POLICY BRIEF

World Vision

Governance: Laying the foundations for sustainable and effective development

What are the challenges?

Empowering people, especially those living in the most marginalised communities of the world, is vital to improving governance and achieving effective development. It is rare that ordinary citizens in most developing countries are given a genuine voice on issues of most concern to them and, more often than not, it is the poorest that miss out. Over the past decade there has been a paradigm shift in development thinking around these issues prompted by increasing pressure for good governance to ensure aid monies reach the poor and are not lost to corruption. But there is a growing consensus that strategies to improve governance solely through institutional reform are likely to be undermined if there is no ability for the community to directly demand accountability from their governments.

Until relatively recently, governance initiatives have focused on the supply side of governance which has included strengthening the capability of institutions, including parliaments, judiciary, bureaucracy and the media. Alternatively, demand side governance initiatives have largely concentrated on electoral reform and civic education as a way of increasing citizen access. The challenge is to move beyond the focus on the electoral role of citizens as the major route to accountability via approaches, which foster a vigorous and engaged civil society. Programmatic interventions and advocacy in this area depend heavily on direct relationships with communities, which is a strength of non-government and community-based organisations. Given the need for donors to develop effective programs in this sector and the complexity of the task, stronger and more sophisticated partnerships between donors, national governments and non-government organisations are required.

1. Supply side governance – only half the story

It is more than a decade since the push for better governance became mainstream in many major bi-lateral and multi-lateral development agencies. Since 1996, the World Bank, for example, has mainstreamed anti-corruption and governance initiatives to target government institutions via the development of better national government planning, management and accountability systems. Donors have focussed on promoting reform and capacity building of key institutions including the bureaucracy, judiciary, and parliaments largely through training and secondments of expatriate officials to support local civil servants.

2. Demand side governance – completing the picture

A ground breaking study by the World Bank in 2000 highlighted a fundamental disconnect in developing countries between government institutions and the people those institutions are intended to serve. More than 60,000 people were interviewed by the authors of the *Voices of the Poor* report, which found that there was a deep crisis in governance [1]. The poor have seen little point in seeking recourse from understaffed, inexperienced or unresponsive institutions resulting in a cycle of weak demand for accountability. Francis Fukuyama has highlighted the fact that the supply of good governance, while necessary, does not automatically create demand. "Insufficient domestic demand for institutions or institutional reform is the single most important obstacle to institutional development in poor countries."[2] The key challenge has been to add to the equation demand-led, participatory governance which gives greater substance to democracy and legitimacy to the state.
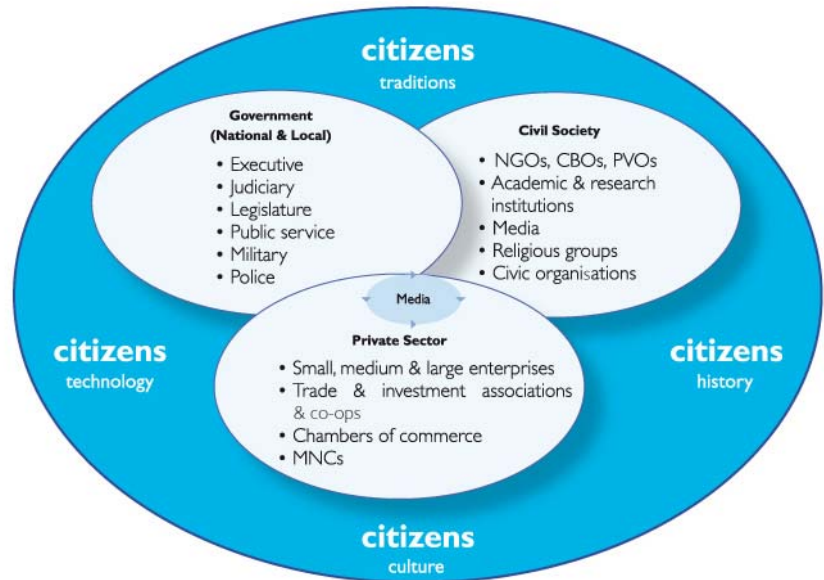
3. Essential services, human development and democratic participation

Existing approaches by donors to encourage greater civic participation typically seek to strengthen the role of citizens as electors or increase their voice, for example, through stronger, more independent media. These approaches are critical in supporting the development of democratic societies, but in reality the electoral route to accountability is long and can leave many citizens, particularly those who are impoverished, without a genuine voice.

The question of how to encourage greater citizen participation and decision-making dominates the development discourse. One of the key challenges is to find ways to foster understanding of fundamental rights and participation in decision making that have tangible and direct relevance for the poor. Practical approaches, which focus on creating demand for provision of health and education services, tend to resonate with those in need of access and provide greater incentive for participation. There is also a critical nexus between promoting participation and accountability in essential services and human development outcomes. Where basic services fail, as they too often do for the poor, human development will also fail. There are also detailed studies to show that local involvement in public service delivery can enhance efficiency by between 100 and 400 per cent.[3]

Actors in governance

The size of the 3 sectors can vary greatly from one country to another
They overlap and interrelate to one another closely

The focus on essential services provides an entry point for other social accountability approaches to promote greater understanding of the importance of civic and democratic rights. It is a small step towards other - arguably more complex - approaches to citizen empowerment, which may need timeframes more appropriate to generational change.

How does demand-led governance work in practice?

Donors and non-government organisations have begun work on a wide variety of programmatic approaches to supporting demand-led governance. Initiatives have ranged from building the capacity of local non-government and civil society organisations, working with women and youth groups, developing local leadership skills, participatory budgeting and monitoring of government services.

In 2004 World Vision Australia piloted a demand-led governance initiative in Uganda, using a citizen engagement tool, Community Based Performance Monitoring (CBPM).

First used as a Community Scorecard process by CARE International in Malawi, CBPM was further developed by the World Bank in The Gambia. CBPM aims to enable and empower grass-roots communities to influence the quality, efficiency and accountability with which services are provided to them – primarily regarding service provision through community facilities such as schools and health centres. Information collected can also be aggregated and used for advocacy purposes at state or national levels to influence government policies and resource allocation.

Uganda provided a favourable political and social context for World Vision to trial this tool given the government's explicit efforts in support of poverty reduction - including the preparation of the World Bank-initiated Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) - as well as other poverty monitoring activities.

Working with a team of CBPM facilitators, community members:
- ❑ Are informed about targets set by government for the provision of services in their community
- ❑ Use this information to review what services are presently provided against these standards
- ❑ Are offered the opportunity to rate the performance of the services being provided;
- ❑ And, based on this knowledge, develop action plans to improve the service

If we consider information to be power, then this information can be critically important in assisting citizens to hold governments accountable.

An important component of CBPM involves sharing information on stated government standards and people's perceptions of the services with everyone present, including government and political representatives. In this forum individuals - be they community members, education or health staff, government or political representatives - make a public commitment to take some responsibility for a particular activity in the action plan and within a certain timeframe. These activities and the local government response are monitored in further community meetings on a regular basis.

Achievements to date

As well as the pilot in Uganda, World Vision is trialling CBPM in Peru, Brazil, Tanzania, Armenia and Kenya and exploring options for further pilots in the Asia Pacific.

Community puts World Vision under the spotlight

When World Vision began a pilot social accountability approach in Uganda in 2005, it was aiming to help communities understand their entitlements to basic services and provide them with the skills to seek improvements from their local governments and service providers.

But the community decided it was also time to hold World Vision accountable. Several water tanks provided by World Vision were found to be cracked and could not be used.

The community wrote to World Vision and pursued a series of meetings with the procurement manager and the responsible contractor, who agreed to replace the tanks.

"This is unusual because the community thinks World Vision is helping them so if they question us they worry that we may stop helping them. CBPM has made them brave." Betty Wamala, World Vision Uganda.

A formal evaluation of CBPM is currently under development but there have been promising results so far. In several communities in Uganda and Brazil representations using the CBPM tool have resulted in the government providing either new health clinics or schools or new teachers. The approach has also fostered a sense of community responsibility. When students at the school where CBPM was carried out complained of hunger at lunchtime, the community joined together to provide porridge. Many other schools have now copied this practice. When a local government responded that it had no money for new classrooms, the community built the classrooms with government contributions. When it was claimed that a midwife could not be provided because the health clinic required a maternity ward, the community built the maternity ward, which qualified the health clinic to receive a full-time midwife.

Local politicians have also been involved in CBPM meetings and see the benefits in promoting civic rights. In Nkosi, 80 kilometres south of the Ugandan capital of Kampala, the chairman of the local sub county, Mr Ssendaula Fulgensio, commented that:

"The key thing that CBPM has done is to mobilise the community. They know their rights. The community now knows what they are supposed to get from the sub county. They are in a position to track their services. They can identify a problem and see what they can get from their service providers. The community is able to say no to substandard service. Politicians normally promise air but because CBPM is in place the community has come out with a vision and know what they want and are asking for politicians to do what they promised."

World Vision Recommends

World Vision welcomes the significant shift in donor thinking on the need for demand-led governance. While recognising the complexity of programmatic interventions in this area, World Vision believes that progress is too slow both within the Australian Government and the NGO sector.

1. ## Increased funding for demand-led governance initiatives

   Most of the current Australian aid funding related to governance is spent on institutional reforms. World Vision supports this critical work but considers that it is unlikely to prove effective without concurrent efforts to build citizen demand for government accountability. Current funding levels for demand-led governance are modest. There needs to be a significant increase in funding provided for participatory and demand-led approaches to governance and civil society capacity building.

2. ## The establishment of new partnerships to support demand-led governance initiatives

   New, innovative partnerships are needed to explore promising social accountability approaches in the Asia-Pacific region with a view to demonstrating their value and enlarging the body of evidence relating to their impacts on development effectiveness, community empowerment and improved governance.

3. ## Recognition of the need for civil society involvement in national policy making, particularly service delivery

   Demand-led governance requires some degree of government responsiveness. It has been achieved in countries such as the Philippines, Brazil, Peru and Uganda because the governments have provided either mandated, recognised or legislated space for civil society participation. World Vision urges donors to encourage recipient countries to provide space for participation by civil society groups as a prerequisite for greater community participation.

Further Information

Relevant publications and papers on governance

Arroyo, D. (2005), *Summary Paper on the Stocktaking of Social Accountability Initiatives in Asia and the Pacific.* Washington, DC, World Bank Institute: 33.

Chaudhury, N. D., Shantayanan (2006), *Human development and service delivery in Asia* Development Policy Review 24(s1): s81.

Fukuyama, F. (2005), *State building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century.* Cornell University Press.

Fukuyama, F. (2007), *Civil Society and Improved Governance in Developing Countries.* Speech to the International Transparency and Accountability Program at the Brookings Institute, John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and International Budget Project. March 20.

Narayan, D. (2000), *Crying out for change.* Published by Oxford University Press for the World Bank.

Sirker, V and Cosic, S. (2007), *Empowering the Marginalised: Case Studies of Social Accountability Initiatives in Asia.* World Bank, Washington DC.

Walker, Bill. (2007), Community Based Performance Monitoring. Presentation to AusAID's Civil Society Network, August. United Nations Development Programme. (2002), *Human Development Report 2002 :Deepening democracy in a fragmented world.* New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

About World Vision

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organisation working to create lasting change in the lives of children, families and communities living in poverty. In Australia, World Vision is the country's largest charitable group. With the support of more than 400,000 Australians, World Vision helps over 20 million people every year. The organisation implements humanitarian relief, long-term community development projects and advocacy that address the causes of poverty and helps people move towards self-sufficiency.

To discuss World Vision Australia's position on governance, please contact policy@worldvison.com.au

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[1] Narayan, D (2000) *Crying out for Change*, World Bank, Oxford University Press

[2] Fukuyama, F (2005) *State building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century.* Cornell University Press

[3] Rose-Akerman, Susan (2004). *Governance and Corruption* in Global Crises, Global Solutions, (Ed) Bjorn Lomborg, Cambridge University Press.