

Social Accountability Practice for Good Governance

Introduction

The four months fellowship under Community Solutions Program (CSP) sponsored by US Department of State and my host organization Colorado Common Cause (CCC) has given me the opportunity to do some research on governance and its derivatives for developing community to ensure their rights and wellbeing. Colorado Common Cause works on government accountability through citizens' participation in public decision-making to hold governments accountable. CCC believes instead of thinking of government as an "other," it should reflect the wishes of citizens. Just as we're all accountable to friends, family and colleagues, government must be accountable to citizens.

Good Governance

Governance is epitomized by predictable, open, and enlightened policymaking (that is, transparent process); a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; and a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law. (World Bank Study on Africa, 1989, p-55)

Former Congressman from New York and World Bank President Barber Benjamin Conable, Jr. used the term 'good governance', referring to it as a public service that is efficient, a judicial system that is reliable, and an administration that is accountable to its public.

Goals for Governance

- Legitimate, effective, responsive institutions and policies (embedded autonomy)
- Understandable processes and outcomes;
 - with visible results in citizens' lives;
 - with clear standards for success or failure;
 - with clear lines of responsibility and accountability.
- Transparency:
 - ✚ openness from above;
 - ✚ participation and scrutiny from below;
 - ✚ honesty from all.
- Incentives to sustain good governance:
 - ✓ for leaders: the opportunity to take credit;
 - ✓ for citizens: a credible chance for justice and a better life;
 - ✓ for neighboring societies: sharing insights, experiences, expertise, values.
- Vertical accountability:
 - government that answers to citizens;
 - citizens who accept and abide by laws and policies.
- Horizontal accountability and leaders, and among segments of government:
 - ❖ access to information;
 - ❖ the right to be consulted;
 - ❖ the power to check excesses and abuses.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) provides a well-accepted definition of good governance including nine elements:

Good governance comprises the existence of effective mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulated their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate

their differences. Its essential characteristics are: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness, accountability and strategic vision.

Good Governance Indicators

Different expert and development organizations including UNDP and World Bank identified six dimensions of good governance as follows:

- i. Voice and Accountability;
- ii. Political Stability and Absence of Violence;
- iii. Government Effectiveness;
- iv. Regulatory Quality;
- v. Rule of Law;
- vi. Control of Corruption.

These indicators are captured for more than 200 countries and territories from 1996 to 2012. Countries those have higher values thus indicate better governance and draws attention to the well-established link between better governance and improved development results.

Tools for Good Governance Measuring

Different international development organization and prominent world development experts on good governance have developed number of tools useful for good governance. Development practitioner can use these tools for good governance from program planning stage to its impact assessment. These tools used in two broader aspects which are planning and monitoring & evaluation stages.

Planning and designing Tools:

- i. Relationship Mapping;
- ii. Capacity indices;
- iii. Goods and Services Assessment etc.

Monitoring & Evaluation Tools:

- a. Participatory Budgeting;
- b. Community Score Cards;
- c. Community Government Linkage Card;
- d. Local Government Focus Groups;
- e. Services and Resourced Mapping;
- f. Citizen Report Cards etc.

Accountability

Decision-makers in government, the private sector and civil society organizations are accountable to the public, as well as to institutional stakeholders. Accountability of politicians and civil servants to ensure that the power given to them through the laws and regulations they implement, resources they control and the organizations they manage is used appropriately and in accordance with the public interest.

The four pillars for ensuring accountability:

1. Rules and Regulations – administrative procedures, audits, code of conduct;
2. Bring in Market Principles – privatization or contracting out to private sector and NGOs;

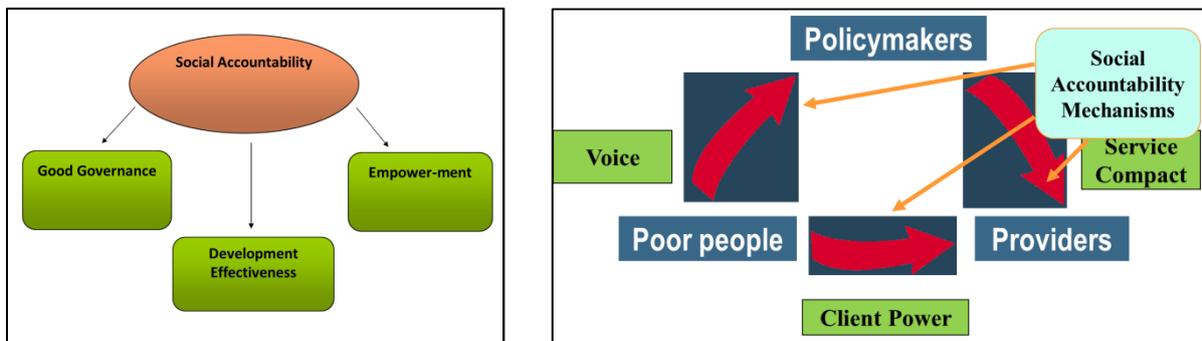
3. Independent Agencies – ombudsman, vigilance committees;

4. Social Accountability Practices.

Social Accountability

Social accountability can be defined as an approach towards building accountability that relies on civic engagement, i.e., in which it is ordinary citizens and/or civil society organizations who participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability (World Bank, 2004).

Social Accountability Framework



There has been varying success with this framework. What has been learnt is that success often depends on direct participation of the people. Social accountability has potential to improve the responsiveness of governments and other power functions to the needs of common people.

There is a wide range of social accountability mechanisms arising from specific needs, power relations and a desire for improving services. Each social accountability mechanism has a specific social, political and economic context with associated benefits and risks. The success of one mechanism in a local context in no way guarantees success in another.

Source:

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