FOSTERING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY:

FROM PRINCIPLE TO PRACTICE

GUIDANCE NOTE
AUGUST 2010

United Nations Development Programme

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Overview:

The expansion of formal democracy systems has led to an increased focus on the accountability of states to citizens, and the role of citizens in decision-making processes. Development actors and practitioners recognize that strengthening citizen voice and the engagement of civil society, along with traditional forms of support to develop state systems and institutions, is critical to responsive governance mechanisms, ultimately resulting in more efficient service delivery.

Social accountability is at the heart of UNDP's understanding of democratic governance, and of human development more broadly. Both the UNDP Strategic Plan [2008-2013] and the Global Strategy to Strengthen Civil Society and Civic Engagement [2009] prioritize fostering inclusive participation and building responsive state institutions as means to strengthen democratic governance and accountability.

This note seeks to provide staff with an understanding of how the principles of social accountability are already an integral part of UNDP's approach to human development. The first sections give an overview of definitions and the *principles* of social accountability. The later sections provide guidance on how to incorporate the *practice* of social accountability into programming, illustrated by examples of how it is currently being operationalized in many contexts in different regions.

DISCLAIMER

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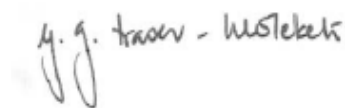|	
A2I	Access to Information
BCPR	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNDP
BDP	Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP
C4D	Communication for Development
C4E	Communication for Empowerment
CBMS	Community Based Monitoring System
CBO	Community Based Organization
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CEMDEF	Community Empowerment for Management of Devolved Funds
CLARION	Centre for Law and Research
CRC	Community Report Card
CSC	Community Score Card
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DG	Democratic Governance
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
IC	Integrity Circle
ICTs	Information and Communication Technology
ICTD	Information and Communication Technology for Development
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MHC	Media High Council
NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
NSSED	National Strategy for Social and Economic Development
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
PEM	Public Expenditure Management
PETS	Public Expenditure Tracking Survey
UNCAC	United Nations Convention against Corruption
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework

PREFACE

The expansion of formal democracy systems has resulted in an increased focus on the accountability of states to citizens, and the role of citizens in decision-making processes. Development actors and practitioners recognize that strengthening citizen voice and the engagement of civil society, along with traditional forms of support to develop state systems and institutions, is critical to responsive governance mechanisms, ultimately resulting in more efficient service delivery.

Social accountability is at the heart of UNDP's understanding of democratic governance, and of human development more broadly. Both the UNDP Strategic Plan [2008-2013] and the Global Strategy to Strengthen Civil Society and Civic Engagement [2009] prioritize fostering inclusive participation and building responsive state institutions as means to strengthen democratic governance and accountability. The civil society strategy emphasizes support to a range of social accountability mechanisms through which citizens and CSOs can engage with state officials at various levels to bring about more responsive governance.
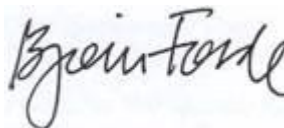
This note is a response to growing demand from UNDP country offices and regional centres for practical guidance on how to adopt social accountability principles and practices and integrate them into programming. It seeks to provide staff with an understanding of how the principles of social accountability are already an integral part of UNDP's approach to human development. It then provides guidance on how to incorporate the practices of social accountability into programming, illustrated by examples of how it is currently being operationalized in many contexts in different regions.

The note has been developed internally, drawing extensively on staff experiences. An initial draft was presented at a global meeting on voice and accountability held in Bogota in December 2008, organized by the Oslo Governance Centre in collaboration with UNDP's Escuela Virtual and UNDP Colombia. This meeting brought practitioners from regional and country offices to discuss experience in this area, and consider practical entry points for programming. The note has been further refined through extensive feedback from numerous colleagues. The final document is the product of a two year consultation and review process.

We hope that this guidance note will be useful to all UNDP staff at headquarters, regional and country level who want to understand the concept of social accountability better and integrate social accountability into UNDP's programming and other activities.

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1. INTRODUCTION

UNDP understands democratic governance as a set of values and principles that underpin state-society relations. This means allowing people, in particular the poor and marginalized, to have a say in how they are governed, in how decisions are made and implemented, in how diverging opinions are mediated and conflicting interests are reconciled in a predictable fashion and in accordance with the rule of law.

Democratic governance, practiced in diverging models of government, means that people's human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected, that they can hold their leaders to account and that they are protected from arbitrary action in their lives by governments, private institutions and other forces. Democratic governance thus results in governing institutions becoming more responsive, inclusive and accountable, and respectful of international norms and principles.

The concept of *accountability* is therefore at the heart of our understanding of democratic governance. However, accountability is a central element not only of democratic governance, but of all aspects of human development since it contributes to ensuring that the interests of the poorest and most marginalized groups in society are taken into account. It is a core human rights principle, and therefore intrinsic to the human rights-based approach [HRBA] to development to which UNDP is committed in all its programming

There are many institutions and mechanisms through which state accountability operates and in which it can be enhanced. Citizens and other rights-holders can demand that governments live up to their obligations through a variety of tools and approaches [other than elections], and governments can respond to such initiatives from citizens. This is termed *'social accountability'* and is the focus of this guidance note.

The principles of social accountability are already embedded in key approaches and frameworks which UNDP uses in the area of democratic governance as well as other areas. A focus on social accountability is fully compatible with and strengthens the implementation of HRBA since it provides additional emphasis to the principle of accountability.

This note seeks to strengthen awareness of one aspect of this principle and ensure it is put into practice more systematically in our programming.

1.1. Purpose of the note

Governments, donors, civil society and other actors including the private sector are increasingly recognising the importance of various levels of accountability to achieve human development and there are now significant funds flowing into initiatives that strengthen transparent and accountable governance. The accountability agenda has given rise to a set of often overlapping concepts and terms. These include 'voice', 'social accountability', 'civil society', 'active citizenship' and 'civic engagement'.

In this fast-changing context, this guidance note seeks to provide UNDP staff with guidance on how to understand social accountability and how to put it into practice to achieve more development effectiveness, providing examples of where this is already happening. The first sections give an overview of definitions and the *principles* of social accountability. The later sections are concerned with the *practice* of social accountability.

Since the concept of social accountability goes to the heart of how UNDP understands democratic governance – linking inclusive participation with responsive institutions – UNDP is working to promote social accountability in multiple ways, and there is already substantial knowledge and experience about how to do so. The purpose of this note is to help promote synergies between different activities which are sometimes separated for institutional and organizational

reasons, and to push the application of social accountability principles beyond what is often thought of as 'democratic governance programming'.

The note also shows that social accountability approaches are not only, or primarily, about the adoption of certain tools [for example, citizen report cards or participatory budgeting] which are becoming increasingly well-known. Rather, a social accountability approach to programming is an analytical lens through which existing programmes or strategies can be viewed to see whether they could be made more effective in supporting citizen participation and responsive governance. This Note does not provide a programming template, but highlights key areas to consider within a given context.

1.2. Background: the new accountability agenda

The principal means by which citizens hold their states to account is through the key features of democratic systems, such as elections and multi-party parliaments. Worldwide, the number of countries embracing such systems has soared from fewer than 60 in 1985 to over 140 in 2007.[1] Although these numbers are impressive, in many countries, rising hopes have turned to frustration due to social and political exclusion, the absence or ineffectiveness of functioning public services, and the lack of accountable institutions. Globally, women are still underrepresented at all levels of decision-making, and in many countries governments have failed to provide the jobs, services and personal security their citizens so badly require to lead fulfilling lives.

At the international level, national governments are increasingly required to answer to actors outside their own borders. Most notably, in the context of direct budget support, aid-dependent countries are required to be accountable to multilateral institutions and donor countries. Accountability is thus directed 'outward', with answerability to donors often taking precedence over accountability 'downward' to citizens or to parliaments.

Within countries, the disillusionment with the limited impact of introducing formal democratic systems coupled with the increasing recognition that citizens and communities have an important role to play in how their government performs has led to many development organizations adopting an agenda that stresses 'transparency,' 'voice' and 'accountability'. They argue that citizens must exert pressure on governments to live up to their obligations and promote human development, including the promotion and protection of human rights, adoption of a pro-poor approach to economic growth, ensuring the provision of social services to vulnerable groups, and protection of the environment.

The increasing emphasis on decentralized government and decision-making at the local level has also created opportunities for a new set of actors to engage in decision-making processes. Municipalities, districts and regions are being given extended powers to control resources and service delivery that were once the domain of central government. The belief is that bringing government to the local level brings it "closer to the people" and increases opportunities for citizen participation.

One additional dimension driving the accountability agenda is aid and development effectiveness: with the adoption of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005, and the resolutions from the follow-up meeting in Accra in September 2008, UNDP is actively involved in dialogue with OECD-DAC member states, partner countries as well as global civil society on a variety of issues related to aid management and mutual accountability.

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[1]   Data available at http://www.freedomhouse.org

2. ACCOUNTABILITY AND 'SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY'

Although UNDP has worked on 'transparency', 'accountability' and 'integrity' since the 1990s, it is clear that there has recently been a sharp increase in attention to these as key elements in achieving human development in general and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in particular. The renewed focus on accountability underlines the importance of state-society relations, in the context of efforts to support building a capable, effective and inclusive state.

2.1. Understanding accountability[2]

Simply defined, accountability is the obligation of power-holders to take responsibility for their actions. It describes the rights and responsibilities that exist between people and the institutions [including governments, civil society and market actors] that have an impact on their lives.[3] In democratic states, accountability relationships help to ensure that decision-makers adhere to publicly agreed standards, norms and goals: citizens grant their government powers to tax, to spend, and to enact and enforce laws and policies. In return, they expect the government to explain and justify its use of power and to take corrective measures when needed.

In this view, accountability has a *political* purpose [to check the abuse of power by the political executive] and an *operational* purpose [ensure the effective functioning of governments].[4] To be effective, accountability must have two components: *answerability* - the obligation to provide an account and the right to get a response; and *enforceability* - ensuring that action is taken or redress provided when accountability fails.[5]

Accountability is a key element of a human rights-based approach, which emphasizes the relationship between the duties of the state and the corresponding entitlements of the individual. It helps identify who has a responsibility to act to ensure that rights are fulfilled. For accountability to function, there must also be *transparency*[6], for in the absence of reliable and timely information there is no basis for demanding answers or for enforcing sanctions.[7] **Box 1** [on page 8] provides a summary of common definitions of various terms related to accountability relationships, although there is much variation in how these terms are used in practice.

Accountability can be *vertical* - imposed externally on governments, formally through electoral processes or indirectly through civic engagement, and it can be *horizontal* - imposed by governments internally through institutional mechanisms for oversight and checks and balances.[8] Examples of these different types of mechanisms are illustrated in **Figure 1** [on page 9].

Yet, both vertical and horizontal forms of accountability have been found to be unsatisfactory on many counts [e.g., inadequate electoral processes, insufficient checks and balances insti-

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[2]   This section draws on the useful discussion in UNIFEM (2008): "Who Answers to Women? Gender and Accountability" New York: UNIFEM, Chapter 1.

[3]   Peter Newell and Joanna Wheeler. 2006. 'Making Accountability Count.' *IDS Policy Briefing*. 33.

[4]   Mark Schacter (2000): 'When Accountability Fails: A Framework for Diagnosis and Action.' Policy Brief No. 9. Institute on Governance.

[5]   Andreas Schedler (1999): 'Conceptualizing Accountability.' In The Self-Restraining State: Power and Accountability in New Democracies. Eds. Andreas Schedler, Larry Diamond, and Marc F. Plattner. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers: 13–28.

[6]   Transparency has been described as "relat[ing] to openness in the processes and procedures in performing and reporting on the designated function. To be transparent, the processes and procedures must be clear, easily understood, and implemented without guile or concealment." p.19. UNDP Country Assessment in Transparency and Accountability (CONTACT) (2001).

[7]   Mike Moore and Graham Teskey (2006). 'The CAR. Framework: Capability, Accountability, Responsiveness: What Do These Terms Mean, Individually and Collectively? A Discussion Note for DFID Governance and Conflict Advisors', DFID Governance Retreat, 14-17 November.

[8]   Guillermo O'Donnell. 1998. 'Horizontal Accountability in New Democracies.' *Journal of Democracy*. 9(3):112-126.

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tuted by the state, secrecy laws, lack of entry points for citizens, particularly for marginalized groups].

Efforts to address the shortcomings of vertical [demand] and horizontal [supply] aspects of accountability have tended to focus separately on each side. For example, efforts to strengthen vertical accountability have involved supporting civil society actors, developing capacity in NGOs, and encouraging citizen participation in policy processes and in service provision, grievance mechanisms and monitoring systems. Horizontal accountability initiatives have involved improving internal government mechanisms to investigate and correct electoral, corruption, human rights abuses and improving audits of public expenditure.[9]

[Box 1]

Common definitions of accountability types

Upward accountability: Defined as the answerability of lower ranks to a higher-level authority, such as that of local government bodies to a national body.

Downward accountability: The answerability of a higher rank to a lower level, for example, a Ministry of Finance to municipalities that receive part of their funds from central level.

Vertical accountability: Imposed externally on governments, formally through electoral processes or indirectly through citizens and civil society, including mass media. These external actors seek to enforce standards of good performance on officials. The most common mechanism for the exercise of vertical accountability is an election.

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.

Hybrid accountability: Where civil society itself takes on attributes of the state in supervising the performance of state agencies. Participatory budgeting, report cards on public service, citizen audits are examples of hybrid accountability mechanisms.

Domestic accountability: Refers to all domestic accountability relationships, including vertical, horizontal, downward, upward, hybrid and social accountability.

Mutual accountability: This term is frequently employed in the context of aid effectiveness, with regard to the relationship between donors and aid recipients. It speaks to the notions of reciprocity and the presence of mutual expectations related to the conduct of both parties.

Outward accountability: The answerability of domestic/national actors to external donors or development partners.

Social accountability: a form of accountability which emerges from actions by citizens and civil society organization (CSOs) aimed at holding the state to account, as well as efforts by government and other actors (media, private sector, donors) to support these actions.

Source: Goetz and Gaventa (2001), Goetz and Jenkins (2005)

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[9]   Anne-Marie Goetz and John Gaventa (2001): Bringing Citizen Voice and Client Focus into Service Delivery. IDS Working Paper 138. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

Figure 1: Vertical and horizontal mechanisms of state accountability[10]
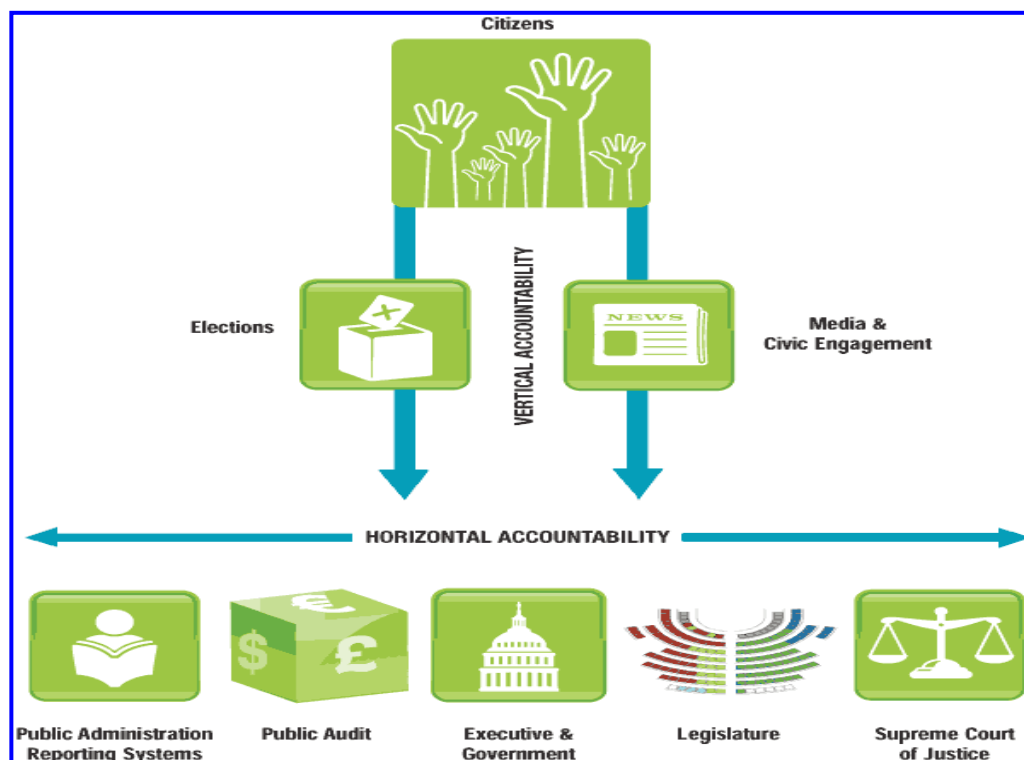
2.2. Understanding social accountability

Social accountability refers to a form of accountability that emerges through actions by citizens and civil society organization [CSOs] aimed at holding the state to account, as well as efforts by government and other actors [media, private sector, donors] to support these actions.

Social accountability can provide extra sets of checks and balances on the state in the public interest, exposing instances of corruption, negligence and oversight which horizontal forms of accountability are unlikely or unable to address.[11] Unlike other forms of vertical accountability such as elections, social accountability can often be exercised on a continuous basis, through the media, the judiciary, public hearings, citizen juries, campaigns, demonstrations, and so on. Social accountability mechanisms thus complement and enhance formal government accountability mechanisms, including political, fiscal, administrative and legal mechanisms.

There are many different mechanisms and tools that can enhance social accountability – for example, strengthening access to information, strengthening independent media, or using specific tools, such as citizen report cards or citizen juries. These *practices* are discussed in Section 5.

2.3. Why focus on social accountability?

It is important to emphasize that social accountability is the operationalization of a number of key *principles* which are at the heart of both democratic governance and a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to development. States are legally responsible for commitments they have made under international human rights treaties and their own national legislation. Rights-

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[10] UNIFEM (2008): Who Answers to Women? Gender and Accountability, New York.

[11] Institute for Development Studies (November 2006): IDS Policy Briefing, Issue 33.

holders are entitled to hold them to account for these obligations and can use a wide array of formal and informal measures do so. Formal measures include legal mechanisms, such as the use of courts and international treaty bodies.

Social accountability can enhance development outcomes and progress towards the achievement of human development overall as well as the MDGs by strengthening links between governments and citizens to:

- improve the focus of public service delivery;
- monitor government performance and foster responsive governance;
- emphasize the needs of vulnerable groups in policy formulation and implementation;
- demand transparency and expose government failure and corruption;
- facilitate effective links between citizens and local governments in the context of decentralization;
- empower marginalized groups traditionally excluded from policy processes.

An example of how social accountability approaches have been used to contribute towards achieving the MDGs in Albania is discussed on page 32.

Social accountability practices can particularly contribute to addressing gender-based inequalities. A number of social accountability tools such as gender budgeting and gender-disaggregated participatory monitoring and evaluation specifically address gender issues in public policy. However, social accountability initiatives can also be affected by gender inequality. Women are systematically underrepresented in most civil society organizations, state institutions and the government, which can limit their capacity to promote their own interests. Excellent analysis and resources related to gender aspects of social accountability are available in detail elsewhere.[12]

2.3. Understanding related concepts

Voice

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.[13] 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 factors. These include:

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[12] UNIFEM (2008): Who Answers to Women? Gender and Accountability, New York. Resources in relation to gender budgeting initiatives are available here.

[13] Anne-Marie Goetz and John Gaventa (2001): Bringing Citizen Voice and Client Focus into Service Delivery. IDS Working Paper no. 138. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

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.

An example from the Philippines on the ways in which different voices were brought together to strengthen municipal accountability is discussed on page 33.

Civic engagement

Civic engagement as a concept has much in common with social accountability, but is not synonymous with it. Both are related to the idea of collective action by citizens that "involve people in the economic, social, cultural and political processes that affect their lives".[14] Civic engagement is a broad concept, encompassing a number of different mechanisms through which citizens or their representatives engage with and seek to influence public processes in order to achieve civic objectives and goals.

The 2008-2013 Strategic Plan identifies the following different mechanisms and opportunities for civic engagement:

- electoral laws, institutions and processes,
- mobilization channels [such as political parties and civil society organizations],
- communications channels [access to information networks, e-governance, and independent media].

Social accountability has an element of demanding responsiveness and accountability from the state, which is not necessarily present in all forms of civic engagement. Thus actions by citizens to promote social accountability constitute one form of civic engagement but not all civic engagement contributes to social accountability.

Participation

The concept of participation is also closely linked to voice, social accountability and civic engagement. There are multiple understandings of participation, even within UNDP, and no corporate definition. In general terms, many view participation as a process whereby people take part and contribute towards policy development and implementation.[15] However, there are many different levels and types of participation, and different typologies to describe them. One approach is to consider the following levels of participation:[16]

- **Information & awareness**: At this level, actual 'participation' is minimal and includes information sharing, public awareness campaigns & educational initiatives.
- **Consultation**: Consultation engages citizens and stakeholders in dialogue and networking, and involves stakeholder analyses and issue mapping.
- **Representation**: At this level, stakeholder preferences are represented in public policy forums, through citizen and/or community advocacy groups.

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14 The UNDP Human Development Report 1993 describes civic engagement as "a process, not an event, that closely involves people in the economic social, cultural and political processes that affect their lives".

15 UNDP (1997): Empowering People: A Guide to Participation, Civil Society Organization and Participation Programme, New York: UNDP.

16 UNDP (2010) Marginalized Peoples' Participation in Public Policy (MP4) Public Policy Participation Primer. Draft. Available at http://teamworks.beta.undp.org/pg/groups/116508/mp4m/

- **Partnerships**: At this level, consultation is turned into actual collaboration, where citizen forums take initiative in policy development & implementation.
- **Oversight & audits**: At this level, stakeholders 'own' initiatives for policy development and service delivery, and provide the necessary monitoring and evaluation as full owners over the process.

The participation of citizens is a necessary pre-condition for the promotion of social accountability, and it distinguishes social accountability from other conventional accountability mechanisms (like public audit systems, the legislature and others). However, often participatory approaches do not explicitly focus on accountability.

3. UNDP AND SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

This section looks at the relevance of social accountability to a number of UNDP operational areas. It outlines social accountability concepts in the Strategic Plan and then looks in detail at their particular relevance to specific areas of UNDP programming, including the different areas of democratic governance programming.

3.1. UNDP: Strategic direction 2008-2013

UNDP has a strong comparative advantage in promoting social accountability. Its experience and expertise in democratic governance, its traditional relationship as a trusted and neutral partner with host governments, together with its widely acknowledged coordinating role by other development actors enable UNDP to play a leadership role. UNDP can promote both the need for social accountability and provide support to governments and citizens' groups in how to operationalize the concept in practice, integrating it into national development and service delivery processes.

The 2008-2013 Strategic Plan, '*Accelerating Global Progress on Human Development*', emphasizes the role of democratic governance in achieving human development through the MDGs and identifies the importance of *fostering inclusive participation* and *strengthening accountable and responsive governing institutions* as critical processes. Together, these approaches constitute a commitment to social accountability and recognize the importance of working on both 'demand' and 'supply' to achieve accountable states. The Plan stresses the need to enhance the participation and engagement of all rights-holders and vulnerable and marginalized groups in particular (the poor, women, youth, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples) in public policy dialogues and decision-making.

However, as discussed above, concepts of social accountability are central not only in the discussion of democratic governance in the Strategic Plan, but are fundamental to our approach to human development and are therefore embedded in the frameworks and approaches that are used throughout the Plan. UNDP's approach to capacity development, identified as the overarching contribution of UNDP to human development, explicitly highlights the importance of accountability as one of four key domains which capacity development interventions should address (along with institutional arrangements, leadership and knowledge). The five-step approach of UNDP to capacity development helps identify strategic entry points through which to work on accountability issues and address capacity deficits.

3.2. Social accountability and UNDP programming

Examples of the operationalization of the principles of social accountability through work with both the 'supply' and 'demand' side can be found throughout UNDP programming.

To stimulate the 'demand' side, UNDP works in many contexts by emphasizing civic engagement and strengthening the role of civil society, as discussed in UNDP's civil society strategy.[17] UNDP partners with a wide cross-section of local, regional and global civil society organizations (CSOs) in programme implementation and policy advocacy across all its six thematic areas. UNDP also works to strengthen the legal, regulatory, and normative environment in which civil society seeks to hold governments to account. Many good case studies of this work are available elsewhere and will not be repeated here.[18] An example of how CSOs and CBOs in Kenya have helped to ensure improved local-level accountability in the management of funds allocated

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[17]   UNDP (2008): Voice and Accountability for Human Development: A UNDP Global Strategy to Strengthen Civil Society and Civic Engagement.

[18]   See UNDP (2008): Partnerships in Action: UNDP Engagement with Civil Society, available here.

for local development, including funds for which elected leaders are directly responsible, is discussed on page 35.

In the thematic areas, UNDP works on both the 'demand' and 'supply' side of social accountability. In the area of poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs, UNDP stresses enhancing the voice of local actors in local development processes through participatory assessment, planning and monitoring of programmes and plans. The Albanian example on page 32 illustrates integrated strategies that UNDP uses both to enhance the participation of people in defining pro-poor policies and also to build the capacity of state institutions to be responsive and promote pro-poor livelihood strategies.

In the Environment and Energy sector, UNDP works with rural and indigenous communities to enhance their participation in defining policies as well engaging with issues around natural resource management. In Eastern Cameroon, for example, the Baka people were provided with video cameras to document how climate change is damaging the forests where they live. The resulting documentary was used in advocacy work at the Global Indigenous Summit on Climate Change.

In the area of HIV/AIDS,[19] civil society organizations and groups have historically engaged in advocacy to press for a range of policy objectives including better health care and more accessible and affordable anti-retroviral treatment. They have been particularly effective in drawing attention to populations and communities that are often left out of policy debates and dialogues, as well as the planning, implementation and monitoring of HIV/AIDS responses.[20]

UNDP's Gender Equality Strategy (2008-2011) stresses the importance of giving explicit attention to the enlargement of women's capabilities on an equal basis with men. The strategy emphasizes strengthening the capacities of women to participate in policy planning, reporting, and monitoring and evaluation of programmes.[21]

Post-conflict countries are particularly challenging environments for developing social accountability systems and mechanisms.[22] This is primarily due to the fact that state institutions and governance systems and networks have either been destroyed or critically weakened by conflict. Reduced or non-existent government ownership of development processes is common, and interest groups tend to form to protect narrow interests. In some contexts, revitalizing state structures also results in excessive centralization which can result in very few opportunities at a sub-national level for state-citizen interaction.

Early recovery in post-conflict contexts poses additional special challenges as it often requires quick support to ensure security, protect and address the needs and rights of victims and vulnerable groups such as IDPs and women, strengthen the rule of law and access to justice and deliver quick results to demonstrate the "peace dividend". The need to move fast in such circumstances is often thought to work against the slower processes needed for building participation and social accountability.

The capacity of citizens to participate in decision making processes has often also been undermined by a number of factors related to conflict, including lack of trust in weakened institutions, shifting power relations, fear of retribution, displacement and so on. Despite the challenges, such contexts may also provide an opportunity to enhance human rights and establish a social contract that rests on the rule of law, justice and security. They may also prove a critical moment to reassess gender roles and capacities, and to take concrete steps towards strengthening women's empowerment and gender equality.

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[19] For case studies and practical guidance on how to enhance the impact of civil society in HIV/AIDS responses see UNDP (2009): Civil Society & Government Partnership in National AIDS Responses: Designing and Implementing Programmes, Guidance Note.

[20] UNAIDS 2006 *Report on the Global Epidemic.*

[21] UNDP (2008), Empowered and Equal: Gender equality strategy (2008-2011), New York: UNDP

[22] See UNDP (2007): Capacity Development During Periods of Transition, Practice Note.

3.3. Social Accountability and DG Programming

Social accountability is at the heart of UNDP's work in democratic governance and is relevant to all its service areas.

E-Governance and Access to Information via ICTs

Recent evidence from several developing countries indicates that better development outcomes can be achieved if the needs and priorities of potential beneficiaries are taken into account by policy and decision makers. In this context, citizens' voices are heard and acted upon. It is here where supply (government) can effectively meet demand (stakeholders).

The rapid emergence and diffusion of new Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) has created new channels for citizens and stakeholders to interact with governments in a more effective fashion. It has also provided innovative solutions to deliver basic public services to poor and marginalized communities on larger scales and at affordable costs. UNDP's work on e-governance is based on these premises and takes a citizen/stakeholder-centered approach, with a pro-poor approach fostering participation and accountability. This represents a move away from traditional e-government interventions where citizens are only seen as clients. As stakeholders, citizens are part and parcel of both policy agenda setting and the implementation of programmes, including decisions around public investment - at the local level in particular.

UNDP's e-governance framework has three core components:

1. E-administration: ICT investments to foster efficiency, transparency and accountability within public institutions, both national and local.

2. E-service delivery: ICT investments to deliver public services to people, with a focus on poor and marginalized populations.

3. E-participation: ICT investments to foster interaction between public institutions and citizens to promote better policies, services and public operations. It includes three levels: information provision to citizens, consultation with citizens, and dialogue between government and citizens.

Work in this area takes place through three additional cross-cutting components:

- Access to ICT and Connectivity: ICT investments in information infrastructure, connectivity and equipment to foster wider use, for example broadband, community services centers and public access points.

- Access to Information (A2I) via ICTs: Public ICT investments to promote both the digitalization and dissemination of public information among the overall population and the emergence of new and independent media outlets using new technologies.

- Policy, Enabling Environment and Regulation: Public investments to support the creation and implementation of ICTD and e-governance policies, regulation, access to information legislation and related.

UNDP is also supporting work on using mobile technologies to improve governance. Mobile technologies have tremendous potential in terms of opening up access to poor and marginalized populations and could be used in many social accountability initiatives and pro-poor e-service delivery endeavors.

The work on A2I via ICTs is closely linked to UNDP's broader work in the area of access to information, which is a foundational element that supports the development of social accountability.[23] UNDP concentrates on strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks to enhance the freedom and pluralism of information sources. It works on both 'demand' and 'supply' sides -

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[23] See UNDP (2003) Access to Information Practice Note
http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/docs03/access_to_information_practice_note.pdf

strengthening both the capacity of state institutions to provide access to official information and civil society's capacity to demand information and manage independent information outlets. UNDP also works to integrate Communication for Development (C4D) approaches[24] in the implementation of programme and projects in order to raise awareness of development issues and create safe public spaces for debate, dialogue and action on key issues. Additionally, UNDP supports mechanisms to amplify people's voices, including through the media. One such example is the Communication for Empowerment (C4E) initiative, which aims to identify the information and communication needs of marginalized groups through tailored needs assessments and the development of media strategies to address the needs identified. UNDP also provides assistance to advance free, plural and independent media, and enable media to play its public service and watch-dog role.

Access to Justice and Legal Empowerment of the Poor

In the absence of access to justice, people cannot have their voices heard, exercise their rights, challenge discrimination, or hold decision-makers accountable. Rule of law, access to justice and legal empowerment are therefore indispensible factors which facilitate the functioning of social accountability, as well as contributing to an enabling environment for the enhancement of human development and reduction of poverty. In UNDP the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery [BCPR] and the Bureau for Development Policy [BDP] jointly work with COs to deliver on rule of law, security and access to justice programming in all developing country situations.

UNDP helps partners to enhance legitimacy and public confidence in the justice system by promoting civic participation in legal reform processes to ensure that reform measures, laws and procedures are pro-poor, address the challenges in the sector, and are more likely to be used to demand accountability from the state. Additionally, UNDP's access to justice and legal empowerment engagement emphasizes the importance of engaging with grassroots and civil society actors that support the accountability of the state to its citizens.

Human Rights

Human rights add significance to the agenda of development, and underpin UNDP's work on social accountability. They draw attention to accountability for the delivery of development benefits to all people, and lend legal and moral legitimacy, and a sense of social justice to the objectives of human development. This perspective directs attention in setting development goals to the rights and needs of the most deprived and excluded members of society, especially where deprivations are the result of discrimination. It also highlights the right to information, political voice for all, and other civil and political rights as an integral part of the development process.

There are two aspects to UNDP's human rights work, both of which are relevant to the fostering of social accountability. One focuses on supporting countries to build the capacity of the systems and institutions (independent human rights commissions, ombudsman office and others) put in place at national and sub-national levels to promote and protect human rights. It also assists countries to have greater engagement with the international human rights machinery through harmonizing national laws and policies with international human rights norms and standards, meeting the reporting obligations, and participating in human rights meetings and conferences.

The other key aspect of UNDP's work is about promotion and application of the use of human rights-based approaches (HRBA) to development programming. These approaches promote social transformation by empowering people to exercise their "voice" to influence the processes of change. They give substance to universal principles of human rights by translating them into entitlements and concrete actions.[25] As indicated earlier, HRBA and social accountability are

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24   See UNDP (2009) Communication for Development: A Glimpse at UNDP's Practice, Oslo: UNDP Oslo Governance Centre.
25   UNDP (2005) Human Rights in UNDP: Practice Note, New York: UNDP

mutually reinforcing approaches. While HRBA provides a set of tools and essential references for applying principles of human rights to development programming, social accountability approaches provide additional practical means and tools to enhance participation and empower people to demand accountability.

Public Administration and Local Governance

A country's public administration at national and sub-national levels is the key interface between the supply and the demand for good governance, between state and the people. It is therefore the critical 'location' for social accountability initiatives. Many of the social accountability tools discussed in the following section are explicitly designed to enhance the interaction between state and citizen through the public administration for increased accountability. For example: participatory social impact analysis and policy audits can increase the responsiveness of the policy-making system; community score cards and social audits can assist in monitoring and improving public services; and alternative budgeting, public budget oversights, and public procurement monitoring methods can enhance the participation of citizens in revenue and expenditure management systems. In practice, it is their use at the sub-national level that often has the most impact, but also where there can be the greatest resistance to their use.

UNDP's support to public administration and local governance already includes a broad range of initiatives addressing not only the more traditional concerns for modernizing the public administration at national and sub-national levels including the training of public servants and elected local representatives, but also aiming to give more voice to citizens in public policy debates, and supporting access to information. Indeed, strengthening the 'demand' from citizens for better performance of public services also reinforces efforts to promote internal accountability mechanisms within state institutions. UNDP's work in this area is therefore increasingly focused on encouraging citizen inclusion in policy and decision-making processes and could be further strengthened through an increased emphasis on social accountability principles and practices.

Anti-Corruption

Corruption adversely affects efforts to reduce poverty, protect the environment, promote human rights and ensure gender equality, and is of great concern to poor people. It is often the 'target' of social accountability initiatives. The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) articles 9, 10 and 13 supports the use of social accountability tools like social audits, citizen's audits, budget tracking, and public procurement monitoring to ensure citizen participation and engagement in anti-corruption efforts.[26]

UNDP addresses the far reaching social, economic and political consequences of corruption through all its practice areas. Through the democratic governance practice area, UNDP works with both governments and citizens to combat corruption. Specifically, it supports the adoption of anti-corruption frameworks and the strengthening of oversight institutions. It also provides countries with technical assistance in the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), and specifically the preventive measures indicated in chapter two of the UNCAC. Further, UNDP supports the development and utilization of nationally owned governance and anti-corruption measurement tools.

In addition to strengthening state capacity to address corruption and improve the transparency and accountability of the public administration, UNDP also gives priority to encouraging efforts by key partners in civil society, media and the private sector to demand state accountability. UNDP provides capacity building support to media and CSOs in anti-corruption norms, standards and practice and supports them in playing a watch-dog role. It also supports increased access to official information, including budgets and expenditure reports. UNDP also pays specific attention to ensure women's participation in designing and implementing anti-corruption initiatives, including through various social accountability methods.

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[26] UNDP (2008), UNDP Framework on Corruption and Development: Anti-corruption Guidance Note, New York: UNDP

Electoral Systems and Processes

Elections are fundamental to democratic governance systems and the primary means for citizens to hold their governments to account and choose the ones that they think will meet their needs. However, they need to take place within the context of a broader democratic system to ensure transparent and accountable governments are in place. UNDP works in this area through the 'electoral cycle approach' which emphasizes elections as cyclical processes rather than events held at periodic intervals. The electoral cycle is divided into three broad phases – **pre-electoral** (e.g. regarding planning, training and education, registration and nomination, and the electoral campaign), **electoral** (voting election day(s), verification of results) and **post-electoral**.

UNDP places equal importance on electoral administration and development (electoral reform, electoral processes, and the capacity building of electoral institutions) through-out the electoral cycle and on building partnerships with civil society and the media to enhance civic participation, and enable the electorate to make informed critical choices. Specifically, it works with CSOs (and the states) to improve pre-election, election and post-election outreach, particularly targeting women and other underrepresented segments of society, in a range of areas, including civic and voter education, voter mobilization, election monitoring, and post-election agenda setting. UNDP's work with the media in the area of elections revolves around building the capacity of the media to provide balanced election coverage. It also ensures equal opportunities for election campaigning for all political parties and, in some countries, it specifically works towards enhancing the access of political parties to the media.

Applying social accountability principles in this area will further strengthen efforts to enhance engagement of citizens and CSOs in all aspects of the electoral cycle. Specifically, it could enhance opportunities for wider engagement in election monitoring and reporting on election campaign financing. Depending on the country context, UNDP could support partners and others in developing innovative ways to engage citizens in monitoring elections and also managing conflicts related to elections through citizen driven alternative dispute resolution mechanisms (for example: Vote Report India is an online citizen-driven election monitoring platform[27]). Further, UNDP's support through other areas of democratic governance programme, including access to information, anti-corruption, parliaments and public administration reform also advance efforts to ensure that elections are free and fair.

Parliamentary Development

Parliaments are vital public accountability and oversight institutions in a democratic governance system. With more countries adopting elections as legitimate means to enable people to choose their government, there is an increased demand for strengthening democratic institutions to ensure that the elected governments are transparent, accountable and responsive to the needs of the people. UNDP parliamentary development support is aimed at promoting robust democratic practices by enhancing the representative, legislative and oversight roles of the parliaments. It provides support to parliaments in constitutional reform, establishing rules of procedure and framework laws, legislative review, policy research and analysis, enhancing women parliamentarians' role, and enhancing parliament's role in financial accountability and economic development, among others and thereby, enhance parliament's relevance vis-à- vis the executive and the judiciary.

Most importantly, UNDP focuses on strengthening parliaments' relationship with civil society in order to be able to bring in different voices to inform parliamentary decisions. Further, linking parliaments with key CSOs will enhance parliaments' access to CSOs' research and analysis on key issues (including findings of social audits, community score cards, public expenditure track-

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[27] Vote Report India is an online collaborative citizen-driven election monitoring platform established to monitor the 2009 Indian general elections. Users send reports regarding violations of the Indian Election Commission's Model Code of Conduct through SMS, email and web report. The platform aggregates these reports online on an interactive map. For more details see http://votereport.in/

ing and others). These findings would enable parliamentarians to make more informed decisions while reviewing or developing pro-poor policies and programmes, and also be used to hold government to account. In addition, citizen and CSO participation in various parliamentary committee meetings allows them to question and/or influence decisions around budget allocation, public expenditure and other key policies that affect people's rights.

In addition, stronger engagement of citizens and CSOs in parliamentary processes will strengthen parliaments' and parliamentarians' own accountability and transparency. UNDP supports parliaments with institutional outreach and civic education to increase public and media awareness of the role of the parliament. It also supports parliamentarians to improve relationships with their constituencies by facilitating meetings between parliamentarians and their constituent members and providing capacity building support to CSOs and citizens to interact with parliamentarians and participate in public hearings and discussions.

As evident from above, stronger integration of social accountability principles and methods would be valuable at two levels. One, it will assist in strengthening parliamentary processes and enhance civic engagement in supporting the legislative and oversight role of the parliament. Two, it will improve interaction between parliamentarians and CSOs and citizens and reinforce demands at the constituent level for more accountability from parliamentarians (and elected officials).

4. PUTTING PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

It is helpful to see social accountability in terms of both *principles* and *practices*. The principles have been discussed extensively in sections two and three.

There are three stages in working with social accountability practices.

1. Understanding the context and environment
2. Working with programmes and projects
3. Monitoring, evaluation, impact assessment and review

Each stage is discussed in detail below.

4.1. **Stage 1:** *Understanding the context and environment*

To guide social accountability practice it is important to ask two sets of questions related to understanding the context and assessing UNDP's niche:

Understanding the political, social and institutional context:

Key questions to guide analysis of the scope for adopting social accountability practices in a given context [whether this is a country, particular locality or sector] are:

- What are the linkages between different formal and informal accountability mechanisms? That is, how do accountability *systems* work, rather than isolated institutions? The tendency in the past has been to work on building the capacity of particular institutions [like parliaments] rather than understanding how different mechanisms function together [or not].

- How are different groups of citizens able to express their voices, and through what channels are they heard?

- What are the entry points with governments, civil society organisations and other stakeholders for working on social accountability initiatives?

- What political, social and institutional risks are there in working on these issues?

Answering these questions is essentially conducting a partial political economy analysis. At a country-level this type of analysis should be informing the country programme document, as well as the CCA and UNDAF. This type of analysis can also be applied to sub-national contexts as well as particular sectors.

There are various tools available to assist in this type of analysis, including 'drivers of change' tools, stakeholder analysis matrices, network analysis tools and political mapping tools.[28] Though it is beyond the scope of this Note to provide detailed guidance on carrying out this type of analysis, an indicative list of questions that can be used to conduct political-economy analysis at various levels is provided in Annex B.

Promoting social accountability may sometimes be sensitive or difficult. It often involves a redistribution of power away from those who are used to making decisions, often without being questioned. Strengthening the influence of the voices of those who have traditionally been excluded can therefore be politically, socially and institutionally sensitive, and there are risks involved. Assessment of those risks should therefore be an integral part of understanding the

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28 Other donors are currently producing helpful guides on how to conduct political economy analysis, including DFID and the World Bank. The OECD-DAC govnet is also undertaking a substantial study on 'accountability systems;' and how they function in practice.; A useful resource book which clearly lays out different approaches and their suitability in different contexts as well as providing case studies is World Bank (2007) Tools for Institutional, Political and Social Analysis of Policy Reform, available here.

context. There are a number of different tools available to help assess risk, including those developed by other donors and the private sector.[29]

Assessing the UNDP niche in a given context

The key questions to ask are:

- What other actors are working in this field?
- How can UNDP work strategically to leverage the different initiatives for maximum development impact?

There are now many others – including state institutions, private sector organisations, other UN agencies, multilateral and bilateral donors, international and other NGOs, and other CSOs – working on social accountability issues in different contexts. Some have particular expertise in certain areas, for example, in budgetary analysis. Others work more generally on linking states and citizens. An illustrative list of international organisations working on related issues is provided in the resource section.

In what is becoming a very 'crowded' field with increasingly large sums of money available for interventions, it is very important that UNDP does not duplicate activities. Rather, UNDP's role is to understand the varying contributions that different actors can make, and seek to ensure that they work together for maximum impact.

UNDP can play a unique role in this, given its special relationship with governments, and its ability to convene different actors around a particular issue. Additionally in some contexts, certain groups or organizations play an intermediary or catalyst role and help build the capacity of citizens to raise their voices and/or the government to respond. Supporting such organizations can be an appropriate role for UNDP, particularly in an environment where it is not seen as appropriate for UNDP to be seen as too aggressive in promoting social accountability.

An example is given from the Pacific sub-region on page 36.

4.2. **Stage 2:** *Programmes and projects – approaches and tools*

A social accountability approach to programming attempts to ensure that the key principles of social accountability inform activities. It may or may not result in specific 'social accountability' programmes. Having conducted analysis of the context and environment (stage one), there are then a range of options, which can be chosen in combination with each other:

- **Option one:** work with programmes and projects that have a specific focus on enhancing social accountability principles;

- and/or **option two:** emphasise social accountability principles in new or existing programmes and projects which have a different primary focus

- and/or **option three:** work in non-programmatic ways with other stakeholders (government, civil society, private sector) to enhance social accountability principles.

Each of these three options is discussed below.

Option one: Work with programmes and projects that have a specific focus on enhancing social accountability principles

There are many different types of initiatives and interventions which can be employed to enhance the principles of social accountability. As discussed above, many of these are areas and activities that UNDP is already involved in, for example:

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[29] See for example, Price Waterhouse Coopers political risk assessment diagnostic and monitoring methodology.

- access to information and e-governance issues[30]
- 'communication for empowerment' approaches[31]
- nationally owned governance assessments[32]
- strengthening civil society's ability to engage in policy processes[33]
- strengthening independent media
- civic education
- facilitating public consultations and hearings [like on poverty reduction strategies]
- election monitoring
- supporting citizen oversight committees for improved service delivery

Detailed advice and resources on working in each of these areas can be found elsewhere among UNDP knowledge products, including in the resources referenced above.

Option two: Emphasise social accountability principles in new or existing programmes and projects which have a different primary focus

A social accountability approach is about ensuring that a set of principles are operationalized to achieve improved governance and empowerment of people. There are many ways to do this when working with programmes or projects which have a different primary focus, for example, mitigating the effects of climate change, or providing services for people living with HIV/AIDS. In many countries, programmes can be marginally changed to ensure improved social accountability outcomes. Two useful ways are discussed here:

Programme/project analysis - running a 'social accountability' check

One means of working with the principles of social accountability in a programming context is to run a 'social accountability check' to examine whether concrete channels are in place for citizens to express their voice, influence decisions, and hold duty-bearers to account- as well as measure the capacity of institutions and government officials to respond and be accountable. [34] Many of the issues addressed are similar to those covered in the political economy analysis described above, but a programmatic check is likely to be more focused on the specific area under consideration rather than the operation of broader formal and informal systems.

A number of UNDP and other planning exercises place great emphasis on the mobilisation of financial resources and technical solutions, but not enough on social or political factors that are barriers to change. At a programmatic level, understanding the factors for exclusion of people or some groups of peoples from decision-making processes (e.g., lack of mechanisms for participation, lack of skills on the part of citizens for effective engagement, other social norms) is useful in developing approaches that focus on *transforming power relations* (whether political, economic, cultural or legal), one of the core underlying principles of social accountability.

Running a social accountability check draws attention to the following questions:

- ✓ *What are the concrete channels through which citizens can express their voice or demands, and are able to hold duty-bearers to account?*

- ✓ *Do men and women access these 'communication' channels differently?*

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[30] See UNDP (2003): Access to Information: Practice Note.

[31] For an approach to assessing the information and communication needs of vulnerable groups see UNDP (2006): Communication for Empowerment: developing media strategies in support of vulnerable groups: Practical Guidance Note.

[32] See Democratic Governance Assessments webpage on UNDP Oslo Governance Centre Website and the Governance Assessment Portal (GAP).

[33] UNDP (2008): Voice and Accountability for Human Development: A UNDP Global Strategy to Strengthen Civil Society and Civic Engagement. These and other UNDP resources are available here.

[34] The suggested 'social accountability check' is adapted from the empowerment framework presented in UNDP (2009): "Claiming the MDGs: An Empowerment Framework", OGC Framework Paper no1.

    ✓   *Do institutions (particularly service delivery institutions) and government officials have the capacity to respond and be accountable?*

Using a gender lens, it looks at the capacity of and mechanisms for the most vulnerable groups:

- **To seek, access and obtain information:**
  - ✓ *Do vulnerable groups know that they are supposed to claim their entitlements?*
  - ✓ *Are they aware of their rights? Is there a difference in the level of awareness among men and women?*
  - ✓ *What kind of information channels exists to inform vulnerable groups? Do men and women access these channels differently?*
  - ✓ *Are the information needs of men and women met? Is the information that is available in the language or form that vulnerable groups can easily understand?*

- **To organize and participate in public life and in the development process:**
  - ✓ *Do vulnerable groups know how to claim their entitlements, and how to advocate and mobilize for those?*
  - ✓ *Are there any hindrances for the participation of vulnerable groups? What are they? What, if any, are the specific hindrances for women's participation?*
  - ✓ *Are there legal frameworks or regulations that exist that allows for participation by vulnerable groups, specifically women and youth?*

- **To advocate for policy change:**
  - ✓ *Are there specific channels of participation available and accessible for the most marginalized groups? Do they meet the communication needs of the men and women of the marginalized groups?*
  - ✓ *What kind of skills do they require for effective participation and engagement? (for e.g. budgeting skills)?*
  - ✓ *What kind of capacities are required for local institutions to adopt participatory processes?*

- **To seek, claim and obtain redress:**
  - ✓ *Do vulnerable groups have the ability to affect decision-making processes to their advantage?*
  - ✓ *Are there mechanisms established for citizens to claim redress?*
  - ✓ *Are there feedback mechanisms established for local institutions to respond to the demands of the people and provide necessary redress?*

Simply put, a social accountability check asks:

- ✓ *'Whose voice'* is sought and heard?
- ✓ *'When and where'* can one express voice?
- ✓ Exercising voice *'for what'* purpose?
- ✓ Accountability *'for what?'*
- ✓ Accountability *of whom?*
- ✓ Accountability *'upheld how?'*

These questions are expanded in Annex A, to show the types of questions that can be asked in different contexts.

A 'social accountability check' is designed to be an additional set of questions for analysis of programmes or projects. It supplements, not replaces, existing programme design tools and assessments, drawing attention to linkages that need to be in place. For instance, the promotion of civic engagement by the local government in the form of providing budget literacy training to community groups may seem useful but may not have much impact if such groups are excluded from the budgeting/planning/auditing processes [i.e. absence of a 'voice mechanism'], or if they have access to such processes but are unable to affect decision-making [i.e. absence of an 'accountability mechanism'].

The 'check' squarely places people (including the poor and marginalized) at the centre of policy and programme design and by expressly linking the principles of democratic governance as-

sessment with capacity assessment, it enables the creation of synergies between different UNDP programmes.

Build in social accountability 'tools'

A second approach to enhancing social accountability principles through programmes with a different primary focus is by the use of specific tools. Some, such as citizen report cards or social audits are relatively well-known. Others, such as 'generative dialogue' approaches, are evolving. A tool [such as a citizens' jury] can be implemented in different ways in different contexts. Furthermore, there is no clear boundary as to what counts as a 'social accountability tool'.

For these reasons, there is no definitive list. The table[35] below provides a partial list, grouped according to the focus of the tool.

Citizen Deliberation and Public Dialogue on policies
Citizen jury: composed of 12 to 24 randomly selected citizens, this is a direct method for obtaining informed citizens' input into policy processes. The jury questions expert witnesses who present information or advocate positions on a policy issue. The jury uses this information to challenge and/or hold decision-makers to account.
Public hearing: held by a public body (i.e. city councils, municipalities, planning commissions) either as a part of its regular meetings or as a special meeting, the main purpose of a public hearing is to obtain public testimony or comment on an issue.
Study circle: comprises a small group of people who meet over a period of time to learn about and deliberate on a critical public issue. Trained facilitators provide discussion materials to the circle and move the discussion from personal experience ("how does the issue affect me?") to a broader perspective ("what are others saying about the issue?") to action ("what can we do about the issue here?").[36]
Virtual or online town hall meeting: refers to organized web-based meetings where participants pre-submit questions to an official or elected representative, and the officials respond during the allocated time. Depending on the technology used, the responses can either be viewed online in real time or can be received via email, phone or live web-text. Use of new technologies makes participation in public policy processes more accessible to a wider public and increases their engagement.
Appreciative inquiry summit: the opposite of problem solving, appreciate inquiry (AI) focuses on the positive aspects or core strengthens of a community or organization. By focusing on what works, rather than fixing what does not work, it enhances the system's or organization's capacity for collaboration and change. AI summits bring diverse groups of people to study and build upon the best in an organization or community.
Public forum: refers to a place that is dedicated to the free exercise of the right to speech and public debate and assembly. Limited public forums are established when a government opens official meetings to the public to receive input or feedback. Designated public forums are intentionally created either by government or any other organization to provide space for public debate and discourse.
'Future search' public workshop: Future search is a task-focused planning meeting that helps people transform their capability for action very quickly. It brings together 60 to 80 people from all walks of life in one room or hundreds in parallel rooms through public workshops. During workshops over 3 days, people discover their common ground through story-telling about their past, present and desired future. After this, concrete action plans are drawn up. It relies on mutual learning among stakeholders as a catalyst for voluntary action and follow-up.[37]

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[35] Adapted from a list from the CIVICUS Participatory Governance Programme.

[36] Marci Reaven (1997): What is a Study Circle?, in Toward a More Perfect Union in an Age of Diversity: A Guide to Building Stronger Communities through Public Dialogue, Study Circles Resource Centre (now Everyday Democracies) for PBS online.

[37] Future Search Network, _What is Future Search?,_ Accessed 13th November 2009.

Policy audit: refers to a systemic review of existing policies to identify barriers or gaps that impede implementation of the policy - including limitations to participation, issues of affordability and accessibility as well as compliance.

Participatory social impact analysis: is the participatory analysis of the impact of policy reforms on various stakeholders, especially on poor and vulnerable. The findings of these analyses promote evidence-based policy choices that minimize negative impacts on vulnerable groups and foster debate on policy reform options. The World Bank uses Poverty and Social Impact Assessment (PSIA) in the elaboration and implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategies.

Democratic Dialogue: refers to an open and inclusive dialogue process that involves all stakeholders to address complex social, economic and political problems.[38]

Advocacy and voice

Public opinion poll: An **opinion poll** is a survey of public opinion from a particular sample. Opinion polls are usually designed to represent the opinions of a population by conducting interviews using a series of questions and then extrapolating generalities.[39]

Referendum: or **plebiscite** is a direct vote in which an entire electorate is asked to either accept or reject a particular proposal. This may result in the adoption of a new constitution, a constitutional amendment, a law, the recall of an elected official or simply a specific government policy.[40]

Deliberative polling: Deliberative Polling is an attempt to use television and public opinion research in a new and constructive way. A random, representative sample is first polled on the targeted issues. Then participants engage in dialogue with competing experts and political leaders, using balanced briefing materials provided. After the deliberations, the sample is again asked the original questions. The resulting changes in opinion are considered to represent the conclusions the public would reach, if they had the opportunity to become more informed and more engaged.[41]

Budgets and expenditures

Public revenue monitoring: refers to the tracking and analysis of the type and amount of revenue that a government receives. This can detect and help prevent corruption or the squandering of revenue sources, as well as increasing awareness of the amount of money that a government has at its disposal.[42]

Independent budget analysis: is a process where a wide range of stakeholders research, monitor and disseminate information about public expenditure and investments. CSOs or other interested parties review budgets in order to assess whether allocations match the government's announced social commitments.[43]

Alternative budget: Alternative budgets influence budget formulation indirectly. They present the priorities and preferences of citizen groups, which may influence the government's actual budget.[44]

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[38] CIDA, IDEA, GS/OAS and UNDP (2007): Democratic Dialogue: A Handbook for Practitioners.

[39] Wikipedia, *Opinion Polls,* Accessed 13th November 2009

[40] Wikipedia, *Referendum,* Accessed 13th November 2009

[41] James Fishkin (1988), *Deliberative Polling®: Towards a Better Informed Democracy*, Centre for Deliberative Democracy, Stanford: Stanford University

[42] Civicus, *Public Revenue Reporting and Monitoring,* Accessed 13th November 2009

[43] World Bank, *Participation and Engagement: Independent Budget Analysis*, Accessed 13th November 2009

[44] World Bank (2003), *Making Services Work for Poor People: The role of participatory public expenditure management (PPEM),* Social Development Notes No. 81, March 2003

Public expenditure tracking survey (PETS): a quantitative survey that tracks the flow of public funds to determine the extent to which resources actually reach the target groups. The unit of observation is typically a service facility rather than a household or an enterprise. The survey collects information on transfer procedures, amounts and timing of released resources.

Community-led procurement: refers to participatory procurement mechanisms through which local communities are engaged in public procurement processes.

Participatory budgeting: is a process through which citizens participate directly in the different phases of budget formulation, decision making, and the monitoring of budget execution. This tool can assist in increasing the transparency of public expenditure and in improving the targeting of budgets.

Monitoring public services

Stakeholder survey: refers to a range of techniques for mapping and understanding the power, positions, and perspectives of the players (stakeholders) who have an interest in, and/or are likely to be affected by, a particular policy reform. Stakeholder analysis can be of use in understanding the prospects for reform, and the ways in which particular stakeholders might influence the outcome of the policy process.[45]

Citizen report cards (CRC): Participatory surveys that solicit user feedback on the performance of public services. CRCs can significantly enhance public accountability through the extensive media coverage and civil society advocacy that accompanies the process.

Community scorecards (CSC): combines the participatory quantitative surveys used in the CRC with village meetings whereby citizens are empowered to provide immediate feedback to service providers in face-to-face meetings.

Participatory output monitoring: is a method through which local actors can monitor the achievement of stated project or policy outputs against indentified indicators.

Social audit: is a process that collects information on the resources of an organization which is analyzed in terms of how resources are used for social objectives. It is then shared publicly in a participatory fashion.

Citizen audit: is an information gathering process that collects evidence from citizens on the implementation of programmes and their impact. It can also help in gathering evidence about the abuse of authority (including during election monitoring).

This note does not provide detailed guidance on these different tools. See the UNDP-managed Governance Assessment Portal for guidance on many of these, including examples of their use.[46]

The 'level' and timing of citizen engagement

The extent to which various types of social accountability initiatives result in genuine policy impact is partially affected by the degree of engagement citizens have with state institutions and officials. There are three degrees of citizen engagement– first *consultation*, then *presence* and finally *influence*.

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[45] Robert Nash, Alan Hudson and Cecilia Luttrel (2006), *Mapping Political Context: A toolkit for Civil Society Organizations,* London: ODI

[46] Additionally, further details about many different tools and case studies are available at http://www.pgexchange.org/

Consultation can occur in a range of spaces with dialogue, information sharing or awareness-raising. Examples of such accountability initiatives include:

- *Public opinion surveys*
- *Citizen report cards*
- *Community scorecards*
- *Citizen juries*
- *Public hearings*
- *Participatory poverty assessments in monitoring public service provision*
- *Consultations over national poverty reduction strategy processes*

To a greater or lesser degree, such initiatives can be characterized as watchdog advocacy. Citizen report cards, for example, have generated important information not easily accessible to the public and succeeded in naming and shaming public officials. However, they do not audit government spending and often fall short of challenging state control over internal accountability.

In the second category of social accountability initiatives, citizens and civil society organizations have a greater **presence** in and access to decision-making processes. Some well-known examples here include:

- *Management councils comprised of civil society, service providers and government responsible for different areas of social policy*
- *Gender and participatory budgeting exercises*
- *Participation in electoral commissions, human rights institutions, ombudsmen*

The growth of participatory budgeting initiatives reflects increasing recognition on the part of governments and donors that citizen participation in economic policy deliberation and policy setting can potentially improve the efficiency and legitimacy of the policy process and the allocation of public resources.

In the third category, citizen engagement is able to **influence** policymaking and service delivery through mechanisms premised on people's right to seek accountability from power-holders. Examples include:

- *Social audits [e.g., the work of citizens in Rajasthan in India]*
- *Public interest litigation*

In general, supporting a higher 'level' of engagement will strengthen the impact in terms of social accountability.

It is also important to think about different options for including social accountability practices at different stages of the programme/project cycle or policy process, and working with different stakeholders.

For example, **Figure 2** [on page 28] provides an illustration of how different social accountability tools could be applied at different stages of the policy and budget cycle. An example of how this took place in Benin is given on page 38.

During periods of reform, it is especially important to ensure that citizens are involved at all stages. Research has shown that when citizen/user groups take part in negotiations over institutional and policy reform, it is more likely that the institutional models that emerge will enable them to remain engaged and hold service providers accountable.[47]

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[47] IDS (2010) *An Upside-down View of Governance* IDS:Brighton, UK

Figure 2

Application of different social accountability tools through the policy and budget cycle[48]
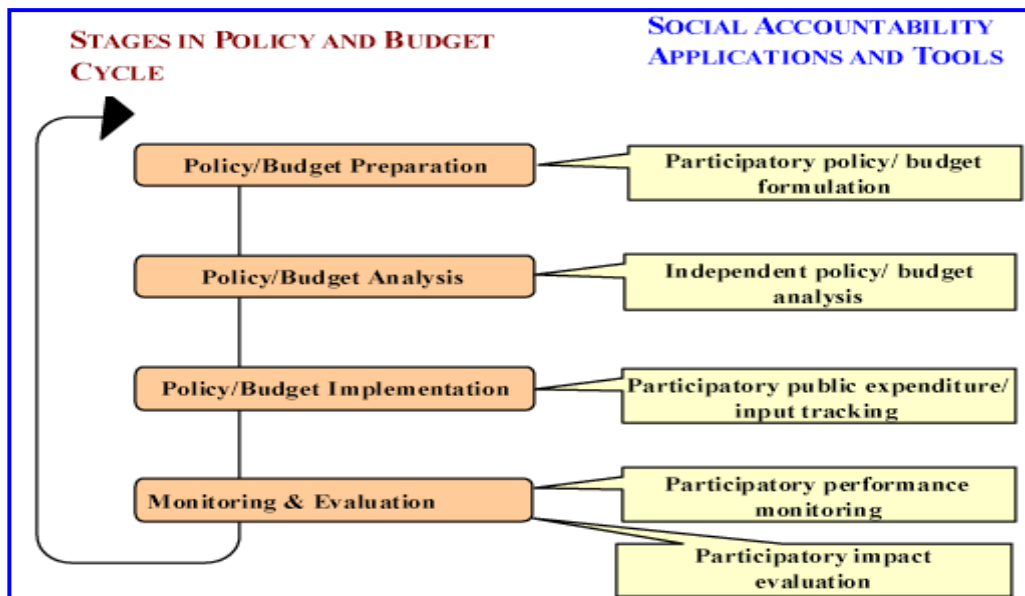
> **Option three: Work in non-programmatic ways with stakeholders [government, civil society, private sector] to enhance social accountability principles**

As discussed above, UNDP has a particular role in bringing together a broad range of stakeholders to ensure that social accountability is enhanced. This can be a powerful way of ensuring that the principles of social accountability are put into practice. This might mean bringing together government and civil society organisations through non-programmatic ways such as facilitating dialogues or consultations or providing formal or informal strategy and policy advice to government. By its nature, however, such critically important work tends not to be reported through normal reporting mechanisms.

4.3. **Stage 3:** *Monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment*

There are few tools specifically designed to evaluate the effectiveness of social accountability practices. There is such a broad range of different actions and approaches to enhancing the principles of social accountability that there is no 'one size fits all' for monitoring and evaluation.

Given the importance of working on both voice and accountability at the same time, it is important to consider how to measure both aspects and the relationship between them. Experience suggests that there is often a need for both quantitative and qualitative indicators, and that it is important to focus on the context, purpose and processes of interventions as well as outputs and outcomes.[49] Some areas for developing indicators for assessing the effectiveness of social accountability initiatives include:

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[48] Carmen Malena, Reiner Forster and Janmejay *Singh* (2004), *Social Accountability: An introduction to the concept and emerging practice,* World Bank: Washington, DC

[49] This discussion draws on Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) (2008): "Helpdesk Research Report: Monitoring and Evaluation of Participation in Governance" available at http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HD549.pdf

Voice:

- the level of participation of different stakeholders
- institutional arrangements to facilitate engagement
- active engagement of stakeholders, and their confidence and willingness to get involved in future
- the extent to which participants are mobilising their own resources
- equality of access to decision-making
- transformation of power through, for example, new relationships and access to new networks

Accountability:

- Capacity of institutions and officials to support participation of different stakeholders
- Communication strategies that ensure easy access to official information, if possible in local languages
- Policies and strategies that mandate adoption of feedback mechanisms to respond to the demands of various stakeholders as well as on progress made in implementation of development policies and service delivery
- Functionality of mechanisms allows for citizens engagement in various process (budget, costing, procurement and others)

Additionally, one way of mainstreaming social accountability approaches is to ensure that the social accountability outcomes of initiatives that may have a different primary focus are also assessed alongside other programme goals.

5. KEY AREAS TO CONSIDER IN PUTTING PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

5.1. Focus on both voice and accountability mechanisms

Often interventions focus on either voice or accountability separately and in isolation. Key mechanisms that can bring voice and accountability together to enhance social accountability are therefore often missed. Programmes should be designed to work consistently and systematically on both voice and accountability simultaneously, rather than assuming that one leads to the other.

Ways to do this include:

- Seek out ways to connect increased voice with the corresponding and relevant actors in state institutions. For example, directly link the empowerment of excluded and marginalized groups with interventions aiming to influence policy decisions. At the same time engage actively with the government on these issues.

- Strengthen existing mechanisms at the national level that bring the state and citizens together, such as parliaments, ombudsmen (for example, human rights/anti-corruption and electoral commissions) and multi-stakeholder processes (for example, participatory budgeting and local development processes).

- Work not only on building the technical capacities of institutions, but fundamentally work on changing the perceptions of actors so that they view engagement with others as constructive, and so that they develop the will to become more transparent and accountable.

- Actively strengthen mechanisms at the local level, such as local development committees and consultative councils, and do not rely simply on supporting the decentralization process to bring the state closer to the citizen.

- Work on further developing the media's role to strengthen social accountability.

- Support increased access to information by supporting legislation and the right to information. However, a focus on this formal right is not enough. Access to information should also be supported by improving the capacity of interested actors and watchdog organizations to understand and use information correctly, working closely with domestic supporters of freedom of information laws.

- For accountability initiatives to have lasting change, they need to have key institutional characteristics: legal standing for non-governmental observers within institutions of public-sector oversight; continuous presence for observers throughout the process of a public agency's work; clear procedures of conduct for meetings between citizens and public-sector actors; structured access to the flow of official information; and the right of observers to issue a dissenting report directly to legislative authorities.

Good examples of how this has been operationalized in practice are provided in the examples section [pages 32-38] of this Note.

5.2. Work with a wider range of partners

Whose voices are heard and levels of inclusion in participatory processes are fundamentally shaped by power and informal relations as well as cultural norms and discrimination. These are difficult issues to address. Nonetheless:

- When selecting CSO partners, pay attention to issues of integrity, quality and capacity.[50]

- Be more selective in choosing experienced partners that have ties to the grassroots and can reach otherwise marginalized and isolated groups (especially in the rural areas). This is important to ensure that participatory processes are more inclusive and representative.

- Engage with CSOs beyond traditional NGOs (such as social movements, religious organization and trade unions). These have proven successful in empowering and strengthening the voices of key groups among the poor.

5.3. Think about the time scale of interventions

- Where possible, provide longer term and more flexible support. Strengthening voice and accountability require longer-term commitments than those usually made in project planning. Building relationships with key strategic actors (both state and non-state) over the long term seems essential to ensure positive outcomes.

- Longer term commitments do not necessarily require longer programming cycles but a commitment to remaining engaged with the issue of strengthening social accountability.

- In the longer term, the principle of working to strengthen local partner capacities to take on social accountability issues (and thereby support 'ownership') should be a central part of UNDP support.

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[50] A tool to assist in assessing this is available in 'UNDP and Civil Society Organizations: A Toolkit for Strengthening Partnerships'

EXAMPLES OF UNDP WORK ON SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Albania:

Supporting social accountability to achieve the MDGs

Context:

The Government of Albania considers progress towards the MDGs essential for meeting the Copenhagen Criteria and acceding to the European Union. It has also recognized the importance of building partnerships with civil society for joint action to achieve the goals as well as promote social accountability. These partnerships would create linkages between the 'demands' by citizens to the 'supply' of services from the government. It has therefore embarked on strengthening institutional frameworks to ensure the continued engagement of CSOs in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring, including involvement in the *National Strategy for Social and Economic Development* (NSSED).

Programme Interventions:

To support these 'supply side' efforts in institutional reform, UNDP has worked on the 'demand' side through its *Enhancing Capacities of Civil Society for Monitoring Progress on NSSED and MDGs* project which supports capacity development of civil society. This one year project combined CSO training, involvement in consultation workshops and practical initiatives to institutionalize civil society engagement.

The CSOs, coalitions and networks were trained in the policy cycle with particular focus on participatory monitoring and participatory budgeting, including on the analysis of how the budget linked to the medium-term expenditure framework, MDGs and EU accession.

UNDP integrated its support with other relevant donor initiatives, such as the *Civil Society Development Centres* established by the OSCE in six regions of the country to serve as information hubs. UNDP partnered with these centres to provide training for civil society, encouraging them to facilitate dialogue with local government officials through town hall meetings on MDG monitoring and participatory budgeting.

UNDP also supported initiatives to foster networking and cooperation among CSOs and civil society networks. Data gathering and analysis to monitor MDGs and overall knowledge management among civil society actors was also emphasised as a vital tool for continued engagement with the government.

Impact:

The *integrated approach* that focused on developing the capacity of both civil society and local government and creating networks among CSOs contributed to stronger engagement with local governments in the development of Regional Development Strategies. Some regions have forged stronger partnerships between civil society organizations and local government and institutionalize participation in future processes through signing MoUs.

Lessons Learnt:

■ Institutionalizing of engagement is a long term process. Therefore, in order to have open communication channels for engagement, it is important to strengthen networks amongst civil society organizations and between CSO and local government officials

■ Any practical initiative [a small community infrastructure project or lobbying for an amendment to a local regulation] can become "the vehicle" that could strengthen networking and engagement and lead to institutionalization of engagement and accountability.

■ Access to information is critical for sound engagement. Hence, capacity building of CSOs in data gathering and analysis to monitor MDGs and in overall knowledge management was essential for informed engagement and also communicate with the citizens at large on the initiatives undertaken by national and local governments.

■ To institutionalize civic engagement at the local level, it is sometimes helpful for national governments to provide official instructions or directives to the local government to promote participatory process in local planning. Legislation can also mandate consultation and engagement with citizens and thus institutionalize civic engagement.

The Philippines:
Strengthening municipal accountability

Context:

In the Philippines, UNDP and UN-Habitat partnered with five municipal governments to implement the *Citizen Action for Local Leadership to Achieve MDGs by 2015* project or *Call 2015.* The primary objective of this project was to localise MDGs and promote citizen engagement in urban governance. It aimed to establish face-to-face dialogue and voice mechanisms between citizens and the government to combat corruption and strengthen the delivery of basic services.

Programme Interventions:

The project's core strategy was to build partnerships between research and academic institutions, civil society organizations (including grass-roots women's organizations) and local governments to develop systems of knowledge exchange and management as well as user-friendly applications to measure results and track progress towards the MDGs. 'Integrity Circles' (ICs) composed of respected men and women from local communities selected through a community consultation process were established in all 5 cities. Researchers and academics from participating universities were also members. Each of the 5 cities piloted *Call 2015* through various projects. A Community Based Monitoring System (CBMS) was developed to profile all the households in the municipalities and establish baseline indicators for eight poverty 'dimensions'. The baseline data was translated into household-level maps indicating problem areas. Local government officials and IC members were trained to use the CBMS to monitor service delivery against the baseline.

Impact:

Linking institutions of higher learning and grass-roots organizations to develop systems to track, collect and transfer knowledge and information about delivery of local services was both innovative and successful. This contributed to strengthening accountability mechanisms and the adoption of new methods of delivery based on evidence.

The involvement of city officials through systemic consultation increased their responsiveness to the suggestions of the ICs to update local legislation and policies. In Tuguegarao, the city government established the Call 2015 Information Corner and invited the city-level IC to monitor and evaluate the performance of the city. An official resolution facilitated participation of IC members in city council proceedings. This strengthened the direct accountability of city officials to citizens.

The success of these pilot projects resulted in mainstreaming this approach in all cities in the Philippines.

Lessons Learnt:

■ The success of participatory processes depends on wider involvement of various groups and institutions, in addition to the more usual civil society organizations. The research institutions were able to provide the tools to monitor service delivery and assist local CBOs and CSOs to use the knowledge for evidence based programme development and for holding local government accountable.

■ One key lesson from this project is the importance of political timing in establishing accountability mechanism. The Philippines underwent a change in the government in the middle of the project. This led to the transfer of local officials – including those that were part of the ICs. New officials were appointed and they had to be trained. This led to interruptions in institutionalizing participation of ICs in local governance processes. Therefore, it is crucial to fully consider the political situation while creating systems of accountability– for such systems require time to become fully functional and be institutionalized.

■ A specific focus on improving the capacity of local officials to respond to 'voice' or demand from the public is necessary in order to ensure the full success of a voice and accountability system.

Note: *Two participatory tools developed by UN-Habitat were used to identify priorities and set local MDGs targets. The tool to Support Participatory Urban Decision Making was used as the template to develop the annual work plan of the project and that of the cities. The tool to Support Transparency in Local Governance was used to survey the various modes of participation and transparency and identify possible strategies, approaches and methodologies appropriate for the project.*

UN Habitat (2001): Tools to Support Participatory Urban Decision Making, Nairobi.

Rwanda:

Strengthening media accountability as a foundation for social accountability

Context:

In Rwanda the media was politically manipulated and used as a tool to spread ethnic hatred and instigate violence prior to and during the 1994 genocide. Given the misuse of the media in the past, the Government of Rwanda recognizes the importance of maintaining the independence of the media and using its potential to enhance state accountability in the making and implementing of pro-poor public policy. Rebuilding public trust in the media and encouraging participation in governance processes through the media is a part of this process.

In 2002, Rwanda established the Media High Council (MHC), a constitutionally mandated independent body which aims to promote freedom of expression and information sharing. It is also responsible for monitoring the media and developing a regulatory framework for its operations.

The establishment of MHC is part of a broader long-term reform process to strengthen state institutions to deliver services and build systems through which citizens can hold the state accountable for the development and delivery of its policies and programmes. The Government has adopted a holistic approach that focuses on **building the accountability chain** through strengthening non-executive oversight bodies [Office of the Ombudsman, Human Rights Commission, Media High Council and other bodies] and creating linkages between institutions of state delivery and oversight bodies to establish functioning systems of accountability.

Programme Intervention:

MHC was instrumental in establishing regulations governing access to public media by political organizations during the 2008 parliamentary elections to ensure equal access to the public media for all political parties and then monitored coverage of the elections. It has also promoted press ethics through a Code of Conduct for journalists and media organizations.

In order to enhance civic engagement, the MHC carried out an information campaign on press freedom that reached the grassroots level. It organized a series of public debates and talk shows on radio and television around media freedom and the rights and responsibilities of the media and on other issues concerning media practice, including regulation.

Impact

Preliminary evidence indicates that the general public has actively participated in these debates. The work of the council in regulating the media and improving its professionalism and objectivity is increasing public trust. In addition, monitoring activities of the MHC have enabled it to identify key problem areas that have impaired media objectivity. For instance, the council's April 2009 report on election coverage indicated a lower level of accuracy in the print media than in the electronic media and radio. As a result, MHC is calling for various measures to improve the professionalism of print journalists.

Lessons Learnt:

- Building public trust in the media, particularly in post -conflict context like Rwanda, is essential for media to be able to play the role of an independent informant of political and social debates in the country and be able to hold government to account.

- Building the capacity of the media to provide fair and accurate information is equally essential for building the public trust in the media.

- Building strong linkages with CSOs interested in media monitoring is critical for MHC to play its role effectively. Without this, given its limited capacities, it cannot conduct an extensive monitoring of the media and public outreach to report on media discrepancies.

- In addition, MHC is dependent on funding from donors and does not have any recurring funds allocated as a constitutionally mandated independent body. Overcoming this structural drawback would be vital for maintaining the independence of MHC.

Kenya:
Supporting local CSOs for accountable fund management

Context:

Over the last decade, the Government of Kenya has adopted fiscal decentralization policies to try to ensure improved development outcomes. Funding mechanisms to ensure more money reaches local areas include the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), in which 2.5% of the country's total annual revenue is disbursed to constituencies, the Constituency AIDS Fund to fight HIV & AIDS , the Poverty Reduction Funds, the Rural Electrification Programme Fund, the Free Primary Education Fund, and the Youth Enterprise Development Fund.

Most of these funds have inbuilt participatory mechanisms designed to facilitate citizen engagement in development processes. However, people's participation in this process remains lacking due to the country's culture of centralized planning, lack of a clear decentralization policy, and insufficient awareness of participatory frameworks and their operation. Further, the committees managing various funds at the constituency level are appointed by members of the parliament and therefore may not be fully and directly accountable to citizens.

Programme Intervention:

UNDP has partnered with the Centre for Law and Research (CLARION) to implement the Community Empowerment for Management of Devolved Funds (CEMDEF) project. CEMDEF aims to raise the awareness of community members of participatory planning mechanisms and build their capacity to develop community action plans in two targeted districts (Vihiga and Narok).

UNDP has also supported development action planning forums and facilitated monitoring visits of local communities to project sites, resulting in the development of a number of community action plans. Community members were also encouraged to organize themselves which resulted in the formation and registration of CBOs to monitor the management of decentralized funds and projects.

Impact:

There is an increased demand from CBOs and community members for increased access to financial information related to community projects in the two targeted districts. They have been active in monitoring these projects and were instrumental in publicizing and/or reporting to relevant government agencies in cases of discrepancies. The data collected on fund allocations and project status and schedules became campaign tools against outgoing parliamentary and civic leaders in the 2007 elections.

Lessons Learnt:

- Awareness of rights and information about various participatory processes is an essential first step for ensuring participation and engagement of citizens. Without this basic awareness, any inbuilt participatory mechanisms to facilitate engagement and promote accountability in policy and service delivery processes are ineffective.

- The media could serve as an important instrument in raising awareness of the people about various participatory processes that they are entitled to be a part of. Specific media strategies should be developed to meet their information needs as well as for media to serve as a channel for people to voice their concerns.

- Specific attention should be provided to ensure that skills training and capacity building initiatives are tailored to the needs of the people. Efforts should also be made to conduct trainings in local languages, where applicable, as this could potentially increase the effectiveness of the trainings and result in wider participation.

- Improved management of devolved funds, as a result of increased participation in local development processes, is currently being used as evidence in advocating for a more comprehensive decentralization policy.

Yemen:
Decentralization and service delivery

Through the Decentralisation and Local Development Support Programme in Yemen, UNDP and UNCDF supported the development of a Public Expenditure Management (PEM) approach which has been piloted in 48 districts across eight Governorates. Along with elected local councillors and key local government administrative and executive staff, local authorities are required to include representatives of local NGOs/CBOs in the team responsible for drafting the Local Development Plan, the district budget and investment programme.

As part of the planning and budgeting process the drafting team is divided into small sub-groups which visit different *uzlas* (a district subdivision). The subgroups hold discussions with local people in a variety of forums: through traditional channels, such as meetings facilitated by local sheikhs or tribal leaders; and also at public service delivery points, for example, discussions are often held at local clinics with user groups, for instance, water or irrigation groups.

These discussions allow sub group members to verify the quality of public services and identify and prioritise local needs. During the consultations at *uzla* level efforts are made to seek the views and priorities of the most vulnerable people. In some *uzlas*, in order to get the views of women who are unable to participate in public meetings, NGO representatives in the sub groups have either visited them at home or in settings where women feel comfortable.

Pacific sub-region:
Social accountability in difficult socio-political contexts

Context:

The Pacific sub-region is a difficult socio-political context to promote social accountability. A range of factors affect democratic governance and citizen engagement in governance processes including the fact that customary and informal institutions at the local level are often seen as more legitimate and relevant by the islanders than state institutions. Local communities often have little or no interaction with formal state institutions beyond the local primary school or first-aid post. In addition, low literacy, low development, the traditional role of women and a tendency to acquiesce to authority – where elected members are often seen as having the right to govern as opposed to having a responsibility to their electorate – add to the difficulty in promoting social accountability mechanisms. Successful social accountability initiatives have tended to be *ad hoc* and short-lived. The important challenge for UNDP and other external actors is how to build and institutionalize nationally driven accountability mechanisms by changing traditional understandings of the concepts of rights and accountability without impeding relations with government and traditional authority.

Programme Interventions:

In the Pacific context, UNDP has worked on both elected and social accountability mechanisms. On the one hand, it has focused on building the institutional capacity of parliaments and their members to enable them to perform their duties and strengthen their role in national development. On the other hand, UNDP has supported civic education programmes to raise citizen awareness of democratic governance and their rights. Most importantly, UNDP has been playing a critical role in building partnerships between citizens and government institutions by supporting participatory processes including participatory policy engagement.

In the future, UNDP could potentially become a central resource point or knowledge centre on social accountability concepts and programmes, serving both civil society and governments. This would also enable UNDP to play a stronger advisory role in promoting social accountability.

Mongolia:
Governance assessments for social accountability

Context:

The Government of Mongolia believes that promoting participatory democracy is fundamental for its development. Beginning in 2004, the Government with UNDP assistance embarked on a process of conducting a democratic governance assessment. Mongolia used the *State of Democracy Assessment Framework* of International IDEA as the primary method for developing indicators due to its flexibility and stress on developing indicators that reflected national characteristics. IDEA's methodology also emphasized advancing public discussion, participation, knowledge and public understanding of the importance of the assessment.

Programme Interventions:

To encourage wide input and participation from citizens in the process, the government carried out mass and elite surveys. It also organized numerous focus groups, dialogues, national events and public forums to seek the opinion of citizens. All these efforts contributed to identifying concrete challenges in the consolidation of democracy.

In addition, civil society, which is seen as the third pillar (along with the Government and Parliament) in the process of consolidating democracy, was actively engaged by the government in the process of developing indicators. As a complementary activity, the project team organized a Civil Society Index assessment which showed that, despite the large number of registered civil society organizations, the sector as a whole remained underdeveloped and relatively weak. To address this, the Government committed itself to creating a favourable environment for enhancing civic engagement and public participation.

Impact:

The first assessment of the state of governance in Mongolia was produced in 2005 and subsequent discussions on the assessments with civil society and other stakeholders led to the development of the National Plan of Action which aimed to address some of the key challenges identified, including access to information, control of corruption and strengthening the rule of law. The process of conducting a nationally driven democratic governance assessment further highlighted the significance of democracy for sustained Mongolian development. Therefore, it devised and adopted MDG Goal 9. Goal 9 refers to consolidation of human rights, democratic governance and zero tolerance of corruption. This goal is measured by a set of 12 indicators. The first assessment of the state of governance in Mongolia was produced in 2005.

By 2006, approximately 130 indicators were developed. An important methodological novelty of the Mongolian assessment was to supplement a set of "core" indicators reflecting the general attributes of democratic governance with some "satellite" indicators reflecting Mongolia's specificities. Satellite indicators, for instance, were developed to account for the predominant importance of social relations, traditions and customs over rule of law in Mongolian society.

Lessons Learnt:

- A nationally owned democratic governance assessment provides a useful tool for democratic consolidation and serves as a critical accountability mechanism for government and citizens to engage on governance issues. However, the effective use of governance assessments as an accountability tool depends on how the information generated is used and by whom. Therefore, it is essential to make the results of the assessments publicly available and easily accessible.

- Strengthening local ownership in the assessment process requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including the marginalized. The process should be flexible to consider social and cultural priorities of various stakeholders, relationships between actors and the desired impact of the policy process. In Mongolia, the flexibility and inclusiveness in the indicator development process resulted in the development of a set of 'satellite' indicators by marginalized pastoralists.

- CSOs are critical actors in governance assessment processes and play an active role in ensuring the relevance of such processes in addressing the needs of the people. Besides participation in the development of indicators, CSOs take part in monitoring and measuring indicators to assess progress and thus, hold government accountable on its stated policies.

Benin:
Engaging different stakeholders throughout the budget cycle

Context:

In the early 2000s, Benin witnessed an increased demand by CSOs for more fiscal transparency and efficient public spending. During this period, the Government also undertook reform efforts to strengthen parliament and parliamentary control of public policies (including public expenditure). These institutional reforms enabled parliament to adopt more participatory processes in the development of the national budget and other financial policies.

Programme Interventions:

Along with other donors, UNDP provided technical and financial assistance through various projects to parliament, civil society organizations and the media, to build their capacity and set up mechanisms for civic participation in the national budgeting process. For example, UNDP and SNV provided financial and technical assistance in budgeting, gender budgeting and budget analysis to the Social Watch Coalition, a consortium of local civil society organizations that aimed to establish citizen scrutiny of the national budget and the poverty reduction strategy. Through the UNDP *Support to the Beninese Press* project, Beninese press capacity to cover and analyze parliamentary discussions on budget and poverty reduction policies (including the daily question hour in the parliament) was also enhanced. The resulting increase in media coverage contributed to better public understanding of fiscal issues and helped shape public opinion.

UNDP through the Global Programme for Parliament Strengthening has also supported the Beninese parliament (Assemblée Nationale) to play a stronger role in the budget process. The Unit of Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation Budget (UNACEB) which provides the parliament, including the Committee on Finance, with models of calculation, techniques for analysis and simulation of economic and financial data as tools for monitoring and evaluation of the state budget was established in 2001. In addition to developing the capacity of parliamentarians in budgeting, UNDP has also supported annual public hearings between the Committee on Finance and civil society organizations, trade unions and other stakeholders to discuss the draft national budget and propose changes. The public hearings provide an opportunity for the Committee on Finance to present the draft budget and for CSOs to analyse the budget and advocate for changes.

Impact:

UNDP's sustained support to the reform process and capacity building programmes targeting both CSOs and parliament has strengthened the foundation for civic engagement in budget processes and created the space to advocate for a more gender sensitive budget and the allocation of additional funds for pro-poor programmes. In addition, increased awareness of policy discussions in the parliament had a direct impact on voting patterns. In the National Assembly elections of 2007, fewer than 30% of the parliamentarians were re-elected as the people wanted to only elect the ones they thought were effective in promoting the interests of their constituencies.

Lessons Learnt:

- The success of the parliamentary support in Benin is due to the series of initiatives undertaken by multiple stakeholders, including by the Government of Benin and CSOs. It is therefore critical for UNDP to position itself strategically, work with all stakeholders to bring about consensus and influence polices and strategies towards enhancing democracy and achieving poverty reduction.

- This case study also highlights the long term process of consensus-building and setting-up of sustainable accountability systems. Designing long term programmes that focus on strengthening the culture of engagement through institutional reforms and capacity building of actors along the accountability chain (in this case, parliamentarians, media and CSOs) is essential.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

UN and UNDP

UNDP *Resources on Civil Society*

UNDP *Governance Assessments.* Governance Assessment Portal

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Affiliated Network for Social Accountability (ANSA - EAP, East Asia and the Pacific)

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MKSS -- Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, social movement in Rajashtan, India, that launched the campaign for the right to information

PG Exchange - Online platform on participatory governance (PG), CIVICUS

Public Affairs Foundation Bangalore, India (Citizen report cards)

Parivartan India - Public oversight of government services Centre for Policy Research -- Civic engagement for public service accountability

Selected civil society networks in Asia, Africa and LAC

CIVICUS Participatory Governance Programme

Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) -- Topic guide on 'Voice and Accountability'

One World Trust -- Global Accountability Report

One World Trust -- Resources on Practical Measures to Improve Accountability

South Asia Social Accountability Network (SASANET) -- Social Accountability Tools

SEWA -- Self-Employed Women's Association

BRAC-- Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, publication guide

Annex A. A Social accountability check: illustrative questions [51]

Voice Mechanisms	
1. Whose voice? Who attends? Who participates? Who is absent or silent?	■ Are local-level public consultations dealing only with community leaders or heads of households, normally mainly men? Do public consultations involve only people who have access to land rights, often mainly men? ■ Do local elites use informal hierarchical power relationships as a form of social control preventing participation by certain groups? ■ Which CSOs participate in consultations, whom do they claim to represent and what is their basis for this claim?[52] ■ Is there much variance between membership diversity (gender/social/ethnic/religious) of CSOs and diversity of local community? ■ Are there cultural restrictions on the participation of women or other groups such as youth in political settings? ■ Are women encouraged to speak in public forums, particularly on intra-family issues such as distribution of workload? ■ Do women have the necessary experience to put forth their views confidently? ■ Do facilitators and presenters avoid patronizing behaviour towards women participants? ■ Do members of different groups (gender caste/ethnicity) feel treated with the same level of respect by members of other groups? ■ Do government officers avoid the use of jargon or highly technical terms in discussion? ■ Are participants provided with the necessary information and skills (e.g. leadership, problem-solving, accounting, etc.) in order to participate meaningfully? ■ Is two-way translation for local languages provided, including languages of immigrants or refugees where necessary?
2. When and where?	■ Are consultations carried out before making decisions, rather than after? ■ Is there space for 'voice' at different stages of the ■ Are meetings scheduled at a time when participants from different groups (including women) can attend? ■ Do participants from different groups (including women) have sufficient time to participate? ■ Are meetings held at locations easily accessible for women and marginalized groups? Alternatively, is public transport provided for free? ■ Are some castes/ethnicities restricted from entering certain public areas, such as village district offices? ■ Are consultations held in the locality of those affected? ■ Are office hours compatible with working obligations of applicants?
3. What for?	■ Do participants feel it is worth investing time in participation? ■ What is the share of decision-making positions occupied by women/people from minority groups? ■ Are the views of those consulted accurately recorded? ■ Do the views of those consulted affect the decisions made?

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[51] 'Social accountability checks' should be developed on the basis of the specific power dynamics in a given country and in relation to the sector and level (national, local) under consideration. As such, the illustrative questions listed in the table are only provided as examples to inspire the formulation of further specific questions.

[52] Other useful questions related to assessment of CSOs, including their representativeness, can be found in UNDP and Civil Society Organizations: A Toolkit for Strengthening Partnerships (UNDP 2006).

Accountability Mechanisms	
4. For what?	■ Do citizens know what they have a right to? ■ Can citizens access the information they need from government?[53] ■ Do vulnerable groups have access to and use information from the radio, TV, newspapers, post office, telephone? [54] ■ Are application forms for access to a subsidy written in languages understandable to those entitled to the subsidy? ■ Is evidence (data) collected about policy outcomes made publicly available, in a user-friendly format, and using means of communication that are easily accessible by the poor / women (e.g. through community radio)?
5. Of whom?	■ Have governments and public officials delineated clear lines of responsibility? ■ Do all groups have accurate information about the relevant responsibilities of each government actor?
6. Upheld how?	■ Have poor people, women and other vulnerable groups received training on how to claim their rights? ■ Can poor people, women and other vulnerable groups equally access an effective complaints mechanism? ■ Do poor people and vulnerable groups feel that they are treated fairly by the police and the court? ■ Are there some laws that treat men and women differently? ■ Do the operations of non-formal courts discriminate against women/vulnerable groups? ■ Is it more likely for a man to obtain justice in disputes between a man and a woman? ■ Is it an established practice for men to be punished in courts for committing acts of domestic violence? ■ Do informal rules and traditional procedures in place at the local level contradict formal laws? ■ Are women / vulnerable groups who provide inputs towards the design of a plan or programme also able to provide an opportunity to monitor the implementation of this plan/programme?

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[53] For a number of questions to assess access to information, see UNDP (2003): Access to Information: Practice Note.

[54] For an approach to assessing the information and communication needs of vulnerable groups see UNDP (2006): Communication for Empowerment: developing media strategies in support of vulnerable groups: Practical Guidance Note. `

Annex B: Indicative list of questions for conducting political economy analysis[55]

The overall goal of the Political Economy analysis is to understand the political, economic and social processes in society - specifically, the incentives, relationships, distribution and contestation of power between different groups and individuals - all of which impact on development outcomes, contributing to its success or failure. An understanding of the political economy on country, thematic and project levels, will positively contribute to over all UNDP's engagement in a thematic area as well as enhance effective design and implementation of projects and programmes to achieve pro-poor development.

Country-level (can be carried out as a desk study)

- Is there a secure state control over the entire territory?
- What are the sources of such fragility in the country? What arrangements -- economic and non-economic mechanisms -- seem to be essential to assuring stability – for example, in mediating among deeply divided social groups in the society?
- What is the basis of legitimacy of the ruling elite? (ideology, liberation, performance)
- What are key historical legacies of instability, social cleavages etc.
- What are in broad terms, the main rents and how are they being allocated?
- What are key characteristics and dynamics of the political system (presidential, parliamentary, hybrid etc)
- Which incentives exist for politicians to act in the public interest? (votes, patron client networks, etc)
- Do political and economic elites overlap, cooperate, collide? What are the implications on legislative, executive and judicial independence and checks and balances?
- What are the main features of accountability and the role of societal voices?

Thematic

- What is the key legislation governing this area? Is it enforced? How or why not?
- How are responsibilities distributed between the national and sub national levels?
- What are opportunities for rent seeking?
- What reforms have been attempted in the past and how do they shape current expectations?
- What stakeholders are involved and what are their interests? (See notes on institutional mapping below). Include information on national (including local) and international partners, including bilateral or multilateral organizations active in this area.
- What stake do key political factions have?
- What is the reflection of the political economy country context on this area?
- What is the accountability mechanism in this area?
- How are voices of society represented in this area?
- How are policy processes unfolding in the sector / governance theme (which reforms have been announced, implemented, sabotaged or stalled and major reasons why)?

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[55] Adapted from World Bank (2009) *Problem-Driven Governance and Political Economy Analysis: Good Practice Framework*

Project-level

- Who are the main national partners for the project(s) (Government body, National Project Director, implementing partners, etc.?
- How will the political context in the country affect the commitment of national partners to the project? Will this affect project implementation and results?
- Are national partners dependent on, connected to or autonomous from other institutions active in the thematic area concerned? Will this affect project implementation and results?
- Do national partners feel that they "own" the project? Were they fully involved in design of the project? Will this affect the project implementation and results?
- What are the existing power relations at the local level? How will the activities of the project affect these power relations?
- What are the existing capacities of the people to participate in local decision making processes? Will the activities implemented through the project enhance people's capacity?
- Will the project activities strengthen responsiveness and accountability of local government bodies and officials? If so, how?
- What material incentives, if any, did national partners have to carrying out additional work related to the project (this applies mainly to government staff and can include incentives such as salary supplements/DSA in connection to travel/use of project car, laptops, etc)?
- How was the relationship of national and international project partners with the UNDP Country Office? How did this affect the performance and sustainability of the project?