

Introducing

Jesper Katomero

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Jesper Katomero researches local governance, water sector governance, and accountability in Tanzania. He is currently coordinating a two-year multi-country Accountability for Water (AfW) research programme involving Kenya, Tanzania, and Ethiopia under the Shahidi wa Maji (SwM) and Water Witness International (WWI) NGOs. Jesper is also a lecturer at the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of Dodoma, Tanzania. We spoke to him about this work at AfW and what he hopes his students will take away from his lectures.

How did you become involved in the Accountability for Water (AfW) research program, and what was your role as a National Research Coordinator?

The Accountability for Water research programme was a programme of action and research that sought to improve water governance and water service delivery, accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals' progress in Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Liberia, and Zambia. The programme started in 2020 and was concluded in January 2023. I became involved in September 2020, although the programme started officially in March 2020. A colleague of mine, Prof. Ruth Carlitz, sent me an advert that Water Witness International was looking for a researcher specializing in accountability studies in the WASH sector to lead the programme as a National Research Coordinator in Tanzania¹. She told me: "There is no researcher on WASH accountability studies in Tanzania - you should apply!" I applied, and a month later, I was informed that my application was successful. As a National Research



Coordinator (NRC), I coordinated three key pillars of the programme and ensured deliverables in each pillar. These pillars were: knowledge generation, outreach and communication, and advocacy and programme legacy. The first pillar targeted professional research fellows from participating countries to research accountability-focused WASH topics. In this pillar, my role was to ensure that the research proposals met the required standards; the finances and all fieldwork logistics for the fellows were effectively managed; data was collected within agreed timelines; performed quality assurance on the fieldwork research reports; and finally ensured the research outputs were converted into peer-reviewed journal articles, policy briefs, and bulletins. In the second pillar, I communicated research findings

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to all WASH stakeholders within the country, the region, and beyond. We organized bi-weekly webinar series where fellows presented findings to national, regional, and global WASH stakeholders. We also organized research symposiums, workshops, conferences, etc., to share the findings with many WASH stakeholders. The third pillar is ongoing, as pushing for systemic changes within government takes time.

How do you envision the Accountability for Water program impacting water service delivery and sector governance in Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Liberia, Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia?

Accountability is relevant to us all. Increased accountability can strengthen all parts of the water governance system. It can improve the performance of all water users, water managers in government, utilities, regulators, the private sector, NGOs, civil society, and

development partners. To fully harness the potential of stronger accountability, we were able to generate the required knowledge regarding 'what works and why?' in different water management contexts in the six participating countries. Thus, when WASH stakeholders own and use the knowledge generated from the AfW research, I envision more responsive governance systems in these countries, which, eventually, will help communities, including households, farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, businesses, industries, etc., sustainably benefit from water resources.

You are also a lecturer at the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of Dodoma, Tanzania. How do you incorporate your research and experiences into your teaching, and what lessons do you hope to impart to your students?

I consider teaching as being both research-driven and experience-based. Having worked in the AfW programme and interacted with many WASH stakeholders at national, regional, and international levels, I am in a great position to teach and inspire my students and fellow academics to do research in the WASH area and forge collaborations and partnerships, of mutual benefit, with local and international scholars and organizations. The biggest lesson I hope to impart to my students and faculty members is that, as intellectuals, we should strive to achieve the three core functions of a university with equal priority: teaching, research and consultancy. While doing this, we should strive to embrace the idea of co-creating knowledge through partnerships and collaborations with local, national, regional, and global knowledge organizations and actors.

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