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MAKING ALL VOICES COUNT

A GRAND CHALLENGE FOR DEVELOPMENT

PROGRAMME LEARNING REPORT

Tech for governance programmes in Kenya: what is left of the conducive tech environment, and where to next?

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Since November 2016, she has been a member of the Making All Voices Count research outreach team, working with the programme's grantees in Kenya and Tanzania to support research uptake and engaged learning processes, and to situate their learning in national and regional citizen-engagement and government-responsiveness agendas.

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FRONT COVER IMAGE: Staff members of Umande Trust Nairobi walk through the Kibera slum © Pieternella Pieterse

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Summary

- Several early technology developments put Kenya on the map as the 'tech capital' of East Africa, and during the past decade, Kenya went through a period of overabundant funding for information and communications technology (ICT) solutions related to governance or development challenges. But ICT specialists, staff from non-governmental organisations / civil society organisations (CSOs) and donors tend to agree that not many applications (apps) and platforms developed at that time yielded results. This has led to a refocusing on different types of governance and development programmes.
- Too many of Kenya's Making All Voices Count grantees repeated the same mistakes, which have been documented as well-known challenges for technology for transparency and accountability (Tech4T&A) initiatives: commissioning the design of custom-made tech platforms; overestimating smartphone use among their community members; and not engaging their communities in the design, piloting or testing of the tech product (de Lanerolle, Walker and Kinney 2016; Sika, Sambuli, Orwa and Salim 2014). Despite the fact that the implementing CSOs are in Kenya, not every organisation has sufficient in-house tech knowledge to be able to choose and implement a tech-based solution.
- When the tech component was slow in delivering results, Making All Voices Count grantees in Kenya worked hard to achieve governance improvements, and often managed to add in the tech component towards the end of the programme.
- In Kenya, the focus has shifted towards governance issues at the county level, and several proofs of concept developed with Making All Voices Count funding are suitable for adaptation and scaling up in accountability programmes at this level.

About this programme learning report

Making All Voices Count has been a grant-making programme supporting tech for accountable governance initiatives, which in this report are defined as "projects, programmes and campaigns which use information and communications technologies (ICTs) in initiatives intended to increase transparency and improve government accountability to citizens" (Brock, Shutt and Ashlin 2016: 4). Making All Voices Count also supported research about what works in accountable governance, and why. This report presents a country-specific synthesis of the trends, ideas, research and learning from the interventions supported by grants from Making All Voices Count in Kenya. It highlights the commonalities and diversity, and successes and challenges of the programme's grantees.

The report's author, Pieternella Pieterse, is a member of Making All Voices Count's research outreach team, focusing on its programmes in Kenya and Tanzania.[1] She wrote this report after visits to several Kenyan grantees, key informant interviews with leading tech experts in Kenya, and conversations with representatives of donor agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on tech and governance. The report also draws on academic papers, relevant media reports and a review of the Making All Voices Count programme's monitoring, evaluation and learning documentation.

The report starts with a brief history of Kenya's tech for social good field, highlighting the recent hype about tech in the governance and international development sectors. The section thereafter provides an overview of Making All Voices Count programmes in a few short lines. This is followed by three case studies focusing on grantee projects, and a brief analysis of these case studies. A concluding discussion highlights questions regarding ways forward.

Kenya's ICT-focused context

Salome (2016) notes that Kenya has witnessed an ICT revolution in the past decade. Kenya's capital, Nairobi, is feted as a leading regional tech hub; the city is sometimes referred to as Africa's 'Silicon Savannah'. Former US President Barack Obama hosted the 2015 Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Kenya – a first in sub-Saharan Africa.

Kenya's reputation as a conducive environment for ICTs was cemented by the development of the mobile money platform M-Pesa. Bitange Ndemo, the former Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Information and Communications in Kenya, explains the advance of M-Pesa and several other early ICT successes in the context of two decisive factors: the arrival of the first fibre-optic cable on the eastern seaboard of Africa, which dramatically improved Internet connectivity and drove down prices, and the Kenyan government's development of pro-entrepreneurialism policies and partnerships in 2015.

M-Pesa was initially designed to facilitate easier repayments of microfinance loans and thus started as an ICT for development (ICT4D) product. After its success, a very different tech-based social good emerged. When violence erupted throughout Kenya after the 2007 elections, a small group of concerned bloggers and tech entrepreneurs began to collect eyewitness reports of violence from emails and text messages. They were uploaded to Google Maps, giving rise to the Ushahidi platform (Swahili for *testimony* or *witness*). Ushahidi's trailblazing information-gathering, visualisation and interactive mapping tool gained huge prominence and has since been used worldwide. M-Pesa and Ushahidi put Kenya squarely on the international tech map, attracting investors. According to *The Economist* (2012), Kenya's exports of technology-related services were worth US$16 million annually in 2002 and "exploded to $360 m[illion]" by 2010. *The Economist* also noted that alongside private investors, the tech buzz in Nairobi attracted aid donors, development funds and international NGOs "eager to shell out shillings".

Technology for governance

The Kenyan government has used ICTs for reporting on corruption since 2006, when the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission installed an online tool to

1 This role involves some accompaniment and support to Making All Voices Count-funded work going on in the region, and situating programme learning in national and regional citizen engagement, government accountability and tech for transparency and accountability communities.

There are undeniably many positives about the ever-increasing access to technology for many Kenyans. Less clear is the extent to which the apps and platforms designed to improve Kenyans' lives have achieved their original aims

improve the quality and quantity of the reports it receives (Schultz, Osore and Vennen 2010). Over the past decade, a range of official and non-governmental entities have used ICTs to expose corruption, highlight staff absenteeism in schools and clinics, and report the lack of completion of many public works. Kenya was among the first African countries to sign up to the Open Government Partnership, but despite many efforts to increase transparency and expose official wrongdoing, there is little evidence to suggest that governance in Kenya has improved, according to Worldwide Governance Indicators.[2]

Support for technology for transparency and accountability (Tech4T&A) interventions in Kenya has, in the recent past, been provided by diverse sources such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank, bilateral donors from the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK, United Nations agencies, and philanthropic foundations linked to successful tech companies such as the Omidyar Network or the Hewlett Foundation. Key informants interviewed for this research suggested that there has been a decline in funding for Tech4T&A, however. Many spoke (self-critically, at times) of the period when investments peaked and funds were (over)abundant. They recalled "hackathon after hackathon, and nothing to show for it" and "a graveyard overflowing with redundant apps", and described tech hubs as "glorified coffee shops".[3] Several former and current tech entrepreneurs suggested that, at a certain point, there were simply too many donors eager to support the development of tech solutions for social causes. Many young tech developers lacked the know-how, the funding or the interest to take their newly developed app or platform to the community or to government, and few hackathon products made it beyond the 'tech concept' stage (McClure and Gray 2015; Banks 2014).

There are undeniably many positives about the ever-increasing access to technology for many Kenyans. Less clear is the extent to which the apps and platforms designed to improve Kenyans' lives have achieved their original aims. This is the question many tech- and governance-focused individuals are asking. A donor representative noted that, several years ago, it became clear that there was a lot of hype around tech for governance, but he can recall few lasting successes: "Even today, we have our doubts. We see that some organisations are getting better at designing apps that work, but whether apps will find traction, that remains questionable". Even individuals who have been at the centre of the Tech4T&A revolution, such as Erica Hagen, who established (and continues to support) Map Kibera, raised this same question in a recent paper (2017: 5): "But how useful has open data been to local communities in achieving their own goals? All this technology was supposed to level the playing field. Has it done so?"

A shift in focus

New issues dominate in Kenya (Wainaina 2017). In 2017, the elections have of course been the main focus. Interestingly, one governance advisor from a donor organisation pointed out that this time, there was no single tech platform dominating the 'report election fraud' sphere: "Everybody just uses Twitter these days, have a look at @KOT and #KOT.[4] Twitter provides a perfect platform for public debate, so why do we need a separate election platform? There is no point in designing something that can't compete with the existing system – as donors, we would not fund it anyway."

Devolution

'Devolution' is the new donor buzzword in Kenya. Kenya's 'new' constitution is seven years old, but its mandated devolution of development-focused budgets and decision-making has only recently become a reality, with the adoption and implementation of budgetary devolution, alongside

2 See: http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/#reports
3 Based on interviews with Ory Okolloh, Conrad Akunga, Declan Ottaro, Dr Peter da Costa and others.
4 @KOT stands for Kenyans on Twitter, a Twitter account with 88,300+ followers, as of September 2017. #KOT is widely used by Kenyans on Twitter while posting on issue concerning their country, politics, etc.

It is important to remember that, while Kenya's citizens may now be able to renew their driver's licence online, many still live without tarmac roads on which to drive and have no clean water or sanitation facilities

the necessary laws and regulatory frameworks (Kinutia and Lakin 2015). There are good reasons for the strong donor focus on supporting the potential development dividend that devolution can bring: Kenya's county governments have been handed a significant opportunity to support the wellbeing of their inhabitants by spending devolved funds on improving service provision for water, health or early childhood education.

Many argue that scrutiny of county-level spending is badly needed; a 2015 report from the Controller of Budget revealed that county governments regularly overspend, and that funds allocated for development were used for salaries and allowances in the past (Government of Kenya 2015). Kenya's district and county governments have a poor reputation for implementing pro-poor development projects using the constituency development fund (TISA 2011, 2010) and the Kenyan government has a reputation for rent-seeking and patronage (Hope Sr. 2014). This means that a lot hangs in the balance to prove that devolution can support better governance and stop corrupt practices from being "brought down to the local level in response to popular expectations that it is 'everyone's turn to eat'" (D'Arcy and Cornell 2016: 246).

E-government

The Kenyan government's interest and investment in ICT solutions is significant. In recent years, it has surged ahead with providing an ever larger number of basic services online. The Kenyatta government, elected in 2013, made a point of pushing for the establishment of e-government services. Salome (2016) noted that, at the time of her research, 41 public services could be accessed online. With the creation of an e-citizen platform where citizens can access some basic services, and a single website for all government information,[5] the Kenyan government is clearly signalling its embrace of technology.

While the embrace of such technical solutions should be lauded, there are well-known drawbacks to the embrace of ICT-based portals and platforms. E-government services are only useful to those who have access to the required ICT-enabled phones, laptops, etc. Tech solutions therefore effectively exclude the very poor, many rural communities and illiterate people, groups that usually have more women than men among them (Pew Global 2015). ICT solutions can even create a barrier between government and citizens, if offline methods of service provision are scaled back (Gurumurthy, Bharthur and Chami 2017). It is important to remember that, while Kenya's citizens may now be able to renew their driver's licence online, many still live without tarmac roads on which to drive and have no clean water or sanitation facilities. Investing in e-government services is a choice the Kenyan government has made and is based on its priorities for its citizens, which are not always the majority of its citizens' priorities. As Salome noted, in Kenya, many "state actors mistake e-government for e-governance and are often indifferent to citizens' aspirations for more public participation" (2016: 4).

Overview of the Making All Voices Count grantees in Kenya

Between 2013 and 2017, Making All Voices Count provided funding to 18 NGOs and CSOs and one tech hub in Kenya.[6] The following section lists the foci of all grantees and picks up on some of the trends. After this, three grantee case studies are presented.

5 www.mygov.go.ke

6 These were: Caritas; Centre for Advocacy Relief and Development (CARD); Constitution and Reform Education Consortium (CRECO); Fahamu; Global Pivotal Solutions; International Budget Partnership (IBP); International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) Kenya; INFONET; International Rescue Committee (IRC); Kwale Youth Governance Consortium (KYGC); Local Empowerment for Good Governance (LENGGO); Mtaani; Sentinel; SKIRTS; Transparency International; Umande; UN Habitat; and the tech hub IHUB. For more information about the Making All Voices Count grantees in Kenya, see: www.makingallvoicescount.org/project-filter/?_sft_country=kenya

Making All Voices Count's grants allowed organisations to use new technologies to promote accountable governance. It awarded different types of grants, allowing the programme to support projects that enable, amplify and channel citizens' voices to secure accountability and responsiveness from governments. There were innovation grants for projects focused on finding and testing new ideas, and scaling grants for taking proven concepts to scale. Making All Voices Count also provided research grants for building our knowledge of how technology is being applied across the wider governance field, and supporting practitioners to learn about how their own projects are working. Its tech hub grants supported the development of technologies with a focus on 'public good'.

In terms of where the promotion of good governance was being directed, the trend was clearly in line with the current national focus: the county governments. Seven CSOs chose to focus on devolved government institutions, though many narrowed their target groups down further: **Caritas** and **Umande** promoted the greater engagement of women in budget dialogues with county governments, the former targeting Kitui County and the latter Kibera slum. **UN Habitat** received funding to replicate an intervention it had already trialled successfully. It focused on getting young people engaged in county governments by organising events in which tech-savvy urban youth and county governments grappling with devolution and decentralisation were brought together to brainstorm solutions jointly. These events gave marginalised youth an opportunity to grapple with county governance issues. **IRC** promoted the greater engagement of the Turkana pastoralist community with county authorities, and focused specifically on improving access to health services (health is one of the devolved budget lines that is now in the hands of each county).

LENGGO was able to support communities in Mombasa, Kilifi and Kwale Counties to engage with their county officials on the scope of annual development plans and the quality of the implementation of development activities. **Fahamu** conducted participatory budgeting in Emu County, focusing on citizen engagement with the devolved county budget. **IBP**, in collaboration with the **Kerio Center**, sought to improve the dialogue between citizens and the county government, especially when it came to citizens providing feedback on the county's development plans. The organisation successfully used video recordings of county officials that were played to audiences that may not have understood their messages, or would have been too intimidated to speak out if they had heard it 'live'. After an 'everyday language' explanation was provided, the organisation gathered feedback from the community and delivered it to the county government, which could then take it into account.

There were a range of other interesting programmes, with a wide variety of foci. **CARD**, also working in the Turkana area, focused on education. Its overall objective was to improve learning outcomes and empower pupils to seek better service delivery from teachers by monitoring absenteeism.

Transparency International targeted the health sector at the national level. It developed a pharmaceutical pricing reference guide to help formulate pricing policies. The guide aimed to enhance transparency and accountability in pharmaceutical procurement, with a view to enhancing price predictability. This, it argued, could limit consumer exploitation, which is a countrywide problem, and ease access to medication.

The overall goal of **CRECO**'s project was to ensure that both the national and county governments provide a conducive environment for accountability, transparency and service delivery through inclusive public participation in Open Government Partnerships. CRECO supported communities to monitor the realisation of three commitments outlined in the *2016–2018 Kenya OGP National Action Plan II*:

1. Enhance transparency in the legislative process in parliament and county assemblies.
2. Create transparent public procurement processes and public oversight of expenditure, and ensure value for money towards citizen's priorities.
3. Improve access to government budget information and create wider and more inclusive structures for public participation.

ICJ Kenya worked with court users' committees (CUCs) in two counties. CUCs are critical avenues for public participation within the justice system in Kenya, and are composed of the police, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, advocates, children's services, probation departments, prison services and the judiciary. The public are represented through paralegals, faith-based organisations and CSOs. By organising open days, helping CUCs to create websites and Facebook pages, and organising exchange visits between two groups of CUCs, ICJ Kenya improved working relationships and coordination among justice system actors, and between them and the general public. The judiciary in Kitui and Eldoret benefitted from ICJ Kenya's support to set up a legal case management system to track and manage files better; the attached SMS[7] platform now informs litigants and their lawyers of changes in court dates, so they don't have to travel from far for no reason.

7 Short Message Service, or text message.

INFONET was involved in the facilitation of Ennova, a series of targeted innovation challenges organised by the National Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (NPSDD) seeking to harness the data revolution to catalyse actions to mitigate development challenges in Kenya. The NPSDD is an inclusive data ecosystem involving government, the private sector, academia, civil society, local communities and development partners. It tackles the informational aspects of development decision-making in a coordinated way. Ennova's first event was an 'Ideation Challenge for Climate Action', funded by Hivos, the Ford Foundation and the Kenya School of Government. The event received significant government buy-in and great interaction between government and participants, who identified various data challenges. The event resulted in commitments by companies and organisations including IBM, HDX Lab, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, ICT Authority and the Kenya School of Government. It also highlighted two policy requirements regarding the framework on data sharing and data management.

With Making All Voices Count funding, INFONET scaled Ennova. The success of the first Ennova event led to high demand, resulting in INFONET engaging with all 13 other government sector agencies. INFONET had to second one of its own directors to work in government as an advisor on partnerships and formulate a data initiative within the Office of the President.

The CSO **Mtaani** worked in partnership with the MIT Center for Civic Media to engage graffiti writers to spread data-based information in the slums area of Nairobi, and organise artistic events attracting youth. The organisation's proposal suggested: "The data murals will leverage open data initiatives to empower community groups to make data-driven arguments, in addition to existing methods they have. This info-activism is all too often confined to the digital realm, in social media campaigns and infographics. Bringing this work to real world murals allows us to make the data-driven activism more participatory, opening up a new avenue for citizen-driven, data-informed, accountability."

Sentinel implemented the only election-focused intervention, delivering an ICT project that aimed to increase open governance and reduce the risk of violence in Nairobi during the 2017 election by using technology to enable citizen participation in countering incendiary misinformation.

The case studies

A certain level of failure is a sign of risks taken. During Making All Voices Count's daring experiments, certain things did not work out. For a variety of reasons, three grantees in Kenya were unable to finish their tech for governance interventions.

Case study 1: The Kwale Youth Governance Consortium

The Kwale Youth Governance Consortium (KYGC) is an umbrella organisation that represents over 30 community-based organisations (CBOs) in Kwale County. With a scaling grant from Making All Voices Count, it carried out a programme called 'Digital Mapping for Social Accountability in the Extractive Sector in Kwale County'.

The organisation had good ties with more than 40 community groups with which it works. It is clear that some of the CBO volunteers' engagement with the KYGC programme provided on-the-job training and capacity development that may not have been documented, but which was noted by many of the young CBO representatives as "very useful". KYGC had experience with community-engaged map-making, but the organisation admitted that not everything mapped immediately becomes actionable.

When a previous programme uncovered that local development fund projects were documented as finalised in the county offices when many were unfinished, it gave communities tangible information around which to rally. With a map of extractive industry activities, this was different. KYGC professed to being disappointed that no one out of the community, the mining companies or the county government seemed to have the relevant tech knowledge or interest to access the maps that it produced: "At the community level, we printed the maps and displayed them at sub-county offices, where people primarily used them for navigating around the area."

KYGC had been involved in advocacy regarding the adoption of a new mining act, which was eventually signed into law in May 2016 (during the Making All Voices Count project). The new law mandates that 20% of mining royalties are transferred to the county

government and that 10% should be allocated towards spending at the community level.[8]

Many challenges delayed the envisaged tech component of KYGC's extractives project. KYGC struggled to decide on which mapping software to use and, without the relevant in-house tech know-how, found it hard to adapt free open-source options to its needs. Despite early signs that mapping alone would not lead to strong engagement from the community, the county government or the mining companies, KYGC was determined to complete the map. KYGC believes it shows how prevalent mining is in Kwale County. The mapping also raised awareness of the fact that each mining activity implies governance issues, from land rights and drilling permits to tax and environmental concerns.

Before the mapping was complete, KYGC conceived several offline strategies to ensure that some of its original advocacy objectives were achieved. It identified 62 village units (out of a total of 73 in Kwale County) that in some way are affected by mining. KYGC focused on supporting the 30 worst-affected communities, which yielded the biggest results for the programme. KYGC staff and members of the CBO umbrella group raised communities' awareness of their rights and of the provisions in the new mining act, and helped to implement context-specific solutions.

Visits to one of the 30 target communities provided some illustration of the problems faced and the solutions offered by KYGC. A community targeted for relocation because of the expansion of a nearby titanium mine faced a lack of clarity about the terms and conditions offered by the mining company. KYGC supported the community with advice on its rights, after which many community members resolved to lease their land to the mine, rather than selling up and surrendering their properties. While this was initially hailed as a victory, the issue did not end there, however. Before KYGC could return to the community with contracts drawn up by its lawyers, which the community could use to negotiate the leases, the mining company managed to persuade over half of the families to hand over their title deeds in exchange for undisclosed sums. This destabilised the bargaining power of the remaining inhabitants and left many uncertain about how to proceed.

Despite the Making All Voices Count programme ending, KYGC continues to support the affected community.

Case study 2: Local Empowerment for Good Governance

LENGGO is a small, Mombasa-based CSO. It is relatively experienced in promoting citizen engagement, having previously focused on governance programmes with the aim of holding local government accountable for the implementation of the County Integrated Development Plan.[9]

LENGGO planned to use its scaling grant from Making All Voices Count to develop a tech platform to communicate messages related to the county development budget in its three target counties: Mombasa, Kilifi and Kwale. It planned to alert people about county–citizen engagement events that were being organised. In addition, LENGGO wanted a platform / free SMS system in which people could text back to notify the organisation of breakdowns / problems in public services. LENGGO staff admitted that it took a long time to get the tech set up.

The organisation surged ahead with its offline strategy to promote citizen engagement within the three target counties. These activities focused on forging successful collaborations with a large group of locally active NGOs and CSOs, which was part of LENGGO's engagement strategy. The CSO network convened by LENGGO jointly took Mombasa County to court over its failure to organise government-mandated citizen engagement while drafting the annual county development plans. While the actual court case was thrown out, the judges reprimanded the county government, suggesting it should carry out mandated citizen engagement or risk further court action. The case led to links between Mombasa County and the CSO network being rebuilt. This has developed into a positive relationship, with the county governor stating that its office now perceives CSOs such as LENGGO as "entities that are able to complement local government".[10]

In Kwale County, the LENGGO-led CSO network already had good relationships with the county government. Several of the network partners had donor funding, so the network decided to pool its funds to deliver a joint programme for strengthening budget engagement. This resulted in greater community awareness and a village-level budget consultation in all 87 villages in Kwale County. Lucas Fondo, the Director of LENGGO, explained: "The three lead CSOs decided to synchronise and harmonise

8 Much of the new mining code that lays out how the 2016 law should be enacted was still being debated in July 2017. While the passing of the law was a victory for KYGC and many other advocacy groups, its prescriptions came too late to affect KYGC's Making All Voices Count-funded project.

9 This is a five-year plan in which all capital spending on human development for the whole county gets mapped out.

10 Based on an interview held in Mombasa on 5 September, 2017.

our budgets, so we could implement a county-wide intervention. We made a joint plan and shared our reporting at the end of the programme. We spoke as one voice, which [the] county government much appreciated. There was no duplication; we were very effective and worked well together. The network has subsequently grown and is in talks with another donor to carry on working on similar budget engagement issues as a group of CSOs."

LENGGO's offline strategy resulted in tangible improvements. In Kasemeni Ward, a local citizen group, which received training from LENGGO on their right to engage with county-funded development initiatives, petitioned the ward administration and was granted an oversight role during the construction of their local early childhood education centre. The contractor, which had been delivering sub-standard work, was forced to rebuild certain sections of the school.

While the offline work went well, the tech component was challenging. LENGGO was advised by a tech expert from another CSO to build a custom-made platform. Upon completion, LENGGO realised that it needed additional functions, such as differentiating between comments and notifications of service problems, and making SMS conversations public so others could join in. LENGGO resorted to using the tech platform for mass SMS, but relied on WhatsApp to have 'group conversations' with community members. LENGGO staff admitted that a two-way mass SMS system resulted in many more responses than it had anticipated, and unfortunately, it was only able to reply or react to a small proportion of the messages it received from the public.

LENGGO's novel idea of putting on free buses to bring commuters into town while they were engaged in conversations about local governance yielded a huge number of additional supporters among the middle classes, who are hard to reach during rural community outreach. However, because their tech platform was not set up to engage with people more actively than by mass SMS, the envisaged mobilisation of the middle classes did not materialise.

Case study 3: Umande

The CSO Umande, based in the informal settlement of Kibera in Nairobi, used its innovation grant to implement an intervention called 'Women Voices – ICT Choices'. The project aimed to empower a group of women with relevant knowledge to enable them to effectively participate in various development initiatives. The intervention involved training 20 women 'champions', five per ward. These champions were trained to act as women's representatives in four of the wards of Kibera, through both online (dashboard and social media) and offline (participation in meetings and forums) means. They represented religious communities, women with disabilities and women carers of those living with HIV, among others.

At the end of the project, it was clear that the women champions were active within their communities. They had regular meetings other women, passing on their new-found governance knowledge. They had established good relationships with the county and ward administration, and many had volunteered to join local development committees. They expressed a clear understanding of the roles of the staff and elected representatives within their county, sub-county and ward.

Huge recognition for Umande's work came recently, when the administrators of the four target wards tasked the women champions with assisting them to ascertain the development priorities of the community. The women had previously conducted many smaller community meetings to explain the devolved system of governance and the development budget, and they had taken note of all of the priorities that communities (men and women) had suggested. When, in the meeting with the ward administration, the officials realised the women champions had carefully noted priority lists, they immediately asked if they could be the community representatives during the forthcoming citizen engagement fora for the County Integrated Development Plan. Umande's women champions are currently in talks to organise a joint community–ward administrators meeting to validate their list of citizens' priorities.

In terms of tech, the project had an ICT learning component for the women champions, who were taught skills to conduct basic data gathering. The data was uploaded onto the interactive dashboard that was designed for the project. Because the majority of the women lacked smartphones, most of the citizen-generated data was transferred from paper to the dashboard. This allowed the group to keep an accurate, up-to-date picture of their neighbourhood and all its facilities (and lack thereof). Umande had applied for tech support from Making All Voices Count, but as the last grantee in Kenya, the timing was too tight to make it happen.

Making All Voices Count did identify an appetite for establishing a community of practice to share practitioner lessons and avoid making the same mistakes among its grantees. However, a reluctance to share learning because of the competition for tech funding contributed to this initiative never getting off the ground

Reflecting on the case study evidence

The case studies and programme documentation from all the Kenyan grantees show that the NGOs, CSOs and tech hub implementing the Tech4T&A interventions met significant challenges. Most striking is the fact that many (though not all) Making All Voices Count grantees were relatively strong in terms of engaging with the communities and with local government as planned when using offline strategies – but a number struggled with the tech components they had planned to use, and with combining online and offline strategies. Interestingly, this is almost the exact opposite of what happened during Kenya's Tech4T&A funding boom, when many exciting tech products were developed but few made it to the implementation stage and, if they did, often found that establishing meaningful links with citizens was the biggest hurdle (Banks 2014).

During a Making All Voices Count learning event in South Africa in March 2017, there were grantees from all countries who highlighted their challenges with blending online and offline actions to promote governance. The causes were often a range of practical problems, combined with a tendency to focus exclusively on the tech component. This meant that too much was often expected from the technologies, instead of "seeing them as just one aspect of the many factors that shape the dynamic relationship between citizen voice, accountability and responsiveness" (Brock and McGee 2017: 3).

An in-depth reading of the challenges encountered by many of the Kenyan grantees suggests several issues. Despite Nairobi being the tech capital of East Africa, few organisations were familiar with the tech they proposed to use. Many grantees conceived tech solutions that did not take the constraints of the targeted environment into account: for example, an app needed citizens to use smartphones to engage with the tech; a service problem notification platform only worked on laptops, which very few people had; an SMS platform did not allow for public dialogue to be visible to all users.

These challenges are not new. De Lanerolle et al. (2016) examined the methods by which 38 organisations in Kenya and South Africa selected the specific technology they used for a Tech4T&A intervention. The authors found that few CSOs employed staff that had sufficient ICT knowledge to lead the successful selection of the right tech tool / app / platform. CSOs routinely used consultants for the selection, and sometimes also design and operation, of tech in their Tech4T&A interventions, and these consultants often favoured building a new tech tool rather than proposing the use of an existing one (Ibid). During a Making All Voices Count learning event, some grantees explained that they preferred creating a unique platform or app in order to prove 'ownership', with several CSOs citing general donor expectations and / or the need to clearly attribute change to *their* project, as reasons to invent rather than adapt a tech solution.

De Lanerolle et al. (2016) also note the problem of overestimating smartphone possession among target populations. When this issue was discussed with the directors of LENGGO and KYGC, both admitted that they may have been over-reliant on the advice of the tech experts they had engaged, and blamed them for designing a smartphone-based solution. This problem points to several other issues: CSOs do not sufficiently engage citizens in the design stages of their Tech4T&A programmes (Sika et al. 2014), and they do not conduct sufficient research or pilot their innovations. De Lanerolle et al. (2016) revealed that only a quarter of the CSOs they interviewed conducted any research involving the potential users of the tech.

The grantees interviewed for this research professed to having been poorly informed about other CSOs in Kenya that implement Tech4T&A programmes at the early stages of their intervention, and even less so of research that could have assisted their choice of technology. Making All Voices Count supported the Engine Room to develop a website that assists CSOs

The Tech4T&A space in Kenya may be heading for a period where there will be less **invention** *and more* **meaningful innovation** *– less focus on creating new apps or platforms, and more investment in realising the potential of existing ideas and early stage innovations*

in the selection of the most suitable technology for their ICT4D intervention.[11]

The fact that CSOs continue to make basic mistakes, which have already been identified in a number of research papers, suggests that Making All Voices Count in Kenya seems to have underestimated the grantees' need for mentoring. On reflection, it might have been useful if the grantees had received an early introduction to common tech solutions that are already available and which could be adapted to suit local contexts (de Lanerolle et al. 2016), and coaching to ensure that the tech they selected was developed or adapted in collaboration with citizens (Sika et al. 2014). Making All Voices Count did identify an appetite for establishing a community of practice to share practitioner lessons and avoid making the same mistakes among its grantees. However, a reluctance to share learning because of the competition for tech funding contributed to this initiative never getting off the ground.

There is, however, always a counter argument to being too prescriptive. Making All Voices Count set out to promote innovation; when CSOs are given too much guidance, there is little room for innovation or even adaptation. Research commissioned by Making All Voices Count stressed the importance given by donors and grant-makers to enabling and encouraging greater capacity for adaptation and learning within projects in order to achieve the best possible outcomes (Prieto-Martin, Faith, Hernandez and Ramalingam 2017). The balance between technical support and micro-management varies from country to country, and from organisation to organisation, depending on the particular context, capacities and characteristics involved. In Tanzania, for example, where the tech sector is much less well developed, half of the Making All Voices Count grantees received tech mentoring, while most other grantees received other forms of support, depending on their needs.

Where to next?

As noted, donor trends shift and the appetite for funding new Tech4T&A developments may be waning. The donors interviewed for this research indicated an interest in less ambitious and less risky interventions in a bid to support the advancement of good governance. Donors in Kenya are aware that, at this moment, there are clearly defined entry points for the promotion of good governance in Kenya, and these are at the county level: every county in Kenya is mandated by law to engage with citizens regarding the spending of development-focused budget lines. This translates into engagement opportunities at the time of the composition of the five-year County Integrated Development Plans and during deliberations on localised annual plans derived from these. Further evidence suggests that there is scope for CSOs to support the citizen-led monitoring of the tendering, oversight and completion of construction projects in relation to these plans.

As Kenya continues to push ahead with the provision of e-government services, and continues to work with the Open Government Partnership, it is hoped that county-specific data will become regularly available without CSOs having to demand it or file freedom-of-information requests for it. A standardised platform for county-level information is currently under development. Should it be successfully updated with relevant budget expenditure data on a regular basis, it would create the opportunity for CSOs to support citizens in their efforts to monitor and hold their county- and ward-level representatives to account.

Overall, the research suggests that a shift is detectable, favouring less tech innovation and more offline 'doing what we know works well'. Donors in Kenya expressed a preference for "working with what we have"[12] (i.e. available data) rather than trying to obtain or make sense of more abstract data sources. This does not make the learning from

11 See: https://alidade.tech
12 Based on an interview with Muratha Kinuthia, World Bank Kenya, in Nairobi on 8 September, 2017.

Making All Voices Count redundant. On the contrary, the lessons learnt from Making All Voices Count provide proofs of concept that can be adapted to suit different county contexts. Brock and McGee (2017) show that across the 178 projects implemented by Making All Voices Count grantees, there were seven distinct ways in which tech was used to improve governance: from facilitating a flow of new information to a wide group of citizens; to collecting, analysing and providing feedback; to 'naming and shaming' corrupt officials online. The tech and the knowledge to implement these approaches now exist, and can be replicated or scaled up at low cost and with a greater chance of success. The Tech4T&A space in Kenya may be heading for a period where there will be less *invention* and more *meaningful innovation* – less focus on creating new apps or platforms, and more investment in realising the potential of existing ideas and early stage innovations.

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About Making All Voices Count

Making All Voices Count is a programme working towards a world in which open, effective and participatory governance is the norm and not the exception. It focuses global attention on creative and cutting-edge solutions to transform the relationship between citizens and their governments. The programme is inspired by and supports the goals of the Open Government Partnership.

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Research, Evidence and Learning component

The programme's Research, Evidence and Learning component, managed by IDS, contributes to improving performance and practice, and builds an evidence base in the fields of citizen voice, government responsiveness, transparency and accountability (T&A) and technology for T&A (Tech4T&A).

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