

**May 2014**

**No. 2014-03**

# **International Development Group Working Paper Series**

**From Supply to Comply: Gauging the Effects of Social Accountability  
on Services, Governance, and Empowerment**

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and  
Anna Wetterberg**

A working paper of the  
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# International Development Group Working Paper Series

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May 2014  
No. 2014-03

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## ABBREVIATIONS

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|          |   |
|----------|---|
| CCOAIB   | <i>Conseil de Concertation des Organisations d'Appui aux Initiatives de Base</i> (Rwanda) |
| CHS      | complaints-handling survey  |
| CIVICUS  | World Alliance for Citizen Participation  |
| CNOSCG   | <i>Conseil National des Organisations de la Société Civile Guinéenne</i> (Guinea)         |
| CODE-NGO | Caucus of Development NGO Networks (Philippines)  |
| CSO      | civil society organization  |
| MCH      | maternal and child health   |
| NGO      | nongovernmental organization  |
| PAC      | Public Affairs Centre (India)   |
| PAQ      | Partenaires pour l'Amélioration de la Qualité (Rwanda)                                    |
| PETS     | public expenditure tracking survey  |
| PTA      | parent-teacher association  |
| QAPC     | Quality Assurance Partnership Committee (Philippines)                                     |
| RTI      | RTI International (trade name of Research Triangle Institute)                             |
| SA       | social accountability   |
| SBM      | school-based management   |
| SWOT     | strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats   |
| USAID    | United States Agency for International Development  |
| WBI      | Women's Budget Initiative (South Africa)  |

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**ABSTRACT**

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Social accountability interventions have demonstrated some positive examples of successful citizen engagement with state actors to enforce accountability for service delivery, but the extent to which project-based replication will lead to sustained transformation of state-citizen relations and to better service delivery and governance is open to question. We argue that the success of such interventions depends on more than the importation and faithful implementation of the social accountability toolkit. Underemphasized in most treatments are the variety of purposes for demand-driven accountability, the agency of citizens beyond mobilization for accountability actions, and the extent to which both citizens and state actors change and learn as a function of accountability interactions. To compare outcomes and explanatory factors, we review four donor-funded projects with social accountability mechanisms that aimed to improve service delivery, enhance democratic governance, or empower citizens. The most consistent effect of social accountability interventions across our four cases was a contribution to improved governance, relative to service delivery and empowerment effects. Two main implications arise from the comparisons. The first concerns the degree of alignment between the supply- and demand-side factors, which can help to counter the effects of the dominance of upward accountability and can result in mutual reinforcement for social accountability. The second implication is the time factor: sustainable social accountability mechanisms and processes emerge from extended interactions that support both learning and capacity building.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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This paper originally was prepared for presentation at the Panel on Challenges to the Developmental State: Governance, Innovation and Administrative Answers to Political Problems, 18th International Research Society for Public Management, held in Ottawa, April 9–11, 2014. Financial support from the RTI Fellows program and IDG’s Office of the Executive Vice President is recognized. The views and interpretations in the paper are solely those of the authors and should not be attributed to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), RTI International, or any of the projects described herein.



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## INTRODUCTION

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Research on the politics and governance of service delivery has highlighted the importance of accountability as a driver of service access, responsiveness, quality, and equitable distribution (see Batley et al. 2012). Accountability is a core element of the good governance policy agenda, and its exercise takes place within the set of state institutions that establish checks and balances, and that seek to curb abuses. Good governance depends upon effective state-society relations; thus, citizens—both as individuals and as organized civil society—play a key role in accountability as well. Efforts to improve accountability have targeted state institutions, laws and regulations, and processes (the supply side), as well as civil society and citizens (the demand side). This latter category, labeled social accountability, has to some extent eclipsed supply-led reforms in terms of policy and research attention on accountability. It is important to interrogate experience with social accountability to clarify how, where, and when demand-driven accountability actions work effectively and to identify what factors influence their success.

This paper explores the pathway summarized in our title: from supply of accountability tools, mechanisms, and process, to “comply”—that is, changes in actors’ behaviors. It takes a critical look at the reliance on civil society and engaged citizens as the vehicles for sustainable accountability and responsiveness to shed light on the contextual factors that affect how and under what conditions such approaches and tools can achieve intended results. Social accountability interventions have demonstrated some positive examples of successful citizen engagement with state actors to enforce accountability for service delivery (for example, Björkman and Svensson 2009). However, these successes have frequently been oversold within the international donor community, which seeks to replicate success through projects that apply the same tools and approaches in other settings. These efforts de-emphasize context and, further, represent essentially a retail approach to reform. The extent to which project-based replication will lead to sustained transformation of state-citizen relations and to better service delivery and governance is open to question.

We argue that the success of social accountability depends on more than the importation and faithful implementation of the social accountability toolkit. Contextual factors related to demand, supply, and state-society relations are critical to achieving the aims of social accountability. Much of the literature on social accountability acknowledges context. However, underemphasized in most treatments are the variety of purposes for demand-driven accountability, the agency of citizens beyond mobilization for accountability actions, and the effects of the process dimensions of social accountability. This latter element concerns the extent to which both citizens and state actors change and learn as a function of accountability interactions.

The paper begins by defining the concept of accountability and clarifying the types of actions involved in social accountability and what those actions seek to accomplish. The next section explores context, examining the supply- and demand-side factors associated with social accountability, and how state-society relations condition the interface between supply and demand. In the third section, we review four donor-funded projects with social accountability mechanisms that aimed to improve service delivery, enhance democratic governance, or empower citizens. Two of the country examples are from Asia and two from Africa. We assess the outcomes achieved and analyze the factors that help to explain them,

focusing on local political support, which citizens engaged in social accountability, patterns of upward accountability and supply-side incentives for social accountability, how those patterns create or constrain opportunities for citizen engagement, the importance of learning over time, and the role of capacity and individual agency. The last section offers some conclusions for sustaining social accountability relationships and poses several questions for future research.

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## UNPACKING ACCOUNTABILITY

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In general, accountability concerns the obligation of one actor to share about, and sometimes justify, past actions, in response to another actor empowered to insist on these obligations and apply sanctions for noncompliance. The twin dimensions of accountability are answerability and enforcement (Schedler 1999). State-centered accountability (also called horizontal accountability) refers to public “agencies of restraint” that monitor performance/compliance and/or control abuses by other branches of government. Horizontal accountability relies upon the capacity and willingness of state actors and institutions to supply the conditions, mechanisms, and processes that enable answerability and enforcement (Brinkerhoff 2005).

Social accountability (sometimes called vertical accountability) refers to actions by civil society and citizens to push office holders to report on, and answer for, their actions; this category is the demand side of accountability. In democratic systems of governance, the core of social accountability is political, and takes place through the ballot box. However, most treatments of social accountability look further, and conform to Malena and McNeil’s (2012, 6) definition, which characterizes it as “a) the broad range of actions and mechanisms (beyond voting) that citizens can use to hold the state to account, ... and b) actions on the part of government, civil society, media, and other societal actors that promote or facilitate these efforts.”

The rise in popularity of social accountability is seen as an antidote to weak state-centered accountability, and a growing body of research is emerging that aims to review and assess the effectiveness and impact of social accountability mechanisms and tools (see Bukenya et al. 2012, McGee and Gaventa 2011). Citizens’ actions and available mechanisms for social accountability can be categorized in a variety of ways, and analysts have been concerned with establishing conceptual boundaries that distinguish between citizen engagement with state actors for purposes of holding them to account versus all forms of citizen-state interaction related to governance. A recognized issue is the extent to which social accountability is viewed as normative or instrumental; that is, whether citizen engagement in accountability is an end in itself, valued as a component of good governance regardless of results, or a means to achieving specific outcomes. Drawing on Malena et al. (2004) and McGee and Gaventa (2011), we can identify three instrumental aims of social accountability:

- To increase the effectiveness of the delivery of public goods and services. Here, social accountability actions target improving responsiveness to citizens’ needs and preferences, informing policy decisions with increased citizen input, and—more broadly—fulfilling the social contract between citizens and the state.

- To improve the quality of governance and democracy. This aim focuses on social accountability actions to strengthen the integrity of public institutions and actors, and to reduce corruption. It also relates to what is termed democratic deepening, or the promotion of the active engagement in public affairs of citizens from all socioeconomic strata such that the quality and substance of governance is improved (see Fung and Wright 2003).
- To increase citizen empowerment. Social accountability can be a means to empower the disadvantaged and marginalized in society to express voice and realign state-society relations to influence power distributions and reduce horizontal inequality (Stewart 2000). Important outcomes include the building of skills and capacity for collective action.

The degree to which each of these aims can be achieved depends, in part, on the type of social accountability action. Table 1, drawing on several sources that propose categorizations, offers a typology of social accountability actions, mechanisms, and purposes. This is a stylized delineation of social accountability in that the boundaries between the categories are not necessarily hard and fast; and actors may shift relatively seamlessly from one to another type of action, or pursue more than one type simultaneously with several aims in mind. Further, information is central to all of them. Thus, in a sense, transparency-related actions undergird all the other categories.

*Transparency-related* efforts (Table 1) center on sharing information with citizens that had previously been reserved for state actors. With more and better information in hand, citizens can identify short-comings in service provision, highlight program and policy priorities that diverge from their own, and demand a response from state actors to these concerns, potentially achieving all three instrumental aims. An example of transparency-related action is the South Africa Women's Budget Initiative (WBI). Begun in 1995 by the South African advocacy nongovernmental organization (NGO) IDASA, the WBI has analyzed the impacts of the government budget on various socioeconomic groups. The WBI's members launched awareness campaigns and engaged with the media to educate the public on economic issues, and organized conferences and workshops to foster an exchange of views and to generate consensus. The results influenced policy makers as they prepared South Africa's budget (Brinkerhoff with Azfar 2010).

**Table 1. Clarifying social accountability**

| Type of action   | Illustrative mechanisms and tools   | Aims             |                          |             |
|--|---|------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
|  |   | Service delivery | Governance and democracy | Empowerment |
| <i>Transparency-related:</i> collection, analysis, and dissemination of information on public policies, programs, and services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic education</li> <li>• Awareness campaigns</li> <li>• Independent budget analysis</li> <li>• Social audits</li> <li>• "Watchdog" NGOs</li> </ul> | ✓                | ✓                        | ✓           |

| Type of action   | Illustrative mechanisms and tools  | Aims  |                          |                          |
|--|--|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|  |  | Service delivery                              | Governance and democracy | Empowerment              |
| <p><i>Collaborative/joint:</i></p> <p><i>Compliance-focused:</i> monitoring and oversight of public policies, programs, and services in cooperation with officials and providers</p> <p><i>Co-production-focused:</i> engagement in policy-making and program/service delivery planning and implementation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public expenditure tracking surveys (PETs)</li> <li>• Citizen/community scorecards</li> <li>• Complaint surveys</li> <li>• Service charters</li> <li>• Citizen review boards</li> <li>• Participatory budgeting</li> <li>• Participatory planning</li> <li>• Citizen-provider committees and organizations (e.g., parent-teacher associations [PTAs], community health associations)</li> </ul> | <p>✓<br/>(primary)</p> <p>✓<br/>(primary)</p> | <p>✓<br/>(secondary)</p> | <p>✓<br/>(secondary)</p> |
| <p><i>Contentious/confrontational:</i> civil society actions that interrogate or contest state policies and actions</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Right-to-information campaigns</li> <li>• Street protests and demonstrations</li> <li>• Sit-ins</li> <li>• Investigative journalism</li> <li>• Blogs and social media</li> <li>• Public-interest lawsuits</li> </ul>  |   | <p>✓<br/>(secondary)</p> | <p>✓<br/>(primary)</p>   |

Source: Authors, adapted from Bukenya et al. (2012), Brinkerhoff with Azfar (2010), O'Meally (2013).

Although they also rely on information, *compliance-focused* types of social accountability offer structured mechanisms specifically for citizen oversight of state actors. A key mechanism in the compliance-focused subcategory of social accountability action is citizen or community scorecards. Since the Public Affairs Centre (PAC), an NGO established in 1994 in Bangalore, India, pioneered their introduction, scorecards have spread around the world. The scorecard methodology monitors citizen satisfaction with public services and policies, based on perceptions of quality, efficiency, adequacy, and access. PAC initially conducted scorecard studies with the aim of confronting municipal officials and using the media to expose service delivery failings (Paul and Sekhar 2000). However, its use in many settings today reflects more cooperation between public officials and citizens than confrontation. Many public service agencies use scorecards and complaint surveys as informational input to service delivery management and performance contracting (Brinkerhoff and Wetterberg 2013). Citizen expectations and demands often then become codified in service charters. These mechanisms primarily focus on improving service delivery, as they reveal users' perceptions and identify short-comings of existing provision. To the extent that they lead to lasting improvements in providers' responsiveness to and engagement with citizens, they can also result in better governance.

In the *co-production-focused* subcategory, participatory budgeting, made famous by the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, is the quintessential accountability mechanism that brings citizens into the process of

making public resource allocation and spending decisions. In that city in the 1990s, the left-of-center workers' party municipal administration engaged large numbers of local organizations and individuals in discussions of spending priorities and resource allocation (Baiocchi 2003). Subsequently, participatory budgeting processes have spread to many other countries (see, for example, Bland 2011).

There are numerous examples of citizen-provider organizations that bring the perspectives, needs, and demands of service users to the attention of providers, monitor service provision, and seek to develop joint solutions to identified problems, as well as to hold providers accountable for service delivery. In the education sector, PTAs serve these functions, and in some countries the PTAs hire and manage teachers independent of the civil service. When community members of PTAs receive training and support for their contracting and management roles, the associations have proven effective in increasing accountability and teacher performance (see Duflo et al. 2012).

In the health sector, village health committees and local health councils have played an integral role in accountability of public health service providers to community needs (see Cornwall et al. 2000). A recent literature review of experience with these accountability mechanisms, however, revealed a mixed record of effectiveness (Molyneux et al. 2012). Issues flagged concerned: a) member selection, as well as committee composition and functioning; and b) relations between the committees and health workers and the health system. Nevertheless, while more evidence for the role of these bodies in improved service delivery is called for, community engagement in accountability for the purpose of citizen empowerment remains an important aim (see Narayan 2005).

In contrast to collaborative efforts, where citizens are invited to oversee or contribute to the state's functions, *contentious or confrontational* accountability forcibly breaches established boundaries between state and citizens' roles and responsibilities. Contentious actions are for the most part initiated by NGOs and social movements, and, in the case of street demonstrations and protests, may be physically confrontational. One example is the "Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem-Terra," a landless peasant movement formed in 1984 in Brazil, which used techniques of mass peaceful land occupations to pressure state governments for agrarian land reform (Wright and Wolford 2003). Another example is the extended right-to-information campaigns in six states in India (Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu) led by local civil society organizations that sought to empower citizens to obtain information on pro-poor state spending and corruption (Goetz and Jenkins 2004).

This category of social accountability actions often combines mobilization of affected communities; pursuit of legal avenues of exposure, advocacy, or redress (e.g., parliamentary hearings, court cases); and media campaigns (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz 2002) to empower citizens in new societal roles. To the extent that the state accepts (or at least does not reject) such shifts, this type of social accountability may also achieve changes in governance and democracy.

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## CLARIFYING CONTEXT: DEMAND, SUPPLY, AND STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONS

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It has long been recognized that a singular focus on demand for better governance—whether, for example, more democratic practices, stronger rule of law, or better service delivery—is insufficient for both explanatory and operational purposes (e.g., Coston 1998). Similarly, for the subset of governance reforms related to accountability, without taking into consideration the state’s capacity and willingness to support social accountability mechanisms, and the incentives for state actors to respond to gaps, weaknesses, and failings, concentrating on citizen demand as the primary driver of reforms is misplaced. Whether social accountability produces results depends upon the context within which citizens seeking to hold state actors to account employ the various mechanisms and tools briefly summarized above. Importantly, context also affects the expectations citizens have of the state.

However, a focus on “best practices” and current attention to randomized controlled trials—as the “gold standard” for determining effectiveness, value-for-money, and replicability of international development interventions—has led, in some quarters, to de-emphasizing context while focusing on the technical aspects of intervention mechanisms and tools, rather than on the implementation space, actors’ incentives, and incremental learning (see the critique in Pritchett et al. 2012). In investigations of social accountability, this focus has led to what Joshi and Houtzager (2012) term a preoccupation with “widgets” at the expense of the contextual factors that help to explain whether or not social accountability actions lead to better services, increased government responsiveness, and citizen empowerment.

Among the more influential structural frameworks for mapping and assessing the dynamics of state-society accountability relationships is the World Bank’s principal-agent accountability triangle connecting citizens to politicians and policy makers, politicians and policy makers to service providers, and service providers to citizens (World Bank 2004). The three sides of the accountability triangle represent interlocking and complementary principal-agent relations that constitute a service delivery accountability chain. A direct service delivery link between citizens and providers, where the former exercise demand-making power through transactions and monitoring over the latter, constitutes the short accountability route. The supply-side accountability connection involves state actors that employ regulatory, oversight, and management systems to signal and control providers. This link is the long route to accountability. When these chains function effectively, citizens receive the services they want and need, and providers, politicians, and policy makers are accountable and responsive.

The foundational assumption in principal-agent theory is the divergence of interests between principals and agents, where agents seek to pursue their own goals at the expense of principals’ objectives, and principals try to institute controls over agents (see Waterman and Meier 1998). Regarding accountability, the effectiveness of the linkages among actors in the state, provider, and citizen nodes of the triangle thus depends upon the extent to which the aims and interests of principals (citizens) and agents (the state and providers) converge and align.

Three categories of contextual factors affect these principal-agent linkages as they relate to social accountability: those associated with demand, supply, and state-society relations.

## Demand-Related Factors

Civil society is an aggregate category of organizations and individuals with a wide variety of interests and capacities to promote those interests. The principal-agent based accountability model, assumes an unrealistic degree of commonality of purpose such that citizens will mobilize in sufficiently large numbers on an ongoing basis to hold state actors to account (Booth 2012). Such idealized notions of the power of citizen demand do not take into account the complex and heterogeneous nature of civil society or the variety of incentives affecting citizen engagement, and the limits they place on increasing citizen voice. For instance, groups with privileged access to state resources are unlikely to share the concerns of deprived groups for service delivery accountability, and may in fact oppose actions the latter might take to seek government response to their demands. The poor are consistently at a disadvantage in engaging in local participation, whether for social accountability or other aims, often lacking the necessary resources, knowledge, time, and motivation (Brinkerhoff with Azfar 2010).

Rather than facing a purely principal-agent problem, then, social accountability confronts a collective-action problem: how can quiescent principals be mobilized around shared interests and concerns so as to be motivated to express demands to state actors (their agents)? In seeking to answer this question, Lee (2011) notes that an important step is to identify which public is to be mobilized, and distinguishes between the general public at one end of a continuum and the already highly engaged stakeholders at the other. In between are self-selected participants, explicitly recruited groups, and professionalized civic organizations. These various publics may be targets of social accountability actions—for example, awareness campaigns and civic education in the transparency category in Table 1. Or they may be participants in accountability actions, such as conducting community scorecard assessments; or in the confrontational category of actions, participating in demonstrations. Some publics may consider that their accountability interests are sufficiently addressed through the long route, so their motivation for social accountability, either as targets or participants, may be limited.

For those civil society entities with an interest, mobilization for collective action will depend upon their capacities and willingness to undertake the necessary activities to pursue effective social accountability. Requisite capacities include: organizational and managerial skills, ability to attract resources, technical skills and relevant knowledge sufficient to perform effectively, ability to build alliances and maintain support, ability to adapt and self-renew, and capacity to build long-term strategies that engage multiple actors (see Brinkerhoff with Morgan 2010, O'Meally 2013). The importance of these capacities was demonstrated in a study of Indonesian democracy advocacy NGOs that identified weaknesses in their ability to develop supportive connections to local constituencies for democratic reforms, which jeopardized their potential to fulfill a social accountability function in the absence of international donor funding (Antlöv et al. 2010).

A key dimension of willingness concerns agency: the belief, held by individuals or groups, that they can exert control or influence over situations, events, and actors that affect them. This sense of agency motivates collective action, and without it social accountability is unlikely. It is not, however, simply a prerequisite, but instead is likely to be an emergent phenomenon. While large numbers of people will not necessarily be interested *ex ante* in collective action, small numbers of individuals may engage initially, acting on behalf of their communities. Empowered individuals can significantly advance a

collective agenda, even in some cases spurring emboldened publics to take up accountability actions (Brinkerhoff with Azfar 2010).

## Supply-Related Factors

As numerous analyses have shown, the structures and processes of state-centered accountability influence incentives for citizens' engagement. In many developing countries, a well-recognized set of weaknesses constrains the ability of the state to perform at acceptable levels. These include limited resources, flawed civil service systems, low wages, mismanagement, poor oversight, political patronage, and corruption (Holland et al. 2012). All of these limit the reach and effectiveness of the institutions and actors that populate the long route to accountability, and increase the appeal of social accountability. In cases where these weaknesses result in close-to-nonexistent levels of service delivery and persistent political neglect, though, citizens' expectations of the state may be so low that the idea of holding public actors to account seems inconceivable and futile.

Without sufficient institutional capacity, the best-designed accountability systems will falter, and state actors will fail to perform their intended governance functions. Laws and regulations may exist, but remain only partially or rarely implemented. Audit institutions need the resources and skills to conduct audits and investigations. Courts need reliable flows of resources and protections from political interference. As various observers have pointed out, the exposure and denouncing of wrongdoing, inequities, or inefficiencies through social accountability will not have much impact on increasing accountability, responsiveness, and service delivery unless these actions trigger some sort of sanctions (e.g., Brinkerhoff 2005, Smulovitz and Peruzotti 2000). Without functioning agencies of restraint, enforcement will be weak, selective, and partial. State credibility, legitimacy, and effectiveness suffer as a result.

Financial accountability mechanisms such as PETSs, for example, depend upon agencies having operational administrative and financial systems, at a minimum with the ability to track and report on budgets and expenditures. Supply-side service delivery accountability ratchets capacity requirements beyond the basics. Executive agencies not only need basic financial and budget systems, but also must be able to undertake programming, track activities and services delivered, carry out performance monitoring and evaluation, report to elected or appointed officials, and solicit input from service users.

The long route to accountability is predicated upon an electoral system that communicates citizens' needs and preferences to politicians and upon a legislative process that responds through policy choices, budgeting, and oversight of executive agencies. State actors at all levels need information systems and outreach mechanisms to give citizens information on services, legal rights, and responsibilities. Judicial systems need capacity to maintain and enforce the rule of law, and to serve as credible adjudicators of accountability cases. Analyses using the accountability triangle framework and principal-agent theory have highlighted that, in many countries, these governance linkages fail to function as hypothesized (e.g., Brinkerhoff and Bossert 2013).

However, even where the long route operates imperfectly, the relative openness of democratic governance systems, and the accompanying legal provisions supporting respect for basic rights and freedoms (access to information, freedom of expression and of association), yield more potential

opportunities for social accountability actions. For example, Paul (2011) recounts that PAC's service scorecard exercises and their associated publicity events in Bangalore were possible in part because India's democracy allows citizens' groups to confront and then collaborate with state actors on issues of service quality (see also Goetz and Jenkins 2004). Accountability response on the part of state service delivery actors depends upon more than electoral democracy, either national or local, which in and of itself is an imperfect motivator of performance. Comparative governance assessments in Africa have shown that commitment to performance and pressure for accountability must come from higher levels for effective provider incentives to be established (Booth 2012).

A well-known example of combined top-down and bottom-up pressures for accountable service delivery performance comes from the health sector in Brazil (Tendler 1997). The state of Ceara's health department designed a decentralized primary health care program for municipalities that created strong links between health care providers (community health workers) and citizens. The state health department served the function of an agency of restraint, exercising tight control over the hiring and payment of the large labor force of health agents. Over time the health workers voluntarily took on more tasks in response to their clients' needs, and clients came to trust the workers and their commitment, leading to further increases in program performance. The reasons for the program's success stemmed from practices that reinforced accountability to clients, community participation in performance monitoring, commitment to service delivery, and transparency.

In principle, decentralized systems that bring state and citizens closer together can increase the prospects for both citizen empowerment and state responsiveness, something the Brazil example also shows. However, such positive outcomes are subject to a range of caveats. Decentralized government structures are often captured by local elites, and exhibit limited interest in serving all citizens equally. Community participation in holding local government to account does not lead to more accountability without: a) local political support for such involvement, as in the case of the workers' party in Porto Alegre; and b) discipline imposed by higher levels of government (Brinkerhoff with Azfar 2010). Thus, decentralization needs to be carefully assessed to identify how and where it can effectively serve as a catalyst for accountable service delivery (Brinkerhoff and Wetterberg 2013). One constraint to the functioning of such discipline is, for example, unclear, contradictory, and conflicting roles and responsibilities across public sector agencies or between different levels of government; what Wild et al. (2012) call policy incoherence. The incentives that this situation creates for state actors to respond to social as well as horizontal accountability are confused at best, and negative at worst.

## State-Society Relations

Citizen demand and state supply come together in patterns of interaction conditioned by the factors on both sides briefly reviewed above. Differing configurations of state-citizen relations influence possibilities for achieving results from accountability interventions. The degree to which governments are embedded in society, and relate and respond to citizens' needs, desires, and demands, is not uniform. The state has the power to support (actively or passively) social accountability, or to impede or repress such pursuits by citizens. Blair (2011) identifies a spectrum of state responses along the support dimension. In countries where state-society relations do not involve repression, he characterizes state responses in terms of passive or active support for social accountability, with "grudging assent" as the most passive degree

of support, to “encouragement,” “strong backing,” and “championship” as increasingly active degrees of support. In the passive categories, states in essence refrain from placing constraints on citizen action, but do little to encourage engagement. In the active categories, states provide legislative and institutional support, such as creating and authorizing ombudsman offices, decentralization, statutory oversight entities, laws mandating citizen participation, and so on. The active-passive divide means that “active [social accountability] mechanisms count on the state exercising a *supply* function, whereas the passive ones depend on *demands* being made on the state” (Blair 2011, 43, emphasis in the original).

Political economy factors significantly shape where states fall on Blair’s passive-active support continuum. These relate to demand- and supply-side functions; for example, patterns of relationships among societal groups, which determine access to power, resources, authority and a sense of agency. The social contract, when unpacked in terms of which societal groups expect and get what from which state actors and institutions, reflects these complex patterns. As O’Meally (2013) points out, how state-society relations affect prospects for social accountability is strongly shaped by these intra-state interactions, particularly as they influence inequality and exclusion (see also Stewart 2000).

The time dimension is important here for a variety of reasons. First, the history of state-society relations and state-citizen bargaining influences citizens’ expectations regarding the social contract and the extent to which they trust state actors and accord legitimacy to state institutions (Brinkerhoff et al. 2012). Second, many social accountability mechanisms involve dynamic processes that persist over time, and are not just one-off encounters. All actors in such processes are subject to influence and change as a result, whether the social accountability actions involved are collaborative or confrontational. Third, time enables repeated interactions (bargaining) between state actors and citizens for mutual learning and accommodation (Coston 1998). The particular circumstances of engagement in social accountability will have an impact on citizens’ expectations; the attitudes, knowledge, and skills of both citizens and state actors; and their resulting behaviors. These can also influence perceptions of state fairness, responsiveness, and legitimacy.

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## IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY AND SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY: COUNTRY EXAMPLES

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In this section, we present four examples of social accountability interventions intended primarily to improve service delivery, drawn from a purposively selected sample of projects funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The sample selection was driven by a) variation in contextual variables influencing social accountability aims and outcomes, and b) similarities in aims and methods for social accountability. In addition, we took advantage of our ready access to information on the cases as a function of RTI International’s role in implementing the projects.

The projects selected come from two Asian and two African countries: Indonesia, the Philippines, Guinea, and Rwanda:

- The Kinerja (“performance” in Indonesian) project focuses on service delivery innovations at the district government and community levels, and employs local organizations as the delivery

mechanism for technical assistance to local government and public service delivery units. Kinerja works in 24 districts in five Indonesian provinces, and supports front-line service delivery improvements in health, education, and business licensing. Kinerja began in 2010 and continues through September 2015. We focus on education sector reforms in a single district, Kota Probolinggo in the province of East Java, during Kinerja's first year, because they were particularly well supported by public actors and civil society.

- The Quality Assurance Partnership Committee (QAPC) pilot demonstration project in the Philippines was one activity conducted under USAID's Health Systems 20/20 project. It aimed to introduce community input to government health service quality assurance and quality improvement initiatives in cooperation with provincial and municipal governments. The project established joint community-provider committees (that is, the QAPCs) in three public health facilities in two provinces, Compostela Valley and Misamis Occidental, where maternal and child health mortality was high.
- The Faisons Ensemble (Working Together) project in Guinea addressed governance weaknesses through a multisectoral approach that integrated health, education, and agriculture and natural resource management through a common system of training and resource provision emphasizing democratic state-society interactions, along with technical training in procurement, financial management, conflict resolution, and greater gender equality.
- The Twubakane (Let's Build Together) project aimed to increase access, quality, and utilization of family health services by strengthening the capacity of local governments and communities to co-deliver services in 12 of Rwanda's 30 districts. Its components integrated technical health interventions (family planning, reproductive health, child survival, malaria and nutrition) with capacity-building for local governments in planning and management, and for local health service providers in management. Communities received support for social accountability interventions.

Table 2 summarizes the projects and their social accountability activities.

**Table 2. Project summaries and social accountability interventions**

| Country                         | Indonesia   | Philippines  | Guinea   | Rwanda   |
|---------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Project                         | Kinerja (education sector component)  | Health Systems 20/20 QAPC Pilot Demonstration  | Faisons Ensemble   | Twubakane  |
| Time period                     | 2011–2012   | 2009–2010  | 2007–2013  | 2005–2009  |
| Geographic scope                | 24 districts; focus here is on 20 schools in Kota Probolinggo District  | 3 facilities in 2 provinces in Mindanao  | 342 communes; focus on 10 high-performing communes   | 12 districts; focus here is on 3 districts and Kigali  |
| Technical assistance activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training in school-based management (SBM) for school staff and school committees</li> <li>• Facilitation of SBM planning steps in each school</li> </ul> | Support for improving access to and providing quality health services in maternal and child health (MCH) and family planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training on Local Government code, tax collection, procurement, resource mobilization</li> <li>• Support to service providers (HIV training, school)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for service providers to improve MCH, family planning, nutrition, malaria prevention and treatment</li> <li>• Dissemination of national policy on community health, training materials for</li> </ul> |

| Country                                  | Indonesia   | Philippines   | Guinea   | Rwanda  |
|--|---|---|--|---|
|  |   |   | grants)  | health workers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for community-based health information system</li> <li>• Introduction of district SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)</li> <li>• Support to Joint Action Development Forums to harmonize district development plans</li> </ul>                |
| Social accountability (SA) interventions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of complaints-handling surveys (CHS) to identify problems</li> <li>• Negotiation of service charters to plan improvements</li> <li>• Training for school committees to clarify function and role, including service charter monitoring</li> <li>• Establishment of multistakeholder forums</li> </ul> | Formation of Quality Assurance Partnership Committees (QAPCs) to engage citizens at the facility level to improve service quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training for Health and Hygiene Committees and school committees to clarify function and role</li> <li>• Creation of Innovation Circles for consultation with citizens</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation and capacity-building of <i>Partenaires pour l'Amélioration de la Qualité</i> (PAQs) to bring local leaders, providers, and community representatives together to improve services</li> <li>• Award of District Incentive Fund grants to encourage participatory planning</li> </ul> |
| Type of SA action expected               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Co-production</li> <li>• Compliance</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Transparency)</li> <li>• Co-production</li> <li>• Compliance</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Co-production</li> <li>• Compliance</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Co-production</li> <li>• Compliance</li> </ul>   |
| Primary Sources                          | Field interviews by authors;<br>Solehkan and Faishal 2013   | Field interviews by authors;<br>Brinkerhoff 2011  | Arandel et al. 2014,<br>Charlick et al. 2011   | Field interviews by authors;<br>Brinkerhoff et al. 2009,<br>IntraHealth 2009  |

Source: Authors.

As the table reveals, the four projects contained similar social accountability interventions. Each project combined technical assistance to service providers with mechanisms to enable citizens to express their needs and concerns with delivery. Each intervention also formed new, or strengthened existing, formal bodies for citizens to engage with service providers. As a result, the types of social accountability action (see Table 1) expected from these interventions were very similar. All four promoted service co-production through citizen engagement. They underscored compliance, as users had opportunities to monitor how providers responded to their concerns through participation in joint committees. All the examples also implicitly promoted transparency, although the intervention in the Philippines did not

explicitly train citizens or inform them about their rights, service details, or local laws. Based on the social accountability interventions and associated aims (Table 1), we would thus expect primary effects in improved service delivery, with secondary gains in governance and empowerment.

### **Context: “Thumbnail” Country Sketches**

It is beyond the scope of this paper to draw an in-depth picture of each country’s contextual factors that affected the potential of social accountability mechanisms to achieve one or more of their intended aims (Table 1). However, a number of indices and rankings allow for “thumbnail” country comparative sketches of selected features of the context summarized above in terms of the demand and supply sides, and state-society relations.

#### ***Demand***

Here we draw mainly upon the World Alliance for Citizen Participation (CIVICUS) civil society assessments that have been conducted in each country to highlight features relevant to social accountability. The CIVICUS methodology (CIVICUS 2013) relies upon input from civil society representatives, government officials, parliamentarians, and researchers, as well as secondary sources, to assess civil society on four dimensions:

- Structure/level of organization: strength and depth of citizen participation, diversity, number and nature of formal/informal organizations, availability/adequacy of resources
- Values: extent of commitment to, and practice of, values related to democracy, transparency, equity, inclusiveness, gender, nonviolence, environmental sustainability, and poverty reduction
- Impact: level of civil society influence on public policy, responsiveness to societal needs, and empowerment
- Degree of engagement: extent to which environmental constraints impede or facilitate civil society actors’ engagement with state actors (see Lyons 2009).<sup>1</sup>

Table 3 shows comparative ratings, based on the CIVICUS assessments.<sup>2</sup> Indonesia and the Philippines share roughly similar features regarding their civil societies, with relatively long traditions of grassroots and faith-based organizations. In both Asian countries, the fall of authoritarian governments and their replacement with democratically elected ones led to a flowering of citizen activism and an increase in advocacy NGOs, many supported by donors, pushing for democracy and good governance (Antlöv et al. 2010, CODE-NGO 2011, Ibrahim 2006). In both countries, these civil society actors see their engagement as constrained by high levels of state corruption, and to a lesser degree by weak links between their advocacy efforts and local communities.

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<sup>1</sup> The CIVICUS assessments have both a measurement and an advocacy function. As with any methodology that relies heavily upon perceptual data, these are affected by the accuracy of the perceptions of those canvassed. In our view, the results tend toward the optimistic, reflecting the dual aims of the assessments and the positive orientation of the civil society representatives assembled for the CIVICUS consultations. Despite the methodological weaknesses, the assessments examine similar measures across cases, thereby enabling some degree of comparative analysis. For a critique of the methodology, see Lyons (2009).

<sup>2</sup> Impact ratings are reported in Table 5.

Of the two African cases, Guinea is the weaker in terms of organized civil society entities and resources. Informal groups are common at the community level (CNOSCG 2011), but the extent to which the post-conflict government will support an active civil society remains to be seen. Rwanda's post-genocide civil society is active in a range of self-help and community-level cooperative endeavors, often in government-directed partnerships with local district officials and service providers (CCOAIB 2011). Civil society operates within a state-specified band of acceptable activities set by the Kagame regime, and opposition political activism is repressed.

**Table 3. Civil society ratings for country examples**

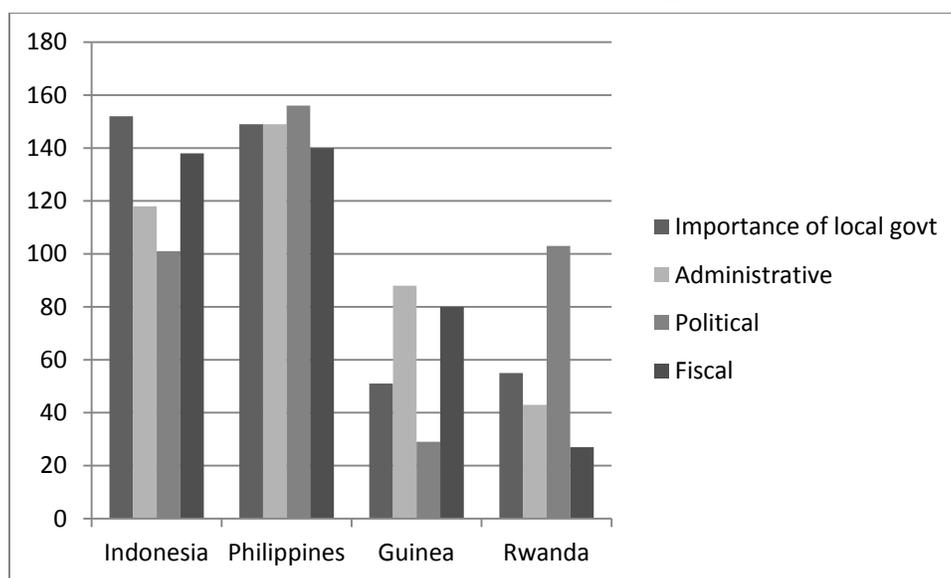
| Civil society dimension         | Dimension ratings  |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
|                                 | Indonesia  | Philippines  | Guinea   | Rwanda                                     |
| Structure/level of organization | Medium/high  | Medium/high  | Low (weak on resources)                                | Medium                                     |
| Practice of values              | Medium (med/low on tolerance and nonviolence)            | Medium/high  | Medium (low on tolerance and nonviolence)              | Medium/high (post-genocide reconciliation) |
| Degree of engagement            | Medium/high (limited by corruption and weak rule of law) | High (but constrained by corruption and patronage) | Low (constrained by poverty and weak state governance) | Medium (excluding political advocacy)      |

Source: Authors' interpretation of CIVICUS assessments (CCOAIB 2011, CNOSCG 2011, CODE-NGO 2011, Ibrahim 2006).

## Supply

Among the supply-side factors, as the above discussion notes, the extent of decentralization can significantly influence possibilities for social accountability. World Bank comparative decentralization rankings across 182 countries show Indonesia and the Philippines as closely matched on the importance of local government, with rankings of 30 and 33 respectively, while the rankings for Guinea (131) and Rwanda (127) indicate higher degrees of centralization (Ivanya and Shah 2012). Rankings for different types of decentralization—administrative, political, and fiscal—and for the relative importance of local governments reveal more variation across the four countries. The Philippines ranks highest for administrative, political, and fiscal decentralization. Indonesia ranks close to the Philippines on fiscal decentralization, but lower on administrative and political. Rwanda's rankings reflect the strong central control exercised by the Kagame government. Guinea's rankings reveal weak levels of decentralization and the dominance of central authority, which World Bank (2008) confirms. Figure 1 is a graphic depiction of the four countries' rankings, with the scores inverted to highlight visually their comparative degree of decentralization.

**Figure 1. Comparative decentralization index rankings**



Scale: 1 = lowest decentralization ranking, 182 = highest ranking

Source: Adapted from Ivanya and Shah (2012).

At a more general level, our country examples vary on the supply-related variables that condition opportunities for both the long and short accountability routes. According to the Freedom House annual rankings (Table 4), Indonesia and the Philippines have relatively comparable scores on freedom, civil liberties, and political rights. However, the Philippines’ overall status is ranked as partly free, due to the ongoing Moro insurgency, electoral fraud and violence, and high levels of cronyism and corruption. Guinea and Rwanda are ranked similarly, with Rwanda lower due to the autocratic nature of the Kagame regime, and increased repression of any political opposition.

**Table 4. Freedom House rankings for country examples**

| Category         | Category rankings |             |             |          |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
|                  | Indonesia         | Philippines | Guinea      | Rwanda   |
| Status           | Free              | Partly free | Partly free | Not free |
| Freedom          | 2.5               | 3.0         | 5.0         | 6.0      |
| Civil liberties  | 3                 | 3           | 5           | 6        |
| Political rights | 2                 | 3           | 5           | 6        |

Scale: 1 = best, 7 = worst

Source: [www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2013](http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2013)

**State-Society Relations**

Given the above constellations of demand- and supply-related contextual factors, past interactions between state and society also condition social accountability efforts. Table 5, drawing on O’Meally (2013), shows selected available measures related to state-society relations that complement the supply side indices presented above. Comparing these measures reinforces the similarities shown in the supply-side indicators between Indonesia and the Philippines. In terms of the state’s legitimate use of resources

and power—our primary gauge of the social contract—both have relatively poor control of corruption, some budget transparency, and reasonably robust levels of legitimacy. Citizens in the two countries also show similar impact of past civic activism, accompanied by some opportunities for voice and accountability, although both nations have relatively weak press freedoms. These indicators reflect their relatively established democratic regimes (Table 4). Where they differ, however, is in citizens' perceptions of and interactions with the state, with Indonesians reporting considerably higher confidence in equal treatment by government.

Guinea and Rwanda stand in much sharper contrast, both to each other and to the Asian countries. Both exhibit features associated with state fragility, in terms of state legitimacy; and limited opportunities for voice and accountability. Guinea experiences extensive corruption, very weak rule of law, and little effect of past civic activism but relatively high levels of press freedom in its fledgling democracy. Rwanda's more autocratic regime instead has corruption and rule of law well in hand, although budget transparency and press freedoms have suffered. The impact of civil society activism has been limited to state-led efforts.

**Table 5. Selected indicators for state-society relations**

| State-society relations  | Indicator   | Scoring   | Indonesia                                  | Philippines                            | Guinea  | Rwanda  |
|--|---|---|--|--|---------|---|
| <b>Social contract</b>   |   |   |  |  |         |   |
| Legitimate use of public resources and authority by officials and citizens | Control of corruption index <sup>3</sup>                              | 0 = lowest<br>100 = highest                               | 29   | 33                                     | 12      | 73  |
|  | Open budget index <sup>4</sup>  | 0 = lowest<br>100 = highest                               | 62   | 48                                     | —       | 8   |
|  | Degree of state legitimacy, as contribution to fragility <sup>5</sup> | 12-point scale, higher = less legitimate and more fragile | 4  | 3                                      | 9       | 8   |
|  | Rule-of-law index <sup>6</sup>  | 0 = lowest<br>100 = highest                               | 34   | 36                                     | 4       | 47  |
| Primary distribution and pressure for entitlements                         | Equal treatment by government <sup>7</sup>                            | % respondents strongly or somewhat agree                  | 74.7%                                      | 38.4%                                  | —       | —   |
| <b>History of state-citizen bargaining</b>                                 |   |   |  |  |         |   |
| Impact of civil society activism   | CIVICUS impact rating   | High to limited   | Medium/high (but low impact on corruption) | High (except for impact on corruption) | Limited | Mixed (high on state-led activities, low on independent action) |

<sup>3</sup> Worldwide Governance Indicators 2012 (Kaufmann et al. 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Open Budget Index 2012 (International Budget Partnership 2012).

<sup>5</sup> State Fragility Index 2012 (Center for Systemic Peace 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Worldwide Governance Indicators 2012 (Kaufmann et al. 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Barometer surveys (2006 for Indonesia, 2005 for the Philippines) (Globalbarometer 2014).

| State-society relations                                | Indicator  | Scoring   | Indonesia | Philippines | Guinea | Rwanda |
|--|--|---|-----------|-------------|--------|--------|
| <b>Formal and informal accountability mechanisms</b>   |  |   |           |             |        |        |
| Existing formal and informal accountability mechanisms | Voice and accountability index rank <sup>8</sup> | 0 = lowest<br>100 = highest                       | 51        | 48          | 17     | 14     |
|  | Press freedom index rank <sup>9</sup>            | 1 = highest ranked country<br>179 = lowest ranked | 139       | 141         | 86     | 161    |

Source: Authors, adapted from O'Meally (2013); sources for selected indicators in footnotes.

In terms of Blair's (2011) spectrum of state support for social accountability, the supply and state-society indicators suggest that social accountability mechanisms will be more likely to find receptivity in Indonesia and the Philippines, where local governments have more resources, autonomy, and reasons to listen to their constituents. These characteristics put the two countries on the active end of the spectrum, although challenges persist. In the Philippines, at least for the provinces where the QAPC pilot project operated, cronyism and patronage have an impact on the extent to which average citizens' concerns are listened to. In Indonesia, the degree of receptivity is tempered by longstanding attitudes of many public officials that affairs of government are their domain, and citizens should leave things to them (Brinkerhoff and Wetterberg 2013). Guinea, in contrast, fits better on the passive end of state support for social accountability. Press freedoms and moves toward democratic governance offer some support, but corruption, lawlessness, and low state legitimacy limit opportunities for active support.

Rwanda is an intriguing hybrid case. On one hand, the country remains centralized and the state restricts political freedoms, closing off opportunities for social accountability. On the other hand, the Rwandan government actively supports citizen engagement in service delivery, although that engagement is circumscribed and largely state-directed (Brinkerhoff et al. 2009). As a result, there is active repression of confrontational social accountability, but "strong backing" and possibly even "championship" of state-led cooperative actions (Blair 2011).

## Outcomes

Below, we compare our country cases in terms of how outcomes contribute to social accountability aims. As we do not have comparable empirical data on the size of effects in each project, we gauge the relative contribution to each aim by project, as shown in Table 6, and then compare the patterns across the examples.

<sup>8</sup> Worldwide Governance Indicators 2012 (Kaufmann, Kraay, Mastruzzi 2014).

<sup>9</sup> World Press Freedom Index 2013 (Reporters Without Borders 2013).

**Table 6. Relative prominence of contribution to social accountability aims**

| Country     | Social accountability aim      |                          |  |
|-------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
|             | Service delivery effectiveness | Governance and democracy | Empowerment                                    |
| Indonesia   | Secondary                      | Primary                  | Tertiary                                       |
| Philippines | Primary                        | Secondary                | Secondary (at 2 sites)<br>Tertiary (at 1 site) |
| Guinea      | Tertiary                       | Secondary                | Primary  |
| Rwanda      | Primary                        | Secondary                | Tertiary                                       |

Source: Authors.

### Indonesia

Accountability gains in Kota Probolinggo were concentrated in the area of *governance*. In the past, development of school self-assessments and work plans involved only the principal and a handful of teachers, whereas, after the school-based management (SBM) interventions, these processes also engaged school committees, community leaders, and parent representatives, often in protracted discussions. The school committees were reportedly engaged to give input to school planning, and transparency has been enhanced through public posting of work plans, complaint survey results, school committee activities, and financial information on both available funds and expenditures.

The municipal government had been quite supportive of SBM reforms. The mayor's funds from central budget transfers were earmarked for the 20 Kinerja-supported schools and, in May 2012, he signed a regulation making SBM mandatory for all schools in the city. Since then, original SBM schools have become models for schools in other districts and provinces. Although these broader governance effects are encouraging, some caution is warranted. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and Kinerja staff have raised concerns that replication would be contingent on continued local government support, mentoring, and skills transfer. Sustainability may also be an issue; a CSO staff member estimated that less than a year after program interventions ended, only five of the 20 original SBM schools were self-sufficient and capable of conducting complaints surveys on their own, which bodes ill for continued accountability based on citizen input.

Concrete *service improvements* have been achieved at schools associated with the SBM, complaints-handling system (CHS), and service charter interventions. By 2013, all 20 schools had implemented more than 75% of items identified in the service charters, with a number of schools achieving 100% completion even in 2012. Examples of improvements included supplying books, visual aids, chairs, and infrastructure improvements. Notably, most improvements appeared to be one-time investments, rather than ongoing efforts or commitments, such as additional teachers or new instructional or extracurricular activities, which are more difficult to support over time. Because school budgets are restricted to 13 specific categories of expenditures, improvements outside these areas must come from other sources. Identification of issues through the CHS reportedly helped schools connect with and mobilize resources from municipal agencies outside the education sector. For instance, in one school the CHS identified the muddy, poorly draining school yard as a priority problem. Drainage was built in collaboration with the Environmental Health office. Similarly, the Office of Public Works helped to

construct hand-washing sinks for each classroom. School administrators noted that these resources could be very slow in materializing, however; the other main source of support for service improvements was funds raised from or with the help of parents. Consequently, schools in poorer areas saw more limited improvements.

The most likely opportunities for *empowerment* were through multistakeholder forums, set up to monitor implementation of SCs. These forums could potentially be a means of raising other concerns beyond the scope of Kinerja interventions, enabling citizens to interact with the state in new ways using skills and mechanisms gained through the program. Implementers expressed concern, however, that these forums did not have sufficient time to establish new patterns of behavior during Kinerja's implementation in Kota Probolinggo, and such opportunities therefore were limited.

## **Philippines**

In terms of the instrumental aims of social accountability, the primary outcome at all three sites was improved *effectiveness of service delivery*, demonstrated by more client focus from providers and increased utilization of services. In response to the issues identified by the QAPCs, facility staff initiated information campaigns, which mobilized community members to use facilities. QAPC community members also helped encourage facility use through outreach efforts. Further, the committees pursued initiatives to improve provider attitudes toward clients and to mobilize funds for specific improvements in facilities, supplies or technical skills.

To a lesser extent there were also some enhancements related to *governance and democracy* and *citizen empowerment*. In terms of governance, citizen representatives channeled user feedback to the QAPC. Formal customer satisfaction surveys were carried out at one site, and all sites installed suggestion boxes to invite client input. Effects on citizen empowerment were seen at two sites (Compostela Valley provincial hospital and Lopez Jaena rural health unit), where the QAPCs strengthened their ability to engage with decision makers to ensure citizen needs were taken seriously. In Compostela Valley, the committee worked with the facility director to push for follow-up to community issues. At both sites, they also met with higher level policy makers (provincial governor and mayor) to raise citizens' concerns. These actions indicate enhanced agency: new skills for monitoring and advocacy, which elevated citizens from simply channeling feedback and input to promoting change.

While the details on project implementation are too extensive to delineate here, it is worth noting an important difference in how QAPC members were selected. At the Compostela Valley and Lopez Jaena sites, community members elected their own QAPCs' participants and leaders. Although health facility staff also participated in these committees, the leaders at these two sites were community members. In contrast, the Oroquieta City mayor appointed the QAPC participants, selecting a medical professional to lead the committee. Further, participation was limited to NGOs, with no direct community participation. This difference in QAPC selection resulted in an important distinction in the publics that were engaged. Whereas participants self-selected at the first two sites, the Oroquieta City QAPC consisted of members who were already highly engaged in the issues.

## Guinea

Relative to our other examples, the Faisons Ensemble project in Guinea faced limited facilities and resources available to service providers and citizens, which circumscribed the scope for *service delivery improvements*. However, given these constraints, there were enhancements in HIV testing confidentiality and referrals of HIV-positive patients at some sites, as well as better financing of midwives, drug supplies, outreach efforts, facility infrastructure, and attendance of personnel. Some schools showed evidence of improved facilities, teacher recruitment and oversight, and student attendance and graduation rates.

Improvements in *governance* appeared also to have resulted from interventions, which may have contributed to the above service improvements. Nearly all communes reported increases in transparency in terms of posted budgets, service fees, and commune decisions made, and most also found other ways to inform citizens of communal affairs. All communes opened their council sessions to citizens and most reported back on communal proceedings in their districts. One commune broadcast the council sessions on radio. Three communes initiated internal audits and another opened itself to auditing by CSOs. All communes adopted formal public procurement procedures and ended informal personalized contracting practices. These changes cannot be attributed to social accountability interventions alone; the Local Government Code provided the supporting legal framework by mandating open meetings, and citizens' rights to information and to participation in development planning decisions.

With these improvements in transparency, nearly all communes reported increased tax collection rates, with some more than doubling revenues. Officials credited this result to training to identify potential sources of revenue, Innovation Circles' support in mobilizing revenues, and the increased trust between citizens and the communes. The mayor of Hèrèmakono specifically noted that increased transparency in communal affairs had led to an upsurge of funding from expatriate commune members.

Perhaps most notable is the considerable effect project interventions had on *citizens' empowerment*, indicated not only by their active contributions to health center and school committees, but also by direct participation in functions previously reserved for officials. Community members said that they had not known that they could participate in school management, but credited awareness of such rights to changes that took place in their communities' schools. For example, after Faisons Ensemble, the parents' associations oversaw the management of parents' contributions to the school to ensure that these were used for their intended purposes, developed school improvement plans, raised funds (from the communes and parents) to implement them, and monitored attendance of children and teachers. At most health centers, health committees started to accompany the doctor to the central pharmacy to procure drugs, monitored revenues to ensure that they were remitted in full, and raised staff awareness about the respectful and confidential treatment of patients. Health committees learned to lobby the commune for funds for renovations, birthing services, and equipment purchases. Public and private funds were combined to finance community construction; for example, a youth house and a school in Hèrèmakono, and a health center in Fèrnessadou.

For their part, local officials learned how engaging citizens could help them achieve their objectives. Several government officials interviewed mentioned synergy and mutual dependence between state actors and citizens as the result of project activities. Communes lacked both the staff to assess

potential revenues and the legitimacy of civil society leaders needed to collect taxes. By collaborating with citizens and ceding some responsibilities to them, commune officials gained both new resources and legitimacy as community leaders showed support for their activities. Civil society stakeholders also understood that by supporting the commune, they gained access to decision-making and influence over communal investments. As they urged fellow citizens to contribute, civil society leaders gained an even greater stake in ensuring that the commune properly manages its resources.

However, during *Faisons Ensemble*—and afterward, for that matter—both the state and civil society in Guinea were critically weak. It became clear that parents' associations with no access to donor or international NGO support would be largely unable to fulfill a social accountability role. Centralized funding and management of teachers along with poor supervision meant that local governments and parents' associations had limited ability to hold teachers accountable for performance (World Bank 2008). In short, *Faisons Ensemble* did demonstrate that social accountability is possible in Guinea, but sustainable reforms are far from assured given the scope of change necessary and the paucity of resources available.

## Rwanda

As in the Philippines, the primary impacts in the Rwanda Twubakane example were in improved *service delivery*. Respondents pointed to ample examples of PAQs channeling issues to health center managers, resulting in changes in provider behavior (punctuality, attendance, waiting time, confidentiality) and greater resources and investments in facilities. The 2009 assessment indicated that 74% of PAQs effected changes in corresponding health facilities (IntraHealth 2009). PAQs also channeled information to communities and made suggestions to higher levels of government. At some centers, utilization increased dramatically, with enrollment rising from 40% of eligible citizens in 2006 to 91% in 2008 in Gasabo District, for instance. In this district, one health center credited the PAQ's outreach with contributing to a rise in family planning acceptance from 5% of eligible patients in 2006 to 35% in 2008.

The strengthening of PAQs allowed citizens a greater say in health facility *governance*. At all visited centers, officials reported that the planning process had become more participatory, as local NGOs, CSOs, and donors were involved, resulting in a better fit with local needs. Plans were therefore more realistic, reflecting available resources. PAQs were continuing to meet regularly; in 2008, 84% of PAQs had met in the previous three months.

Notably, although governance of health centers did improve with Twubakane's interventions, impact on *citizens' empowerment* was limited. The project may have encouraged participation in Accountability Days (already established prior to the project, see below) by increasing citizens' interest in questioning government officials. However, although the PAQs contributed to service improvement and involved civil society representatives in health center governance, there were few signs that citizens' opportunities for voice had been substantially enhanced. A contributing factor may have been the structure of PAQs. These were fairly large committees, averaging 20 to 25 members, incorporating: administrative officials, including the executive secretary of the sector, the president of the local council, a member of the district health office, and the head of the local community-based health insurance scheme; community leaders and other members of the community who usually were salaried workers

(teachers, for example); local members of women's and youth associations; and the head of the health center, health center medical service providers, and community health workers. Given the preponderance of state officials and workers on these committees, PAQs likely provided few opportunities to realign state-society relations. Citizen representatives likely contributed viewpoints and information, but did not substantially augment their capacity for collective action through their PAQ participation.

## Explaining Outcomes

The effects of social accountability interventions on the three instrumental aims varied. Perhaps the most consistent pattern is that all four examples demonstrated some contribution to improved governance, although this effect, relative to the contributions to effectiveness of service delivery or empowerment, was more prominent in Indonesia than in the other examples. Although contributions to service delivery were expected to be the most prominent results of social accountability actions, this was the case only in the Philippines and Rwanda, while these were secondary in Indonesia. Effects on empowerment were generally low, except in Guinea, where it was the primary contribution of the interventions, reflecting in part USAID's intent to use services as an avenue to more democratic state-society relations. Clearly, donor objectives and resources played a role in which aims were emphasized and what outcomes were achieved. Yet equally clearly, our small purposive sample of social accountability interventions demonstrates that the resulting outcomes are importantly dependent upon their implementation contexts. Our four country examples confirm what other analyses have found regarding the need to situate social accountability within the contextual dimensions of demand, supply, and state-society relations summarized above (see Bukenya et al. 2012, McGee and Gaventa 2011, O'Meally 2013, Tembo 2013).

Our data preclude us from drawing definitive conclusions about factors that may contribute to these patterns of social accountability outcomes. Yet, while demand capacity is necessary for the effective functioning of social accountability mechanisms, the salience of supply factors in sustaining the impacts of social accountability on service delivery and government performance stands out. Our cases suggest that there is an inverse relationship between the degree to which government (either central or local) takes the lead in social accountability and the potential for empowerment and citizen responsiveness. The comparisons across the four cases suggest a number of contextual variables that should be considered and warrant further investigation.

## Government Structure and Process Frame Potential for Empowerment

On the supply side, decentralization and, as a consequence, the form that local political support takes, can have consequences for the extent to which citizens are empowered by social accountability interventions. This effect was seen most clearly in the Philippines, where there was evidence at all three sites of state support from local government actors. Chief executives issued Executive Orders giving official recognition to the QAPCs, and were strongly supportive of the committees. However, in Oroquieta City, the mayor appointed the leadership of the QAPC and chose medical professionals for both the chair and co-chair positions. In the other two, the committees themselves elected their leaders. In Compostela Valley, community members filled all leadership positions. In Lopez Jaena, the QAPC chair was a local businessman and president of a community organization focused on agricultural development, and the vice-chair was a community member. In Oroquieta City, where support arguably translated into

government overreach, the QAPC was able to influence improvements in service delivery and governance, but did not empower citizens to the same degree as at the other two sites.

The Philippines example also relates to a demand-side factor—i.e., which citizens engaged in social accountability interventions. In Oroquieta City, the mayor limited community representation to NGOs, without any direct participation by community members, who, as mentioned, made up the QAPC leadership and some of the rank-and-file at the other sites. Although the NGO representatives in Oroquieta City constituted highly engaged publics (Lee 2011), they lacked the grassroots connections to other service users and local communities of the self-selected participants at the other sites. Similarly, PAQ participation in Rwanda, where empowerment was not evident, was also limited to NGOs, CSOs, and influential community leaders.

The examples also demonstrate that empowerment is unlikely to result when the state leads social accountability efforts. Breaking established boundaries and creating new roles for citizens cannot, by definition, be orchestrated by the state. Although empowerment was expected as a secondary result of interventions in our examples, it was the least frequent outcome. In Rwanda, the state's hybrid repression/active support carefully constrained social accountability efforts. More surprisingly, the active support expected from supply and state-society indicators for Indonesia and the Philippines did not translate into empowerment, except at the Philippine sites where the state explicitly stepped back from leading the process. It was only in Guinea, where passive state support was expected, that empowerment consistently resulted. These patterns suggest that active state support for social accountability, while conducive to service improvements and enhanced governance, may actually restrict opportunities for citizen empowerment.

It may also matter whether local political support is specifically for the social accountability initiatives, or for a larger set of reforms of which these are a part. In Probolinggo, as mentioned, there was substantial support from the mayor for SBM, in the form of both budgets and legislation. SBM had been mandated since 2003, but in interviews, education officials admitted that they had not known how to implement these reforms. Kinerja reforms thus helped officials respond to an unfulfilled mandate for technical reforms, with the social accountability efforts seen as a contribution to the effort to improve school management, rather than a mechanism to empower citizens.

### ***Orienting Accountability Upward Can Limit Responsiveness***

The Kinerja example underscores that officials often perceive social accountability mainly as items in a citizen participation toolkit, basically “widgets” (Joshi and Houtzager 2012), rather than as repeated and long-term processes that can increase citizen empowerment and support improved public sector performance. Such a perspective may be particularly likely in country contexts where officials' own accountabilities are oriented upward, toward higher levels of government, rather than downward, as agents oriented toward fulfilling the needs and demands of citizens/principals. In Indonesia, because a number of social accountability mechanisms have been included in national legislation on service standards and quality, this upward dynamic has been reinforced, even though the intent of the laws and regulations is to stimulate responsiveness and accountability to citizens.

Rwanda also illustrates this pattern of upwardly oriented accountability, with an autocratic regime exercising strong control and oversight regarding lower levels of government, that in turn are pushed to demonstrate performance to their superiors. In Rwanda's case, this orientation is driven by the national government's commitment to improved service delivery. The Kagame administration has introduced a series of performance-based measures, such as public and closely monitored contracts for mayors (*imihigo*), citizen report cards, and performance-based financing. It has also worked to encourage participatory planning, drawing on traditional practices for voluntary social contributions of funds and labor, and accountability, through Open House and Accountability Days where citizens are given opportunities to hear from and question officials directly. These processes are managed by decentralized administrative structures of the government, guided from the center. As a result, citizens are mobilized to participate in state-set agendas, rather than initiating engagement with administrative structures to push for responsiveness (Brinkerhoff et al. 2009).

Guinea, still emerging from recent conflict and charting an ambitious path to decentralized democratic governance embodied in the Local Government Code enacted in 2006, has faced a confused and conflictive state institutional architecture. This includes parallel decentralized and deconcentrated administrative entities, overlapping and unclear roles and responsibilities of different levels of government, and central oversight ("tutelle") of local governments (see World Bank 2008). For example, the code makes provisions for communes to collect their own revenues, as part of 32 devolved functions. In practice, however, the central government continued to collect taxes in many areas, and even in 2014, many other functions were still being carried out by higher levels above the commune. As noted above, the code also mandates citizen access to information and participation in development planning. In this context, local officials and service providers can see the benefit of working with citizens, particularly local leaders, who increase their legitimacy and ability to carry out their mandates, and can serve as allies in the power struggle against central dominance.

The degree of responsiveness can also be constrained by lack of provider autonomy, seen in countries where decentralization has been patchy or incomplete. In the Indonesian example, schools' service improvements were mostly limited to physical enhancements (such as paving the school yard, building hand-washing stations) and peripheral changes (adding a lactation room for teachers), with little change related to quality of instruction, pedagogy, etc. In spite of decentralization, and a relatively supportive state, Indonesian schools have very little control over budget allocations and pedagogical substance (as indicated by the low administrative and fiscal decentralization in Figure 1). Attempts to respond to local needs in Kota Probolinggo were thus limited by parents' fundraising and by the funding priorities of local public agencies. Similarly, Guinean local agencies' and communities' attempts to meet local needs hit up against the constraints of higher levels of government (see above).

## Implications for Sustainable Social Accountability

Two main implications arise from our analysis of the four cases. The first concerns the degree of alignment between the supply- and demand-side factors, which can help to counter the effects of the dominance of upward accountability and can result in mutual reinforcement for social accountability. The second implication is the time factor: sustainable social accountability mechanisms and processes emerge from extended interactions that support both learning and capacity building.

### **Effective “Invited” Spaces Require Aligned Supply- and Demand-Side Factors**

These examples also underscore how the institutional capacity of the state can circumscribe the space available for citizens. All our examples are of “invited” spaces (Cornwall and Coelho 2007), as citizens were given specified opportunities to collaborate with officials. In Guinea, even though community members’ avenue for participation was through *Faisons Ensemble*, they were able to achieve a measure of empowerment by laying claim to space that previously had been reserved for the state. In our other examples, with more capable states, citizens relied on receptive government officials—for example, the governor of Compostela Valley in the Philippines—to offer space.

An important explanatory factor related to “invited” spaces is the extent of coherence between supply-side incentives for social accountability and demand-side opportunities for citizen voice and engagement that may result from bureaucratic upward accountability. The four examples reveal that the upward accountability orientation of public service delivery actors generated some degree of alignment with facility-level incentives to extend the “invitation” and to be open to citizen input. In the Philippines health facilities, managers and health providers were positively disposed to working with the QAPCs, and saw value in community engagement. In Indonesia, the education officials’ interest in implementing the SBM reforms led to collaborative opportunities with citizens, even though empowering them was not the first and foremost goal of school principals and district education officers. In Rwanda, the strong signals from the top in support of improved service delivery created incentives for service providers to see citizens as co-producers of services. In Guinea, as noted, incentives aligned with local officials’ desires to push back against central authority, and citizen engagement helped to further that aim.

These examples suggest that the critical contextual variables may not be discernable at the aggregate country level. While general levels of civil society development, political support, and state-society relations delimit the opportunities for social accountability, the local contexts—characterized by individual officials’ interests, CSO capabilities, and their past interactions—in which projects are implemented shape the actual effects of such actions. For example, Kota Probolinggo is in East Java, considered the second best-governed of Indonesia’s 33 provinces (Kemitraan 2014), placing it above national averages on several relevant contextual variables and suggesting that social accountability interventions likely function differently there than at sites with less conducive contextual conditions. Further, education CSOs working in this city had relatively strong interest in the project interventions, which likely also enhanced the effectiveness of the social accountability actions (Faculty of Social and Political Sciences 2011). The varying attitudes of mayors in our Philippine examples shaped the degree of empowerment possible from social accountability efforts.

Particularly in larger countries with diverse contexts, such as Indonesia and the Philippines, the importance of local contextual factors argues against extensive attention to and collection of national-level data (O’Meally 2013). Rather than discounting the effects of context, however, programs encouraging social accountability need to work with actors who have first-hand knowledge of local conditions. Such approaches involve their own challenges (Wetterberg et al. 2013), but can enhance the prospects for effective social accountability.

## **Learning and Capacity Building Enhance Agency, Facilitate Social Accountability**

The Guinea and Philippines examples, and to a lesser extent the Indonesia case, point to the importance of learning over time, and its role in achieving social accountability aims. Arandel et al. (2014) report that officials frequently were at first frightened of the project interventions because they feared they would open them up to blame. As small changes began to show results, some officials gradually gained confidence in collaborating with citizens, changing state-society relations at such sites. Citizens, too, learned about what they could expect from officials and service providers, and how they could interact to increase accountability and responsiveness. Similarly, at one of the sites in the Philippines, QAPC representatives asked the facility director to act as the chair. The director instead insisted that a community member should lead, and supported a housewife who was initially reluctant to take on the role. This committee eventually brought its concerns to higher levels of government, both building skills for citizens and reflecting shifting attitudes of state actors. Conversely, the time frame to establish multistakeholder forums in Indonesia was too short for participants to learn new behavioral patterns and modes of state-society interaction.

On the demand side, the four cases reinforce the salience of civil society capacity and individual agency as contributors to effective social accountability (see Table 3). In the Philippines, with its relatively long tradition of community activism and interaction with local governments, community members volunteered to serve on the QAPCs, and the project-supported facilitators both built capacity and offered personal encouragement that strengthened members' personal sense of agency. Similarly in Indonesia, where grassroots associations, many of them faith-based, are integral to the sociocultural landscape, the project could tap into community willingness to engage with school officials, and with some training, community members became effective participants in school committees. In Rwanda, the fabric of civil society had been torn by the recent genocide, whose effects still lingered. The national policy of forgiving and forgetting, firmly managed from the center, has mobilized citizens in the service of rebuilding the nation, and shapes the narrow pathways along which acceptable (nonpolitical) citizen agency is enacted, which in turn affects the enabling environment for citizen engagement (see Table 5) (Brinkerhoff et al. 2009). In Guinea, where civil society capacity is arguably the weakest of the four cases, the *Faisons Ensemble* project supported substantial citizen capacity building, including in basic skills such as literacy, to enable citizens to interact effectively with local officials and service providers.

The importance of capacity building is a reminder of the point we made above that these examples illustrate the dependence of social accountability mechanisms on donor objectives and donor resources. It is difficult to identify to what extent country actors in government and civil society share these same objectives. Donors, although external, are a contributing element to context, since without their resources and capacity-building support, the interventions would not have led to the social accountability outcomes that were achieved.

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## SUSTAINING ACCOUNTABILITY: CONCLUSIONS

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Several conclusions emerge from this study of an admittedly small sample of social accountability interventions to shed light on the paths from accountability “supply to comply.” First of all is confirmation of Joshi and Houtzager’s (2012) caveats regarding treating accountability tools and mechanisms as widgets, divorced from context. It is an oversimplification to consider state compliance and responsiveness to be dependent upon the exercise of demand-driven accountability alone. The context for SA tools and mechanisms is framed by the interplay of forces for and against accountability within the state, the match (or mismatch) between accountability signals from within state institutions and those from citizens to local governments and service providers, and the historic legacy of state-society relations (see O’Meally 2013). However, when societal forces are in balance and some degree of incentives match exists, whether public officials see SA as simply tools and mechanisms (widgets) does not necessarily preclude the achievement of positive accountability outcomes.

A second conclusion is that state capacity to engage with citizens and willingness to create space for social accountability is more critical to achieving service delivery, governance, and empowerment outcomes than at least some of the literature recognizes. The examples point to ambiguous benefits of state support for governance and empowerment SA aims. When state actors pursue SA reforms, it appears that the most likely outcomes are primarily increased service delivery, with some change in governance practices, but less likely to be seen is citizen empowerment, broadly conceived. This pattern was strongest in the Rwanda case.

Third, the four cases suggest that the usual assumption that upward and downward accountability are necessarily either-or orientations may be overstated. Particularly for social accountability aims in the realm of service delivery (both co-production and compliance), coherence between the two sources of pressure for accountability can be mutually reinforcing, and can contribute to sustained outcomes. This situation is most clearly demonstrated in the Indonesia and Philippines examples, where a combination of decentralized local government and service delivery agencies with a commitment to meeting service standards and enforcing performance mandates appears to have strengthened the hand of citizens in undertaking social accountability actions. These efforts exemplify the kind of steps the state can take to support SA that Blair (2011) discusses. The caveat arises in considering SA intended to reinforce democratic governance and citizen empowerment, where such coherence may be weaker, and as McNeill and Malena (2012, 200) conclude regarding social accountability in Africa, governments insufficiently recognize “the democratic obligation of government to account to the people and the fundamental political right of citizens to demand public accountability.”

A fourth conclusion is the importance of citizen agency and capacity, which are closely related. Without the skills and resources for social accountability, citizens are unlikely either to be able or to be motivated to pursue SA actions. In terms of sustained social accountability, paying attention to citizens’ incentives, whether for individual or for collective action, is key (see Booth 2012). Interestingly, the Indonesia and Guinea cases, while very different in terms of socioeconomic development and of civil society capacity (Table 3), both revealed some citizen motivation for good governance beyond simply getting services they wanted. What drives citizens to mobilize, express voice, and seek to hold state actors

accountable varies across categories of publics (Lee 2011). Which individuals play a leadership role will shape patterns of agency and collective action; this is a topic that Tembo (2013), for example, addresses in his discussion of the importance of interlocutors' characteristics for engaging in social accountability activities. He unpacks the different types of power that interlocutors can muster that enable effective agency: individual sense of efficacy and responsibility (power within), ability to mobilize others for collective action (power with), competence and ability to pursue actions (power to), and ability to direct and control others (power over).

A fifth conclusion concerns the role of repeated interactions, long-term investment in joint action and trial-and-error, and mutual learning in making social accountability effective and sustainable (Coston 1998). In our examples, project-supported capacity building enabled citizens and state actors to employ the SA tools and mechanisms briefly described above, but in each case these engagements took place over a period of years; they were not one-shot interchanges. Capacity only translates into improved performance through repeated application. Ongoing interactions with successful accountability outcomes support learning, reinforce trust, and encourage further engagement, as game theory and social exchange theory tell us, and as a range of experience demonstrates (see Carter 2013).

Looking beyond the four cases and the associated SA literature, we can pose several questions for future research. First, what is a realistic trajectory for progress with social accountability? What scale of transformation can we expect from donor-funded project interventions? The four cases show a range of effects on service delivery, governance, and empowerment, but all four constitute what could be characterized as "stories in progress," particularly Guinea, whose post-conflict path toward stability and socioeconomic development is still in its infancy. One intervention progression that has been identified is referred to as "pockets of effectiveness" (Leonard 2010) or "islands of excellence" (Therkildsen 2008), where sources of capacity and commitment for change become vanguards from which to spread innovation more widely. To some extent, *Faisons Ensemble* in Guinea pursued this approach with selected commune governments, with mixed results; in some cases officials at higher levels resented the attention and resources devoted to the communes and sought to block them.

Over time, sustained improvements in governance and accumulation of SA advances in different sectoral pockets or islands may constitute what Sandercock (1998, cited in Beard 2002) calls "a thousand tiny empowerments." These may reinforce social accountability and citizen power; yet, political and bureaucratic forces can dilute or derail the cumulative effect of such micro-steps (see Wild et al. 2012). Here is where the contextual factors discussed above will have their most significant impacts, particularly on state-society relations. Controlled experiments with SA tools are unlikely to offer much guidance on temporal paths toward incremental change in accountability relationships. Donors' abilities to incorporate politics into their programmatic investments are limited, as Carothers and de Gramont (2013) recently documented; but success with external support to social accountability is likely to hinge on better context sensitivity and attention to politics.

The second question addresses what is, or can be, the role of public sector service values and norms in promoting and sustaining social accountability? We see this as a neglected avenue of investigation. Demand-driven accountability is unlikely to be sustainable without the supply side, which is influenced by historical legacies and broader political shifts. Among those legacies in developed

countries is the impact of a professionalized civil service and norms that support equitable and high-quality service delivery. The ability of SA mechanisms to drive increased accountability depends upon responses of individual public actors; yet changes in their behaviors are difficult and costly to enforce case by case. Without some degree of internalization by public actors of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness as norms and values, acceptance and enforcement will be hard to achieve (see Schnell 2014). Whether for the long or the short routes to accountability (World Bank 2004), such norms and values are important, and affect the behavioral conduits from supply of accountability tools, mechanisms, and process to compliance leading to increased accountability.

This question brings in the politics issue that is widely recognized as central to service delivery and accountability (e.g., Batley et al. 2012). However, it suggests a different analytic pathway from explorations of patronage, elite pacts, and social exclusion, examining instead (or in addition) how political factors influence public sector actors in terms of service/accountability values, norms, and intrinsic motivations. For example, a recent 50-country study that included a number of developing countries found evidence that in those countries, confidence in political parties as a proxy for alignment with public sector's mission, coupled with high levels of altruism, explained preferences for working in the public sector (Dur and Zoutenbier 2014). This finding offers some suggestive substantiation that positive politics may contribute to a virtuous circle that reinforces public service/accountability values and norms and attracts like-minded people to public employment (see also Banuri and Keefer 2013). More research is needed in this underexplored policy arena.

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