

# EVALUATION OF CITIZENS' VOICE & ACCOUNTABILITY

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE & DONOR APPROACHES REPORT



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Front cover photograph courtesy of Marta Foresti

# Evaluation of Citizens' Voice and Accountability: Review of the Literature and Donor Approaches

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## Executive Summary

S1 Enhancing citizen voice and accountability has increased in importance for donors since the 1990s. This paper reviews existing literature and the strategy and policy documents of seven DAC donors in order to contribute to the design of an evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of these donors' voice and accountability interventions.

### Understanding voice and accountability

S2 Voice refers to the capacity to express views and interests and to the exercise of this capacity. For the purposes of this project, voice is about poor people expressing their views and interests in an effort to influence government priorities and governance processes.

S3 Accountability exists when those who set and implement a society's rules – politicians and public officials – are answerable to the people who live under those rules. In this review, our focus is on the relationship between the state and its citizens and the extent to which the state is accountable to its citizens.

S4 Voice and accountability are separate but related concepts. In some contexts, voice can lead to greater accountability. In most contexts, a lack of voice will lead to a lack of accountability.

S5 The landscape of and for voice and accountability is more complex than a simple model of accountability and its relationship to voice suggests. Rather, there are various levels and forms of accountability, and the formal rules of accountability can be in tension with informal rules. In recent years, complexity has increased with the proliferation of actors engaged in accountability struggles, and the emergence of new arenas or jurisdictions for such struggles. In short, voice and accountability are dynamic and complex rather than static and simple; actors play different roles differently, depending on the context.

S6 To understand the complex landscape of voice and accountability requires that attention be paid to a number of related concepts, including citizenship and empowerment. Citizenship, and the political processes which this term refers to, provide the backcloth for the play of voice and accountability. Empowerment provides an important reminder of the fact that it is only empowered individuals who will be and feel able to exercise voice, and of the fact that voice and accountability are about power and powerlessness. Responsiveness might provide a measure of the extent to which there is accountability.

S7 Voice and accountability matter for development for two sets of reasons. First, powerlessness, voicelessness and a lack of accountability are constitutive of poverty. As such, enhancing voice and accountability leads in itself to a reduction in poverty. Second, voice and accountability can lead to other outcomes such as greater ownership and pro-poor policies which can lead to a reduction in poverty.

S8 However, there are challenges, particularly around the role of external actors in strengthening voice and accountability. In addition, there is uncertainty about the relationship between democracy and development outcomes. There is a need for

more evidence on how change occurs, and how voice and accountability relate to more effective states and better development outcomes.

### **Voice and accountability: a review of donor policy and guidance documents**

- S9 Interventions to strengthen voice and accountability cover a spectrum. Over time interventions have shifted from working mainly with non-state actors to also working with and through the state. The quality of institutions within the state and society, and the relationship between them, has increasingly come to the fore.
- S10 Donors give two sets of justifications for their work on voice and accountability. First, voice and accountability are good in themselves; the ability to express one's views is a human right. Second, enhanced voice and accountability is expected to lead – via improved governance and democracy to better development outcomes in terms of poverty reduction, sustainable development and progress towards the MDGs. Depending on the donor, voice and accountability is seen as either a fundamental component of governance initiatives or an issue that is mainstreamed through many activities, or both.
- S11 Donors vary in their approach to development cooperation and voice and accountability interventions. There has been some blurring of the distinction, but it remains the case that some donors take a more top-down or statist approach, and others – particularly those for whom democracy and human rights are central to their mandate – take a more bottom-up approach.
- S12 Donors cannot work directly on voice and accountability. They strengthen voice and accountability by attempting to create or strengthen the preconditions for their exercise. This means seeking to influence the: (i) enabling environment; (ii) channels for citizens to express their voice or hold government to account; (iii) institutional framework required for voice and accountability; and (iv) individual state agencies required for voice and accountability. Similarities across donors result from a common conceptual framework emphasising formal institutions and non-state actors. It is also difficult for donors to directly engage with informal institutions and actors and little work has been done on these.
- S13 Donors include both state and non-state actors in their strategies. Their activities are generally about strengthening the capacity and effectiveness of these. New types of actors, including the media, political parties and non-traditional civil society organisations, have become more prominent in the language used by all the donors. Those donors that emphasise human rights and democracy also see civil society organisations as the bearers of such values, channelling governance assistance through these groups. Others focus more on state reform, institution building, decentralisation and corruption, although the lines are, again, blurring.
- S14 Donors therefore have a shared toolbox from which to build their approach to voice and accountability. Its source is in the liberal democratic model but key concepts are not fully unpacked. There is limited articulation of the causes (rather than symptoms) of poor governance in different types of countries and of how societies and states are transformed. Donors tend to work back from the ideal, which sidelines a discussion of the incentives and constraints shaping behaviour. This is partly the result of a paucity of research and evidence about what works and under what conditions. It is particularly the case when donors' own political and institutional incentives mean that

their approaches need to conform to specific political frameworks regarding the type of state and societies that they are aiming to foster.

- S15 Dealing with this means understanding the role of *context* in discussions around voice and accountability, particularly in terms of sequencing of interventions and overall objectives. It is not clear whether or how previous country-level donor work on contexts will be used to inform strategic planning. Currently, the approach to voice and accountability found in corporate policy is not differentiated according to governance context. They do not consider such foundational issues as whether voice and accountability have the same meaning in different systems, or whether the strategy for promoting them should be different.
- S16 An attempt to specify contexts for this purpose would be challenging, although some donors have already carried out some work on this for other purposes, such as: (i) situations of conflict or fragile environments; and (ii) presence or absence of political will (which, again, is not unpacked). There is some consensus among donors in both areas, but also some divergence. Where more detailed guidance exists in specific governance areas, there is more consideration of the need to analyse context.

### **Approaches and frameworks for evaluating voice and accountability interventions**

- S17 Theory-based approaches to evaluation find that evaluation is a “theory-testing exercise” to explain the implicit assumptions, logic and mechanisms behind complex development interventions. The approaches are useful in that some support is highly dependent on assumptions, and in that they solve some of the problems associated with results-based evaluation given, difficulties of attribution and measurement.
- S18 Such evaluation can contribute to a better understanding of the causal/impact chains linking activities, outputs and results. As such, it may be useful in tracking voice and accountability interventions, by allowing exploration of multiple causal strands as well as multiple levels of causal chains. This provides an opportunity to test the possibility of developing either an overarching programme theory to be adapted specifically for diverse projects, or multiple programme theories reflecting different perspectives on intended outcomes and causal paths. This does not mean that there is a single or unified theory driving development interventions or that the relationship between theory and the study of its implementation is linear. Also, the emphasis on theory does not necessarily mean less focus on action: rather, it refers to the fact that each intervention is motivated by a set of beliefs and assumptions that underlie action.
- S19 Two different strategies arising from theory-based evaluation may be useful for evaluating voice and accountability interventions. First, a “theory of change approach” looks at the theories or “steps” in a programme and how these are reflected in a causal chain. Second, a “realist approach” tries to overcome limitations of theory-based evaluation by looking at the actual mechanisms that support or hinder social change processes.
- S20 Quantitative methods and statistical analysis are not frequently used to assess the effectiveness of aid in supporting democracy and accountability in developing countries, partly because of the problem of attributing such outcomes. Other challenges include the often complex dynamics involved and the fact that analysis may not be able to provide evidence able to explain outcomes.

- S21 Evaluating advocacy measures and policy change poses similar challenges to evaluating voice and accountability. The frameworks that have been developed by civil society organisations to evaluate their advocacy efforts include features that could be useful for the development of a framework to evaluate voice and accountability, including the inclusion of power relations.
- S22 Attribution remains one of the key challenges for evaluating voice and accountability. However a modified notion of attribution, for example the World Bank's "most likely association", would allow for a sound evaluative judgement based on the best evidence available while at the same time acknowledging that conditions are far from experimental and that data and knowledge gaps are widespread.
- S23 A framework to evaluate voice and accountability interventions should take the following into account. First, it is necessary to adopt an iterative approach. Second, it is necessary to be realistic about what the framework can and cannot include. Third, it should be possible to identify the logics which underpin the various voice and accountability interventions. Whilst there will not be one common logic, it is essential that a single evaluation framework is able to analyse and identify a number of logics. Fourth, it is important to experiment with different methods and approaches recognising that there is no 'golden rule' as to what constitutes an ideal approach for evaluating voice and accountability.

#### **What have donors been doing to measure their effectiveness?**

- S24 Donors do not attempt to evaluate voice and accountability discretely. Most evaluation efforts cover other thematic areas, including (i) voice and accountability; (ii) democracy and human rights; (iii) participation and empowerment; and (iv) working with civil society.
- S25 Efforts to assess donor effectiveness in areas related to voice and accountability have usually taken the form of traditional evaluative approaches based on a combination of desk-based and field research. In the field of human rights and democracy, one explicit attempt has been made to explore new ways of evaluating, given the difficulties measuring contributions to this sector. This used a fixed model of analysis to reconstruct programme theory by identifying the chains of actors and interventions, then identifying patterns for assessment.

#### **What have donors learnt?**

- S26 Donors can contribute positively to intermediate outcomes. Here, an understanding of politics is fundamental to success. Findings in this area reinforce the need for strategy and programming (including design, monitoring and evaluation) to be grounded in thorough political economy analysis.
- S27 Influencing broader development outcomes requires an integrated approach, and the sustainability, as well as the effectiveness, of many interventions is dependent on further actions. This means adopting a perspective that is realistic and long-term.
- S28 Donors must also be realistic about the capacity of civil society to act as a channel for citizen voice and demand. This demands an analysis of context, as does the ability of decentralisation to improve voice and accountability.

- S29 New aid modalities have implications for work on voice and accountability. In countries where aid is aligned with government systems, country programmes usually have objectives relating to strengthening domestic accountability. However, the new modalities have also been found to increase the emphasis on an instrumentalist approach to gender mainstreaming, for example, and to risk excluding civil society.
- S30 Donors can increase their impact by adopting a harmonised approach. There is currently limited coordination in the field of human rights and democracy promotion; it has been found that greater coordination could increase impact.

### **What are the gaps in donor knowledge?**

- S31 The collective knowledge of the donors has much more to say about the types of approach that they *should* be adopting than about the effectiveness of current models, particularly in terms of broader development outcomes. It is difficult for donors to identify their impact beyond the intermediate level. As such, there is a need for donors to give higher priority to evaluation research, and the development of performance measures and systematic monitoring and evaluation.
- S32 A particular challenge for donors is how to take account of context, both in their design of voice and accountability interventions and in their evaluations. The effectiveness of voice and accountability interventions is likely to vary depending on their context and on the extent to which their design has taken account of context. This much is obvious but, to date, there has been little progress with establishing frameworks that relate voice and accountability to context. This is a challenge that can be addressed through this evaluation exercise and the comparative knowledge that it generates.

### **Conclusions**

- S33 Voice and accountability will remain part of donor strategies for the foreseeable future, both because of their importance in delivering donor objectives and because of the long-term nature of work in this area. This review suggests that generating more systematic evidence about the effectiveness of donor activities in this area is of paramount importance and requires awareness of four issues in particular:
- i. Models are important for understanding the operation of voice and accountability and their relationship to broader social and political processes of change.
  - ii. The fit between models and their actual functioning is determined by context.
  - iii. Frameworks or typologies for understanding context can help reconcile the context-specific nature of social and political processes and the need for programming to be grounded in models.
  - iv. There are different levels of impact and it may not be possible to determine them all.



## Abbreviations

BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany)
CAR	Capability, Accountability, Responsiveness (DFID)
CGA	Country Governance Assessment (DFID)
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
Danida	Danish International Development Assistance
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DGDC	Director-General for Development Cooperation, Belgium
DISHA	Developing Incentives for Social and Human Action
GBS	General Budget Support
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFA/MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MP	Member of Parliament
NAO	National Audit Office
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PFM	Public Financial Management
PRISM	Performance Reporting Information System Management (DFID Information System)
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Sida	Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
V&A	Voice and Accountability



## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Governance refers to the formal and informal processes through which a society's rules are established, operate and evolve. The formal institutional framework of the state is important in determining how a society is governed, but governance is about more than this. In reality, governance is messy and context dependent, and entails the interaction between formal and informal rules, processes and relationships. The foundation of governance is therefore politics. Politics is a process and constitutes all activities involved in the "use, production and distribution of resources". It involves both the "rules of the game" and the "games within the rules" – the ongoing processes of social and political bargaining that results from individual and group interests (Leftwich, 2006). Governance is therefore also about power, because this determines who has the power to set and oversee society's rules.
- 1.2 Voice and accountability are important dimensions of governance. Voice refers both to the capacity to express views and interests and to the exercise of this, usually in an attempt to influence government priorities or governance processes. Accountability exists when those who set and implement the rules (politicians and public officials) are answerable to those whose lives are shaped by those rules and can be sanctioned if their performance is unsatisfactory. Voice and accountability are therefore important indicators of the nature of the relationship between a state and its citizens.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.3 A core group of DAC partners<sup>2</sup> are collaborating on a joint evaluation of development aid for strengthening citizens' voice and the accountability of public institutions. The Overseas Development Institute has been contracted to undertake the first stage of this evaluation, which involves the development and piloting of an evaluation framework. This literature review is the first output from this first phase. It aims to: (i) review the theoretical debates on voice and accountability and how they relate to development; (ii) review the different donor approaches to supporting voice and accountability and identify commonalities and differences across contexts; (iii) provide an overview of evaluation theory and practice in relation to voice and accountability interventions; and (iv) identify key knowledge gaps in relation to the effectiveness of donors in supporting voice and accountability.
- 1.4 This review has three main sections. Section 2 surveys the academic literature to present current thinking on what voice and accountability means, how they operate in practice and how they relate to the achievement of broader development objectives. Section 3 turns to the donors' own understanding of voice and accountability as set out in their relevant policy and guidance documents. It discusses how the donors see voice and accountability contributing to their poverty reduction mandates and what approaches they have adopted to strengthen them, including in different contexts. Section 4 considers the main issues relating to the evaluation of interventions to

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<sup>1</sup> State and citizen will be used to describe the two parties in the accountability relationship. However, it is recognised that it is important to consider those without formal citizenship, such as refugees, in the context of voice and accountability because it is these groups who are most likely to be marginalised and unable to express their voice or demand accountability for their entitlements.

<sup>2</sup> These are Danida, BMZ, DGDC, DFID, NORAD, SDC and Sida.

strengthen voice and accountability. It first reviews some of the methodological debates in the theoretical literature before summarising the donors' own evaluative efforts in this field, identifying both common findings and key gaps in their knowledge.

## 2. VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: A VIEW FROM THE LITERATURE

### Voice and accountability: a basic static model

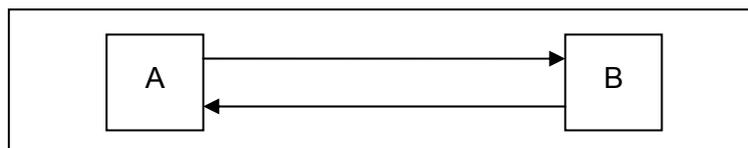
#### *What is voice?*

- 2.1 Voice refers to both the capacity of people to express their views and the ways in which they do so through a variety of formal and informal channels and mechanisms. Referring primarily to the efforts of the poor to have their views heard by more powerful decision-makers, voice can include complaint, organised protest, lobbying and participation in decision making, service delivery or policy implementation (Goetz and Gaventa 2001).
- 2.2 Goetz and Jenkins (2002, 2005) suggest that voice matters for three related reasons. First, voice has intrinsic value – it is good for people to have the freedom to express their beliefs and preferences. Second, voice is an essential building block for accountability; it is only by speaking up – directly or through channels such as Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and parliament – that the poor have a chance to see their preferences, opinions and views reflected in government priorities and policies and to ensure that these are implemented. Third, the exercise of voice, and the conversations that result, 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 power-holders will be judged.

#### *What is accountability?*

- 2.3 Accountability refers to the nature of a relationship between two parties. A relationship may be characterised as lacking in accountability or highly accountable. In a relationship between two parties, A is accountable to B, if A is obliged to explain and justify her actions to B, and B is able to sanction A if her conduct, or explanation for it, is found to be unsatisfactory (Goetz and Jenkins 2002, citing Schedler 1999). These are the two dimensions of accountability – answerability and enforceability (also called controllability or sanction) – which must exist for there to be real accountability (Goetz and Jenkins 2005). In addition, both dimensions of accountability require that there is transparency; in the absence of reliable and timely information, there is no basis for demanding answers or for enforcing sanctions (Moore and Teskey 2006).

**Figure 1. The accountability relationship: a static model**



2.4 Beyond the  $A \leftarrow \rightarrow B$  model of accountability, commentators from different traditions use different vocabularies to talk about the roles within an accountability relationship. Borrowing from the language of economics, some commentators refer to the demand and supply sides of accountability, with the *demandeurs* being those who ask for answers and enforce sanctions. This language is prevalent within the donor community. Alternatively, from a human rights perspective, accountability is about the relationship between a bearer of a right or a legitimate claim and the agents or agencies responsible for fulfilling or respecting that right (Gloppen et al 2003). A further way of talking about accountability is in terms of an accounter and an accountee, with the accounter being the agent that demands answers and enforces sanctions (Moore and Teskey 2006).

**Table 1. Language used to describe the roles within an accountability relationship**

Agent being held accountable	Agent asking for answers and enforcing sanctions
A	B
Supply-side	Demand-side
Duty-bearer	Rights-holder
Accountee	Accounter

2.5 These different vocabularies for talking about accountability bring with them their own intellectual baggage. For instance, a supply and demand model might imply that demand will generate a response in terms of the supply of accountability; that is, that arriving at accountable relationships is a matter of market-clearing. The language of duty-bearers and rights-holders is rooted in the international human rights framework, raising questions about the appropriateness of its use in the domestic sphere, particularly when human rights are not guaranteed by national legislation, thereby weakening both answerability and enforceability. Nevertheless, these different vocabularies share some important characteristics: they imply that accountability is a one-to-one relationship between agents with fixed specific roles and identities, brokered by formal mechanisms such as elections, taxes and legal process. As such, whilst this simple static model of accountability, expressed in whatever vocabulary, is a useful starting point, it is unlikely to provide the tools needed to understand the real-world complexities of accountability and voice.

*How are voice and accountability inter-related?*

2.6 Whilst voice and accountability are intimately related, they are not the same. Voice is about people expressing their opinions. Accountability is about the relationship between two agents, one of which makes decisions which have an impact on the other and/or which the other has delegated to them. Voice and accountability come together at the point where those exercising voice seek accountability. It is also important to note that voice can strengthen accountability, including by pushing for greater transparency, whilst accountability can encourage voice by demonstrating that exercising voice can make a difference. In this respect, there is a two-way relationship between voice and accountability.

2.7 But, whilst voice is necessary for there to be accountability – for questions to be answered, someone must be asking them (Goetz and Jenkins 2004) – it is not sufficient. Voicing demands can strengthen accountability, but it will not on its own

deliver accountable relationships. Indeed, the extent to which voice does or does not deliver accountability is something which will vary between societies and political contexts, depending upon existing power relations, the enabling environment, the nature of the state and its institutions, and the social contract between the state and its citizens.

## **Voice and accountability: a complex dynamic reality**

- 2.8 In the real world, voice and accountability play out in ways that are more complex, dynamic and context dependent than simple bipolar language suggests. In terms of voice, the way in which it is expressed is likely to vary depending on context, specifically on the extant capacities for voice. Such capacities include the personal capacities of those seeking to exercise voice – their awareness of the issues and their degree of empowerment – as well as the institutional capacities or environment, including the socio-cultural environment, the political and legal framework and accepted notions of citizenship and rights (Gloppen et al 2003). The extent to which voice is effective in strengthening accountability will also depend on the identity of those concerned. Poor and marginalised groups, such as women, usually find exercising effective voice difficult.
- 2.9 Accountability is also complex, dynamic and systemic. That is, given the interdependent nature of different levels and forms of accountability – for instance, public, political, parliamentary, financial, etc. – and increased non-state involvement in accountability, the functioning of any one accountability relationship, or the effectiveness of a donor intervention relating to such a relationship, is likely to be shaped by other accountability relationships (Moncrieffe 2001). Relatedly, whereas the language of accountability might seem to be a good way of getting a handle on the relationship between those who set and those who are subject to formal rules, such formal rules and relationships can be in tension with informal social rules and relationships which extend beyond the formal political arena but which are integral to its operation.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.10 Goetz and Jenkins (2005), in their work on the “new accountability agenda”, suggest that to understand accountability one needs to ask a series of questions: who is demanding accountability; from whom is accountability being sought; where – in what forum – are they being held to account; how is accountability being delivered; and, for what are people/institutions being held accountable? In recent years, the range of answers to these questions has expanded, due, in part, to challenges from participatory governance initiatives. Actors are playing new accountability roles, blurring the distinction between vertical and horizontal accountability, creating new

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<sup>3</sup> For example, informal relations and practices can mean that representation and accountability take on a different meaning from that envisaged when the formal system was designed or adopted and which undermine its operation. Chabal and Daloz (1999: 38-9) discuss the meaning of political representation (and, by extension, accountability) in countries where political clientelism is pervasive: “The populace expects to exchange political support for concrete help ... What this means is that ... there has been no modification in the notion of representation ... The understanding of the concept of citizenship and of the purpose of the individual vote remains indelibly linked to the anticipation of the direct communal (or even personal) benefits which elections offer .. The vote is not primarily a token of individual choice but part of a calculus of patrimonial reciprocity based on ties of solidarity”.

accountability mechanisms and finding themselves both subject to demands for accountability as well as themselves demanding accountability from others. Methods and jurisdictions are changing too, with, for instance, the emergence of global arenas for accountability and new accountability mechanisms at the local level, such as those that are created through decentralisation. There is also a change in the standards of and for accountability, with increasing attention to outcomes (justice, equity, poverty reduction) as well as process (fairness, soundness, gender equality). As such, the landscape for accountability struggles is becoming more complex and the strategies and tactics of those seeking accountability are becoming more diverse.

- 2.11 To make sense of these complexities requires a more sophisticated means of understanding voice and accountability than the simple static  $A \leftrightarrow B$  model. Rather than seeing actors playing set roles in static relationships, one needs to be able to tease out the ways in which context makes a difference to the operation of voice and accountability, the ways in which the exercise of voice and accountability evolve and the flexibility of roles and actors which this entails. Rather than seeing a particular actor always playing a particular role, it might be better to think of a range of actors taking on different roles, and playing them differently, depending upon the context.

### **Relating voice and accountability to other key concepts**

- 2.12 Vertical accountability is used to describe the accountability relationship between state (or more accurately the public officials within it)<sup>4</sup> and citizenry.<sup>5</sup> It is useful because it captures the roles within this relationship: the authority that public officials have to make and implement the rules that citizens are subject to and the extent to which public officials have been delegated this authority by society and therefore are accountable for the stewardship of it. However, as discussed, when using the language of vertical accountability it is important to situate this in relation to other accountability relationships, to recognise that state and society are not unitary actors and to be cognisant of the fluidity of roles and the importance of context. A corollary of this is that effective vertical accountability, between a state and its citizens, requires that other social relationships – between men and women, between the powerful and the powerless – are made more accountable, and that the powerless are able to exercise voice.

- 2.13 Citizenship is a useful concept through which to express some of the complexities relating to vertical accountability. Citizenship is by definition about the vertical relationship or social contract between state and citizen, connoting the rights and responsibilities that a citizen can legitimately claim from the state and which the state can legitimately expect of its citizens. As Newell and Wheeler explain (2006: 29), “in order to be able to make accountability claims, there must be an implicit assumption [a social contract] about the roles and responsibilities of the state, as well as the rights and entitlements of citizens”.

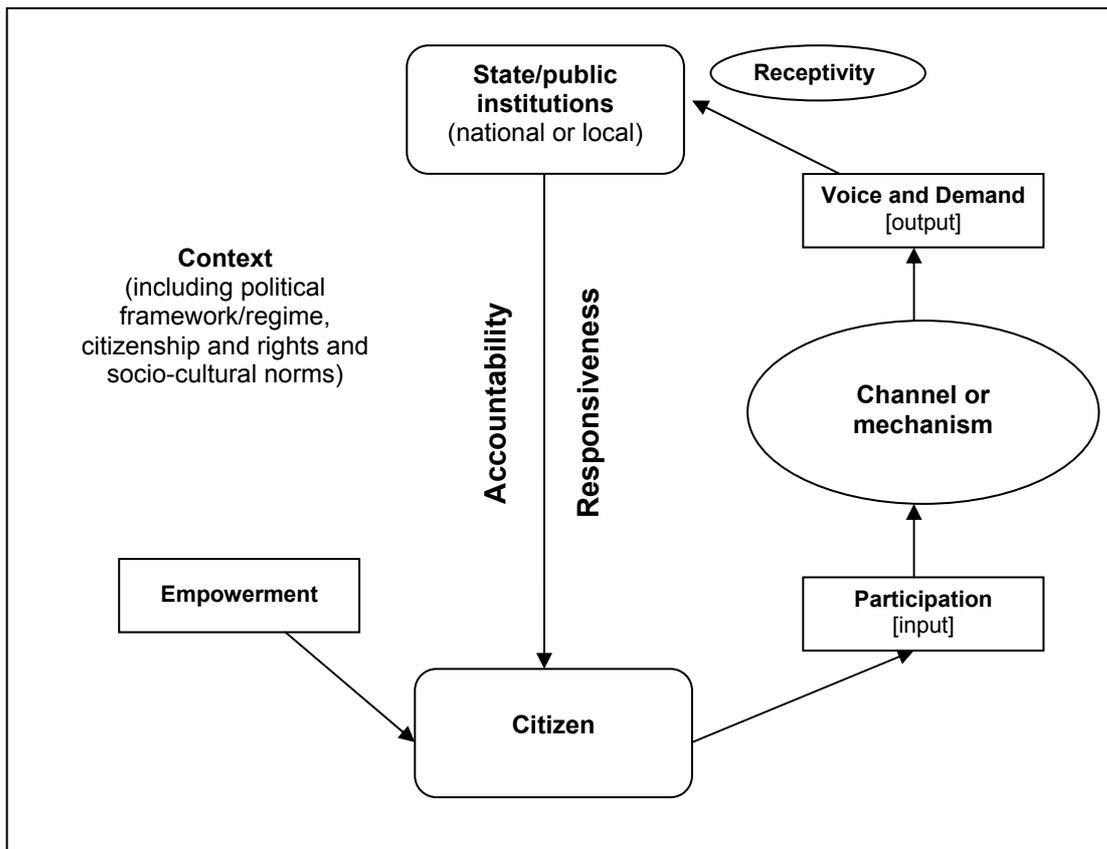
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<sup>4</sup> Such as politicians, civil servants (including bureaucrats, the police force and judiciary) and front-line service providers.

<sup>5</sup> This is opposed to horizontal accountability, which is used to describe the accountability relationship between agencies within the state.

- 2.14 The nature of citizenship varies from country to country, depending upon the institutional and legal framework, the degree to which state actors operate within the legal framework, and – perhaps most importantly – the relative power and capabilities of the state and its citizens. Indeed, in many developing countries, there is no established social contract or understanding of citizenship. The nature of citizenship, and the extent to which the notion forms part of a country’s political vocabulary, will itself shape the ways in which people exercise voice and demand accountability, and the extent to which the state responds to peoples’ voices and makes itself accountable to them (see Goetz and Gaventa 2006). As Newell and Bellour put it (2002: 23): “Citizenship is in many ways the concept that brings accountability and participation [voice] together. Who has the right to hold to account, and who should be held to account? Who is entitled to participate in public (and private) decision making and who is not? The answers to these questions will tell us something about the different uses of the term citizenship”.
- 2.15 Although citizenship provides the backcloth upon which the play of voice and accountability takes place (Goetz and Gaventa 2001), the practice of voice and accountability is also shaped by other related concepts (see figure 2). Starting at the citizen end of the citizen-state relationship is the concept of empowerment. Citizen empowerment and participation are prerequisites for exercising voice and demanding accountability (Goetz and Jenkins 2001). Notwithstanding their diverse and contested usage (Cornwall and Brock 2005), these concepts are generally associated with a focus on enhancing the opportunities of those who are socially, politically or economically excluded and transforming the power relations which lead to such exclusion (Gaventa 2006, Just Associates 2007). Empowerment in particular focuses on issues of power, commonly recognising this as a relative concept and requiring support strategies based on empowerment as a process rather than a product.
- 2.16 The focus on power and on making explicit which social groups are excluded is critical because encouraging participation in the absence of empowerment will not lead to effective voice for the most marginalised (Cornwall, 2003). Tackling exclusion requires more than consulting with people or creating opportunities to be heard. To empower marginalised voices and engage with new opportunities for holding the state to account, development efforts must also include strategies that help the excluded to actively use opportunities or ‘spaces’ (Gaventa 2006). A key element of such support is building capacities for critical reflection and strategic action at both individual and collective levels so that new opportunities to be heard can be seized when they arise.

Figure 2. The relationship between voice, accountability and other key concepts



2.17 Moving towards the state end of the citizen-state relationship are the concepts of receptivity and responsiveness. Receptivity refers to the extent to which the state hears the voices of those expressing their opinions and preferences. Responsiveness – a form of behaviour – refers to the extent to which the state, having heard the voices of its citizens, responds to their demands and concerns (Gloppen et al 2003; Moore and Teskey 2006). Responsiveness and accountability are the “critical missing elements in our understanding of the relationship between the powerful elites and the disempowered poor who are asserting their rights” (Gloppen et al 2003: 1, citing UNDP 2002). Responsiveness is what citizens want when they exercise their voice and is fostered by the existence of soundly functioning accountability mechanisms.<sup>6</sup> Responsiveness is perhaps a useful intermediate outcome, which could be tracked as part of the evaluation framework’s effort to assess the effectiveness of voice and accountability interventions. Such an approach would take seriously the injunction to understand the preconditions for and process of, as well as outcome of, empowerment (Kabeer 2000). Put most simply:

<sup>6</sup> Moore and Teskey rightly point out that states may and do respond to things other than their citizens, for instance, external security threats and natural disasters. This is why the equation here is specifically about responsiveness to citizens.

**Responsiveness to citizens = f (Voice + accountability)**

2.18 The degree and quality of responsiveness to citizens achieved will depend upon context (f). In terms of responsiveness to the voice of poor people, this could include factors such as: the political and organisational culture – whether the interests of poor and marginalised groups are acknowledged as legitimate and just; the salience of the pro-poor mandate and the relative prominence of poverty concerns on the agenda of decision makers; the weight of the poor relative to other interest groups and the state’s incentives to address their concerns; and the ability of decision-making agencies to comprehend the concerns of poor and marginalised men and women and to plan and implement policy in response to them (Gloppen et al 2003). In large part, the degree of responsiveness attained, for a given volume of voice and a given degree of accountability, depends on politics and associated power asymmetries. As Eyben and Ladbury (2006) emphasise, the concepts of citizenship, participation [voice] and accountability are political as well as technical; they illuminate issues of power, but are themselves context – political context – dependent.

**Voice, accountability and development outcomes**

2.19 For Amartya Sen (1999), development is “the process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy”, that is the capabilities that allow people to do the things that they value. This leads Sen to argue that capabilities, such as those associated with voice and accountability, are primary ends or “constitutive” elements of development and that poverty is therefore the deprivation of these capabilities. This is a perspective that is shared by a human rights approach to development – which also views development as the realisation of human rights, such as accountability and participation in public life. It is also a view that has been substantiated by the path-breaking *Voices of the Poor* series in which poor people identify the lack of voice and accountability as central to their experience of poverty (Narayan et al., 200a, b, 2002; Gloppen et al 2003).

2.20 However, Sen and others also recognise that freedoms, including those associated with voice and accountability, can also have instrumental or indirect value in relation to other development objectives such as economic growth, human welfare or better governance. This is because different types of freedoms can be complementary, for example increased social opportunities such as education can lead to better economic opportunities and therefore higher incomes. With specific reference to the relationship between civil and political freedoms and the fulfilment of economic needs, Sen argues *inter alia* that political freedoms enable citizens to articulate their needs and values through their participation in public debate and alter the incentives faced by power-holders, including their incentive to hear and respond, using his often-quoted example that famine has never occurred in a democracy.

2.21 Enhancing voice and accountability can therefore have an impact on poverty in two ways. Firstly, increasing voice and accountability can directly reduce poverty because powerlessness is a constitutive aspect of poverty. Secondly, voice and accountability can indirectly contribute to poverty reduction through its contribution to other objectives, for instance by supporting a governance environment in which poor

people are able to voice their interests and participate in public discussions, leading to more pro-poor policies .

2.22 Development and aid effectiveness offer another perspective on the linkages between voice, accountability and development outcomes. The importance of local ownership and participation in policy formulation is recognised by donors' commitments to the Paris Agenda on aid effectiveness, which is based on the assumption that locally-owned policies are more likely to be poverty-focused and be effective. Voice and accountability can play important roles in generating ownership of a country's policies and priorities. The chain of reasoning is that voice and accountability lead to more responsive and more effective (in terms of reducing poverty) states. More effective states enhance the effectiveness of aid and development policies more widely, ultimately leading to better development outcomes.

**Box 1: Increasing budget accountability and pro-poor outcomes through civil society monitoring and advocacy**

Civil society budget analysis and advocacy has gained increased significance for donors as a result of the Paris Declaration commitments to increase the amount of aid that is provided in the form of sector or general budget support. However, whilst civil society budget analysis and advocacy have become more common in developing countries, there is little systematic evidence to date on the actual impact of these activities. In an attempt to respond to this gap, de Renzio (2007) summarises the evidence from six case studies of the work of independent budget organisations. This study found that it was difficult to assess the impact of these groups on their long-term objectives, such as better governance and poverty reduction, but that it was possible to identify "a set intermediate outcomes that more directly linked to applied budget analysis as a research and advocacy tool". These outcomes were grouped in two categories:

- (i) *Budget accountability*. This is the impact on levels of budget transparency, public literacy and awareness of budget issues, and public engagement with budget processes. The evidence suggests that budget groups have played a vital role in expanding, interpreting and disseminating budget information to enable broader civil society and actors to conduct better analysis and advocacy. For example, the Ugandan Debt Network has used community radio to reach a broad, non-literate audience.
- (ii) *Budget policies*. This refers to improvements in budget systems, shifts in allocation and more pro-poor results. The evidence of the positive impact of these activities on budget policies is more limited than that relating to budget accountability. Nevertheless, it was found that budget work can have a direct impact in terms of improved budget systems and on pro-poor budget locations and results. For example, the work of DISHA in Gujarat has resulted in an increase in resources ring-fenced for tribal groups and better actual implementation of these resources.

A key finding is that the impact of the different budget groups was dependent on context. Context was found to matter in three ways:

- (i) The influence of *external factors* such as political environment and opportunities to engage with government, legal and institutional framework determining access to budget information, presence and role played by International donor agencies, and overall level of literacy and interest in budget issues.
- (ii) The influence of *internal factors* such as focus of the budget group, leadership, technical capacity and expertise around communication/dissemination.
- (iii) The importance of the relations that these groups develop with different actors: "Groups which were able to develop wider networks both within and outside government, and more strategic collaborations with different actors, were the more successful ones in terms of achieving actual policy influence.

Source: de Renzio (2007). The full case studies are available at [www.internationalbudget.org](http://www.internationalbudget.org).

2.23 It is important here to clarify how the voice and accountability agenda fits together with the effective states agenda. As Eyben and Ladbury note (2006: 4), "debates around state building – what it means and how it happens – have tended to focus on the state itself" rather than on supporting "state-citizen relationships in a wider sense of mutual respect and democratic accountability". However, it can be argued that an effective state is one that is inclusive, democratic and just, and that includes

empowered citizens (Eyben and Ladbury 2006). Put simply, “effective states are based on an evolving relationship between the state and its citizens” and “effective state building requires legal frameworks and institutionalised arrangements for citizens to hold the state accountable” (Eyben and Ladbury 2006: 5, 16).

- 2.24 The theoretical chain of reasoning that links voice and accountability with better development outcomes may be clear but it is susceptible to challenge in terms of its fit with the real world. First, this relates to the evidence about how change actually occurs and the ability of external actors to influence this – that is, how much can donors realistically hope to achieve in terms of strengthening citizens’ voice and the accountability of public institutions in other countries. Unsworth (2007: 5-6) argues that “effective public institutions evolve through a process of bargaining between the state and organised groups in society”. Donors should therefore focus beyond attempts to strengthen formal institutions and simplistic supply/demand side dichotomies to understanding what actually works and what is “do-able” in poor countries and what opportunities exist to increase “constructive state-society engagement”. She highlights that this is a challenging messages for policy makers who work within institutional incentives that “focus on identifying problems and finding solutions to them, and on tangible, direct action”.
- 2.25 Second, it is a question of how closely the theoretical chain of reasoning which relates more voice and accountability to more effective states and better development outcomes fits with evidence. In many ways, uncertainty about the development impact of enhanced voice and accountability is a sub-set of uncertainty about the relationship between democracy and development. Whilst the intrinsic value of democracy – that people have a right to have a say in how they are governed – is accepted in many quarters, the developmental benefits of democracy are much contested. The assumption is that, “if the state has the capacity to operate a democracy, and democracy works to give the poor a proportionate voice in setting national priorities, the poor can mandate basic service delivery”. But, “the assumption that democratisation will enable the poor to set national priorities” is “the weakest link” in the chain of reasoning (Khan 2005: 10). The assumption that democratisation or governance reforms will ensure that the needs of the poorest and most marginalised are met is a still weaker link (Mukhopadhyay and Meer, 2004; Goetz and Hassim, 2003).
- 2.26 It would be overly optimistic to assume that a democratic political system will force the state to act for the public good (Khan 2005: 19) and empirically blind (to China, for instance) to believe that poverty reduction can only be achieved in democratic states. Democracy may be desirable in itself, but there is no strong evidence of a clear relationship – positive or negative – between democracy and development (Moore 2005). Nevertheless, “even if popular participation can not set the agenda for government priorities in developing countries, we could still expect democratic states to be more accountable in delivering the services that happen to be part of the policy agenda” (Khan 2005: 21). Exploring the impact of voice and accountability on development outcomes, in different contexts, should shed some light on the relationship between democracy and development and on the related issues of empowerment, participation and citizenship (see also Kabeer, 2000).



### 3. VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: A VIEW FROM THE DONORS

3.1 This section reviews donor approaches to strengthening citizens' voice and the accountability of public institutions, seeking to locate these within their broader mandates and to identify commonalities and divergences, including in relation to different contexts. This is not a comprehensive review of these donors' policies. It is a review of their policy and guidance documents relevant to voice and accountability.<sup>7</sup> These are mainly governance-related policies selected by the donors. A full list can be found in the reference section and an overview of the thematic areas is given in Annex 2. As this section is based on donors' corporate policies, it is a review of what they say about how they will strengthen voice and accountability rather than actual implementation.

#### Why do donors want to strengthen voice and accountability?

3.2 Voice and accountability have been part of development discourse and donor programming since the 1990s. This was partly a result of the new geopolitical environment, which provided space for donors to integrate activities related to political liberalisation and democratisation into their political dialogue and programmes in developing and transitional countries. However, three other shifts in the development and aid paradigms further consolidated the importance of strengthening citizens' voice and the accountability of public institutions:

- i. *New poverty agenda*. The international consensus around poverty reduction based on a multidimensional understanding of poverty, which recognises that the lack of power, voice and accountable and responsive public institutions are as much a part of the experience of poverty as the lack of material assets. The Millennium Declaration and Goals provide a focal point for international action on poverty based on this agenda.
- ii. *Good governance agenda*. This diverse agenda incorporates a number of concerns and goals. Whilst there has always been a stream around democratisation and human rights, in many agencies this agenda has been dominated by technical concerns about the management of public finances and corruption. Since the end of the 1990s, however, political and institutional issues have become more prominent.
- iii. *Aid effectiveness debate*. The principles of ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability emerged from donors' desire to increase the pro-poor impact of aid and have produced new commitments and ways of working as reflected in the international consensus around poverty reduction strategy processes and the Paris Declaration, with implications for the perceived importance of voice and accountability.

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<sup>7</sup> For instance, donor commitments to attend to the global drivers of poor governance, including international action to combat corruption, are not included.

- 3.3 Therefore, whilst strengthening citizen's voice and public accountability has been a development objective for some time, the ways in which they have been pursued have varied. For instance, during the 1990s, donors tended to work on projects with non-state actors, seeking to promote democracy by strengthening civil society and its participation. This approach was consistent with the Washington Consensus and its philosophy of minimising the role of the state. More recently, the debate about how to make aid more effective has brought attention back to the importance of the state to development and the need therefore to provide aid in ways that support developing countries' own priorities and systems. This thinking champions working through the state, in the form of programmatic (sector or budget) modalities where possible. This has reinforced the importance of voice and accountability staked out by the poverty and governance agendas. If development assistance is aligned with developing countries' own priorities and channelled through their systems, donors want to increase the likelihood that national development agendas reflect the needs and priorities of poor people and that governments are held accountable by their citizens for their actual implementation. Whilst a commitment to institutional capacity building, strengthening accountability and reducing corruption is established in most agencies in relation to the management of public resources, in the context of the Paris Declaration and the attempt to bolster domestic accountability more widely, donor attention has turned to more explicitly political arenas. In trying to support the conditions for citizens to engage meaningfully with public agencies to influence and monitor government policy and expenditure, donors are seeking to engage with new constituencies, including parliaments, political parties, the media and citizen watchdog organisations. The quality of institutions within both state and society and the relationship between them is therefore an important part of the debate about what makes aid and states effective – with voice and accountability as important components of improved governance as well as frequent indicators of its quality.
- 3.4 For the six donors, the primary rationale for strengthening citizens' voice and public accountability comes from their common mandate around poverty reduction, sustainable development and attainment of the MDGs. This has produced a broad consensus about the contribution that strengthening citizens' voice and public accountability can make to the reduction of poverty (see Annex 1). In their policy statements, donors suggest that voice and accountability interventions have: (i) a *direct* contribution to poverty reduction – poverty is directly caused by the absence of voice and accountability and therefore increasing voice and accountability will inherently reduce poverty; and (ii) an *indirect* contribution to poverty reduction – poverty is directly caused by poor governance or the absence of democracy or human rights protection and therefore increasing voice and accountability will reduce poverty via their implied importance to governance, democracy and human rights.<sup>8</sup>
- i. The *direct* contribution of voice and accountability is based on their importance to the causes and experience of poverty, in particular:

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<sup>8</sup> Indirect should not be read as less important. The distinction between direct and indirect is used here because donors are often not explicit about the relationship between voice and accountability and poverty reduction. Rather, it is implied through the importance of governance, democracy and human rights, which donors do explicitly link to the reduction of poverty.

- a multidimensional conceptualisation of poverty in which the absence of voice and accountability is integral to the experience of poverty and one of its root causes; and
  - the importance of supporting the empowerment, including increased voice, of traditionally marginalised groups, such as women and indigenous people, if they are to have the opportunity to move out of poverty.<sup>9</sup>
- ii. The *indirect* contribution of voice and accountability is based on their importance to the achievement of other objectives believed to directly influence poverty, in particular:
- *Improved governance and institutional performance.* The six donors agree that the quality of governance is fundamental for development and poverty reduction because the state has primary responsibility for providing services, guaranteeing rights and creating an environment conducive to investment and growth.<sup>10</sup> Rather than being spelt out, the significance of voice and accountability is usually implied through their relationship to the institutional characteristics that define “good” governance. These are overwhelmingly drawn from the liberal democratic model, including democratic structures and processes such as free and fair elections and the peaceful exchange of power, respect for the rule of law and human rights, a clear separation of powers and checks and balances, an independent judiciary and media, functioning political parties and parliament, an effective, autonomous and rule-bound public sector and space for a vibrant civil society.<sup>11</sup> Voice and accountability are important components of these institutions and, as such, are indicators of the quality of their performance.<sup>12</sup> However, it should be noted that a focus on ‘good governance’ runs the risk of glossing over the politics of governance and inclusion (see Goetz and Hassim, 2003).

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<sup>9</sup> The language of participation continues to be more pervasive than that of voice (or accountability). In the documents reviewed participation was used 446 times, as opposed to 137 times for voice (and 208 for accountability). As discussed in Section 2, voice, participation and empowerment are distinct concepts but they are related in donor usage to the extent that efforts to empower marginalised individuals and communities often take the form of supporting them to participate in community or civil society groups which in turn may channel the voices of the poor in their engagement with the state.

<sup>10</sup> For example, “Effective states and better governance are essential to combat poverty. States which respect civil liberties and are accountable to their citizens are more stable, which in turn means that they are more likely to attract investment and generate long term economic growth ... Unless governance improves, poor people will continue to suffer from a lack of security, public services and economic opportunities” (DFID 1996a: 21). For Belgium’s DGDC, good governance and human rights are principles to be followed in efforts to consolidate democracy, which, in turn, is expected to contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction (Belgian Government, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> Evidence from Asian developmental states has fed into academic debates about the types of governance capabilities required to promote growth, in particularly those relating to democratic governance. Given the poor capacity and weak institutionalisation evident in low-income countries, this has fuelled debates about the feasibility and need for low-income countries to simultaneously address all components of the good governance agenda and whether they should instead concentrate on what is “good enough” (Grindle 2002, 2005). This debate has yet to be reflected in the bundle of state capabilities and institutions promoted by donors at the level of corporate policy.

<sup>12</sup> The most explicit example of this is DFID’s new CAR (capability, accountability, responsiveness) framework which is used to delineate and measure the quality of governance and state effectiveness (DFID 2006a).

- *Promotion of democracy and human rights.* This is seen to be instrumental to poverty reduction, both as a component of good governance and in its own right (all six donors claim there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between human rights, democracy, good governance and sustainable development/poverty reduction). For some of the donors, it is also an element of their core development and foreign policy mandates (see below). Accountability, in particular political accountability, is integral to democracy, as is the idea of indirect representation (i.e. elected parliamentarians as channels for citizens' voice). In terms of the importance of voice and accountability to human rights, invariably, the commitment to human rights involves supporting an environment in which individual agency can be exercised and all have equal opportunity to participate and where states are able to fulfil their human rights obligations and can be held accountable for these. All of the donors have some form of commitment to a rights-based approach or the mainstreaming of human rights, although the strength of this commitment and its operationalisation varies.

3.5 There is therefore a great deal of commonality in the way donors articulate their support for strengthening citizens' voice and public accountability in their policy statements. Variations in each donor's approach to development cooperation and the fulfilment of their mandates do exist, however, with implications for the strategic place that voice and accountability interventions have in their overall programming. These differences are the result of the particular cultural and social values of each country, their own developmental paths and the institutional histories of their Ministries of Foreign Affairs and development agencies. However, it must be stressed that these differences exist along a continuum. All six agencies share a common conceptual and ideological framework broadly rooted in liberal democratic notions of the state and market economy and any differences are ones of emphasis rather than absolutes.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the following observations can be made:

- *Relative role of the state and the individual.* A review of a selection of key policy statements reveals that all donors stress the importance of both the state and the individual in the reduction of poverty. However, there are differences of emphasis between the donors, with some having a more "bottom-up" or "person-oriented" approach and others being relatively more "top-down" or "statist". Sida, NORAD and SDC tend to emphasise the perspective of the poor, and the importance of creating an environment that supports the strategies of poor people (Sida, 2005a; Norwegian MFA, 2004a; SDC 2000 and 2004a). BMZ on the other hand tends to take more of a top-down approach, exemplified by its long-term commitment to institutional strengthening and administrative capacity-building (BMZ, 2002c). Belgium's DGDC has also tended to focus on strengthening state institutions, but since 2001 has expanded its work with NGOs, civil society and women's groups (DGDC, 2005). DFID is somewhere in the middle, with its current high-level emphasis on state capability, accountability and responsiveness building on a longer history of work focused more on individual empowerment and participation and efforts to tackle social exclusion (DFID, 2000c; DFID, 2005a). However, a categorisation of donors as

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<sup>13</sup> To be clear, this means that all donors reviewed state a commitment to democracy and human rights and say that both the state and individual agency are important for poverty reduction and that voice and accountability has both direct and indirect value.

top-down or bottom-up should not obscure the fact that the traditionally bottom-up donors pay increasing attention to the role of the state, and that traditionally top-down donors pay increasing attention to individual empowerment. Neither should such a categorisation be taken to imply that there is a uniformity of approach within any one donor.

- *Influence of cultural values.* The cultural values of the donor country have a clear influence on their development objectives and approach. This is particularly apparent in the strong commitment of the Nordic countries and SDC to the promotion of democracy and human rights. In these countries, the promotion of democracy and human rights is embedded in the legal frameworks governing both the domestic sphere and their relations with other countries and this has led to a more explicit commitment to the promotion of democracy and human rights in their foreign policy and political dialogue, including through their development cooperation.<sup>14</sup> These donors are more likely to express a normative and direct commitment to human rights, not mediated by its instrumental value to poverty reduction, and to stress the centrality of human rights to good governance. The Nordic countries, particularly Sida, also make normative prescriptions about democracy being the appropriate political framework.<sup>15</sup> Another example of the importance of cultural values is the Swiss commitment to solidarity in their domestic and foreign relations. For its part, DGDC emphasises the importance of the “social economy”, in relation to strengthening social capital and civil society (DGDC 2002c).
- *Relative emphasis given to the direct and indirect importance of voice and accountability.* Some of the donors’ (in particular, Sida, SDC and NORAD) strong commitment to human rights and a “person-oriented” approach means that they place specific emphasis on the intrinsic value of voice and accountability. DFID’s mandated focus on poverty reduction produces a relatively more pragmatic or instrumental approach to voice and accountability, with important exceptions such as its strategies to combat social exclusion and empower women.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The role of human rights in DFID’s development cooperation and allocation of aid has been strengthened in its new White Paper and commitment to human rights is now one of three principles that the UK government will consider (along with commitment to poverty and good governance) when deciding how to provide assistance (DFID 2006a).

<sup>15</sup> For instance, “everyone must have the chance to participate, have a voice and be respected in efforts to eradicate poverty. This is only possible with a democratic form of government” and “human rights cannot be respected without a democratic form of government” (Swedish MFA 2002: 24, 21). Again, however, the lines are blurred. For instance, BMZ also argue that “democracy is the form of government most successful and conducive to development” (BMZ 2002b). As noted by Moore and Unsworth (2006), the CAR (capability, accountability, responsiveness) model contained within DFID’s new White Paper on Governance (DFID 2006a) attempts to be less normative by focusing on functions rather than a specific political regime. However, as will be discussed later, giving substance to the types of institutions that can deliver CAR is likely to involve those derived from a liberal democratic model, not least because these provide the backbone for all DFID’s policy and guidance documents.

<sup>16</sup> As discussed in Section 2, Khan (2005) questions the supposed linkage between democracy and economic development and the assumption that providing democratic channels for poor people to participate results in better pro-poor outcomes.

**Box 2: Sida's two foreign policy perspectives and implications for its approach**

A brief discussion of elements of Swedish development policy highlights some of the issues raised about how policy orientation impacts on the rationale for, and approach to, strengthening voice and accountability.

In 2003 the Swedish Parliament adopted a new policy for global development called "Shared Responsibility" (Government of Sweden 2002). This affects all areas of Swedish overseas policy, requiring coherence across aid, trade, environment, security, migration, etc. and requires annual reporting to Parliament on progress. It reaffirms that Sweden's global development policy goal is to contribute to equitable and sustainable development using two perspectives:

- *A rights perspective.* This is based on the international conventions and mandates that "measures taken towards equitable and sustainable development are compatible with respects for human rights". A rights perspective means that poor people are regarded as "individuals and actors with the power, capacity and will to create development". It encompasses both democracy and respect for human rights.
- *The perspective of the poor.* This takes "poor people's needs, interests, capacity and conditions" as the "point of departure" for Swedish overseas policy. It means that the poor people's "voice and perspectives are rendered visible and explicit" in Swedish cooperation with other countries. It recognises that the importance of popular organisations as partners in this endeavour and that "integrating the perspectives of the poor will involve shifting the balance of power ... from governments to individuals and groups".

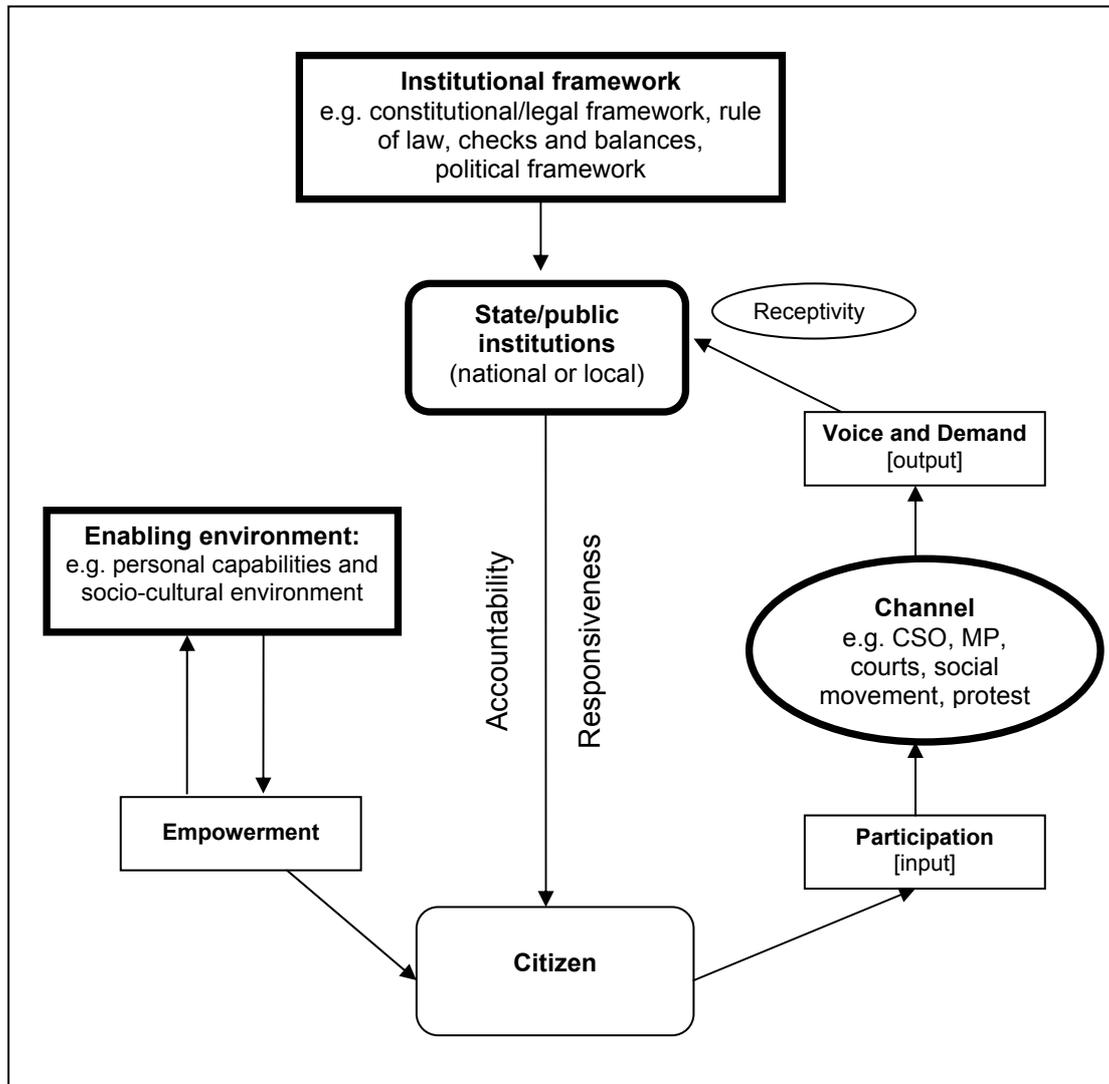
This policy – to the extent that it is translated into programmes and projects on the ground – steers Sweden towards a "bottom-up" approach that has emphasised the role of the individual in development processes. It also means a legal commitment to mainstreaming human rights throughout Swedish foreign policy reflecting Swedish domestic commitment to human rights, a position reaffirmed in its 2002 National Human Rights Action Plan. Sweden has been working to mainstream a democracy and human rights approach throughout its development assistance since 1997 (Sida 1997), an objective also supported by earlier legislation (e.g. Government of Sweden 2003, which revised the 1997 legislation on human rights in Swedish foreign policy and development cooperation.) These documents closely link human rights and a democratic culture and institutions, understanding this approach as clarifying "power structures and power relationships at all levels in society" with the aim of strengthening "poor people's role in the exercise of power and foster their influence in society" (Sida 2001: 2). Accountability, participation, legitimacy, transparency, representivity and similarity before the law are presented as fundamental conditions (Sida and MFA 2001). The promotion of human rights and democracy is therefore central to Sweden's mandate alongside its commitment to poverty reduction.

## **What strategies do donors adopt for strengthening voice and accountability?**

- 3.6 Voice and accountability cut across and relate to a wide range of development issues, such as governance, human rights, and empowerment. Voice and accountability can therefore be both a cross-cutting issue or theme that is mainstreamed through other activities and a specific component of wider initiatives on governance or democracy. In practice, donor approaches to voice and accountability can also be influenced by the complexity of the concepts and their linkages with other programmatic areas or priorities.
- 3.7 Overall, donors are unable to work directly on voice (an action) or accountability (a relationship). In practice, therefore, donors strengthen voice and accountability by seeking to create or strengthen the preconditions for the exercise of voice and accountability. This means seeking to influence the: (i) enabling environment; (ii) channels through which citizens can express their voice or hold government to account; (iii) the institutional framework required for voice and accountability; and (iv)

the individual state institutions/agencies required for voice and accountability (see Figure 3):<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 3: Enabling environment, channels and institutions: mechanisms through which donors work to strengthen voice and accountability**



- *Enabling environment.* This refers to the personal and institutional capabilities required for meaningful accountability relationships and expression of voice, and the broader political and socio-cultural context in which these operate. For citizens to exercise voice and fulfil their role in accountability relationships they not only need to be aware of their rights and have the requisite skills and tools to exercise them, but also feel empowered to use these. Donors may therefore be engaged in activities to raise awareness, such as civic education campaigns, or support to activities which build particular skills, such as organisational and leadership skills. Societies in developing countries are often hierarchical and characterised by

<sup>17</sup> Although conceptually voice and accountability are distinct, in practice they require a similar enabling environment, channels and institutions.

relations based on personalism, particularism and patronage, which militate against the types of accountability relationships and formal expressions of voice envisaged by the liberal democratic model. Donors also seek to work at a more fundamental level to address structural conditions, the underlying power relations and socio-cultural norms that shape how people interact with each other, such as working to alter gender relations or to imbue citizens (including those in positions of authority) with the values that underpin a democratic culture.

- *Channels.* Citizens also require channels through which they can exercise their voice or monitor public officials/institutions and hold them to account. These channels are identified according to the function they perform – as a mechanism through which citizen’s express their voice or demand accountability – and are therefore *not* restricted to a particular form. This is an important distinction. Channels can therefore include organisations, modes of expression and public fora. They can be state mechanisms (such as elections, the court system, or the citizen-elected representatives relationship, e.g. with a local councillor or MP) or non-state mechanisms (such as the media and CSOs, e.g. NGOs, community and faith groups and professional organisations). They can also be both formal (such as political parties or public meetings) and non-formal mechanisms (such as protests, social movements, traditional authorities and letter writing e.g. to a newspaper).
- *Institutional framework.* The formal institutional framework needs to meet certain requirements in order for public officials and institutions to be receptive to citizens’ voice – not only in terms of their willingness or capacity to hear but also, crucially, to act – and for them behave in ways consistent with the ethos of accountability. This framework establishes the “rules of the game” which provide the incentives and sanctions that govern individual and institutional behaviour. It includes the legal and regulatory framework (that set out rights and responsibilities for both citizens and the state, including those that govern accountability relationships), institutional checks and balances and bureaucratic regulations, such as those relating to human resource management.
- *State institutions:* These are the individual organisations that make up the state apparatus at both local and national levels. These include parliaments, committees and commissions, the civil service and individual government agencies, the judiciary, the police force, and service providers. How these individual organisations operate and relate to each other and how the individuals who work within them behave is determined by the formal institutional framework and the informal rules and norms that operate within society. Their ability to be responsive to voice and demands for accountability is also determined by their capacity.

3.8 Table 2 lists the types of enabling conditions, channels, institutions and institutional frameworks discussed by *all* the donors in their most relevant policy documents, as well as the sorts of activities they undertake. The striking similarity of approach, in terms of the types of actors, organisations and agencies the six donors seek to influence or strengthen, points to commonalities in the underlying conceptual framework. This also explains the clear emphasis on supporting formal institutions. Indeed, the impact of informal institutions on voice and accountability, both positive and negative, is generally not explored. Some of the donors mention the need to

work with informal institutions but this is not unpacked (DFID 2006a; Sida 2001; NORAD n.d., DGDC, 2002c). One reason that formal institutions dominate in donor approaches is because they are easier for donors to identify and engage with. For instance, it is logistically difficult for donors to give money to informal social movements which lack administrative structures and this is likely to become more, rather than less, of a challenge in the context of the scaling-up of aid.

3.9 What the table is not able to capture is the clear qualitative element to what the donors are trying to achieve and which is present in their corporate policies. For instance, domestic accountability not only requires parliaments, it needs “effective” or “vigorous and knowledgeable” parliaments. Equally, citizens not only need CSOs as a channel for their voice and demands, they need organisations that are “politically active” if they are to be effective advocates and “inclusive” or “democratic” if they are to be representative. This means that donor efforts in this area are largely about building the capacity of existing channels and institutions to make them more effective.

**Table 2. Transforming capabilities, channels and institutions: what are the objects of donor interventions to strengthen voice and accountability?**

Enabling environment	Channels (for voice and demand)	Institutional framework (i.e. rules of the game)	State institutions (i.e. individual organisations)	Donor activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Empowerment (e.g. knowledge and skills)</li> <li>- Equality and non-discrimination (e.g. gender)</li> <li>- Democratic culture and values</li> <li>- Structural conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Civil society organisations</li> <li>- Non-governmental organisations</li> <li>- Trade unions/professional associations</li> <li>- Cooperatives</li> <li>- Faith groups</li> <li>- Women’s groups</li> <li>- Youth groups</li> <li>- Citizens’ watchdog organisations</li> <li>- Free and independent media</li> <li>- Parliament</li> <li>- Electoral processes</li> <li>- Political parties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Democratic structures and processes</li> <li>- Constitutional/legal/regulatory framework</li> <li>- Rule of law</li> <li>- Checks and balances</li> <li>- Respect for human rights, in particular:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- right to information</li> <li>- freedom of association</li> <li>- women’s rights</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parliaments and Parliamentary committees</li> <li>- Independent judicial system</li> <li>- Impartial police force</li> <li>- Public sector/bureaucracy</li> <li>- Local government</li> <li>- Anti-corruption commissions</li> <li>- Audit institutions</li> <li>- Human rights institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Civic education</li> <li>- Technical assistance/capacity building</li> <li>- Financial support/funding</li> <li>- Training</li> <li>- Political dialogue</li> <li>- Observation and monitoring (e.g. electoral)</li> </ul>

Source: See reference section for details of donor documents reviewed.

3.10 As the table demonstrates, all six donors include both state and non-state actors in their strategies. Whereas formal state institutions are the focus with respect to the institutional framework, donors recognise a number of different types of channels for voice and demand, including those located within civil society, political society and the state. As discussed, political society (such as political parties) and non-traditional CSOs (such as faith groups and trade unions) are becoming more prominent in donor discourse alongside the more traditional focus on working with CSOs as a way of empowering poor and marginalised people and increasing their participation. However, there has also been a change in the types of CSOs that donors are funding, even within this more traditional group, as a result of the steady move away from service providers to those with a more explicitly political or advocacy role. This trend, which reflects the growing attention given to domestic accountability within the

governance agenda, has been further hastened by the focus on downward accountability in aid effectiveness debates. Here civil society is ascribed an important role in ensuring that national authorities are held to account for the management and use of public resources, including aid resources, and in helping to shape national plans and policy frameworks that reflect citizen needs.<sup>18</sup> It has also increased the diversification in the types of CSO donors are working with.

- 3.11 The normative value that the Nordic donors place on human rights and democratic values is also manifest in their conceptualisation of the role of CSOs. Sida is the most explicit in this respect, arguing that CSOs are “bearers of fundamental values” and therefore the principal means through which it seeks to foster a democratic culture in their partner countries (Government of Sweden 2002).<sup>19</sup> Along with SDC, these donors also emphasise the importance of CSOs to the development of social capital and solidarity that makes collective action possible.
- 3.12 Funding is provided to CSOs through a variety of mechanisms, including direct support from country offices/embassies and central departments and indirect support through Southern governments or Northern NGOs. All six donors use a mixture of these but the relative balance varies. For example, whilst most of the donors have dedicated funding mechanisms for CSOs, such as DFID’s Partnership Programme Agreements or Civil Society Challenge Fund, Norwegian funding for NGOs is greater than its bilateral government programmes and, of this, the majority (around 80%) is given to Norwegian NGOs (NORAD 2004a).<sup>20</sup> Some of the donors have supported the creation of organisations to strengthen Southern civil society (e.g. Norway’s Fredskorpset or Partnership for Development) and some have increased funding available for CSOs (e.g. DFID has increased its funding by 50% since 1997 to 9% of total expenditure, and DGDC has increased its direct support for NGOs since 2001) (NAO 2006). Indirect funding is also used in areas perceived to be too political for donors to provide direct funding. For example, Germany, Norway and the UK seek to strengthen capacity of political parties through funding to third party organisations (e.g. German political foundations, Norwegian Centre for Democracy Support and the UK’s Westminster Foundation).
- 3.13 The increased prominence of the role of the state and the emerging consensus about the importance of better governance and institutions for development outcomes is reflected in the number of governance and governance-related policies that have been produced in the past few years.<sup>21</sup> There has also been increased interest in governance measurements and assessments. These governance policies also demonstrate that donors have a common understanding of what good governance

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<sup>18</sup> This concern was also more a reflection of the rhetoric around programmatic aid than its reality. The amount of aid that is channelled through government’s own systems is still a relatively small proportion.

<sup>19</sup> Most of the donors recognise that not all CSOs promote democratic values. They are also cognisant of the potential impact of donor funding in terms of encouraging growth of NGOs that are financially dependent on external resources and which lack grassroots legitimacy (see, for example, NORAD 2004a).

<sup>20</sup> This strategy is based on the belief that “these organisations ... are well qualified to communicate values fundamental to society building in civil society in developing countries” but also owe to the administrative costs and political risk of direct funding to developing country CSOs through Norwegian Embassies (NORAD 2004a: 185).

<sup>21</sup> Good governance is a priority area for Danida, DFID, SDC and Sida. BMZ, Danida, DFID and NORAD have governance policies or strategies. NORAD and DFID refer to use of governance assessments.

means, including a mixture of institutions and their qualities, principles and relationships. The role of civil society and the media as non-state watchdogs is well recognised (e.g. Danida 2003, SDC 2004, Sida 2006). However, their differences in approach – based on factors such as comparative advantage and historical preferences – can be gleaned from their priority areas. For instance, most of Norway’s assistance in the area of good governance is channelled through CSOs with the aim of promoting popular participation and human rights (Norwegian MFA 2004a). The most significant activities for Germany, within its “democracy, civil society and public administration” focal area, relate to legal and judicial reforms, decentralisation, public institution building and corruption (BMZ 2002c). However, the most recent governance strategies indicate that these “bottom-up” and “top-down” approaches are beginning to merge. For instance, DFID’s proposed Governance and Transparency Fund signals a renewed recognition in DFID of the importance of working with actors outside the state (DFID, 2006). Conversely, DANIDA, NORAD and Sida have shifted towards providing more support to state institutions to improve public sector management (Danida 2004a; Norwegian MFA 2004a) and democratic culture (Sida 1997).

**Box 3: DFID’s Capability, accountability and responsiveness framework<sup>22</sup>**

DFID new White Paper focuses on the importance of governance and effective states for development. It commits the UK to place support for good governance and the building of “states that work for poor people” at the centre of its development cooperation. It emphasises that “good governance is not just about government. It is also about political parties, parliament and the judiciary, the media, and civil society. It is about how citizens, leaders and public institutions relate to each other in order to make change happen”. DFID uses the framework of capability, accountability and responsiveness (CAR) to define what good governance requires:

- State capability: “the extent to which leaders and governments are able to get things done”. Examples include providing political stability and security, setting good rules and regulations, creating conditions for investment and trade, managing public finance and making sure services meet needs.
- Accountability: “the ability of citizens, civil society and the private sector to scrutinise public institutions and governments and hold them to account”. It includes the opportunity for citizens to check laws and decisions made by government and public institutions, the encouragement of free media and freedom of faith and association, respecting human rights and upholding the rule of law and providing regular opportunities to change leaders in peaceful ways.
- Responsiveness: “whether public polities and institutions respond to the needs of citizens and uphold their rights”. For example by providing ways for people to say what they think and need, implementing policies that meet needs of poor, using public finances to benefit poor, providing public goods and services in ways that reduce discrimination.

DFID uses three principles to assess how to provide assistance to its partners: (i) is there a commitment to reduce poverty; (ii) is there a commitment to uphold human rights and international obligations; (iii) is there a commitment to improve public financial management, promote good governance and transparency and fight corruption. To answer these questions, DFID has adopted a new Country Governance Assessment (CGA), intended to provide ministers and senior management with a better understanding of governance context and trends, inform country planning and enable monitoring, including of risk. This will be used alongside existing tools for social and political analysis, and will be mandatory for all countries required to prepare Country Assistance Plans and will be publicly available. The governance data and analysis in the CGA will be organised according to the CAR framework.

Sources: DFID (2006a, c).

<sup>22</sup> It is important to note that DFID’s work on voice and accountability clearly precedes its recent focus on governance. For instance, policies and practice on social exclusion and gender have in some respects been very much about voice and accountability. As such, the 2006 White Paper on governance reframes rather than discovers the issues of voice and accountability.

- 3.14 Whilst it is important to acknowledge that different departments – such as gender departments - within a single donor agency do have different approaches to understanding voice and accountability, it seems fair to say that donors have essentially the same toolbox from which to build their approach to voice and accountability, and governance more generally. The liberal democratic model is the source for this toolbox; a shared conceptual framework that is generally left implicit<sup>23</sup> with limited discussion of issues such as tailoring, sequencing or prioritisation according to country context. Institutional and cultural histories mean that different institutions or sectors are given emphasis by different donors (for example, decentralisation is a focus for Swiss, German, Danish and Belgian governance support) but, on the whole, there is little deviation from the standard list of institutional requirements required for democratic governance or from an approach that is stated mainly in terms of outcomes (i.e. accountable, responsive, inclusive).
- 3.15 Although donor strategy documents inevitably have their limitations, and there is some variation both between and within donors, it is significant that few display a solid grounding in: (i) an understanding of the reasons why there is weak or poor governance in different types of countries; and (ii) a theory about how societies and states are transformed. Political and public institutions that are democratic, accountable, responsive, inclusive and effective are a common vision or endpoint for the donors. There is also collective recognition that the starting point is societies and institutions based on hierarchy and particularism, even if there is no further discussion of this.<sup>24</sup> Thorough discussion of why different states are poorly governed, in terms of the conditions underlying this rather than the symptoms,<sup>25</sup> or how societies move from one type to the other, is minimal, as is discussion of the role of external actors in this, apart from a general acknowledgement that processes of change are long term and that there are limits to external influence.<sup>26</sup>
- 3.16 Instead, there is a tendency to underplay the incentives and constraints that shape individual and institutional behaviour, leading to statements of the kind that creating more accountable public institutions requires actions to make these institutions more accountable. This makes the toolbox mostly aspirational. To a large extent, this is because donor approaches are constrained by the paucity of research and evidence

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<sup>23</sup> In fact, key concepts, including voice and accountability, are rarely defined in donor policy documents and strategies. In the documents reviewed, there were only two clear definitions of accountability and none of voice.

<sup>24</sup> For an example of this see DFID (2001b: Section 2.1).

<sup>25</sup> There are exceptions, for instance, BMZ (2002c) highlights the importance of understanding the causes of the problems in developing countries, such as historical legacies and neopatrimonialism, in order to successfully promote good governance, and most of the donors have some discussion of some underlying causes of poor governance (e.g. DFID, 2001a). However, these discussions are brief and unsystematic, and therefore do not provide concrete direction on different causes of poor governance and how this relates to approach.

<sup>26</sup> In its new White Paper on governance, DFID identifies strong political leadership, sense of national purpose, economic growth, a vibrant private sector, the size of the middle-class, levels of education, the nature of civil society and the media as all being important drivers of better governance but this does not extend to further analysis of what in turn produces these. Instead, accountability is presented as itself being a key driver of change because of its potential to ensure that governments implement their economic and social priorities (DFID 2006a). However, it could be questioned whether accountability is the driver or the result of other processes and, in any case, the question of what conditions produce greater accountability and how donors can support these remains unanswered.

in this area about what works and under what conditions (as demonstrated by the discussion of lines of causality between voice and accountability and development outcomes in Section 2). This is particularly the case when donors' own political and institutional incentives mean that their approaches need to conform to specific frameworks regarding the type of state and societies that they are aiming to foster, and when critical voices within donor agencies struggle to make themselves heard. However, donors have also not generated systematic evidence about the types of interventions that do or do not work and why (see Section 4).

## Do donor approaches take account of context?

- 3.17 Understanding why there is poor governance and the conditions that are likely to favour transformation means understanding context.<sup>27</sup> Context is important for donors' approaches to voice and accountability in two ways: (i) for the sequencing of governance interventions, for example, whether voice and accountability can be strengthened in all contexts or whether there are preconditions that must first be met; and (ii) in terms of the overall strategy for strengthening voice and accountability and the types of activities within this, for example, whether donors can expect to apply the same approach in all contexts<sup>28</sup> or whether environment should condition expectations and objectives and, therefore, the approach taken.<sup>29</sup>
- 3.18 Donors clearly recognise that context matters.<sup>30</sup> By nature, the question of context largely arises at country level during country assessment and planning processes. As noted, a number of donors have adopted governance assessments, such as DFID's new Country Governance Assessment (see Box 3), and there is a general interest within the donor community about how to better utilise governance indicators. Donors have also been exploring various frameworks for analysing the political economy of the countries in which they work, e.g. Sida's power analyses and DFID's drivers of change studies. It is not clear from the policy documents surveyed, however, how these types of assessments and analyses will be used to inform strategic planning, for instance whether they will be used to make decisions that are essentially about the sequencing of governance activities rather than more fundamental questions of governance objectives *per se* and the methods for achieving these. There are also questions about whether donors have the capacity to undertake these types of analyses and to turn the findings into operational recommendations.

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<sup>27</sup> Stressing the important of context does not mean that approaches should be entirely country specific. However, it does mean that approaches need to be intelligent with respect to linking approaches and expectations about outcomes to countries with similar conditions, which comparative analysis tells us are likely to operate and transform in particular ways.

<sup>28</sup> Such as democratic or transitional or non-democratic, countries that are stable or experiencing conflict, low and middle-income, etc.

<sup>29</sup> This raises the question of whether the objective of donor governance policy can remain the same across all contexts and there is simply recognition that each country poses a different baseline (i.e. a teleological model) or whether structural conditions such as type of economic organisation, political framework, socio-cultural norms mean that the framework itself or the objective of policy needs to be adapted to context.

<sup>30</sup> For example, that "development cooperation cannot conform to a single model; it must be adapted to specific situation in different countries. Needs and prospects of achieving desired results should determine the extent and the forms for development cooperation with individual countries" (Government of Sweden 2002), or that "poverty is context specific. Its causes and the ways in which it is expressed vary over time and place. This makes it necessary to adapt development cooperation to the specific context" (Sida 2005a).

- 3.19 Whilst many of the issues relating to context will be dealt with at a country level, it is still expected that strategy documents at the corporate level should give clear indications of how context needs to be taken into account in the operationalisation of voice and accountability interventions. Instead, as discussed, the policy documents tend to present a uniform approach across governance sectors and do not consider such foundational issues as whether voice and accountability have the same meaning in democratic and non-democratic, or de facto one-party and multi-party, systems, or whether the strategy for promoting them should be different.
- 3.20 Such an attempt to provide guidance about *a priori* tailoring of approach to context would require specifying what these different contexts are. Identifying broad categories of states in a meaningful way is challenging and this level of detail is not found in the documents reviewed, with the exception of DFID's policy on working in fragile states (DFID 2004b). This document divides developing countries into four types according to their degree of capacity and political will: (i) good performers: capacity and political will to sustain development partnership; (ii) weak but willing: limited capacity; (iii) strong but unresponsive: may be repressive; (iv) weak-weak: little political will and institutional capacity. The implications for aid delivery mechanisms are noted, for instance the observation that it may be necessary to work through non-state actors in the third category, but broader operational implications regarding governance strategies resulting from these contexts are not unpacked. It is also not clear how this is reconciled with the commitment in DFID's new governance strategy to mainstream the CAR (capability, accountability and responsiveness) framework.
- 3.21 The two types of context-related factors that are widely discussed by donors are: (i) the impact of conflict or working in fragile environments; (ii) the importance of the presence or absence of political will. In its fragile states<sup>31</sup> policy, DFID makes the case that governance reforms need to be "prioritised, achievable, and appropriate to context" – for donors to support "good enough governance" rather than "long lists of donor-funded governance reforms". The policy suggests that five types of governance reform should be prioritised in fragile states (which could fall within any of the first three categories relating to capacity and will above) based on their potential to increase state fragility if left unaddressed: (i) protection of people and their property; (ii) security sector reform; (iii) public financial management, focusing on weaknesses with most potential to deepen fragility e.g. corruption linked to natural resources or macroeconomic shocks; (iv) improving service delivery starting by strengthening what works; and (v) protecting and promoting livelihoods.<sup>32</sup> There is a

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<sup>31</sup> DFID defines fragile states as those that are ranked in the bottom two categories in Country Policy & Institutional Assessment (CPIA) and those that receive no ranking, i.e. those "where the government cannot or will not deliver core functions to the majority of its people" (DFID 2004a).

<sup>32</sup> In his review of DFID's 2001 Governance Target Strategy Paper, Moore (2005) argues that DFID proposed seven essential governance capabilities should be prioritised according to context. As a rule of thumb he suggests the following order of importance: *A: basic governance requirements* (i) establish authority and security; *B: next set of priorities* (ii) institutionalisation of basic rules for civil political competition and succession; (iii) providing basic services; (iv) offering security against appropriation of investment profits; *C: higher set of priorities* (v) creation of institutions to support more accountable, democratic or participatory govt; (vi) provision of wide range of public services; (vii) active use of public authority to encourage and shape private economic enterprise. It is notable that interventions relating to voice and accountability mostly come in the final grouping.

general consensus amongst the six donors that action that promotes stability and, in some instances justice, must be given priority in states with particularly weak governance structures or those emerging from conflict.<sup>33</sup> This is not entirely consistent, however. For instance, security and political, economic and social development are sometimes presented as essentially mutually reinforcing components which should therefore not be subject to sequencing (Norwegian MFA 2004c); there are suggestions that strengthening accountability and human rights promotion should be a priority in weak or fragile states (SDC 2006a).

3.22 There is also recognition of the importance of political will for determining what donors can achieve and therefore the appropriate strategy and types of assistance. For instance, in relation to its support for democracy and human rights, Sida has long-term commitments with a small number of countries that demonstrate that they are serious about making progress in these areas, and undertakes thorough contextual analyses in these countries, but also has a more short-term and flexible approach in relation to wider group of countries, in some of which it works exclusively with civil society owing to the absence of “positive political will” on the part of the government (Sida 1997). Again, however, what is missing in the policy documents is further analysis of what political will means and the underlying conditions that support its presence or absence and the implications of this for the design of governance interventions and strategies.<sup>34</sup>

3.23 Where more detailed guidance on providing support in specific governance areas exists, such as DFID’s guidance on parliamentary or electoral assistance, there is more detailed consideration of the need to analyse context in order to ascertain whether this type of assistance will be beneficial or it is something that cannot be supported owing to existing conditions, whether this is because of conflict, absence of will, need for other activities first, etc. There is again recognition that external actors can only achieve so much in the absence of broader trends of social change supported by domestic constituencies. Whilst all the donors recognise that there is a need to work with and through government systems, and that the re-establishment of this is a priority even in post-conflict environments, where governance activities in partnership with government are not possible or will not be fruitful, the strategy for all the donors is to work through civil society or, where possible, to identify reform-minded individuals with whom to work (e.g. individual parliamentarians).<sup>35</sup> The suspension of relations is unusual, but significant deteriorations in governance weigh heavily in these decisions for donors such as Sida and NORAD.

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<sup>33</sup> However, this leaves a large group of “middling” countries for which there is little direction about prioritisation of governance interventions in general, and voice and accountability interventions more specifically, other than that these are to be decided on the basis of country analyses.

<sup>34</sup> For instance, as noted in DFID’s new framework for its drivers of change studies, political will is an institutional rather than a personal quality (Leftwich, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> The need to work through non-state actors in states where will or capacity is particularly weak is also a point of consensus. For example, BMZ say that they will adopt a “bottom-up” approach to governance where there is little government cooperation by working through NGOs to strengthen reform elements (BMZ 2002c). However, NORAD also highlights that “in many cases there must also be a strong emphasis on the importance of re-establishing official government functions” (NORAD 2004a: 18).



## 4. EVALUATING VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

4.1 The discussion in the previous sections has demonstrated that more systematic evidence is needed to help donors to understand how their approaches to strengthening voice and accountability are influenced by different context-specific conditions and whether and how strengthening voice and accountability contributes to broader development outcomes, such as improved governance and poverty reduction. It has also emphasised the importance of disaggregating outcomes; it cannot be assumed that poverty reduction will translate into poverty reduction for marginalised groups. This section outlines some of the key features of current debates on evaluation theory relevant to voice and accountability, and democracy promotion and governance more generally. It then reviews the donors' own attempts to assess their approaches and effectiveness in this field in order to identify their common findings, as well as the main gaps in their knowledge about what works and under what conditions.

### **Approaches and frameworks for evaluating voice and accountability interventions**

4.2 In this section we do not aim to review all possible approaches to evaluation and their applicability to voice and accountability initiatives. Rather we build on existing literature and experiences of applying different approaches to evaluating voice and accountability and related interventions (e.g. governance, democracy building, human rights etc.) to date and we draw some of the key lessons in relation to the relevance and applicability of these approaches.

#### *Theory-based approaches to evaluation*

4.3 As outlined in Section 3 (see 3.13), donor approaches to voice and accountability are rarely grounded in robust theories of how states and societies are transformed and the role of voice and accountability in these processes. This tendency is reinforced by the lack of systematic evidence about what types of interventions work (or do not work) in different contexts and the reasons for this. This gap in knowledge reinforces the timeliness of a joint evaluation of the effectiveness of voice and accountability interventions. In particular, it will provide an opportunity to test the relevance and applicability of a theory-based approach to the evaluation of these types of interventions.

4.4 Theory-based approaches to evaluation rest on the suggestion that social programmes are theories (or embody theories) and that evaluation is therefore a "theory-testing exercise" to uncover and explain the implicit assumptions, programme logic and mechanisms behind complex development interventions (Pawson 2003). As Rossi et al (1999: 156) note: "Every program embodies a conception of the structure, functions and procedures appropriate to attain its goals; this conception constitutes the logic or 'plan' of the program." Interpreted in this way, evaluation is primarily about uncovering and explaining the underlying logic or plan, with a view to exploring the linkages to both the expected and the unintended outcomes or results (Booth and Evans 2006).

- 4.5 The possible practical applications of a theory-based approach to evaluation are wide ranging and include the areas of voice and accountability, democracy promotion and aid effectiveness. In their evaluability study of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, Booth and Evans (2006) propose a theory-based approach in order to develop a framework that makes explicit the Declaration's implicit theories of change and tracks the anticipated sequence of linkages from inputs and activities to outcomes. Similarly, Ugglå (2006) recently tested the applicability of a theory-based approach by reviewing a sample of Sida projects on democracy promotion (see paragraph 4.14: ii). He concludes that this approach is useful for these kinds of projects because they are highly dependent on assumptions and analogies that are best analysed through an improved understanding of the logic model that underpins them.
- 4.6 Theory-based evaluation has both advantages and limitations. A theory-based approach can provide a solution to some of the problems associated with results-based evaluation of democracy promotion, namely that the lack of suitable indicators and the difficulties of attribution and measurement often lead to inconclusive findings, typically calling for higher quality data and analysis in order to reach more definitive conclusions. As Ugglå acknowledges, this solution could be considered defeatist because it deals with the challenges of identifying and assessing results by instead focusing on the underlying assumptions and logic which may or may not lead to expected results and outcomes. However, the success or failure of an intervention can be as much a result of the robustness of the underlying theory as other factors, such as weaknesses during implementation (Ugglå 2006). Others have therefore argued that theory-based evaluation can make a significant contribution to a better understanding of the causal/impact chains linking activities, outputs and results because logic models reconstruct and clarify the linkages between the different dimensions of a programme (Weiss 1998, Booth and Evans 2006b). Finally, although the focus of theory based evaluation is on improving the understanding of the underlying theories and implicit logic underlying a programme or a project, it is important to recognise that in its applications this is not necessarily an aim in itself, but that it could also be a means to identify and assess actual changes. In particular, logic models can be used to if, how and why objectives are being met, outcomes achieved or unexpected results are being observed<sup>36</sup>. From this perspective, theory based evaluation can be a very powerful tool to explore failures and the reasons behind them.
- 4.7 Voice and accountability interventions are complex because they are characterised by non-linear causal chains. Theory-based approaches have been successfully applied to the evaluation of such complex programmes. The main advantages of using programme theory in these cases is that it is possible to explore multiple (simultaneous or alternative) causal strands, as well as multiple levels of causal chains. Furthermore, such exercises provide an opportunity to test whether it is

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<sup>36</sup> This is reflected in the various 'logic' models and tools which have been developed to determine the changes occurring as a result of a programme or project, by identifying the various steps in the results chain leading (or not) to both expected and unexpected outcomes. See for example the .K. Kellogg Foundation *Logic Model Development Guide* (<http://www.wkcf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf>)

possible to develop either an overarching programme theory, which can be adapted for different projects, or multiple programme theories that reflect different perspectives on intended outcomes and causal paths (Rogers 2000, Stame 2004).

- 4.8 This is important because one of the main misconceptions about theory-based evaluation is that it requires the identification of a single theory that is then applied to a diverse range of interventions. Rather, as noted by Weiss (1998: 61-2), “the theory does not have to be uniformly accepted. *It doesn't have to be right*”. Using a theory-based approach does not therefore equate to an attempt to identify a unified theory driving development interventions or that the relationship between theory and the empirical study of their implementation is necessarily linear. The emphasis on theory also does not have to mean less focus on action, as demonstrated by the application of theory based approaches and methods to evaluate community based initiatives with a strong action oriented focus (Weiss 1995).
- 4.9 Different strategies have emerged from theory-driven evaluation, with two being of particular relevance for the purpose of evaluating voice and accountability interventions: (i) a theory of change approach; and (ii) and a realist approach.
- *Theory of change approach*: This approach understands programmes as being iterative sequences of theories which are implemented through a series of steps. Together these constitute the main “logic model” of the programme. These steps can also be considered as the main elements of the causal chain, linking inputs and outputs to both expected and unexpected results (Connell et al 1995).<sup>37</sup>
  - *Realist approach*: This approach focuses on the actual mechanisms that support or hinder social change processes. These refer to both the choices and capacities which lead to regular patterns of social behaviour.<sup>38</sup> For any given programme, these mechanisms fall into two types: those defined by the original programme concept and those put in place by the programme itself. The focus of the evaluation then becomes the match or the “goodness of fit” between these programmes mechanisms and their link with results (Pawson and Tilley 1997). The realist approach can also be considered as addressing some of the perceived limitations of a theory of change approach. Pawson (2003) argues that, generally speaking, the goal of theory based approaches is “enlightenment” rather than “political arithmetic” – that is, they tell us more about the medium rather than the message that policymakers expect evaluators to deliver. He suggests that a realist approach instead takes into account the limitations that evaluators are confronted with when trying to answer the question “what works?”.

#### *Further lessons from the implementation of evaluation frameworks and approaches*

- 4.10 The assessment of results and of actual change is a key objective of any evaluation. This is all the more important in an area like voice and accountability where, as it is

<sup>37</sup> For an illustration of this see the “actors” and “mechanism” chains used by Uggle (2006).

<sup>38</sup> For example, in order to attempt to analyse the different explanatory factors influencing crime rates in the context of a police support programme, a realist evaluator will be interested in “what is it about a programme that makes it work”. An example of a mechanism is the “empowerment” process generated by increased patrols in the community, which in turn leads to the greater capacity of community members to self-protection and reporting crime (Pawson and Tilley 1997).

the case in related sectors like democracy and human rights, availability is a key challenge and, as stated by Thomas Carothers 'democracy promoters have tended either to underdo evaluations, carrying them out hap-hazardly, using superficial methods, or to overdo them, elaborating complex, rigid methods...' <sup>39</sup> Among the key difficulties are the lack of suitable indicators and the complexities of attribution, i.e., to decide what to measure and why. As pointed out by Uggla (2006), despite these difficulties often evaluation studies in these domains try to reach 'result-based' conclusions based on result or performance based methodology. This was the approach adopted in two recent Sida studies which were not very conclusive in relation to results and performance, emphasising instead the need to develop further the quality of evaluations and the availability of indicators <sup>40</sup>. The limitations of the applicability of results and performance oriented approaches in the field of voice and accountability is one of the main reasons why Uggla (2006) advocates that theory based evaluation could provide a useful alternative.

- 4.11 Quantitative methods and statistical analysis are not often used to assess the effectiveness of aid in supporting democracy and accountability in developing countries. However, these approaches have both potential benefits and limitations, as highlighted by a recent study of the effects of US foreign assistance on democracy building (see Box 4). Similar considerations apply to recent attempts to develop quantitative indicators to measure human rights. Whilst it is desirable to have comparable indicators that can be applied across a number of countries and sectors, it is also increasingly recognised that what determines democracy or human rights outcomes is highly context-dependent and that the available measures are often insufficient for exemplifying which explanatory factors lead to different results (Raworth 2001). <sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Thomas Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999).

<sup>40</sup> Derek Poate, Roger Riddell, Nick Chapman, Tony Corran et al., "The Evaluability of Democracy and Human Rights Projects" (Stockholm: Sida, 2000); Kim Forss, "Finding out about results from projects concerning democratic governance and human rights" (Stockholm, Sida, 2002)

<sup>41</sup> For an overview of the current debate on human rights indicators see (Raworth 2001) Other initiatives to develop indicators to measure human rights include the OECD Metagora Project ([www.metagora.org/html/index.html](http://www.metagora.org/html/index.html)), Green (2001), Danish institute of Human rights (2000)

**Box 4: Quantitative methods to assess the effectiveness of voice and accountability interventions: the USAID experience**

In 2005, USAID commissioned a study to assess the effect of its programmes supporting democracy building around the world. The authors conducted a worldwide cross-national quantitative study based on the entire democracy portfolio of USAID between 1990 and 2003. In order to deal with the problem of attribution, the study tries to determine what a country's normal "growth" in or "decline" of democracy would have been in the period studied, in order to isolate the effects of USAID interventions. This poses significant challenges as these are complex dynamics that are likely to differ from one context to another. Their findings suggest that, although it is possible to conclude that foreign assistance has a positive impact on democratisation, it is difficult to determine "how large" such impact is for two reasons. First, there is a lagged effect of such interventions, which tend to take several years to mature. Second, although the impact of USAID assistance on democratisation is potentially significant,<sup>42</sup> this has to be set against the reality of the actual outlay for USAID democracy assistance, which in the time period amounted to US\$2.07 million per year. Finally, one specific finding of the study is that, although such statistical analysis is complemented by other methods, its explanatory power remains rather limited. The results on the impact of USAID assistance on human rights show a strong negative effect, i.e. that USAID interventions apparently had a detrimental effect on human rights conditions. The authors suggest that this could be the result of an increase in reporting of human rights abuses in the countries affected by USAID interventions, although the evidence available does not support this hypothesis nor does it explain the reason why this could have occurred.

Source: Finkel et al (2006).

4.12 Over the past decade, many civil society organisations have been developing frameworks and tools to assess the impact of their advocacy and policy influencing work.<sup>43</sup> Evaluating advocacy measures poses similar challenges to evaluating voice and accountability, in that it requires long timeframes and tries to assess processes of change that are often difficult to measure and to attribute to a particular intervention or actor. However, the frameworks that have been developed include features that could be useful for the development of a framework to evaluate voice and accountability. These include:

- an explicit typology of the different dimensions of policy outcomes, including the levels at which change is supposed to occur and the distinction between normative and behavioural change (Miller and Covey, 1997); and
- attempts to construct the steps involved in policy change (or the impact chain), such as the 'ladder of democratic and political space (Chapman and Wameyo 2001), the matrix for evaluating community initiatives (Kubisch et al 1995) and advocacy indexes and rating systems (Hirschmann 2002).

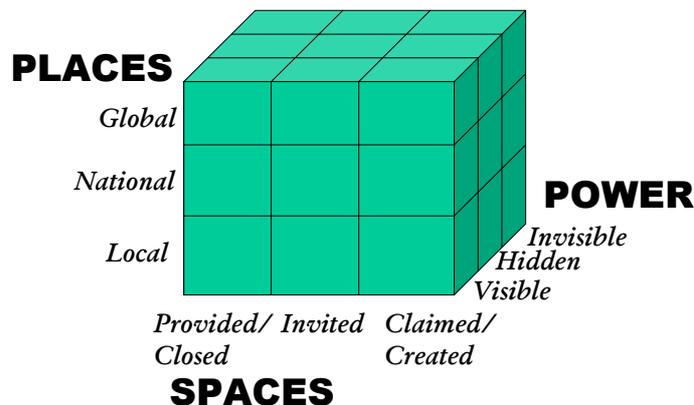
4.13 A key challenge emerging from these attempts to assess the effectiveness of civil society advocacy is that the transformation of power relations is both integral to other outcomes (such as increased voice and accountability) and an outcome in its own right (that is, changed power relations at different levels), but that it is difficult to incorporate considerations of power into evaluation frameworks. The 'Power Cube' developed by Gaventa (2003) attempts to provide a tool for doing this and has been used in a recent evaluation of civil society programmes commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see Box 5).

<sup>42</sup> An additional US\$10 million investment would, by itself, produce a five-fold increase in the amount of democratic change that the average country would expect to achieve.

<sup>43</sup> For example, Save the Children UK (2003), Chapman (2006) and Chapman and Wameyo (2001), Court et. al (2006)

**Box 5: The application of the Gaventa 'Power Cube'**

Gaventa's Power Cube visually represents relationships of power, place and space.



In so doing it helps to emphasise that: (i) different types of power or space are a continuum rather than binary which is the way that they have traditionally been conceptualised (powerful vs. powerless, included vs. excluded); (ii) power is relational rather than finite; (iii) a relational approach (following Foucault) stresses the importance of the *exercise* of power rather than its possession; and (iv) there is a need to look at the combination of spaces, places and visibility of power and the way in which they affect each other.

The Power Cube was applied as an analytical framework in the context of the Dutch CFA evaluation 'Assessing Civil Society Participation supported in Country by Cordaid, Hivos, Novib and Plan Netherlands' (Guijt 2005). The 'spaces, places, power' framework has proven a valuable and dynamic tool to encourage power analysis and to stimulate discussions of strategies and dynamics of participation with the CSOs involved in the evaluation. However, this experience also points to the limitations of using a single framework in different contexts. The 'Power Cube' was adapted to the specific circumstances of the different case studies involved in the evaluation and it was found that: "the ways in which the dimensions were filled differs greatly across context, shaped as they are by the histories and realities of violence and conflict, hence there is no recipe of what constitutes effective participatory action" (Guijt. 2005: 44).

Source: Gaventa (2003, 2005), Luttrell (2006).

*Some challenges and the way forward*

4.14 The challenges involved in evaluating development interventions in areas such as democratisation, voice and empowerment, accountability and human rights are widely acknowledged.<sup>44</sup> Some of the frameworks and approaches developed by academics and practitioners have attempted to deal with some of the difficulties, namely complexity, multiple directions and levels of causality (Rogers 2000, Stame 2004, Booth and Evans 2006b) and the need to integrate power as a key dimensions (Gaventa 2003, VeneKlasen and Miller 2002).

4.15 One of the main challenges involved in evaluating the direct effect of donors' interventions in a given context is striking a balance between: (i) the need to attribute the changes that have occurred as a result of an intervention to a specific actor or institution; and (ii) the importance of recognising the role played by other

<sup>44</sup> See Ugglá (2006) for an overview.

endogenous factors that are likely to be present in any given context. There is no easy solution to this dilemma, which becomes all the more challenging when considering multi-donor interventions. One way of dealing with the problem of attribution is to use statistical analysis to test the robustness of the correlation between different variables. However, as discussed (see Box 4), such methods can lead to findings which, although statistically significant, remain very difficult to interpret or explain. Furthermore, it is not always desirable to “isolate” the effect that one donor has from those produced in combination with others.

- 4.16 Others, using a capability approach as the entry point, suggest that, although it may not be possible to evaluate capability from the observations of outcomes alone, it should still be possible to distinguish the role played by personal agency from the opportunity structure in which individual choices are made (Alkire 2005, Alsop and Norton 2005). On the basis of the World Bank *Annual Reviews of Development Effectiveness* (ARDEs) between 1997 and 2005, Booth and Evans (2006) refer to the need for donors to move towards a modified notion of attribution, what the World Bank calls “most likely association”. This would allow for a sound evaluative judgement based on the best evidence available while at the same time acknowledging that conditions are far from experimental and that data and knowledge gaps are widespread.
- 4.17 Whilst evaluating voice and accountability presents some clear challenges, it should also be considered as an opportunity to test new ideas and approaches and, in so doing, to contribute to the overall debate on evaluation theory. One possibility is to consider the evaluation itself as part of an overall effort to increase voice and accountability. This approach is consistent with the notion of voice as developed by Hirschman (1970), that is, as an attempt to repair or improve a relationship through communication of the complaint, grievance or proposal for change. From this perspective, the process and results of an evaluative effort could play a crucial role in defining what such a proposal for change could look like. This approach has been referred to as “deliberative democratic evaluation” (House and Howe 1999, Greene 2000) and as “evaluation as public good” (Greene 2005).
- 4.18 What are the implications emerging from this review of evaluation theory and practice for developing a framework for evaluating voice and accountability interventions? First, the nature and scope of the challenges are potentially significant and it is therefore necessary to address these in an iterative way, adopting a trial and error approach at different stages. Second, to ensure that the task is manageable, it will be important to be realistic about what is possible for the framework to cover and what is not likely to be included. Third, it is clear that an all-encompassing model for voice and accountability interventions to be applied in all contexts by all donors is neither possible nor desirable. Rather, the evaluation framework will need to be capable of identifying and analysing a range of different models or logics. Fourth, it will be important to experiment with different methods and approaches, recognising that there is no ‘golden rule’ as to what constitutes an ideal approach for evaluating voice and accountability. In particular, it will be desirable to combine different aspects of theory-based approaches, with a view to generate useful knowledge and understanding as to what are the enabling conditions or the obstacles to an effective use of donor resources in this field.

## What have donors learnt about their effectiveness?

4.19 This sub-section reviews evaluations undertaken by the six donors in areas relevant to voice and accountability. These evaluations have been selected by the donors and constitute a rich body of information. It has therefore been necessary to be selective and to identify the most important or common findings of relevance to this review and the design of an evaluation framework, rather than those which are specific to an agency or project/programme.

### *What have donors been doing to measure their effectiveness?*

4.20 As discussed in Section 3, voice and accountability is not a discrete area of donor intervention but is instead a subsidiary of their work in other thematic areas. This is also reflected in the efforts of the six donors to assess their approaches to voice and accountability and the impact of these interventions. Only DFID has directly reviewed its work on voice and accountability. The majority of reviews and evaluations relate indirectly to voice and accountability through their focus on other thematic areas of relevance. Four areas in which donors' evaluative efforts are clustered have been identified: (i) voice and accountability; (ii) democracy and human rights; (iii) participation and empowerment; and (iv) working with civil society. A brief description is given of the individual reviews that have been undertaken in each area, including main objectives and methodology.<sup>45</sup>

- i. *Voice and accountability*: DFID has produced a series of reviews relating to its work on strengthening voice and accountability.
  - A preliminary mapping of what DFID is doing to strengthen *domestic accountability on public expenditure*, with particular emphasis on those countries receiving budget support. Interventions were identified using DFID's information management system (PRISM) and categorised according to whether they related to: (i) transparency and opening up space (supply side of accountability); or (ii) participation and capacity building (demand side of accountability) (Bosworth 2005).
  - An assessment of DFID's work since 1995 on issues of *gender, voice and accountability*, including a broad overview of DFID's direct engagement on women's issues in relation to citizens voice, political participation, national machineries, PRSs and gender budgeting initiatives, and a more detailed examination of specific projects to understand approaches in contrasting contexts (Waterhouse and Neville 2005).
  - An evaluation of DFID's efforts to *strengthen voice and accountability for better service delivery*. This project involves:
    - An initial mapping of DFID's support to voice and accountability. This review has been completed and was compiled using DFID's management information system (PRISM) and interviews with DFID staff. It uses an analytical framework which categorised interventions according to their purpose and/or implementing agency: (i) support to civil society to establish preconditions; (ii)

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<sup>45</sup> All are single donor evaluations.

citizen-led initiatives to influence service delivery; (iii) citizen-led initiatives to influence policy; (iv) joint government/civil society initiatives; (v) government-led initiatives; (vi) supply-led (government or NGO) initiatives to strengthen accountability of service providers. It also considers the sectoral focus of the intervention and its aid modality (Thomas 2006).

- Four country case studies. The Indian case study has been completed and reviews experiences and good practices with strengthening citizens' voice and accountability for better health and education services, focusing on two centrally sponsored projects and another in Andhra Pradesh. This uses the same categorisation developed during the mapping phase (Thomas et al 2006).
  - The project will conclude with a synthesis and a DFID guidance note on supporting voice and accountability for better service delivery.
- ii. *Democracy and human rights*: Sida, Danida and SDC have made significant efforts to evaluate their contribution to this field.
- Sida has a series of evaluations exploring its *approaches to democratic governance*.<sup>46</sup> This includes:
    - A review of research and donor practice in relation to methods to assess results of projects in democratic governance and suggest lessons learned (Forss 2002).
    - A project to develop methods for the promotion of democratic governance, including four studies and a synthesis (Sida 2003). The studies review both what Sida is doing, including findings from Sida's evaluations, and other donor practice and covers: (i) support to political institutions focusing on elections, political party systems and parliaments in countries undergoing democratic transition; (ii) democratic participation/state-society relationship; (iii) good governance (limited to quality of public authorities/rule of law/corruption/PFM, including vertical accountability); and (iv) access to justice.
    - An analysis of 52 Sida projects on democracy, good governance and human rights in four different country contexts (Bolivia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, South Africa and Vietnam) to reconstruct and assess their underlying programme logic. The author uses a fixed model of analysis to reconstruct the programme theory through the identification of the chains of actors and interventions and then identifies patterns in order to assess these. This is an explicit attempt to explore new ways of evaluating democracy and human rights interventions based on Sida's previous findings regarding the difficulties associated with measuring its contribution to this sector (Uggla 2006).
  - Danida undertook a major evaluation of its support to human rights and democratisation between 1990 and 1998, documenting these activities to identify lessons learnt/best practice and assess whether these activities have promoted democratisation and human rights. The evaluation includes four country case

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<sup>46</sup> Sida also co-hosted a workshop on 'Methods and Experiences of Evaluating Democracy Support' in April 2006.

studies (Ghana, Guatemala, Mozambique and Nepal) in order to encompass a range of political contexts and four thematic studies (justice, constitution and legislation; elections; media; participation and empowerment), as well as a synthesis (Sørbø et al 1999).

- SDC commissioned an evaluation of its work on Human Rights (SDC, 2004e). The evaluation examined the extent to which two key SDC policy statements - a) Promoting Human Rights in Development Cooperation and b) The Rule of Law and its Implication on Development Cooperation – had influenced policy dialogue, programmes and projects. A key finding was that whilst the policy statements were useful in terms of setting out policy positions, further work was needed to operationalise them in specific interventions.
- iii. *Participation and empowerment*: SDC commissioned an independent evaluation (undertaken by a team of Southern researchers) to assess its performance in empowering marginalised groups and understand perspectives of those engaged in implementing these programmes, including case studies in Bolivia and Burkina Faso. Danida also reviewed its support to participation and empowerment as part of the evaluation discussed above (Sørbø et al 1999).
- iv. *Working with civil society*: Three of the donors have evaluated their work with civil society:
- NORAD has analysed the dynamic of civil society in two country contexts – Mozambique (Rebelo et al 2002) and Uganda (Thue et al 2002) – including the relationship between civil society and government, using a combination of desk and field-based research. NORAD has also produced a study exploring the roles of CSOs in SWAps, with focus on health and education, based on the recognition that first generation SWAps focused on government effectiveness rather than the role of CSOs. The study involves a desk study, four case studies and a synthesis report (Kruse 2003).
  - SDC commissioned an independent evaluation of its interaction with Swiss NGOs, involving a desk study, interviews and two workshops (Bähr and Nell 2004d).
  - The UK's National Audit Office undertook a review of how DFID is seeking to promote effective working partnerships with CSOs in support of its poverty reduction objectives. The review focused on the rationale, methods and impact of CSO partnerships, with particular attention on funding through country teams to local CSOs and the two largest UK-based schemes (the Civil Society Challenge Fund and the Partnership Programme Agreements). The methodology includes desk-based review, country visits and a survey (NAO 2006).
- v. *Decentralisation*
- DGDC commissioned a comprehensive evaluation of its support for decentralisation and local governance. The evaluation sought to clarify the role and objective of Belgian support to decentralisation, emphasised the importance of taking account of local context, and made clear the contribution which decentralisation can make to responding to social and political crises, to consolidating democracy and to promoting local development. However, as the

evaluation notes, decentralisation will only bring about positive change in governance and the relationship between citizens and the state, if: a) citizens are actively involved in processes of decentralisation; b) the capacity and willingness exists at a local level to implement principles of good governance and to provide citizens with adequate services; and c) the central state is willing and able to create an institutional framework which gives authority and decision-making powers to the local level.

*What have the donors learnt?*

4.21 What have donors learnt about their contribution to strengthening voice and accountability and the types of approach that are likely to increase their impact? Some key findings and recommendations emerging from their evaluations are summarised below.

4.22 *Donors can positively contribute to intermediate outcomes.* Many of the evaluations found that interventions had successfully contributed to their objectives with the effect of strengthening citizens' voice and public accountability. The variety in types of interventions mean that these cannot be summarised but they range from successfully empowering marginalised communities "to recognise, articulate and deploy their abilities according to evolving needs and priorities, and to negotiate changes with actors who influence changes" (SDC 2006d) and increasing the availability of information (Bosworth 2005), to strengthening the capacity of individual CSOs (NAO 2006) and strengthening women's voice by increasing their participation in policy forums including elected bodies (Waterhouse and Neville 2005, Sida 2003).

4.23 *An understanding of politics is fundamental to the success of these types of interventions.* This is the strongest common message. Politics is of course a broad church and needs further unpacking. A number of subsidiary strands of this finding are therefore teased out below. What these all reinforce, however, is the need for strategy and programming (including design, monitoring and evaluation) to be grounded in thorough political economy analysis.

- i. *Institutions and actors are not neutral but are instead motivated by different incentives and interests.* Institutional approaches that are not cognisant of these political dynamics – in terms of the institutions themselves and the relationships between actors within them, and their situation within a broader political context – are often ineffective. Sida (2003) provides the example of technical support to legislatures that do not take into account the impact of their internal political dynamics or the effect of external factors, such as political culture or executive dominance. Another is the promotion of partnerships between government and civil society which result in civil society actors being co-opted rather than improving citizen participation and government responsiveness. A greater understanding of political dynamics will also help donors to identify and attempt to address underlying power structures (relating to tradition, historical legacy, etc.) that impede change in comparison to interventions that are "ineffective" or "counterproductive" owing to their focus on what

are essentially symptoms (Sida 2003: 16).<sup>47</sup> A related, more micro-level, example of the importance of understanding political dynamics is the tendency to focus on inter- rather than intra-group empowerment (SDC 2006d).

- ii. Though not unpacked, the *importance of political will* on the part of government to the success of voice and accountability interventions is highlighted (Bosworth 2005). This factor constraining the success of interventions is perhaps something that donors who have traditionally worked with CSOs as the implementers of their projects are particularly wrestling with. For instance, SDC (2006d) found that, although there was an attempt to work more through government, “they had encountered inefficiency, apathy and lack of vision”. Clearly moving forward – particularly in the context of the Paris Declaration commitments – requires understanding why this is the case.<sup>48</sup>
- iii. *Donors are political actors operating within political processes*. Development is a political process and this statement can therefore be applied to all interventions. However, Sørnbø et al (1999) suggest that this is particularly acute in relation to democracy and human rights promotion “where political considerations tend to overshadow technical or economic feasibility criteria”. However, they also caution that “even when they are well designed and well executed, donor initiatives in support of human rights and democratisation normally operate at the margin [of the political process]”.
- iv. *Informal politics, institutions and processes are as important as formal ones*. In the context of an analysis of civil society in Mozambique, Rebelo et al (2002: 3) found that the jurisdiction of the formal state is limited: “An estimated 60% of the population live according to traditional norms and with little notion of the state, formal laws and their rights. Governance is in the hands of indigenous/‘non-state’/‘non-system’ leaders and structures ... [who] have legitimacy in that their position and their powers are accepted by the local communities and there is a degree of formality, structure and division of responsibilities”. They also argue that there is a great deal of fluidity between categories such as formal/informal, modern/traditional and rural/urban, for instance, civic associations that had transformed themselves into parties to contest municipal elections include members of the traditional elite, but also that many civil society activities are “invisible” to donors because they occur at community level and do not fit the stereotype of a formal association.
- v. *Interventions must be tailored to political context*. These insights culminate in the message that donors must adapt their approach to the particular context.<sup>49</sup> As Sørnbø

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<sup>47</sup> In relation to this it is important to note that understanding of economic context – the way that economic relations are organised and the influences on this – is just as important as political context in understanding power structures. Any separation of the economic and political is clearly artificial as politics refers to the processes that govern the distribution of resources (both material and non-material) (Leftwich, 2006).

<sup>48</sup> As highlighted in note 32, it is inadequate to conceptualise political will as an individual rather than institutional quality.

<sup>49</sup> It is important to note the difference between adaptation to local conditions and to political context. Whilst local context also involve political dynamics, the two are not necessarily the same. For example, Uggla (2006) found that some of Sida’s interventions varied according to context in the sense that Sida worked almost exclusively with government in Vietnam and with civil society in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Importantly, however, this represents local conditions shaping approach – in the sense of the availability of organisations or institutions for donors to work through – rather than an approach being designed to achieve the most

et al (1999) argue, this implies “a change in the way that donors do business if they are to make a significant impact [on democracy and human rights] ... Successful programmes are not those which expand and repeat initial interventions after a period of testing and refinement of a single package of assistance. Rather, they are programmes that are tailored to particular political, economic, cultural and social contexts”.<sup>50</sup> This means that blueprints for policymakers about “what works, where, when and how in the field of democratisation and human rights” are not possible because there will be many paths to similar outcomes. Policymakers instead will need to adopt an approach which mixes longer-term interventions with more short-term and flexible ones that respond to changing circumstances. Above all, this means that models that are successful in one set of conditions are unlikely to operate in the same way or have the same outcomes when imported into another (Thomas et al 2006).<sup>51</sup> It also implies that donors need to understand better the difference that context makes. This is unlikely to be achieved solely by the use of top-down quantitative assessments of context or governance. Rather, it will imply the use of more qualitative analysis and assessments, such as those developed as part of DFID’s Drivers of Change initiative.

4.24 *Influencing broader development outcomes requires an integrated approach.* The success of single interventions which focus on a single institution, actor or event can be severely curtailed because of their interdependence with other institutions, actors and processes. For instance, the absence of functioning political parties undermines the effectiveness of electoral and parliamentary support, and strengthening single parties is unlikely to have broader impact (i.e. beyond the objective of strengthening that party) if the party system as a whole is not strengthened (Sida 2003). This includes having an approach which includes both formal and informal institutions.<sup>52</sup> It is also stressed that the sustainability, as well as the effectiveness, of many interventions is dependent on further actions, for example, to translate awareness into strategic action or empowerment into actual change in conditions (Waterhouse and Neville 2005, SDC 2006d). This means *adopting a perspective that is realistic and long term* (Sida 2003, Waterhouse and Neville 2005, Sørnbø et al 1999).

4.25 *Donors must be realistic about the capacity of civil society to act as a channel for citizen voice and demand.* Understanding political context and dynamics also has implications for how civil society’s role is envisaged. Context determines the nature

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results given the political context (for instance, Uggle points out that Sida partners the Vietnamese government because of the absence of other partners despite its questionable commitment to democratic reform). Sørnbø et al (1999) also found that Danida’s democracy and human rights assistance to CSOs was generally “well adapted to local condition” but argued that *political conditions* would become more important as Danida moves to sectoral programmes.

<sup>50</sup> The evaluation notes that this has other implications for ways of working, namely that “bigger is not better” because the number of organisations “worthy of support are small and incapable of utilising large grants” and that these types of interventions are “inherently personnel intensive” (Sørnbø et al 1999).

<sup>51</sup> Sørnbø et al (1999) argue that Danida’s position as a relatively small donor has meant that it has had more freedom to respond to “windows of opportunity” and intervene at crucial points to support positive regime change (e.g. Nepal, Guatemala and South Africa).

<sup>52</sup> Although the justice sector is explicitly excluded from the ToR for this project, it provides a good example of an area in which donor practice has moved to recognise the importance of an integrated approach that incorporates informal (customary justice systems) as well as formal institutions if access to justice is to be improved.

of civil society, the space in which CSOs operate and their relationship to other actors and institutions, including both citizens and government.<sup>53</sup> Three of the reviews found that civil society, in particular formal CSOs, is relatively young and that formal NGOs tend to be urban-based and elitist organisations with limited geographical reach and which are dependent on external funding. These organisations are only marginally involved in policy processes both because of their limited capacity or technical knowledge but also because of the limited space available to them.<sup>54</sup> The organisations that were involved tended to be those involved in service delivery (Kruse 2003, Thue et al 2002, Rebelo et al 2002).<sup>55</sup> A particularly interesting finding, given current trends, is that CSOs who have a track record in service delivery are seen as more legitimate advocates than those who specialise in advocacy, and that “in some policy processes, involvement in service delivery was a pre-requisite for participation in policy formation”, meaning that “a move away from service delivery could remove a point of entry for NGOs at local level” (Kruse 2003: iv). This is echoed by Rebelo et al (2002: 4) who argue that, in the Mozambican context, “many of the so-called ‘advocacy’ organisations have strong service delivery components, and would probably have less impact without them”.

**4.26 *The ability of decentralisation to improve voice and accountability is context specific.***

The findings about the importance of context and politics for impact are also born out by donors’ assessment of the success of decentralisation activities. Whilst it was noted that participation does tend to be greater at the local level, whether or not increased participation, voice and accountability are achieved through decentralisation depends on factors such as the quality and effectiveness of local institutions and public officials and the degree of devolution of power and resources (Sida 2003, Thomas et al 2006). Sørnbø et al (1999) argue that, “the lesson learnt is not that decentralisation should be discouraged but that donors must be far more circumspect in terms of what it can deliver in the form of improved governance, including the more specific goals of encouraging popular participation, promoting local-level planning and implementation, or enhancing political accountability at the local level”.

**4.27 *New aid modalities have implications for work on voice and accountability.*** The perceived importance of strengthening domestic accountability in countries where aid is aligned with government systems is confirmed by the finding that country programmes in countries receiving significant amounts of general budget support usually have objectives relating to strengthening domestic accountability (Bosworth

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<sup>53</sup> NAO (2006: 6) found that DFID “does not systematically assess the overall strength, distribution and quality of CSOs in each country, and its knowledge more generally about the strength and capacity of society to challenge government is not complete”. It recommended that it should assess “CSOs’ maturity and capacity to play an active role in society, and the potential benefits and risks of engaging with them”.

<sup>54</sup> As argued by Rebelo et al (2002: 4): “The view of civil society as primarily championing democratic reforms assumes a well-educated, well-informed society, and is too narrow for Mozambique where civil society is still in its infancy. There is no historical experience to draw on, the legal framework is archaic, government attitudes range from suspicion to ambivalence and the vast majority of the population is illiterate, unformed, and extremely poor”.

<sup>55</sup> Thue et al (2002) identify four context-specific determinants of civil society: (i) the availability of funds and interests of funders/donors; (ii) the political history and contemporary political environment and the space(s) available for civil society actors; (iii) socio-economic conditions prevalent in the country; and (iv) the character and objectives of the founding personalities.

2005).<sup>56</sup> However, other, potentially less positive, implications of new modalities for voice and accountability were found. For instance, Waterhouse and Neville (2005: 2) argued that the move away from micro to macro-level interventions “has increased the emphasis on an instrumentalist approach to gender mainstreaming [vis-à-vis growth and poverty reduction] at the cost of a stronger focus on women’s empowerment” (p.2). They also found that there was a danger that DFID could miss opportunities to strengthen government accountability for gender equality goals in the context of PRSs and budget support if gender equality is seen as an additional issue that is not nationally owned and where DFID does not have comparative advantage. Similarly, Thomas et al (2006) cautioned that budget support risked excluding civil society from policy dialogue and financial support and question DFID’s ability to promote domestic accountability relationships when it is only partnering government.

4.28 *Donors can increase their impact by adopting a harmonised approach.* Whilst not prominent in the evaluations, it is noted that there was currently limited coordination between Danida and other donors in the field of human rights and democracy promotion (Sørbø et al 1999) and the recommendation is made that greater coordination could increase impact and lessen the risk of “overwhelming fragile civil society movements” (Bosworth 2005).

#### *What are the gaps in donor knowledge?*

4.29 The collective knowledge of these donors, as presented in their evaluations, has much more to say about the types of approach that they *should* be adopting than about the effectiveness of current models. This is particularly the case when one moves from the intermediate outcomes of single interventions, such as increased participation or empowerment, to trying to understand the impact of voice and accountability interventions on higher-level development outcomes,<sup>57</sup> such as better service delivery or allocation of public resources, to still broader ones, such as democracy, governance, aid effectiveness or poverty reduction. The reasons for this stem from two principal gaps in donor knowledge.

4.30 The first is the apparent *difficulties for donors in identifying their impact beyond the intermediate level*. The problem is well stated in an independent review of DFID’s overall effectiveness between 1997 and 2001. This differentiates between the possibility of ascertaining DFID’s organisational effectiveness – measuring its performance in relation to its policies, processes and outputs – and its development effectiveness – measuring its contribution to development outcomes. This argues that, whilst it is possible for performance measures relating to organisational effectiveness to be “direct and attributable” (if the relevant performance information is available), it is extremely difficult to establish causality between DFID interventions and development outcomes: “in most cases changes in development outcomes in a specific country cannot be attributed to aid in general, let al one to an individual

<sup>56</sup> Also that these types of interventions, which were equally balanced between those categorised as “supply” and “demand” side, were most advanced in those countries that had been receiving GBS the longest. The majority of these were therefore in Africa.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Higher-level’ is used in the sense of extrapolating out from the immediate objective of the intervention rather than being a comment of order of importance of different objectives or outcomes.

donor. The evidence on development impacts is patchy, and generally lacks sufficient information on the links between DFID's inputs and interventions on the one hand, and the positive outcomes observed on the other" (Flint et al 2003: 2-3).

4.31 The finding that donors are unable to ascertain their effectiveness beyond intermediate outcomes is repeated in virtually all the evaluations surveyed regardless of the focus of the interventions that are the subject of evaluation. The reasons underlying their inability to establish causality and attribution are given below.<sup>58</sup> Together they highlight the wider institutional issue of the need for donors to give higher priority to evaluation research, including modelling of research context and the development of methodological competence to work with indicators (Forss 2002), and greater priority to the development of performance measures and systematic monitoring and evaluation (NAO 2006, Flint et al 2003).

- The need for greater capacity to "formulate realistic and measurable goals" (Sida 2003: 41).
- The absence of adequate baselines and suitable indicators against which to measure progress (Sida 2003, NAO 2006, SDC 2004d). As Forss (2002: 3) argues a fundamental problem is that "indicators only capture a small part of reality. They are useful means to 'anchor' and develop a qualitative analysis but on their own they are meaningless if not directly misleading".
- The vague nature of outputs and the inability to distinguish the contribution of different donors to broader processes (Forss 2002).
- The absence of tangible models that would enable the identification of causality and attribution, including reference to the broader context in which projects are carried out. In relation to democracy promotion, Sørnbø et al (1999) suggest that, although there is no generally accepted theory or model of democracy, it is possible to construct "propositions about what conditions or contexts are likely to accelerate reform once a process of democratisation has been set in train". However, Forss (2002: 4) argues: "A good descriptive model of the relationships between events is a must. With the help of one or several models, it is possible to portray and assess quite complex phenomena. It is still relatively rare that evaluators in development cooperation make much use of models. However, if one is to make sense of complex causal chains this is necessary".

4.32 The recognition of the importance of models leads to the second principal gap in donor knowledge: *the absence of frameworks for understanding different contexts and how these relate to voice and accountability*. There is a tension between recognising that the design and outcome of interventions are to a large part dependent on context and claiming that donors need to establish models with which to assess lines of causality and their contribution within this. Frameworks or

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<sup>58</sup> It is interesting to note Forss' point that these problems with attribution rarely emerge in the context of evaluations of processes in OECD countries and, where they are mentioned, it is usually in the context of how such methodological problems were solved. She also recognises, however, that the reasons for this could include more resources being devoted to evaluation in OECD countries or more realistic expectations (Forss 2002).

typologies for understanding context help to provide a bridge between these positions. This is based on the proposition that comparative research can help to identify similar sets of conditions in which similar approaches should lead to similar outcomes.<sup>59</sup> This means that, whilst donors cannot be prescriptive, strategic guidance at corporate level about how to operationalise the importance of context is both possible and necessary.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> As Sida (2003: 41) states: “Which criteria or methods can guide Sida in identifying the most relevant and strategic issues, sectors, ways of working, goals and measures in democratic governance work at the country level? It is impossible to answer this question at a general level ... It is thus better to devise a framework for classifying political systems as a basis for determining what mix of interventions would be most suitable”. They suggest a six-pronged typology based on the level of political development: Autocracies (closed and fragmentary systems); transitional democracies (electoral and structurally deficient democracies); and democracies (consolidating and functioning democracies).

<sup>60</sup> This point is made by both NAO (2006) and SDC (2004d) which argue that, particularly because of the decentralised structure of these organisations, it is necessary for headquarters to provide clear guidance, in this instance with respect to working with CSOs. This recognises that both the implications of context and commitment to a country-led approach mean that “fixed frameworks for engagement” are not possible but argue that “even taking situation-specific factors into account, there was a variable depth of analysis of, and engagement with, CSOs across country programmes and underlying the various support schemes” (NAO 2006: 4 ). Similarly, SDC (2004d) suggests that the absence of clear policies leads to differences in interpretation of roles and ways of working with NGOs.



## 5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Voice and accountability will remain part of donor strategies for the foreseeable future, both because of their importance in delivering donor objectives and because of the long-term nature of work in this area. This review suggests that generating more systematic evidence about the effectiveness of donor activities in this area is of paramount importance and requires addressing four issues in particular.
- 5.2 First, *models are important for understanding the operation of voice and accountability and their relationship to broader social and political processes of change*, including the role of external actors. Whilst for heuristic purposes accountability is often conceptualised in static terms, it is a dynamic relationship, relating to different levels (e.g. global, national, local) and spheres of activity (e.g. public, political, financial) and involving different actors and institutions. It is made more complex still because the formal and informal rules governing accountability relationships are often in tension and the roles that actors and institutions adopt are dependent on context. Developing models that attempt to capture this complexity, including expected causal linkages, to inform both donor approaches and evaluations is therefore necessary but is a significant challenge. The challenge is to ensure that the evaluation framework enables the identification and analysis of the various logics or models of voice and accountability interventions, and links these interventions to wider development outcomes.
- 5.3 Second, *the fit between models and their actual functioning is determined by context*. An understanding of context (in particular local political conditions and the interaction between formal and informal institutions) is fundamental to understanding how processes relating to voice and accountability operate in practice and how they influence, and are influenced by, other processes, relationships and actors. Donor approaches to strengthening citizens' voice and the accountability of public institutions therefore must be grounded in an understanding of context because this will determine: (i) the feasibility of objectives; (ii) the appropriate actors and agencies to work through and with; and (iii) issues of sequencing and prioritisation.
- 5.4 Third, *frameworks or typologies for understanding context can help reconcile the context-specific nature of social and political processes and the need for programming to be grounded in models*. There is a tension between recognising that the design and outcome of interventions are to a large part dependent on context and claiming that donors need to establish models with which to assess lines of causality and their contribution within this. Frameworks or typologies for understanding context can help to provide a bridge between these positions. This is based on the proposition that comparative research can help to identify similar sets of conditions in which similar approaches should lead to similar outcomes, as well as identifying the conditions in which divergent outcomes can be expected. A context analysis should therefore be integrated into the evaluation framework as this may enable the construction of typologies once a sufficient number of evaluations have been conducted.
- 5.5 Fourth, *there are different levels of impact and it may not be possible to determine them all*. Increased donor investment in evaluation research and tools, including modelling, indicators and baseline data, is important and will help donors to become more effective at measuring their impact. The picture that emerges from both the

evaluation theory and practice reviewed here suggests that donors may be able to ascertain their contribution to intermediate outcomes, that is the effectiveness of their voice and accountability interventions in terms of their direct objectives (for example, empowering citizens or increasing the capacity of civil society organisations) and less direct objectives (for example, more pro-poor allocation of public resources or improved service delivery). However, they may not be able to identify their specific contribution to wider development outcomes, such as better governance, deeper democracy, aid effectiveness or poverty reduction. Nevertheless, a theory-based approach to evaluation will bring to the fore the implicit assumptions and theories of change which are likely to contribute to such broader development outcomes.

- 5.6 Donors understand that context is important and this is reflected in the methodology and findings of their evaluations within fields relevant to voice and accountability. However, they do not, as yet, have explicit or consistent frameworks for operationalising this knowledge. The impression is that donors have not yet fully grappled with their understanding of the underlying causes of poor governance in different countries or with different trajectories of change. There is therefore a need for more systematic evidence on what works (or does not work) and in under what conditions. There is a clear role for both research and evaluation in generating this evidence and this joint evaluation of voice and accountability is both timely and will be able to make a significant contribution to this. By generating more systematic evidence, the evaluation should be able to foster a better understanding of what it is feasible for donors to influence and achieve and the most effective approaches for doing so.

## Annexes

## ANNEX 1: WHY DO DONORS WANT TO STRENGTHEN VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY?

Donor	Mandate and main priorities/approach	Contribution of voice and accountability to mandate
BMZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Mandate:</u> Improvement of economic, social, ecological and political conditions in development countries guided by the principle of sustainable development.</li> <li>- Poverty reduction has a 'special place' in German development policy.</li> <li>- Commitment to the MDGs.</li> <li>- 4 target dimensions of sustainable development include social justice and political stability.</li> <li>- Commitment to the mainstreaming of human rights throughout development cooperation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Direct:</u> (i) political nature of poverty reduction because its causes are often rooted in unequal power and poor governance; (ii) importance of voice if people are to improve their own circumstances.</li> <li>- <u>Indirect:</u> (i) political stability and good governance are prerequisites for sustainable development and they require good respect for human rights, basic democratic principles and the rule of law; (ii) democracy is the form of government that is most conducive to development; (iii) positive relationship between poverty reduction and the promotion of human rights.</li> </ul>
Danida	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Mandate:</u> Poverty reduction/fulfilment of the MDGs.</li> <li>- Cross-cutting issues include equal participation of men and women in the development process, respect for human rights and democratisation.</li> <li>- Priority areas include good governance.</li> <li>- Danish foreign policy mandate includes the promotion of democratic government and human rights.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Direct:</u> (i) increasing women's voice and participation in economic and political life is a key poverty reduction strategy.</li> <li>- <u>Indirect:</u> (i) good governance and respect for human rights are 'fundamental prerequisites' for the effectiveness of pro-poor reforms/initiatives; (ii) democracy is a means to poverty reduction and a development objective in itself.</li> </ul>
DFID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Mandate:</u> Poverty reduction/attainment of the MDGs.</li> <li>- Based on the principles of sustainable development and pro-poor growth.</li> <li>- Emphasis on the essential role of the state in creating the political and economic framework for economic growth and poverty reduction.</li> <li>- Poor people as the means as well as beneficiaries of sustainable development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Direct:</u> unaccountable and unresponsive government is central to the experience of poverty.</li> <li>- <u>Indirect:</u> (i) good governance is a precondition for poverty reduction and political systems that provide the opportunity to exercise voice and which are accountable are key governance capabilities; (ii) state effectiveness is a fundamental determinant of successful development, and accountability and voice (via responsiveness) are determinants of state effectiveness.</li> </ul>
DGDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Mandate:</u> Sustainable development, poverty reduction and the MDGs</li> <li>- Based on the concept of partnership and compliance with relevant development criteria</li> <li>- Emphasis on developing and consolidating democracy and rule of law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Direct:</u> Focus on human rights and fundamental freedoms [inferred that voice and accountability are part of this]</li> <li>- <u>Indirect:</u> Good governance as a key principle for building democracy and furthering sustainable development.</li> </ul>

- Including principle of good governance, and towards objective of respecting human rights and combating discrimination
  - Mandate: Poverty reduction/attainment of the MDGs.
  - 3 priority areas including natural resource management (with special emphasis on governance and sustainability) and equality, inclusion and economic rights.
  - Human rights are a fundamental pillar of development policy based on the principle of all people being equal in human dignity.
  - Mandate: Sustainable development.
  - Commitment to the MDGs.
  - 5 priority areas including empowerment and good governance (which entails state-civil society division of labour, rule of law, decentralisation, human rights, corruption, public spending, media and culture).
  - Focus on the individual and their empowerment.
  - Swiss foreign policy mandate includes the promotion of democracy and human rights.
  - Adopting of a human rights-based approach to development cooperation.
- NORAD
- Mandate: Promotion of equitable and sustainable development by contributing to an environment supportive of people's own efforts to improve the quality of their life and overcome poverty.
  - Commitment to the MDGs.
  - Two perspectives to development cooperation: rights perspective (measures taken towards sustainable development are compatible with respect for democracy and human rights) and the perspective of poor people (emphasises poor people's agency and priorities as the point of departure).
  - 8 central components that constitute the building blocks of development, including three that provide the basic values: human rights, democracy and good governance, and gender equality.
  - Swedish mandate for all foreign policy areas includes the promotion of democracy and human rights.
  - Adoption of a democracy and human rights-based approach to development cooperation.
- SDC
- Indirect: (i) mutually-reinforcing relationship between human rights, democracy, good governance and sustainable development; (ii) improved governance is a precondition for aid to be effective in supporting sustainable development.
  - Direct: exclusion and unequal access to power and decision making structures are structural causes of poverty. Empowerment of disadvantaged groups to enable them to exercise their rights, access resources and actively participate in shaping society is therefore a key poverty alleviation strategy.
  - Indirect: (i) good governance (the protection of human rights, the rule of law and responsible use of power) is a precondition for sustainable development and poverty reduction; (ii) relationship between human rights promotion and poverty reduction, requiring legal and political systems based on rule of law, participation and accountability; (iii) relationship between combating corruption and poverty reduction.
- Sida
- Direct: (i) the absence of voice and accountability is part of the experience of poverty: 'a litmus test of if an intervention decreases poverty could ... be if the effect is that poor people have increased scope to decide over their lives'; and (ii) everyone has the right to a voice and participation in development processes which can only be fulfilled with a democratic form of government; (iii) unequal power relations are often the root cause of poverty and the promotion of voice and accountability are a key strategy in changing these.
  - Indirect: human rights, democracy, sustainable development and poverty reduction are mutually-reinforcing and voice and accountability are integral to human rights and democracy.

Sources: BMZ (nd, 2002b, 2002c, 2004); Danish MoFA and Danida (2000a), Danish MoFA (2006); DFID (1997, 2001a, 2006a); DGDC (1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2005); Norwegian MoFA (2004a); SDC (2000, 2003, 2004a, 2006a); Sida (1997, 2001, 2002, 2005a), Government of Sweden (2002).

## ANNEX 2: DONOR POLICY AND GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS REVIEWED BY CATEGORY

Donor	Governance	Human rights	Media	Corruption	Gender	Parliaments	Civil society	Decentralisation	Elections	Info
BMZ	Y	Y		Y	Y					
Danida	Y		Y	Y	Y		Y			
DFID	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y			Y	
DGDC	Y				Y			Y		
NORAD	Y		Y	Y			Y			
SDC		Y		Y	Y			Y		Y
Sida		Y	Y	Y	Y					



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In 2006, a group of DAC donor partners<sup>1</sup> agreed to collaborate on a joint evaluation of 'Voice and Accountability' programmes. Voice and Accountability interventions focus on the relationship between citizens and the state, and, as such, they lie at the heart of the (good) governance agenda. Good governance, in turn, is increasingly viewed as lying at the heart of pro-poor development.

This evaluation of Voice and Accountability comprises a series of linked activities and publications which will conclude with a final Synthesis Report in May 2008. As the first step – in late 2006 – the Evaluation Core Group commissioned ODI<sup>2</sup> to undertake a literature review and an analysis of a cross section of donor V&A interventions. From this, ODI then developed and piloted an evaluation framework.

**Evaluation of Citizens' Voice and Accountability: Review of the Literature and Donor Approaches** is the first publication in the series. It will be followed later in 2007 by the Evaluation Framework and Methodological Guidance. An ODI Briefing Paper will be published in September 2007.

## *Why Voice and Accountability? Why Now?*

Good governance is increasingly seen as critically important to development – as the necessary basis for effective poverty reduction, for addressing inequality, and for the promotion of economic stability and growth. While definitions vary, all are agreed that 'Governance' means much more than the institutions and structures of government. It also means the very nature of the relationships between those who hold formal positions within the state and private citizens; and the nature of the relationships between the invisible structures of the state (rules and laws, customs and hierarchies) and those whose lives are affected by them. Governance is the interaction (or bargaining) between those who hold power, and those who seek to influence it, often from positions of vulnerability – whose voices often go unheard.

Only those citizens who can make their views known have a 'voice'; and only governments or states which are 'accountable' will respond.

Good governance thus requires a just and responsive relationship between the citizen and the state. This has long been recognised. For years, programmes have been developed to allow the most vulnerable in societies to make their needs known. Complementary programmes have been developed to give governments the mechanisms they need to respond to all their citizens. But despite these efforts, we have little evidence of the factors which will increase 'Voice' and enhance 'Accountability'. There is a need for systematic and targeted evaluation of different interventions to generate some credible answers.

This donor initiative seeks to identify what works, what does not, and why; and to identify gaps, overlaps and duplication in donor provision. In doing so, it aims to allow us as donors to become more effective and transparent in our support to partner countries, and to improve the coherence of our support – and ultimately to increase our own accountability to those with whom, and on whose behalf, we work.

<sup>1</sup> BMZ, Danida, DFID, Norad, SDC, SEO (Belgium), and Sida.

<sup>2</sup> Overseas Development Institute, UK



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