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**Bringing citizen voice and client focus into service delivery**

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## Summary

This is a study of efforts to improve the responsiveness of public service providers to the needs of service users, particularly the poorest service users. This paper examines over sixty case studies of both public-sector reforms to foster stronger client focus in service delivery; and civil-society initiatives to demand improved services. This work was concerned to identify means of amplifying citizen ‘voice’ such that engagement with the state moves beyond consultative processes to more direct forms of influence over policy and spending decisions. The case studies upon which this research is based are drawn from around the world, from developing and developed countries. They are organised into 14 different types of ‘voice’ or ‘responsiveness’ mechanisms, and are available on: [www.ids.ac.uk/ids/govern/citizenvoice/annexcs.html](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/govern/citizenvoice/annexcs.html). Across different types of public service, the potential for citizen voice, and varying degrees of public sector responsiveness, can be surmised from features of service design and delivery such as the complexity of the technology involved in the service, the remoteness, geographical, social and educational, of providers, the extent to which the service is a shared good or an individually consumable product, or the social and environmental consequences of dramatic service break-down. Variations in voice and client focus are also explained by client characteristics: the social status of clients, their geographic concentration, and whether they have a sustained or one-off relationship with providers. The study concludes with policy-relevant findings on ways of enhancing citizen voice in decision-making, planning, and monitoring of public services. For citizen engagement with public service providers to move beyond consultation to real influence, citizens must enjoy rights to a more meaningful form of participation. This would include formal recognition for citizens’ groups, their right to information about government decision-making and spending patterns, and rights to seek redress for poor-quality service delivery. Public sector providers, for their part, need assurances regarding the mandate and internal accountability of such groups. This study was commissioned by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID).



## Contents

Summary	iii
List of tables	vii
List of boxes	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Abbreviations	ix
Introduction	1
<b>1 Background: context, voice, and responsiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Background	2
1.1.1 <i>Towards a new strategy</i>	3
1.2 Methodology	4
1.3 Terminology	5
1.3.1 <i>Voice</i>	5
1.3.2 <i>Citizen, consumer, client, contract</i>	6
1.3.3 <i>Responsiveness</i>	6
1.3.4 <i>Accountability</i>	6
1.4 A framework for linking citizen voice and responsive government	8
1.4.1 <i>Consultation, presence, and influence</i>	8
1.4.2 <i>Civil society, politics, and the state – the determinants of voice and responsiveness</i>	9
1.4.3 <i>The power of the client lobby</i>	10
1.4.4 <i>The politics of effective voice and response</i>	11
1.4.5 <i>The nature of the state</i>	12
<b>2 The case studies</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1 Categorisations by type, sector, and level of government	14
2.2 Description of the mechanisms	18
2.2.1 <i>Citizen initiatives</i>	18
2.2.2 <i>Information generation (research for advocacy)</i>	19
2.2.3 <i>Lobbying to influence planning and policy formulation</i>	20
2.2.4 <i>Citizen-based monitoring and evaluation</i>	21
2.2.5 <i>Implementation and precedent-setting (including partnerships)</i>	23
2.3 Joint state-civil society initiatives	25
2.3.1 <i>Auditing</i>	25
2.3.2 <i>Joint management of sectoral programmes</i>	26
2.3.3 <i>Government frameworks for participatory planning and community development</i>	28
2.4 State responsiveness initiatives	31
2.4.1 <i>Consultation on service delivery and policy priorities</i>	31
2.4.2 <i>Setting standards</i>	33
2.4.3 <i>Incentives, sanctions, performance measurement</i>	34
2.4.4 <i>Service delivery ethos in organisational culture</i>	37
2.4.5 <i>Accessible government: information and services</i>	38

	2.4.6 <i>New rights for citizens or clients</i>	39
<b>3</b>	<b>Lessons</b>	41
	3.1 Lessons about effectiveness and comparative findings	41
	3.2 Strength of the client lobby in civil society	41
	3.2.1 <i>Broad membership</i>	41
	3.2.2 <i>Incentives to cooperate</i>	42
	3.2.3 <i>Media and publicity: naming, shaming, blaming and praising</i>	42
	3.2.4 <i>Protest or the threat of protest</i>	43
	3.2.5 <i>Cognitive framing</i>	43
	3.2.6 <i>Coordination of public sector responsiveness reforms with a demand from civil society</i>	44
	3.3 The political framework: degree and nature of party competition	44
	3.3.1 <i>Public sector reforms and supportive party politics</i>	46
	3.4 The nature of the state – accessibility of civil servants to citizens, efficiency of accountability institutions	46
	3.4.1 <i>Consultative efforts</i>	47
	3.4.2 <i>Presence of clients in policy-making</i>	49
	3.4.3 <i>Influence and more direct accountability</i>	50
	3.5 Summary – the key conditions for effective voice	53
	3.6 Variations in voice and responsiveness by sector and service	54
<b>4</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	59
	4.1 Implications for donors	59
	4.2 Establishing the pre-conditions for state-civil society dialogue: unwilling states and/or weak civil societies	59
	4.3 Building on the strengths of successful initiatives: key elements of effective citizen voice and state response	60
	4.4 Variations in voice and client focus by sector and level of service	62
	4.5 Limits to participation	63
	4.6 The relationship between politics, voice and responsiveness	63
	<b>Bibliography</b>	64

## Tables

Table 1 Dimensions of the voice/responsiveness relationship	10
Table 2 voice and responsiveness initiatives by type	15
Table 3 Voice and responsiveness initiatives by level of government	17
Table 4 Voice and responsiveness initiatives by service or sector	55
Table 5 Impact of service characteristics	56
Table 6 Strategies to support citizen voice initiatives	60
Table 7 Strategies to support state responsiveness initiatives	61

## Boxes

Case studies: Awareness-raising	18
Case studies: Information generation	19
Case studies: Influencing planning and policy formulation	20
Case studies: Citizen-based monitoring and evaluation budget analysis initiatives	22
Case studies: Implementation	24
Case studies: Auditing	25
Case studies: Joint management of sectoral programmes	27
Case studies: Government frameworks for participatory planning	29
Case studies: Consultation	31
Case studies: Setting standards	33
Case studies: Incentives, sanctions, performance measurement	34
Case studies: Service delivery ethos	37
Case studies: Accessible government	39
Case studies: New rights for citizens	40
Parties and participatory budgeting – Brazil	45
Formalising a presence in the administration for a CSO coalition	50
Creating demand for the supply of new rights	53

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## Abbreviations

ABCs	Attitude and Behaviour Changes
BATMAN	Popular name for a Filipino NGO consortium (Philippines)
BUDD	Brighton Urban Design and Development (UK)
CBHO	Community Based Housing Organisations (UK)
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSPIP	Civil Service Performance Improvement Program (Ghana)
CSRP	Civil Service Reform Programme (Uganda)
DAs	District Assemblies
DfID	Department for International Development (UK)
ENDA	Environnement et Développement du Tiers-Monde (Senegal)
FPC	Forest Protection Committees
IDASA	Institute for Democracy in South Africa
IT	Information Technology
JFM	Joint Forestry Management (West Bengal, India)
LDC	Less Developed Country
LDC	Local Development Council (Philippines)
LPP	Law of Popular Participation (Bolivia)
MIS	Management Information System
MKSS	Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan
NACFAR	Nation-Wide Coalition of Fisherfolk for Aquatic Reform (Philippines)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIA	National Irrigation Administration (Philippines)
NPM	New Public Management
PAC	Public Affairs Centre (Bangalore, India)
PDS	Public Distribution System (Mumbai, India)
PIA	Project Implementation Agency
PIP	Performance Improvement Plan
PIs	Performance Indicators
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PT	Partido dos Trabalhadores (Brazil)
PVO	Private Voluntary Organisation
RIPS	Rural Integrated Project Support (Tanzania)
RKS	Rationing Kruti Samiti (Action Committee on Rationing, India)
SC/ST	Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

SEBRAE	Brazilian Small Enterprise Assistance Service
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SMART	Support for Managing Administrative Reform in Transition (Romania)
SPARC	Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres, India
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UPPAP	Ugandan Participatory Poverty Assessment Plan
VC	Vigilance Committee (Bolivia)
WDR	World Development Report
WEN	Women's Environmental Network

## Introduction

This study was commissioned by DfID to review international experiences of:

- 1 public-sector reforms to foster stronger client focus in service delivery; and
- 2 civil-society initiatives to demand improved services.

Two concerns guided this work. The first was to identify, on the citizen-initiative side, means of amplifying citizen ‘voice’, such that engagement with the state moves beyond consultative processes to more direct forms of influence over policy and spending decisions, service delivery, the monitoring of programme impacts, and accounting for public expenditure.

The second concern was to identify, in the context of public service delivery, those reforms that enhance responsiveness to clients, particularly the poor.

The study is organised as follows:

**Part 1 Background** situates client voice and state responsiveness initiatives in the context of changing notions of citizenship and the individual-state relationship. Description of methodology. Definitions of central terms (voice, responsiveness, citizen, client, consumer, responsiveness, accountability). Outline of an analytical framework for assessing how citizen voice and public sector responsiveness initiatives relate to each other.

**Part 2 The case studies** classifies the case studies along three dimensions: (1) the type of mechanism, (2) the country context, and (3) the levels of government with which the case studies engaged. This information is presented in tabular form. The basic data is complemented by descriptions of each type of ‘voice’ or ‘responsiveness’ mechanism. Full case studies can be found at [www.ids.ac.uk/ids/govern/citizenvoice/annexcs.html](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/govern/citizenvoice/annexcs.html).

**Part 3 Lessons about effectiveness and comparative findings** discusses factors that account for the success (or failure) of citizens’ voice initiatives, and for the propensity of public sector actors to respond to expressions of citizen voice. This section also discusses variations in voice or responsiveness that occur between different sorts of services.

**Part 4: Conclusions and research gaps.**

# **1 Background: context, voice, and responsiveness**

## **1.1 Background**

Conventional forms of political representation and accountability have been found wanting in many societies. Common shortcomings in conventional accountability systems – such as secrecy in auditing, the extended time delays between elections, ineffective policy reviews in legislatures, excessive delays in the courts, and inadequate sanctions for failure to apply administrative rules or respect standards – have created pressure for establishing better channels for vertical information flows and new accountability relationships between state agents and citizens. The recent *Consultations with the Poor* report, prepared for the World Bank's *WDR 2001* found that many poor people in developing countries perceive public institutions as distant, unaccountable and corrupt. Drawing from participatory research exercises in 23 countries, the report concludes:

From the perspectives of poor people world wide, there is a crisis in governance. (...) State institutions, whether represented by central ministries or local government are often neither responsive nor accountable to the poor; rather the reports detail the arrogance and disdain with which poor people are treated. Poor people see little recourse to injustice, criminality, abuse and corruption by institutions. Not surprisingly, poor men and women lack confidence in the state institutions even though they still express their willingness to partner with them under fairer rules (Narayan *et al.* 2000: 172).

The public institutions of most importance to poor people were those responsible for delivering services in health, education, policing, utilities and transport. However, when ranked according to effectiveness, agencies charged with delivering these services scored very poorly. In urban areas, more than 80 per cent of the institutions ranked as ineffective were state institutions, while in rural areas the figures rose to 90 per cent.

Poor people's dissatisfaction with public service institutions relate largely to issues of voice and of accountability. Poor people believe that 'state institutions – whether delivering services, providing police protection or justice, or as political decision-makers – are either not accountable to anyone or accountable only to the rich and powerful' (Narayan 2000: 177). The *Voices of the Poor* study is not alone in its findings. Another study by the Commonwealth Foundation based on focus groups in over forty countries also found a growing disillusionment of citizens with their governments, based on concerns about corruption, lack of responsiveness to the needs of the poor, and the absence of connection to or participation by ordinary citizens (The Commonwealth Foundation 1999).

The crisis in the relationship between citizens and their state is not limited to the South. In a number of established democracies, there is a loss of interest in conventional forms of political participation, and a loss of trust in many state institutions. In the UK, for instance, a recent study sponsored by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation points to the need to build a new relationship between local government and local

people. There are two reasons for this. The first has to do with alienation and apathy. There is a major issue about the attitudes of the public, as customers or citizens, towards local government ... This is a symptom of a deeper malaise, the weakness or lack of public commitment to local democracy (Clarke and Stewart 1998: 3).

These recent studies point to a critical problem that this study attempts to address: the need to build the effectiveness of citizens' voice and the responsiveness of state actors in the delivery of public services. Other underlying factors, in addition to citizen perceptions, are driving the search for new approaches. These include:

- A growing recognition in the social policy literature that universal conceptions of needs, met through uniform social policies, fail to recognise the diversity of the poor. New approaches to social citizenship seek to link concepts of universal rights with recognition of a diversity of needs in the delivery of social services.
- A recognition that the seemingly paradoxical combination of globalisation and decentralisation are redefining the role of the state in public service delivery.
- Fiscal crises in many states have raised questions about the capacity of the state to continue providing public services on the scale to which earlier generations in many societies had grown accustomed. Civil society organisations have increasingly become co-producers of what were once largely state functions. To some, these new roles are welcome forms of partnership between state, market and civil society. Others consider the state to be off-loading its larger social responsibilities to private or non-governmental actors.

### *1.1.1 Towards a new strategy*

Citizen voice and public-sector responsiveness reforms are usually considered separately in the academic and policy literature, with public-sector efficiency problems having spawned an industry of market-inspired organisational reforms. Citizen-voice initiatives tend to be the concerns of social activists, and to find reflection in literature on NGOs and social movements. This paper begins from the premise that it is important to study public-sector reforms (the supply side of responsiveness) together with citizen-voice initiatives (the demand side).

Considering the two together can help to illuminate not just the more obvious point that the effective use of 'voice' by service users may help to generate better service outcomes, but also the fact that public services can actually help to build both 'voice', in the sense of creating new client groups with shared interests, and a point of access to the state. In other words, more responsive and transparent public administration will foster more effective citizen engagement with the state.

The call for new forms of engagement between citizens and the state challenges the convention in representative democracies of citizens expressing their preferences through elections exclusively, leaving the job of holding public officials accountable to elected representatives. This paper examines citizen voice and state responsiveness initiatives from around the world in order to make comparisons, draw

contrasts, and extract lessons for replication. It also considers variations in the potential of citizen voice mechanisms (and in public sector responsiveness) from sector to sector.

## **1.2 Methodology**

This is a desk study based on case studies of known citizen voice initiatives or efforts to bring greater client focus into public-sector service delivery. The case studies are based on published and unpublished literature, and some, particularly the UK cases, have been supplemented with interviews. Since the analysis is developed from the case-study material, the methodology involved the collection of instances of ‘voice’ or ‘responsiveness’ initiatives, their categorisation by service sector, by purpose and by type, and the application of a comparative analysis. The cases are not a random selection of ‘voice’ or ‘responsiveness’ mechanisms. Instead, they are a purposive sample, designed to cover a range of services and types of intervention.

A drawback of the methodology is that a vast number of citizen-voice initiatives and indeed public-sector responsiveness reforms are under-researched and poorly documented. Reliance on published and unpublished literature also had the drawback of making assessments of the impact and effectiveness of ‘voice’ and ‘responsiveness’ initiatives very difficult. Few studies, whether published as articles or in an unpublished form, engage in objective assessments of effectiveness, and much of the civil society and public sector literature is oriented to publicising and promoting, not critically assessing, the mechanism in question.

Each voice or responsiveness initiative has been summarised in such a way as to provide an account of:

- What the mechanism is and how it works;
- Who or what interests initiated and supported it;
- Whose voice was articulated, and by whom;
- What sector or service is addressed, and at what level of government;
- What factors promote the success, or limit the impact, of the mechanism;
- The conditions under which the mechanism might be (or has been) replicated;
- Whether the mechanism built citizen voice and whether it created or strengthened connections between citizens and the state.

The analysis was guided by the following questions:

- What are the preconditions for the effective expression of citizen voice or for effective client focus in service delivery?
- What are the mechanisms through which voice is articulated and through which public-service bureaucracies actually change? How does the impact of these mechanisms vary by location of the

initiative (urban or rural, different levels of government), or type of client (youth, middle class, poor rural residents, working class)?

- What is the relationship between newer forms of voice and conventional forms of political representation?
- What are the conceptual and empirically supportable linkages between the highly normative concepts of accountability, responsiveness, citizenship, voice and participation?
- What are the perceived and actual rights and entitlements of citizens in relation to public services?
- What impact do new mechanisms for strengthening voice and ensuring responsiveness have on the lives of the poor?

In addition, attention was paid to variations across service sectors, examining how both voice initiatives, and the alacrity of state responses, vary by:

- The nature of the service in question (a collective good or an individual benefit; elective or essential);
- The way service delivery is organised (centralised and top-down, decentralised and participatory);
- The knowledge base (expertise) and autonomy (professionalism and discretion) of providers, and the technical complexity of service delivery;
- The level at which improved service delivery is sought (primary, secondary or tertiary level social services); and
- The cost of services, and whether clients pay providers directly for them.

### **1.3 Terminology**

#### **1.3.1 Voice**

This paper uses the term ‘voice’ to refer to the range of measures – such as complaint, organised protest, lobbying, and participation in decision-making and product delivery – used by civil society actors to put pressure on service providers to demand better service outcomes. The term is drawn from Albert O. Hirschman’s influential book *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: responses to decline in firms, organisations, and states* (1970) in which he demonstrates how consumers can use two main reactions – exit or voice – as well as the more passive ‘loyalty’ reaction, to generate improvements in service or product quality. Where public service providers operate monopolies, exit is not necessarily a viable option for service users, since there is no alternative source of supply. In such contexts, some forms of ‘loyalty’ – for instance, where users become clients in patronage networks – may be the only means for individual clients to secure better services. While many public sector reforms, for this reason, prescribe exit options (privatisation of services, empowering consumers to choose alternatives), these do not always work, particularly for citizens with limited power as consumers.

### ***1.3.2 Citizen, consumer, client, contract***

Citizenship rights define what individuals can expect and demand from the state. The definition of citizenship will shape the ways in which citizens exercise voice, and the range of services and freedoms they will struggle to oblige the state to provide. Citizens benefit from certain public services by virtue of their social rights – not, as in a market situation, by virtue of their purchasing power. The extent to which citizen voice will trigger an improved service response will depend (in part) upon the coherence and strength of accountability systems within the state. For this reason, a considerable portion of citizen voice initiatives focus on strengthening accountability systems.

The terminology for service users can differ between developed and developing countries, or between elite and socially subordinate clients within countries. More privileged service users fit best in the market models of ‘empowered consumers’ or ‘clients’, and their dealings with providers can resemble a contractual relationship. These terms stress service users’ positive agency and capacity to choose. Less privileged service users may be referred to as ‘recipients’, suggesting a more passive role as receivers of hand-outs.

### ***1.3.3 Responsiveness***

Responsiveness describes the extent to which a public service agency demonstrates receptivity to the views, complaints, and suggestions of service users, by implementing changes to its own structure, culture, and service delivery patterns in order to deliver a more appropriate product. Most state bureaucracies are in fact ‘responsive’ – but to socially powerful interest groups, not the poor. Promoting responsiveness to a broader range of social groups, and particularly to the poor and other socially excluded groups, can involve promoting counter-cultural reforms in bureaucratic behaviours.

Responsiveness can be in tension with an important principle of public service: impartiality. Responding in an unmediated way to citizen needs as expressed through the jostling of special interests groups is certainly no method for ensuring fair and responsive governance, and this is one reason for the enthusiasm of public servants for creating distance and boundaries between themselves and the publics they ostensibly serve. However, the protestation that public servants must remain ‘neutral’ is often an excuse for evading responsibility for responsiveness. The notion of impartial public service need not be in conflict with the notion of proactively directing services to some ‘publics’ which are ‘inarticulate’ – groups which are not normally able to ‘voice’ their concerns effectively.

### ***1.3.4 Accountability***

Conventional public accountability systems, in tandem with democratic institutions and politics, are designed to ensure that the public service does indeed respond to citizen needs in a fair and impartial way. Responsiveness and accountability are not the same thing. As Blair notes in a discussion of the obligations of local officials in decentralised service provision, ‘bureaucrats should be *responsive* to citizens ... but they should be *accountable* to elected officials’ (2000: 37 fn: 13, italics in original). However, a connection between responsiveness and formal and informal accountability mechanisms is being made because of



citizen dissatisfaction with the record of their elected representatives in holding civil servants to account, or in channelling citizen concerns and preferences into decision-making. Many citizen voice initiatives imply expectations that civil servants can be made to account directly to clients for their actions, and to accommodate citizen concerns without the mediation of elected representatives.

Accountability mechanisms generally operate along either a 'vertical' axis (external mechanisms used by non-state actors to hold power holders to account), or a horizontal axis (institutional oversight, checks and balances internal to the state) (O'Donnell 1999). In liberal democracies there are few formal means for individual citizens to hold the state to account, let alone to enforce answerability from particular parts of the state. The vote is the classic formal mechanism of vertical accountability, allowing citizens periodically to hold governments to account for their rule. Between elections, this vertical accountability mechanism is supplemented by the operation of a free media, and advocacy by civil society groups.

Horizontal or internal accountability functions are ensured by a range of formal institutions:

*Political accountability* is ensured through the legislature, particularly where there is an effective opposition, sufficient staff resources, well-functioning oversight committees, access to relevant information and intelligence, and parties organised on programmatic lines, oriented to serving the national interest rather than parochial concerns (Brademas, 1997: 6).

*Fiscal accountability* is one of the most precisely defined types of accountability, ensured through formal systems of auditing and financial accounting for the use of public resources. Accounting offices and the role of the controller and auditor-general are ideally insulated from political pressure, highly professional, and well endowed with resources. Classically, this form of accountability rewards correct procedure rather than assessing the value of outcomes.

*Administrative accountability* is ensured by reporting systems that link the bureaucracy with ministers and the legislature. Similar hierarchical reporting relationships within bureaucracies assure internal accountability. However, this upward flow of accounting within bureaucracies is not very effective where there are incentives which reward corruption and patronage; collusion between officials at different levels of hierarchies can prevent accurate reporting and accounting. Acting as an informal mechanism for administrative accountability is the public service culture – shared informal norms of public sector probity that constitute moral pressure to perform responsibly and responsively.

Finally, *legal and constitutional accountability* is assured by the judiciary which checks that politicians and officials do not exceed their legal authority. The judiciary is the ultimate seat of accountability in most countries, and for this reason its autonomy from the executive and legislature is crucial. This enables courts to bypass obstacles to accountability in the legislative or executive branches, as in the case of successful public interest litigation or the US civil rights movement.

Low levels of public confidence in these horizontal forms of accountability in most developing countries has evolved alongside growing dissatisfaction with limitations on the effectiveness of 'vertical' forms of accountability, which include both the individual citizen's exercise of electoral choice and the collective exertion of pressure by civil society organisations (Goetz and Jenkins 2001: 1). Vertical accountability systems suffer from many shortcomings, among which is their tendency to blunt the impact

of citizen ‘voice’, because of the long waits between elections, or because often the interests of poorer groups are not well represented in civil society associations.

As noted in the introduction, efforts to rectify the problems of horizontal and vertical modes of accountability (the supply and the demand sides of accountability) tend to take place independently of one another. Thus, development organisations have supported horizontal accountability by strengthening audit and account functions, or creating agencies to investigate corruption or to investigate human rights abuses. Other mechanisms push beyond the procedural focus of fiscal and administrative accountability mechanisms to put more stress on monitoring and measuring government outputs, such as performance auditing of public expenditure. Donors have supported improvements in vertical accountability by funding capacity-building in NGOs and encouraging citizen engagement in sectoral decision-making through consultative forums, joint service management by user groups and local-level officials, standards-setting and monitoring, and stronger grievance-redressal procedures. Some of these initiatives are reviewed in this paper.

An emerging trend, however, is to transcend this vertical/horizontal institutional divide and to support *efforts which engage citizens directly in the workings of horizontal accountability institutions*. This represents an effort to augment the limited effectiveness of civil society’s watchdog function by breaking the state’s monopoly over responsibility for official executive oversight (Goetz and Jenkins 2001: 3). This paper reviews civil society initiatives, and a few joint state-civil society efforts, that move beyond vertical accountability efforts to encourage a focus on client needs in the state’s horizontal accountability systems, or to catalyse the creation of new institutional checks and balances. These measures include public hearings or participatory auditing to expose mis-spending, participatory information-generation exercises (such as civil-society-initiated public opinion surveys) to better inform policy-makers of people’s needs, evaluations of public spending from the perspective of particular social groups (such as Women’s Budgets), citizens’ juries to evaluate public policy, or the establishment of parallel services to demonstrate effective alternative approaches to service delivery.

## **1.4 A framework for linking citizen voice and responsive government**

### **1.4.1 Consultation, presence, and influence**

Efforts by officials to foster citizen participation in policy-making and in scrutinising policy-implementation will vary in the depth of engagement permitted to citizens. For instance, most officials find it more palatable to cultivate a consultative relationship with citizens than to assign them automatic rights to information about government decision-making, or rights of redress where there are grievances. Similarly, citizen efforts to voice concerns over government behaviour will vary according to whether they take a ‘barking dog’ position on the margins, protesting about poor policy implementation, or whether they try to insinuate themselves to horizontal accountability functions, asserting rights to monitor government functions and demanding redress for poor performance. We express these differences of intensity of engagement in the distinctions between initiatives that organise opportunities for consultation

and dialogue with officials, for formal representation in public decision-making forums, and for more direct response and accountability to citizens.<sup>1</sup>

These three processes – *consultation, presence, and influence* – represent three broad steps in state engagements with citizens. The first, consultation, involves opening arenas for dialogue and information sharing, and can vary in form from one-off consultative exercises, on-going participatory poverty assessments, citizens’ juries, even surveys. The second step, presence and representation, involves institutionalising regular access for certain social groups in decision-making (for instance, through quotas in local government for socially excluded groups, or through the structured access for a wide variety of neighbourhood associations to municipal planning and budgeting debates as in the Brazilian municipal budgeting experiments). The third step, influence, brings citizen engagement to the point where groups can translate access and presence into a tangible impact on policy-making and the organisation of service delivery. This can happen when accountability mechanisms incorporate citizen concerns and preferences, by, for instance, engaging citizens in financial audits at local levels, or incorporating client satisfaction measures into new performance indicators for public servants, or giving citizens formal rights to litigate in the event of non-delivery of services, as in the Employment Guarantee Scheme in Maharashtra. This last stage is the point at which improved responsiveness and client focus has been achieved in service delivery, or improved accountability to the poor has been realised in official institutions for horizontal accountability and oversight.

The distinctions between consultation, representation, and influence are designed to emphasise that the creation of opportunities for consultation do not lead, on their own, to policy influence. Nor do opportunities for excluded groups to be represented in political forums or in the administration (through advocacy structures such as special bureaucratic units for women, the disabled, and so on) mean actual influence and power. In addition, important problems regarding the democratic representativeness of citizens’ groups are raised by efforts to institutionalise a presence for such groups in official decision-making arenas. We discuss this problem below.

#### ***1.4.2 Civil society, politics, and the state – the determinants of voice and responsiveness***

It is important to note that citizen initiatives to improve public sector accountability and responsiveness are never independent of the state. The point is not just that each initiative we review here engages directly with state agents. It is that the range of actions open to citizens, and even the forms of associational life citizens choose, are shaped by the nature of the political regime, the variation in the enjoyment of citizenship rights between different categories of citizen, and the institutional capacity of the bureaucracy to make any kind of response at all.

The extent to which citizens influence the design, delivery, and assessment of public services, and the extent to which states are capable of making a response will depend upon the interaction of three major factors:

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<sup>1</sup> These distinctions, and the conceptual framework developed in this section, are drawn from Goetz (2000).

- *The social, cultural, and economic power of the client group* in question within civil society – its power to mobilise resources and public concern to support its demands;
- *The nature of the political system* (the depth of procedural and substantive democracy, the configuration of executive/legislative/judicial power, the level of political participation), and *the organisation of political competition* (the number and types of parties, their ideologies and memberships, the relative importance of high finance or crime in political contests);
- *The nature and power of the state* and its bureaucracies (whether it is a developmental state, whether it has the will and capacity to enforce change in the culture and practices of bureaucracies, whether there is a professional civil service, whether the public service has internalised a commitment to poverty reduction, etc).

One could list or categorise the processes which permit consultation, presence, and influence for citizens across these three institutional arenas in a table as follows:

**Table 1 Dimensions of the voice/responsiveness relationship**

	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Representation/Presence</b>	<b>Accountability/Influence</b>
The power of the client group in civil society			
The nature of the political regime and of political competition			
The nature of the state and its bureaucracies			

Source: Goetz (2000)

### 1.4.3 *The power of the client lobby*

By including consideration of consultation, presence, and influence *within* civil society organisations, this framework allows for scrutiny of accountability issues in civil society groups. It enables observation of whose ‘voice’ is promoted and represented by CSOs, a question which is asked of each of the case studies. When civil society associations claim to represent the voice of the poor, attention must be paid to the processes in which the poor engage in articulating, aggregating, and representing their interests. Questions of the internal democracy of an organisation, its grassroots structure and internal culture, and the nature of its leadership are critical for establishing whose voice is being promoted. Thus, for instance, in an organisation claiming to represent poor women, the top row of the table could be filled in to make note of the arrangements for the participation of poor women in the organisation's activities, the extent to which they are represented in leadership structures, and the extent to which the organisation’s accountability mechanisms respond to the concerns of poor women (as opposed to the concerns of funders or others).

There are certain preconditions for the expression of voice by individuals or collectives of service users. These include a minimum level of awareness of entitlements and rights and the ways these are or

are not being met through state services, and some degree of social or political power. Social or political power may be ascribed by non-earned individual or group characteristics (such as gender, caste, class, race), or it may be acquired through social mobilisation. In the latter case, effective mobilisation depends on, among other things, social capital (investment in shared interests by a particular social group), and the capacity to attract allies from other and more powerful social groups. We have concentrated on cases of citizen voice involving poorer groups or socially excluded categories.

Alliances which are made with service providers best illustrate the way that the relationship between the state and citizen's associations can be a two-way constitutive process. It is not just that state agencies are sometimes set up in response to a social movement in placing issues on the public agenda. More often, state actors attempting internal reform may try to create, or at least increase the effectiveness of, their political base by cultivating an external constituency for reform. Thus, alliances between service users and key figures in the service-providing administration are a key resource for *both* parties in promoting responsive service delivery.

#### *1.4.4 The politics of effective voice and response*

Politics is the intervening variable between citizen voice and public sector response. A civil society group may be equipped with all the preconditions for effectively pressing its demands on the state – a united and well-organised constituency, allies in the right places, generalised social support, and even a crisis event to concentrate public concern on the group's needs – but the political environment may undercut its impact if the group does not contribute to prevailing political agendas or patronage systems.

Political systems have a critical impact on the calculations civil society groups make about the value of engaging with the state. Formal democracy and the existence of basic civil and political rights is a crucial precondition for virtually any kind of civil society activism that engages critically with the state. Beyond this, three features of party systems are important:

- the number of parties,
- the level of ideological polarisation, and
- the extent to which parties are institutionalised.

Where there is robust multi-party competition, with well institutionalised and ideologically diverse parties, civil society groups may pursue confrontational, high visibility strategies to promote group interests or challenge state behaviour, in the hope of interesting opposition parties in taking up their concerns in the legislature.

If, on the other hand, parties are weakly institutionalised (based on personalism and clientalism), lack programmatic platforms and rely on appeals to identity politics, civil society groups will not have effective access to the policy-making forums controlled by parties. Clientalist relationships of political subordination in exchange for material rewards actually engage clients in a perverse relationship of 'reverse vertical accountability' (Fox 2000: 7), requiring clients to be accountable to state patrons. This poses

tremendous challenges for civil society groups hoping to wean clients off individually beneficial patronage systems and into collective efforts to press for service improvements in the broader public interest.

#### *1.4.5 The nature of the state*

States create the environment for citizen voice – and to a great extent determine the effectiveness of citizen voice – by virtue of the rights they extend to citizens and the access and participation opportunities they create. State services, and the range of rights these accord clients, are part of the constitution of client identities (including degraded identities as long-term dependent clients). State services also construct some of the social and political spaces in which interests are debated and aggregated. A classic example of this is the role of the Employment Guarantee Scheme in Maharashtra in organising the poor and establishing new rights and an identity for rural workers. Studies of the scheme suggest that its delivery structure, which obliged work-seekers to organise in groups to demand employment from state officials, encouraged rural workers' associations and NGOs to organise poor labourers to demand their employment rights in ways which have over time accelerated into cooperation with state-level and national trades unions to demand minimum wage laws for rural workers. The statutory right to employment guaranteed by the scheme equipped activists with the right to litigate in cases of non-implementation or of corruption – a right which is not automatic in cases of poor delivery of most state services (Escheverri-Gent 1993; Joshi and Moore 2000).

State responsiveness implies and requires efficiency and thus a concern with responsiveness in the public administration overlaps with many current efforts to build managerial, administrative, and accounting capacities in the public sector. Indeed, a very basic precondition for state responsiveness is a functioning public administration. This is not as tautological a proposition as it appears. The point is that incompetent and utterly kleptocratic states will neither initiate nor respond to responsiveness initiatives. Nor will or can collapsed states which have disintegrated due to civil war. Certain basics have to be in place: a bureaucracy which is protected from political interference and which subscribes, at least notionally, to publicly legislated rules and procedures, notions of merit-based recruitment and promotion, a mission to work in the public's best interests, in relative autonomy from powerful social groups. Few public administrations, North or South, meet all of these conditions. However, constitutional commitments to such conditions give citizens an essential lever with which to press for public sector probity, equity in service delivery, and accountability to the public. Without this precondition, there is no point to the kinds of citizen voice initiatives investigated here.

Responsiveness involves re-engineering hierarchical relationships of command and reporting (administrative accountability mechanisms) to accommodate a richer information flow from the implementation level upwards, and a delegation of powers downwards. It involves greater transparency, changed staff attitudes, and the introduction or reinforcement of a service culture within the administration.

Responsiveness to the poor in particular – or to other socially excluded categories of people – must go beyond changes in the nature of services offered and involve physical changes to delivery practices

which improve accessibility. This is because the nature of access opportunities and redress mechanisms empower some citizens over others. For instance, redress mechanisms that oblige citizens to take action in legally literate ways will mean that mainly empowered and socially elite citizens will engage with the state. Making access and redress mechanisms more poverty-sensitive might involve, for instance, establishing offices in rural areas or outreach programmes to remote users, disabled access facilities, and publishing materials on the service entitlements of citizens in the vernacular or in minority languages.

In patronage-based states, accountability mechanisms are weak, and citizen ‘voice’ is normally channelled to civil servants through patron-client relationships, where citizens receive services as a matter of favour, not of right. For most citizens, this favouritism in service delivery is something which it is risky to challenge, and it is often far safer to enter into dependency relationships with providers, whether by invoking ascriptive status commonalities (tribe, caste, etc) and hence asserting mutual (but asymmetric) obligations, or by offering more tangible incentives (bribes). In such systems, the individual and collective influence of service clients when they attempt to demand better performance is exceptionally weak. This makes setting up alternative or parallel informal accountability functions (such as people’s audits of local spending), or alternative, civil society-managed forms of service delivery, the only option.

## **2 The case studies**

### **2.1 Categorisations by type, sector, and level of government**

Table 2 shows the range of case studies analysed for this study categorised by type of initiative. Beginning on the left hand side of the table, the vertical columns list a range of civil society voice initiatives. These range from efforts to articulate and aggregate citizen concerns about service quality, to modelling alternative and more appropriate ways of producing and delivering services, to lobbying for, or even setting up, institutions designed to effect stronger direct accountability relationships between service providers and users (the auditing cases).

There is an implied progression in levels of participation from left to right in the table. The progression is from efforts which aim at informing policy makers and seeking inclusion in consultative forums, to efforts to regularise a civil society presence in decision-making arenas, to efforts to enter into horizontal accountability functions and influence the way government behaviour is scrutinised (from consultation, to presence, to influence).

On the right hand side of the table are the public sector initiatives to raise the receptivity of service providers to expressions of voice, or even to anticipate client needs through pro-active responsiveness reforms. Like the citizen voice initiatives, there is an implied progression from left to right in the table, in terms of the degree of rights and power ceded to citizens – from consultation initiatives, through classic market-inspired reforms which empower clients as consumers, to reforms designed to instil a new service culture, to reforms which give clients rights to hold the administration directly to account.

Between the two categories of citizen voice initiatives and public sector initiatives is a merged category of joint state-civil society initiatives. Although strictly speaking these cases are initiated by the state, many are inspired by citizen initiatives, and they are impossible to sustain without strong civil society engagement. It is in some of these cases that we find several of the key conditions for effective voice and responsiveness satisfied.

Table 3 categorises the case studies by level of government. While all levels of government are represented in the case studies, the table reveals a preponderance of cases at local government levels. This is unsurprising. The local environment has an element of immediacy lacking in the macro environment; it enables citizens to see the direct links between revenue generation and expenditure, and between priority setting, planning, and the actual implementation of public policies. Poor client groups in particular are more likely to mobilise at local levels (at least initially) given the constraints which social exclusion and resource scarcity put on their capacity to gain access to decision-makers at higher levels.

Each case study can be found at [www.ids.ac.uk/ids/govern/citizenvoice/annexcs.html](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/govern/citizenvoice/annexcs.html).

They are catalogued in groups according to the category in which they appear in Table 2.



**Table 2 Voice and responsiveness initiatives by type**

<b>Preconditions for voice =&gt;</b>	<b>Means of amplifying voice – citizens’ initiatives =&gt;</b>						
				<b>Joint civil society – public sector initiatives</b>			
<b>Awareness-raising and building capacity to mobilise</b>	<b>Research for advocacy (information generation)</b>	<b>Lobbying to influence planning and policy formation</b>	<b>Citizen-based monitoring and evaluation</b>	<b>Implementation (incl. partnerships)</b>	<b>Auditing</b>	<b>Joint management of sectoral programmes</b>	<b>Government frameworks for participatory planning</b>
Panchayat Waves (community radio) India	Report Cards, India	Community Visioning, Bristol, UK	Budget analysis Initiatives: Women’s and Children’s, South Africa	Washington Youth Court – USA	Public Hearings MKSS, Rajasthan, India	Education Guarantee Scheme, Madhya Pradesh, India	People’s Planning Campaign, Kerala, India
Citizen Education – Zambia	Participatory research for Advocacy – Putting Breast Cancer on the Map, UK	Coordinator Civil, Nicaragua	People’s Charter, Lok Satta, India	Low cost housing in urban communities – SPARC, Mumbai, India	Vigilance Committees (Law of Popular Participation, Bolivia)	Forest Protection Committees, West Bengal, India	Local Governance Code, Philippines
Nicaragua Community Movement	Citizen’s Jury on GM foods, UK	Community Safety Forum, Brighton, UK	Monitoring quality in the Public Distribution System, RKS Mumbai	Community-Based Housing Associations, UK	Social Audit (Local Agenda 21), Sutton, UK	Watershed Management, India	Law of popular participation, Bolivia
	Project Votesmart, Oregon, US	Assembly of the Poor, Thailand	Rural Empowerment Zones, US	ENDA (low-tech community sanitation), Rufisque, Senegal		Healthcare rationing in Canada and US	Participatory Municipal budgeting analysis, Brazil
		Fisherfolk for Aquatic Reform (NACFAR) Philippines		Health insurance scheme, Zaire		Users in policy-making, Denmark	Stirling Council Civic Assembly, UK
							New Deal for Communities, UK
							Budget Balancing Exercise, Oregon, US

<b>Receptivity to voice – public sector initiatives</b>					
<b>Consultation on client needs, to inform service delivery or policy</b>	<b>Setting standards</b>	<b>Incentives, sanctions, controls (efficiency-linked reforms)</b>	<b>Service delivery ethos in organisational culture</b>	<b>Accessible government – information and services</b>	<b>New rights for citizens</b>
UK Government People's Panel	Citizens' Charters, UK	Best Value – UK	Health Agent Program, Ceara, Brazil	Ombudsperson, UK	Employment Guarantee Scheme, Maharashtra, India
Consultation re Urban Design (BUDD), UK	School League Tables , UK	New Public Management, Ghana	Neighborhood Watch, San Diego	NHS Direct, UK	Right to Information laws, Goa and Rajasthan, India
Participatory Wellbeing Assessment – local health planning, UK		Support for Managing Administrative Reform in Transition (SMART), Romania	Learning Processes in Participatory Irrigation, Philippines	One-stop shops, UK	
Participatory needs appraisal with minorities (Tees Valley and Stonebridge Estate, UK)		Performance and Perceptions of Health and Agriculture Services, Uganda	Encounters between bureaucrats and villagers (Janmabhoomi), India	New Technology (IT) for public service access, UK	
Citizen's Juries – Women's Unit, UK		Quality Schemes, UK	Training for behaviour change, (RIPS) Tanzania		
Participatory Poverty Assessment, Uganda		Participatory Public Procurement, Brazil			
Urban Regeneration, Dublin, Ireland					
Brightonrocks Legislative Theatre, UK					
Appreciative Inquiry, Housing, Dubuque, USA					

**Table 3 Voice and responsiveness initiatives by level of government**

National (and int'l)	Provincial/state	District	Local	Local – urban issues focus	Multi-level (local/state/nat'l)
Coordinadora Civil, Nicaragua	People's Charter, Lok Satta, India	Panchayat Waves community radio, Karnataka, India	Social Audit of Local Agenda 21, Sutton, UK	Neighborhood Watch, San Diego	Citizens Juries – Women's Unit, UK
Citizens jury on GM foods, UK	Participatory Public Procurement, Brazil	ENDA Sanitation Scheme, Senegal	Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS), India	Report Cards, India	Training for behaviour change, RIPS, Tanzania
Children's Budget Initiative, South Africa	Health Agent Program, Ceara, Brazil	New Public Management (district assemblies), Ghana	Participatory Municipal Budgeting Analysis, Brazil	Community Based Housing Organisations, UK	Citizen Education, Zambia
UK Government People's Panel	Encounters with bureaucrats and villagers, (Janmabhoomi), India	Watershed Management, India	Participatory wellbeing needs assessment, UK	Low-cost housing for low income urban commune. (SPARC) India	Participatory Poverty Assessment, Uganda
Putting Breast Cancer on the Map, UK	Forest Protection committee, West Bengal, India	Employment Guarantee Scheme, India	Brighton Rocks participatory theatre, UK	Community Visioning, Bristol, UK	New Technology for public access, NHS Direct, UK
Quality Schemes, UK	People's Planning Campaign, Kerala, India	Performance of Health and Agricultural Services, Uganda	Local Governance Code, Philippines	Appreciative Inquiry, Housing, Dubuque, USA	Citizens Charters, UK
Nation-wide coalition of fisherfolk, NACFAR, Philippines	Provincial Women's Budget Initiatives, South Africa	Health insurance scheme, Bwamanda, Zaire	Best Value, UK	Consultation re Urban Design (BUDD), Brighton, UK	Law of Popular Participation, Bolivia
	Project Votesmart, US		Stirling Assembly, (Participation in Locality), UK	Participatory Needs Assessment with Minorities, Stonebridge, UK	Assembly of the Poor, Thailand
	Healthcare rationing, US and Canada		School League Tables, UK	Washington Youth Court, US	Participatory Irrigation, Philippines
			Ombudsperson, UK	URBAN regeneration Partnership, Dublin	Nicaraguan Community Movement
			One-stop shops, UK	Community Safety Forum, Brighton, UK	New Deal for Communities, UK
			Public hearings, MKSS, Rajasthan, India	Monitoring food distribution to the poor, RKS, India	Support for managing administrative reform in transition (SMART), Romania
			Users in Policymaking, Denmark	Rural Empowerment Zones, US	
			Budget Balancing Exercise, Eugene, Oregon, US		

## **2.2 Description of the mechanisms**

### **2.2.1 Citizen initiatives**

#### **Awareness-raising and building capacity to mobilise**

In order to exercise voice, citizens need both awareness (of issues, rights, and their own ability to speak) and a capacity to organise with others to express or act upon that voice. Mechanisms to do so work on both individual and collective levels. Some focus on raising consciousness of individuals, while others support more collective efforts to vocalise concerns and demand a response from the system.

#### **Case studies: Awareness-raising**

##### **Panchayat Waves (community radio), Karnataka, India**

This community radio show aims to educate marginalised groups about how local governance structures are to work, especially in light of India's 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment, which provided greater representation of women in the Panchayati Raj institutions by reserving 33 per cent of the geographical constituencies for women candidates only. With characters and story lines relevant to people in the local district (Mysore, Karnataka), this show weaves information about the roles, responsibilities and functions of local governance institutions into the plot of each episode. Radio is the chosen medium since it can reach 98 per cent of the population, including those who cannot read. Women especially are targeted. They can listen while they are at home doing chores and get information on matters like the constitution, the role of public forums and women's rights, and the process of democracy – all of which are normally considered men's domain.

##### **Citizen Education Programmes, Zambia**

Three education programmes aim to increase citizens' awareness of Zambia's nascent multi-party democracy. Initiatives include reforms to the school curriculum, training of trainer programmes, popular theatre, and discussion groups. The aim is to expand political awareness. Programmes emphasise that it is in skills and action that citizens' voices are articulated, as in participating in elections and establishing contact with elected representatives.

##### **Nicaraguan Community Movement**

This NGO has its social base in villages and networks where it focuses on training community leaders, identifying community problems and proposing appropriate actions – all by participatory methods. The process is called 'constructing a local agenda' and includes expanding the capacity of individuals and groups to build consensus, negotiating across groups and eliciting the voice of the most marginalised sections of society – like women and the poorest members of a community. Part of constructing the agenda is prioritising needs and determining what local actors – government, other public institutions, private enterprise, NGOs – can do. Local candidates for election are targeted and lobbied to take up the local agenda as part of their platforms. The agenda is both a product used for negotiation and fund-raising purposes, and a process that raises awareness of citizen's rights and how to exercise them.

A number of strategies have long been used for awareness building: popular education, mass media, artistic communication (such as theatre), and education and literacy campaigns. Similarly, a great deal of experience exists in building skills and capacity for mobilisation, through community-based organisations, peoples' movements and campaigns. This area is a vast subject of study in and of itself. Only a few examples are given, therefore, to suggest the broad range of approaches in existence.

### **2.2.2 Information generation (research for advocacy)**

A basic expression of citizen voice is the collection of information on citizens' needs and complaints in relation to service delivery, and the presentation of this information to policy-makers. This generally involves research to generate the information, and can involve innovative and participatory methods which in themselves act as awareness-raising and mobilisation mechanisms. They can also involve innovative approaches to publicising the information so as to catch the attention of policy-makers, politicians and the media.

#### **Case studies: Information generation**

##### **Report Cards, Mumbai, Bangalore, Calcutta, India**

Formal, largely quantitative surveys of client satisfaction with public services, these have been conducted in low-income neighbourhoods in several major Indian cities. The objective character of the surveys is stressed by the organisations that have adopted this approach: they are large random-sample surveys, sometimes stratified by geographical area or household type, which generate 'report cards' on the perceived quality and appropriateness of a range of urban services. They are used to put pressure on elected officials by demonstrating the extent of public dissatisfaction, in the hope that this will result in heightened responsiveness on the part of public servants responsible for the service areas identified. The surveys are also used to educate and mobilise the media, other public interest groups, and the citizenry at large. The survey's questions, foci, and target population are identified by the NGO and marketing research firm conducting the survey.

##### **Participatory Research for Advocacy – Putting Breast Cancer on the Map – UK**

A two-year participatory research and advocacy campaign to generate information and raise awareness about the impact of environmental pollution on breast cancer. It addressed medical professionals and health authorities to argue for better primary prevention programmes and more detailed analysis of breast cancer data. The campaign challenged the relative neglect of research on breast cancer and gave voice to a relatively silenced health service clientele – women at risk of or suffering from breast cancer.

##### **Citizen Foresight Project – Citizens' Jury on GM Foods – UK**

A public deliberation in 1998 by a socially representative jury of 12 on the safety of genetically modified foods, initiated by civil society actors. Information was provided by a range of experts and stakeholders, and was processed and analysed by the jury. The jury challenged the UK government's lack of responsiveness on issues of environmental health and its lack of transparency on food-safety issues, and articulated to the government the public's sense of unease over GM foods and food safety in general.

### **Project Votesmart, US**

Through their website, telephone service and published documents, this US non-profit voluntary organisation empowers voters by compiling and disseminating information on elected officials and candidates for public office. It covers their backgrounds, positions on issues, campaign finances, and publicises evaluations of their performance. Set up in 1994, Project Votesmart aims to provide neutral information to citizens in the state of Oregon, specifically to marginalised groups like youth, ethnic minorities and low-income people, and so encourage them to participate in the political process. It also provides practical information on voting procedures. Oregon is politically liberal with high-levels of education and representative institutions that work, which might limit the replicability of this kind of tool in other contexts (whether other US states, or other countries).

### *2.2.3 Lobbying to influence planning and policy formulation*

Citizens in democracies traditionally influence planning and policy-making by individually or collectively contacting local officials, participating in political parties, and making their views known in elections. Elections, of course, are too crude an instrument for articulating policy preferences, and disillusion with politicians and legislatures encourages more direct forms of engagement with planning processes. This essentially involves lobbying planners and decision-makers.

### **Case studies: Influencing planning and policy formulation**

#### **Community Visioning, Bristol, UK**

Choices for Bristol, an NGO, launched this city-wide consultation initiative in the mid-1990s. The objective was to solicit views of desirable future developments in both the public and private sectors from across the city's communities. Random public sampling was combined with the targeting of particular, often socially excluded, communities by the research teams. Visions for the future were articulated around six themes: acting together, people, places, play, work and transport. These were published and presented to the city council in 1997, and since then 17 citizen-generated planning ideas have been acted upon.

#### **Coordinadora Civil para la Emergencia y la Reconstrucción, Nicaragua**

This coalition of more than 320 social movements, NGOs, CBOs, producers' associations and unions acts as a forum for debating civil society positions on government policy, and as a representative of civil society views in planning and policy debates. It was formed to coordinate civil society views on emergency relief and reconstruction following the Hurricane Mitch disaster in 1998. This became the basis for the creation of a broad policy advocacy network with a shared interest in promoting environmentally sustainable human development and participatory reconstruction and development initiatives.

#### **Community Safety Forum, Brighton, UK**

A citizen's group representing the concerns of the lesbian and gay community about community safety forms part of a Community Safety Forum, launched in 1998. The Forum also brings together citizens working to seek greater police responsiveness to race harassment and domestic violence. The Forum is an autonomous body that liaises with the police to improve community safety, the policing of crimes which are not sufficiently well prevented and prosecuted (homophobic attacks, domestic violence, and race-

related incidents), and to seek to address discriminatory attitudes amongst police staff. It lobbies and negotiates with the police for policy and practice changes both in police work (for instance, to devote additional investigative resources to homophobic assaults) and within the police force itself (hiring gay officers, and reducing discrimination against serving officers). Reporting in the local lesbian and gay media has affirmed successes, as well as highlighted areas for further improvement: this has helped strengthen responsiveness and accountability. Home Office pressure for more meaningful partnerships with the community helped to open space for a more active engagement between the police and the Forum. This has produced a successful bid by the police to host an innovative pilot Hate Crimes unit, which will be the subject of a BBC documentary.

#### **Assembly of the Poor, Thailand**

A loose farmers' network that organises mass agitation campaigns and sit-ins to demand response from government officials on issues affecting poor rural communities like dam displacement, access and rights to local resources such as land, water and forests. Campaigns target policymakers continuously at the local level and reached the national level during a mass mobilisation of 20,000 farmers in 1997 for a 99-day sit-in. Objective media coverage and leadership that bridged the urban-rural cultural divide were essential elements of this movement's awareness-raising capacity.

#### **Nation-Wide Coalition of Fisherfolk for Aquatic Reform (NACFAR), Philippines**

This coalition of eight major fisherfolk organisations grew out of the structures of the Congress for People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR). It developed a comprehensive fisheries code calling for basic changes in control over fishing resources, and opposing interests of powerful business, government and military groups. The code was designed by a participatory process, which involved a series of consultations and conferences with fisherfolk groups. Using the code as a springboard, they set up parameters for discussion with the government, launched a general public information and education campaign, and gradually cultivated allies in political and civil society. They succeeded in getting a five-year moratorium on destructive commercial fishing practices in the Manila bay, and recognition by some municipal governments for community-run councils to oversee local fishing areas.

### **2.2.4 Citizen-based monitoring and evaluation**

It is one thing to influence policy formation. It is quite another to hold policy-makers to account for their commitments. Yet there are few institutionalised opportunities for citizens to participate in regular monitoring and evaluation of government services. Citizens are rarely involved in establishing minimum acceptable standards, let alone regular review of service provision patterns. The cases below are examples of citizens setting up mechanisms to assert their views on minimum entitlements, or to review government spending patterns and assess whether these are in line with national commitments to the social development of particular groups. A growing number of monitoring exercises by CSOs examine the likely impact of public spending decisions on particular social groups. For instance, in Tamil Nadu, India, one CSO investigates the impact of public spending proposals on the poor, and even more specialised initiatives in Maharashtra investigate spending patterns within particular sectors. The most sophisticated of these initiatives monitor the impact of public expenditure on women.

## **Case studies: Citizen-based monitoring and evaluation budget analysis initiatives**

### **Women's Budget Initiative (national) – South Africa**

The initiative analyses public expenditure patterns in terms of their likely impact on the economic and social condition of women. A civil-society initiative, which replicates a state-based budget-analysis initiative in Australia, it has inspired similar programmes in Canada, Jamaica, Tanzania, Uganda, and Mozambique. The aim is to monitor government commitments to gender equity by tracking spending on gender-sensitive policy measures, as well as spending patterns throughout the public sector, to demonstrate new ways of monitoring and evaluating expenditure from a gender perspective. The accent is on *ex post* budget analysis, since there is limited access to government budgets before they are published. These efforts rarely include attempts to audit actual spending, as this information is also restricted.

### **Women's Budget Initiatives (provincial and local) – South Africa, Uganda**

These focus (since 1999 and 2000) upon inter-governmental fiscal transfers and on whether local spending reflects policy commitments to gender equity. In the South African case the national women's budget initiative group works with senior finance and policy officials in provincial governments to make key measurable indicators (KMOs) for planning and budgeting more gender-sensitive. In the Ugandan case, District budget analysis will consider whether spending in health, education, and agriculture meets national commitments to gender equity.

### **Children's Budget Initiative – South Africa**

This analytical exercise examines the impact of public spending on children. It has focussed (since 1997) on five sectors – health, welfare, education, justice and policing. It monitors annually how far the government has met commitments to protecting children's rights, and provides base-line research that can feed into, among other things, parliamentary submissions and sector policy research by CSOs.

### **People's Charter, Lok Satta – Andhra Pradesh, India**

This is a popularised version of the 'citizens' charter'. Rather than the government informing citizens of what their entitlements are, this initiative reverses the process by having citizens tell government what their expectations are from particular government services. It represents an evaluation of the quality of government services and an articulation of what citizens consider minimum standards that government providers should meet. It is intended as a lobbying and monitoring tool. It covers citizen's needs and rights across a wide spectrum including the public distribution system, public utilities, land-related issues, certificates, voting rights, and civil liberties.

### **Monitoring the Public Distribution System – Rationing Kruti Samiti, Mumbai (India)**

The RKS is a federation of about 40 NGOs and CBOs in Mumbai which constitute a network across the metropolis. The RKS monitors the functioning of the subsidised basic commodity programme – the Public Distribution System (PDS) – in low-income communities. Its informal vigilance committees of women consumers monitor individual PDS shops to observe incoming food grains and other commodities, to monitor quality, and to try to prevent leakages into the black market.



### **US Rural Empowerment Zones**

The Empowerment Zones / Enterprise Communities programme, established under the Clinton administration in 1993, aims for holistic community development by addressing issues of high-poverty in rural and urban areas. The programme is focused on: creating economic opportunity through public-service programmes; linking economic, environmental, human and social development in a comprehensive long-term strategy; and encouraging partnerships between diverse groups. It also emphasises that change must begin with communities themselves, and uses popular planning and citizen learning and monitoring to this end. In 1994, out of 500 communities that submitted strategic plans for community revitalisation, three rural 'Empowerment Zones' and 30 rural 'Enterprise Communities' were designated. In certain pilot areas, citizen 'learning teams,' led by a local co-ordinator from the community, were established to track progress, document lessons, and provide feedback to program officials and managers.

### *2.2.5 Implementation and precedent-setting (including partnerships)*

Where the expression of citizen preferences does not produce a response from service providers, but where exit is not an option because no alternative providers exist, one response is for citizens to run services themselves or through an NGO. Sometimes this is initiated in partnership with the state, where the state delegates aspects of service delivery to NGOs, and sometimes partnership follows from successful self-help initiatives. In the latter case, citizens trigger more responsive service delivery through the demonstration effect of running more appropriate and effective services themselves. At the heart of many of these initiatives is institutional change – challenging the accepted 'rules of the game' in the delivery of certain services in order to demonstrate the extent to which alternative delivery patterns, information generation systems, or client self-organisation, can result in more accessible, appropriate services.

Perhaps the most powerful example of civil society demonstrating a model of radical institutional change to better accommodate the interests of poorer clients is the Grameen Bank's micro-finance delivery system in Bangladesh. There, a small civil society experiment proved that institutional changes such as mutual loan guarantees by borrowers, delivery and recovery of credit at the village level, weekly scheduling of loan repayments, and elimination of paperwork in organising loans, made micro-finance to poor clients moderately profitable while opening up a vista of financial empowerment for a hitherto utterly excluded group. This model was imitated later by the state through the Rural Poor Program of the Bangladesh Rural Development Board.

## **Case studies: Implementation**

### **Low-Cost Housing in Low-Income Communities, Mumbai, India**

The NGO 'Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers' (SPARC), in its advocacy work with slum communities and particularly women pavement dwellers, has developed innovative approaches to surveying informal low-income communities, planning for urban amenities (particularly water points and public lavatories), building models of cheap low-income housing, and developing sustainable savings collectives to finance these constructions. Government officials have acknowledged the utility of these innovations, but have not attempted to replicate them. They have, however, liaised with SPARC in order to gain access to SPARC's surveys and censuses of low income communities. Where SPARC works with larger social movements, such as the Railway Slum Dweller's Federation and the National Slum Dweller's Federation, they have succeeded in promoting policy change such as securing land for resettlement of squatters.

### **Community-Based Housing Organisations, Scotland, UK**

CBHOs are community-managed small-scale housing associations that typically manage between 100 and 500 dwellings. There are about 40 such schemes in Scotland. They originated in Glasgow in the mid 1980s as a response to chronic council housing maintenance problems, which local councils were unable to solve because of funding and capacity deficits. Management committees are elected from local residents, and non-elected residents can participate in decision-making forums. These schemes enable councils to offload responsibility for their most degraded housing stock, and at the same time have resulted in tangible improvements in low-rental housing.

### **Community Management of the Urban Environment, Rufisque, Senegal**

The NGO initiated this urban water and sanitation infrastructure scheme in 1991. It is an elaborate and partly user-funded alternative sanitation system that uses cheap and locally appropriate technologies (such as organic water purification systems, or hand carts to collect refuse from areas with no roads) to create a sanitation infrastructure where the state has failed to do so. Paid workers maintain the sewers, and householders pay most of the costs of building domestic lavatories and cesspools. About one-third of the population in the nine targeted communities participates in the management and operation of the sanitation systems. A revolving credit fund helps to pay for some of the installations; foreign funding covers the rest. The government's desperately over-stretched and under-funded Office National de l'Assainissement Urbain has approached the NGO (ENDA-RUP) to scale up its efforts in other cities, using a government-supported revolving credit scheme and government resources to generalise its low-tech approach.

### **Washington Youth Court, USA**

This is an alternative justice system in which juries of teenagers try non-violent young offenders. It was initiated by a PVO, the Time Dollar Institute, in 1996, and takes pressure off the overloaded youth justice system in Washington. Sentences take the form of community service or direct redress to victims. Jurors earn 'time-dollars' – a non-taxable alternative currency that can be redeemed for used computer equipment and other commodities. Community service is also paid in time dollars, and once they have served their sentences, offenders are encouraged to serve as jurors. The long-term aim is to challenge popular youth culture, which encourages young people to offend, and also to challenge the inaccessibility and rigidity of the traditional youth justice system.

#### **Health Insurance Scheme, Bwamanda, Zaire**

This health insurance scheme in Bwamanda district of Zaire offers coverage of hospital inpatient care for an annual premium equivalent to the cost of 2 kg of soybeans (about £ 0.20). It aims to bring those who normally cannot afford hospital care into the service loop for justified priority procedures and was initiated by health facility staff themselves, assisted by staff of village committees and supported by a Zairian non-profit organisation. Staff from other sectors (rural development and agriculture) contributed to mobilisation and enrolment efforts, which were highly successful. About 36,000 district residents (28 per cent of total population) joined the scheme within four weeks of its launch in 1986 and the entire process took place virtually without the involvement of the Zairian State.

### **2.3 Joint state-civil society initiatives**

#### **2.3.1 Auditing**

One of the most innovative forms of citizen engagement in monitoring service quality is citizens' audits of actual spending. Since citizen auditing strikes right at the heart of practices which preserve the powers and privileges of civil servants and politicians (secrecy in public accounts, the use of public office and access to funds for private gain), there are, unsurprisingly, few cases of genuine citizen auditing. The two case studies below include one purely citizen-initiated auditing activity, and one made possible through local government reforms. Auditing can be done at the receiving end of public services, where citizens consider whether funds allocated to local services have, in the first place, arrived without significant 'leakages', and in the second place, been spent in appropriate ways. This latter form of audit, which makes an assessment of the relevance and impact of spending priorities in local services, is sometimes known as a 'social audit', or a micro-level performance audit. Citizen auditing is also done at the level of local government, where citizens review spending patterns on local services and on local government support systems.

Local auditing helps promote citizen awareness of what their government is doing, equips citizens to judge the effectiveness of public policies, and allows people to participate in, and influence, the development process

#### **Case studies: Auditing**

##### **People's hearings – Rajasthan, India**

The 'jan sunwai' – or people's hearings – local audit method was introduced in Rajasthan by a small CBO (the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, MKSS) in 1994. It involves extensive research into suspected corruption in local development projects, particularly employment-generation schemes targeted at the poor. Information thus generated is painstakingly compared with information from local government offices about amounts sanctioned and actually spent on inputs – including labour – for local public works and other development projects. Villagers, particularly labourers, suppliers and contractors on local projects, are asked to verify whether they received the money due to them, or whether construction took place as claimed. Discrepancies are noted and officials are asked to return missing sums. This process has

now been institutionalised. A revision of the local government act in 2000 endows village assemblies with the right to audit local spending, and to demand an investigation by District officials in cases of discovery of mis-spending.

#### **Vigilance Committees (Law of Popular Participation)– Bolivia**

Vigilance Committees are set up parallel to local elected bodies in Bolivia with a mandate to monitor these bodies. They are composed of six elected leaders of traditional local governance systems, such as peasant syndicates and neighbourhood councils. The VC's main responsibility is to ensure that community priorities are reflected in municipal investment decisions. But it is also empowered to wield a legal instrument called a *denuncia* against local councils. The VC can call for regular audits of local government, and if it detects corruption, it can lodge a complaint with the national executive branch, which passes it on to a special committee of the Senate, which can in turn suspend central funds to the erring council until the case is resolved.

#### **Social Audit, Local Agenda 21, Sutton, UK**

Social Audit is a consultative tool that organisations can use to understand, measure and report on their social performance. It was used in Sutton's Local Agenda 21 Forum, a partnership that brings together council officers, councillors, voluntary organisations, community representatives and local businesses – to arrive at a new, more structured, focus to improve delivery of sustainable development objectives. An environment NGO with close links to the council and the community managed the process, together with the Forum review sub-group and a team of volunteer auditors. A range of stakeholder groups was consulted through questionnaires, workshops and interviews. The social audit opened up dialogue regarding the LA21 Forum on process, which was restructured as a result to comprise a larger and more active network.

### **2.3.2 Joint management of sectoral programmes**

Joint state-civil society management and delivery of services represents one ideal form of responsive government; the boundaries between citizen and state are blurred, and because citizens themselves are making decisions, in principle the result is directly responsive service delivery. There are more prosaic reasons for introducing joint management: where resources (staff and money) are limited, where client communities are geographically distant, where the state's role in managing and harvesting common property resources (forests, water) is fundamentally disputed, or where certain social groups have historically rejected the authority and legitimacy of the state (as is the case with some aboriginal communities), it is practically and politically expedient to cede aspects of service delivery to communities.

## **Case studies: Joint management of sectoral programmes**

### **Forest Protection Committees, West Bengal, India**

Forest Protection Committees (FPC) are local partnerships between forest dwellers and front-line forest officials implementing the Joint Forestry Management (JFM) Programme in West Bengal. This programme was intended to end the adversarial relationship between forestry workers and forest-fringe villagers. The latter are blamed for forest degradation. Conflicts in some instances resulted in violent assaults on forestry workers. The FPCs engage local residents in the regeneration, protection, and maintenance of forests and plantations, and in keeping encroachers out. In exchange, each FPC has a right to 25 per cent of the net income from timber sales and the right to collect certain categories of forest produce. JFM has not met with success elsewhere in India, where service providers from the bottom to the top of the Forest Department have been reluctant to cede management responsibilities and rights to forest produce to local people. In this successful West Bengal case, front-line workers were responsible for pushing the Forest administration into full implementation of the national JFM proposals. Indeed, they mobilised client communities to push for more participation and more substantial rights to forest produce. They did so because of a collective interest – expressed through their union – in ending the violence and intimidation they faced from villagers, and in improving their working conditions.

### **Watershed Management, India**

Local-level watershed management in rainfed areas is, according to the 1994 national Guidelines for Watershed Development, intended to be subject to community control. These national Guidelines detail progressive arrangements to ensure community mobilisation and autonomous planning and management of rainwater conservation constructions. All community residents dependent on the watershed area are members of a Watershed Association, which appoints a committee composed of representatives of user groups, local CBOs, and *Gram Panchayat* (village government) members. This committee communicates service-user needs to the Project Implementation Agency (which can be either a government agency or an NGO) appointed by the District Rural Development Agency, and the PIA can appeal to this committee for help in mobilising community funding or labour to implement or manage watershed control facilities. There are very few cases of full or successful implementation of these Guidelines for local participation in project management. The rare successes depend on proactive NGOs or community groups putting pressure on authorities for proper implementation. Otherwise, Watershed Committees and user groups are simply set up by the authorities to meet targets. Successes also rely on the capacity of the civil society partner to generate substantial funds to compensate for resource scarcities on the administration's side, where just 50 per cent of staff costs of PIAs are covered by the government.

### **Education Guarantee Scheme, Madhya Pradesh, India**

This scheme was established in 1997 by the state government of Madhya Pradesh. It is a rights-based initiative to universalise primary education. Based on the notion that all children have the right to go to a nearby school, the state government created an informal charter in which it guarantees that it will establish a school within 90 days whenever this is demanded by a community lacking a nearby school. The community has to demonstrate that it has 40 learners (25 in the case of tribal communities). The District provides the teacher, training, and basic learning materials, while the community provides the land for the school. The *Gram Panchayat* appoints the teacher. Communities are encouraged to suggest a suitable local resident to be the teacher, thus minimising the problems of geographical and social distance between teachers and communities, which have led in the past to extensive teacher absenteeism. The community oversees the maintenance of physical facilities and school management. Community

stakeholding in schools is encouraged by the threat of withdrawal of funding if drop-out rates are high. Take-up of the scheme has been very high, with over 15,500 EGS Schools established in the first year of the Scheme. This suggests effective dissemination of information about community rights and entitlements under the scheme.

#### **User involvement in policy-making and neighbourhood councils, Denmark**

A Danish government initiative of the 1990s includes citizen-users of public services in the management of those services. Instead of government officials, there are local residents, service users, or interest group representatives sitting on neighbourhood councils and user boards to formulate policy in areas like urban/community planning and advisory help to the elderly. For child daycare, local government appoints users of the service – parents – to the board. To manage schools, parents of pupils elect a board of directors, which also includes the school principal. The powers of these bodies vary by type of service. The initiatives are part of a general shift in state decision-making away from narrow bureaucratic concerns to a broader service-delivery approach. There is great variation, however, in the effectiveness and extent of their influence, depending on the nuances within the context of the service area they are managing and the power of existing actors in that area.

#### **Healthcare rationing in Canada and the US**

Government authorities hand over to citizens the politically-sensitive job of deciding who gets 'free' health care services. The case study examines this approach to health-care expenditure decision-making as tried in two Canadian provinces, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan, and in the American state of Oregon. Citizen bodies are entrusted to prioritise the treatments that will qualify for public funding based on technical-medical criteria and citizen's values. In Oregon, an 11-member commission of doctors, other health care professionals and lay people did the work of ranking 1600 condition-treatments. In Canada, regional and community health boards had to decide what were core services, though these bodies had more broad-based citizen participation than the 11-member Oregon case. In all three cases the governments used involvement of citizens to legitimate courses of health-care reform with varying effects. In one case (Nova Scotia) participatory institutions came up against the institutional power of health care professionals.

### **2.3.3 Government frameworks for participatory planning and community development**

In a number of countries, participatory planning mechanisms have been institutionalised through legislative reforms or government-sponsored programmes which provide frameworks for participatory planning by local citizens. In the South, participatory planning requirements are increasingly included in laws for decentralisation of local governance. In the North, the examples found for this study suggest more *ad hoc* procedures, in which citizens are consulted but without any statutory provisions for representation of civil society groups on key decision-making bodies or requirements to follow citizen-developed plans and priorities.

## **Case studies: Government frameworks for participatory planning**

### **People's Planning Campaign, Kerala**

Among the various provisions for strengthening village governance (*Panchayati Raj* institutions), the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment in India called upon the *Panchayati Raj* Institutions to conduct local programmes of planning for social and economic justice. Local Planning has been implemented most fully in the State of Kerala, where the State Planning Board launched the People's Planning Campaign in 1997 to empower local *panchayats* to draw up plans, based on a highly participatory village-based planning process. Planning was supported through mobilisation and the involvement of neighbourhood groups, training camps for thousands of resource persons from state, district and local levels, as well as for retired experts (e.g. teachers, former government workers), and allocation of 40 per cent of the state budget for support of projects planned and implemented locally.

### **Participatory Local Government in the Philippines**

The Local Government Code of 1991 establishes a Local Development Council (LDC), for every province, city, municipality, and *barangay*. The primary responsibility of the LDCs is to draft comprehensive multi-sector development plans, including a comprehensive land-use plan for each local government unit concerned. At least one-fourth of the total membership of the LDCs should come from the NGO -POs (people's organisation) and private sectors. LDCs have become vehicles for these civil society organisations to mobilise people in the *barangay* to claim from government minimum basic services and to prioritise projects to be supported from local projects. A national network of NGOs, known as the BATMAN project, has worked to strengthen local government and civil society interaction, and to strengthen participatory approaches such as PRA in *barangay* development planning.

### **Law of Popular Participation, Bolivia**

The Law of Popular Participation (LPP) of 1994 empowers democratically elected municipal councils to design and implement local development policies and programmes, with finance transferred from the central government. In addition, the law empowers Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), known as *Organizaciones Territoriales de Base*, to participate in the development of five-year municipal plans. These groups are given jurisdiction over a given territory and assigned rights and duties covering a range of social, infrastructural, productive and environmental matters. In addition, Vigilance Committees are set up to act as watchdogs on the municipal council, and to ensure that community projects and priorities are reflected in municipal budgets and expenditures.

### **Participatory Municipal Budgeting, Brazil**

Participatory budgeting is a process through which newly created structures known as Regional Assemblies and the Participatory Budget Council participate in allocating resources and monitoring how they were used. The Council is composed of delegates elected from regional meetings, from thematic working groups which deal with issues such as transport, culture and leisure, healthcare, economic development and city management, from the municipal union and neighbourhood associations, and from representatives of local government. The Council representatives are responsible for organising ongoing consultation meetings, representing district priorities to the municipal governments, and (in collaboration with government representatives) establishing and monitoring the local budget. Originally initiated in Porto Alegre, participatory budgeting is now practised to some degree in 80 cities throughout Brazil. Beginning in May 2000 the process will be applied at the state level, encompassing some 500 municipalities.

### **Stirling Council Civic Assembly (Scotland)**

A cornerstone of the UK central government's attempt to revitalise local government is more active consultation in planning processes with the general public. In recent years in the UK there has been a general mushrooming of techniques to enhance public participation in local public-service institutions, ranging from visioning exercises, user forums, area forums, focus groups, citizens' panels and citizens' juries. In Scotland, one of the most prominent local councils to carry the agenda forward has been in Stirling, where a Civil Assembly was established to provide local people with the opportunity to participate in the development of the Council's major strategies and initiatives, as well as to influence other public service providers such as the local health boards and enterprise companies. Originally the Council proposed that the Assembly should be a constituent body of 70 members nominated by communities of interest as well as by geographic zones. Later, a less structured approach was taken, with meetings open to any interested officials. Meetings have focussed on such areas as the council's budget priorities, healthcare services, and involvement of young people.

### **New Deal for Communities, UK**

This programme, launched in September 1988, is central to the UK government's strategy to regenerate deprived neighbourhoods and tackle 'social exclusion'. Key aims are improvement of citizen health, tackling unemployment and crime, and improving educational standards. The government identifies poor areas by inviting them to go through a community development process in which the government, private sector, voluntary organisations and community residents work together. The process includes open public consultation days; residents' surveys; weekend seminars for local residents to identify issues of concern; exchange visits with other neighbourhoods; on-the-ground work by community workers with people unable to go to other events; youth days; a bus travelling around communities to reach and involve older or less mobile people; 'question time' sessions with representatives from the police, housing authorities and residents; visioning days to bring together residents and professionals to identify priorities. Involving local residents in a long-term way is seen as central to the NDC programme, though some areas have used consultants to coordinate the seek ideas, draft a vision and report back. Others have kept the planning process more flexible and accessible to the general public.

### **Oregon's Budget Balancing Exercise, the 'Eugene' decisions, US**

In this case study of participatory budgeting, citizens of the city of Eugene, Oregon, held forums to generate ideas on how to solve the city's financial problems. The city council also sent citizens a series of surveys that asked where the city should spend money. Later, when options were identified, residents were asked for their preferences. The initiative, which was highly publicised and covered in the media, aimed not only to elicit citizens' views but also to involve the citizenry in complex decisions lasting over a period of time to allow for deliberation and reflection. Response rates to the surveys were high, indicating that they can be effective as a governance instrument when combined with other forms of consultation. The process was aimed at all citizens, not a particular group. It led to some service reductions and consolidations and new and increased user fees. A key finding was that greater information increased the willingness of voters to recommend public spending increases.



## **2.4 State responsiveness initiatives**

### **2.4.1 Consultation on service delivery and policy priorities**

Consultation offers a way of gauging public opinion on a wide range of service-related issues, from the quality of service delivery to current or prospective policies. As such, it can provide both a source of information on public perceptions and a way to assess the acceptability of planned interventions in policy and practice. Consultative events or processes can also open spaces for public involvement in making and shaping interventions, principally through recommendations made by the public or by affected user communities. These may concern potential improvements that can be made to existing service delivery or highlight gaps where new policies or new forms of service delivery are needed. Where consultation reaches beyond elected or informal representatives to seek a broader picture of public or user-community opinion, it offers a more direct democratic mechanism that enables people to have a say about the services and policies that affect their lives.

#### **Case studies: Consultation**

##### **UK Government People's Panel**

Funded by Central Government and prompted by a recognition of the need to listen to and learn from citizens' views, the People's Panel was set up in the late 1990s. It consists of a random selection of 5,000 members of the public representing a cross-section of the population. The Panel is consulted about how public services are delivered and how improvements can be made, providing a perspective from the service users rather than the system. It enables government to assess how and why views change and provides a ready resource for consultation with service users and non-users. Any government department or other publicly funded body can use the People's Panel. Action taken to follow up findings has included the development of a central website to link all complaint procedures.

##### **Citizen's Juries – Women's Unit, UK**

Citizen's Juries bring together a group of 12–20 members of the electorate, chosen randomly from the electoral register. Over the course of 3–5 days, the jury hears evidence from 'expert witnesses' on policy issues, engaging in deliberation on policy implications and arriving at recommendations on potential courses of action. First developed in Germany and the USA, this approach grew out of a perceived need to give ordinary citizens a stronger voice and role in democratic decision-making. The first citizen's juries to be carried out by Central Government in the UK were commissioned by the Women's Unit in 1998, to inform the development of a national childcare strategy. The initiative sought to address policy issues related to the provision of childcare, the balance of work and parenting and the nature of support given by employers to working mothers and their families. Many of the recommendations were subsequently taken up and are reflected in the emergent National Childcare Strategy. As deliberative mechanisms that offer access to the informed views of the public, Citizens Juries can help feed these views into the policy process.

### **Participatory Poverty Assessment, Uganda**

Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) involve the use of participatory and qualitative research techniques for national-level consultation on local people's perceptions of poverty and priorities for poverty reduction. The Ugandan PPA (UPPAP) is an extensive (over time and sample size) consultation exercise that has generated nuanced qualitative information about the experience, depth and breadth of poverty. It has sought to: build a national system to integrate quantitative and qualitative poverty monitoring; increase the capacity of CSOs and government personnel (especially at District and lower levels) for poverty monitoring and poverty eradication policy design; and continuously inform top-level policy-makers about the nature and locations of poverty in the country. It was initiated by bilateral donors (with some World Bank input) and NGOs, and is managed by Oxfam. It has put an emphasis on nurturing government ownership and its management unit is located in the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development.

### **Participatory Wellbeing Needs Assessment – UK**

Supported by local regeneration partnerships and specialist area health promotion services, this is a consultative mechanism that has graduated into a framework for improving understanding and communication between clients and professionals, as a route to enhancing service responsiveness. It is based on the use of Participatory Appraisal with and by a wide range of stakeholders. In the Sutton case, a team of providers and residents engaged local residents, many of whom normally do not participate in local government (lone mothers, ethnic minority residents, elderly people, people with disabilities or mental health needs), in articulating needs and developing alternative service-delivery proposals. These were then negotiated with service providers. Outcomes included improved inter-sectoral working relations and increased resident involvement in planning and decision-making.

### **Appreciative Inquiry, Housing, Dubuque, USA**

Appreciative Inquiry involves working with a range of stakeholder groups to build on a positive past and understand the present through shared stories, experience and analysis. The emphasis is on building on achievements and positive experiences and on exploring and discovering common ground. AI was used in 1998 by the City of Dubuque in Iowa to strengthen and improve contentious relationships with customers and achieve community-wide consensus on public policy for a consolidated five-year housing, community and economic development plan, setting priorities for a budget of \$20 million. At the start of the project, only the voice of the landlords was being heard. Eighteen months later, a wide range of stakeholders had been involved, including businesses, tenants (including the more disenfranchised, such as children, the homeless, Bosnian immigrants), elected officials, schools, service providers and neighbourhood associations. Collective answers were sought to affordable housing. The process built consensus through inclusive, collaborative activities and ended with self-organised task forces whose ideas, plans and recommendations were incorporated into the city's consolidated plan.

### **Legislative Theatre, Brighton and Hove, UK**

Originating in the work of the Brazilian theatre activist Augusto Boal, Legislative Theatre involves the production of a play on social issues by local people or members of user communities. Members of the audience stop the play at points where they can see alternative policy solutions to the dilemmas being dramatised. Solutions are then explored and debated, leading to recommendations for action. The Brighton Rocks Legislative Theatre project was initiated in 1999, commissioned by East Sussex Health Authority as part of efforts to include resident views in shaping the area's new Health Improvement Plan

and facilitated by the Scarman Trust, in partnership with local voluntary sector organisations. Through a piece of theatre in which residents enacted everyday health and social dilemmas, the initiative sought to bring together policy makers and residents in deliberation on possible avenues for action.

#### **Consultation on Urban Design, Brighton, UK**

Consultation with local residents over a plan for infrastructure development included an open access participatory Community Planning Event and the involvement of a local citizen's association in a working group to take forward residents' concerns about the proposed development. The consultation came about as a result of Central Government requirements. Initially supported by the council, the citizen's group worked together with consultants commissioned by the council to create a forum for public involvement in planning the future of the site. Yet many of the suggestions arising from the planning event, and, most importantly, considerable public opposition to the key feature in the development – a supermarket – were not taken on board in the revised planning brief. This example serves as a cautionary tale in the tokenistic use of consultation and has left in its wake an even larger gap and greater distrust between citizens and local government.

#### **URBAN Regeneration, Dublin, Ireland**

Mechanisms for involving communities in planning –from Planning for Real, to consultation via workshops and questionnaires, to community representation in planning groups – were used to feed into the planning process of the URBAN regeneration partnership in South Dublin.

### *2.4.2 Setting standards*

Some public sector reforms aim at establishing clearly the standard of service that clients can expect. Standard-setting addresses two major concerns. It focuses the efforts of service providers on setting minimum, socially appropriate, and feasible performance standards. And it provides clients with a benchmark against which they can measure the quality of services they actually receive, and for which they can hold service providers to account – through citizen monitoring, for instance. Standard-setting has been a widely exported public sector management tool in recent years, with many public services in developing and transitional countries encouraged to set up citizen's charters.

#### **Case studies: Setting standards**

##### **Citizens' Charters – UK**

A Charter is a public organisation's statement of its aims, the standards of service that users can expect, feedback mechanisms to improve the quality of services and raise standards, and grievance redress mechanisms. It may also give limited statutory rights to certain public customers. In the UK today 10,000 local services produce local charters, and these are now an integral part of public service delivery.

##### **School League Tables – UK**

Local secondary school performance league tables were introduced in the mid-1990s in the UK to measure schools' attainment of appropriate standards of literacy and numeracy and other designated curriculum

areas. They enable parents to act as better informed consumers in selecting schools for their children on the basis of comparisons of performance on outcomes such as standardised test scores, pupil absence rates, and percentage of pupils staying on after the minimum school leaving age.

### *2.4.3 Incentives, sanctions, performance measurement*

A work force which is already demoralised, badly paid, and under-resourced is hardly likely to respond well to public pressure or 'voice' mechanisms, whether couched in the language of consultation or complaint. In fact, the response is more likely to be defensive or negative. The use of pay and other benefits to reward individuals for conforming to the organisation's desired performance goals (and, conversely, sanctioning inadequate performance) addresses a problem which citizen voice efforts do not always deal with very effectively: how to make 'front-line' service deliverers – and their managers – actually care about the quality of the service they provide, and change their behaviour accordingly.

Currently dominant approaches in public service reform in the Anglo-American /Australasian world (so-called New Public Management, or NPM), therefore, emphasise market-based solutions which assume that public servants are like other 'rational self-interested' individuals in a market economy. Where the goal is to make public servants more client-oriented and responsive to the public, then individual incentive structures that mimic the market are introduced to reward client-centric behaviour. The reward element is balanced both by internal sanctions (no promotion, no pay rise, or even sacking) by the threat of 'competition' from private providers invited to tender for the same service, or by outright privatisation.

Linking incentives and sanctions to specific desired performance goals – such as 'greater responsiveness to clients' – inevitably implies performance-related pay and promotion, and hence a systematic and objective set of mechanisms for measuring performance. The NPM approach therefore typically involves the use of devices such as 'results-oriented' performance targets, whose achievement is monitored at both the individual and organisation levels by measurable performance indicators (PIs) and performance contracts. With the latter device, managers of the particular department or public agency providing the service are given a budget and a set of quality standards, as if they were entering into a commercial contract. Internal market devices such as 'cost centres' are similarly designed to enhance transparency and accountability for the achievement of performance targets within an agreed budget.

#### **Case studies: Incentives, sanctions, performance measurement**

##### **The Civil Service Performance Improvement Programme (CSPIP) and decentralised government in Ghana**

Ghana's District Assemblies (DAs), set up in 1989, provide an excellent example of two key mechanisms for improving the responsiveness and performance of government: on the one hand, attempts to enhance popular participation in local government through both direct and representative methods, and on the other, attempts to create a more 'service conscious and responsive' public service through New Public

Management (NPM)-inspired organisational reforms of the civil service itself. The Civil Service Performance Improvement Programme involves government agencies and departments in designing their own Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs), which form the basis for Performance Agreements between chief executives and their political bosses, and between staff and management. The PIP process uses self-appraisal and participatory management methods, supplemented with client satisfaction surveys, in order to encourage staff to confront the problems facing their service and to design their own solutions.

#### **Public administration reform in Romania: improving accessibility and responsiveness through Citizens' Information Centres**

Since 1997 DfID has been involved in funding a general administrative reform programme in Romania, designed to:

- create a more open, accessible and 'citizen friendly' public service;
- strengthen policy-formulation capacity;
- establish a modern human resource management function.

The general results have not been very encouraging due mainly to the continued dominance of politicised patronage appointments, low pay and staff demoralisation, and excessive 'legalism' in civil service attitudes. In addition the implementation of the reform was entrusted to a general Department of Administrative Reform, which experienced frequent changes of top personnel and a consequent loss of momentum and commitment. But the programme did achieve some success in the area of local government, through the device of improving public information and citizens' willingness and capacity to make their views known. The institutional mechanisms were a national public relations and information unit and the establishment of Citizens' Information Centres in eight local councils. Using modern communication technology, these centres greatly improved the transparency of local government and encouraged citizen involvement and participation through contacting and petitioning officials.

#### **The Civil Service Reform Programme in Uganda: public assessments of the efficiency and responsiveness of health and agricultural services**

Decentralisation of services to the district level has been a major part of the Ugandan CSRP introduced by the Museveni government in 1989. In 1995, a 'Results Oriented Management' initiative was launched, with initial priority being given to the provision of health and agricultural services to rural communities at the district level. In order to facilitate measurement of management performance, a comprehensive Service Delivery Survey was commissioned by the Government of Uganda; its purpose was to provide baseline data on the efficiency and responsiveness of these key services. The longer term goals were to help develop the evaluative capacity of government agencies and to increase the involvement of citizens in monitoring service quality.

The impact of the findings of these surveys has been limited so far, for the following reasons:

- Staff reductions affected the capacity of Ministries to complete the review process
- Severe problems in the introduction of computer systems and poor quality Management Information Systems
- There is still no real link between rewards (pay, promotion) and performance – particularly willingness to respond to the results of public consultation, and the reform process more generally.

### **Demand-Drive procurement, Brazil**

In 1987, Ceara state in north-east Brazil launched a scheme to promote the growth of small locally based businesses through demand-driven public procurement. The mechanism meant redirection of state expenditures for procurement of goods and services away from large companies towards local small firms. The program was 'demand-driven' in that state agencies purchased only what they needed and only from the small firms if they were satisfied with quality, price and delivery. The contracting process created incentives for effective performance with a view to job-creation and economic growth. The initiative worked in cooperation with the national Brazilian Small Enterprise Assistance Service (SEBRAE) for support and technical assistance, and involved associations of small firms, individual tradesmen, and neighbourhood/parent-teacher associations for decision-making on expenditures in the department of education. The campaign was highly publicised and small firms and artisan associations were encouraged to lobby to counteract negative pressures coming from the large companies that formerly dominated procurement. The organisation of the scheme overcame problems that had prevented small businesses from applying for government contracts in the past and as a result hundreds of new service and repair contractors and small manufacturers emerged.

### **Performance Measurement and Monitoring in Newham Council (UK); the Best Value concept**

The 'Best Value' concept is a policy initiated by the New Labour Government in 1997 in order to improve and monitor local government service provision. It aims: (a) to ensure that the quality and cost of services reflect public perceptions of what is needed and affordable, and (b) to build in continual improvement in service quality and efficiency. The mechanisms typically include a review and implementation process which begins with establishing whether there is a need for the service to be publicly delivered at all, followed (if the answer is affirmative) by a comparison of the costs of best practice for delivery of that service both public and private, consulting with the public and finally ensuring that the service is provided on the most competitive (cost efficient) basis. It is very much a 'top down', centrally imposed policy which places local councils under a statutory duty to consult on best-value performance reviews.

### **Quality improvement and measurement schemes in the UK public services**

Since the early 1990s UK governments have developed a set of schemes for improving the quality of public services. There are four principal schemes:

- 1 The *Business Excellence Model* is a framework of standards against which organisations are encouraged to conduct self-assessments and then design performance improvement plans.
- 2 *Investors in People* establishes a national standard for training and staff development within government organisations.
- 3 *ISO 9000* is a British Standard for quality management systems, which helps organisations to develop manuals of quality assurance procedures. Organisations can register as meeting the requirements of the BS, and are then regularly inspected to ensure that the standard is being maintained.
- 4 *Charter Mark* is a Government certificate which is awarded at a national ceremony and can be displayed as a logo on stationery and vehicles; over 1700 have been awarded.

#### 2.4.4 Service delivery ethos in organisational culture

A number of programmes around the world have sought to improve and sustain public service responsiveness through creation of a new public service ethos amongst their employees. This 'human relations' approach includes several strategies, including training and other interventions for attitude and behaviour changes among bureaucrats and service providers, developing and promoting greater job satisfaction based on responsive service delivery, and encouraging a culture of organisational learning, in which meeting the needs of the client is highly valued. A key lesson of such initiatives is that to be successful they must often combine with other approaches, such as internal mechanisms for changing incentive and reward structures, or changing the external relations between service providers and service users.

##### **Case studies: Service delivery ethos**

###### **Training in the ABC's (Attitude and Behaviour Changes) of Participation, Tanzania and India**

Work in participatory rural appraisal (PRA) has increasingly pointed to the importance of changing attitudes and behaviour of professionals, civil servants and outside facilitators in order to support participatory processes. A number of recent initiatives – in India, Tanzania, and Uganda – have developed training approaches for public officials to develop attitudes such as openness, respect, humility, flexibility, and ability to listen. In the RIPS program in southern Tanzania, over 100 workshops over the last few years have been held with public officials in Linde and Mtwara districts in PRA approaches. Success at the district level has led to workshops for principal secretaries at the national level. In India, the National Training Academy has been piloting training in behaviour and attitude changes as part of a national curriculum, with the support of the Minister for Rural Development.

###### **Health Agent Programme, Ceara State, Brazil**

This program required the recruitment of 7,300 new basic community health workers (mainly women) and 235 part-time nurse supervisors, whose task was to carry out infant vaccinations and child preventive health campaigns. The case is frequently cited as what can be achieved through the inculcation of a strong sense of dedication and job commitment amongst 'front-line' employees. Though the employees hired were generally low-income and from the communities they were to be serving, recruitment and hiring of these field workers was conducted centrally by the state, thus bypassing local patronage. Using media and other methods, strong public prestige was given to attainment of the job on merit. Health agents were encouraged to develop and maintain a strong *esprit de corps* and pride in the job, and rewarding tasks and relations with clients helped to create high job satisfaction. Internal mechanisms were supplemented by external public monitoring processes to make sure that public workers were performing well.

###### **Learning Processes in Participatory Irrigation, Philippines**

The learning process approach is perhaps best known through the example of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) in the Philippines. Historically, the NIA followed a very top-down approach to irrigation management, with little consultation with local people. A learning process approach was instituted, which formed working groups of front-line workers and national agency staff to re-define the approach. Emphasis was placed on supporting local farmers to organise themselves into Irrigation

Associations, which then contracted with the NIA to receive needed services. This required, in turn, re-training NIA staff to be responsive to farmers' decisions concerning design, construction, and irrigation operation and maintenance. There was a shift to a more process-oriented approach, involving modification of many long-standing organisational rules and procedures. Rather than a 'blueprint' approach, value was placed on embracing error and uncertainty, as well as on harnessing the insights of clients and front-line workers in the organisational learning process.

#### **The Neighbourhood Watch Programme, San Diego, California**

The Neighbourhood Watch Programme is a community-based policing project. Changes were made in training and in recruitment practices in order to make the police more responsive and accountable to local citizens, and to overcome some of the cultural barriers and mistrust that had arisen between the police and minority groups. Police recruits were encouraged to rethink their functions – that is, not only responding to crime, but also improving the overall quality of life in the community in partnership with local people, schools, organisations and businesses. Community leaders are involved in the training of police officers to ensure that they understand the people with whom they will work, and new recruits have to spend 40 hours in a community organisation to improve their understanding of local peoples' needs. Police work in partnership with over 3000 residents who are also involved in 'Citizen's Patrols'. Attempts were made to alter the demographic make-up of the police force so that it better reflected the racial and cultural composition of the communities being served. Internal training approaches are complemented by new systems of both internal and external accountability, including community advisory groups and a Citizens' Review board.

#### **Encounters between bureaucrats and villagers, Janmabhoomi, Andhra Pradesh, India**

A more directive and top-down approach is found in the Janmabhoomi, or people-centred development process, in Andhra Pradesh, India. Promoted by Chief Minister Chandra Babu Naidu, the process seeks to multiply interactions between government officials and the people. The process takes place through three monthly 'rounds', which last for one week and take place simultaneously in every locality across the state. During these periods rapid visits are made to villages by state-level officials, as well as more routine visits by local government officials. Officials are then asked to present 'action taken reports' – but there is little evidence that these are used as accountability mechanisms for interaction or follow-up. Nor is there evidence that internal bureaucratic changes are made in response to the village-level interactions.

#### **2.4.5 Accessible government: information and services**

Efforts to make government service providers more accessible and transparent in their dealings with the public include the creation of new physical points of access where citizens can obtain information and process a range of claims (such as 'one-window' or 'one-stop-shop' desks in local government offices). They also include the creation of 'virtual' points of access, where new information and communication technologies are used to consult with and provide information to service users. They sometimes claim to do more than this: to be 'interactive', to invite a deeper level of participation from citizens.



## **Case studies: Accessible government**

### **One-Stop Shops, UK and Sindudhurg, Maharashtra, India**

This initiative is designed to ease access to a wide range of local services offered either by local councils, or by local service providers. It aggregates in one locale a number of functions, or at least, application procedures for a number of functions, thereby minimising the amount of petitioning in which citizens must engage, or the number of offices and officials they must visit. 'Joined-up government' innovations enable citizens to access service providers from a range of sectors, and even across different levels of government. For instance, in Lewisham, UK, people can claim either housing benefit or income support from either the Benefits Agency office, or the council's housing benefit department. In Sindudhurg, 'one-window' innovations in District and Block offices have signboards detailing the cost of all services and the amount of time it should take to process an application, thus informing citizens of basic standards for delivery of these services. The one-window reform was delayed by protest activities by lower-level civil servants, who saw their illicit rent-gaining opportunities shrink as citizens gained a better understanding of their entitlements and the one-window method protected them (to some degree) from exploitative encounters with bureaucratic middlemen.

### **Modernising Government and IT, UK**

Computer and communications technology, particularly the Internet, is used in this case to speed up and broaden citizen applications to service providers for a wide range of services, and for basic inquiries. With multiple points of access to computers besides domestic PCs (libraries, schools, hospitals, community centres, shopping/leisure centre kiosks) IT creates new opportunities for citizens to express voice. Access to this new technology is not, however, universal, though it is an effective way to engage youth in dialogue with service providers. In addition, there is a tendency for government Internet sites to provide a one-way stream of information, rather than exploring the interactive possibilities of municipal websites.

### **NHS Direct, UK**

This is a 24-hour telephone advice line staffed by nurses piloted in 1998. It should be accessible to most of the UK's population by 2000. It is intended to expand access to healthcare information at the same time as relaxing trivial demands on health services by weeding out cases that are not serious. Nurses offer advice to callers on the appropriate level of care to seek.

## **2.4.6 New rights for citizens or clients**

Although there is much talk about rights-based approaches to development, many states are reluctant to codify statutory rights for citizens where such rights would imply mandatory legal proceedings against the state in the event of delivery of unsatisfactory services. Such reforms, intended to empower citizens in relation to the state, usually require new legislation or even constitutional change recognising new rights. There are a few examples of this, where clients are endowed with a statutory and justifiable right to a particular service, of a particular quality, within a particular time-period. Failure to deliver can result in clients suing the state for compensation. Another and recently more common example is the creation of new public institutions for the protection of the rights – sometimes newly-recognised rights – of certain categories of citizens. Offices of the public ombudsperson can perform this function, as can specialised

institutions for channelling and resolving grievances, such as the state-level commissions on the status of women in India, or the various Commissions on Human Rights, Gender, and Youth in South Africa.

### **Case studies: New rights for citizens**

#### **Employment Guarantee Scheme, Maharashtra, India**

This long-running employment creation scheme (since 1977) commits the state government to provide manual labour opportunities on public works programmes to groups of unemployed workers. If the government fails to provide jobs in 15 days, it is obliged to pay unemployment benefit until work is provided. It is financed through a hypothecated tax on professionals and formal sector employees. The scheme has had the effect of mobilising unemployed rural labourers to demand that the government implement the scheme as provided for by law. Political parties and NGOs have used access to employment through the scheme as a mobilisation strategy and also as a way of holding the government to account. In cases where the government has failed to provide employment (or unemployment benefit), or indeed associated amenities such as childcare for working women, successful public interest litigation has been pursued. Though activists have won these cases, they have not been able to get rulings implemented. Nevertheless, the scheme is seen as a model for empowering clients in that it gives them statutory rights to a state service and is a reliable and accountable program which has become an important part of seasonal livelihood strategies of the poor.

#### **The Right-to-Information Act in Goa, India**

The Indian state of Goa enacted a citizens' Right to Information Act in early 1998 that is one of the most progressive (in that it has the fewest exceptions) in the world. It is distinguished by provisions which enable citizens to photocopy entire files relating to government business, including informal notes made by civil servants and politicians, which give indications of the basis on which government decisions are made. Hundreds of citizens have made use of the Act to investigate government decision-making and service delivery problems in areas ranging from the education system to the banking sector, as well as decisions on foreign investment, the implementation of government environmental and health regulations, and the implementation of government laws pertaining to affirmative action for the employment of 'Backward Castes' in public sector jobs. Findings from these investigations have resulted in a number of court cases enabling citizens to secure redress.

#### **Ombudsperson, UK**

Ombudspersons act as watchdogs on public services in the UK, and have been appointed to many government bodies following recommendations to strengthen grievance procedures in the Citizen's Charter White Paper in the early 1990s. Ombudsperson offices may be set up to oversee services or sectors (the health Services Commissioner for England), or to keep an eye on different levels of government (the Local Government Ombudsman in England, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration). The Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration investigates complaints from members of the public who allege maladministration by central government departments and non-departmental public bodies. The ombudsperson acts as a voice for the citizen once internal public-sector complaint procedures have failed to produce a satisfactory conclusion. Originating in Scandinavia, ombudsperson functions have proven a popular means of improving citizen access to a receptive hearing within the state, and have been widely replicated, including in forms such as Human Rights Commissions, which are more explicit about citizens' statutory human rights, and rights to a hearing, and carry stronger powers of investigation, search, and prosecution than do most ombudspersons.

## 3 Lessons

### 3.1 Lessons about effectiveness and comparative findings

In this study, data constraints have not permitted a rigorous measurement of ‘effectiveness’. Instead, as is evident from the case studies at [www.ids.ac.uk/ids/govern/citizenvoice/annexcs.html](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/govern/citizenvoice/annexcs.html), we have tried to establish whether the initiative in question succeeded in achieving its own objectives – whether this concerned citizens’ efforts to provoke prompt and appropriate delivery of services, or the efforts of public sector officials to improve the alacrity and probity with which their departments deliver services or respond to citizens’ concerns. Beyond this, for factors influencing effectiveness we look to the conceptual framework discussed earlier: we look at the relative strength of the client group in civil society, the nature of political competition in the country, and the nature and effectiveness of state institutions.

### 3.2 Strength of the client lobby in civil society

Although it is tempting to suggest that socially powerful groups are the most effective at influencing service delivery, socially excluded groups can also be effective when their groups, or the associations they join, have the following characteristics:

- They have a *broad membership*, ideally one which cuts across classes or other social divisions, which demonstrates the social legitimacy and relevance of the concern, and removes the suggestion that it might be special pleading by narrow interest groups;
- They offer clear *incentives to cause citizens to cooperate*;
- They *use the media or other public forums* (for instance the internet, or public hearings) to build up a sense of urgency behind citizens’ concerns, to shame officials by exposing poor practice, or alternatively, to praise them for good performance;
- They combine *protest* (or the threat of protest action) with constructive engagement with officials;
- They engage successfully in challenging policy-makers’ assumptions about the needs and rights of their membership (*cognitive framing*)

Public sector responsiveness initiatives, particularly efforts which require the engagement of citizens as in the joint state-civil society initiatives we reviewed earlier, also benefit when:

- They coincide with a demand from civil society for changes in service quality or delivery.

Each of these factors influencing effectiveness are reviewed below.

#### 3.2.1 Broad membership

Alliances or connections between the poor and social and policy elites can be the key to ensuring that citizen voice initiatives reach the ear of planners. A number of the case studies support this assertion. In India, SPARC (the organisation promoting low-cost services and housing in Mumbai), MKSS (the

organisation running public hearings on corruption in Rajasthan), Lok Satta (the organisation in Andhra Pradesh promoting People's Charters), and RKS (the coalition of NGOs promoting better delivery of subsidised food for the poor in Mumbai) each has social elites in its leadership. The leadership of the Assembly of the Poor in Thailand, which articulates farmers' concerns to the government, is made up of an unusual new generational elite: the urban-based children of peasant farmers. The MKSS has been perhaps the most spectacularly successful at using its elite leadership to draw extremely prominent social workers, politicians, judges, civil servants, and artists to sit on 'juries' at its public hearings – and in the process, give legitimacy and social status to these hearings.

Beyond the leadership, citizens' initiatives that can demonstrate a broad social base in their membership obviously gain strength not just from numbers, but also from being able to refute the familiar claim by officials that their concerns reflect the problems of just one narrow interest group (and therefore do not merit any change in service design or delivery patterns).

### *3.2.2 Incentives to cooperate*

An important obstacle to effective collective action is the fear by individuals that others will not participate so they will be left not just with the burden of work involved in collective action, but with having to bear the risks of challenging authority.<sup>2</sup> Participatory initiatives encouraging citizen voice need to create conditions to ensure that trust emerges and defection is discouraged, and this is done most effectively through finding incentives that cause citizens to cooperate. Participants have to be able to see clear benefits from working collectively – such as anticipated improvements in service delivery, or at the least, anticipated protection which strength of numbers provides in case of a hostile and repressive response from authorities.

### *3.2.3 Media and publicity: naming, shaming, blaming and praising*

Many of the most successful citizen voice initiatives have used the media or other means of public communication to catalyse a response from the public administration. This is done either through exposing poor service delivery or corrupt behaviour by officials, or alternatively by praising and, it is hoped, reinforcing positive service delivery innovations. One group which makes media exposure a key part of its strategy is the Public Affairs Committee in Bangalore, which relies on the press to print its 'Report Cards' on the state of public amenities in low-income neighbourhoods. In the UK, the Community Safety Forum in Brighton helped attract a BBC documentary team to film the work of the police in fighting homophobic attacks. This action endorsed and reinforced the positive police response to their concerns. In Rajasthan, the MKSS has devised the method of holding public hearings to read out

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<sup>2</sup> This problem is addressed in many rational choice models which assess the marginal considerations which enter into a citizen's calculus of action, for instance, Grofman (1992; 1996), and also of course in the work of Elinor Ostrom (1991) who analyses collective action dilemmas over common property use.

details of village government spending patterns as a way of publicly exposing malpractice by local officials.

Public exposure of poor quality services may have little effect on politicians – and none on civil servants – since their position and job security is not necessarily contingent on quality service delivery. However, media campaigns designed to mobilise the passions of voters on these issues, particularly during election periods, can arouse more direct responses, particularly from politicians anxious to extend their stay in office.

### *3.2.4 Protest or the threat of protest*

Officials whose jobs are not linked to client satisfaction, and politicians outside of election periods, may remain indifferent to citizen's concerns, particularly if they are articulated by socially marginalised groups without the resources to launch massive lobbying efforts, or to 'exit' from the system and purchase services from the private sector, or to set up their own alternative models of service delivery. For such groups protest action offers one means of attracting the attention of policy-makers. The effectiveness of protests will depend upon the breadth of the social support network of the group, the type of protest activity, the way it is covered by the media, and the repressiveness of the state. Just a few of the case study examples show the use of protest: The MKSS in Rajasthan, the RKS in Mumbai, and Lok Satta in Andhra Pradesh. Peaceful protests such as *dharnas* (sit-ins in front of official buildings) by the MKSS have attracted national attention because of the wide range of social groups attracted to them. The RKS has staged innovative protests to parody official explanations for non-responsiveness. For instance, its women members and their children flooded the streets of the Mumbai to 'beg' in order to help the Chief Minister subsidise the PDS system. Other groups, such as the Community Safety Forum in Brighton, have used protest petitions. Such activity is designed to demonstrate to policy-makers the strength of numbers and feeling behind the claims and concerns of the civil society group in question.

### *3.2.5 Cognitive framing*

#### **Professional discourses and organisations**

Some citizens' voice initiatives seem to have a greater impact to the degree that complaints and claims are reformulated to fit in with government objectives or 'priority areas' (Sawer and Jupp 1996: 87), and articulated using official terminologies, within the framework of the disciplines and mind-sets animating official institutions. The people responsible for the UK citizen-initiated jury on Genetically Modified foods, IDASA's budget analysis initiatives, PAC's Report Cards, the Vigilance Committees in Bolivia's new arrangements for local government, The Washington Youth Courts – all were at pains to acquire and demonstrate knowledge of the fields involved (biotechnology, economics and public accounts, quantitative research and statistical analysis methods, monitoring and auditing public accounts, magistrates' skills). In each case, this has been rewarded with official acknowledgement (if not necessarily change of practices) of the quality and therefore credibility of the information supplied by citizens, or of the judgements made by citizens about government behaviour.

## Alternative discourses

Often civil society groups are formed on the basis of newly-realised identities and subjectivities, and this leads to a struggle to negotiate and compete for a public sector response to newly-realised needs or rights (for instance the need for public facilities for disabled people) (Fraser 1989). This process involves an act of cognitive-re-framing, where civil society groups attempt to re-define public understandings of the rights and needs of citizens. In such cases, people can find professional and policy languages debilitating, as these often leave no space for new ways of conceptualising rights. They therefore adopt innovative and sometimes unusual ways of articulating and publicising their concerns and prosecuting their claims.

The Community Safety Forum in Brighton, for instance, sought to re-define notions of public safety (and indeed the protections citizens can expect from the police) to include the right of homosexuals to physical security. WEN's breast cancer campaign in the UK was designed to broaden the health sector's understanding of the way this illness is experienced by women. In Newcastle, the Gypsies and Travellers' group sought to convince authorities of their needs as citizens and of their capacity to run their own sites. The MKSS in Rajasthan has made a point of shifting the cognitive framework around the liberal rights associated with citizenship, to demonstrate the great relevance of a right to information about public spending to the survival strategies of the poor.

### *3.2.6 Coordination of public sector responsiveness reforms with a demand from civil society*

Public sector reformers have much to gain from ensuring that their reform efforts are supported by a demanding constituency outside the administration. External pressure of this sort can lend urgency and legitimacy to the efforts of reformers. In the case of the Participatory Wellbeing Assessments in Sutton, UK, participatory events assessing community health problems gave a voice to silenced grumbles from within the health services. The concerns of health visitors about the practices of the local doctors had fallen on deaf ears before. But once community residents' voiced these concerns themselves, and expressed them directly to senior health officials, lower-level staff felt vindicated for having raised these same issues internally.

## **3.3 The political framework: degree and nature of party competition**

The literature on social movements and party systems suggests that groups of the poor are best able to influence state policy in contexts where there are well-institutionalised, ideologically diverse, and numerous parties. This is because political competition encourages parties to seek alliances with new social groups and to promote their interests (Mainwaring 1999; Houtzager 2000). Opportunities may come from moments of systems change, such as changes in government, or even changes in political regime, from authoritarian to democratic politics. In Rajasthan, the MKSS exploited the state-level election campaign of 1999 to ensure that the right to information became a campaign issue, and has since held the newly elected Congress administration to account for its manifesto promise to pass right to information legislation.

Unfortunately very little of the published literature on the citizen initiatives in our case studies explicitly investigates the relationship between the political environment and the effectiveness of voice efforts, and this is one research gap which could be addressed in future. Differences in depth of party institutionalisation is one of the main contrasts which emerges between developed and developing countries in the case studies, with many developing countries having weakly institutionalised parties run on clientalist or personalistic lines. This makes it hard for citizens to demand responsiveness from parties, and instead puts them in the position of demonstrating loyalty to parties in exchange for benefits – unless, that is, parties need to demonstrate responsiveness in order to win votes. This is one important aspect of the role of the Partido dos Trabalhadores in Brazil in promoting citizen engagement in budget planning in the city of Porto Alegre (described in the section on Government frameworks for participatory planning):

### **Parties and participatory budgeting – Brazil**

The Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT: the Workers' Party) takes credit for introducing successful Participatory Municipal Budgeting once they won the mayor's office in Porto Alegre in 1989. But it was a civil society group which first politicised the issue. Avritzer argues that the Union of Residents' Associations of Porto Alegre came up with the idea of a public budgeting process in the mid-1980s (2000: 9), because, according to a statement they made in 1986: 'the most important aspect of the City Hall is the collection of taxes and the definition of where the public money will go. It is based on this that we will have or not the funds with which to attend to the demands of the popular estates and neighbourhoods. This is the reason why we want to intervene directly in the definition of the municipal budget and control its application' (ibid: 9).

From this time, popular participation in budgeting became a political demand of left-wing parties in the area. It is an annual exercise where city residents, in public assemblies and sectoral committees, establish spending priorities for basic capital investments (paved roads, drainage and sewage, school construction) in their own neighbourhoods. Though it is now practised in some degree in 80 of the 500 municipalities of Brazil, it has tended to be most effective where the PT has been in charge of city government, particularly in Porto Alegre since 1988 and in Belo Horizonte since 1992.<sup>3</sup> As successes, advocates point out that participatory budgeting over the 1990s in the two cities has produced much greater equity in the distribution of public funds between rich and poor neighbourhoods (Avritzer 2000: 19).

Ironically, in spite of the importance of the PT in launching this initiative, the process of negotiation over local spending has given non-party citizen's structures greater strength to resist the patronage systems which are particularly dominant in Brazil's party system. In cases of municipal council non-implementation of local projects, what is striking is the extremely low citizen recourse to politicians for help. Instead residents have turned to their regional assemblies or directly to their own delegates on the

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<sup>3</sup> But note that the participatory budgeting process has not been totally hostage to the electoral fortunes of the PT: in Belo Horizonte the process was fully sustained after 1996 even though the city government was captured by the Brazilian Socialist Party.

Participatory Budget Council. This by-passing of traditional political mediators, who use such appeals for help as a means of establishing patronage relationships, suggests a citizen move towards seeing proper public service delivery as being a matter of their rights as citizens, rather than as favours to be obtained through political contacts.

### *3.3.1 Public sector reforms and supportive party politics*

The influence of party politics on the effectiveness of public sector reforms emerges more clearly from the state responsiveness than the citizen initiatives in the case studies. Responsiveness reforms are often pursued independently of reforms to political institutions or reforms that might challenge the character of party competition. But promoting participatory processes in service delivery or in local government deliberations in isolation from efforts to democratise the internal workings of political parties can leave responsiveness efforts still-born. Evidence from the case studies points to this as perhaps the key constraint on the effectiveness of participation and responsiveness initiatives.

In some contexts, resources for services – particularly specialised anti-poverty programmes – are handed by central or state governments to party bosses for distribution as patronage. This is certainly the case in Bolivia (Blackburn 1999; Dove and Moore 1999). As the case study on the Law of Popular Participation in Bolivia shows, such opportunities for civil society groups – to sit on the Vigilance Committee or to develop five year municipal plans in a given area – become ‘prebends’ to be distributed by political parties (elected to the municipal councils) to their clients.

In other contexts, where parties are absolutely unable to cooperate or work in stable coalitions, or where there is a very sharp 50–50 polarisation between just two major power groups, participatory initiatives can be destroyed by party squabbling. Access opportunities can be captured by (or distributed only to) members or clients of the party responsible for the initiative (as in Kerala, where the citizen members of the Expert Committees who review local planning proposals are said to be disproportionately supporters of the dominant party in the state-level ruling coalition). Such practices not only discredit the participatory initiative – they excise any critical content from citizen engagement.

### **3.4 The nature of the state – accessibility of civil servants to citizens, efficiency of accountability institutions**

The degree of institutionalisation of the state, in terms of the efficiency of its bureaucracies and the probity of its accountability institutions, is the main determinant of the effectiveness of responsiveness initiatives. In the context of this report, this statement seems tautological, since so many of the citizen and public sector responsiveness efforts we review are designed precisely to build efficiency and probity, and cannot start from these essential conditions. State capacity, however, is the bottom line in determining attentiveness to citizen voice and client focus in service delivery. Below we list features of citizen’s efforts which can make reasonably competent states more responsive to poorer people, and features of public sector initiatives which can make service providers more attuned to client concerns.



The effectiveness of *consultative efforts* is enhanced when:

- The citizens involved can call upon *technical knowledge* about the service in question and constraints to delivery in order to either evaluate the quality of service, or to propose realistic alternative services or delivery patterns
- *The state actors coordinate surveys or consultation mechanisms with decision-making processes* and with commitments to take action;
- The working conditions of *front-line public sector workers encourage access and communication with clients, and communication of client concerns to policy-formulation processes*;
- *The state invests in time* (lots of it) and (costly) *outreach work*;

The *presence* or representation of client concerns in decision-making is enhanced where:

- Citizens are in alliance with sympathetic and reform-minded civil servants and other ‘insiders’.

Substantive *influence* resulting in changes of policy, or improved accountability to clients results from:

- Incentives to public sector workers for participatory processes, and for results;
- External monitoring systems that can embarrass service-providers in cases of poor performance;
- Linking the income of the agency to effectiveness in delivery;
- Providing clients with statutory rights to particular services (the right to education, the right to employment for the poor) so that clients can litigate in the event of failure to deliver.

### 3.4.1 Consultative efforts

#### Grasp of technical aspects of service delivery

Citizen voice efforts are more effective when informed by an excellent understanding of the obstacles to effective service delivery. This includes developing a sound grasp of technical matters. For instance, the small firms and artisans involved in tendering for public contracts through the Brazilian demand-driven procurement program have kept a hard-headed emphasis on competitive pricing and high quality in order to challenge the dominance of large companies in executing large public contracts. Another example is the MKSS’s work in exposing corruption in public works programmes, which involves a technical understanding of the amounts of materials and labour which would normally be required for a public amenity, whether the public work in question is a culvert, classroom, or canal. Their activists can work backwards from this knowledge to calculate approximately how much ought to have been spent on materials and labour, and then compare this against official accounts.

## Coordinating consultation initiatives with decision-making processes

For the many mechanisms through which public servants can gauge client satisfaction to be more than shallow displays of the interest of the public sector in ‘listening’ to citizens, they must be clearly linked to decision-making processes. As shown in the discussion on consultation-based mechanisms for responsiveness, there is growing citizen irritation with the failure of their consultation exercises to make any obvious impact on policy. Citizens’ juries, for instance, in the US and the UK, though they receive much publicity, have had little impact on public policy. In contrast, they are taken much more seriously in Germany. There, government planning cells commission the Institute for Citizen Participation of the University of Wuppertal to run large juries with more than fifty members. Before the jury is formed, the public authority must agree to take its recommendations into account.

Surveys and referenda are increasingly used, particularly in the North, to inform government decision-making, and should not be dismissed as meaningless gestures, especially in contexts where people have little time for participation. But again, their effectiveness is tied to the way they are used in decision-making. In Uganda a comprehensive Service Delivery Survey which examined the efficiency and responsiveness of health and agriculture services had little effect on responsiveness in these services because of severely limited information processing capacities in the Ministries in question, staff reductions which made it impossible to complete the review process, and no real link between willingness to respond to the results of public consultation and rewards (pay, promotion).

## Engaging front-line workers in policy-making

Front-line workers – nurses, teachers, agricultural extension officers, engineers on public works programmes, police officers – are the public sector workers in the best position to know about the needs and problems of their clients because of their frequent contacts with them. However, these workers are often deeply unresponsive to client concerns because low pay and poor working conditions create incentives to limit client demands and deny them access to state services. Incentives are needed that directly reward front-line workers for service delivery practices that exhibit sensitivity to client needs and greater receptivity to and respect for their views, and for becoming advocates for their interests within the bureaucracy. The strongest example of this among the case studies is the health agent program in Ceara state, Brazil. Here, mostly non-material incentives were used to generate remarkably positive relations between community health workers and their clients. The public prestige of the job was built up through publicity about the purely merit-based recruitment system and rewards for hard work. A strong *esprit de corps* was created through introducing a quasi-uniform for staff, which made them easily identifiable in public, and through training. Staff were encouraged to develop services in relation to client needs, which produced very high job satisfaction.

As the staff with the most up-to-date information about client needs, and about the environments in which clients live, the engagement of front-line workers in policy-making and organisational learning is critical for the production of realistic and responsive service design and delivery. The most powerful example of this comes from the Joint Forestry Management case in West Bengal (India), where front-line

workers were responsible not so much for changing policy designed to increase the participation of communities in forest protection, as for obliging higher level officials to ensure that it was implemented to the letter. This was because of their interest in fostering much more productive and safe relations with villagers to make their own working conditions more bearable.

### **Time and outreach**

A common lesson running through the cases of responsiveness initiatives is that the attitudinal and cultural changes required on the part of both service providers and users to trigger a participatory process and results-based service requires enormous amounts of time and costly and continuous outreach work on the part of authorities and facilitators. In the US Empowerment Zones, successful initiatives were those that invested heavily in staff whose primary function was to manage citizen contacts. State-citizen participation structures cannot be commanded into existence by law – they tend to evolve gradually. Thus the many innovative arrangements legislated into existence through the Local Government Acts in Kerala, Rajasthan, or Madhya Pradesh, or in Brazil and Bolivia, will take considerable time to become effective. And in many cases, it is traditional policy-makers who will have to initiate efforts to use these provisions to, for instance, demand information from local authorities about how development funds have been spent, or about the basis upon which people have been identified as recipients for poverty-relief resources.

### ***3.4.2 Presence of clients in policy-making***

#### **Alliances with policy elites**

Connections with sympathetic bureaucrats are key to enhancing the leverage of the poor in policy-making circles. The MKSS in Rajasthan would not have been able to hold its first public hearings without the information on public accounts leaked to its workers by sympathetic local government officials. In the US, Citizen Learning teams, as part of Empowerment Zones, often worked best in monitoring local government implementation of community revitalisation work where they encountered supportive political leadership. In Senegal, ENDA has succeeded in disseminating its innovations in low-income sanitation technology through its connections with officials in the national sanitation office.

Sometimes these ‘insiders’, who are also champions of reform, can act as proxy representatives for citizens. But they are much more effective when they engineer opportunities for civil society groups to gain regular access to and a formally recognised presence within the service bureaucracy. This was the key, for a short period, to the success of the CSO coalition in Mumbai (the RKS) in participating in improving accountability in the Public Distribution System (described in the section on Citizen Monitoring and Evaluation):

### **Formalising a presence in the administration for a CSO coalition**

The Rationing Kruti Samiti was most successful and catalysing improved delivery of subsidised food for the poor in Mumbai in an 18 month period between 1992 and 1994 when an unusually reform-minded civil servant, Mr. Salvi, was appointed regional Controller of Rationing. He accepted the representative nature of the RKS, to the extent of giving their informal ration-shop-based Vigilance Committees semi-official recognition. This meant a right to access information about PDS deliveries. He set up monthly meetings between the RKS and city officials involved in the PDS. The RKS used these meetings as a means of informing officials about malpractices in the system, and to push, successfully, for changes to simplify procedures at the shop level, to introduce new products to the system, and to institute new measures to ensure product quality at the consumer level.

The RKSs's success at this time owes to a great extent to factors beyond its influence: to the fact that its actions coincided with a political crisis – the need for the city to be seen to be responding to the poor after the 1992 riots – and with the efforts of a champion of reform within the administration. Mr. Salvi was able to use the RKS's activities to support reforms he was anxious to promote in this notoriously run-down and under-resourced government service. The formal recognition of the RKS and of their concerns about transparency, efficiency, and probity in the delivery and sale of subsidised commodities was used to support his own efforts to improve working conditions for PDS staff, to introduce more effective monitoring systems, and to build a commitment to service delivery. The next logical step would have been to institutionalise a role for the RKS's Vigilance Committees in providing assessments of quality performance. However, momentum towards this was dramatically arrested when Mr. Salvi received a punishment transfer for his pains. He had unacceptably challenged the functioning of vast chains of patronage within the PDS and between it and politicians.

### *3.4.3 Influence and more direct accountability*

#### **Incentives for participatory processes, and for results**

Responsiveness reforms focus attention in two directions which are new for rule-bound civil services: participatory processes involving service users in shaping policy and delivery, and positive results which respond to the needs of users. Focusing on participatory processes and on results involves a very significant shift in bureaucratic authority, management, and accountability systems. Some of the responsiveness initiatives reviewed above fail to provide incentives for encouraging participation. In the American Urban Empowerment Zones, for instance, where participation was an important part of the public rhetoric of the program, the benchmarks of success on which program managers were required to report to Washington failed to include a single indicator of success in fostering participation (Gaventa, Creed and Morrissey 1998).

Concern with results, and with participatory processes, means that accountability systems in public services need to be altered to reward or punish performance in these two areas. Our strongest cases of this are the two Brazilian programmes – in community health and public-sector procurement. In both cases, non-material incentives were provided for efforts to engender better client participation in determining the nature, quality and cost of services, and for producing results that satisfied clients. Excellent results

became a material reward in the public procurement case, where the procurement agency's income was linked to commissions on the contracts of the small businesses it had assisted in winning contracts.

### **External and local monitoring systems**

New Public Management reforms are associated with the creation of increasing numbers of independent regulatory and scrutiny bodies. Such regulatory bodies rarely include as members representatives of the people most directly affected by poor services, or where they do, they may fail to put mechanisms in place to ensure that these representatives are democratically selected and are drawn from the poorest or most vulnerable user groups.

Involving service users from the grassroots in monitoring bodies can provide for closer formal scrutiny of service quality. External monitoring systems involving locals are even more effective if equipped with powers to investigate, demand and secure information, and even press charges where necessary. The Vigilance Committees in Bolivian local government are a good example of this. They are composed of representatives of Community-Based Organizations and have the powers to request a Central government investigation and prosecution of local councils where they deem corruption to be occurring. The Citizen Learning Teams of the US Urban Empowerment Zones who monitor local government implementation of community revitalisation plans likewise represent an effective approach to external monitoring, though they tend to work best where given access and information by a supportive political leadership.

### **Linking income to performance**

An on-going debate in development work remains divided on the utility of user fees in provoking more responsive performance in service providers (or in provoking greater citizen interest in seeing better quality performance). Two of the case studies do suggest that the generation of income from clients encourages service providers to improve their response to clients' needs in terms of making themselves available to clients, showing that they are listening to and learning from client complaints, and improving service to fit client needs. In the National Irrigation Administration program in the Philippines, user fees and a contractual relationship between farmers' associations and the NIA are said to have triggered a tighter focus on client needs. But it has been argued that other changes such as the occasional transformation of farmers into trainers for front-line workers, and the rejection of standard blueprints for delivery, are responsible for producing more responsive behaviour on the part of front-line workers.

A stronger example comes from the demand-driven public procurement program in Brazil, where an important part of the operating costs of the Small Enterprise Assistance Service came from a five per cent levy on the contracts won by the small firms they helped to tender for public works. It was in this agency's direct interests to improve the quality and reliability of the products of small firms, and in effect, this government body became a direct advocate for its clients, the small firms.

## Statutory rights for clients

A striking feature of most responsiveness initiatives is the almost universal absence of measures to enable citizens to hold service agencies directly accountable for poor services. Such measures – such as the provision of full rights to information and rights to sue, or else statutory rights to the service in question (education, employment, health care) – imply a more radical vision of democratic public sector management than many states can entertain. The provision of such rights reverses the political-administrative control system from one in which the state controls society on the basis of a democratic mandate from the people, to one in which society controls the state more directly through legal accountability mechanisms.

There is evidence that citizen command of rights to information and litigation has the effect of empowering citizens in relation to providers, and in some cases, of triggering a public sector response. In the case of the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee program, statutory rights to employment and to unemployment benefits give poor people the grounds to challenge collectively any failure on the part of local authorities to create jobs. There have been a number of successful Public Interest Litigation cases which have secured government admissions of responsibility, though none yet have secured actual payouts of lost wages. The Government of India has recently (August 2000) made education a statutory right. This may yield some fruitful citizen monitoring and litigating efforts, particularly where universal access to education has been further supported by such schemes as the new Madhya Pradesh Education Guarantee Scheme.

States have been more willing to grant citizens statutory rights in relation to the *private* sector. And here there is some very strong evidence of success. A study that examined the effect on environmental regulation of the state-sponsored right-to-know and right-to-sue provisions in the US found that such rights are highly effective in holding industrial polluters to account. The study found that efforts to engage citizens in environmental regulation through the more conventional means of consultation, public hearings, and so on, tended to be cosmetic measures. But states that armed citizens with the right-to-sue polluting industries, and with state-funded right-to-know programmes providing information on toxic emissions, had lower rates of toxic emissions over time (Grant 1997).

The ‘supply’ of new rights which can help citizens hold the state to account is most effective when it meets (and indeed is usually triggered by) a strong civil society demand. This has been the case in the institutionalisation of a right to information and the people’s audit method in new local government provisions in Rajasthan (MKSS case, discussed in the section on Auditing):

### **Creating demand for the supply of new rights**

A Rajasthani experiment in public audits of spending on local development works, the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS – literally the Workers and Farmers’ Power Association) has demonstrated the importance of a right to information for citizen efforts to hold local government to account for its spending decisions in anti-poverty programmes. The MKSS’s dramatic but infrequent public hearings (*jan sunwai*) are a collective method for reviewing local government accounts and determining whether money was spent on the development work as declared in the accounts. Meticulous research is conducted beforehand to procure government expenditure accounts, including receipts, employment-wage registers, and invoices (where available either on direct request or with the help of sympathetic public officials) and to compare stated expenditure with evidence of actual spending.

At the public hearings villagers are asked to give testimony which highlights discrepancies between the official record and their own experiences and observations. Though effective in exposing corruption, and in, sometimes, provoking a return of stolen moneys, the greatest constraints to date to the public hearing audit method have been first, the absence of a statutory right to information about local government spending, and second, the lack of mandatory legal outcomes to ensure that cases of corruption or malfeasance are acted upon by the police, courts, and administration. Over the 1990s, the MKSS and its supporters in other social movements launched high-profile public protests to demand the right to information about government accounts. Sustained pressure, and the opportunities created by the inauguration of a sympathetic Congress state administration in 1999, resulted in the passing of a state-level Right to Information Act in the Rajasthan state assembly in May 2000.

Parallel to its efforts to promote a right to information, the MKSS has campaigned for, and won in the spring of 2000, an amendment to the state’s local government law which creates mandatory legal procedures for the investigation of corruption and institutionalises the public hearing audit method at the village assembly (*Gram Sabha*) level. The new Act legally empowers village assemblies to conduct audits of the development activities initiated by their local elected councillors. In the event of mis-use of funds, or poor decision-making, the higher-level District officials, such as the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO), are legally obliged to register any cases brought by the *Gram Sabah*, and constitute an enquiry committee, and eventually report back to the *Gram Sabah* (Mander 2000: 27). The high degree of social awareness of the MKSS’s makes it more likely that these provisions will actually be used by citizens. Similar provisions in local government in Madhya Pradesh have never been used for want of a social movement creating a ‘demand’ for them.

### **3.5 Summary – the key conditions for effective voice**

The review of efforts which move from translating citizens’ access (consultation) and presence in policy making into real influence over service delivery (influence measured as changes in policy, improved quality or better targeted services) suggests that several key conditions need to be met to some degree in any state, citizen, or joint initiatives to improve responsiveness. These are, in theory:

- 1 legal standing or formal recognition for non-governmental observers within policy-making arenas or the institutions of public sector oversight which scrutinise quality in service delivery;
- 2 a continuous presence for these observers throughout the process of the agency’s work;
- 3 structured access to the flow of official documentary information; and either

- 4 the right of observers to issue dissenting report directly to legislative bodies, or
- 5 the right of service users to demand a formal investigation and/or seek legal redress for poor or non-delivery of services.<sup>4</sup>

As is clear from the case studies, very few efforts to improve state responsiveness or bring citizens' voices into policy-making respond to all of these conditions, but some do, and the extent to which they do helps to determine their success in producing more appropriate and better delivered services.

### ***3.6 Variations in voice and responsiveness by sector and service***

This section examines whether the characteristics of the service in question influences the way citizens organise and articulate voice, and the shape and impact of public sector responsiveness reforms. Table 4 categorises the case studies by sectors and services. It shows that while about half the cases address particular services and sectors, many of the others are oriented to process reforms across a range of public services, or else to promoting participation in local government deliberative processes. If we focus on key traditional services such as health, education, policing, housing, water supply and sanitation, and poverty reduction programmes, a range of service characteristics appear to shape the scope for expressions of citizen voice, or alternatively, the nature of public sector responsiveness efforts. Table 5 summarises these differences in two sections, looking first at service characteristics, and second at client characteristics:

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<sup>4</sup> These five points are discussed in Goetz and Jenkins (2001).



**Table 4 Voice and responsiveness initiatives by service or sector**

<b>Health</b>	<b>Education/ public information</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Urban planning/ Infrastructure/ Housing/ services</b>	<b>Policing/Crime</b>	<b>Rural/Enviro. Agricultural/Nat. resource management</b>	<b>Multiple social sectors (i.e. health, education, social welfare)</b>	<b>Crossing all sectors</b>	
Health Agent Program, Ceara, Brazil	Citizen Education, Zambia	Participatory Public Procurement, Brazil	People's Planning Campaign, Kerala, India	Washington Youth Court, US	Assembly of the Poor, Thailand	Children's Budget Initiative, South Africa	People's Charter, Lok Satta, India	Coordinadora Civil, Nicaragua
Participatory Wellbeing Needs Assessment, UK	Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS), India	Employment Guarantee Scheme, India	Low-cost housing for low income urban commune. (SPARC) India	Neighborhood Watch, San Diego	Participatory Irrigation, Philippines	New Deal for Communities, UK	Women's Budgeting, South Africa	Participatory Municipal Budgeting Analysis, Brazil
Putting Breast Cancer on the Map, UK	Panchayat Waves community radio, Karnataka, India	Rural Empowerment Zones, US	Community Based Housing Organisations, UK	Community Safety Forum, Brighton, UK	Forest Protection Committee, West Bengal, India	Citizens Juries – Women's Unit, UK	Nicaraguan Community Movement	Law of Popular Participation, Bolivia
Brightonrocks Participatory Theatre, UK	School League Tables, UK		Consultation re Urban Design and Development, Brighton, UK		Citizens jury on GM foods, UK	Encounters with bureaucrats and villagers, Janmabhoomi, India	Community Visioning, Bristol, UK	Local Governance Code, Philippines
Participatory Needs Assessment with Minorities, Stonebridge, UK	Project Votesmart, Oregon, US		Appreciative Inquiry, Housing, Dubuque, USA		Watershed Management, India	Users in Policymaking, Denmark	Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA)	Best Value, UK
Health Insurance Scheme, Bwamanda, Zaire			URBAN Regeneration Partnership, Dublin		Social Audit of Local Agenda 21, Sutton, UK	Law of Popular Participation, Bolivia	UK Government People's Panel	Stirling Assembly, UK
Healthcare Rationing, Canada and US			Report Cards, India		Training for behaviour change, RIPS, Tanzania		One-stop shops, UK	New Technology for public access, NHS Direct, UK
			Rationing Kruti Samiti, Mumbai India		Performance of Health and Agricultural Services, Uganda		New Public Management, Ghana	Citizens Charters, UK
			ENDA Sanitation Scheme, Senegal		Nation-wide coalition of fisherfolk, NACFAR, Philippines		Support for Admin. Reform in Transition (SMART), Romania	Ombudsperson, UK
							Public hearings MKSS, India	Budget Balancing Exercise, Oregon, US

**Table 5 Impact of service characteristics**

Service characteristics	Impact of service characteristics on:	
	Citizen voice	Public sector responsiveness
<b>Technically complex</b> (tertiary level health and education, urban water supply, high-level infrastructural or macro-economic coordination)	Knowledge barriers can undermine citizen engagement unless they equip themselves with substantial technical skill – and then only to provide alternative design and delivery suggestions, not to engage directly in service planning.	Where experts are the powerful core producers in a service and resist change, responsiveness initiatives are constrained – for instance, consultants in hospitals resist efforts to engage with client groups.
<b>Low-tech</b> (primary education, community health, rural public works)	Can be easier for citizens to engage, or to provide alternative services.	Potential for co-production of services (particularly in preventative health care) is more obvious to officials.
<b>Cost of services to the client</b> (user fees)	Can trigger greater client interest in seeing fees spent on service improvements.	If fees are used to supplement the income of the service provider, clear incentives for greater responsiveness, but only where the entire sector has the capacity to provide the necessary back-up in terms of infrastructure, equipment supply, etc.
<b>Cost of service disruption to client</b> (electricity cuts, water supply cuts, no rubbish collection, versus lack of road maintenance, temporary school closures)	Ruptures to or poor quality in services upon which people rely every day of the year will trigger a more immediate collective action response than will poor quality services which can be endured for some time – such as potholed roads.	Likely to be more alacrity in responding to client complaints where poor service produces complete breakdown in productive and domestic life.
<b>Strong private market for the service</b> (housing)	Exit by better-off users, weakening the collective voice of worse-off users.	Either: poor responsiveness in management of the rump of the service left for weaker citizens,  Or: more creativity in finding state-sector niche in competitive service market.
<b>Service consumed by individuals</b> (housing versus environmental health regulation)	Where services deliver an individual rather than collective good, better-off users tend to form exclusive lobbies and promote co-production or privatisation.	Responsiveness to vocal individual users.
<b>Face-to-face delivery</b> (schools, health clinics, rubbish collection, one-stop-shops).	Citizens able to detect problems in service quality more quickly – though not necessarily more able to complain about this directly.	Can be a stronger in-built user orientation in interactions with clients.
<b>Detached delivery, regulatory services</b> (environmental health regulation, macro-economic planning)	Citizens tend to organise once alerted of problems in these areas because of serious crises. Access to these areas particularly difficult, for technical reasons, but also because of physical distance and bureaucratic access barriers, including official secrecy.	Responsiveness is oriented to interactions with institutionalised lobbies (e.g.: labour and business in corporate systems).

Client characteristics	Impact of relationship between users and providers on	
	Citizen voice	Public sector responsiveness
<b>Long-term client relationships</b> (school – parent; urban water supplier – domestic client)	Sustained contact with providers (or extended clientship of a service) can build collective identity and engagement – most obvious in parents’ engagement in school management.	Sustained contact with users produces either greater responsiveness and knowledge about users’ needs, or greater indifference, depending upon the social status of clients (long-term welfare recipients versus middle-class school pupils’ parents).
<b>Short-term or one-off client relationships</b> (hospital – emergency patient; transport services – irregular traveller)	Citizens can have a low stake in, and little incentive for, collective action to repair services which they rarely use or do not imagine they might use (e.g.: highly specialised surgery).	User orientation hard to establish where clients change frequently and do not follow up complaints or concerns with collective action.
<b>Physically dispersed clients</b> (road users)	Difficult to coordinate collective action	Particularly challenging to identify credible representatives of user groups to which the public sector can demonstrate responsiveness
<b>Physically concentrated clients</b> (urban domestic rubbish collection, parents of school children)	Clear incentives to collective action (economies of benefit from better services in a particular area).	Obvious client groups towards which to address responsiveness efforts.
<b>Client social status</b> (race, age, class, caste, gender)	Though middle class urban users, physically concentrated in one area, tend to be effective at voicing their concerns, this is not an automatic predictor of the richness of social capital or of willingness to act collectively to voice complaints.	User orientation tends to be stronger where clients have high social status.

Table 5 sets out characteristics of different public services which affect the capacity of clients to engage with service providers, and also the openness of service providers to client involvement in improving service quality. For instance, schools, with their monoprofessional culture, long-term and face-to-face client relationships and low level of technology, tend to be more open to client involvement in management than are hospitals, with their mix of professional staff, powerful consultants, high technology, and short-term, irregular, and unsustained interactions with patients. Of course, client social status trumps all these considerations. So, in anti-poverty programmes, which tend to be low-tech, administered through face-to-face interactions and which can involve sustained relationships with clients, contempt towards low-status clients can breed over-familiarity with the resources which are supposed to be delivered to them.

Regular user fees which are the main source of operating income for a provider, combined with user engagement in determining service quality, likewise can improve provider responsiveness and accountability. One study in Uganda found a stark contrast between the financial accountability and record-keeping of primary schools and health clinics. This was because the high level of parental financial contributions, through Parent-Teacher Associations, to school operating costs (paying as much as 73 per cent of school costs in 1991 and 60 per cent in 1995) meant heightened parental scrutiny of quality of teaching and school management (Ablo and Reinikka 1998).

Other features of services can trigger client engagement and public response. For instance, if the cost of service disruption is high and if the clientele of a service is physically concentrated, such as urban residents reacting to a water supply cut or a rubbish collection failure, citizen response can be swift because of the urgency created by the visible and unpleasant consequences of service rupture. A catastrophe or breakdown of service provision may make a service provider more open to citizens' suggestions or more willing to go into partnership with citizens to restore efficient delivery. In Mumbai in 1992, communal riots not only catalysed the formation of a users' group, Rationing Kruit Samiti (Action Committee on Rationing), to improve the delivery of subsidised food to low-income communities, but also made the city's politicians and administrators more willing to encourage the bureaucrats of the Food and Civil Supplies Department to collaborate with the RKS to clean up the management of the Public Distribution System.

On the other hand, where clients are dispersed over large distances – as is the case with road users – it can be much harder for them to coalesce into citizens' associations demanding better road maintenance or monitoring road quality. And 'interruptions' of service delivery in road maintenance can have a less immediate impact than interrupting essential urban services. Deteriorating roads can be endured for much longer than water cuts, as pot-holed roads are still useable (up to a point) for transport and travel.

Differences in the type of bureaucracy (a central agency involved in coordination of macro-economic work versus a line department) and the level of staff addressed through an initiative (permanent heads and senior civil servants versus the street-level staff) will also determine the extent to which a particular responsiveness strategy will be feasible, let alone effective. The level of government at which a responsiveness initiative is attempted – national, local, or some intermediate level – may determine the types of citizens affected by the initiative, and its geographical reach. For instance, in large social development or anti-poverty programs, the extent to which citizens can engage in planning and auditing spending can vary according to how these are administered. In some contexts, the management of many such programmes is devolved to the local level, and hence the nature of decentralised government will determine whether people can engage in setting local priorities for such programmes. In India the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), a national employment-creation scheme for the poor in periods of livelihood stress, is managed at District levels, but village governments have the power to identify the need for such schemes and must provide completion certificates verifying that the work has been accomplished and the workers paid. This can give locals a chance to scrutinise and influence program delivery.

In other contexts, parts of these national programs will be contracted out to private operators for implementation, which creates a new set of constraints and opportunities for clients to demand better services. For example, the food rationing system in India relies on private shops as outlets for its subsidised commodities. Though private shop keepers must follow official guidelines on pricing and distribution, they constitute a much more dispersed and fragmented service supplier than does a public operator, and hence are much harder to monitor and control.

## **4 Conclusion**

### **4.1 Implications for donors**

The number of successful cases of citizen, state, or joint efforts to improve the relationship between service users and providers show that engagement between the state and civil society does not have to be confrontational to generate a response from service providers, and can be productive for both parties. What practical conclusions can be drawn from these initiatives? Can donors treat any of the successful cases of citizen voice or public sector responsiveness initiatives as ‘models’ for replication elsewhere? Do our findings on the variations across service sectors in their openness to citizen engagement or official accountability improvements suggest priority sectors or levels of service delivery in which to invest? What are the most promising institutional contexts for improving dialogue between citizens’ groups and the state? What should donors do when facing a state that is completely unwilling to entertain more citizen engagement or to reform its own accountability relationships with service users? We begin with this last question.

### **4.2 Establishing the pre-conditions for state-civil society dialogue: unwilling states and/or weak civil societies**

A hostile state is the greatest constraint to donor efforts to build citizen capacity to make claims on service providers, or to deepen responsiveness initiatives. States which are not democratic, which have corrupt and inefficient bureaucracies, and which are dominated by patronage networks, will not respond positively to concerns with strengthening accountability institutions and improving the responsiveness of service providers to clients.

Preparatory work to build the conditions for responsiveness and accountability will be needed in such contexts, and this may take some time. For instance, such states could be encouraged (or aid conditionality could be used) to reform legal and regulatory frameworks, as well as the systems for implementing them, which give citizens more effective rights to make claims upon the state. Accountability institutions, such as auditing offices, the judiciary, systems of recruitment and advance in the administration, and oversight committees in the legislature, can be strengthened through capacity-building programmes. In the case of deeply repressive authoritarian states, it may be that the most effective external support is that directed to supporting dissident civil society groups – as was the case in the 1980s with external support for anti-apartheid groups both within and outside of South Africa.

Where civil society is weak, or where responsiveness reforms are initiated from above, and not triggered by client demands, progressive measures to empower citizens to voice their concerns about service quality or official impropriety may not work. In Madhya Pradesh, for instance, local government provisions guaranteeing investigations of corruption charges made by the village assembly have remained reforms on paper, as citizens are insufficiently informed and organised to use them. Worse, where ordinary citizens are not able to take advantage of important new opportunities to engage with policy-makers (because of low literacy, lack of awareness, insufficient mobilisation), such opportunities will be

hijacked by elites. In such cases, reformers may more usefully direct their energies to establishing the preconditions for citizens (especially poor or marginalised people) to articulate their concerns and to make claims. This can be done through supporting strategies for awareness raising, information generation, and capacity-building in civil society groups. They must also pay attention to the incentives for citizens to engage in new participatory opportunities. Too often, new arrangements for consultation and dialogue with policy-makers represent a time drain on citizens, and there is little concrete evidence about what citizens might gain from engaging in such processes.

### **4.3 Building on the strengths of successful initiatives: key elements of effective citizen voice and state response**

Part 3 of this report has elaborated key conditions for effectiveness from successful citizen voice and state responsiveness initiatives, most of which are suggestive of areas for donor support. Table 6 summarises these findings and the implications for donor strategies.

**Table 6 Strategies to support citizen voice initiatives**

<b>Conditions for effective citizen voice initiatives</b>	<b>Implications for donor support</b>
<b>Broad membership base and alliances with middle class and elite groups</b> (strength of numbers, avoidance of charges of being a 'narrow' interest group, social protection provided by elites)	Foster encounters between different classes of service users. Develop awareness of shared interests across class or localities in better-quality services to discourage elite drop-out. Focus attention on building accountability mechanisms from which all classes of users can benefit (i.e. anti-corruption measures, right to information measures, etc).
<b>Technical knowledge</b> (Sound grasp of technical aspects of service design, financing, and supply – enables constructive engagement on matters of service improvement, or ability to detect malpractice in delivery patterns)	Training civil society users' committees or advocacy groups in techniques for assessing service quality – i.e., how to judge the quality of social services. Introduction of new technologies/methods for monitoring service quality – such as the sealed transparent samples of subsidised commodities in India's Public Distribution System (RKS example). Support for citizen specialists advising such groups -- such as civil engineers, medical professionals, etc. Training for citizens in budget analysis.
<b>Knowledge of official policy discourses and of effective alternative discourses</b> (framing claims and demands in terms which fit with government objectives)	Training citizens in awareness of the policy cycle, in the data systems used by officials, in modes of presentation which officials find accessible. Introduction of new, more direct forms of presenting information – such as participatory poverty analysis.
<b>Publicity</b> (using the media for naming, shaming, blaming, praising)	Support to independent media efforts to expose poor quality service delivery, or poor functioning of accountability institutions.
<b>Autonomy</b> (Credibility of some citizen initiatives depends on demonstrating independence from state funding, even donor funding, and distance from patronage systems and political party influence)	Support for internal capacity-building efforts of civil society groups – capacity to generate operating funds, develop a paid-up membership base, and provide members with an alternative to reliance on patronage networks. However, <i>in some cases, this means donor non-involvement</i> , as donor engagement may undermine the legitimacy and credibility of some groups in the eyes of their members and of the state.
<b>Time (lots of it) and scale (starting small)</b> (the 'success stories' here have taken time to build and have increased in scale over very many years)	Avoid putting pressure on citizens' groups to increase in scale too rapidly.

<p><b>Social capital</b> ( the 'success stories' are rooted in social movements and organisations which have built trust and mutual support amongst members)</p>	<p>Assess the local context – is there awareness of and interest in new accountability mechanisms? What kinds and levels of social mobilisation exist? Do not assume that accountability initiatives can be treated as mechanisms to be 'transplanted' in new contexts without considerable groundwork in building social and organisational support. This is especially true for any 'voice' initiatives which involve confrontations with authorities – such as auditing local spending.</p>
<p><b>'Horizontal slice' strategies</b> (coordination of the expression of voice by civil society with decision-making occasions or else accountability reforms in the counterpart public sector agency)</p>	<p>Where forums or processes are created for citizen-state dialogue or consultation, these should be linked to planned decision-making moments. Alternatively, they can be linked to accountability and efficiency changes in the public sector agency involved (e.g.: the Participatory Poverty Assessment process in Uganda coincided with planning for poverty reduction in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, and general efficiency/responsiveness reforms there.)</p>
<p><b>Formal standing and a regular presence for citizens' groups in service quality oversight agencies</b> (a formal presence in policy-making arenas or institutions of public sector oversight to scrutinise quality of services, and a continuous presence for these civil society observers in the agency's work improves the flow and quality of dialogue, and endows the citizen participants with more legitimacy and potential influence)</p>	<p>Establish forums for civil society/state dialogue on policy-making or accountability where civil society groups would have formal standing and where there would be structured, regular encounters between citizens and state officials. For the citizens' groups to be seen as legitimate by officials, mechanisms need to be in place to demonstrate the representativeness and credibility of citizens' groups – e.g.: transparency about membership and funding base, etc.</p>
<p><b>Statutory rights to know and rights to redress</b> (citizens are most effective at encouraging high quality service delivery where they have full information about budgets, policy choices, regulations, delivery mechanisms, etc, and where they can litigate in the event of poor quality service delivery)</p>	<p>Support the development of right to information legislation, and support efforts to popularise the use of such legislation by ordinary people. Support the establishment of complaints procedures in service agencies, and clear rules on redress measures. Identify areas of public service provision where citizens might litigate effectively in the event of poor quality delivery.</p>

**Table 7 Strategies to support state responsiveness initiatives**

<b>Conditions for effective state responsiveness initiatives</b>	<b>Implications for donor support</b>
<p><b>Internal champions/reform entrepreneurs</b> (high-level advocates of better client focus and responsiveness in public services are essential for the success of responsiveness measures)</p>	<p>Identify and support champions through special training, awards, leadership programmes, etc. Create incentives and opportunities for contacts between insider champions and external civil society actors working for the same goals.</p>
<p><b>External pressure</b> (mobilised constituencies demanding change in service quality can support client focus reforms in public service agencies)</p>	<p>Identify civil society critics, constituencies of service users, media groups etc, which can raise awareness of problems in service delivery and support reform efforts.</p>
<p><b>'Vertical slice' strategies</b> (reforms at the top of public service agencies must be mirrored by changes at all levels of the agency, and ideally, by parallel changes in other parts of the public service)</p>	<p>Coordinate reform measures at different levels of the same bureaucracy.</p>
<p><b>Incentive systems rewarding participatory processes and client focus</b> (reporting, monitoring, and accountability systems in public service agencies should reward performance which produces satisfied clients, and which increases client participation in determining the nature, quality, and cost of services)</p>	<p>Review incentive systems. Introduce results- and client-focus into performance assessment procedures. Ensure, where appropriate, that indicators of participation are included in the list of desirable results.</p>

<p><b>Involvement of front-line workers in policy-making and planning service delivery</b> (as the providers in closest contact with clients, front-line workers are in the best position to improve client experiences of public service delivery, and also to channel information about client needs back to the policy-making level)</p>	<p>Review and improve conditions for front-line workers – including levels of pay and benefits, working conditions. Build an <i>esprit de corps</i> which centres on changing the image of the public service agency as an efficient and responsive organisation.</p>
<p><b>External and local monitoring systems</b> (service users from the grassroots are able to bring important local knowledge to monitoring and regulatory processes)</p>	<p>Involve local-level service recipients in the work of regulatory or monitoring agencies. Form service user groups and equip them with powers to demand and secure information about service funding and delivery patterns.</p>
<p><b>Linking agency income to performance</b> (in some cases, user fees which directly cover operating costs and bonuses for service staff can trigger better client focus)</p>	<p>Investigate capacity of clients to pay for services, and examine how far the fees can not only cover operating costs but contribute to salary bonuses for staff. Link fee payment by clients to rights to participate in oversight committees (such as Parent-Teacher Associations in primary schools).</p>
<p><b>Investment in attitudinal change</b> (if linked to changes in accountability systems or performance measurement, training in attitude and behavioural change can produce greater responsiveness)</p>	<p>Link training of public servants in awareness of client problems, in participatory techniques, etc, to changes in performance assessments which value results, client focus, and responsive behaviour.</p>

**4.4 Variations in voice and client focus by sector and level of service**

In Table 5 (section 3.6 of this report) we suggested that variations in the capacity of clients to express voice, or in the willingness of providers to develop better client focus, varied by sector and level of service. These variations can be explained by a range of factors, including service characteristics, such as the complexity of the technology involved in the service, the remoteness, geographical, social and educational, of providers, the extent to which the service is a shared common good or an individually consumable product, the social and environmental consequences of dramatic service break-down, and so on. Variations in voice and client focus were also explained by client characteristics – the social status of clients, their geographic concentration, and whether they have a sustained or one-off relationship with providers.

These observations have implications for the ways in which donors can support voice or client focus initiatives. Types of service and the ways they are delivered can be assessed using Table 5 as a guide, and a judgement can then be made about the appropriate institutional arena at which to focus. For instance, where there is clear demand for and interest in participation by users in determining service quality – as in parents’ interest in school operations – there will be more mileage to be had in strengthening the powers of monitoring and service quality analysis among users groups. But where users interact infrequently and reluctantly with providers – as in secondary and tertiary-level health services, police and security services, or perhaps even in relation to local government – donors might better focus their actions on building responsiveness and client focus in service providers. This could be done through improving internal accountability mechanisms, designing performance assessment systems which reward client focus,



building a stronger sense of agency purpose and identity, and investing in attitudinal and behavioural change, particularly when this is linked to changes in incentive systems.

#### **4.5 Limits to participation**

Two important caveats are in order: *First: not all services and issues are amenable to direct citizen engagement and participation.* Although citizen participation in service design, delivery, and monitoring promises the benefits of improved information flows about client needs, greater transparency, and in the end, better accountability, there are some services where direct citizen engagement is either not desirable or possible. Other concerns, such as efficiency, privacy, and confidentiality, can limit the scope for citizen engagement (though the need for ‘privacy and confidentiality’ is often exaggerated in order to keep citizens at bay, and so must be examined critically). Donors need not infer from this, however, that services in which citizen voice is necessarily remote are not worthy of support.

Second, *citizen participation is not always desired by citizens, or necessarily desirable.* Citizen efforts to improve state accountability to service users are not more democratic, more appropriately designed, or more effective than public sector responsiveness initiatives simply by virtue of the fact that they come from civil society. Civil society groups which act as brokers for the poor may lack a democratic mandate, and often suffer from their own accountability deficits. They are also often geographically confined, limited in the range of interests they can broker, and hence cannot have the same nation-wide impact as a public sector effort can. Finally, citizens’ interest in and capacity for participation is necessarily limited by time, interest, and their work and social commitments. It must not be assumed that citizens prize direct participation over the notion of improved responsibility and trusteeship amongst public service providers – a trusteeship which enables citizens to withdraw from everyday participation and leave the monitoring of service quality to professionals.

#### **4.6 The relationship between politics, voice and responsiveness**

Many participation and responsiveness initiatives are launched with scant consideration of their relationship to other institutions and processes for articulating voice or engineering state response – namely, political parties and political competition. The research in this report indicates that political competition strongly influences the way citizen concerns are articulated and the way public agencies respond (see Section 3.3). However, the relationship between political competition, the nature of voice initiatives, and the success chances of responsiveness initiatives, is still poorly understood, and more research is needed in this area. The implications we can draw for donors are that attention needs to be paid to the political environment in which voice and responsiveness reforms are promoted. Responsiveness initiatives can be still-born if promoted in isolation from efforts to challenge patronage-based distribution systems managed by parties.

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