Building effective states:
Taking a citizen's perspective

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Contents

Preface

Target readers for this publication are those concerned with the policies and practice of international aid. Increasingly donors have picked up the challenge of building effective states as critical for effective aid that reduces poverty and helps achieve the Millennium Development Goals. From a perspective that understands an effective state as one that is inclusive, democratic and just, this publication's specific response to that challenge is through presenting country-based findings from the first phase of work (2001-2005) of members of the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability (DRC) that are most relevant to debates about effective state building and by offering some policy messages. At the same time, by 'taking a citizen's perspective' the paper complements the research of another Development Research Centre that is working on the Future State.[1]

The present publication is in two parts. The first and principal part is this document. It considers current debates on effective states and presents selected research findings from the Citizenship DRC that contain policy messages pertinent to these debates. The second part is a pull-out paper, inside the back cover. The purpose of the pull-out is to serve as a brief exploratory checklist for aid officials. Drawing on but not repeating the findings from the research programme, it considers more specifically the implications of the DRC research for official aid practice. Thus the two documents should be read together.

Distilling research findings into messages that are relevant to such a readership is not straightforward. It involves re-thinking the findings into policy contexts that are themselves constantly changing and into institutional environments shaped by exogenous factors outside the ambit of the research itself. Hence, a dedicated exercise such as this present paper – that draws out the implications from a much broader research programme – can be the best way of identifying the relevance of research for policy actors. This also has the advantage of leaving intact the rich and diverse research findings, not shaped by any initial need to speak to a particular policy audience and therefore available for analysis and interpretation by other sets of readers. It is not therefore a comprehensive synthesis of the DRC research conducted over the last five years. This can be found on the Centre's website at **www.drc-citizenship.org**.

Because of the authors' long experience of working across the boundaries of research, policy and practice, the DRC commissioned Rosalind Eyben and Sarah Ladbury to write this publication. In addition to reading the Centre's publications, the authors jointly interviewed some DRC researchers and to ascertain perspectives on the effective states and aid instruments debates, meetings were also held with a number of staff of the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

The authors are most grateful to all those in the DRC who contributed feedback and comments on an earlier draft of these publications, as well as to Dr Andrew Long of DFID's Central Research Department, and to Professor Fiona Wilson of the International Studies Department, University of Roskilde. The authors take sole responsibility, however, for the final content.

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[1] IDS 2005

Building effective states:
Taking a citizen's perspective

The purpose of this paper is to present findings of the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability (DRC) that are relevant to current policy debates on what makes for effective states and country ownership.

At the heart of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness lies a commitment to partner countries exercising leadership over their development policies and strategies and effectively co-ordinating these.[2] Although the Declaration specifically includes reference to civil society, in practice little consideration has been given so far to what a 'country' (rather than just government) led development approach might mean.[3] This is where the DRC work contributes, drawing on empirical examples to demonstrate the connection between effective states and empowered citizens.

What characterises the DRC work is that it takes a citizen's perspective – in contrast to how concepts of citizenship and citizen action are framed in other dominant approaches to development.

'In the market approach the assumption is that if one can get the market right, the benefits will follow for the citizen as consumer. In the state approach if one can get the institutions of the state right, then citizens can also play a role in holding it accountable and delivering its services. In the democracy building approach, if democracy can be designed and spread effectively, then citizens can play a role as voters and watchdogs of those in power. In the civil society approach, if the NGO sector can grow and become more professional, it can help communicate the messages for citizens as its constituents to market, state and elected leaders. In contrast...the 'seeing like a citizen' approach... *starts with the perceptions of citizens themselves and asks how they interact and view the institutions from which they are expected to benefit.*'[4]

The paper is organised into two sections:

· An overview of current donor debates around effective states, the ways that citizenship, participation and accountability are dealt with in these debates and the insights offered by the DRC research
· Selected DRC research findings from fieldwork undertaken by the research partnership; the policy messages arising from these that are pertinent to the effective states agenda.

A brief conclusion provides some key themes for international aid agencies arising from this research.

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[2] OECD DAC Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, Paris March 2005
[3] This point is made for example by Beloe 2005
[4] Gaventa 2005

Section 1:
Current donor debates around effective and fragile states

The aid paradigm for assisting *effective* states is now tried and tested: it involves donor financed general or sector budget support to help finance Poverty Reduction Strategies, (PRS). Financing through the budget has advantages from a recipient country perspective because it is easier for the government to be in the driving seat as to how aid should be used and reduces the transaction costs relating to a multitude of projects designed and financed by many different donors. It also has advantages from the donor side where it allows significant amounts of aid to be dispersed with minimal donor input. This is important in today's environment where the volume of aid is increasing as donor staffing levels decline.

Budget support has proved less successful in countries with weak or undeveloped institutions or whose governments have shown little commitment to use aid funds accountably. But giving less aid to these so-called fragile states also penalises the poor as this is a group of countries most off-track in terms of the MDGs: 46% of children who are out of school and 51% of children dying before the age of 5 live in states currently defined as fragile.[5] The logic of giving less aid to these states has also been questioned from a human security point of view. States associated with instability, including those in or emerging from conflict, are seen as capable of destabilising regional and global security. From a northern government perspective therefore, increasing support to fragile states is imperative for developmental, human security and diplomacy reasons.

Beyond this, the fragile states agenda has opened a space for reviewing and critiquing some old aid orthodoxies. New thinking on what constitutes effective states and how development aid can best support state building is emerging. It is refreshing to now find, for example, donor acknowledgement that the move to PRSs and budget support was sometimes too quick; that states acquiesced because they realised it released donor funding, not because they felt ownership of the process. Further, that people's participation in PRS processes has not necessarily amounted to much in terms of changing budget allocations; and that too much emphasis has often been put on the production of a paper rather than on more meaningful involvement of a country's population at large in governance and the setting of policy priorities.[6]

Ironically, the lumping together of many diverse states into a 'fragility basket' has also led regional and country donor teams to focus on the *differences* between countries labelled as fragile. 'Context is everything' is now heard with much greater frequency than before. There is an appreciation that there is no one-size-fits-all model of a 'capable enough' state; further, that different economies require different forms of governance. Uncomfortable facts, always known, are now being faced; for example, that authoritarian regimes sometimes achieve better poverty reduction outcomes than formal democracies with winner-takes-all election systems; that post colonial states in

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[5] There is no one accepted definition of fragile states. For a recent discussion of the various criteria currently in use, see François and Sud 2006. DFID lists 46 states as 'fragile' using the World Bank's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment ranking. The World Bank refers to 26 low income countries under stress (LICUS) and the authors identify 30 as 'stagnant economies', four of which, including Rwanda and Nicaragua, are not included in DFID's list.
[6] See for example, Booth 2005

Africa are not necessarily on a virtuous trajectory towards arms-length bureaucracy (but nonetheless a neo-patrimonial system *requires* a minimally operational formal state sector); that a large proportion of the population in many countries has abandoned expectations about the state being anything other than informal and predatory; that ethnicity and other forms of social exclusion matter; that state legitimacy is not achieved simply through elections; and that rebuilding weak states is an arduous process that cannot be accelerated through massive external assistance.[7]

So far, debates around state building – what it means and how it happens – have tended to focus on the state itself. Donors have focused on helping build the capacity of state institutions to provide the core functions deemed necessary for poverty reduction, i.e. 'territorial control, safety and security, capacity to manage public resources, delivery of basic services, and the ability to protect and support the ways in which the poorest people sustain themselves'.[8] Of these, basic services have been prioritised – primary health and education, water and sanitation, roads and bridges and (sometimes) legal and justice systems sufficient to protect personal security.[9] To date then, the donor focus has tended to be on helping to increase the state's capacity and willingness to provide or regulate services for citizens rather than support state-citizen relationships in a wider sense of mutual respect and democratic accountability. Because of the basic services emphasis – where donors can most easily disburse funds – the focus has been more on the executive arm of the state – the line ministries that deliver or regulate services and until recently rather less on the legislative (parliamentarians/politicians) and the judiciary (the courts). There has been very much less attention paid to understanding and working with local institutions and processes in the wider society.[10]

Debates on state building are ongoing. Now is therefore a good moment to complement the current donor emphasis on the state with an emphasis on the citizen. The following paragraphs identify some of the gaps in current donor debates around citizenship, participation and accountability before going on to consider what the DRC research adds to an understanding of these issues.

Citizenship, participation and accountability: what do these concepts mean for the effective state agenda?

For DRC researchers the concepts of citizenship, participation and accountability are political as well as technical. They illuminate issues of power and voice. How the concepts are understood and applied depends on who uses them in what specific context. Because DRC research is grounded in particular places, each with its own history, the researchers from different countries do not always share a common understanding of these concepts. Research of this kind challenges tendencies within the international aid system to assume that an identical conceptual lens can be used to explain phenomena irrespective of local context.

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[7] Points made in this paragraph are drawn from a variety of sources, including Chabal 2006; DFID Policy Advisory Group Minutes, 4th October 2005; Mareno-Torres and Anderson 2004; François and Sud 2006
[8] 'Why we need to work more effectively in fragile states'. DFID policy paper, January 2005.
[9] Slaymaker et al 2005
[10] See DFID's Country Assistance Plan for Nigeria 2004-2008 where this lesson is now reflected: 'Understanding the impact of informal arrangements is essential, as the majority of the poor are dependent on informal networks and institutions and derive limited benefit from the existing formal systems. We need to be prepared to work innovatively with a wider range of partners to achieve real impact.' (p.12)

Citizenship and the citizen-state relationship

Although commonly used with reference to domestic policies, the word 'citizen' is still relatively little used by government aid agencies.[11] The ubiquitous phrase 'the poor' tends to do for most occasions. Yet 'the poor' gives no sense of a relationship to any other person or group or any arm of government. Other terms – 'civil society' and 'NGO' – imply entities distinct from the state but not a relationship with it.

Given that donor agencies acknowledge that state building involves a long process of bargaining between the state and groups in society – i.e. that effective states are based on an *evolving relationship between the state and citizens* – it is initially surprising that the effective states debate has not picked up, defined, debated and put to use, the concept of citizenship.

There are some reasons why 'citizenship' is still a relatively new concept for international development agencies. One reason is that it tends to be seen as a term that is connected with formal, documented membership of a nation state and thus excludes from consideration some of the most marginalised, such as migrants and refugees. Another reason is that until recently the ultimate recipients of aid have either been seen as 'beneficiaries' who got what others decided was good for them or as 'users' who make choices in relation to services provided. A third reason is that 'citizenship' is a word containing a bundle of over-lapping meanings. Citizenship can thus be variously understood as belonging (to a certain place, group or community), as status (as compared with a non-citizen) as national identity (Swedish rather than Swiss) and as relating to rights and duties. This can be confusing.

DRC researchers themselves use the term in a variety of ways, depending on the countries and context they are studying and on their diverse theoretical perspectives. For the authors of this paper, our understanding of citizenship is that in contrast to a perspective that sees people living in aid recipient countries as beneficiaries of welfare or as customers choosing between services, *citizen* connotes someone with rights, aspirations and responsibilities in relation to others in the community and to the state. It is a *political* term.[12] In this sense it is useful because it implies a relationship *both* between citizens themselves *and* between the state and all those living within its borders.[13] It helps us understand that effective state-building requires addressing not only vertical relations between the state and the people, but the exclusions and discrimination that occur within society and that affect state capacity to be responsive, legitimate and accountable to all.

Participation

Unlike citizenship, the concept of participation has received considerable attention by donors. Initially, this was through supporting and encouraging the spread of participatory methodologies, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), for project

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[11] A search on Sida's website had 38 hits for citizens/citizenship compared with 146 for participation and 267 for 'the poor' ; the comparable hits on the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) website were 21, 102 and 96.
[12] See Cornwall 2000
[13] This does not preclude the concept of citizenship being used to refer to demands being made by 'global citizens' in relation to global governance issues.

design, implementation and monitoring/evaluation so that poor and marginalised groups would have a greater possibility of shaping the decisions that affect their lives. In the 1990's as donors moved to sector wide support and other programmatic aid instruments, 'participatory poverty assessments' were developed to include poor people's voices and direct experience in the formulation of policies to reduce poverty.[14] Since 2000, broad-based participation has been seen as fundamental to institutionalising Poverty Reduction Strategies. At a seminar in DFID last year, the issue of country as against more narrow government ownership of a PRS was considered critical.[15] This does not mean that national consensus is necessarily achievable but that there is an agenda open to public debate in which all voices are heard.

Much DRC research was designed to explore the hypothesis that greater participation in decision-making processes by those living in poverty would lead to policies being designed that better fitted their needs and interests. Researchers found that this proposition could not be fully tested. State institutions are still in the process of developing the capacity to respond to greater citizens' participation. Researchers also found that even when the state creates opportunities for dialogue and debate *and* is capable of responding, some people, particularly those living in poverty or subject to discrimination and exclusion, are too alienated or oppressed to enter the debate. Or, when they do try, they find themselves silenced through not being able to speak the 'right' language – or they may be ignored or threatened because more powerful groups believe they have no right to a voice. Later on, we look at some of the empirical research findings that show how states can build their capacity to respond and how exclusion can be successfully tackled and poor people's participation strengthened through practical steps to inclusive citizenship.

At the same time, poor people's empowerment may lead them to deliberately self-exclude themselves from the state sponsored mainstream, refusing to give it legitimacy through participation. Instead, they may mobilise themselves to challenge the status quo from the outside through protests and civil unrest, as for example, in the case of the indigenous movement in Chiapas studied by a DRC partner, or in the 'Other Dialogue' in Bolivia during the PRSP consultation in 2000.[16] Through the eyes of the citizen, 'participation' may mean choosing to join a social movement rather than becoming part of a consultation process about the PRS. Such a choice would appear to be a threat to state-building. However, if the state learns to respond to such a challenge to the status quo by strengthening and deepening the democratic process, then it will have become more, not less effective.

Accountability

It is not enough, however, to secure effective participation if the institutions of the state do not respond. An earlier piece of DFID-funded research found that consultation without due recognition of power and politics will lead to 'voice without influence'. The critical challenge is in the intersection between how citizens, particularly the

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[14] Norton 2001
[15] Seminar to Secure Participation and Ownership in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Process. Thursday 8th Sept 2005 http://www.dfid.gov.uk/mdg/aid-effectiveness/newsletters/prs-seminar.asp
[16] For Chiapas see Cortez 2005; for Bolivia see Eyben 2004.

excluded and marginalised, influence[17] policies and institutions, and how these in turn become more accountable to them.

The concept of accountability has received considerable attention by donors, not least by agencies putting an increasing proportion of their aid budget through government systems. Most work is state focused and on the supply side: northern tax payers need to be assured that there are technical and procedural mechanisms in place to ensure governments use aid accountably. That said, concern with the financial probity of state systems has been accompanied by awareness that independent citizens have an accountability role. Thus, there has been an ongoing emphasis on the importance of opening up the budget process and creating spaces for citizens' oversight functions.[18] It is through the window of accountability that citizens become useful to the would-be effective state because of their potential to 'hold governments accountable'.

There is thus a tendency to see accountability in dualistic terms. On the one hand there is the state that must be helped to become more transparent and responsive, including through putting in place the institutional mechanisms to make this possible. On the other hand is civil society that must be supported to engage more effectively with the state, including through building its advocacy capacity. The DRC research indicates that this approach to accountability does not tell the whole story either at a definitional level – what accountability means- or a practical one –the ways in which citizens' voices actually get heard and how the state and non-state actors respond.

First, research findings challenge the simplistic state-society dichotomy. Boundaries – between the state and its citizens, between the public and the private – are fluid and blurry with multiple interactions and cross-overs. Informal power resources and relationships operate within and between state institutions and also stretch across the state-society divide.

Second, there is little mention of power relations in current discussions around accountability. In practice, and as reflected in the DRC findings, accountability is about the contestation of power between unequal actors – with poorer citizens on the one hand and powerful players on the other, in the form of the state, political elites and private sector employers, including large global corporations.

In short, accountability is frequently used in development debates but the way it is used does little to help us understand how institutional and market failure and abuses of power impact on the lives of people living in poverty and the various ways they *actually* respond – which is much more varied than current donor literature implies.

Just as the DRC work opens up the issues of citizenship and participation by exploring what these concepts mean for citizens themselves, so also it opens up the issue of accountability from the point of view of citizens. What has to happen for accountability structures and opportunities to be effective *from the point of view of poor citizens*?

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[17] For example, McGee et al 2004
[18] For a discussion about donor and particularly DFID approaches see Bosworth 2005

Section2:
Selected DRC research findings

This section is organised around DRC findings that 'speak' to the inter-connected issues of citizenship, participation and accountability as they relate to effective states. It is based on the findings of research partners who carried out field studies with people who live in diverse settings, including in low-income communities of urban Brazil, in the Niger Delta, in rural and urban Bangladesh, with nomads in Rajasthan and in the Chiapas area of Mexico.

The section is divided into three parts:

- The nature of citizenship – how it emerges, grows, develops
- Different ways that citizens engage with the state
- Institutions and citizen action

The nature of citizenship – how it emerges, grows, develops

This part looks at citizenship as a process rather than as something fixed. It considers this process in relation to notions of identity and community, the importance of dignity and self-respect and the significance for people in organising themselves around local and sub-national issues. DRC research tells us that we must not make general assumptions about how citizens – particularly those living in poverty – understand their roles and responsibilities in the wider community, nor about their expectations in relation to the role of the state that they may feel is distant, absent or even hostile to them.

Citizenship starts with action around local issues

Case studies indicate that a sense of citizenship may not develop initially through engagement with the state. In Bangladesh 'citizen-like' engagement for poor women was first with the 'shalish' (informal courts), village factions, informal labour and credit markets, informal savings groups and NGO-mobilised groups. Such forms of organisation were vital first steps in developing a sense of self-identity, and subsequently, of citizenship. They allowed individuals to translate their own individual grievances into a sense of collective injustice and then articulate these to those they felt should respond.[19] In societies like Bangladesh where poor people are highly dependent on a range of patrons these independent moves in the direction of group association are much bigger steps than they appear from a northern perspective as they often involve challenging established dependency relationships.

In Mexico, mobilisation around being heard on health issues worked to create, in the women involved, not only a new awareness of rights but also a new way of thinking about themselves.[20]

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[19] Mahmud 2006
[20] Cortez 2005

POLICY MESSAGES

1. The 'empowered' poor citizen does not emerge overnight. She or he emerges gradually through local level struggles around livelihoods or access to services, and only later (sometimes a generation later) gains the independence and knowledge to engage with 'higher level' state processes. This implies that decades of donor support to 'participation' and to forms of local level association – micro-credit groups for example – are likely to have had a positive, long term, state building function. (Interestingly, 'state building' was rarely the principal objective of such support at the time.)

2. Support to strengthening participation at the local level is still a key part of many donors' portfolios. However, today it is often indirect through initiatives such as the UK Civil Society Challenge Fund or the Dutch Co-Financing Agencies. The learning from these initiatives is not always feeding into wider policy approaches, thus limiting the possibility for fruitful dialogue with recipient governments on how best to support an enabling environment for local citizen action.

3. The challenge for donors is, on the one hand, to pay sufficient attention to these local building blocks of state-building – sometimes difficult with today's aid modalities – while on the other hand, to avoid distorting or undermining indigenously generated processes through supporting community based interventions that risk being driven by donor disbursement pressures and the need to achieve targets.[21]

Societal senses of citizenship

As just discussed, DRC case studies in many countries and settings found that, among those they studied, a sense of citizenship often does not start with the state.[22] It is rather a 'societal' sense of someone who belongs, or who is excluded from, different kinds of collective associations – village, neighbourhood, user group – and defines their identity in relation to these. 'Their sense of citizenship lies in the terms on which they participate in this collective life and the forms of agency they are able to exercise'.[23] When people are only able to participate on unequal terms, or are excluded altogether, they are practising citizenship when challenging these inequities.

In Nigeria, the challenge of citizenship is the disconnect between local notions of belonging and people's formal identity as Nigerian citizens. A paramount chief in oil-rich and service-poor Bayelsa state is quoted as saying: "My friend, I cannot tell you that I will beat my chest and say I am a Nigerian. Look around. Does this place look like a place in Nigeria? What do we get from Nigeria?"[24]

In Brazil, *none* of the favela residents who participated in one study referred to membership of a Brazilian nation when they defined citizenship. Nor did they see their involvement in the market economy as providing the basis for an identity as citizenship-as-user or citizen-as-consumer. Rather, the concept of citizenship related to rights and responsibilities they had as members of families and communities. The reasons were obvious: getting a job, taking loans, access to education and health care were all mediated by family relations.

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[21] See the OED Evaluation of the World Bank's Support to Community Based and Community Driven Development and the comments of the Evaluation's external advisory panel.
[22] Pant 2005, Mohanty 2005, Mahmud 2006, Williams 2005
[23] Kabeer 2005: 21-2
[24] Abah and Okwori 2005: 73

Beyond this, they felt part of their local community: voluntary work for the community was a responsibility and an investment because they could not rely on the city government to address any of their problems; communities themselves had to self-provide and self-protect.[25]

Parallel research in the UK found that even those who were dependent on the state for social security because they were unemployed did not define citizenship in terms of duties or rights with reference to the state. Echoing the favela residents a 'good' citizen was someone who was caring to those around them and active in the community. 'I wouldn't call a good citizen like the kind who goes out to do charity and trying to raise money. That's not my version of a good citizen. Mine's like they'll help you out. They'll lend you something if you need it… its like your neighbours'.[26]

Citizenship is thus a concept laden with values. For many, it captures both the absence of the state when it should be there (as in the Nigeria case) and the sort of society that people want to live in. People gain that sense of citizenship as they begin to act upon concrete issues in their lives, gradually developing their own sense of entitlements, rights and responsibilities vis a vis the state. DRC research has found that this *expanded* sense of citizenship is acquired through a variety of means including expanded opportunities for participation, through new forms of involvement with the state and through social movements as discussed in the next section.

POLICY MESSAGES

1. It should not be assumed that people will associate the word citizenship with the government or the word 'citizen' with a formal state-endorsed identity. This is not the starting point for many people living in poverty and it reflects the enormity of the 'state building' challenge. But it also suggests a possible indicator for assessing the effectiveness of state building efforts, i.e. poor citizens who also identify the state in their definition of citizenship claims, along with those they make within the family and local community, because they have begun to see the state as a potentially reliable and fair provider, responsive to need and in terms of which they have both rights and responsibilities.

2. The term citizen has both vertical (citizen-state) and horizontal (citizen-community) aspects, both of which are analytically useful in different circumstances. In some contexts it will be essential to retain its association with legal, state endorsed rights even if these are inadequate or difficult for poor people to realise and even if the current law excludes certain groups. In other circumstances, it may be useful to extend the term to include all those who live in a place and feel part of, or are claiming to be part of, a community or local association.

3. The state can play a role in helping create an environment where horizontal (citizen-community) links are strengthened – what is sometimes referred to as building 'social capital'. The state can also inadvertently undermine such links by not paying sufficient attention to them. For example, by creating an environment in which citizens compete with each other for access to services or resources. In post-conflict situations, donors' support to constructing an effective state may be less effective if they overlook the familial and community arrangements that can either help peace building or if such arrangements are exclusionary, undermine it.[27]

[25] Wheeler 2005
[26] Lister et al 2005.
[27] Barakat et al 2002

Improving the reach and quality of public services can be an important step in building citizen-state relations but this depends on how services are delivered

Merely receiving services from the state did not mean study participants felt citizens of the state. A great deal depended on how they were treated. As one Rio de Janeiro resident said; 'Dignity is everything for a citizen – and we have no dignity. We are treated like cattle in the clinics, on the buses and in the shops. Only in rich neighbourhoods are people treated with dignity'.[28] In Chiapas, Mexico, women talked about their treatment as indigenous communities. 'The doctors treat indigenous people badly...teachers treat children badly, they don't listen...In general, there is no accountability for the way doctors and teachers behave.'[29] In India's Rajasthan, most study participants from nomadic groups could not access even the most basic of services, never mind take advantage of special provisions accorded them because of their historical disadvantage and continued discrimination. This was due to the attitude of state officials and settled villagers. But when a struggle was won, the word 'dignity' was also used. As one man said, 'It's difficult to explain in words how we felt when we were finally allotted a piece of land to live...we couldn't have imagined that one day we would be able to live in dignity like others'.[30]

On the other hand research into Angola's Luanda Urban Poverty Programme found that when citizens were fully involved in planning the delivery of a major infrastructure project – a water supply system – this not only resulted in access to a basic service, but also helped to create new relationships between citizens and state officials where citizens learnt to express their voice in different ways. Thus, the way the service was designed and delivered had a broader positive impact of vital importance in a fragile, post-conflict and post-authoritarian state such as Angola.

POLICY MESSAGES

1. The push to extend basic services in an effort to achieve the MDGs needs to be accompanied by a parallel emphasis on the way in which services are delivered. Services can be technically high quality and still be delivered in ways that make people feel like cattle; this can alienate them from the state. Furthermore, when services are delivered in this way they are likely to be less sustainable because users do not feel a sense of responsibility to maintain or improve them.

2. The importance of dignity and self-respect is equally applicable to relations between donors and their aid recipient partners. Donor staff do not always appreciate the importance of managing these relationship so that recipient government officials feel supported and empowered (rather than humiliated or disempowered).

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[28] Wheeler 2005
[29] Cortez 2005
[30] Pant 2005

Different ways that citizens engage with the state

As people's understandings of citizenship grows outwards from local concerns they begin to engage *politically* with the state. The DRC research has looked specifically at how they do this in ways other than, or in addition to, electing representatives to local or central legislatures. These are:

- through *forums created by the state* (health councils in Brazil, forest committees in India, area planning committees in South Africa)
- through *non-governmental organisations* (health committees in Bangladesh, participatory budget deliberations, public hearings on environmental licensing in Brazil)
- through *self-organised social movements* (an HIV/AIDS campaign in South Africa, resistance to dams in India)
- through *parallel governance structures*, such as the autonomous municipalities created by the Zapatistas in the south of Mexico.

Each of these involved a different type of mobilisation and invoked a different response from the state, but all were about engaging *with* the state. In this sense, all were contributing to the process of state building even if, as in the case of the Zapatista movement, what was being demanded was independence from it.

Engaging through forums created by the state

Forums created by the state are bodies purposively set up by government with the aim of consulting the public on aspects of public policy. DRC research points to the fact that these can be empowering and enable participants to translate their voice into influence at a local or national level. But they can also be disempowering and achieve little in the way of strengthening citizen-state relations. The difference depends largely on how they are designed.

DRC research in Bangladesh, Brazil, India (as well as South Africa and Mexico) has studied different types of health committees, so it is worth noting the common lessons to emerge from these.[34] The effectiveness of these forums for poor citizens depended on:

- the attitude of health professionals to them. In Brazil, managers talked about their commitment to participation but we're often seen by citizens as patronising and controlling. In rural Bangladesh, 'Providers have expert knowledge and believe that they know best what the community needs and how to deliver this. Citizen engagement is not only regarded as unnecessary but even viewed with suspicion and hostility.'[35]

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[31] ADRA in Angola (Acção Para O Desenvolvimento Rural E Ambiental) has joined the DRC consortium for the second phase of work (2006-2011).
[32] For research on citizens' engagement with representative legislatures, see findings from the Development Research Centre on the Future State http://www.ids.ac.uk/gdr/cfs/drc-pubs/index.html and the publication 'Signposts to More Effective States' 2005
[33] Cortez 2004
[34] Points in this section draw on work with Health Councils in Sao Paolo (Coelho) and Cabo de Santo Agostinho (Cornwall), Health Watch Committees in Bangladesh (Mahmud) and the Integrated Child Development Scheme in India (Mohanty). In Cornwall and Coelho, forthcoming 2006.
[35] Mahmud 2006 forthcoming.

- the institutional design of the forums themselves, particularly how people were elected or selected for them. If unequal power relations in the society at large – based on gender, caste, class, ethnicity – are simply mirrored in the forum there is little hope of building citizen confidence in the state's ability to listen and respond. In India, women were encouraged to be active in the health committees (it was seen to prepare them to be better wives and mothers) but were positively discouraged from taking part in deliberations in the watershed committees; here they were valued by male members only as labourers.[36]

- the presence of managers committed to social participation, the 'committed bureaucrat'. The significance of the committed bureaucrat was mentioned in several country studies; *despite* frequent changes of personnel due to sudden postings a great deal could and was achieved through these individuals.

- the communication of sufficient knowledge about health issues to citizen participants so they were able to contribute relevant ideas and be respected for their opinions.

POLICY MESSAGES [37]

1. State-invited forums have huge potential to engage citizens, including poor citizens, in debates about public policy from local to national level and in a range of sectors. But their mere existence does not assure they will do this. Attention to their design and functioning, and to the skills of those newly participating, is crucial. Creating new spaces for previously excluded groups – women for example – is not enough to erase deeply embedded cultural inequalities and styles of debate that can be as unfriendly to women's participation as can formal politics.[38]

2. Quantitative research from Brazil shows the effectiveness for inclusive service delivery when there are committed and effective public managers working within appropriate institutional design and in conjunction with civil society mobilisation.[39]

3. Current reductions in staffing levels together with the increased use of budget support decreases opportunities for donor staff to get involved in detailed design issues, let alone identify committed bureaucrats in sector ministries. However, there are other ways to do this: both projects and social funds, both of which can sometimes be highly effective, often using national or international organisations acting as intermediaries. A recent DFID paper gives examples from Kenya, Somalia, Sierra Leone, South Caucasus and Mozambique.[40] Donors need to make more use of these instruments for relationship building and to ensure that those they are working through pay more attention to the design and operation of forums that purport to give poor citizens a say in public policy.

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[36] Mohanty 2006
[37] See also Shankland 2006
[38] Cornwall and Goetz 2005
[39] Coelho 2004
[40] Leader and Colenso 2005

Through civil society organisations

The DRC research indicates the problems of very poor and marginalised people whose exclusion is so deep and long standing that they lack the confidence and know-how to mobilize without outside help. The nomadic groups in Rajasthan discussed earlier are an example. The role that NGOs or other civil society organisations, such as trade unions or faith-based groups can play is discussed in this context.

The research indicates how important it is for groups to find support from the right kind of organisation. Highly 'leader-centric' organisations might impress donors but they can 'take-over' the struggle on behalf of groups rather than supporting them to develop their own leadership capacity, as was partly the case in the Rajasthan example.[41] The knowledge role that intermediaries have is also important. People may have a good understanding of what they intrinsically know to be right and fair, but it helps if they also have sufficient understanding of what they are entitled to by law *even if* there currently exists a large gap between law and practice. Intermediary NGOs can help extend the knowledge of groups they work alongside.

The DRC research gives examples of the fundamental changes that some NGOs have made to the design of government invited spaces. When Nijeri Kori, the Bangladesh rights NGO was selected to help form Health Watch Committees in nine districts they insisted that the management structure proposed by government be modified. HWCs supported by Nijeri Kori subsequently become 50% women with a cross section of representation from professional groups, landless groups (also 50% representation) and government. When the government ran out of money for supporting these HWCs those supported by Nijeri Kori kept on meeting; all the others were dissolved. This shows the potentially positive influence of non-governmental organisations, particularly those that have a strong rights and mobilisation focus.

POLICY MESSAGES

1. In negotiations with governments, donors need to identify how to include a grass-roots participatory element in all support to improving service delivery. The challenges in such a policy dialogue include helping governments understand that such mobilisation is not a threat but an opportunity for securing better quality services and finding ways to maintain NGOs' autonomy through independent financing. Instruments such as donor-funded but independently managed civil society umbrella programmes are one possibility.

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[41] Pant 2004

Through self-mobilisation – social movements

Many instances of citizen engagement with the state take place spontaneously and are about defending or claiming rights or expressing a grievance. People organise themselves, at least initially, without the intermediation of established NGOs or other civil society organisations. DRC partners have been studying a number of these social movements, both big and small. These have included mobilisation over environmental and natural resources issues, such as over protected areas in the Mexican states of Chiapas and Vera Cruz, water resources in India and South Africa and genetically modified crops in India, South Africa and Brazil.[42] Others focus on health issues, such as the movement around HIV and AIDS in South Africa where activists have successfully campaigned for rights to retroviral treatment.[43]

Not surprisingly, these movements are highly varied and shaped by the issue and the locality. Some, such as local struggles over water or other natural resources may be based on a long-established sense of collective identity and rights. Others may be temporary coalitions of interest bringing together diverse groups, in some instances linked to each other through global connections and networks. Such social movements may not necessarily be representing the interests of those most marginalised. As was found in the study of asbestos workers in South Africa, such movements while effectively engaging with the state, can result in more marginalised and excluded groups developing a sense of disempowerment vis-à-vis those in the movement who have greater access to information and operational knowledge about how to make the system work for them.[44]

In some instances, the state may either pre-empt or respond to social mobilisation by initiating formal participatory processes of the kind discussed above. The context-specific inter-play between what happens in the state-established forum, and what happens within the social movement will lead to more or less positive outcomes in terms of citizens' capacity to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

POLICY MESSAGES

1. Much positive social change in the world has been a product of social movements. Yet donors tend to steer clear of social movements. This may be because social movements are fluid and unbounded and therefore difficult for those working in formal organisations to get to grips with. Donors may also however see them as unhelpful to state building (rather than the opposite) or because they are concerned that the government in power might see them as over- interested in politics. However, social movements *are* very important for state building in two ways. First, they reflect a citizenry sufficiently organised and mobilised to protest and carry on a sustained campaign. Second, because they test the state's practical ability to uphold the constitutional rights of its citizens and demonstrate the maturity of its institutions (police and court system).

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[42] On Chiapas see Pare and Cortez 2006; on water resources in India and South Africa see Mehta 2005; on genetically modified crops in India, South Africa and Brazil see Scoones 2005
[43] Robins 2005
[44] Waldman 2005

POLICY MESSAGES CONTINUED...

Thus, donors should see social movements, in principle, as positive. They contribute to holding states accountable, they challenge authoritarian tendencies and they are one way in which citizens can realise their rights.

2. At the same time, donors should not assume that all opposition movements are articulating the voice of the most oppressed and marginalised, particularly when they turn to violence. In the Delta region of Nigeria, an area of huge resource wealth, gangs of young men sabotage flow stations in order to be paid off by oil companies and form paramilitary groups to act as arbitrary 'law enforcers' on behalf of politicians. At base, the violence is the articulation of a demand for a greater share of the oil revenue. Yet violence does not open up spaces for participation by others, women for example; rather, it closes them down by negating the due process of the rule of law.[45]

3. Understanding local social movements, why they happen and how the state responds to them is important for donors in their policy dialogue with recipient government institutions. However, donors either directly, or through the international NGOs that they fund, need to carefully tailor their funding of progressive social movements. Otherwise, donors may trigger internal conflicts over access to these resources as well introduce procedural requirements to account for the money that might undermine the movement's capacity to be autonomous, and to effectively challenge state institutions.

Institutions and citizen action

Effective state-building requires legal frameworks and institutionalised arrangements for citizens to hold the state accountable. This is not a one-way matter. Just as legislation makes citizen action possible within pre-established parameters of what the state judges as acceptable behaviour, so citizen action that sometimes goes beyond these boundaries can lead to changes in state institutions that make them more accountable. At the same time, state-citizen relations cannot be fully understood without taking into account the role in shaping these relations played by other actors including the corporate sector and global organisations with a local out-reach, such as international aid agencies.

Laws and codes in support of citizens' rights are an important – but not sufficient – building block for enabling poor people to claim their rights

'Fighting the might of the state often seems difficult....But in the absence of such rights, engaging with the state appears doubly daunting.'[46] By enshrining certain rights in law, the state is contributing to creating the space for citizens' participation. This was the case in each of the countries studied by the DRC. Citizens' struggles to realise these rights in practice strengthen the state's capacity to be legitimate, accountable and capable of delivering services efficiently and effectively.

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[45] Alubo 2005
[46] Mohanty and Tandon 2005

In Bangladesh, the state is seen as guarantor of citizen status and custodian of all rights; legal, political, economic and social. However, actual experience is shaped by the culture of the paternalistic state and the dependency of citizens, causing a huge gap between what the law says and what actually happens. 'The state does not merely fail to protect the rights of citizens, it actively contributes to their violation'.[47] However, even though the law is not necessarily actionable and is not always a neutral vessel (legal processes come under political pressure), constitutionally guaranteed rights *can create* new possibilities for demanding accountability.

In Brazil, social mobilisation around constitutional provisions has provided an entry point for political struggles over accountability because the judiciary does not fill that space, while elsewhere court cases have had a more central role.[48] In South Africa, Irene Grootboom, a woman living in poverty, successfully appealed to the Constitutional Court to claim her right to basic services.[49] In India, the movement against genetically modified crops used the legal process as a more reliable avenue to state accountability than a political one through the legislature.[50]

POLICY MESSAGES

1. Enshrining rights in law is a necessary element for building effective states. However, law reform and capacity building of the judicial sector will not by themselves enable poor people to claim their rights. In practice, structural inequalities in society can lead to the law being an instrument to violate rather than realise poor people's rights.

2. Citizens organised through social movements bring to attention to rights and entitlements that are not already enshrined in law and the state's capacity to legislate for these is an indicator of its responsiveness.

Citizen's participation strengthens the accountability of state institutions

DRC findings, particularly from Brazil demonstrate the importance of creating the opportunities and building the capacities of poor citizens for holding the state accountable to them – and for building the capacities of state actors and elected representatives to engage with citizens' demands. Direct participation contributes to an empowered citizenry with a strong sense of personal identity and dignity, improved public services and strengthened representative democratic institutions.

On the other hand, findings from everywhere show that changing political culture takes more than good institutional design and simply making opportunities for citizens' to hold the state accountable does little to changing power relations within society. Nor does activating citizens without engaging the state improve service delivery and responsiveness.

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[47] Kabeer 2002
[48] Newell and Wheeler 2006
[49] Williams 2005; Mehta 2006
[50] Scoones 2005

The changing relation of the state with the market presents new challenges to accountability

The accountability relations between state and citizens become confused when non-state actors are involved in delivering services or, as the DRC research clearly shows, are licensed to exploit water and energy resources. In the Niger Delta, it is the oil companies rather than state institutions against whom local people are making claims, but neither the state nor the corporate sector is capable of an adequate response because of unclear lines of accountability. Furthermore, within the delta, the very people who are demanding accountability can themselves undermine their case when internal divisions between traditional authorities and youth groups contribute to increasing cycles of violent conflict between armed state militias and youth gangs.

A resource's importance to a country's economy and the relative position of that country in the global economy can have a strong bearing on which accountability mechanisms can be used and by whom. The cultural and spiritual value that local people place on a natural resource such as water or a forest can also significantly shape their reaction when they perceive their right to such a resource is under threat.

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[51] Cornwall and Coelho 2006

Conclusion

An effective state simultaneously depends upon and nurtures an empowered citizenry. It is a dynamic relationship whereby the character of one is contingent on the other. But the *way* this works is highly context specific. State institutions are built, re-shaped and built again through the action of citizens engaged in struggles among themselves and with the state for power and voice. There is no point of arrival for an effective state. It is continuously subject to change and challenge. In this sense, all states are potentially fragile. However, they are particularly vulnerable to fragility when large numbers of people living within their boundaries are disconnected from state institutions or when state institutions are accountable only to an elite minority.

State-building is a political process. In situations where power is very unevenly distributed and where the majority of citizens are living in poverty *and* have little or no voice in national or even local government matters, then the state is not likely to work to their advantage.

There is growing evidence that involving people directly in decision-making as well as through their elected representatives can strengthen the state. How this works depends on the prior history of relations between citizens and state – as well as on the prevalence of hierarchical relations between citizens. Formal participatory institutions can be quickly established but they are not sufficient for tackling entrenched political and social inequalities – these require a much longer timeframe although deliberate sustained efforts to make such institutions inclusive – for example through rules of representation – can speed up social change .

Donors cannot empower citizens – or create social activists. But they can encourage the conditions under which both can develop and engage with the state and with each other. Social activist movements inevitably test the state's capacity to respond – but in testing they help build it.

At the same time, marginalised groups in highly hierarchical societies – and in many places this means for example most women – need opportunities to develop their political capabilities, confidence and means to exercise voice in the public sphere. A sense of citizenship normally starts with people's own agendas – they create a political identity around a matter that immediately affects their lives. (The issue itself may not be a priority for donors – it is the fact that it leads to organisation that is important.) Group membership amongst those who are marginalized and the sense of dignity and solidarity that comes with this can stimulate people to aspire as a precursor to political engagement

People's claims to understand the world in *their* way and have their way of understanding the world accepted as valid – are an expression of active citizenship. However, people living in poverty often have diverse political agendas.
The donor idea that there will be a broad-based consensus about what constitutes 'country-led approaches' is therefore often unrealistic. Rather than assuming such consensus, donors might do better to do more political and contextual analysis, and identify approaches based on this, e.g. defer more to parliament where this is representative, accepting a level of dissonance between state and citizen agendas and between the agendas of citizens themselves.

Understanding accountability simply as a matter of citizens on one side, and the state on the other ignores the web of relations, claims and responsibilities that make up any society and shape the behaviour of state institutions. Donors can help strengthen accountability by supporting those working *across* the state/society divide and brokering connections. This can be more effective than programmes that focus narrowly on *either* governance reform *or* civil-society building – as these run the risk of one set of political actors not being able to respond adequately to the other set. Governments can help by valuing committed bureaucrats. If staff at all levels of service delivery feel valued they will help foster accountability from within, and create the basis for greater state responsiveness and the delivery of services with respect for citizens' dignity.

Finally, relations of accountability that have a local impact on poor people include the rights and responsibilities of the corporate and NGO sectors, stretching beyond country boundaries and involving the citizens of rich countries in their diverse roles as share-holders, voters, volunteers and consumers. International donors are also part of this accountability web. They are significant political actors in the countries they are assisting, helping shape the accountability relations between state and citizens and needing to be held accountable for this.

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