

# Transparency and accountability

Good Governance and Peacebuilding



The Hague Academy *for*  
local governance

## Learning objectives



### At the end of the module participants will be able to:

- ▶ Explain (social) accountability and transparency and its underlying concepts
- ▶ Discuss the benefits and limitations of (social) accountability and transparency in promoting good governance
- ▶ Analyse the applicability of different social accountability tools

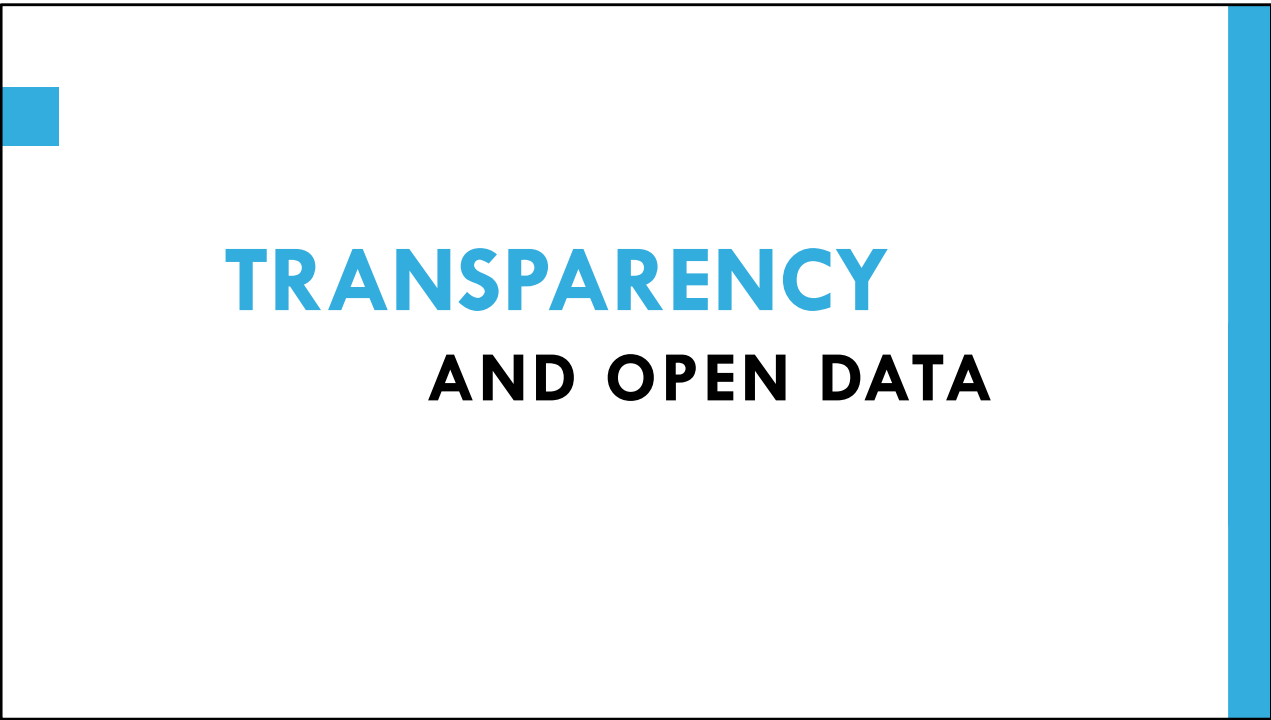
The Hague Academy for  
local governance

### Speaker's note:

Explain the learning objectives of this session

**Time:** *to be added by trainer according to planning*

**Background information:**



# TRANSPARENCY AND OPEN DATA

**Speaker's note:**

**Time:** *to be added by trainer according to planning*

**Background information:**

## Wide definition of transparency

*“The increased flow of timely and reliable economic, social and political information, which is accessible to all relevant stakeholders”*

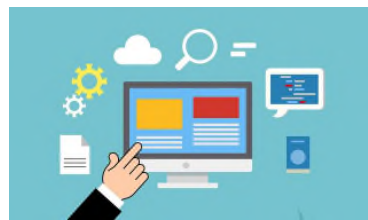
(Kaufmann 2002)



TIMELY



RELIABLE



ACCESSIBLE

### Speaker's note:

Explain that there are two ways of defining transparency. A wide and a narrow definition. Provide and explain the wide definition.

**Time:** 5 minutes

### Background information:

According to the wide definition, transparency is “the increased flow of timely and reliable economic, social and political information, which is accessible to all relevant stakeholders” (Kaufmann 2002).

At the center of this definition is the flow of information. Information about government processes, decisions and arguments should be provided to the public. But just providing information is not enough. Kaufmann argues that the information provided should be **timely, reliable, and accessible**.

**Timely** means that the relevant information should be available when it is needed. For example, if your municipality organizes a public meeting where you can influence the development of your neighbourhood, the municipality should provide relevant

information beforehand. It is not sufficient to provide information three minutes before the meeting. It should be timely, so people have time to read and use the information.

**Reliable** information means that the information that has been made public should be accurate. It should represent the truth. If civil society organisations or citizens get incomplete or incorrect information, they cannot interact with their governments in an effective way.

**Accessible** information means that the public information should be easy to find, through public channels. This can be through radio, newspapers and the internet. But also through public announcements, flyers that are handed out or signs in the street. The information should also be presented in an understandable way. This is related to the inclusiveness of governments.

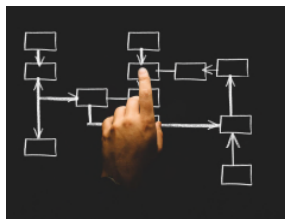
## Narrow definition of transparency

*“Transparency is the availability of information, relevant to evaluating institutions, both in terms of rules, operations as well as outcomes”*

(Bauhr and Grimes 2012)



RULES



OPERATIONS



OUTCOMES

### Speaker's note:

Explain the narrow definition of transparency.

**Time:** 5 minutes

### Background information:

#### Narrow definition of transparency

The narrow definition of transparency states that “Transparency is the availability of information, relevant to evaluating institutions, both in terms of rules, operations as well as outcomes” (Bauhr and Grimes 2012).

This definition also states that the availability of information is at the core of transparency. But these scholars make a further distinction in the types of information that should be made public. They argue that transparent governments should provide information about **rules**, **operations**, and **outcomes** of government processes. That's why we call this definition the “narrow definition”.

Information about **rules** refers to information about the processes of the government

organization and how decisions are being made. This is important because citizens and civil society organizations should be able to understand how they can be heard, and when and where they can advocate for their interest.

**Operations** refers to the activities of the state institution. So the actual actions that are being taken. This can for example be drafting local policies, spending public funds for street lighting, or organizing waste management services.

Lastly, **outcomes** refer to the result of the government decision making and the government operations. So what has happened as the result of certain policies, actions or interventions.

## Transparency benefits

- ▶ Citizens have the **right to know** how their tax money is spent
- ▶ Transparent organizations are **less vulnerable to corruption**
- ▶ Stimulates public **trust** in government, politicians and policies
- ▶ Can provide the information to enable **citizen participation**
- ▶ Allows citizens to hold their governments **accountable**
- ▶ Can help better **coordination** between members of government

### Speaker's note:

- Ask participants what they consider the benefits of transparency
- Write the arguments down on a flipchart
- Share the arguments on the slide, skipping any arguments already made by the participants themselves

**Time:** 15 minutes

### Background information:

There is agreement amongst many scholars and decision-makers that transparency is key for democratic societies and good governance (Islam 2002, Transparency International). Some of the arguments are:

- Citizens contribute to the government budget by paying taxes. Therefore, citizens have the fundamental right to know how this tax money is spent.
- Transparent organizations are less vulnerable for corruption.
- Transparency stimulates public trust in government, politicians and policies.
- If organized in an inclusive way, transparency can enable groups, who would normally be excluded, to participate in governance because they have the information to do so.



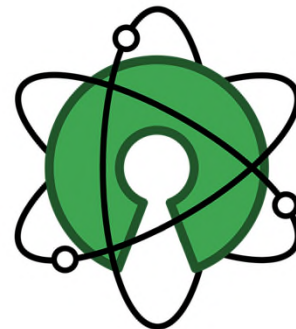
- When government information is available, the public can judge their governments' ability to make good policy by looking at this data. When the public judge their leaders, this can affect the level of support for the government and it determines how long they stay in power.
- Publicly available data can help better coordination between members of government. For example, the budgetary process can benefit from data on outcomes related to fiscal expenditures.
- The use of data to design policy can improve policymaking, help identify goals and evaluate alternative policies.

## Open data

*“Open data is data that can be freely used, re-used and redistributed by anyone - subject only, at most, to the requirement to attribute and share alike.”*

Open Data Handbook

- ▶ Availability and access
- ▶ Re-use and redistribution
- ▶ Universal participation



### Speaker's note:

**Time:** *to be added by trainer according to planning*

### Background information:

There are many ways to make information public and to organize transparent processes, decision making and outcomes. But, like in all parts of society, the rise of the internet has changed the way in which information can be shared and analysed. Moreover, the amount of people with internet access and the skills to find information on the internet increases every day. Technological developments have made it possible for governments to share information in a more cost-effective and quicker way. Therefore, this final paragraph introduces Open Data as a tool for transparency. The information is based on information from [Open Overheid](#) (Dutch for Open Government), a centre for expertise on open data in the Netherlands.

Open Data Handbook (<https://opendatahandbook.org>)

•**Availability and Access:** the data must be available as a whole and at no more than a reasonable reproduction cost, preferably by downloading over the internet. The data must also be available in a convenient and modifiable form.

- Re-use and Redistribution:** the data must be provided under terms that permit re-use and redistribution including the intermixing with other datasets.
- Universal Participation:** everyone must be able to use, re-use and redistribute - there should be no discrimination against fields of endeavour or against persons or groups. For example, 'non-commercial' restrictions that would prevent 'commercial' use, or restrictions of use for certain purposes (e.g. only in education), are not allowed.

Example: <https://data.eindhoven.nl/pages/home/>

## Open data principles of the Government of the Netherlands

- ▶ When making open data available, an assessment must be made as to whether reuse poses risks to fundamental values and privacy.
- ▶ Open data are free.
- ▶ Open data are free of third-party rights.
- ▶ Open data can be accessed without registration.
- ▶ Open data can be processed by computers.
- ▶ Open data are provided with metadata.
- ▶ Open data is as complete and as raw as possible.
- ▶ Open data can be easily found.

### Speaker's note:

**Time:** *to be added by trainer according to planning*

### Background information:

These principles are guiding when making data available. More on this (in English) can be found on [this government website](#).

By providing open data and large sets of data, the government enables civil society and citizens to analyze these data themselves. They may come up with different conclusions, or come up with very more effective solutions than the policy makers. This is a big opportunity for citizen participation and inclusion.

## Transparency & open data challenges

- ▶ Requires significant resources
- ▶ May slow down administrative procedures
- ▶ May offer more advantages to the well-organised and influential citizens and CSOs



### Speaker's note:

Explain the transparency challenges outlined on the slide.

**Time:** 5 minutes

### Background information:

Some policy makers, politicians and civil servants do not support full government transparency. Arguments against transparency are sometimes motivated by personal interests or serious corruption, but there are also genuine obstructions to transparency. We will list three examples of disadvantages of transparency:

- **Transparency requires significant resources.** Governments often deal with a lot of different affairs and with many stakeholders. To provide accurate, up to date information on all affairs requires a serious organizational infrastructure and expertise. This costs money which could otherwise be used for public services.
- **Transparency may slow down administrative procedures.** Making information publicly available in all stages of administrative processes requires time. Information needs to be gathered, made understandable and distributed through different channels. The time this takes is added to each step of the process.

•**Transparency may offer more advantages to the well-organized and influential citizens and civil society organizations**, because they are better able to understand the information and influence government processes. People who have less access to information, or who lack the skills to participate, will not be able to profit from increased transparency.

There are also legal and security-related limitations to the transparency of government organizations. Some information cannot be made public because of national security, for example defence expenses or strategic decisions. Moreover, personal information of citizens cannot be made publicly available because of privacy laws and rights



Organizational transparency and freedom of information are important prerequisites for accountability because they provide forums with information [...] but this is not enough. It has to be taken up actively by journalists, interest groups etcetera and brought to a forum such as a parliamentary standing committee, to hold an actor to account.

Bovens, 2006, p. 13

**Speaker's note:**

Share this quote to explain how transparency is also a crucial component of accountability.

**Time:** *to be added by trainer according to planning*

**Background information:**



# ACCOUNTABILITY AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE



**Speaker's note:**

**Time:** *to be added by trainer according to planning*

**Background information:**



Discuss in pairs: What does accountability mean to you?



**Speaker's note:**

- Ask participants to briefly reflect in pairs on what accountability means to them (5 min)
- Ask for participants to share in plenary (10 min)
- Write all suggestions down on a flipchart

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Background information:**

## Defining accountability

Many definitions exist:

*“A relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgment, and the actor may face consequences”*

Bovens 2007

broadcast sign  
**def·i·ni·tion** n. 1.  
The teacher gave d  
... new words.

### Speaker's note:

**Time:** *to be added by trainer according to planning*

### Background information:

COMING TO TERMS WITH ACCOUNTABILITY

(<https://ecpr.eu/filestore/paperproposal/79d2738d-62e7-4991-a1af-6dcd19dccbca.pdf>)

Bovens' (2007) definition of accountability as 'a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgment, and the actor may face consequences' is a good starting point. Accountability has three indispensable components: (1) the actor should be obliged to inform the forum about his conduct, (2) there should be an opportunity for the forum to debate with the actor about his conduct as well as an opportunity for the actor to explain and justify his conduct and (3) both parties should know that the forum is able not only to pass judgment but also to present the actor with certain consequences. The last part of his definition ('may face consequences') is crucial, but necessarily ambiguous. What is the status of these consequences? In theory, the lower limit of accountability is reached when an

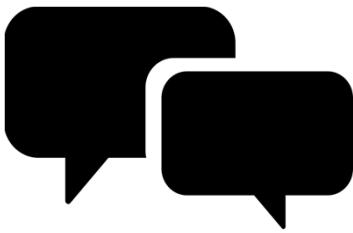
accountor is compelled, or feels compelled, to disclose information to the public, which has very limited possibilities to ask questions or pass judgement. Purely informal or voluntary transparency does not amount to accountability.

*A Review of World Bank Support for Accountability Institutions in the Context of Governance and Anticorruption*

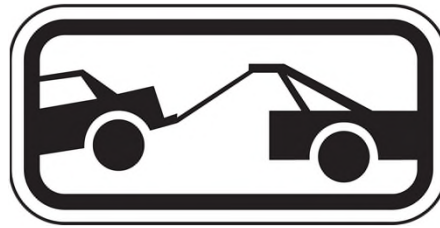
(<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/pt/358571468337248805/pdf/667550NWP00PUB00AccountabilityFinal.pdf>)

Although there is ample literature on the topic, there is no agreement on the exact meaning of the concept. Accountability is essentially about controlling the exercise of power, and, as noted by Newell (2002 and 2006), has become a “malleable and often nebulous concept,” that remains “loose and under-specific.” A few authors define accountability as a duty or liability (see for example Jones and Stewart, 2009), others as a process (see for example OECD 2005, Ackerman 2005, Schedler et al 1999), and some as a relationship (Stapenhurst and O’Brien undated, Lawson and Rakner 2005, Newell and Wheeler 2006, O’Neill et al. 2007).

## Key concepts



ANSWERABILITY



ENFORCEABILITY

### Speaker's note:

Explain the two key concepts of accountability (answerability and enforceability).

**Time:** *to be added by trainer according to planning*

### Background information:

*Accountability in Governance* (<https://silo.tips/download/accountability-in-governance>)

#### Answerability

Refers to the obligation of the government, its agencies and public officials to provide information about their decisions and actions and to justify them to the public and those institutions of accountability tasked with providing oversight.

#### Enforcement

suggests that the public or the institution responsible for accountability can sanction the offending party or remedy the contravening behavior. As such, different institutions of accountability might be responsible for either or both of these stages.

## Definitions & concepts

### Horizontal accountability

Imposed internally: the capacity of state institutions to check abuses by other public agencies and branches of government, or the requirement for agencies to report sideways.

- ▶ Political accountability (parliament)
- ▶ Legal accountability (judiciary)
- ▶ Autonomous institutions of accountability (Ombudsman)



Source: UNDP 2010

### Speaker's note:

Explain horizontal accountability.

**Time:** 5 minutes

### Background information:

*FOSTERING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY. A GUIDANCE NOTE UNDP 2010*

(<http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/OGC/dg-ogc-Fostering%20Social%20Accountability-Guidance%20Note.pdf>)

Horizontal accountability: Imposed by governments internally through institutional mechanisms for oversight and checks and balances, and refers to the capacity of state institutions to check abuses by other public agencies and branches of government, or the requirement for agencies to report sideways. As well as mutual checks and balances provided by the executive, legislature and judiciary, other state agencies that monitor other arms of the state (institutions of „horizontal accountability“) include anti-corruption commissions, auditors-general, human rights machineries, ombudsmen, legislative public-accounts committees and sectoral regulatory agencies.

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PUBLICSECTORANDGOVERNANCE/Resources/AccountabilityGovernance.pdf>

Parliament and the judiciary act as horizontal constitutional checks on the power of the executive. The role of these two institutions can be further delineated in that parliament holds the executive politically accountable, whilst the judiciary holds the executive legally accountable. These classifications stem from the fact parliament is a political institution, while the judiciary can only adjudicate on legal issues. Together, they provide ongoing oversight in order to keep the government accountable throughout its term in office. They may also be aided by other institutions, such as supreme audit institutions, anti-corruption commissions, ombuds offices and human rights institutes. These secondary 'autonomous institutions of accountability' are typically designed to be independent of the executive; in the case of supreme audit institutions (in 'Westminster parliamentary systems'), anti-corruption commissions and ombuds offices they often report to parliament while in the cases of supreme audit institutions in Francophone countries and human rights institutes, they may be part of the judiciary

Political accountability usually manifests itself in the concept of individual ministerial responsibility, which is the cornerstone of the notion of responsible government.

## Definitions & concepts



### **Vertical accountability**

Imposed externally on governments: the means through which citizens, mass media and civil society seek to enforce standards of good performance on officials.

### **Examples**

- ▶ Free and fair elections
- ▶ Presence of alternative political (local) parties
- ▶ Vibrant civil society
- ▶ Use of and access to media

UNDP 2010

### **Speaker's note:**

Explain vertical accountability

**Time:** 5 minutes

### **Background information:**

*FOSTERING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY. A GUIDANCE NOTE UNDP 2010*

(<http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/OGC/dg-ogc-Fostering%20Social%20Accountability-Guidance%20Note.pdf>)

## The impact of a decentralised context

- ▶ Decentralisation (devolution) **reshapes power relations** and sets **new rules** for procurement and service delivery
- ▶ Requires **accountability systems** that make LGs accountable to citizens (downward) and to higher levels of government (upward)
- ▶ Public & social accountability mechanisms safeguard against misuse and abuse of local discretion

### Speaker's note:

Explain the impact of a decentralised context.

**Time:** *to be added by trainer according to planning*

### Background information:

*Local Government Discretion and Accountability: A Diagnostic Framework for Local Governance*

(<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/897941468137384275/pdf/465520NWPOBox31SD1Working1Paper1113.pdf>)

Decentralization (devolution) reshapes power relations and sets new rules for procurement and service delivery which offers new possibilities to strengthen government accountability by exerting pressure from demand and supply sides

Decentralization reforms grant local governments new powers and responsibilities in three dimensions: political, administrative, and fiscal. These dimensions give local governments



discretionary space.

- Ensuring appropriate use of such discretionary space requires introducing effective accountability systems. Within their discretionary space, local governments would be accountable to higher levels of government (upward accountability) as well as to citizens (downward accountability).
- Public accountability mechanisms safeguard against misuse and abuse of local discretion, but they have imperfections. New forms of social accountability mechanisms, which enable direct engagement of citizens with government, emerge to complement public accountability mechanisms.
- Public and social accountability approaches must be bridged to ensure that citizens have the ability and opportunity to demand accountability and that local governments have the means and incentives to respond to citizen demands for accountability and better service delivery.

## Accountable for what?

- ▶ The use of public finances & natural resources
- ▶ The policy/programmatic decisions & their performance (including service provision)
- ▶ The way they act and execute the process.



### Speaker's note:

**Time:** *to be added by trainer according to planning*

### Background information:

1. The use of public finances & natural resources;
2. The policy/programmatic decisions & their performance (including service provision)  
→ *Do they serve the public interest (of all, including the poor) in a (resource) efficient, effective and fair manner?*
3. The way they act and execute the process.  
→ *Do they act within the law, using delegated powers in the interest of wider public, in a fair way and without abusing power? (legal accountability/legitimacy)*

## Ethiopia's commitment to accountability

### **FDRE constitution, Article 12 Conduct and Accountability of Government:**

1. The conduct of affairs of government shall be transparent.
2. Any public official or an elected representative is accountable for any failure in official duties.
3. In case of loss of confidence, the people may recall an elected representative. The particulars of recall shall be determined by law.

### **Proclamation No. 1183 /2020, Federal Administrative Procedure Proclamation, Article 35:**

- ▶ A person rendering administrative decisions shall ensure the transparency of the decision making process.

### **Proclamation no. 211 /2000 the establishment of the institution of the ombudsman**

- ▶ The institution shall see to bringing about good governance that is of high quality, efficient and transparent, as based on the rule of law, by way of ensuring that citizens' rights and benefits, provided for by law are respected by organs of the executive

### **Speaker's note:**

**Time:** *to be added by trainer according to planning*

### **Background information:**

## Defining social accountability

### Social accountability

The “Extent and capability of citizens to hold the state accountable and make it responsive to their needs” (World Bank 2012)



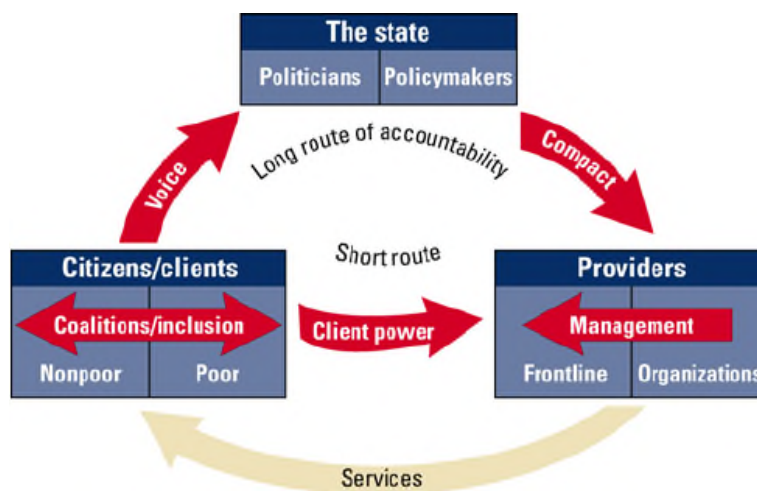
#### Speaker's note:

Provide the definition of social accountability.

**Time:** *to be added by trainer according to planning*

**Background information:**

## The Long route-problem (World Bank 2004)



### Speaker's note:

Explain the Long-route problem (see below).

**Time:** to be added by trainer according to planning

### Background information:

World Bank 2004

For the services considered here—such as health, education, water, electricity, and sanitation—there is no direct accountability of the provider to the consumer. Why not? For various good reasons, society has decided that the service will be provided not through a market transaction but through the government taking responsibility (see box 2). That is, through the “long route” of accountability— by clients as citizens influencing policymakers, and policymakers influencing providers. When the relationships along this long route break down, service delivery fails (absentee teachers, leaking water pipes) and human development outcomes are poor.

Consider the first of the two relationships along the long route—the link between poor people and policymakers or politicians (figure 4). Poor people are citizens. In principle, they contribute to defining society’s collective objectives, and they try to

control public action to achieve those objectives. In practice, this does not always work. Either they are excluded from the formulation of collective objectives or they cannot influence public action because of weaknesses in the electoral system. Free public services and “no-show” jobs are handed out as political patronage, with poor people rarely the beneficiaries. Even if poor people can reach the policymaker, services will not improve unless the policymaker can ensure that the service provider will deliver services to them. In Cambodia, policymakers were able to specify the services required to the NGOs with whom they contracted. But for many services, such as student learning or curative care, the policymaker may not be able to specify the nature of the service, much less impose penalties for underperformance of the contract. Teacher and health-worker absenteeism is often the result. Given the weaknesses in the long route of accountability, service outcomes can be improved by strengthening the short route— by increasing the client’s power over providers. School voucher schemes (Colombia’s PACES) or scholarships (Bangladesh’s Female Secondary School Assistance Program, in which schools receive a grant based on the number of girls they enroll) enable clients to exert influence over providers through choice. El Salvador’s Educo program and Guinea’s revolving drug scheme (where co-payments inspired villagers to stop theft) are ways for client participation to improve service provision.<sup>1</sup>

## Core elements of social accountability

- ▶ Citizen action
- ▶ State action
- ▶ Information
- ▶ Citizen-state interface
- ▶ Civic mobilisation

### Speaker's note:

**Time:** *to be added by trainer according to planning*

### Background information:

*OPENING THE BLACK BOX, World Bank 2015*

(<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/21686/9781464804816.pdf?sequence=1>)

### Citizen action

As the central constitutive element of social accountability (SA) and the basis for citizen-led engagement, citizen action has been a primary focus of the SA concept and its mechanisms or tools. Citizen action can comprise diverse activities, depending on the context and the stage in the process. It typically includes making demands (for information, justification, or sanctions), protesting against injustice, or claiming better public goods. The citizen action element within this framework also unpacks the collective action problem—a problem rarely acknowledged enough by SA tools or mechanisms.

### State action

A primary element of SA, state action needs to be understood within a specific context. The drivers of state action have not been an adequate focus of SA mechanisms, even though the role of the state is pivotal to the SA concept. In order to ensure a “response” from the state, understanding—and sometimes changing—the incentives facing politicians or nonelected officials is necessary. State action can be in the form of positive responses (for example, improved public services and reduced corruption) or repression and backlash. The extent to which responses are organizational actions, based on prevailing cultures, norms, and standard operating procedures, as opposed to individual actions, based on personal preferences and degrees of discretion, matters.

### Information

In an accountable and responsive state that engages citizens in decision making, information flows are needed—from citizens to the state, from the state to citizens, between the various parts of civil society, and within the state apparatus.

The range of information needed for accountability purposes is vast and often highly technical, and in many cases, the information that is needed for engagement and social accountability may not exist. Informational constraints need to be considered in terms of information generation, simplification, presentation, accuracy, access, and, most important, use. Information asymmetry is rarely an accident of history; rather it is the result of authorities or other individuals in charge who intentionally withhold information or resist attempts to make it accessible. Thus improving citizens’ and civil society’s access to information as well as their understanding and use of information requires considerable effort and skills. Information intermediaries are almost always necessary, either to simplify or to explain the content and implications of information.

### Citizen-state interface

SA is a comprehensive process that includes a complex locus of interaction between state and citizen actors. What matters are not only the interactions occurring through the interface, but also the processes that lead up to it and those that follow as well as the level of citizen representation, if any. Interlocution between the state and civil society actors is key to bringing state officials, whether nonelected or elected officials at different levels, and citizens, whether individuals or collectives, together in the interface.

### Civic mobilisation

One of the key elements within this framework stems from the fact that information or the existence of a citizen-state interface does not necessarily spur citizen or state action on an issue. In most cases, SA implies actions by intermediaries to spur citizens



into action. Civic mobilization is often necessary to trigger and facilitate citizen “voice,” especially for vulnerable or marginalized individuals and groups. On the state side, officials need to be mobilized to seek out and engage with citizens. Thus, mobilization is not confined to the community realm. Rather, it is better conceptualized as creating accountability coalitions with pro-accountability actors from both within communities and within states.



### **Voice**

mechanisms – formal and informal – through which people express their preferences, opinions and views and demand accountability from power-holders

### **Preconditions**

- ▶ Individual empowerment
- ▶ Existence of a forum
- ▶ The ability to come together with shared agendas

### **Speaker's note:**

**Time:** *to be added by trainer according to planning*

### **Background information:**

Ability to represent, to speak?

Voice refers to a variety of mechanisms – formal and informal – through which people express their preferences, opinions and views and demand accountability from power-holders. It can include complaint, organised protest, lobbying and participation in decision-making, product delivery or policy implementation. Voice matters for four related reasons:

- From the perspective of civil and political rights, voice has intrinsic value – it is good for people to have the freedom to express their beliefs and preferences.
- If people do not speak up, there is little or no chance that their preferences, opinions and views will be reflected in government priorities and policies.
- Voice is an essential building block for accountability. For a power-holder to respond, she must be answering an expressed need or desire. However, this

relationship is two-way: accountability can also encourage voice by demonstrating that exercising voice can make a difference.

- The process of creating voice, that is, the interaction between groups and individuals who exercise voice, plays an important role in enabling communities to arrive collectively at the standards – the values and norms of justice and morality – against which the actions of others will be judged.

The ability of individuals and groups to claim their rights and demand accountability by exercising voice depends on a number of pre-conditions. These include:

- The need for individual empowerment, which presupposes an awareness of rights and an understanding that the state has an obligation to meet those rights;
- The existence of a forum where various interests and claims can be organized into a shared agenda;
- The ability to come together with shared agendas to demand, access and scrutinize information, and then to take action

*Source: UNDP FOSTERING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY: FROM PRINCIPLE TO PRACTICE AUGUST 2010*

## Social accountability tools

- ▶ Complaint mechanisms
- ▶ Citizens charters
- ▶ Citizen report cards
- ▶ Community score cards
- ▶ Participatory budgeting



### Speaker's note:

- Explain that there are numerous social accountability tools
- Pick out a limited number to explain in more detail. This slide provides a list of 5 examples, but feel free to select other tools (if more relevant) from the handout: [Social Accountability Tools](#).

**Time:** 10 minutes

### Background information:

[Grievance Redress Mechanism](#) (or a formal complaints-handling mechanism) is a system by which queries or clarifications about the project are responded to, problems with implementation are resolved, and complaints and grievances are addressed efficiently and effectively.

[Citizen Charter](#) is a document that informs citizens about the service entitlements they have as users of a public service, the standards they can expect for a service (timeframe and quality), remedies available for non-adherence to standards, and the procedures, costs and charges of a service. The charters entitle users to an explanation (and in some cases compensation) if the standards are not met.

Citizen Report Card is an assessment of public services by the users (citizens) through client feedback surveys. It goes beyond data collection to being an instrument for exacting public accountability through extensive media coverage and civil society advocacy that accompanies the process.

Community Scorecard is a community-based monitoring tool that assesses services, projects, and government performance by analyzing qualitative data obtained through focus group discussions with the community. It usually includes interface meetings between service providers and users to formulate an action plan to address any identified problems and shortcomings.

Participatory Budgeting is a process through which citizens participate directly in budget formulation, decision making, and monitoring of budget execution. It creates a channel for citizens to give voice to their budget priorities particularly at the local government level.

## Social accountability challenges

- ▶ Slow down of decision-making and service delivery
- ▶ Risk or change aversion
- ▶ Tick the box exercise
- ▶ Sustainability
- ▶ Elite capture
- ▶ Lack of voice (awareness, skills and ability to organise)
- ▶ Legitimacy of citizens groups and CSOs
- ▶ Questions existing power balance



### Speaker's note:

Explain the challenges in setting up effective social accountability mechanisms.

**Time:** 10 minutes

### Background information:

The challenges:

- Can lead to bureaucratisation and slowing down of decision-making and service delivery;
- Can lead to an attitude of risk or change aversion among civil servants;
- Risk to see accountability mechanisms as a list of (financial) obligations that just need to be ticked off and then can be put aside.
- Elite capture: If not managed correctly, new accountability mechanisms can be used by existing elites to maintain their power.
- Lack of voice (awareness, skills and ability to organise): citizens, especially the

marginalised often lack awareness of their rights, skills to make use of accountability mechanisms, and the ability to organise themselves around a common agenda

- Capacity & legitimacy of citizens groups and CSOs: Often the legitimacy of CSOs can be called into question. Who do they represent?
- Questions existing power balance: New accountability mechanism will often face resistance because they threaten existing accountability and power relations. This is likely to lead to resistance
- Sustainability: social accountability mechanisms are often set-up and funded through donor projects. Often when the project ends, so does the accountability mechanism, leading to a loss of a lot of the investment

### Exercise: design an accountability process

- ▶ Select a problem that you would like to solve through social accountability
- ▶ Select the social accountability tool(s) you would like to use
- ▶ Clarify:
  - ▶ How you will set up the social accountability mechanism
  - ▶ The roles of all stakeholders involved
  - ▶ Specify how you will ensure 'answerability' and 'enforcement'



**20 minutes!!!**

#### Speaker's note:

- Divide the participants in in small groups (4-6 participants) and ask them to work on the slide (25 min)
- Ask one person per group to report in plenary what they have been working on (15 min)

**Time:** 40 minutes

**Background information:**



## Questions/reflections?



### **Speaker's note:**

- Summarise the content of the session
- Ask if there are any outstanding questions

**Time:** 5 minutes

**Background information:**