Peoples Action for Just & Democratic Governance:

Using Evidence to Establish Accountability

ms actionaid denmark

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A Sourcebook on democratic accountability for development practitioners and learning facilitators

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Acknowledgements

The Accountability Sourcebook has been developed by MS-ActionAid-Denmark. The production process has been informed by field studies of accountability work conducted by MSAA-DK partner organisations and inspired by the work of other organisations and similar handbooks and relevant literature and other publications within this field. In particular we would like to thank the following:

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Foreword

Accountability is a central element of MSActionAid-Denmark's governance work, which operates within a rights-based and participatory framework. For anyone working in this field, key skills are knowledge about state-citizen accountability relationships and the practical skill and ability to hold power wielders to account.

The Accountability Sourcebook provides the reader with an analytical framework for understanding accountability relationships between the state and its citizens, and an action focus on how NGOs and CSOs can hold state institutions, service providers and duty bearers to account, using an evidence-based approach incorporating a range of tools and methods.

The focus of the Sourcebook is on the state, especially at the local government level, and its role as a service provider. In terms of poor people and their organisations, the state is often the only institution which is mandated and obligated to fulfil the basic rights of poor and marginalised people. The Sourcebook should appeal to NGO and CSO practitioners who are involved in championing tangible basic rights to such things as: food, employment, water, health, education and services that state governance mechanisms are mandated and obligated to deliver in an accountable and transparent manner.

The Sourcebook is one of two books produced by MSActionAid-Denmark within the field of just and democratic governance at the local level. The other book is the *Civic Empowerment Guide* which is aimed at understanding processes that can lead marginalised groups in local communities to empower themselves, understand their position and engage more equitably with other citizens and authorities in local (and national) democratic processes.

The two handbooks can be read independently, but a more holistic picture will emerge if the books are read in combination. The handbooks can with benefit be supplemented by ActionAid's 'ELBAG' Handbook (*Economic Literacy and Budget Accountability in Governance*) which is closely linked to approaches outlined in the Accountability Sourcebook, as well as the 'REFLECT' Handbook, which is closely linked to the *Civic Empowerment Guide.*

The first edition of the Accountability Sourcebook will be used, along with other materials, on a large number of training courses that will be delivered by MS TCDC (the MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation, Arusha, Tanzania) during 2010. These training courses are part of the capacity-building programme being implemented under the auspices of ActionAid's International Governance Team (IGT). The training courses will be managed and implemented by 'Training4Change' (the global training organisation of MSAA-DK). During 2010 the Accountability Sourcebook will undergo a substantive re-editing. This process will be managed by the IGT and be based on feed back and inputs from course participants and from other practitioners in ActionAid.

MSActionAid-Denmark

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Preface Why focus on accountability?

This Sourcebook explores the concept and practice of accountability as a key element of democratic governance. Most particularly, it looks at the role civil society can play to strengthen and deepen accountability in governance.

Governance is about the interaction between state institutions and citizens. It is about the laws, policies and regulations that the state makes and the way these are implemented in everyday life. Governance includes how the state treats its citizens and the effort it makes to protect and fulfil their human rights.

When can we say that there is just and democratic governance in a country? The answers to the following questions would shed light on this:

- Does the state use investments and scarce resources reasonably for the benefit of all citizens, and most especially for the most disadvantaged?
- Does the state operate by a clear set of rules, which are considered just and fair by most citizens?
- Does the state treat citizens with respect and inform citizens about what it is doing?
- Does it allow citizens to choose who leads them and have a say about what they need and want from government?

Just and democratic governance is a means to ensure that society attends to the needs of all citizens, including the marginalised. It is also an end in itself, as it creates a fair system for the day-to-day management of society and the peaceful transition of power at regular intervals. When just and democratic governance is in place, development efforts can concentrate on poverty eradication and building a peaceful and inclusive society.

For governance to be just and democratic, leaders need to use their power responsibly and for the greater good. Systems and procedures need to be in place that impose restraints on power and encourage government officials to act in the public's best interests. These systems and procedures fall within the realm of what is known as accountability.

From a governance point of view, effective accountability is especially important because:

- *It keeps government power in check.* Governments have wide-ranging and significant power to intervene in people's lives. The abuse of this power can have very negative outcomes, especially for the poorest and most marginalised, who are least able to seek redress.
- *It is a necessary pre-condition for just democracy.* Accountability helps to ensure that state power is exercised according to the will of the citizenry. Without it, democracy is always at risk.

There are some serious barriers to engaging in accountability work. In many countries, the role of civil society as an accountability actor is not recognised by the state. The quality of democracy varies from country to country and influences what can be accomplished. Calls for accountability from outside the state are severely constrained in countries where basic freedoms - such as access to information, freedom of expression and of association - are absent or circumscribed. The same holds true in countries where criticism of government is treated as grounds for harassment or physical violence. In such contexts, political leaders may operate with wide latitude and ignore or break laws intended to enforce accountability. This contributes to a culture of impunity. Accountability is similarly at risk in countries where elite groups exercise power and influence over government. Where this is the case, governments tend to prioritise a narrow band of special interests, leaving others marginalized and disempowered.

Furthermore, all actors (state and civil society) require the capacity to play an effective role in accountability. For example, the media need basic investigation and reporting skills. They need to conform to agreed reporting standards, if they are to be credible. Civil society organisations need competence in various areas, like how to access information, formulate demands and communicate effectively with public officials.

The focus of this Sourcebook is on countries that are transitioning to, or consolidating, democratic governance systems, primarily in Africa. Africa is of course a vast and varied continent with enormous differences. The cultural, social, political and economic contexts vary greatly between northern, southern, eastern and western Africa. This Sourcebook does not attempt to contextualise accountability in any specific location. The intention is to raise issues related to accountability more generally, while encouraging readers to consider them further in relation to their own contexts, based on their own knowledge and experiences. The Sourcebook is a resource for exploring the meaning of accountability, learning about its basic elements, and discovering practical options for civil society actors to increase accountability at the local level.

Acknowledgement of sources

The content of this Sourcebook has been inspired and informed by many other publications, papers and reports. As a general approach, the information and perspectives gathered from these sources have been adapted, combined and altered substantially to suit the narrative and themes of this book. A full bibliography of quotes and sources appears at the end of the Sourcebook. In addition, where a particular source has provided core ideas for a chapter, it is acknowledged at the end of a chapter.

"...without democracy and accountability there can be no development."

– Bade Onimode[1]

Introduction What you will find in this sourcebook

The purpose of this book is to draw together some key ideas about democratic accountability: about how to recognise it, engage with it, build it and use it to improve peoples' lives. The core assumption is that civil society organizations (CSOs) have an essential role to play in creating and monitoring accountability in their countries.

Doing accountability work is not necessarily a brand new undertaking for CSOs. Many organisations already work to strengthen just and democratic governance through community development, public education, advocacy and other projects. This Sourcebook suggests that we can enhance our impact further by taking a good look at accountability. This might mean venturing deeper into the governance terrain than before, or exploring new pathways to trigger the changes we hope to see. On these pages, you will find a conceptual map and some practical travel tips for adding an accountability dimension to your work.

Who is the sourcebook for?

This resource has been created with the following readers in mind:

- **Strategists**: Members of CSOs who are interested in or responsible for strategic planning in their organisations and want to ensure that their work makes the desired impact;
- **Implementers**: Program and project managers who want to design and implement initiatives to monitor government conduct and service delivery;
- **Trainers**: Facilitators and trainers who want to develop their own training materials and conduct training on accountability or civil society monitoring; and
- **Enablers**: Any other practitioners working to strengthen the voice of citizens in decisions affecting their lives, especially at the sub-national and local level.

What you won't find in this book

The Sourcebook does not aim to be all things to all people. If you are looking for any of the following, you won't find it between these pages.

- **A comprehensive guide to accountability in all spheres of life:** This sourcebook focuses only on accountability relationships between governments and the people they are meant to serve.
- **A training manual:** The information in the sourcebook can be used to design and inform training, but it has not been structured to offer precise training guidelines.
- **An academic report:** The content of the sourcebook has benefited from academic source material, amongst others. However, it is not geared towards academic debate. The aim is rather to translate valuable academic contributions into a more accessible format.
- **A blueprint for democratic accountability:** There is no magic formula for success. The sourcebook provides ideas and tools, but no single recipe.
- **An easy reader/grassroots guide:** The language used in this sourcebook is intended to be clear and accessible, at intermediate level. It is assumed that the target readers (as outlined above) will play the role of further translating the content to suit grassroots audiences across many diverse contexts.

Other materials that inform accountability work

This Sourcebook exists alongside many other valuable materials, manuals, guides and tools that can be used to plan and undertake accountability work. Most notably, it should be considered in conjunction with resources like:

- ActionAid International's Economic Literacy and Budget Accountability for Governance (ELBAG), a learning process which enables communities to break down barriers to information, knowledge and control, to demand accountability from governments and international institutions, to reclaim rights and challenge injustice.
- The Accountability, Learning and Planning System (ALPS), a framework that sets out the key accountability requirements, guidelines and processes for ActionAid International. It outlines core principles and practices to ensure the organisation's accountability to all its stakeholders, but most of all to poor and excluded people, especially women and girls.
- The Civic Empowerment Guide of MS-AAI, which offers a broad array of tools to equip people and communities to make their own decisions about development issues affecting their lives, as well as challenging unequal power relations and injustices that restrict their choices and capacities.

"[T]he struggle has resumed for a new constitutional order in Africa... We may not yet have evolved the final code of universal human rights, but Africa and the human race have at least raised global standards of tolerance and social justice."

Ali A.Mazrui[2]

The structure of the sourcebook

The book is divided into two main parts:

- **Section 1: Exploring Accountability** introduces readers to the concept of accountability. The section consists of eight chapters. The first seven chapters investigate what accountability is, how it works, who is involved and what can go wrong. Chapter 8 looks at the role of civil society in the accountability terrain.
- **Section 2: Working for Accountability** has a practical focus. The four chapters in this section provide a step-by-step journey through the main stages of accountability work. From starting up an accountability project right through to communicating your findings, this section considers the challenges along the way and presents a range of practical tools to consider for your own accountability work.

Clarification of key terms and concepts

A number of key words and concepts come up frequently when you explore the accountability terrain. The term 'accountability' itself is discussed and defined in some detail in Section 1. Various related concepts are introduced in the course of the Sourcebook and defined as and when they occur. The following terms are also used throughout the discussions, and call for clarification in advance. In this sourcebook:

- **Civil society** is understood to include the many different actors in society who do not form part of government or the public sector. Civil society is seen to be made up of individuals, groups, associations, clubs, organisations and institutions of diverse kinds, including media.
- **Civil society organisations** are seen as non-profit, organised forms of civil society, including community-based organisations, faith-based groups, charities, professional associations, trade unions, public interest groups, non-governmental organisations and many academic institutions.
- **Governance** refers to how a country or society operates. It is concerned with the systems and processes used to steer the society and about how decisions are made.
- **Just and democratic governance** is understood to rest on the pillars of participation, human rights, justice, democracy, accountability and the rule of law. A human rights-based, people-centred approach to just and democratic governance calls for the participation of citizens and the ability of the poor and excluded to ask questions, claim rights, make decisions and hold institutions accountable.

SECTION 1
EXPLORING ACCOUNTABILITY

In this section, you can learn more about:

What accountability is all about

Different kinds of accountability

Four components of accountability in action

Accountability relationships in the public sector

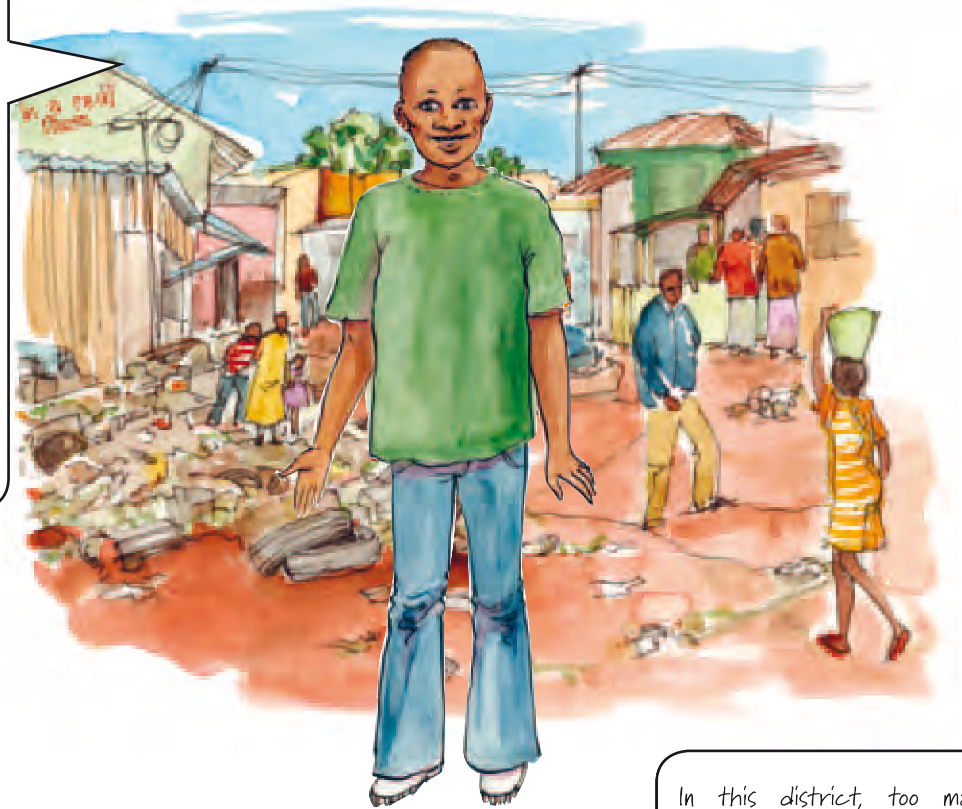
Factors that undermine the effective functioning of democratic accountability

Options and roles for civil society organisations in the accountability terrain.

Question: What do these

Garbage removal is a serious problem in our town. Here on the outskirts, the municipality leaves these big skips on some intersections. They are meant to be cleared once a week – but that never happens. The district councillor blames the town planning department, and vice versa. Meanwhile we are living amongst these growing heaps of waste! The situation is risky, especially for our children who play out here on the streets.

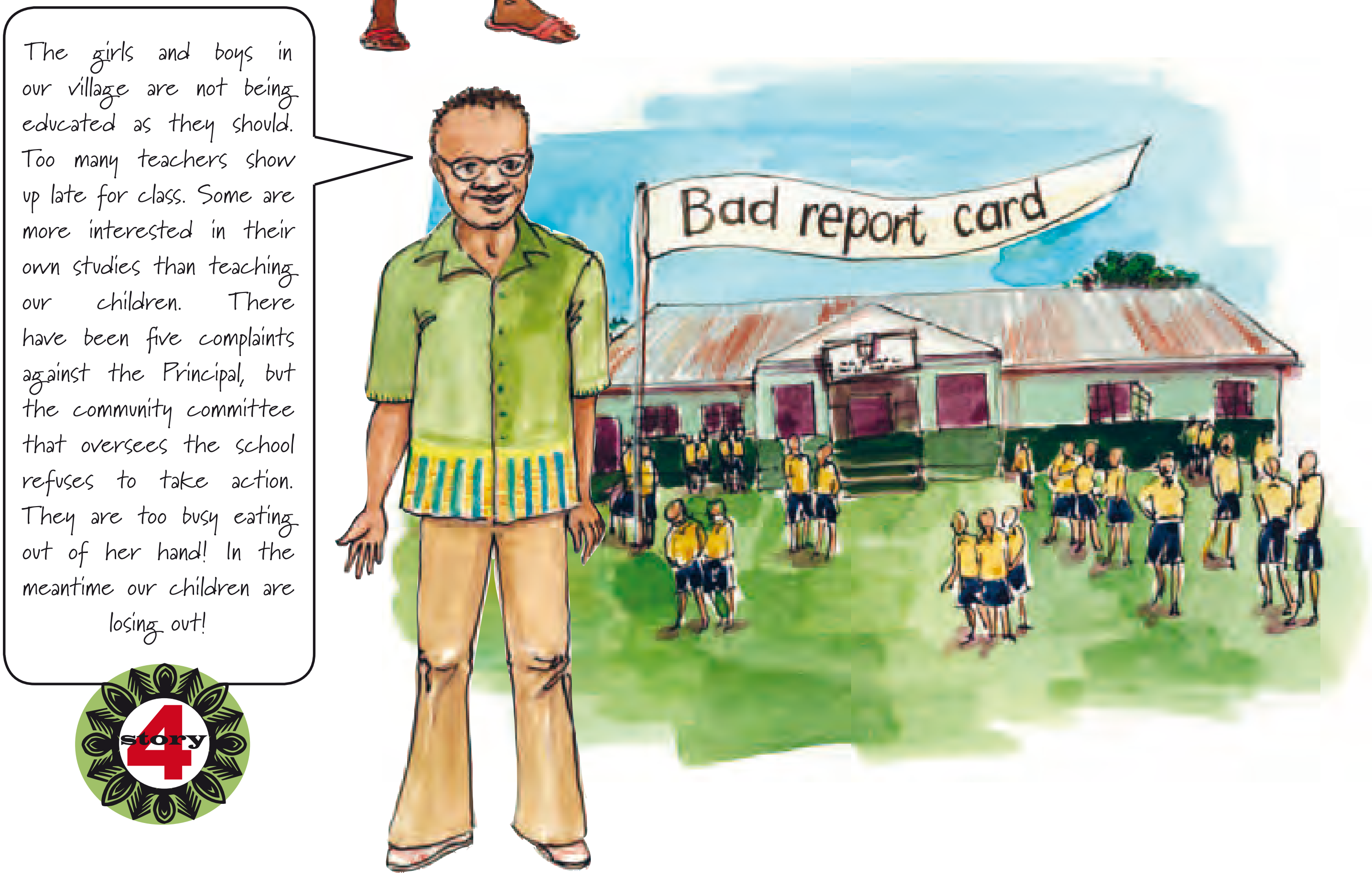
1 story



In this district, too many people die from curable diseases. Some families have to travel long distances to the nearest clinic. This is expensive and difficult, especially with sick children. Clinics have long queues and often no doctors on duty. Some nurses are rude and impatient. People don't always receive the emergency care they need, and can be sent home without medicines. Yet the Health Department says it is doing all it can.

story 2

four stories have in common?



The answer is that in all four stories, there is a breakdown in accountability – and as a result, people are worse off. Also in all four stories, there is scope for accountability to be strengthened – and doing so could help bring about real improvements in peoples' lives.

So let's take a closer look at the concept of accountability and investigate how it works.

Chapter 1

What is democratic accountability?

Accountability is not easy to define. The purpose of this chapter is not to arrive at an all-encompassing definition that meets with universal or academic approval. The aim is rather to see how accountability enhances our efforts to build democracy, advance justice and fight poverty. Most particularly, we want to know how civil society actors can *use* the notion of accountability to strengthen their advocacy and development work.

Therefore, our search here is simply for a *useful* way of thinking and talking about accountability – one that helps us to analyse the challenges we face and take action in new ways. With this in mind, consider the following four characteristics of accountability:

- Accountability is tied up with **human rights**. Citizens are entitled to expect their governments to implement laws that enforce rights covenants. Governments are duty-bound to fulfil these promises and stick to agreed rules of conduct.
- Accountability requires **relationships**. These include relationships between politicians and citizens, between elected representatives and civil servants, between organisations and their members, to name but a few examples.
- Accountability involves taking **responsibility**. Those who accept public office have a mandate to serve the public good. If their actions fall short of this mandate, they should be willing to explain what went wrong and accept the consequences. That is what is meant by “holding someone to account”.
- Accountability is concerned with **power**, and power is present in all accountability relationships. When accountability is working properly, it provides checks and balances for monitoring and limiting the discretion of powerful stakeholders.
- Effective accountability requires **participation**. It opens up spaces for women and men, duty bearers and rights holders, the media, civil society and other stakeholders to jointly oversee agreed commitments.
- Accountability is not possible without **transparency**. People need access to information in order to monitor their leaders and hold them to account. Public sector processes need to be conducted in the open for accountability to flourish.
- Accountability depends on the **rule of law**. It contributes to, and reinforces, a system in which there are clear consequences for misconduct and negligence.

It helps to think of these seven characteristics as the backdrop or canvass against which accountability functions. You will encounter them again and again, as key themes throughout the Sourcebook.

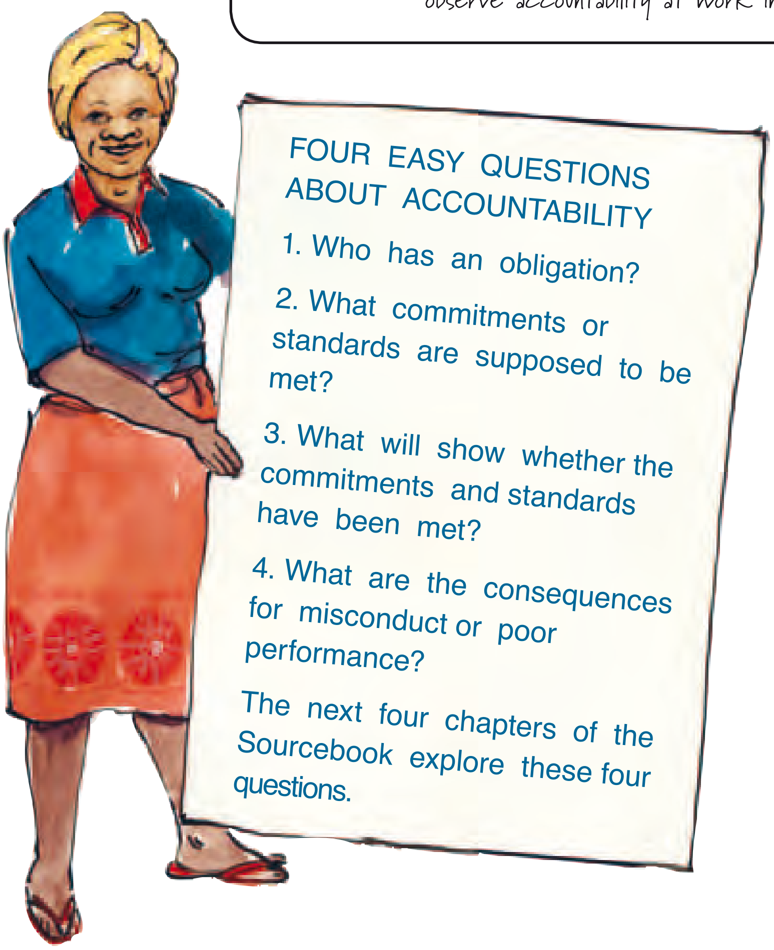
cross reference

See pages 14 and 15 for more information on human rights.

But the seven characteristics don't really give us a clear picture of exactly how accountability works in practice. So imagine that there was a way to watch accountability in action. What would you see when the wheels of accountability are in motion?

Where accountability is present:	Where accountability is absent:
Someone has a an obligation	There is no clear obligation
	and/or
To meet certain commitments or standards	No commitments or standards have been set
	and/or
If it is found that these have not been met	There's no way to tell whether these have been met
	and/or
There are consequences to face.	There are no consequences to face.

The description of accountability in the box above gives a good starting point for enquiry. It suggests four easy questions you can ask when you are trying to observe accountability at work in any situation.



Asking these questions might be easy enough. Finding the answers can be a little more demanding!

Types of accountability

"Rules-based accountability systems… narrow the scope for personal discretion and allow parliaments to locate the source of decisions and trace responsibility to the officeholders who need to be held to account."

Peter Butera Bazimya[3]

Different writers have looked at accountability through different lenses, and identified many ways of dividing it up into categories. For the purposes of this Sourcebook, the following two distinctions are most important to take into account.

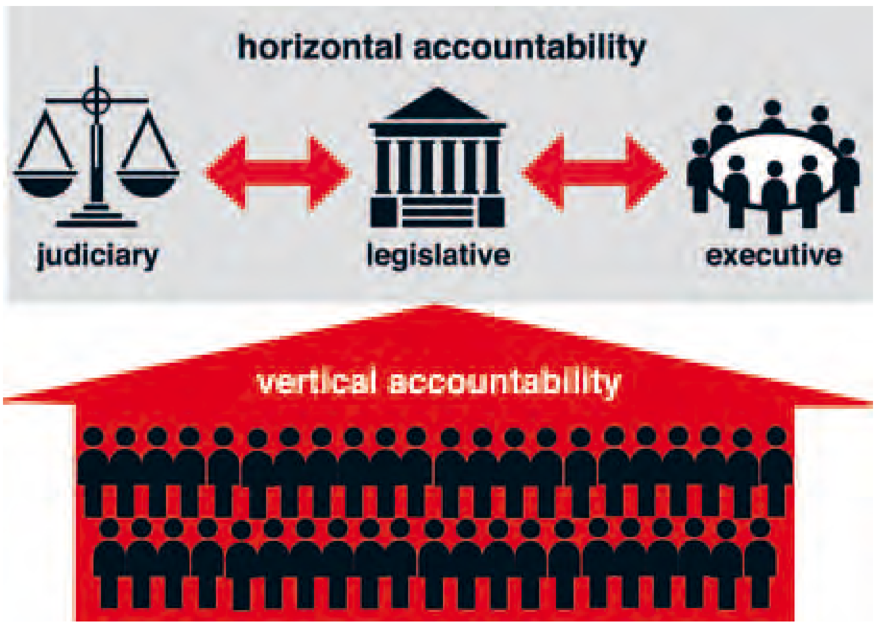
Distinction 1: Vertical and horizontal accountability

Most states have several accountability mechanisms that operate internally, without the involvement of citizens. In fact, some state institutions are created specifically to oversee or investigate other state institutions and make sure they comply with given principles, rules or regulations. This kind of accountability is exercised, for example, by Auditors-General, ombudspersons and human rights commissions created by the state.

In addition to this, democratic states are usually designed to have a separation of powers. The idea is that power is divided amongst the legislature, the executive and the judiciary so that these arms of the state can hold each other accountable.

- The **legislature** is the law-making arm of government. Members of legislatures are generally elected by citizens.
- The **executive** is the implementing arm of government, usually led by a president or prime minister and a cabinet, drawn from the legislature.
- The **judiciary** is the law-enforcing arm of government. It is their role to assess whether laws have been disobeyed, and impose appropriate punishment.

The three arms of state function at national, sub-national and local level, though the forms they take at each level vary considerably from country to country. The separation of powers is meant to ensure that no single part of government has too much power. This kind of accountability is sometimes called 'horizontal' in that it involves the state checking up on itself, through institutions which theoretically occupy the same level of power.



Besides the horizontal accountability operating *within* the state, accountability is also exercised by citizens in relation to the state. This is sometimes called 'vertical' accountability, in that it is the people checking up on their leaders. One such accountability mechanisms 'from below' takes the form of elections, where citizens hold politicians to account by voting them back into or out of office. It can also include many other mechanisms, from citizens participating in parliamentary oversight committees, to media scrutiny of political wheeling and dealing, to public protest against corruption or misconduct.

"Information is a right to every person. The right to know is the right to live."

Hussein Kahlid[4]

Distinction 2: State-led and citizen-led accountability

This distinction may at first seem similar to the previous one, but it concerns who owns the mechanisms rather than the direction of accountability. Some bottom-up forms of accountability are exercised through mechanisms created by the state. For example, elections are state-led accountability mechanisms: they are the official institutionalized means through which the state calls on citizens to give feedback to their political representatives. Even though it requires active public participation, this is a mechanism supplied by the state.

On the other hand, there are also accountability mechanisms created and driven by citizens themselves. For example, when a civil society organization hosts a public hearing to question a government official who has failed to deliver on her promises, this is an accountability opportunity created by citizens. Even though the event requires the participation of government, the mechanism itself – the public hearing – was created by actors outside the state.

state-led accountability

citizen-led accountability

FOUR CLUSTERS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

	Horizontal accountability (state ➔ state)	**Vertical accountability (citizens ➔ state)**
Accountability mechanisms set up by the state	**State-owned mechanisms for state actors to exercise accountability** ▪ Supreme audit institutions ▪ Parliamentary hearings ▪ Legislative committees ▪ Anti-corruption agencies ▪ Inter-ministerial committees ▪ Ombudsman offices ▪ Procurement oversight bodies ▪ Human rights, gender, electoral commissions	**State-owned mechanisms for citizens to exercise or inform accountability** ▪ Elections and referenda ▪ Community forums ▪ Advisory bodies with public representation ▪ Public submissions to parliamentary hearings and portfolio committees ▪ State planning processes involving public consultation or participation
Accountability mechanisms initiated by civil society	**Citizen-led mechanisms to monitor whether the state's own accountability measures are working** ▪ Citizens' monitoring of audit institutions ▪ Citizens advocacy for better legislative oversight ▪ Citizens monitoring how well the executive exercises oversight of service delivery contracts	**Citizen-led mechanisms to monitor state conduct and performance** ▪ Citizen oversight committees ▪ Public expenditure tracking surveys ▪ Citizens' report cards ▪ Civil society watchdog organizations ▪ Community-based monitoring of government programs ▪ Investigative journalism ▪ Civil society-led social audits and public hearings

Adapted and expanded from Brinkerhoff (2001) *Taking Account of Accountability: A Conceptual Overview and Strategic Options.*

What do the four clusters suggest about civil society's role in democratic accountability?

- **Official checks and balances should be effective.** The most established accountability mechanisms lie within the state. For these to function optimally, the state must have both capacity and political will. There is a special role for civil society to monitor how well the state's own sideways accountability mechanisms are working.
- **Speaking louder in the corridors of power.** Some accountability mechanisms can be used much more actively and strategically by civil society. With enough confidence, backing and evidence, civil society actors can make remarkable contributions to parliamentary hearings, special enquiries and commissions, advisory boards and regulatory committees.
- **Thinking outside of the box.** Civil society has the further advantage of being able to monitor government conduct and performance from outside the confines of bureaucracy and institutional culture. This creates scope for innovative methods and, in some contexts, the ability to say what state actors cannot say themselves.
- **Teaming up for more impact.** Civil society has little power to enforce sanctions. For this reason, it is important for CSOs to build linkages with state accountability actors. For example, if journalists expose corruption via the press, they will have little impact unless the judicial system follows through with investigations and prosecutions.

What is the difference between 'accountability' and 'accountability work'?

This chapter explores the meaning of accountability as a desired feature of democratic governance. But what then is 'accountability work'? In this Sourcebook, it is seen to include all organised efforts on the part of citizens and CSOs to strengthen accountability mechanisms and use accountability tools to improve service delivery, governance and development outcomes.

cross reference

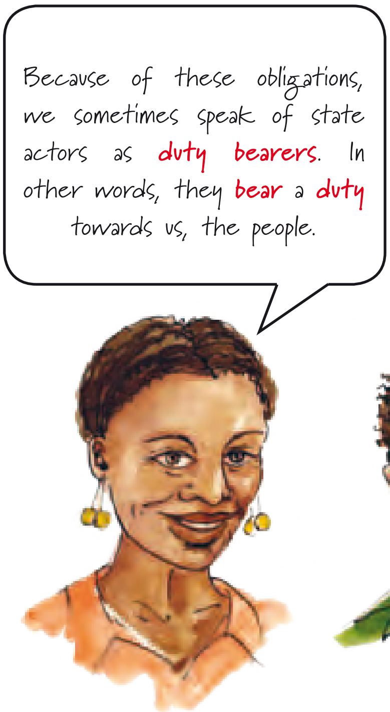
See chapter 8 to find out more

cross reference

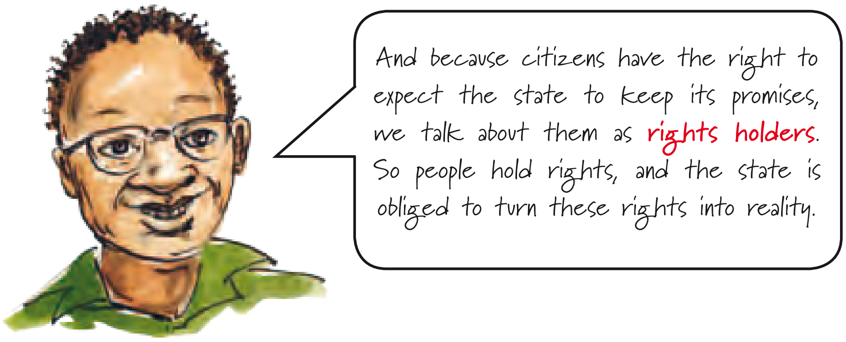
Learn more in Section 2
See Chapter 9 to find more information about diagnosing accountability problems.

Acknowledgement: This chapter was in part inspired and informed by *Accountability in an Unequal World* (2007) by Jennifer Rubenstein, as well as *Social Accountability: An Introduction to the concept and emerging practice* (2004) by Malena, Forster & Singh. See the bibliography for full details.

Chapter 2
The obligation to be accountable



Every accountability relationship begins with an obligation. If there is no obligation, there is no accountability to enforce. When political candidates are elected to public office and government officials accept executive positions, they are not supposed to have free reign to do as they wish. Instead, they take on certain obligations when they step into their positions of power.



Where do obligations come from?

In the public sector, obligations flow from the following sources.

- **Human rights:** States first and foremost have an obligation to fulfil the human rights of the people they serve. When states sign and ratify international and regional rights treaties, like the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*, they take on even more specific obligations. They undertake to abide by certain principles, such as refraining from discrimination. They also take on the obligation to deliver programs and services that advance the rights contained in these treaties. These obligations are legally binding on states. See the box on page 15 for more information.
- **Constitutions and other legislation:** In most countries, a constitution and/or other laws clarify what obligations are created when citizens elect representatives at national, sub-national and/or local level. Such laws also spell out the powers and obligations of the various arms and spheres of government. A key factor in accountability work is to know which department and level of government is responsible to deliver which programs and services. A country's supreme laws will usually reveal how these obligations are divided up.

- **Oaths of Office:** In many countries, there is some form of ceremony to formalise the obligations taken on when men and women accept leadership and executive positions in the state. Judges typically swear an oath of impartiality or allegiance to the rule of law. Public representatives and civil servants may promise to uphold the constitution or serve the interests of the country.
- **Employment contracts:** Members of government departments are employed to fill particular positions, which come with specific responsibilities and duties. In ideal terms, all government employees should have clear job descriptions and know how they are expected to perform. There are legal obligations on state employees to fulfil the duties which they have been hired to do.

These obligations are translated into detailed commitments and standards in government manifestos and plans (see chapter3). In some instances, existing obligations may also be in conflict with government manifestos and plans.

Human rights covenants and declarations

The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) is the most widely accepted statement of human rights in the world. The declaration's principles were made legally binding by two important covenants:

- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Around half of the countries in the world have ratified these covenants, thereby undertaking to implement and protect the rights which they contain. In addition, several other rights treaties can be used to demand accountability over and above the state level. These include for example:

- The United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child; and
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and its Protocol on Women's Rights.

Different kinds of obligations

For the purposes of this Sourcebook, it is useful to differentiate between the following three categories of obligations.

Meeting political obligations → builds democracy

Political obligations are what state actors have to do to honour their electoral and democratic duties. These may include, for example:

- Politicians reporting back to their constituents in between elections.
- Members of legislatures keeping a watchful eye on the work of government officials.
- Safeguarding the judiciary from the interference of powerful government officials.
- Providing channels for civil society to participate in public hearings.

Meeting financial, managerial & administrative obligations → promotes efficiency

Financial, managerial and administrative obligations are the duties on state actors to collect and use public resources ethically and for intended purposes. These obligations are all about following the right regulations and procedures to manage and monitor the internal workings of government. For example, such obligations might include, amongst other things:

- Departmental officials submitting regular reports to higher levels of government.
- Following accepted accounting practices to record and report on financial transactions.
- Looking after state assets, like buildings and vehicles.
- Having transparent tendering in the procurement of goods and services needed by government.

Meeting performance obligations → advances development

Performance obligations are the duties attached to what the state has undertaken to achieve or deliver. These obligations are concerned with outputs and outcomes, and may include, for example:

- Giving due attention to priority sectors or issues highlighted by the government.
- Making progress towards specific agreed goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals.
- Implementing national strategic plans, like Poverty Reduction Strategies or Five Year Plans that set out performance or delivery targets.

Obviously, these different obligations are interconnected. For example, if departments aren't managing their resources as they should, they will struggle to perform well and meet development goals.

Who in the state has the obligation?

Many obligations are taken on by the state as a whole. The duty to meet these obligations – through programs, services and other interventions – is then delegated to different implementing arms of government. As a short hand term, we can refer to these collectively as ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). Most governments have many different MDAs operating across several sectors, and at multiple levels and scales. So imagine for example:

The state as a whole takes on the obligation to advance, protect and fulfil the right to safety

↓

On behalf of the state, the national Cabinet is authorised to implement this right

↓

The national Cabinet delegates this duty to the Ministry in charge of police

↓

The Ministry in charge of police delegates the mandate to perform certain police functions to Police Commissioners at sub-national level

↓

The Police Commissioners each delegate certain duties to district police units

↓

District police units delegate specific duties to community level police stations

So if you experience a problem with police conduct at the local level, is it the community police station that must be held accountable? Not necessarily. This will depend on exactly which police functions have been delegated to which level, and how much authority to make decisions has been passed downwards too.

"Democratic governance cannot be realized at the centre if it does not obtain at the local level."

Walter O. Oyugi[5]

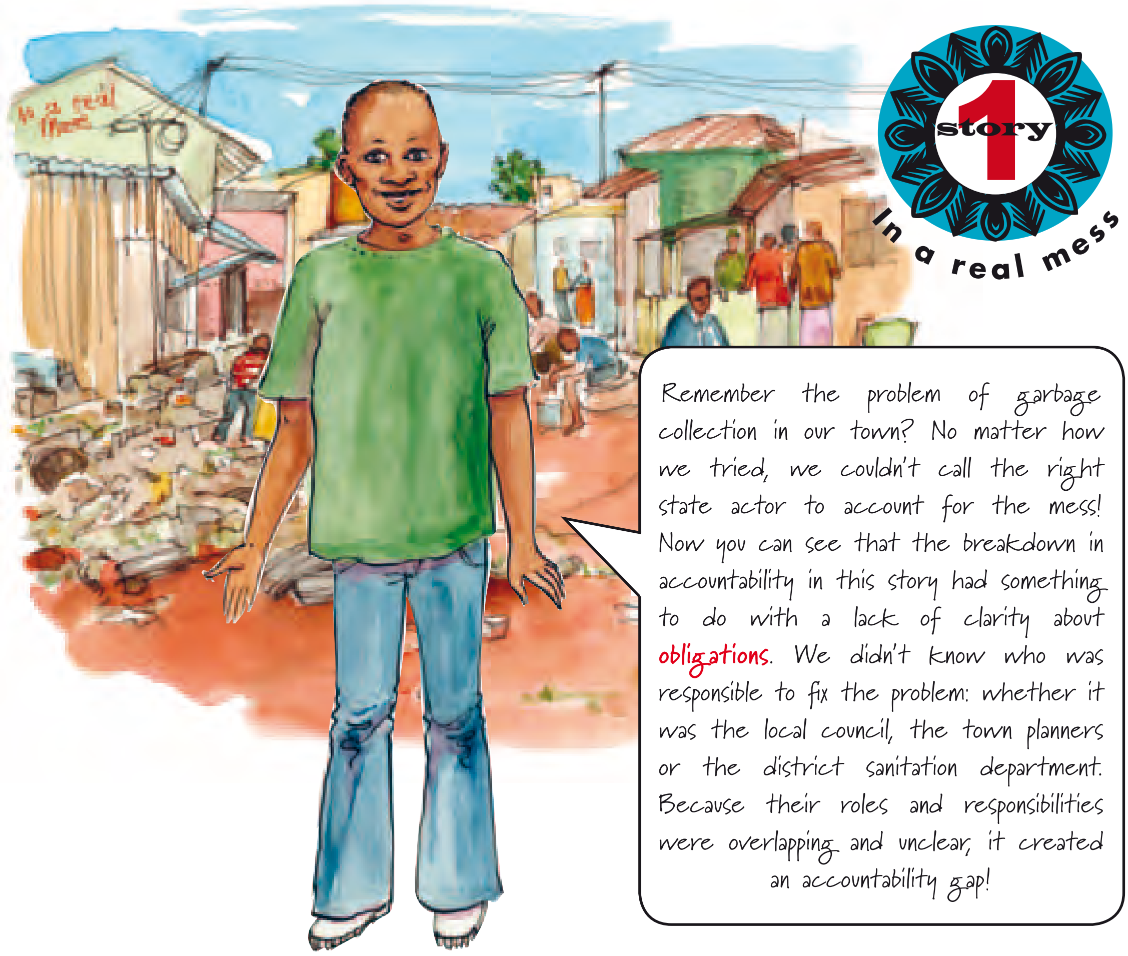
Who can you hold accountable when things go wrong?

Looking at the chart on the left, it isn't always easy to pinpoint exactly who has the mandate to deliver on certain state obligations. Sometimes the person or department with the official mandate doesn't have the power or the resources to fulfil their duties. Conducting a power analysis can help you to clarify what authority different stakeholders have in relation to an obligation.

cross reference

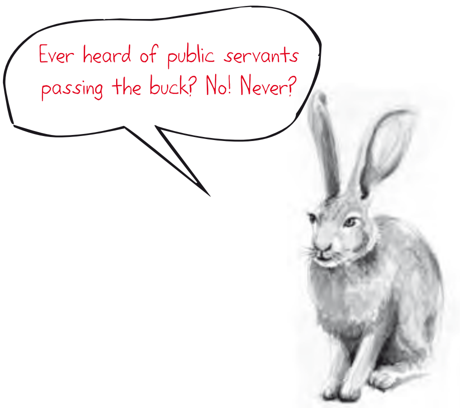
Learn more in Section 2
See Chapter 9 to find out how to identify stakeholders to match different development problems and for guidelines on conducting a power analysis.

When obligations are unclear or overlapping



think about this

If government itself is weak at clarifying its obligations, what can civil society do to establish what the state has a duty to deliver, and who in government has the obligation to do what?



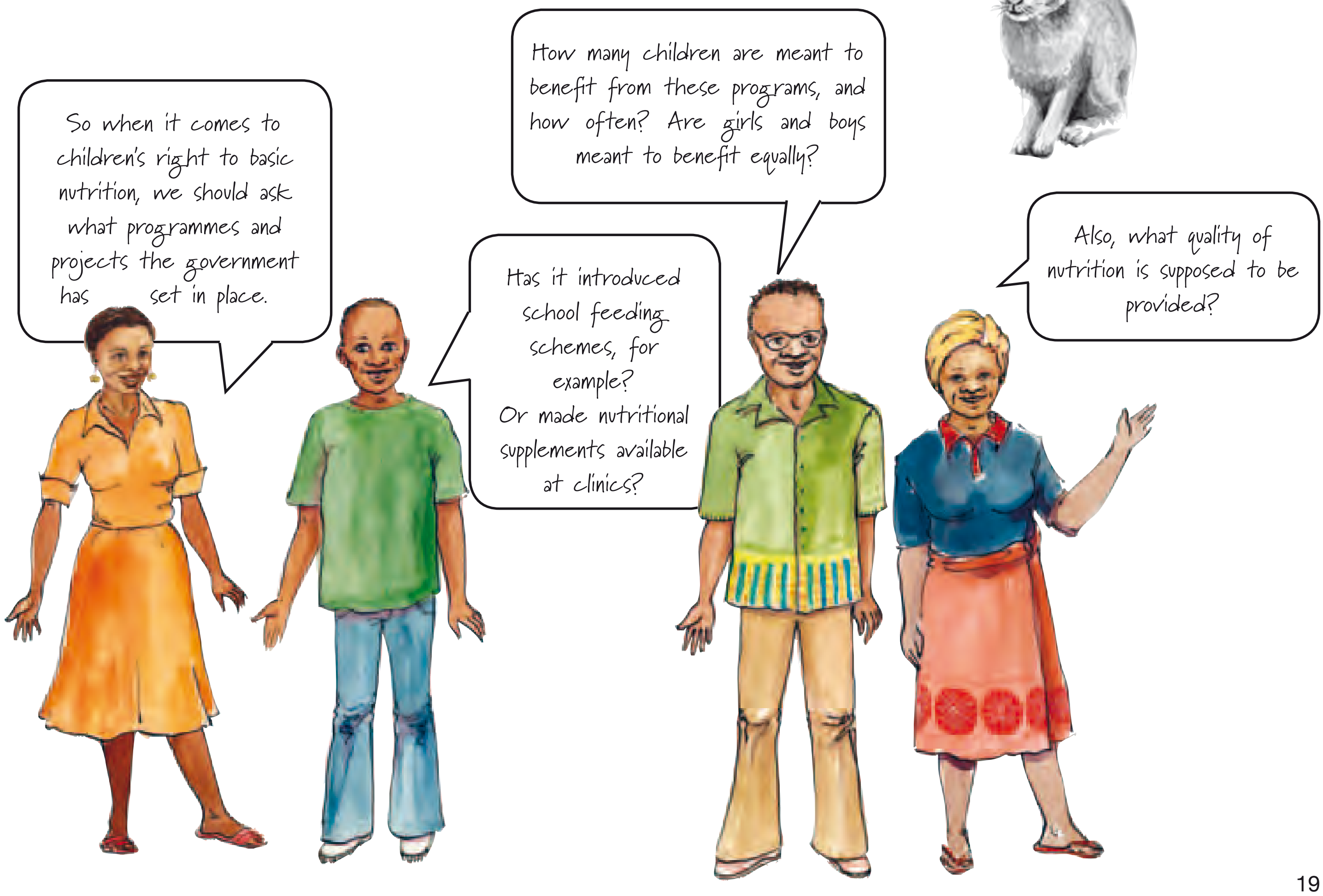
Acknowledgement: This chapter was in part inspired and informed by *Taking account of accountability: A conceptual overview & strategic options* (2001) by D.W. Brinkerhoff. See the bibliography for full details.

Chapter 3
Commitments and standards

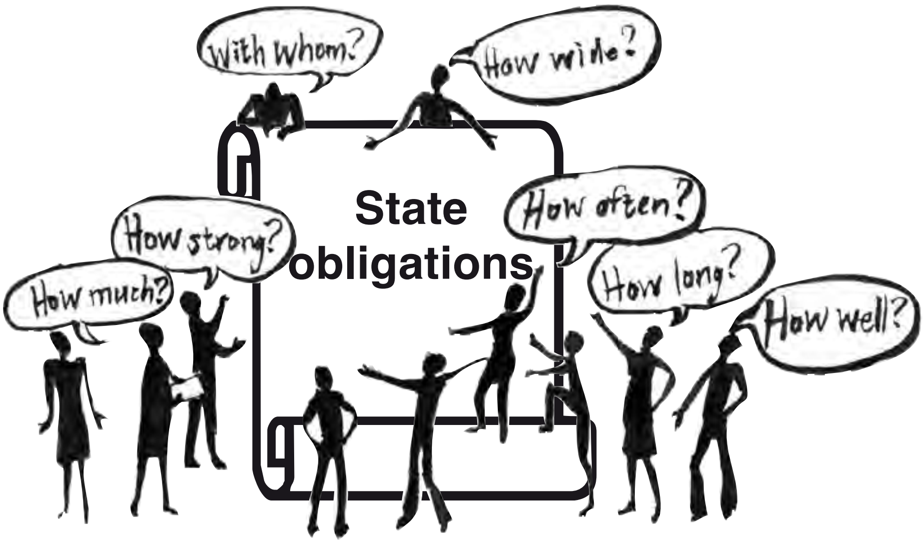
To hold state actors to account for meeting their obligations, it is important to know the exact scope and nature of these obligations. Often the obligations themselves are worded in abstract or vague terms, for example…

Given the rights obligation above, the question is what is the state actually obliged to deliver in practical terms? To answer this question, you need to uncover:

- What **commitments** the state has made as to how it plans to meet this obligation.
- What **standards** have been set about the extent and quality of the obligation.



Commitments and standards are about the quantity and the quality of the obligations on a state



think about this

Who has a say in deciding what the standards should be? Women and men? People inside and outside government? Experts and consultants? Front-end service providers? People with disabilities, the elderly, farmers?

Multiple commitments and standards

States have many different sets of commitments and standards. Some of these are long term, some may be temporary. Some apply to the country as a whole, while others are specific to certain sectors, parts of the country or groups of people, like children or refugees. The table on the following page sets out some examples of commitments and standards you might find attached to diverse state obligations.

"We found that a lot of things are incomplete... They are saying there are 12 windows but there are only 8. They are talking about 2 doors but there is only one door. They are talking about a black board but this is only a wall and they painted it black."

Community monitor in Kenya[6]

Identifying commitments and standards

Obligations	**Commitments** How the state plans to meet its obligations	**Standards** The extent and quality of the obligations to be delivered
Political obligations For example, the obligation to promote public participation in policy decisions.	• Election manifesto's • Legislation on public participation, transparency and accountability • Access to information legislation • Policy statements	• Codes of conduct for parliamentarians, councillors or other elected representatives • Policy goals and targets • Rights standards
Financial, administrative & managerial obligations For example, the obligation to follow accepted accounting procedures	• Public finance management legislation • Human resource policies • Labour laws • Agreements with trade unions • Tax policies • Legislation setting out administrative requirements	• Accounting regulations and procedures • Reporting regulations and procedures • Codes of conduct for civil servants • Charters on public service standards • Regulations governing procurement
Performance obligations For example, the obligation to provide access to health care	• Policy plans • Strategic plans • Sector programs and projects • Annual budget and medium-term policy frameworks • Poverty reduction strategies	• Service delivery targets or goals • Service guidelines or checklists • Policy norms and standards • Sector-specific regulations, eg the dimensions and building materials for a government house • Professional codes of conduct for service providers like doctors

How the state aims to build democracy

How the state aims to ensure efficiency

How the state aims to bring about development

When standards are unclear or haven't been set at all

story 2

Sick of poor health care

think about this

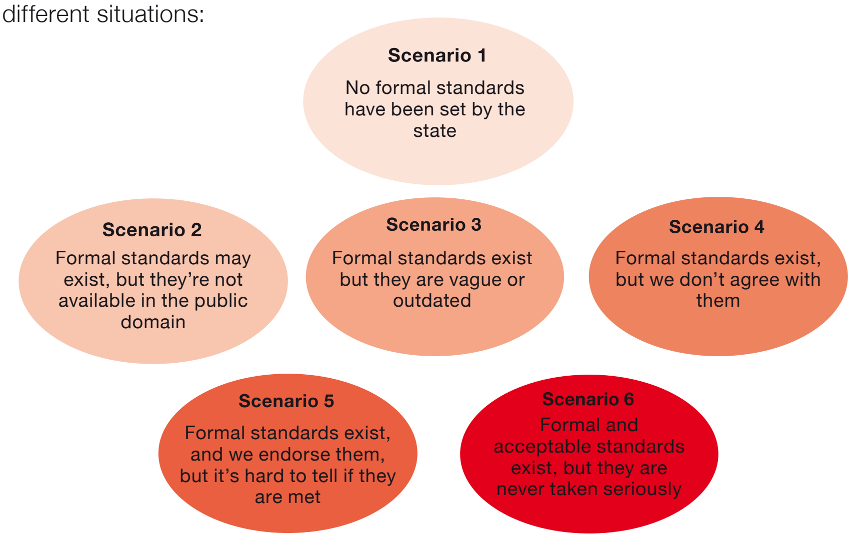
If government itself is poor or negligent about defining standards, what can civil society do to clarify or advocate for acceptable standards?

Tackling the issue not the person

Standards allow you to focus on the issue (for example, poor health services) rather than the people involved. It separates the people from the issue. This is useful whenever the goal is to improve the system (for example, ensure patients receive better treatment) rather than simply pointing fingers. Of course, sometimes peoples' conduct is a big part of the problem. Even then, it helps to evaluate conduct against an agreed standard (like a code of conduct) and criticise the deviation, not the person's character.

Can you have accountability without formal standards?

The definition of formal standards creates a 'social contract' between the state and the people it is responsible for, especially when it comes to service delivery. It tells people what they can expect from the state. So the presence or absence of formal standards is a central question for accountability work. Consider these different situations:



"You need the freedom to challenge and to monitor government and other officials. Without that kind of society, democracy becomes a ritual."

Frene Ginwala[7]

Each of these scenarios calls for a unique response from civil society:

- In **Scenario 1**, there is no benchmark to measure government performance, and as a result, no accountability can be enforced.
- In **Scenario 2 and 3**, the benchmarks that exist are inadequate for civil society to use as a basis for monitoring and accountability.
- It is only in **Scenarios 4, 5 and 6** that the state can be held accountable for not meeting obligations.
- In **Scenarios 3 and 4**, civil society actors may first want to campaign for standards that they find acceptable. Much energy may be spent contesting different perceptions of what the standards should be or not.
- In **Scenarios 5 and 6**, accountability work can concentrate on whether the state has kept its side of the social contract and if not, what can be done to rectify the problem.

cross reference

Learn more in Section 2
See Chapter 11 for more on identifying standards that provide benchmarks for accountability work, and how to access relevant information on commitments and standards.

Acknowledgement: This chapter was in part inspired and informed by *Accountability in an Unequal World* (2007) by Jennifer Rubenstein. See the bibliography for full details.

Chapter 4

Checking if commitments and standards are met

"A major aspect of corruption has to do with the weakness of bureaucratic institutional checks in countries where it is prevalent."

Ngozi Egbue [8]

State obligations provide the foundations for accountability. The state's various commitments and standards spell out the dimensions of these obligations, and create essential benchmarks for what citizens can expect from the state. This chapter takes a closer look at the process of monitoring and assessing whether the state is meeting its obligations.

Horizontal accountability: the state checking up on itself

As mentioned in Chapter 1, all states have mechanisms of their own to hold their various internal role-players to account. In almost all countries, elected representatives – serving in parliaments, senates, councils and similar bodies – are meant to play a critical oversight role. Members of these bodies should, in principle at least, be monitoring and ensuring that the governments at their levels are applying whatever standards they have set for democratic governance, administration, finances, management and performance.

Monitoring political obligations. The primary means through which the state checks whether it is honouring its own commitments to democratic practice, is through:

- Parliamentary debates and hearings on issues of transparency, participation, ethical conduct and so forth.
- Annual reports from government departments on public participation in sector programs.
- The judicial system, including mechanisms like constitutional and equality courts.
- Reports of special oversight bodies like human rights, electoral or gender commissions, ombudspersons and commissions of enquiry.

Monitoring financial, administrative and managerial obligations. The state tracks and assesses its own conduct and adherence to standards, by means of:

- In-year financial and management reports.
- Annual audit reports on financial compliance of all departments and other state bodies.
- Disciplinary enquiries.
- Sector-specific audits, for example, of the infrastructure at state schools.
- Parliamentary portfolio committees when they monitor the efficiency of departments.

Monitoring performance obligations. States typically use the following means to assess whether they have met their own performance standards:

- Annual reporting of government departments, especially when providing feedback on performance indicators.
- Parliamentary debates and portfolio committee hearings on the performance of departments and/or progress in meeting development goals.
- Strategic reviews, for example, mid-way or at the end of a multi-year implementation period.

think about this

Are sanctions imposed as readily on men as on women? Are there some leaders no-one is willing to challenge in public?

Vertical accountability: citizens checking up on the state

Citizens help to monitor and assess whether the state is meeting its commitments and standards. They do so, for example, when they:

- Consider political candidates or parties, and vote in elections
- Participate in parliamentary debates and committee meetings
- Provide evidence in hearings and disciplinary proceedings
- Serve on boards or panels that oversee state-run institutions or programs.

There is also a new wave of monitoring activities being undertaken by civil society organisations over the last decade, especially in developing countries. These activities are especially relevant where the state's own sideways monitoring is weak. They also provide essential alternatives where the participation channels supplied by the state are limited or biased. This new wave of civil society-led monitoring focuses on:

- Collecting and analysing **information from the state** to assess from a civil society perspective how well commitments and standards are being met.
- Gathering **independent information** on government conduct and performance to verify or augment official reports, and evaluate progress in meeting commitments and standards.

"Citizens need effective 'voice' in order to convey their views; and governments or states that can be held accountable for their actions are more likely to respond to the needs and demands articulated by their population."

Alina Rocha Menocal and Bhavna Sharma [9]

Using independent information to assess whether commitments and standards have been met

Civil society actors can gather relevant information by:

- Physically monitoring and recording service delivery data.
- Conducting independent audits of state infrastructure or facilities.
- Asking intended beneficiaries of state services or programs for their views.
- Observing participation processes and other accountability mechanisms in action.
- Tracking the transfer of public funds to where they are meant to be spent.
- Tracking the distribution of public goods like medicines or school text books.
- Recording the perspectives of state service providers about their gains and challenges.

When state checks and balances are faulty or compromised

story 3
Left in the dark

Aha! This sheds new light on the electricity problem in our city. Clearly the procurement process for upgrading our electricity system wasn't transparent enough. The contract was awarded to a company with close ties to the Minister of Energy Affairs! We, the people of the city, should have kept a closer watch. The public representatives who we elected to represent our interests, weren't exercising their oversight role as they should. If they were doing their job, this never would have happened!

The language of "new public management"

When you do accountability work, it helps to be aware of the terms used by state actors to talk about their obligations and how to meet them. Over recent years, there has been pressure on governments to become more efficient and effective. They have been urged to formulate their plans in ways that make it easier to monitor their progress. The following terms have become some of the buzzwords of public sector planning and monitoring:

- **Measurable objectives** are what a government wants to achieve, phrased in such a way that implementation can be counted (in time, numbers, size, levels, and so forth).
- **Inputs** are the resources required by governments to turn their obligations into tangible programs and services.
- **Outputs** are the goods and services delivered by a government.
- **Outcomes** are the changes in peoples lives that result from the delivery of goods and services.
- **Performance indicators** are data about outputs and outcomes that show whether objectives have been met, for example, the number of patients satisfied with treatment.

The harder part is walking the talk!

cross reference

Learn more in Section 2
See Chapter 12 to take a more detailed look at how to collect information for monitoring.

Acknowledgement: This chapter was in part inspired and informed by *Accountability in an Unequal World* (2007) by Jennifer Rubenstein, and *Mapping accountability: Origins, contexts and implications for development* (2002) by Peter Newell & Shaula Bellour. See the bibliography for full details.

Chapter 5

Consequences for misconduct and poor performance

Sanctions are a vital component of accountability. If there are no consequences for state actors if they don't meet commitments and standards, the entire process is compromised. Even with the most comprehensive and insightful information on state performance, no-one can be held accountable unless there are sanctions for misconduct and non-achievement.

Formal sanctions

All states should have an array of formal sanctions to apply when monitoring mechanisms reveal that commitments and standards have not been met. Here are a few examples:

When **political obligations** have not been met, the following sanctions are generally available:

- Non re-election of political representatives (see the box on the right)
- Demotion within political parties
- Disciplinary measures within legislatures
- Exclusion from Cabinet or other decision-making structures
- Removal as Minister, or demotion within executive structures of departments

When **financial, managerial and administrative obligations** have not been met, the sanctions most often used, include:

- Issue of qualified audit for ministries and departments
- Demotion/lack of promotion of non-compliant staff
- Executive officials suspended or fired
- Responsible individuals criminally charged with misconduct or fraud
- Departments placed under administration by another state body

Is the vote an effective sanction?

Not re-electing a disappointing leader is the most common means by which citizens directly impose a sanction. It has been called a 'blunt' accountability mechanism, however, because it rarely works very consistently or clearly. Citizens have been known to re-elect leaders in spite of incredibly poor performance, for example. In addition, leaders may have served some voters' very well and others very poorly. This means that candidates can be re-elected when they 'divide and conquer' segments of civil society, and favour certain interests in exchange for support.

When **performance obligations** have not been met, state actors can generally call on sanctions such as:

- Executive officers fired or demoted
- Service contracts with poor service providers not renewed
- Budget allocations to under-performing departments not increased
- Refusal of budget roll-overs to departments that under-spent
- Refusal of budget re-allocations within departments that did not meet delivery targets
- Poor performance appraisals, lack of promotion
- Non-payment of performance bonuses

Sanctions with teeth

There are two key characteristics that make sanctions more effective:

- Sanctions must be coupled with **answerability**. Those who have the obligation to deliver should also have a binding duty to answer questions and explain themselves when things go wrong.
- Sanctions must be **enforceable**. It is insufficient for sanctions merely to exist, without being put into practice. When monitoring reveals that obligations have not been met, sanctions should be enforced as a matter of course, and not as an exception to the rule.

think about this

If government itself is poor or negligent about imposing formal sanctions, what can civil society organisations do to make sure there are consequences for misconduct and poor performance?

Whistle-blowing

A whistle-blower is a person who raises concern about corruption, misconduct or mismanagement. He or she can play a significant role in providing information to hold the responsible persons to account. Whistle-blowing should be encouraged - within government, CSOs, the media and the public – but it is essential to make sure whistle-blowers are protected form losing a job, being harassed, threatened or hurt. Close ties between those concerned can make it difficult – such as being members of the same political party, organisation, clan or family. Channels that provide anonymity – such as untraceable calls, mobile text messages or the internet – may be considered.

"Democracy is not foreign to Africa. Where I come from there is a saying that a chief is a chief by the will of the people."

Emeka Anyaoku[10]

Alternative sanctions

Besides the blunt instrument of the vote, citizens usually do not have legal authority to impose sanctions directly on state actors. However, civil society groups do have some options to catalyse consequences for misconduct and poor performance, especially when formal sanctions are lacking or inadequate.

- **Lodging complaints.** Many countries have institutions that citizens can appeal to when they have suffered mistreatment or poor assistance from government staff. For example, it may be possible to approach a public protector, ombudsperson or independent complaints directorate. Doing so in large numbers may be part of a larger strategy of peaceful protest. Even if nothing comes from lodging such complaints, it strengthens citizens' case to show that all available formal channels have been used.
- **The power of numbers.** Civil society has the potential to mobilise broad public attention on an issue or situation. When CSOs have evidence to show that under-performing or corrupt public officials are free from sanction, they can use it to raise public awareness and channel public outrage into peaceful protest action. This may range from boycotting elections or refusing services from certain providers, to pickets and marches, sit-ins, mass meetings, public hearings, and so forth.
- **The court system.** In some cases, it is possible for citizens or civil society organizations to take the government as a whole or a specific department to court. In such instances, it would be necessary to prove that state misconduct or poor performance has infringed on the rights of those affected, in terms of the constitution or other binding legislation. This is usually an expensive route and may involve mobilising a class action – that is when many affected parties join forces to pursue a legal matter together.
- **Naming and shaming.** A powerful way to put pressure on specific political leaders or government officials is to draw media attention to their misconduct or poor performance. Using this route calls for close co-operation with the media, who may or may not have the same goals in mind as CSOs. It is difficult to contain a scandalous story once it has gone public, but this form of sanction very often results in the implicated persons resigning or losing respect and popularity.
- **Piggy-backing formal sanctions.** Another possibility is for civil society to instigate, motivate or provide information to state actors so that formal sanctions can be more effectively applied. For example, if a CSO has a good relationship with certain MPs or councillors, you might convince them to use their sanctions to see that consequences are imposed. Alternatively, civil society may have gathered or analysed information that can be used by state actors to set disciplinary procedures or other sanctions in motion.

When formal sanctions let you down

"Always bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward."

Amilcar Cabral[11]

Acknowledgement: This chapter was in part inspired and informed by *Accountability in an Unequal World* (2007) by Jennifer Rubenstein, and *Mapping accountability: Origins, contexts and implications for development* (2002) by Peter Newell & Shaula Bellour. See the bibliography for full details.

Chapter 6

Accountability on four different fronts

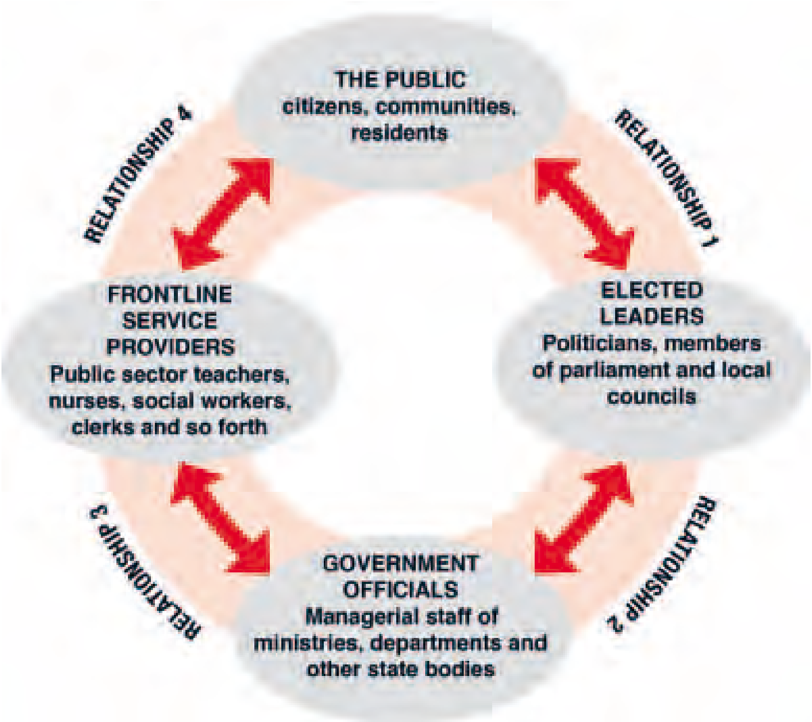
"The most fundamental of the goals of democracy are probably four in number. Firstly, to make the rulers accountable and answerable for their actions and policies. Secondly, to make the citizens effective participants in choosing those rulers and in regulating their actions. Thirdly, to make the society as open and the economy as transparent as possible; and fourthly to make the social order fundamentally just and equitable to the greatest number possible. Accountable rulers, actively participating citizens, open society and social justice – these are the four fundamental ends of democracy."

Ali. A Mazrui[12]

In this chapter, we explore four different accountability relationships. All these relationships exist at the same time, in multiple sectors and levels of governance, overlapping and affecting each other. In reality, if you had to map all the accountability relationships in operation at a given time even in a small town or local district, it would paint a very messy picture.

Yet it is useful to draw out some general patterns and dynamics because they help us think about the scope for accountability work along multiple fronts. This sourcebook focuses on democratic accountability between governments and the people they are meant to serve. In order to deliver goods and services to people, different state role-players are involved and the accountability relationships between *all of them* are important. For CSOs considering how to work in this terrain, it is essential to be familiar with the multiple accountability relationships. It can be on any of these fronts that accountability failures take place, and need to be highlighted and addressed.

On these pages, four key relationships in the chain of democratic accountability are explored:



For each of the relationships above, this chapter begins to examine what role CSOs might play in monitoring state commitments and standards, and strengthening accountability where possible.

Between elected leaders and the public

The relationship between the public and elected leaders is based on **consent** and **representation**. Elected leaders are supposed to represent the needs, concerns and interests of the people who voted them into power. Citizens, in turn, consent to be governed by elected leaders, and to abide by their decisions as long as these are in line with leaders' obligations and commitments.

Elected leaders usually play a key role in policy-making by serving in legislatures at national, sub-national and local level. Though laws and policies may be drafted by special units within government departments, it is the elected leaders who must ultimately decide whether to adopt them on behalf of a state. Policies have an important bearing on accountability, as they set the commitments of a government, and create the framework for the definition of standards.

The **role of CSOs** can include monitoring the formulation of standards and calling attention when standards are inadequate, vague, outdated or unrealistic. CSOs can hold elected leaders to account for meeting these standards, by participating in:

- Formal government-led accountability mechanisms, like voting in elections or making submissions to parliamentary committees.
- Less formal civil society-led mechanisms like public hearings, advocacy campaigns or protest action.

Between elected leaders and government officials

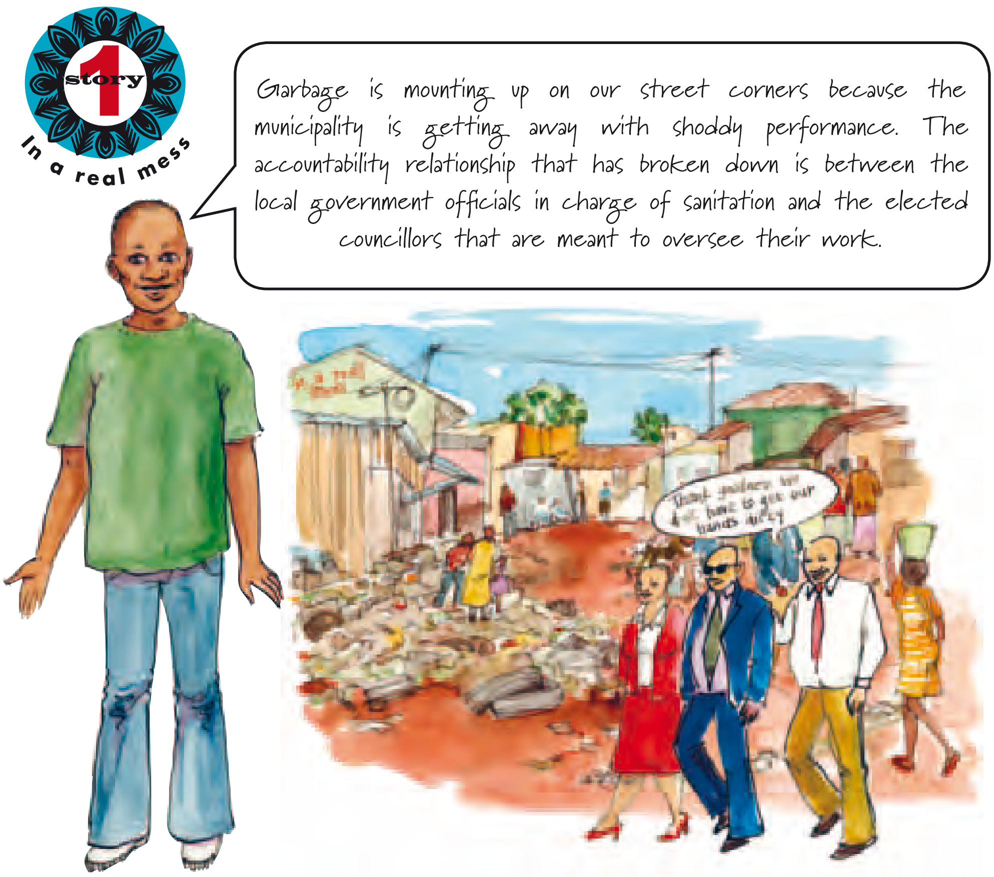
The relationship between elected leaders and government officials is based on **authorisation** and **oversight**. It is typically referred to as the relationship between the legislatures and the executive. The executive, under the leadership of the head of state, is responsible to execute and implement the laws and policies adopted by elected leaders. The cabinet uses government departments to organise and manage this implementation process. Usually the executive is authorised to make certain strategic decisions and use public resources as agreed in government budgets. At the same time, elected leaders are meant to oversee the implementation process and call the executive to account if it deviates from agreed commitments and standards.

Decentralised government

Most countries these days have governments that are divided into levels. The most common model has three levels: national, sub-national and local government. The national level is sometimes called central government. The sub-national level can be called by different names, like provincial, state or district government. The local level is also referred to as municipal government. Irrespective of all these terms, the key feature of multi-level governments is that the duty to implement certain functions is delegated downwards to lower levels of government. The authority to make decisions may also be delegated downwards, but this is not always the case. Local governments may enjoy more or less autonomy from higher levels, and this is an important factor in determining where accountability lies. Find out more in Chapter 8.

The **role of CSOs** on this front could include:

- Monitoring whether elected leaders are exercising their oversight role effectively and calling attention when legislatures merely 'rubber stamp' executive decisions.
- Gathering evidence on how well departments are implementing state obligations, and putting pressure on elected leaders to hold the executive to account.



Between government officials and frontline service providers

The relationship between government officials and frontline service providers is based on **contractual agreement** and **management**. It is not always easy to draw a clear line between government officials and service providers – in a sense everyone who delivers a government service can be seen as part of the executive. Yet for the purposes of thinking carefully about accountability, it helps to differentiate between the planners and managers of policy implementation - and the people who actually deliver services to citizens. This is because decision-makers in the executive have the responsibility to select, contract, train and manage service providers and oversee their work. This can be seen as part of their executive function.

The privatisation of service delivery

When public services are privatised, poor people are often exploited. Inequalities are entrenched when the system favours those who can pay. There is a growing trend, around the world, for governments to outsource or contract out certain functions of service delivery. This is part of what is called the 'shrinking government' – an attempt to get rid of large civil service bureaucracies. Those in favour of outsourcing government services argue that it increases efficiency and value for money. This viewpoint ignores how societies' most vulnerable people can come to be excluded from the benefits of "public" services.

The role of CSOs on this front could include:

- Monitoring the procurement of government goods and services and highlighting cases where the awarding of contracts was not transparent or equitable.
- Keeping track of which service delivery functions involve large scale outsourcing and calling on government officials to account for questionable decisions.

Between frontline service providers and the public

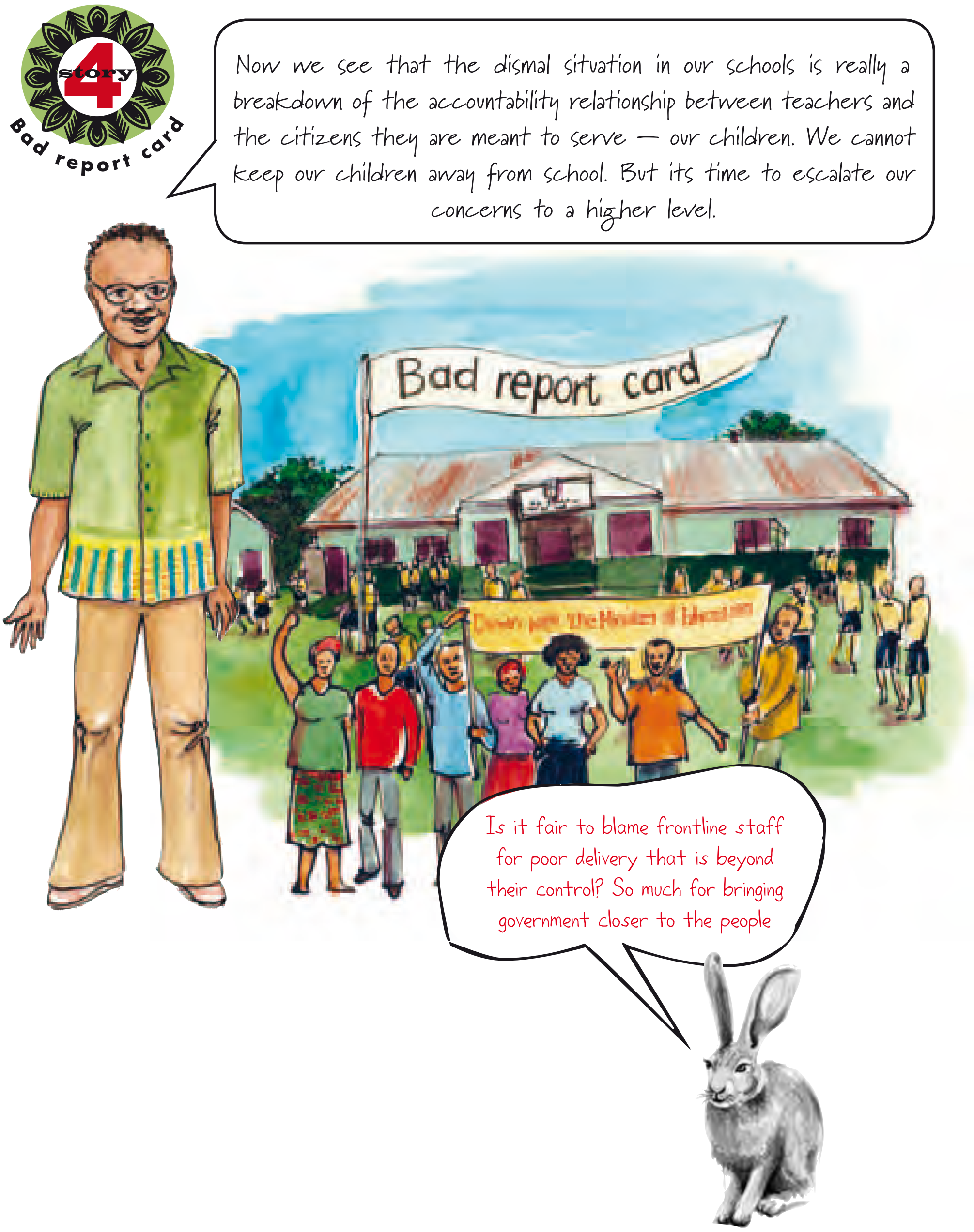
The relationship between frontline service providers and the public is based on **demand** and **response**. Frontline service providers generally do not have power over the policies and standards they are expected to implement (though they may influence these through trade unions and professional associations). They also often do not have much control over the facilities, resources and infrastructure of service delivery. What frontline service providers are able to affect, at least in part, is:

- The quality of the services they provide in terms of professional conduct, effort and commitment;
- The quantity of services they manage to provide in relation to citizen demand.

Frontline service providers are accountable both to their employers (usually government departments or agencies) and to the people they are meant to serve. Citizens are often dependent on government services. They cannot easily refrain from using services as a means of protest against poor standards.

The role of CSOs in this relationship could include

- Monitoring whether service delivery is in keeping with agreed commitments and standards, and calling attention when this is not the case.
- Calling on departments to take responsibility when frontline service providers are impaired by lack of resources, infrastructure or management support.
- Informing policy-makers when service delivery standards are inadequate and/or are out of keeping with what is happening on the ground.



cross reference
Learn more in Section 2
See Chapter 9 to explore various stakeholder relationships and diagnose the accountability dynamics that underlie chosen development problems.

Acknowledgement: This chapter was in part inspired and informed by the *World Development Report: Making Services Work for the Poor* (2004). See the bibliography for full details.

Chapter 7

Factors that undermine democratic accountability

"The legal-political design of local government in Africa tends to weaken the cultivation of a democratic culture at the local level as well as weaken the ability of local authorities to take initiative in the field of service provision".

Walter Oyugi[13]

It is possible, in theory at least, for all the accountability relationships in a country, district or local area to be working smoothly. This doesn't mean there would be no problems in governance or service delivery. But it does mean that such problems would be brought to light in good time and addressed with success. The difference between effective and faulty accountability can be captured in a nutshell like this:

In a well-functioning accountability system:	In a poorly-functioning accountability system:
• Misconduct and poor performance set off alarm bells	Misconduct and poor performance go unnoticed •
• Steps are taken to remedy the faults.	And/or no steps are taken to remedy the faults. •

There are many factors that can undermine democratic accountability. These factors stop the necessary alarm bells from ringing when they should. They also make it difficult or impossible to impose sanctions that would remedy the situation. This chapter considers a few such undermining factors:

- Social and cultural bias;
- Competing allegiances and patronage;
- Weak state institutions; and
- Weak civil society.

It is not desirable to generalise or assume that all these factors affect every context in the same way. The aim of this discussion is to draw attention to realistic challenges that make the accountability terrain more complex, diverse and dynamic.

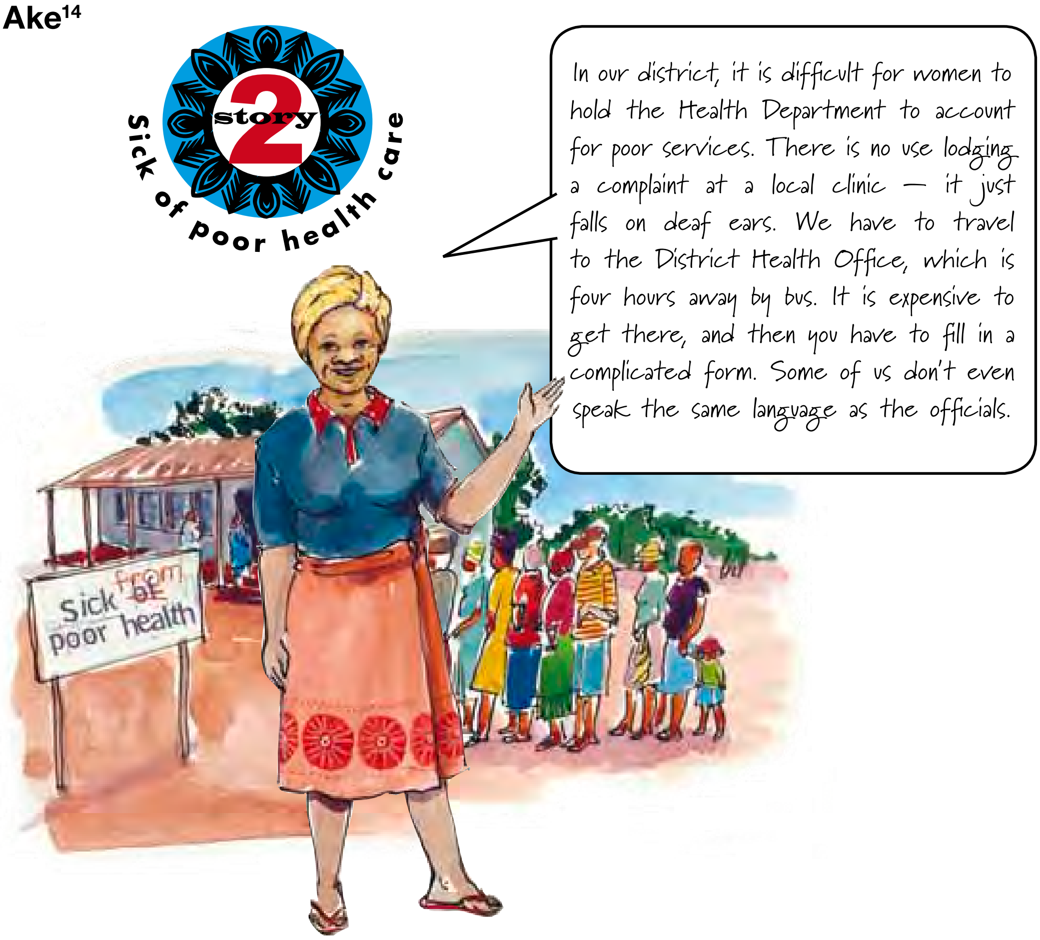
“The principles of democracy include widespread participation, consent of the governed, and public accountability of those in power – principles which permeated traditional African political systems.”

Claude Ake[14]

Social and cultural bias

Democracy and accountability are not Western inventions imposed in the African context. Scholars have shown how democratic practices are rooted in diverse African traditions and histories. Democratic accountability is not alien to Africa, nor is it in conflict with African culture, as some Afro-pessimists would suggest.

The way accountability is practiced in any context is influenced by the history and customs of that society. Beliefs about traditional roles and culture can play a complex role in accountability relationships. In many countries, ideas about ethnic identity have been used to define social positions. Within ethnic or cultural groups, certain customs may prescribe how women, men, children and elders are meant to behave. There may be traditions and rituals that exclude some people from decision-making, or make it unacceptable for some members of the group to question the conduct of others. This can be described as social or cultural bias.



The challenge of democratic accountability is to preserve what is valuable in cultural traditions, but also to confront those practices that reinforce social exclusion and inequality.

Social and cultural bias is sometimes built into systems of governance. The way formal accountability mechanisms are designed may make it difficult for women or others to participate. Opportunities to hold leaders to account could be out of reach for the elderly, people in rural areas, disabled people or the most poor. The system could function in such a way that it marginalises the unemployed or homeless, refugees, people without identity documents, or certain religious or ethnic groups – to name but a few possibilities.

Formal accountability systems display social and cultural bias when:

- Highly technical language is used in public hearings and on government forms, minimising the scope for public participation.
- The data collected to monitor government performance hide discrepancies in service delivery to rich and poor, men and women, and so forth.
- It is frowned upon or too expensive for some people to exercise existing sanctions.

Corruption and vulnerable groups

Corruption reduces the resources available for social services, and impacts on different groups in different ways:

- State officials may find it easier to steal resources aimed for vulnerable groups as they are usually less able to demand that authorities account for missing funds.
- Corruption may rely in part on sexual currency. Women may be expected to perform sexual services in stead of paying bribes to government officials.
- There may be collusion amongst state officials, politicians and some powerful citizens to restrict some groups' access to resources and services.

"In many instances, it is local elite rather than the most vulnerable that capture decentralised power—which is then utilised to repress local minorities—including women and other marginal groups."

Dele Olowu[15]

Competing allegiances and patronage

Democratic accountability is undermined when systems of informal accountability work against formal checks and balances. People may face the difficult choice of being loyal to their clan or cultural group on the one hand, and holding official leaders to account, on the other. When citizens lose trust in government, they are all the more inclined to retreat to ethnic enclaves. This makes for complex arrangements, where people constantly have to negotiate their way amongst competing expectations and allegiances.

"To believe democracy is working, everyone must feel that he is getting a fair share of whatever is available."

Quett Masire[16]

It is not always the case that the formal and informal systems of governance are clearly separated. There may be overlaps and reciprocal arrangements between informal traditional authorities and formal political leaders. In some instances, access to government jobs, resources and services may be manipulated along ethnic or religious lines, creating vast systems of patronage operating below the surface of formal government processes. When government officials also have clan or tribal status, it may be difficult for members of their own ethnic group to challenge their performance or conduct.

When powerful actors use their (official or unofficial) status and resources to influence, intimidate or manipulate others, it can be said that they have 'captured' these peoples' allegiance. Capture happens, for example, when leaders:

- Invite bribes in exchange for access to resources, services or opportunities.
- Promise to protect or prioritise certain groups over others in exchange for support.
- Offer favours in exchange for people turning a blind eye to misconduct or poor performance.

When patronage is entrenched

Unofficial systems of patronage can get entrenched over time. For example, when one ethnic or religious group is favoured by government officials, their privileges can come to seem like a regular feature of everyday life. It may be that 'everyone knows' how decisions are made about winning service contracts, bursaries, jobs in the civil service, or a place on a housing waiting list – even though these practices are not formally acknowledged. In some instances, an unwritten pact might exist between politicians and elite groups. As long as these groups do not call attention to government failures, their privileges are protected by the state.

Weak state institutions

Democratic accountability is compromised when state institutions are weak:

- Policies and standards are poorly formulated and planned, making them more difficult to implement and monitor.
- Government officials don't have the skills they need to follow financial and management procedures, or implement service delivery.
- It can be expensive and time-consuming to train enough people in key areas like accounting, project management and monitoring.
- Elected leaders may not have the capacity or time to exercise oversight very well.
- State structures such as audit institutions and electoral commissions may not be truly independent.

Government closer to the people?

Decentralisation is meant to ensure that citizens have more direct access to government. The more decisions and functions are managed at local level, the more easily people should be able to participate, right? Well, not always. In order for this picture to become a reality, local governments need to be strong and able. In many countries, decentralisation has actually contributed to weaker state institutions at local level. This happens when local governments have too much to do, but not enough resources to do it with. Institutions are stretched very thin, leaving little capacity for monitoring standards and enforcing accountability.

"Well-arranged civil society can … contribute effectively to moving government policies in directions that serve the purposes of maintaining public good. The problem, however, is [when] the public good is distorted by ethnic divisions and strife which government officials and politicians exploit for their own ends."

Ngozi Egbue[17]

Weak civil society

It stands to reason that when civil society is unorganised, ill-informed or disinterested, this has a negative impact on democratic accountability. There are different ways for citizens to help build accountability, but in all cases a degree of commitment and organisation is required. The following issues diminish the scope for civil society to participate in governance, which in turn undermines the potential for effective accountability:

- A lack of knowledge or interest in pursuing the political and civil rights of active citizenship, or the socio-economic rights of better livelihoods.
- No access to government information, with no campaign for freedom of information.
- Few civil society organizations able to mobilise people and lobby decision-makers.
- Deeply divided and fragmented society, in which significant segments are co-opted or favoured by government, while others are marginalised or oppressed.

How accountable are CSOs?

This Sourcebook focuses on building accountability between governments and the people they are meant to serve. However, the need for accountability is not limited to governments. Civil society organisations should have their own houses in order before they can legitimately call on other institutions to be accountable. Large and powerful international NGOs need to be accountable to the partner organisations they fund and work with. Membership-based movements and networks need to be accountable to the people they claim to represent. When CSOs waste resources or fail to implement their programs as planned, they should be answerable for their performance and accept sanctions.

cross reference

Learn more in Section 2
See Chapter 10 to explore how to build networks that strengthen civil society capacity and Chapter 12 to investigate ways of monitoring factors that undermine accountability.

ms actionaid

Acknowledgement: This chapter was in part informed by *Reinventing Accountability: Making Democracy Work for Human Development* (2005) by A-M Goetz & R. Jenkins. See the bibliography for full details.

Chapter 8

Civil society organisations in the accountability terrain

From this point forward, the Sourcebook builds on the foundation of the last seven chapters. The focus now shifts from understanding how accountability works to one of working with accountability. The aim of this chapter is to set the scene for Section II by presenting some useful themes and concepts for talking about accountability work.

cross reference

Learn more in Section 2 See Chapter 10 to learn about analysing accountability spaces in your own context.

The notion of accountability space

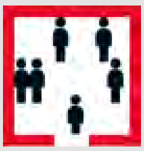
This section is inspired by and adapted from John Gaventa's ideas on participation spaces for civil society (see the bibliography for details). Consider for a moment that not all arena's where accountability is enforced or called for, are the same. A formal debate in parliament is quite different from a protest meeting. A disciplinary hearing in a municipal office is very different from the weekly gathering of a community-policing forum. These events belong to diverse accountability spaces.

Closed spaces

are spaces where accountability is exercised behind closed doors. Civil society is excluded from these spaces. Some closed spaces may be closed for good reason (for example, in camera court cases involving child witnesses). Others may be closed due to lack of transparency, and opening them up would be good for democratic governance.

Invited spaces

are spaces where citizens can participate in accountability mechanisms initiated and controlled by government. Civil society engages in these spaces at the behest of state actors and according to rules set by them. Yet there is often still scope for citizens to influence outcomes in these spaces.



Under-utilised spaces

are spaces that citizens are entitled to participate in, but rarely make use of for a variety of reasons. It may be expensive to use these spaces (like supreme or constitutional courts in many countries). There may be gate-keepers who discourage entry or citizens may simply be unaware that these spaces are available to them.

Claimed spaces

are spaces created and demanded by civil society. These include forums initiated by citizen groups where government officials are called to account. Claimed spaces may range from public meetings to visiting government facilities to deepening participation across a range of other public domains.

"In order to have people-centred development, there is a need to make all stakeholders participate, all service providers must be accountable, committed and both receivers and providers of services must be transparent."

Mary John Mwingira[18]

cross reference

Learn more in Section 2
See Chapter 9 for more information on conducting a power analysis.

think about this

What kinds of power impact on the accountability spaces in your country?

The power dynamics of different accountability spaces are a key feature to keep in mind when you engage with state actors and other stakeholders. Those who create an accountability space usually also determine the rules that apply there. Such rules may be biased, and even if the bias is subtle, this affects what can be achieved in the space.

Power in accountability spaces

In any accountability space, there is usually more than one kind of power at work:

- Overt, visible power is exercised through formal rules, structures and procedures. For example, in a legislature the speaker usually has the power to chair debates taking place in this space.
- Covert, hidden power is exercised from behind the scenes. For example, some powerful stakeholders may be able to influence what gets placed on the agenda of a meeting, or who gets invited to the decision-making table.
- Conditioned, internalised power is exercised through deeply ingrained beliefs and traditions in society. For example, a seasoned male politician may feel very confident and comfortable speaking to a crowd of powerful decision-makers, while other citizens may not. This kind of power influences whose voices are heard most often and taken most seriously.

Adapted from *A New Weave of Power, People & Politics: The action guide for advocacy and citizen participation* (2002) by Lisa VeneKlasen & Valerie Miller. See bibliography for full details.

Closed accountability space

Under-utilised accountability space

The accountability space to address our garbage crisis is under-utilised by civil society. We need to get more involved with the local councillors, and see that they exercise better oversight over the running of municipal services.

Invited accountability space

Community members enter an invited space when they serve on the disciplinary committee at our school. But we know who really pulls the strings in those meetings!

Claimed accountability space

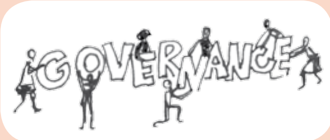
The procurement of goods and services has always happened behind closed doors in our city. But watch this space – it will soon be claimed for civil society monitoring.

Accountability work as a means to different ends

Civil society organisations decide to undertake accountability work for different reasons. There is no single correct motivation for getting involved in this terrain. However, it is important to have a clear sense of what you want to achieve when you participate in or build accountability spaces. Take a look at four of the most common ends CSOs may hope to achieve:

Civil society organisations get involved in accountability work in order to

Improve service delivery so that citizens can benefit directly from better government services, especially in a specific sector or geographical location



Strengthen governance so that power is kept in check, better standards are set and transparency ensures that problems in the system are corrected

Fight corruption so that public resources get used for the development goals they were intended for, and ethical conduct is promoted

Empower citizens so that people are informed and equipped to participate in checking whether the state is meeting its commitments and standards

The goals above are not mutually exclusive and they are clearly linked by complex patterns of cause and effect. For example, service delivery should improve if you strengthen governance and fight corruption. Likewise, corruption should diminish when citizens are empowered to monitor government conduct. So while you may want to bring about change in more than one way, it helps to define a primary goal and let it guide your approach to accountability work.

Accountability work is not about extracting favours

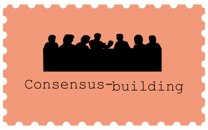
There is a danger for accountability work to be used inappropriately to extract benefits from local government officials. For example, if a CSO persistently petitions a decision-maker for resources to be spent in a particular village, she may finally relent just to get them off her back. The danger is that resources may then simply be shifted from five other villages to satisfy the demands of the one village with the most vocal civil society. Therefore accountability work should always be informed by higher level questions of equity and sound decision-making.

Adapted from *Going Local: Decentralisation, democratisation and the promise of good governance* (2009) by M.S. Grindle. See bibliography for full details.

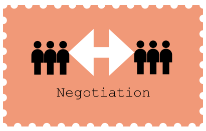
Working *on* or *with* government: Four approaches

Depending on the political and historical context in a country or local area, CSOs have different orientations towards engaging with government. In some countries, the relationship between government and civil society is antagonistic or distrustful, while in others co-operation is possible and beneficial. Below are four different roles civil society actors might consider when doing accountability work (and there are many more possibilities).

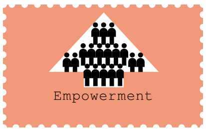
Staunchly independent watchdog: Civil society is seen as the counterfoil to state power and always monitors government conduct and performance from the outside.



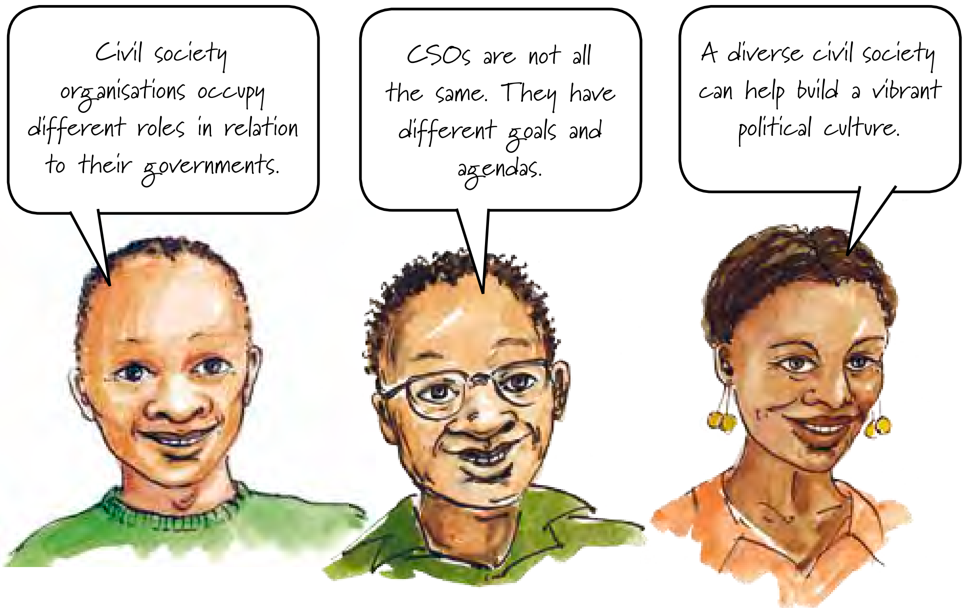
Deliberator and problem-solver: Civil society helps to deepen understanding of key accountability challenges and facilitates processes to find innovative solutions.



Participant in co-operative governance: Civil society works with state actors to represent citizen interests within accountability structures and processes.



Enabler of bottom-up accountability: Civil society creates spaces for citizens to monitor government conduct and performance and directly hold state actors to account.



"Every movement starts somewhere - usually from scratch. There are no limits to what the campaigns of tomorrow can achieve - campaigns not yet born, for causes not yet articulated, championed by hearts and minds still being formed."

Kofi Annan[19]

Participatory approaches

When civil society organisations engage in accountability work, it is always important for them to do so in ways that promote participation, transparency and the rule of law. Substantial participation means ensuring that those most marginalised from political decision-making are enabled to speak for themselves and to determine their own courses of action in the accountability terrain.

Working at the local level

"Decentralisation is only really effective if it includes decentralisation of the power to make decisions, allocate the resources needed to implement these decision and actually execute them."

Diana Conyers[20]

In discussions and debates about building democracy, it is often suggested that the greatest promise lies at the local level. The idea is that service delivery and governance can really be improved when local leaders are directly accountable to local citizens about issues most relevant in the local context. For many civil society organisations, it may therefore be useful to focus special attention on strengthening *local* accountability and monitoring the obligations of *local* governments.

The process of creating (or expanding) government structures at sub-national and local level is called **decentralisation**. In essence, decentralisation happens whenever a central government defers powers and functions to actors and institutions at lower levels of government. Decentralising government is a trend in many countries, including most developing countries. However, there are many different ways for this process to unfold, and it doesn't bring about the same benefits everywhere.

The scope for accountability at the local level is constrained when:

- Local governments have no say over policy decisions, and merely serve as the implementing arms of central government.
- Local governments have no resources of their own and are not provided with the means to fulfil their functions (this is called an unfunded mandate).
- Local councillors are appointed by central government or dominant political parties.
- Local councillors have no control over municipal staff or finances.
- Local governments are legally accountable to higher levels of government and not to local citizens.

"Citizen participation in local affairs is necessarily limited when there are constraints on the freedom of association and the liberty of expression"

Jean-Pierre Elong-Mbassi[21]

All the same, there are instances when it is indeed possible to strengthen democratic accountability at the local level. If so, this is a key area for civil society to focus on. As the case studies in Section II clearly illustrate, dedicated citizen-led initiatives to foster high quality local accountability hold great potential to bring direct improvements to peoples' lives.

Remember the seven characteristics of accountability introduced on the first page of chapter 1? Effective, well-functioning systems of local accountability have the potential to:

- Strengthen the **relationships** between local politicians, civil servants and communities, while allowing new local leaders to emerge.
- Ensure that local leaders take **responsibility** for their decisions and performance by highlighting how these impact directly on local peoples' lives.
- Enhance **transparency** by promoting access to government information and opening up government processes to civic scrutiny.
- Give substance to **human rights** by making sure people receive better government services that really meet their needs and enhance their dignity.
- Re-shape the **power** dynamics between local actors through broad **participation** in local decision-making, service provision, monitoring and evaluation of progress.
- Promote the **rule of law** by seeing that agreed commitments and standards are adhered to, and imposing consequences for misconduct and negligence.

cross reference

Learn more in Section 2
All the chapters in the next section provide ideas and practical insights for undertaking accountability work.

Strategic issues for CSOs

Section I of this Sourcebook has drawn attention to the following strategic choices facing civil society organisations:

- Why take up accountability work?
- Which state obligations are you concerned about?
- Can you access relevant information about state commitments and standards?
- Would you monitor standards even if they're inadequate or unrealistic?
- Which accountability relationships are most relevant to your work?
- How will you guard against bias and capture?
- What kind of accountability space do you aim to work in?
- Will you work with, alongside or as a counterfoil to government?
- Do you want to address nuts and bolts service delivery issues and/or tackle more long-term issues like the quality of governance?
- How much potential is there to enhance local accountability in your context?

Acknowledgements: This chapter was in part inspired and informed by John Gaventa's Power Cube approach for analysing civil society participation space, and his paper, *Triumph, Deficit or Contestation? Deepening the 'Deepening Democracy' Debate* (2005). Ideas were also adapted from *Social Accountability: An Introduction to the concept and emerging practice* (2004) by Malena, Forster & Singh. See the bibliography for full details.

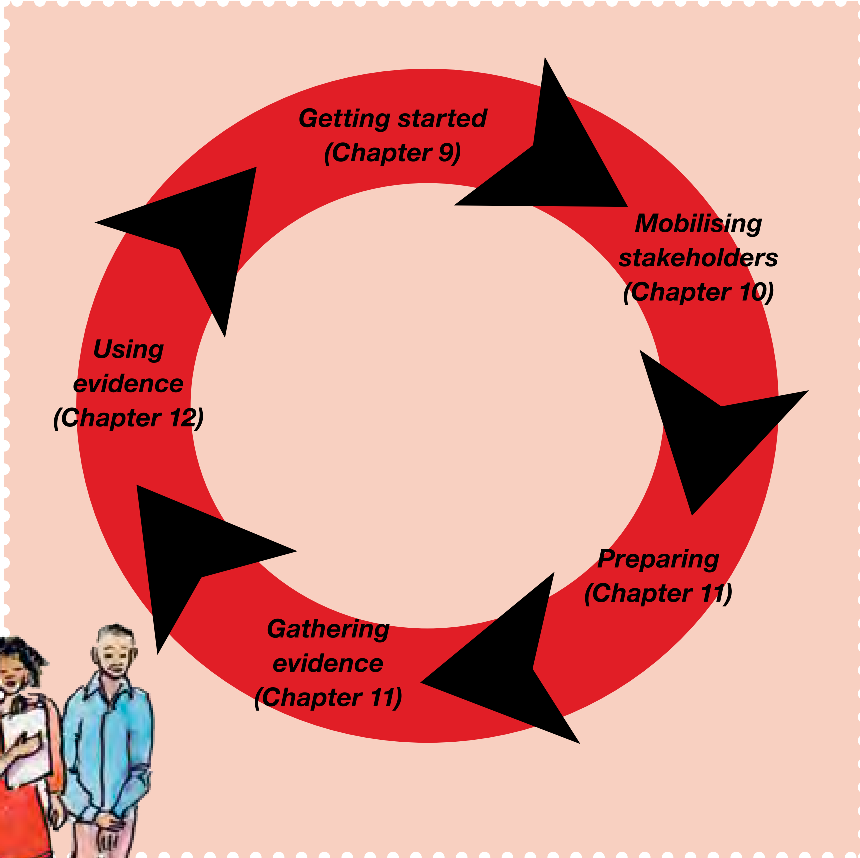
SECTION II
WORKING FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

In this section, you can find out more about:

- Different activities that form part of accountability work
- Ways to get started with accountability work
- Mobilising stakeholders around an accountability issue
- Securing access to information and selecting indicators
- Various methods for gathering evidence
- Using evidence to hold government actors to account.

Phases of accountability work

Doing accountability work is a process involving different kinds of activities. If you want to have an impact, it is important to think through all the phases of accountability work, even before you begin.



Please note: There is no single correct process for doing accountability work. The cycle above is not intended to be prescriptive. It is possible to enter the accountability terrain through any of the phases, and structure them as befits your context. In practice, it is often necessary to move back and forth between the phases.

Exploring the accountability terrain in phases does not suggest a single model that should be followed in exactly the same way everywhere. The intention is rather to break up the many facets of accountability work into manageable chunks – and to investigate how some activities create the foundation for others.

The information in this Section should really be seen as building blocks that civil society organisations can draw from to construct your own approach to accountability work. In each chapter, you will come across:

Practical tools that can be used to support your work.

References to more information in other parts of the Sourcebook.

Think about this: questions to guide further exploration

A note on terminology

The various methods and approaches included in this Sourcebook are not always referred to as 'accountability work' by other organisations or in other resources. In addition, many of these tools are not limited to monitoring governments. Some can also be used to strengthen accountability in corporations, donor organisations and CSOs themselves. Certain tools, like stakeholder mapping, are used across a broad range of institutions and fields. Tools for gathering and using evidence are often adopted by CSOs to influence government policies and budgets, and not always with the direct aim of improving accountability. So keep in mind that many of the methods and tools gathered here are also packaged and presented under other headings.

Chapter 9
Getting started with accountability work


We came across dozens of tools, guides and manuals...
...for influencing policy, for lobbying stakeholders
...for building democracy, for pro-poor change
So many books, reports and websites to look at – and yet...
...we had no idea which approach would work best for us.
Until we went back to basics and asked ourselves what we really wanted to achieve with our accountability work.

Identifying the focus of your accountability work

Accountability work is undertaken for many reasons and in different situations. The four stories in Section 1 introduced a few examples. Whatever the circumstances, the key to meaningful accountability work is to have a clear idea of what you want to change.

In this Sourcebook, it is assumed that you are coming to accountability work as part of a civil society organisation of some kind. It may be anything from a large, established non-governmental organisation to a small, newly formed community-based group. Across these organisations, you might have different aims and expectations in mind as you consider how to get started with accountability work. For example, it may be that:

- Your organisation already works in a specific sector, like health, or agriculture or access to water – and would like to strengthen accountability within that sector;
- Your organisation already has an agreed strategic plan with clear goals – and the idea is to enhance your impact by adding an accountability dimension to your work;
- Your organisation already works with a particular constituency or group, like youth, the elderly, children or refugees – and you want to equip them to demand accountability on issues of their own choice.
- Your organisation was formed around a shared community problem, like a shortage of classrooms at a local school – and your aim is to solve this problem by using accountability tools.

think about this

Who should decide what kind of accountability work is most important in your context? This will depend, in part, on the mandate of your organisation. Using participatory methods in your planning could provide vital information and help build key relationships.

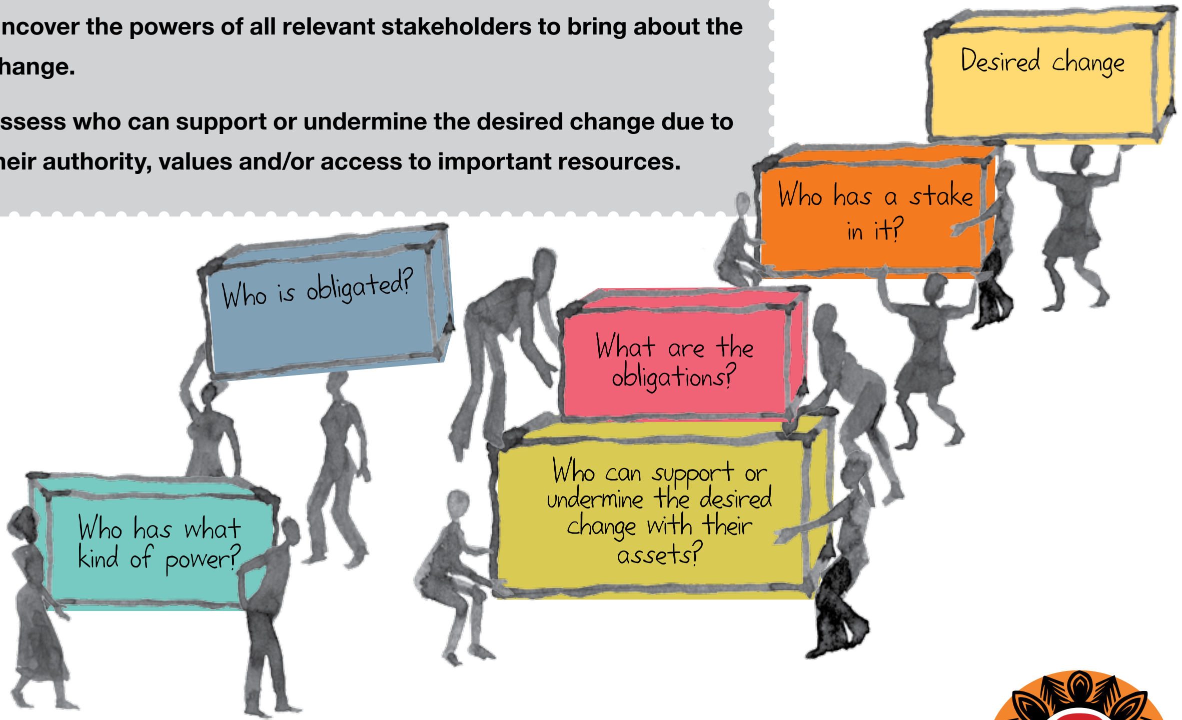
No matter what route has brought you to the accountability terrain, there will be some spade work to do to define your focus. The building blocks below can be applied in almost any situation to bring together the starting ingredients for an accountability work project.

cross reference

Learn more in Section 1
See Chapters 1, 2 and 6 for a discussion of the concepts used in this chapter, such as accountability, obligations and accountability relationships.

Building blocks to define a focus for accountability work

1. **Analyse the change you want to see, and the contributing factors that would help to bring it about.**
2. **Identify the stakeholders who could affect this change, and would be affected by it.**
3. **Clarify what government obligations exist in relation to the desired change, if any.**
4. **Pinpoint which state actors are obligated to bring about this change (and examine the accountability relations amongst them).**
5. **Uncover the powers of all relevant stakeholders to bring about the change.**
6. **Assess who can support or undermine the desired change due to their authority, values and/or access to important resources.**



story 3
Left in the dark

When we looked into the electricity problem in our city, we found big gaps in accountability. The government has been privatising parts of the electricity system, with private companies setting up power generation facilities and then selling electricity to the state. But there's no law providing for civil society to monitor whether these deals are above board. And no regulations seem to exist to ensure electricity provision is transparent and fair! How can we even begin thinking about accountability work when we have nothing to work with?

What is the change you want to bring about?

It is essential to have a clear picture of the goal of your accountability work. Usually, this takes the form of some kind of improvement, be it healthier children, more household income, greater citizen participation in decision-making, better quality housing or more trustworthy leaders. The more detail you can attach to the desired change you have in mind, the more focussed you can be in your planning.

Remember that the kind of change you want to see could be about improving service delivery, combating corruption, strengthening governance, empowering citizens or any combination of these (see chapter 8 in Section 1). In some contexts, the desired change may be to establish accountability mechanisms where there are none. This is especially likely in countries where formal accountability has been destroyed or undermined by war, natural disasters, mass migration, military coups or other non-democratic changes of government.

Whatever goal is most apt in your context, the next step is to think about your desired change as something dynamic – as something tied to causes and effects. The following tool can be used to do so.

TOOL 1: A Tree of Change

A Tree of Change is a useful way to indentify possible triggers to bring about change in the status quo. When you have a desired goal in mind, it is usually easy to imagine the positive results it could bring about. Identifying negative effects can be more challenging - but no less important, as this may indicate where there could be resistance to the change. Likewise, it helps to have a clear sense of what events or decisions need to be triggered before the desired change can come about.

Drawing a chart like the one on the next page can assist you to analyse:

- your desired change (the trunk) within a bigger system (the tree);
- the results that could flow from your desired change (the branches); and
- the contributing factors that could help bring about your desired change (the roots).

You can also show immediate and longer term results and contributing factors by adding branches and roots closer or further away from the trunk.

Once you have identified the possible contributing factors and results of your desired change, you can start seeing what your accountability work might entail. If the goal above was yours, what would your accountability work need to focus on?

Would you work to:

- Advocate for clear obligations and standards in the energy sector?
- Lobby for the right to access public records and use it to track public spending on electricity?
- Work with local councillors to help monitor and scrutinise the government's management of electricity provision?
- Keep watch over transparency and fairness in the privatisation of electricity generation facilities?

Example: A Tree of Change about electrification

Learn more in Section 1
See Chapter 7 for an overview of factors that undermine accountability. Some of these may need to be addressed to bring about your desired change.

Who are the stakeholders?

It is important to be strategic about who you want to work with and who you aim to influence through your accountability work. There are probably many different individuals, organisations, departments and institutions who have a stake (either directly or indirectly) in the change you hope to bring about. Stakeholders are all those who can affect your desired change, as well as those who would be affected by it. Amongst your stakeholders, there are likely to be some who approve of the change you want, others who oppose it and some who do not have strong feelings either way. One or more stakeholders could have an obligation to bring about your desired change, with or without the ability to actually see it through. Any of these stakeholders might turn out to be allies or opponents of your accountability work.

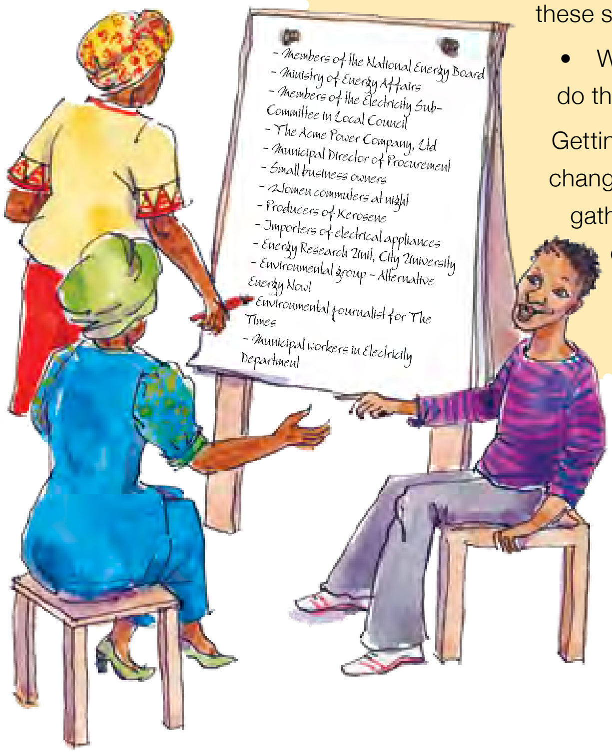
TOOL 2: Identifying stakeholders

To identify who has a stake in the change you want to see, the first step could be to brainstorm a list of possible individuals, organisations and other role-players. Take the five types of stakeholders in the box on page 61 into account while doing so.

Once you have a list like the one in the illustration, the next step is to investigate each of the stakeholders in more detail. The aim would be to establish:

- Who are the key individuals involved in each of these stakeholder groups?
- What different interests and value systems may be operating inside each grouping or institution?
- What different kinds of power may be at play within and between these stakeholders?
- What kinds of information and other resources do the different stakeholders have access to?

Getting to know the stakeholders of your desired change is an on-going process. It is vital to begin gathering this information right from the start of your accountability work – and to keep updating and reviewing it as you proceed.



Five types of stakeholders

Stakeholders can be categorized into five groups relative to the change you want to see:

- **Duty bearers:** Those who have an obligation to bring about or contribute to your desired change.
- **Rights holders:** Those who are entitled to the change you want.
- **Beneficiaries:** Those who are not directly entitled, but will benefit from the change.
- **Otherwise affected:** Those who will be otherwise affected by the desired change, either negatively or in any other way that is not expressly beneficial.
- **Interested parties:** Those who may be interested in, comment on or study the process - such as a university researchers and journalists.

cross reference

Learn more in Section 1 See Chapter 2 for an introduction to the concepts of duty bearers and rights holders, and Chapter 6 for more on the various role-players involved in accountability relationships.

What obligations exist and who is obligated?

To hold state actors accountable, their conduct or performance has to be assessed against what they are obligated to do. Without obligations, accountability cannot be enforced. An essential element in defining the focus of your accountability work is to find out the nature of any government obligations that already exist in relation to the change you want to see.

If there are no obligations in place relevant to your desired change, your accountability work will have to begin by advocating for obligations to be formulated and adopted. Even when obligations do exist, quite a bit more detective work might be needed to accurately map out the various state actors who are obligated, and what each is obligated to do.

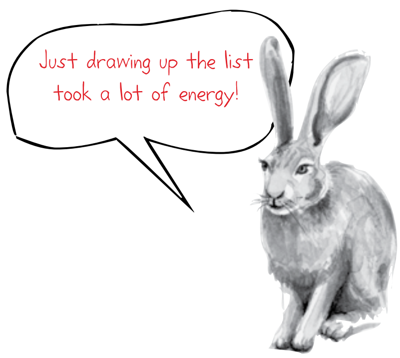
cross reference

Learn more in Section 1 See Chapter 2 for more on where obligations come from

TOOL 3: Linking obligations to stakeholders

The first step is to identify, summarise and list all the obligations that appear in existing documents or laws, that outline what the state is meant to do (or refrain from doing) relevant to your desired change. Remember to take the various levels or spheres of government into account. You could use a table like the one below to organise your research. The second step is to clarify and note down exactly which stakeholders are responsible for each of the obligations.

CATEGORY	OBLIGATION TO	WHO IS OBLIGATED?
Political obligations	Improve access to electricity by 25% by 2020	Cabinet/Overseen by MPs
	Implement the Energy 2020 Strategic Plan	Ministry of Energy Affairs
	Upgrade electricity supply in our city	Energy Ministry & Municipal Sub-Committee on Electricity
Financial, administrative & managerial obligations	Oversee financial management of utility functions	Ministry of Public Enterprises
	Ensure sound financial reporting	Chief Financial Officers, Energy Ministry & City Council
	Procure electricity for the city	Municipal Director of Procurement
Performance obligations	Manage city electricity grid	Senior City Manager: Electricity Infrastructure
	Install and maintain electricity boxes and transmission lines	Manager: Municipal Power installations
	Install and maintain street lights and traffic lights	Manager: Public Lighting &Municipal Traffic Chief



In some instances, the obligations you uncover may be quite straight-forward. Maybe only a few state role-players are obligated and their mandates are clearly differentiated. Yet more often than not, the change you want to see will involve a mix of political, financial, managerial, administrative, and performance obligations. Some obligations may stem from the local level, while others may derive from the district, national, regional and international levels. You will probably come across more than one obligated party, and a trail of relationships amongst them.

Therefore, in preparation for your accountability work, you are likely to face the challenge of unpicking a complex tapestry of obligations and obligated role-players, and analysing how they fit together.

Whether you do it yourselves, or ask for help, Tool 3 should leave you with:

- a clear picture of all the government obligations that impact on your desired change; and
- a list of all the obligated state actors who have duties relevant to your desired change.

Tool 4 on the following page can be used to gain a more thorough understanding of the processes involved in meeting a government obligation. This knowledge can help you to track where accountability can be strengthened and pinpoint where to influence critical decisions.

Where to start if there are no obligations?

Investigating who is responsible for bringing about your desired change, may lead to the discovery that no one is formally obligated. It may also be that the relevant obligations are ill-defined and unclear even to government actors themselves. What can CSOs do to help establish accountability systems where there are none? You could start by asking who could (or should) be responsible to formulate and legalise the missing obligations, and foster public dialogue on what they should contain.

TOOL 4: Mapping a decision-making sequence

One way to explore the nuts and bolts of a government obligation is to identify all the small and big decisions needed in the process of meeting that obligation.

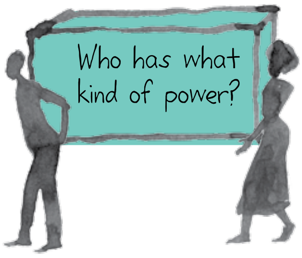
To use the tool below, start with a specific event or output that should flow from the obligation. For instance, this could be 'Medicines are delivered to 80 clinics in the district' or 'Fifteen new schools are built in the province'. For the purposes of the example below, we will use the following event as a starting point: 'User fees for electricity are set.'

A sequence of decisions	Example
Expected output of the obligation	User fees for electricity are set
↓	↓
Who decides about that?	Who decides the price? Advisory Committee of National Energy Board
↓	↓
And who decides about that?	Who decides who is on the Committee? Public nominations approved by MPs
↓	↓
And who decides about that?	Who nominates candidates to be approved? Mostly political parties, but citizens can too

Continue tracking the sequence of decision-making until you have uncovered all the role-players who have a say (or should have a say) in realising a given obligation. Sometimes it can be especially useful to repeat the exercise twice:

- Draw up one chart to show the decision-making sequence as it is supposed to happen in theory, or by law; and
- Gather more information and draw another chart to show how the process actually unfolds in practice.

Who has what kind of power?



In Section 1 of the Sourcebook, it was suggested that power is present in all accountability relationships. Chapter 8 took a brief look at different kinds of power: visible, hidden and internalised power. How are these different kinds of power present and active amongst the stakeholders of the change you want to bring about?

- **Visible power:** Some stakeholders are likely to have obvious power in relation to the obligation you are investigating. Power is made visible through laws, policies and regulations that clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of different state actors, departments and institutions. Holding rights is also a form of power. The power of citizens to impact on government decisions and processes may be made visible in a bill of rights, constitution, other laws, regulations or charters. Visible power is the most easy to recognise, as it is out in the open and in most instances, written down in some kind of document.

- **Hidden power:** Amongst the stakeholders you have identified, there will doubtlessly also be covert power relationships. This kind of power operates 'behind closed doors' and refers to situations where decisions are brokered between powerful individuals outside the formal structures of governance. When you consider the change you want to bring about, it is essential to try and identify who has hidden power over any part of the decision-making sequence you will try to affect. Which state and civil society actors have access to resources or information behind the scenes? It may not be enough to tackle the visible power points, if the hidden power holders are able to undermine your progress.

- **Internalised power:** All the stakeholders on your list will have some conditioned or internalised perceptions of power. These are beliefs about their own and others' status in society, and about what behaviour is 'appropriate' for different people in different situations. How is your desired change perceived by different role-players? Is it seen as a 'women's issue', a 'grassroots issue' or perhaps an issue best left to specialists? Consider how the traditions of political debate and decision-making in your country might impact on achieving your desired change.

TOOL 5: Power analysis

There are many different ways to conduct a power analysis of stakeholders. For the purposes of accountability work, one way may be to cluster the stakeholders you have identified according to:

- The kinds of power they have, be it visible, hidden or internalised power;
- The accountability mechanisms they have access to, be these vertical or horizontal, formal or informal, state-led or citizen-led; and/or
- How much power they have over your desired change.

The questions below may be useful to discuss and unpack to inform your power analysis.

Key questions to ask about power

Where does the power lie?

- **Do laws or policies explain who has the power to make your desired change?**
- **Where does the real power lie to affect your desired change?**
- **Does the real power lie with those who are obligated?**
- **If there are stakeholders who are obligated to bring about your desired change, who are they formally accountable to?**
- **Who are they informally accountable to?**
- **Who does not have any power to impact on the change you want?**
- **Who could be empowered with resources, information, knowledge or skills to contribute to your desired change?**

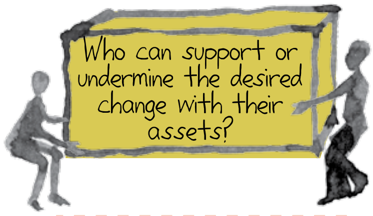
What are the power dynamics?

- **How is hidden power being exercised amongst the stakeholders?**
- **How would your desired change be perceived by the various stakeholders?**
- **Are there people who would benefit or lose out if the change came about?**
- **Who would benefit or lose out if your accountability work succeeds?**
- **What conflicts of interest could emerge in the process of realising your desired change?**
- **What accountability spaces could you use to channel potential conflicts?**
- **How does hidden and internalised power function within these accountability spaces?**

cross reference

Learn more in Section 1
See Chapter 8 for an introduction to different kinds of power and accountability spaces.

Who can support or undermine the desired change?



By now you should have a fair idea of the power landscape surrounding the goal you aim to achieve through your accountability work. The last building block in defining your focus is to identify two very important categories of stakeholders:

- The stakeholders you will have to influence or convince to bring about your desired change. You can think about this group of stakeholders as the **target audience** of your accountability work.
- The stakeholders you could draw into your accountability work and co-operate with to bring about the desired change. This group represents your **allies** or **partners**.

To arrive at the important decisions above, it is useful to undertake some further stakeholder analysis. There are many different tools and methods available that can help you investigate and categorise stakeholders in different ways. TOOL 6 at the end of this chapter is one you could consider.

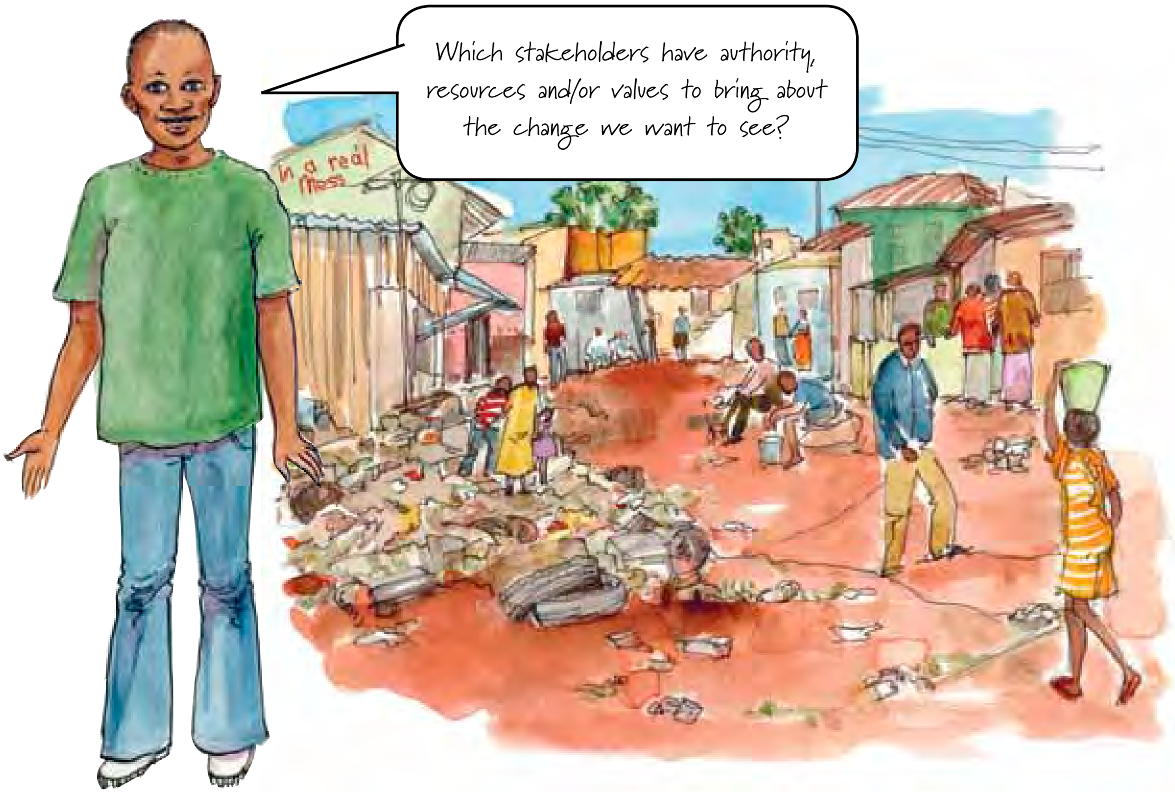
Besides the different kinds of power discussed in the previous section, there are three key assets to take into consideration when you consider your stakeholders. These are authority, resources and values. All three are generally needed to bring about any significant level of change. All three can similarly be used or withheld to undermine the change you want to bring about.

Of the three assets listed above, the value base of stakeholders is often the most underestimated ingredient in accountability work. The term 'value base' is used here to refer to the mixture of values, will, attitudes, aspirations and behaviour that reflects peoples' engagement with civic life.

cross reference

Learn more in Section II
See the end of Chapter 12 for some brief information on communicating with your target audience.

Learn more in Section II
See Chapter 10 to find out more about building networks and partnerships.



How well you understand and interact with stakeholders' values can play a big role in the success of your work. For example, even when a stakeholder has the authority and resources to meet an obligation, she is unlikely to do so (or do so well and often) if it is out of keeping with her value base. The greatest obstacle to meeting your goal could lie in being at odds with the values of powerful stakeholders. Furthermore, in situations where no formal authority and very little resources are available, social capital may be all you can catalyse to begin building an accountability system.

cross reference

Learn more in Section II See Chapter 12, especially the quilt of methods at the beginning of the chapter, for ideas on how to gather information from stakeholders.

So it helps to be aware of the value base of all stakeholders before you select the most strategic partners and target audience(s) for your accountability work. This is not always an easy task. All you can really observe is what people say and do. From this, it is necessary to deduce what they value. In some cases, it may be possible to use some of the tools discussed in Chapter 12 (such as surveys and interviews) to find out more about stakeholders' values.

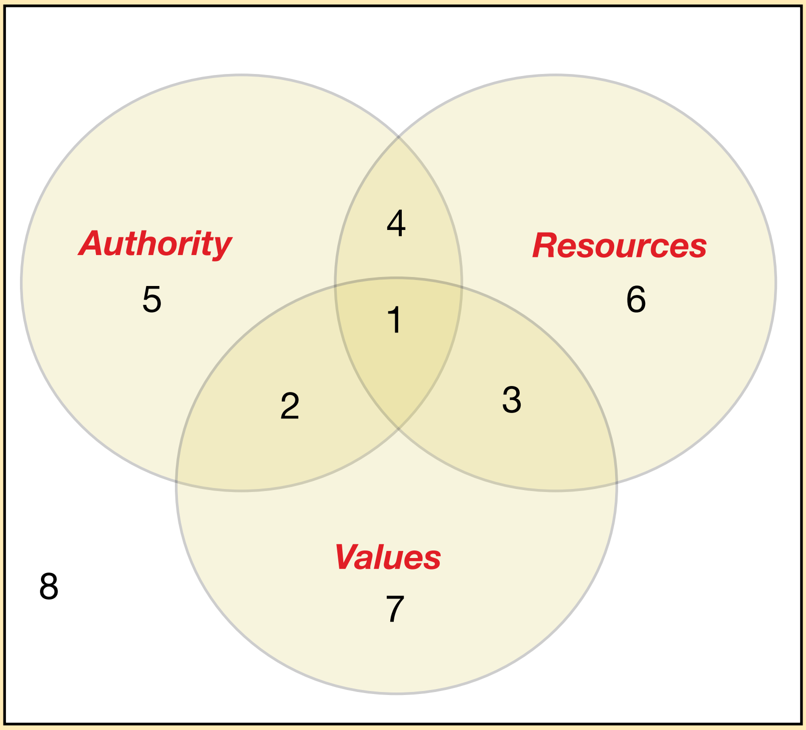
TOOL 6: RAV (Resources, Authority and Values) Analysis

When you start your accountability work, it is important to know who has the resources, authority and value base to assist or undermine the change you want to see. This also allows you to consider who could be supported or equipped with greater authority, resources and/or recognition so that they may play a more prominent role.

In order to use this tool, make sure you have already brainstormed a list of stakeholders and gathered information about their resources, authority and values. You can now use this information to conduct an RAV Analysis in three steps.

Step 1

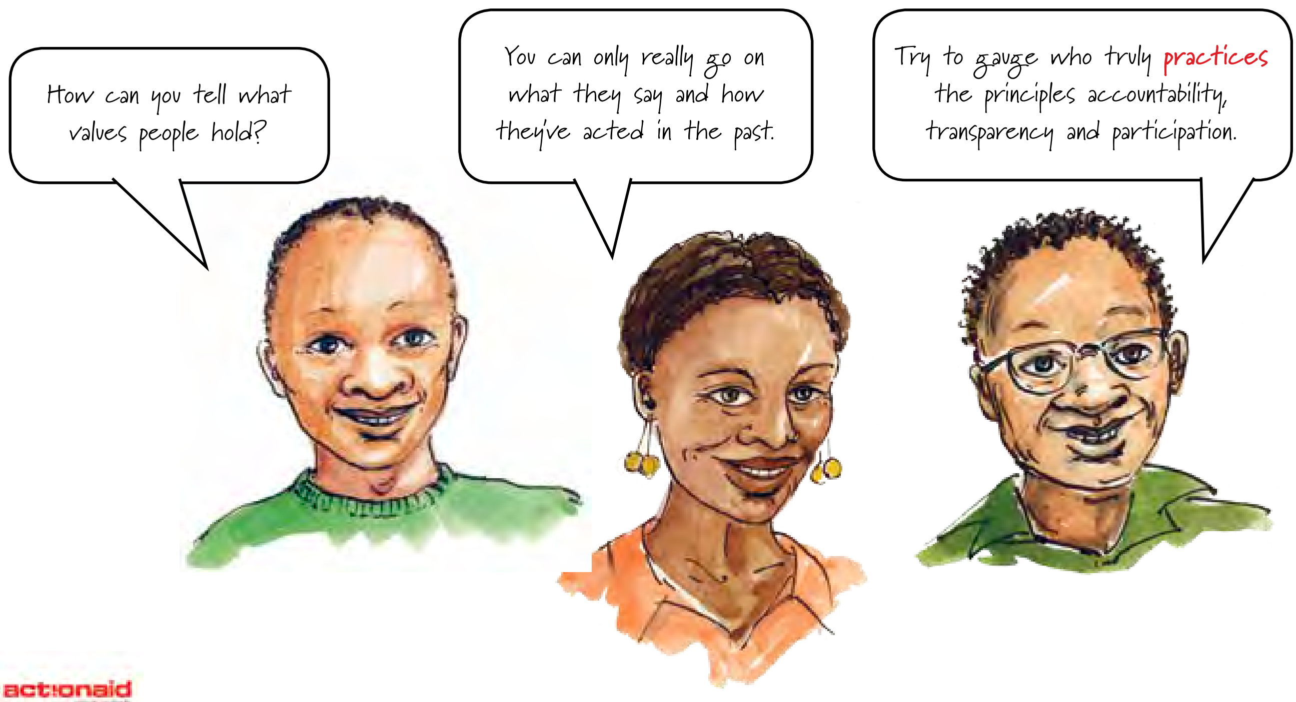
Create a chart like the one below. It should be big enough so that everyone participating in the analysis can clearly see all eight zones on the chart. Number the zones exactly as shown here.



Step 2

Write the names of all your stakeholders on cards and stick each stakeholder in one (or more) of the **eight** zones of the chart. Here are some guidelines to help you:

- **Zone 1:** Place those who have authority, resources and values that can help bring about the change you want. (This could be a supportive government decision-maker).
- **Zone 2:** Place those who have the authority and values to support your desired change, but lack the resources to do it. (This could be a well-disposed frontline service provider, who has no budget to bring about the improvement you want).
- **Zone 3:** Place those who have resources and values to support your desired change, but lack the formal authority. (This could be friendly, pro-democracy journalist with the power to transmit information, for example).
- **Zone 4:** Place those who have authority and resources, but whose values are at odds with your desired change. (This could be a government official who profits from corruption and has no intention to bring about the change you want).
- **Zone 5:** Place those who have authority, but lack the resources and values to support your desired change. (This could be councillor or MP who does not see the necessity of holding the executive to account).
- **Zone 6**: Place those who have resources to support you, but lack authority and similar values in relation to the change. (This could be an institution with networks and analytical skills that could benefit your accountability work, but who are not motivated to get involved).
- **Zone 7:** Place those who would value the change you want to bring about, but who have no authority or resources. This could be a person who is directly affected by the present situation but has no capacity to address it.
- **Zone 8:** Place any other stakeholders who do not fit in zones 1 to 7.



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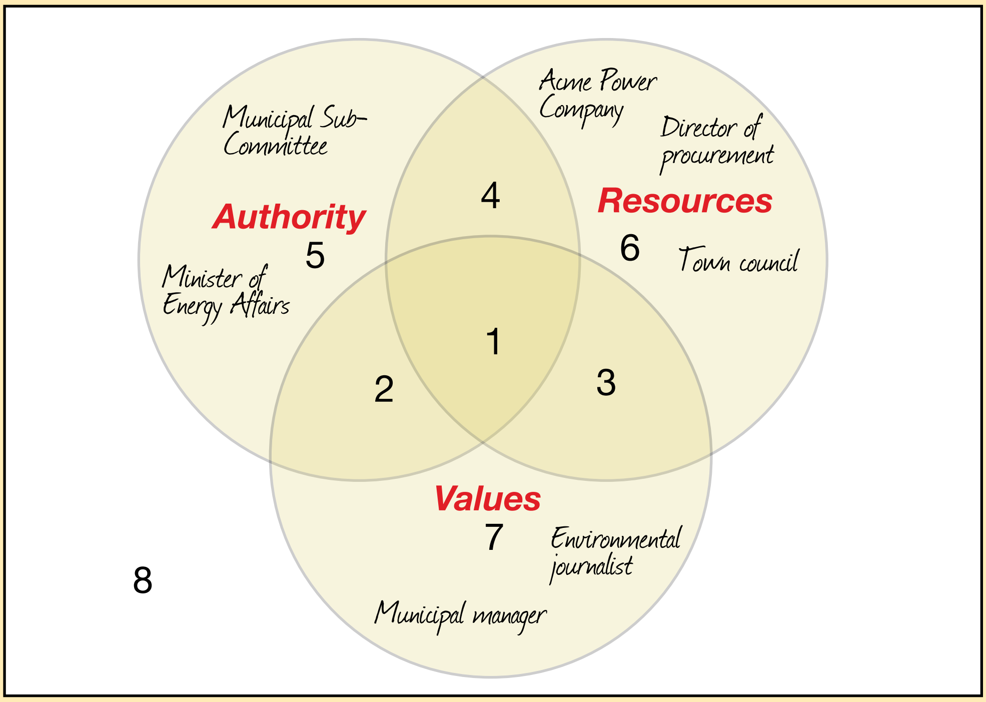
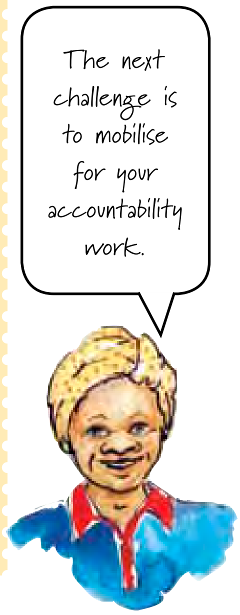


Step 3

Now consider who to work with and who to target with your accountability work, by answering the following questions about the stakeholders in each zone:

- **About the stakeholders in Zone 1:** Could these be the people you draw into your accountability work? They have the strongest potential as positive partners.
- **About the stakeholders in Zone 2:** Could these stakeholders gain better access to resources to realise the desired goal? If, so should this be part of your accountability work? Building the capacity of the stakeholders to support your desired change could prove very valuable to your accountability work.
- **About the stakeholders in Zone 3:** Should any of these stakeholders be given more formal authority? If so, should advocating for this be part of your accountability work?
- **About the stakeholders in Zone 4:** Can you do anything to affect the values of these stakeholders? With a shift in values, they could make an important contribution to your accountability work.
- **About the stakeholders in Zone 5:** These are powerful stakeholders. How feasible is it to improve their access to resources and affect their values? It is probably unlikely, but just may be worth it.
- **About the stakeholders in Zone 6:** Could you engage with these stakeholders in a way that aligns their values more closely with your work? Remember, they don't have to share your values, but rather see value in your desired change. Again this is probably unlikely, but may be worth it.
- **About the stakeholders in Zone 7:** Could these stakeholders gain access to more resources, especially information? Helping to facilitate this may prove well worthwhile.
- **About the stakeholders in Zone 8:** Is it at all strategic to involve any of these stakeholders? Probably not.



Acknowledgement: This chapter was in part inspired and informed by the Human Rights Based Approach, Logical Framework Approach, SWOT analysis, and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Concept Note *Power Analysis – Experiences and Challenges*, 2006.

Chapter 10

Mobilising for accountability work


We had to raise awareness about why accountability is important
We created pamphlets and street plays to show how it affects lives.
We also began to build relationships with local decision-makers inside government
DISTRICT COUNCIL
No pay for absent teachers
Our children have a right to learn
Bad Report
And we identified citizens who could be trained as community monitors.

Mobilising stakeholders

It is rarely possible to bring about a significant change in the status quo by working alone. Mobilising other stakeholders is therefore an essential component of accountability work. In Chapter 9, you identified the desired change you want to bring about, and considered some of the triggers and critical decisions that could make it happen. You also investigated who has a stake in the desired change. The RAV Analysis provided pointers on who might be the most strategic partners and target audience(s) amongst your stakeholders.

When no accountability system is in place

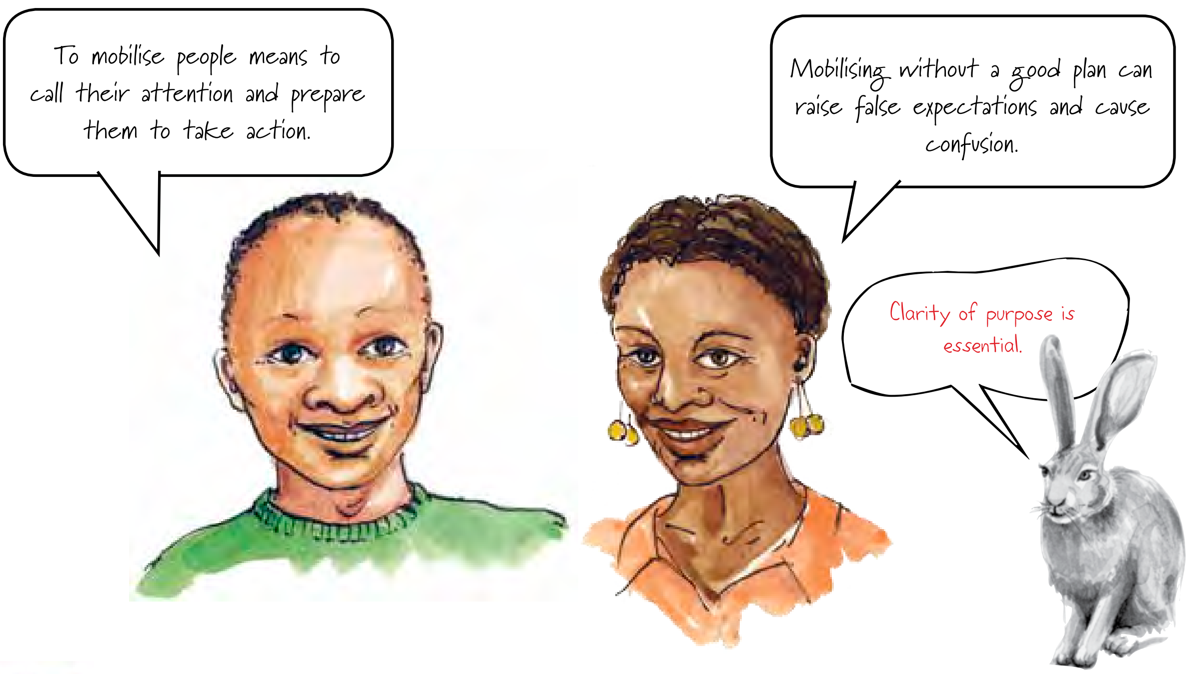
In countries emerging from war or where governance systems are otherwise fragile, it may be necessary first and foremost to help establish basic conditions for accountability to take root. In such contexts, your aim might be to mobilise stakeholders simply to buy into the idea of accountability as a critical component of democracy and development.

What do we mean by *mobilising* stakeholders?

In this Sourcebook, mobilising stakeholders is taken to refer to all the different ways you could engage with other stakeholders to get them involved in the change you want to bring about. This is likely to involve different methods and activities depending on what you want to mobilise other stakeholders to do. When undertaking accountability work, there are usually at least four important things you could want stakeholders **to do**:

1. Give you access to information, accountability spaces or other stakeholders.
2. Help you to gather evidence on whether an obligation has been met.
3. Join you when you use the evidence to call leaders to account.
4. Make the critical decisions that will bring about your desired change.

The important point is that you are unlikely to mobilise all the same stakeholders to do each of the four things above, although there may be overlaps. Tool 7 on the following page is geared to help you clarify what you want to mobilise different stakeholders to do.



TOOL 7: Accountability action planning

It could be pointless and time-consuming to approach all your stakeholders with a vague and general message that your cause is important. You are likely to achieve a great deal more if you can clarify to stakeholders right from the start ***what you would like them to do*** to help bring about your desired change.

Consider drawing up a table like the one below, using the following guidelines:

- **What you want stakeholders to do:** In the left hand column, list the main actions you want stakeholders to take to support your goal. Make sure that every entry you make in this column begins with a verb. These could be similar to the four actions listed above. You may have more or less actions you want to mobilise stakeholders for – or very different ones. The aim is to be as clear and specific as possible.
- **Who to mobilise:** In the middle column, write down which stakeholders would be best suited to undertake each action. Take the findings of your RAV Analysis into account.
- **Time order:** Begin to get a rough sense of which stakeholders you need to approach early in the process, which later, and so forth. The correct timing for mobilising different stakeholders will be further explored later in this chapter.

Accountability at our school: Mobilisation plan

WHAT DO WE WANT STAKEHOLDERS TO DO?		WHO TO MOBILISE?	TIME ORDER?
A	Give us permission to monitor teacher and pupil attendance on school premises	Provincial Minister of Education	2nd
b	Give us copies of the official complaint forms already filed against the teachers at our school	Head of Administration, District Education Office	1st
c	Attend the public meeting in the school hall where we reveal the findings of our monitoring	All community members, especially respected elders and religious leaders	4th
d	Go to school as attendance monitors on the school premises every day during Term III	Selected adult community members, to match specific profile	3rd
e	Recall the community members serving the existing school oversight committee	School governing body	5th

TOOL 8: Charting accountability spaces and mechanisms

Once you have a clear idea of what you want different stakeholders to do, a useful next step is to investigate the available spaces for engaging with them. Two important factors have a big influence on the types of accountability spaces you may encounter:

- **The nature of the stakeholder.** Depending on the nature, position and status of the stakeholder you want to mobilise, there may be more and less appropriate channels and spaces for making contact. For example, when trying to lobby a government official for formal permission to do something, it is essential to use formal channels and create a paper trail of your engagement. On the other hand, when you are trying to identify suitable citizens to be trained as monitors, you might meet informally with a few community-based organisations and ask them to make suggestions.
- **Existing accountability mechanisms.** There should already be some kind of governance mechanisms in place to make or review decisions that impact on your desired change. These mechanisms may be state-owned or initiated by other civil society organisations. Take a good look at the structures and forums where these mechanisms are exercised. These are accountability spaces that may be closed to you or open by invitation only. They could be available in principle, but rarely entered by civil society. If such spaces are unavailable or do not exist, you may first have to create or demand a new accountability space where you can engage with relevant stakeholders.

It is especially important to think strategically about how you will reach the **target audience** of your accountability work. These are stakeholders that you want to see making decisions or otherwise taking action to bring about your desired change.

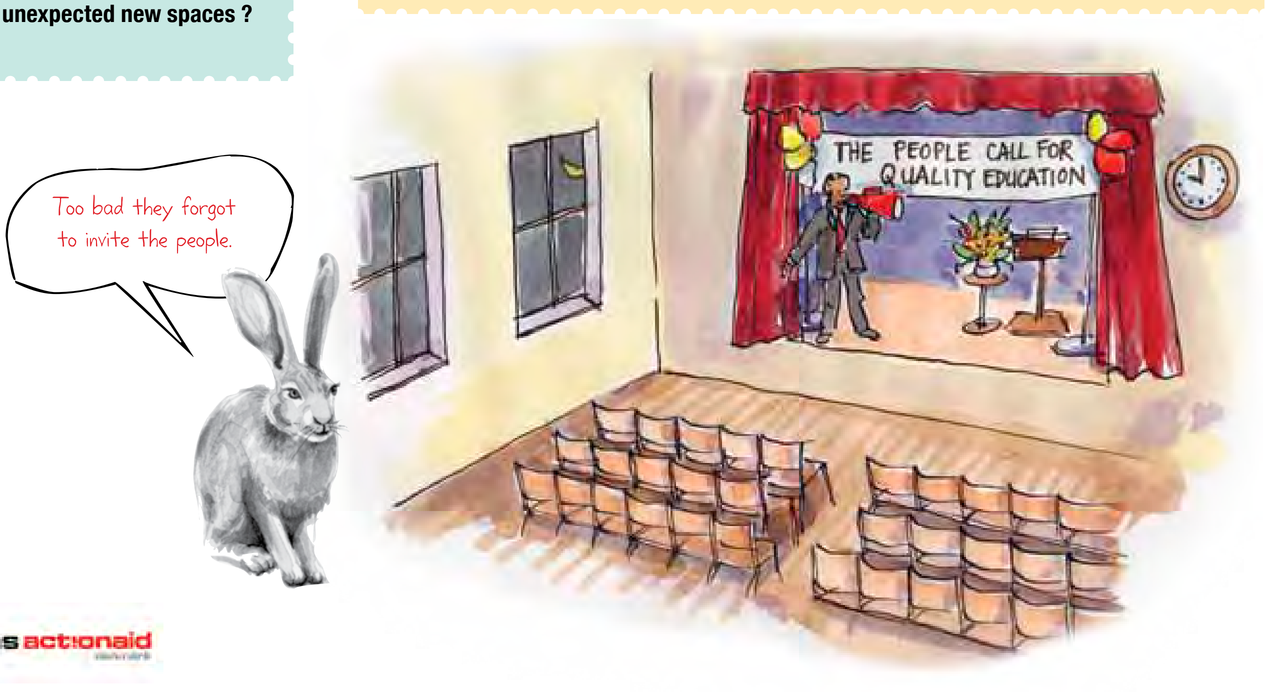
cross reference

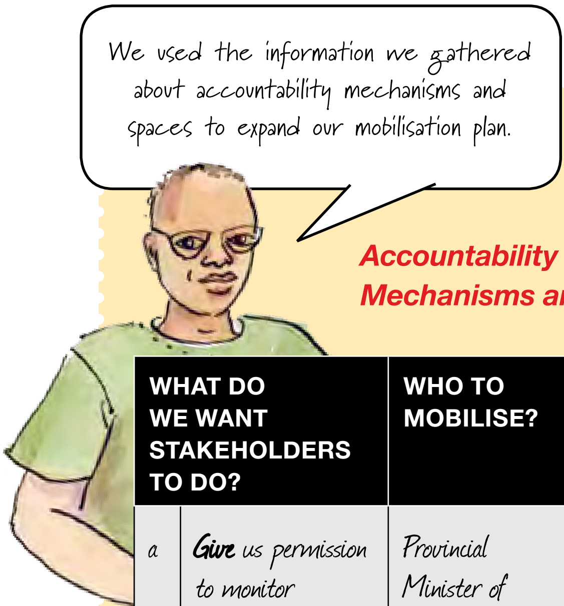
Learn more in Section I
See Chapter 8 for an introduction to different kinds of accountability spaces.

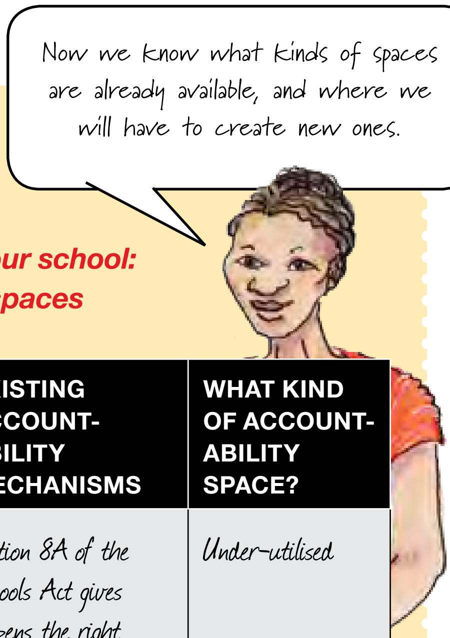
think about this

In your context, could you:

- **Contribute to opening up closed accountability spaces?**
- **Enter spaces you have never considered before?**
- **Get invited into spaces of strategic importance?**
- **Create innovative and unexpected new spaces ?**







Accountability at our school: Mechanisms and spaces

	WHAT DO WE WANT STAKEHOLDERS TO DO?	WHO TO MOBILISE?	EXISTING ACCOUNT-ABILITY MECHANISMS	WHAT KIND OF ACCOUNT-ABILITY SPACE?
a	**Give** us permission to monitor teacher and pupil attendance on school premises	Provincial Minister of Education	Section 8A of the Schools Act gives citizens the right to monitor school premises under certain conditions	Under-utilised
b	**Give** us copies of the official complaint forms already filed against the teachers at our school	Head of Administration, District Education Office	School Oversight Committee	Closed at present
			Section 11 of the Freedom of Information Act	Under-utilised
c	**Attend** the public meeting in the school hall where we reveal the findings of our monitoring	All community members, especially respected elders and religious leaders	This will be a new accountability mechanism	Created

Part of your mobilisation work may be to activate under-utilised accountability spaces. You may also find it necessary to position your organisation or some of your stakeholders to be invited into existing accountability spaces so that you can impact there on decisions that effect your desired change. You might also dedicate part of your time and other resources to creating new accountability spaces that serve a wider or longer-term purpose than your desired change alone. For example, it may be that your mobilisation plan calls for a community forum to be established to address certain education issues. If it is successful, the forum could be formalised and kept going to tackle other issues as well.

What diminishes accountability space?

In many countries, there is limited political space for civil society to hold governments to account. The following factors can severely constrain the scope for effective accountability work:

- No access or very limited access to public records and information.
- Poor, irregular or unreliable government statistics, budget data and other information.
- Restrictions on freedom of expression and of association, either by law or common practice.
- A political culture in which criticism of government actions is treated as grounds for harassment or physical violence.
- Where political leaders are tacitly given wide latitude to ignore and break laws.
- Where governments are accountable only to a narrow range of special interests, leaving others marginalised and disadvantaged.

Working with gatekeepers

Stakeholders can be approached in more than one accountability space. For example, imagine you have identified a particular government official as a stakeholder you need to influence. You have already established that the key decisions relating to your desired change are made behind closed doors. So you could try to open up this space for civil society participation. However, it may also be feasible (and possibly more strategic) to engage with him or her in a forum not related to your issue. Perhaps you can build a relationship with this stakeholder in another space that is easier to access.

In trying to mobilise stakeholders, especially those who are difficult to reach, it may be essential to work through gatekeepers. Could there be someone with the authority, resources or value base to engage with a key stakeholder on your behalf? Who are the people that guard the ears of your target audience? These may be (but are not always) people in the inner circle of a powerful stakeholder, like strategy advisors, media spokespeople, lawyers, political allies and mentors.

The chart below shows that there could be more than one set of gatekeepers to consider in your accountability work. Look back to the contributing factors you identified using Tool 1 in Chapter 9. These are the events or triggers that can help bring about your desired change. You can think about these contributing factors as gateways to your goal. Each contributing factor shifts the status quo and opens up possible pathways to access your target audience. One way to expand your mobilisation plan further would be to identify all the diverse gatekeepers that could influence any of the contributing factors impacting on your desired change.

The challenge is to identify who amongst your possible partners may know or be gate-keepers to powerful stakeholders. In many instances, it may also be necessary to forge new relationships to 'get your foot in the door' of particular accountability spaces you are trying to access.

TOOL 9: Identifying gatekeepers

Looking at your mobilisation plan, you can extract information to draw up a list of key stakeholders you will need to influence in your accountability work – but whom it would be difficult to access directly. This could include people you need information or permission from to do something. It should also reflect the decision-makers you hope to convince to take action in your favour.

- Draw up a table like the one below. On the left, list all the stakeholder you need to influence, but cannot access.
- In the next columns, list all the people you believe act as formal and informal gatekeepers to the stakeholders in your first list. This will probably require some networking and research on your part.
- Underline or highlight the gatekeepers on these lists whom you know or could quite easily gain access to.
- In the right-hand column, list the people who act as gatekeepers to the gatekeepers. Again, underline any of these you have an existing relationship with. You might be able to ask them to introduce you to the gatekeepers.

Trailing the connections

KEY STAKEHOLDERS	GATEKEEPERS	WHO KNOWS THE GATEKEEPERS?
Provincial Minister of Education, Mrs Bheki Malong	**Formal gatekeepers**	
	• Her personal secretary, Mr Jobu • Senior Advisor in the Office of the Ministry, Dr Sage	⇐ Amaya Sage, member of CSO in our network
	Informal gatekeepers	
	• Director-General of Technical Training, Mr Cedric Maloo (close ally) • Cecilia Patrice of Subramoney & Patrice (S&P) Educational Consultants (old friend)	⇐ Snr assistant, Ms Sanat, co-ordinates his diary ⇐ Ken Abdullah (ex-colleague) works as project manager at S& P

The rest of this chapter focuses on mobilising stakeholders to work ***with you*** to bring about desired change. On the following pages we explore how to engage with possible partners and allies by:

- Raising awareness amongst stakeholders;
- Creating partnerships;
- Organising a network;
- Establish trust, credibility and commitment; and
- Formalising network relationships though cooperation agreements.

Raising awareness

An important step in building support for your accountability work is to raise awareness about the change you want to bring about. This process usually involves preparing and spreading accurate and appropriate information, and encouraging public dialogue and discussion. You may want to raise awareness about some or all of these topics:

- What you want to change and why.
- What government obligations already exist in relation to the desired change.
- Who in government is obligated to bring about or oversee this change.
- How well they have fared so far in meeting the obligations.
- Who you are (your network or organisation).
- What you are aiming to do to bring about the desired change.
- What you want other stakeholders to do to assist you.

Before you begin, make sure you have a clear core **message** to convey. Your core message is the kernel of what you want people to retain and take seriously from what you have said. You may not have the same core message for all stakeholders. All the same, you should be able to summarise your core message for each stakeholder in one short sentence.

There are many ways to spread information. How you decide to do it is limited only by your resources and imagination.

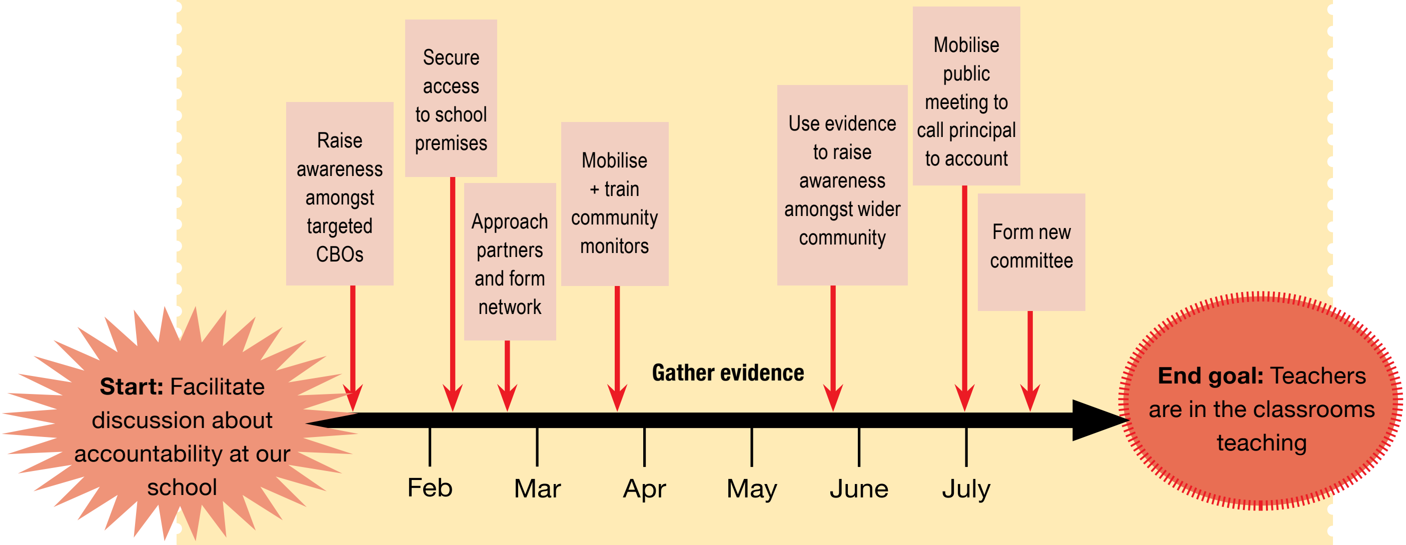
The timing of all public communication is extremely important. When you choose to raise awareness will depend on the nature of your accountability work. It may be that you want to create public awareness right from the start to create a groundswell of support and put pressure on relevant decision-makers to act in your favour. However, there are also instances where it would be strategic to draw as little attention as possible until after you have gathered enough evidence. For example, in sensitive cases of misconduct or corruption, where public knowledge is likely to lead to vast media hype, you may want to safeguard your access to vulnerable information before the scandal erupts in the public domain.

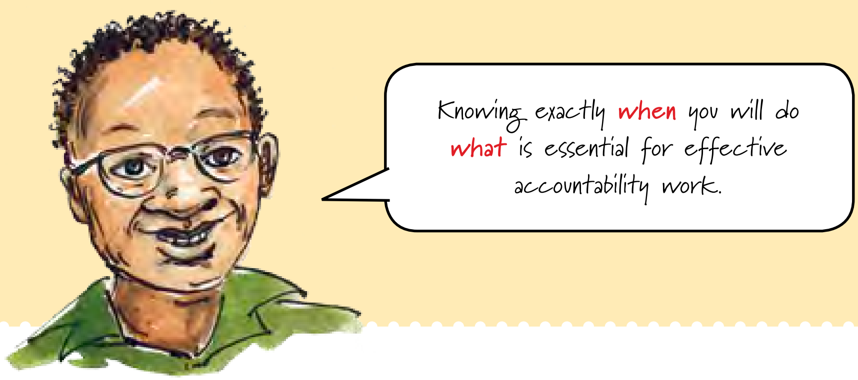
TOOL 10: Accountability time line

By now you should have a clear sense of the starting point and anticipated goal of your accountability work. From using Tool 4, you also know:

- which stakeholders you want to mobilise to help bring about your desired change;
- what actions you want different stakeholders to take;
- more or less in which order these actions should take place.

Use this information to draw up a time line for your accountability work. Plan when it will be most strategic to mobilise and raise awareness amongst different sets of stakeholders. Your time line will probably have to be a lot more detailed than the example below. This is a tool that you can add to as your accountability work progresses.



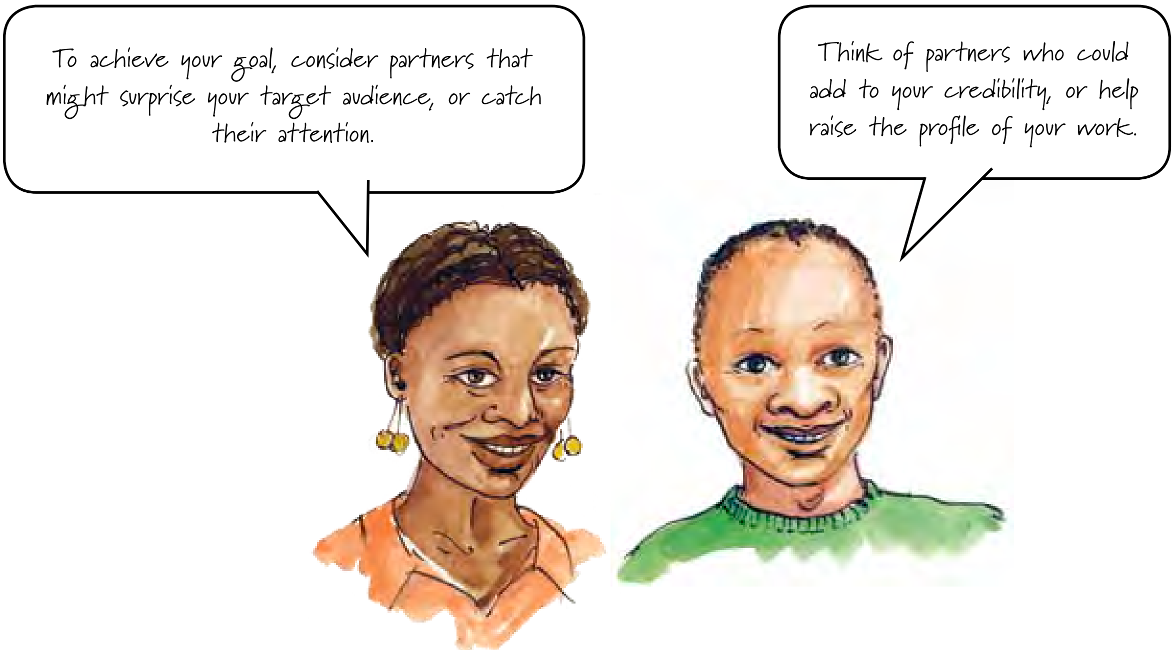


Creating partnerships

Building a network begins with identifying individuals and organisations you would like to team up with. Tool 6 in Chapter 9 can be used to identify possible partners and allies.

There may be more stakeholders on your list than you need. This will depend on the size and purpose of the network you want to build. To guide you in the selection of preferred partners, keep the following pointers in mind:

- If you want to build a broad social movement, numbers and geographical spread are important. You might give priority to organisations with large membership bases and strong grassroots networks of their own.
- If you want to select partners to help you monitor and gather evidence, give careful consideration to the knowledge and skills you need to create a strong project team. Depending on the methods you will use to gather evidence, you might prioritise CSOs with particular research, training and analytical skills.
- You may want to identify partners who have expertise in awareness-raising, public communication and advocacy. Who will be able to help you disseminate evidence, present your findings and put out a compelling argument to convince decision-makers?
- Remember that those most affected by the problem you are tackling have valuable first-hand knowledge and experience. They should be amongst those consulted and included in the work.

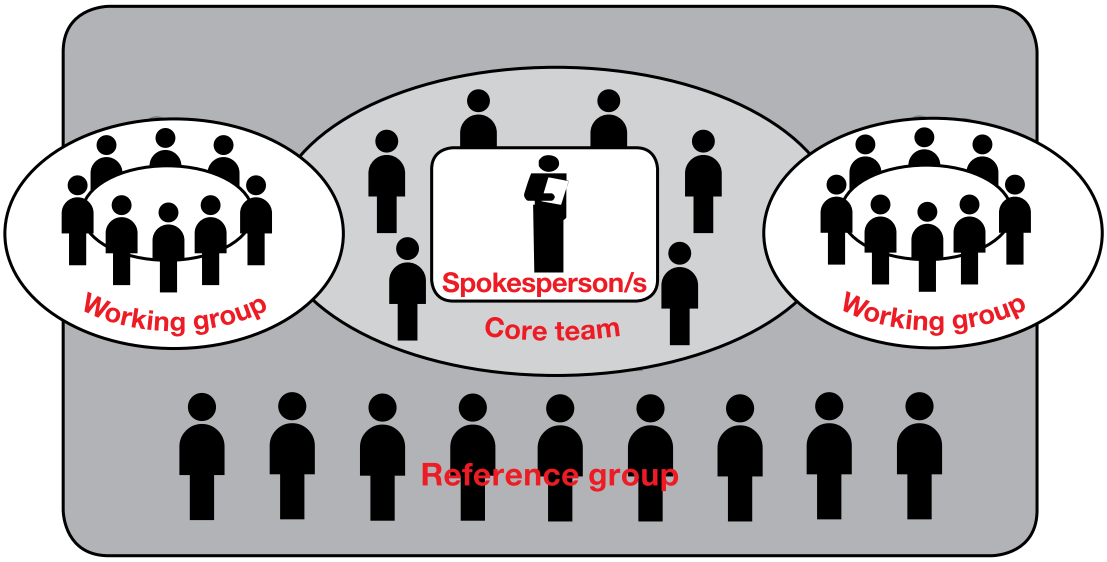


Once you know which stakeholders you want as partners, the next step is to map out who you already have contact with and who you will have to approach for the first time. It could be that some of the stakeholders you want to bring on board, already have contact with people that you know. You can use Tool 9 not only to map gatekeeper connections, but also to uncover the connections amongst your possible partners.

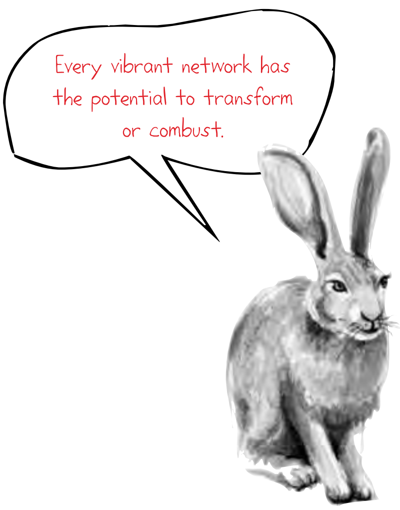
Organising a network

Within any network, it is essential to have clear roles and responsibilities. Be prepared to spend some time with network members planning and negotiating role descriptions, decision-making arrangements and communication lines. There are many different ways to structure a network. Many opt for a system of working groups, as shown in the chart below. As you consider the most appropriate structure for your network, it may be useful to address the following four elements (although of course you may well add more):

- Is there a need for a **core team** to co-ordinate the network?
- Can the network make use of **working groups** on different portfolios or issues?
- Does the network need a **reference group** of mentors or champions?
- Should there be one or more **official spokespeople** for the network?

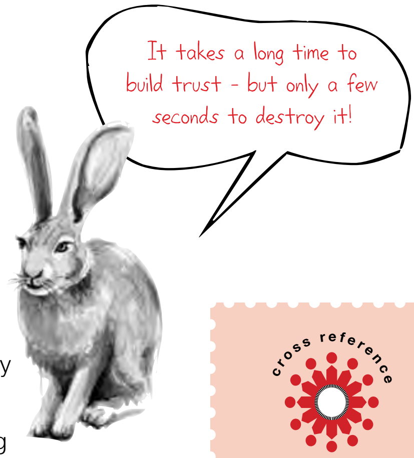


The way you organise yourselves as a network will determine how effective you are in working for the change you desire. There are few things as powerful as a well-organised network to amplify the impact of civil society organisations. However, there are few things as inept and demoralising as an unfocussed, ineffectual network. It is very difficult to rescue a flailing network once it has fallen prey to poor performance and internal conflict. Designing and formalising your network with active participation from members is the best way foster a sense of co-ownership, shared responsibility and common understanding right from the start.



Building trust, credibility and commitment

Establishing trust, credibility and commitment is key to motivating people in your accountability work. It forms the basis for effective communication in a network. It could also prove to be what wins you the ear of those you want to target.



Trust, credibility and commitment are closely linked:

- **Trust** is established when everyone plays by the same, agreed rules and keeps their promises. Trust helps people to work together to solve problems. It is also key to preventing and resolving conflicts.
- **Credibility** grows from the same foundation, but is further concerned with getting the facts straight. So credibility has to do both with reliability and expertise.
- **Commitment** is similar to loyalty. When people are committed, they don't give up at the first sign of an obstacle. It is easier to sustain commitment when people feel they can trust and rely on their partners.

cross reference

Learn more in Section II
See Chapter 12 for more on how to gather credible evidence.

Ten steps to building trust in a network

1. Set common goals and steps for your work, and do it in a participatory way.
2. Be honest and open about what you do, and be proactive in providing information.
3. Listen to others. Be open to their ideas, opinions, criticisms and doubts.
4. Be fair - and be willing to discuss what fairness is.
5. Decide together on clear rules and responsibilities – and make sure they're known.
6. Walk the talk. Do what you say or promise, and when you can't, explain why.
7. Show trust. Delegate and give others space to exercise their authority.
8. Never agree to keep a secret.
9. Admit to failure. Use participatory problem-solving when things go wrong.
10. Give positive feedback and highlight contributions and successes.

How to know if trust is low

The levels of trust in a network are not what they should be, when:

- Some members don' t feel valued;
- People blame one another for mistakes;
- There is a culture of fear of failure;
- A few strong members dominate all the discussions;
- Some members don't feel involved;
- Suspicions and gossip circulate behind the scenes;
- Most energy goes into internal problems rather than making an impact;
- Different opinions lead to conflict not creativity.

Formalising network partnerships

Once you have mobilised the stakeholders you want to work with, it is important to formalise your relationship in a network agreement. This creates a clear, written record of the common rules and arrangements all the partners agree to. As you have seen, trust is enhanced when everyone in an organisation or network play by the same rules. A formal network agreement helps to clarify beyond doubt exactly what those rules are to be. Such an agreement should also spell out the purpose and expectations of the network, and when it will cease to exist. Tool 11 provides guidelines for drawing up a network agreement.

Sometimes networks require a formal legal standing. For example, to raise funds for network activities, it may be necessary to register the network as a legal entity. For longer-term networks, a sound partnership agreement may become the basis for a legally binding contract.

TOOL 11: Creating a network agreement

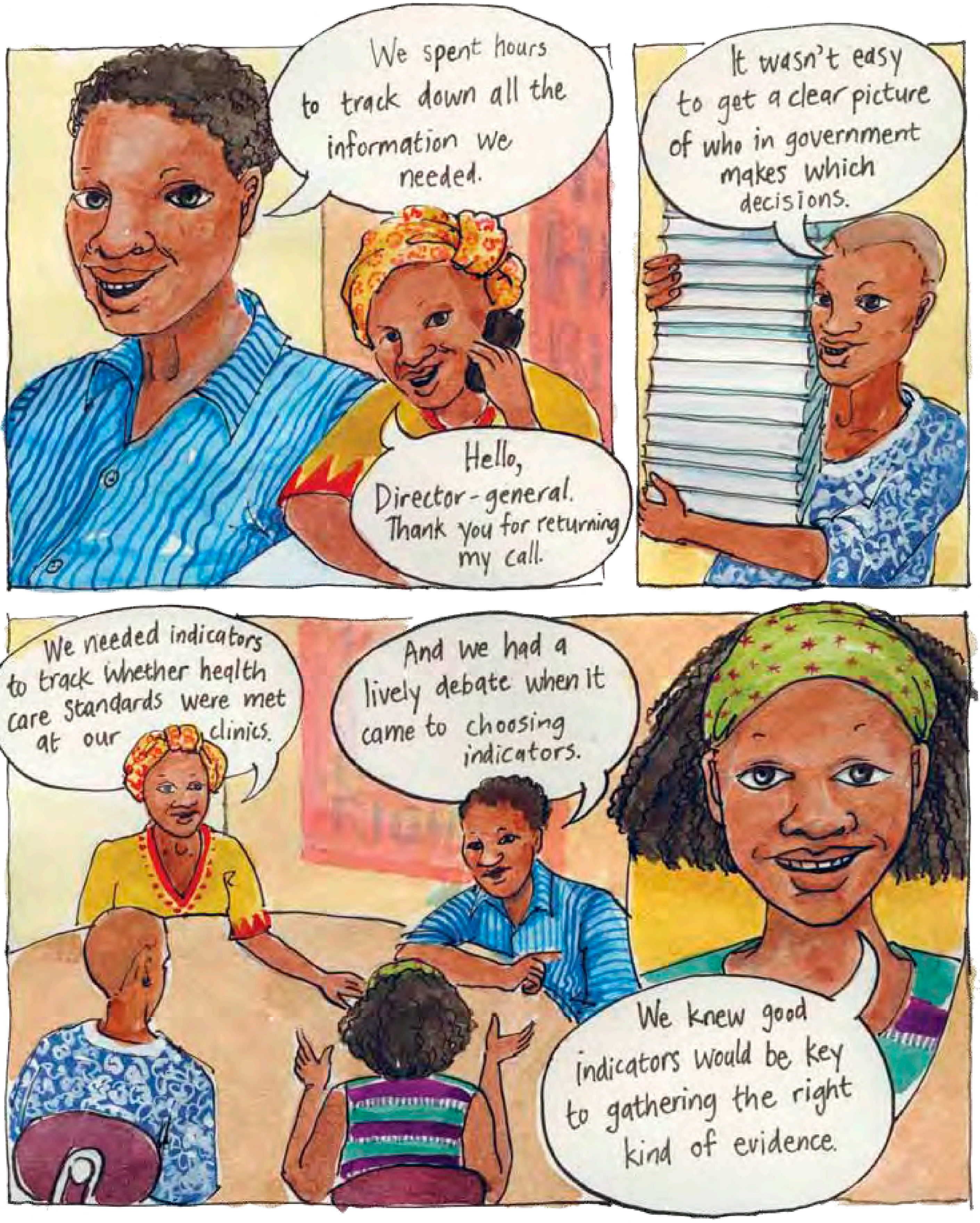
An agreement can be developed collaboratively with the various stakeholders contributing to and commenting on the contents. It can then be formalised and signed by all members as an indication of their commitment to it.

Key points that should be clarified in a network agreement include:

- **Network objectives:** the concrete objectives your network agrees to work towards.
- **Guiding principles:** the basic principles all members agree to uphold and advance.
- **Decision making:** how decisions will be made and the different levels and methods of decision making.
- **Coordination:** who will coordinate the network and what decisions lie within and beyond their mandate.
- **Roles:** an outline of the precise roles for each member of the network.
- **Delegation:** procedures to ensure the clear and fair delegation of tasks.
- **Authority:** who has the authority to do what, as well as limits of authority.
- **Accountability:** who is accountable to whom.
- **Reporting:** who reports to whom and procedures to ensure reporting happens as and when it should.
- **Financial matters:** who is responsible for financial management and accountability and the rules that apply for dealing with funds.
- **Conflict:** how conflict amongst members will be dealt with.
- **Conduct:** a code of conduct setting out appropriate practices and forms of behaviour for meetings and other interaction between members.
- **Recourse:** what action will be taken if the agreement is breached.
- **Review:** when and how often cooperation amongst the partners will be reviewed and the agreement adjusted, if necessary.

Source: *Monitoring government policies - A toolkit for civil society organizations in Africa* (2007) by Anna Schnell & Erika Coetzee. London: CAFOD, Christian Aid & Trócaire.

Chapter 11
Preparing for accountability work


We spent hours to track down all the information we needed.
Hello, Director-general. Thank you for returning my call.
It wasn't easy to get a clear picture of who in government makes which decisions.
We needed indicators to track whether health care standards were met at our clinics.
And we had a lively debate when it came to choosing indicators.
We knew good indicators would be key to gathering the right kind of evidence.

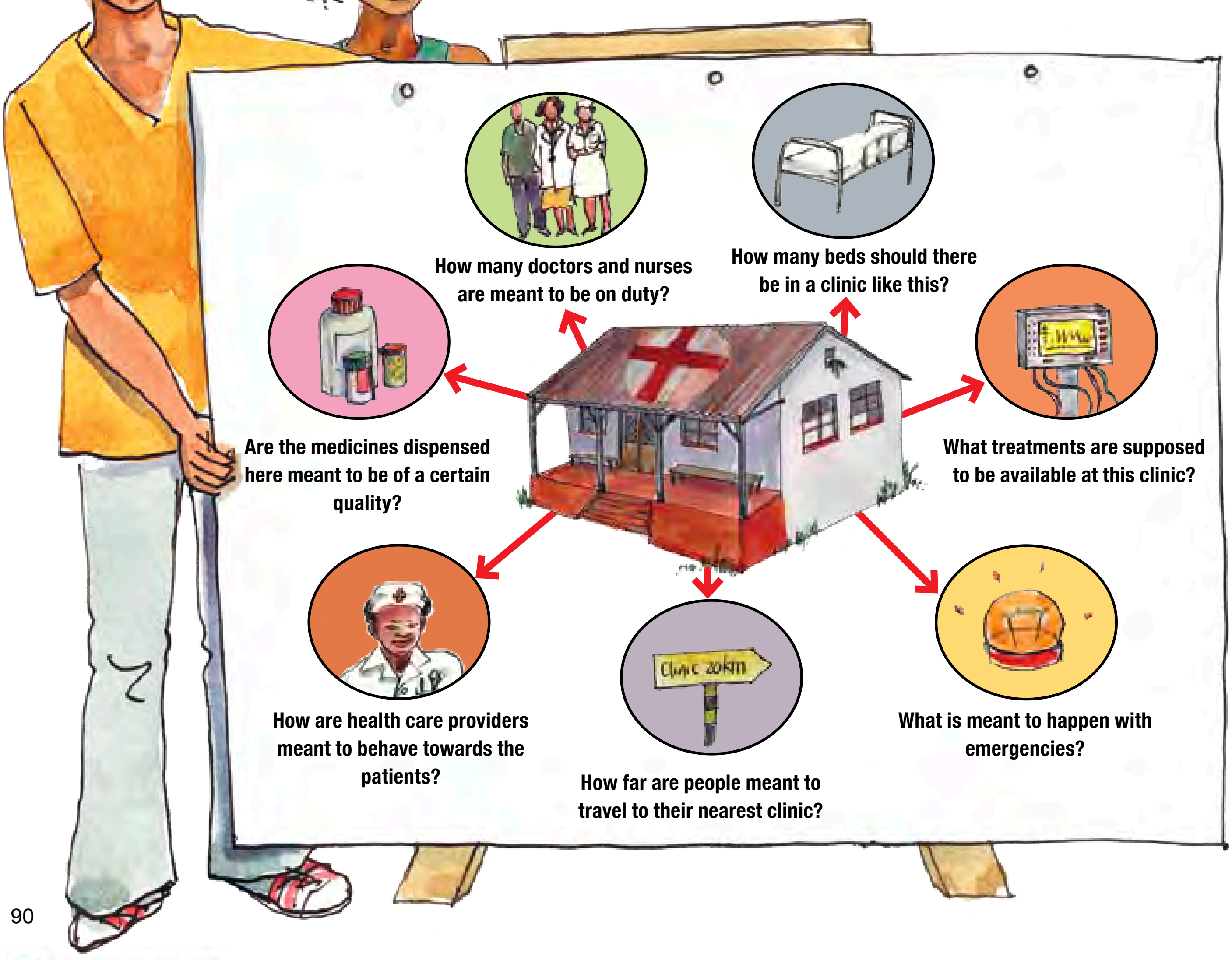
What do we need evidence about?

Chapters 9 and 10 of this Sourcebook explored the first steps in getting ready for accountability work. Based on the discussion and tools in these chapters, you should already have a clear idea about:

- the change you want to bring about;
- what government obligations exist in this regard;
- who you will try to influence and team up with;
- what actions you will ask different stakeholders to take; and
- more or less when you will aim to mobilise different stakeholders.

In this chapter, attention shifts to the **content** of the obligations on government to bring about the change you want to see. The key question now becomes: What **exactly** are the relevant state actors meant to be doing – and to what standard? Only by answering this question will you know what to gather evidence about.

It is essential to invest the necessary time to make sure your accountability work focuses on the right evidence. By 'the 'right evidence' we mean information that reveals whether the duty-bearers within government have met their obligations. The evidence you gather has to be pegged to recognised standards if it is to be of any use in holding leaders to account.



With a list of questions like those generated in the illustration on the previous page, you can begin to identify what commitments and standards may be important to monitor. Consider using Tool 12 to uncover the various accountability relationships that might be relevant to your desired change. In each case, the aim is to identify which standards have been agreed to for conduct and performance in that accountability relationship.

TOOL 12: Pinpointing commitments and standards

In most cases, the desired change you are working towards will involve more than one accountability relationship. As already discussed in Chapter 9, there are also likely to be several overlapping government obligations that impact on your desired change. Each of these obligations and each of these relationships may be governed by its own set of standards. A table like the one below can help you to identify all the possible sets of standards that may be relevant to your accountability work.

ACCOUNTABILITY RELATIONSHIPS	POLITICAL COMMITMENTS & STANDARDS	FINANCIAL, MANAGERIAL & ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITMENTS & STANDARDS	PERFORMANCE COMMITMENTS & STANDARDS
Between elected leaders and citizens	National Health Policy sets out government's vision and promises for district level health care	National Pharmaceutical Regulations have rules and procedures to ensure safety and availability of medicines	Integrated Country Strategy Paper includes health development targets for 2020
Between elected leaders and department officials	National and district health budgets define priorities and projected outputs of spending over the medium-term	National Finance Management Regulations provide standards for financial reporting on health budgets to and from the district level	Employment contracts & job descriptions list competencies and performance indicators for health officials
Between department officials and frontline service providers	District Health Plan includes projected ratios for doctors, nurses, midwives per 100,000 population	District Health Service Contracts set out the conditions of employment for health care providers	District Health Service Contracts include performance targets for health care providers
Between frontline service providers and citizens	Public Sector Quality Care Policy governs all public services, including health	-	National Code of Conduct for Public Health Practitioners provides standards for service and care to patients

Indicators to monitor commitments and standards

There is no real way to uncover the exact content of state obligations without delving into some of the documents that contain the government's commitments and standards.

The table on the previous page shows some examples of the kinds of government documents in which you find information about commitments and standards. These documents reveal the details of what state actors can be held accountable for. A country's *National Health Plan,* for example, might prescribe that there should be, on average, one doctor and three nurses for every 10 000 people in the population. Reading a *Code of Conduct for Public Health Practitioners*, you could learn that frontline service providers may not discriminate against people who are HIV positive. (More examples follow later in this chapter).

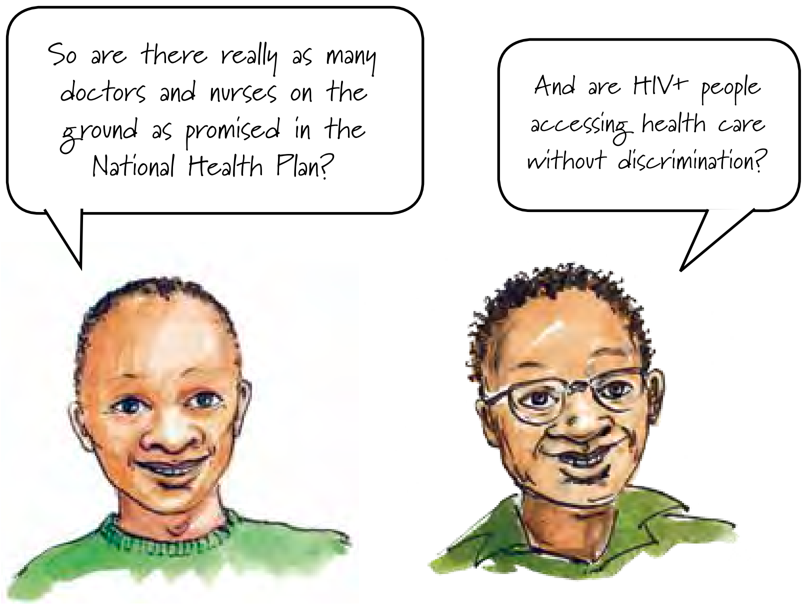
Indicators are instruments that we can use to monitor whether commitments and standards have been met. They aim to show what happens in reality when commitments and standards are being implemented. In a sense, indicators can be compared to traffic lights:

Indicators should caution us when what is happening in reality is **not in line** with agreed commitments and standards.

Indicators can reveal when there are some **deviations** from agreed commitments and standards.

Good indicators will confirm when real events are **in line** with agreed commitments and standards.

Indicators therefore give us a way to evaluate actual events against a clear and agreed yardstick. Tracking indicators generates information that should assist our decision-making.



What if the agreed standards are incredibly low?

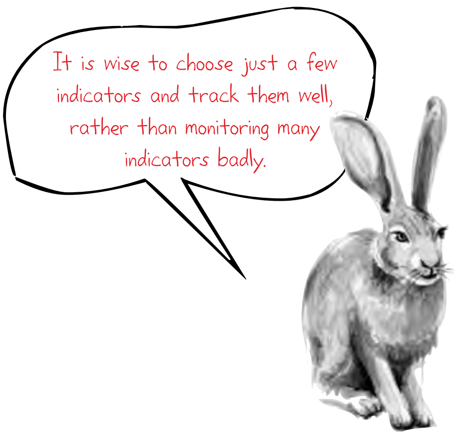
The standards set for government performance may be less than you consider adequate. In this instance, you face a particular challenge. You cannot really hold state actors accountable for not meeting standards they never committed to. On the other hand, what is the use of monitoring government performance against standards you find unacceptable? You may need to start by formulating alternative standards and indicators. To advocate for the inclusion of those alternatives could then be part of your accountability work.

A quilt of indicators

Indicators come in many shapes and sizes. They can be identified and formulated in different ways by different stakeholders. Indicators may aim give you information that is:

- **Quantitative or qualitative.** For example, an indicator that counts the number of patients visiting a given hospital is quantitative. An indicator that aims to capture peoples' perceptions of health services is qualitative.
- **Direct or indirect.** For example, the child mortality rate can be seen as a direct measure of the number of children under five who die. It can also be taken as an indirect indicator of child poverty.
- **Aggregated or disaggregated.** For example, a single measure of 500 patients is an aggregated figure. This total figure could be disaggregated (broken down) according to given criteria, for example 165 men, 220 women and 75 boys and 40 girls.

Average distance patients had to travel to reach nearest health facility	Number of female patients seeking maternal health care	% of health facilities submitting accurate monthly financial reports	Ratio of nurses on duty to the average daily number of clinic patients
% of patients satisfied with health services received	% of health facilities that have the critical medical supplies they need	Number of new clinics built	Number of patients asked for consent before treatment
Average number of hours patients wait in queue before being assisted	Spending on medicines as a % of approved allocations	% of emergency patients who assisted	% of patients who have low or no literacy
Amount spent on doctors' and nurses' salaries	% of child patients treated for malnutrition	Number of cases of suspected financial mismanagement or misconduct	% of nurses who are dissatisfied with their working conditions



The indicators you choose will ultimately depend on the nature of your accountability work, the change you hope to bring about and the dynamics of the sector and context you find yourself in. The following pages present four examples of very different kinds of indicators you may choose to track, derived from diverse sets of commitments and standards. Tools 13 to 16 show how to extract indicators from:

- A code of conduct
- A government budget
- A procurement or service contract
- Regulations for financial reporting.

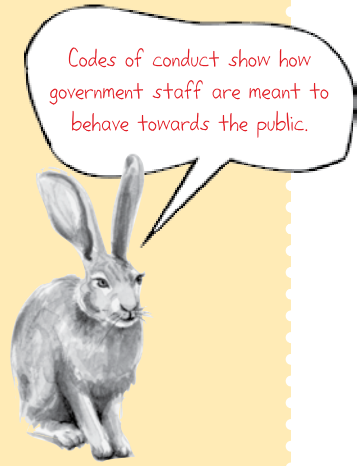
In each case, the government document in question sets out the commitments and standards that the state has agreed to implement or abide by. The indicators allow you to track whether these specific commitments and standards are indeed being achieved.

Creating a baseline

To measure changes relative to an indicator, it is important to know what the situation was at the start. You need a point of reference – a baseline – that allows you to compare evidence over time. Baseline information needs to be collected for each of your selected indicators. Such information may already be available and accessible. You can also establish a baseline by conducting your own research or hiring someone to do it.

TOOL 13: Extracting indicators from a code of conduct

Once you know what commitments and standards are *meant* to be met in relation to your desired change, you can use these to select indicators for monitoring. For instance, imagine your goal is to hold government to account for the way patients are treated by health care staff at clinics. The example below shows how you can extract indicators from a code of conduct that sets out standards for patient care.



FOR EXAMPLE

National Code of Conduct for Public Health Practitioners

All public sector health practitioners have the individual and collective responsibility to:

1. Give priority to the well-being of the patient.
2. Give immediate appropriate assistance to any person in urgent need of medical care.
3. Not discriminate against any patient on the basis of race, gender, marital status, medical condition, age, religion, language or culture, political allegiance, sexual orientation or socio-economic status.
4. Respect the rights of patients, including the right to informed consent.
5. Provide patients with the information they need to make informed decisions about their medical care, and answer their questions to the best of your ability.
6. Respect the right of a competent patient to accept or reject any medical care recommended.
7. Be considerate of the patient's family and significant others and cooperate with them in the patient's interest.
8. Safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of patients and others served.
9. Refrain from exploiting patients for personal gain.
10. To comply with regulations regarding the dispensing of medicines.

Do emergency patients receive immediate attention? Indicator: *% of emergency patients assisted before others.*

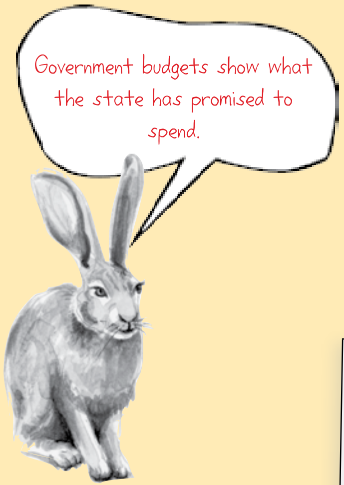
Is there equity in the provision of health care? Indicator: *Number of patients discriminated against.*

Are patients asked for consent? Indicator: *Number of patients asked for consent before treatment.*

Are patients informed as required? Indicator: *Number of patients provided with clear and fair information about their medical choices.*

Are patients' families treated with adequate care? Indicator: *% of patients' families treated with courtesy and consideration.*

Are medicines sold or distributed illegally? Indicator: *Number of medicines absent from dispensary and not accounted for.*



TOOL 14: Extracting indicators from a government budget

Once a government budget is approved, it reflects the commitments of the state about how it promises to use public funds. In a health budget, for instance, it should be clear how the relevant ministry, departments and agencies in the health sector aim to channel public resources to deliver health programs. If your interest is in holding a government to account for putting its money where its mouth is, you can use a government budget to derive indicators for monitoring.

Are these programs really given priority at clinics? Indicator: Share of patients treated at clinics that fall under the priority programs.

Has spending on doctors' and nurses' salaries increased as promised? Indicator: Amount spent on doctors' and nurses' salaries.

Is less being spent on training of health staff (and why?) Indicator: Amount spent on training of health staff at district level.

Are these supplies available at all the clinics? Indicator: Number of supplies delivered to clinics in the district.

Have 20 new clinics been built? Indicator: Number of new clinics built.

Have 100 clinics been upgraded? Indicator: Number of upgraded clinics in the district.

Have these beds and incubators been purchased? Indicators: Number of beds and incubators received per clinic.

FOR EXAMPLE

District Health Budget 2009 – 2011

Code	Budget program	Allocations (in Millions)		
		2009	2010	2011
1	**Operational costs**			
1.3	Administration of clinics	58,942	62, 382	63,896
2.3	Priority health programs			
2.3.3	HIV/AIDS	683, 954	712,456	743,912
2.3.4	Malaria	234,566	255,677	258,900
2.3.6	Maternal health	389,890	398,544	406,844
2.3.9	Child malnutrition	289,890	312,566	316,652
3	Human Resources for Health			
3.3.2	Salaries: doctors	1, 897,990	2,145,678	2,343, 588
3.3.3	Salaries: nurses	3, 122,566	3,699,349	3,900,438
3.3.4	Salaries: other care	587,900	599,233	620,250
3.3.6	District nursing college	350,900	290,400	270,840
3.3.11	Professional skills training	150,888	148,650	142, 775
5.2	Medical supplies			
5.2.2	Skin & wound care	1,113	1,250	1,387
5.2.3	Infection prevention	1, 850	1,934	2,255
5.2.5	Tapes & bandages	689	690	695
5.2.6	Antibiotics	2,366	2,575	2,760
5.2.7	Sterilization	1,209	1,310	1,389
8	**Capital costs**			
8.3	Health facilities			
8.3.1	Construction of 20 new clinics	1, 022,320	940, 560	870, 560
8.3.2	Upgrade 100 existing clinics	833,847	877,685	912,955
8.3.3	Beds	23,347	20,666	19,455
8.3.5	Incubators	58,456	48,456	49,988

TOOL 15: Extracting indicators from a service or procurement contract

There are many contracts involved in government service delivery and public works. Increasingly aspects of government programs are contracted out to service providers in the private and non-governmental sectors. For example, in the health sector, different agencies might be contracted to provide laundry, cleaning, catering and ambulance services. Procurement contracts are signed with suppliers for drugs and medical supplies. Contractors also undertake large infrastructure projects, like building clinics or hospitals. Most contracts contain commitments and standards – these usually form the basis of the agreement between the parties. Let's see how you can derive indicators from such a document.

FOR EXAMPLE

Service contract between

The District Department of Health

&

Speedy Medical Supply Services Pty Ltd

1. It is hereby agreed that Speedy Medical Supply Services Pty Ltd (hereafter referred to as 'the Service Provider') will undertake the following activities on a weekly basis:

(a) Collect medical supply orders from 180 clinics in the district twice per month;

Are the order forms collected as required? Indicator: % of clinics that have medical order forms collected twice per month.

(b) Provide each clinic with requested medical supplies within 30 days of receipt of order forms;

Are the supplies distributed to the clinics as required? Indicator: % of clinics receiving medical supplies within 30 days of order.

(c) Ensure that all medical supply items are sealed upon delivery;

Are the supplies sealed upon delivery? Indicator: Number of clinics reporting instances of unsealed medical supplies.

(d) Ensure that an inspection and acceptance report is signed at each clinic upon delivery.

2. Should any medical supplies be absent, damaged or contaminated upon delivery:

What share of all medical supplies is absent, damaged or contaminated? Indicator: % of total medical supplies that need to be replaced per month.

(a) The service provider will alert clinic staff of any shortfall, damage or contamination.

(b) The service provider will remove and replace these supplies within one week.

(c) The service provider will provide a written record of all supplies to be replaced.

3. Should the service provider fail to deliver medical supplies to the stated clinics according to the agreed schedule:

How often does this happen? Indicator: Number of reports that medical supplies haven't been delivered to clinics according to schedule.

(a) The service provider will be issued with a warning letter, after which the contract may be terminated.

(b) The service provider will be obliged to replace or compensate the state for any missing, damaged or contaminated medical supplies.

Are these sanctions ever exercised (and if not, why not?) Indicator: Number of times the district office has exercised sanctions a) or b).

TOOL 16: Extracting indicators from financial regulations

In most countries, financial regulations exist within the public sector to serve as checks and balances against fraud, mismanagement of funds and corruption. You may be interested to know whether (or how well) these checks and balances are working in a particular sector or level of government. For example, in the health sector, you may suspect that poor service delivery is allowed to prevail due to a break-down in reporting between clinics and district-level supervisors. If this is the case, you can use the standards that exist for financial reporting to identify indicators, as shown below.

FOR EXAMPLE

Regulations for financial reporting at district level

1. Every district office must have an accounting officer.
2. The accounting officer for a district office must ensure that the following is maintained in his/her sector at district level:
   2.1 An accurate account of all income and expenditure at district level;
   2.2 An efficient and transparent system for managing and monitoring all financial transactions, procurement and service contracts pertaining to his/her sector in the district.
3. The district accounting officer must ensure that the following information is obtained from all front-end service units and agencies on a monthly basis:
   3.1 Accurate financial reports reflecting all income and expenses;
   3.2 Inventory of all assets, equipment and medical supplies on site;
   3.3 Record of staff attendance and hours, and numbers of goods and services rendered in line with sector-specific data gathering requirements.
4. The district accounting officer must ensure that:
   4.1 Spending in the district conforms to approved allocations;
   4.2 Over-spending is immediately reported, and appropriate steps are taken to prevent further over-spending;
   4.3 Instances of suspected financial mismanagement or misconduct are reported to the Head of District Expenditure Monitoring in the national Ministry of Finance within two days of detection.

How many health-related government contracts are currently operational in our district? Indicator: Number of contracts managed and monitored by the district health accounting officer.

Does this happen? Indicator: % of clinics in the districts that submit accurate monthly financial reports.

Do clinics submit these on a regular basis? Indicator: % of clinics in the district submitting monthly inventories of assets, equipment and medical supplies.

Are correct data collected from the clinics? Indicator: % of clinics that submit reliable data on staff attendance and service provision.

Does the district accounting officer make sure spending conforms to the approved budget? Indicator: Actual spending as a % of approved allocations.

Are these picked up and dealt with as required? Indicator: Number of instances of suspected financial mismanagement or misconduct reported to the correct authority within two days.

cross reference

Learn more in Section II
See Chapter 12 to find out what methods can be used to track different indicators.

The challenge of access to information

In many cases, it may not be easy to access government information on the commitments and standards you have chosen to monitor. Your accountability work may be focused on a specific sector or issue – like health care, or women's rights or poverty. However, there is a certain accountability issue that underpins all these civil society efforts – and that is the obligation on states to promote transparency in governance. As a pre-cursor or a parallel focus to your desired change, you may consider:

- What commitments and standards exist in your country (or in your sector) relating to transparency in the provision of government information?
- What indicators could you use to reflect on and monitor government transparency in your context?

Transparency in and of itself promotes accountability, by providing citizens with access to information about government obligations, performance and conduct. Yet the call for transparency is not only about the **quantity** of information we have access to – it is also about the quality, reliability and usefulness of that information. Transparency is concerned with the way the information is presented. It may not be adequate to print a brochure, talk about it on the radio, or post it on the web. Government information is only transparent enough if it reaches and is understood by those concerned.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH INFORMATION CHALLENGES

INFORMATION CHALLENGE	POSSIBLE ACTIONS
If the documents exist but you can't gain access to them	• Invoke access to information laws. • Lobby local government information offices. • Make formal requests in writing to the government departments in question for access to the documents and keep a record of your efforts. • Ask the media to report on your denial of access to information. • Talk to other CSOs: Do they have copies or know who does? • Talk to powerful stakeholders inside or outside government: Do they have copies or could they help put pressure on someone who does? • Develop closer relationships with key people in relevant government departments and convince them that they can benefit from your work.
If you can access the documents, but they are incomplete or unreliable	• Supplement the documents with information from other sources, including reports or data from other government departments, CSOs, international bodies, universities, etc. • Develop or bring in additional skills (for example a statistician from a local university) to study the data and assess what can and cannot be used. • Interview government officials to clarify and fill in what is missing from documents or explain discrepancies.
If the information you need does not exist/has not been recorded	• Develop your own tools to gather relevant information. • See if you can use existing information sources to extract the information you need. • Advocate for better information: Call on government to begin recording the kind of data needed to monitor the implementation of standards.

Source: Modified from *Monitoring government policies - A toolkit for civil society organizations in Africa* (2007) by Anna Schnell & Erika Coetzee. London: CAFOD, Christian Aid & Trócaire.

Factors that impact on the choice of indicators

Accountability work has the potential to make a difference precisely because it gathers, analyses and generates information. Without information, accountability work would be powerless. Almost all CSOs will experience some difficulties in the process of seeking out government documents. It may take some time to identify those that contain the most relevant commitments and standards to monitor. Furthermore, it is not always easy to formulate your indicators, or to select which of many possible indicators to track. Knowing what kinds of government information you do and don't have access to could be an important consideration in choosing indicators.

In the following chapter, you will be introduced to a number of different methods for gathering evidence. While these methods, as you will see, all have merit, they tend to be associated with different types of indicators. For example:

- Surveys are often used to gather evidence about peoples' opinions. So they are particularly suited to collecting qualitative information – and then would require indicators that measure changes in opinion or behaviour.
- Budget analysis is often used to track trends in government spending. This method usually generates quantitative information – and requires indicators that measure monetary amounts and percentage changes in such amounts.

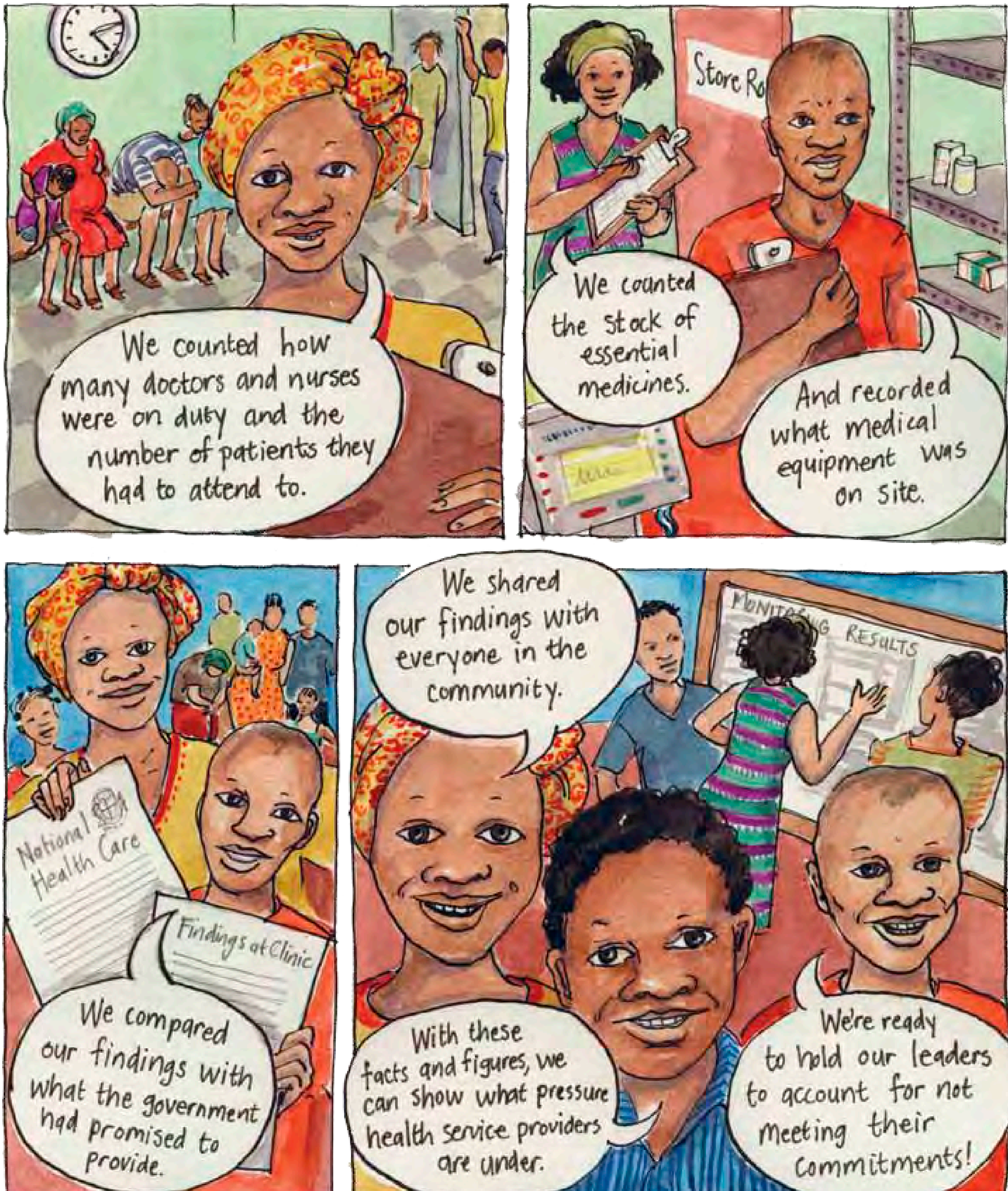
Therefore, it may be useful to consider all the methods available to you, and see which you would most like to use, before finalising your choice of indicators.

Global work to increase transparency

- **The Corruption Perception Index (CPI)** of Transparency International (*www.transparency.org)* measures the perceived levels of public-sector corruption in 180 countries and territories around the world. It is a "survey of surveys", based on 13 different expert and business surveys.
- The **Open Budget Index** of the International Budget Partnership (*www.openbudgetindex.org*) surveys budget transparency across approximately 90 countries. It assigns a score to each country based on the information it makes available to the public throughout the budget process.

Chapter 12

Gathering evidence on compliance and performance

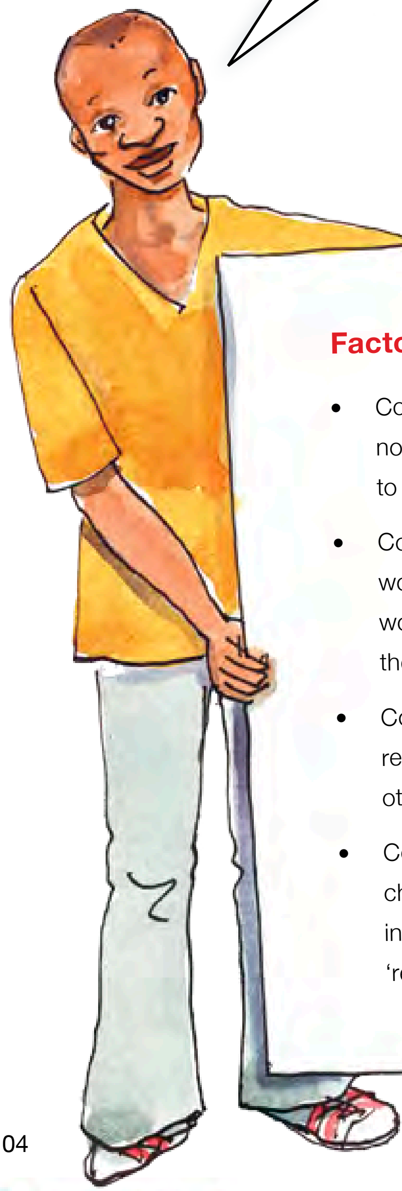

We counted how many doctors and nurses were on duty and the number of patients they had to attend to.
Store Ro
We counted the stock of essential medicines.
And recorded what medical equipment was on site.
National Health Care
Findings at Clinic
We compared our findings with what the government had promised to provide.
We shared our findings with everyone in the community.
MONITORING RESULTS
With these facts and figures, we can show what pressure health service providers are under.
We're ready to hold our leaders to account for not meeting their commitments!

Deciding how to gather evidence for accountability

Gathering evidence to support a call for change has become part of best practice for CSOs. Governments can easily ignore civil society voices when they make demands that sound vague or unrealistic. Citizens' claims about poor government performance or misconduct are more likely to be taken seriously if they are backed up with sound facts and figures. In many parts of the world, CSOs are learning how to build compelling arguments based on detailed information about their governments' progress.

Evidence about government performance or conduct in any sector has the potential to jumpstart dialogue and improve decision-making in accountability spaces. Such information can provide a clear basis for civil society actors to engage with state actors and hold those responsible to account. It can also establish a common starting point for citizens and frontline service providers to work together to find practical solutions to agreed problems.

Due to the growing interest in evidence-based advocacy over the last decade, many methods have emerged from civil society for the purposes of collecting and analysing information on government performance. These activities are sometimes loosely referred to as monitoring. This Sourcebook doesn't present a new method for gathering evidence, nor does it recommend a preferred approach. Instead, you will find, in this chapter, a brief overview of some of the main approaches to monitoring most commonly used by CSOs. All these methods can be further developed, adjusted, refined and applied to support civil society work in the accountability terrain.



Factors to take into account

- Consider your **context**. Some methods may not be realistic where you are, or not at present. For example, in some countries, it may not be feasible for CSOs to get permission to monitor inside government facilities.
- Consider your **indicators**. They provide strong pointers to which methods would be most suitable. For example, if your indicator is the number of pregnant women attending a health clinic, you need a method that is geared to counting them.
- Consider your **capacity**. Some methods require more human and financial resources than others. Some lend themselves to short periods of work, while others may need a full year or longer.
- Consider your **partners** and **target audiences**. Make sure the methods you choose are respected by those you are working with and those you'll try to influence. Some people are swayed by facts and figures, while others may prefer 'real life' accounts of peoples' experiences.

A quilt of methods for gathering evidence

The following methods, amongst others, have been developed and used by CSOs to collect information about government spending, service delivery and performance in different countries.

No doubt there are currently many additional methods being cultivated and applied

Citizen report cards	Focus group discussions	Budget analysis	Procurement monitoring
Monitoring distribution of goods (like textbooks and medicines)	Community score cards	Structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews	Public expenditure tracking
Inspection of construction projects	Monitoring service delivery sites	Social audits	PIMA cards
Independent auditing of financial accounts	Participatory service delivery assessments	Community-based monitoring & evaluation	Audit leaflets

to civil society monitoring work – and the quilt above continues to grow. It is worth noting the following points:

- There are overlaps amongst the methods. For example, citizen report cards, community score cards, PIMA cards and participatory service delivery assessments (PDSAs) are similar in many respects, though there are variations amongst them too.
- The names of some methods mean different things in different contexts. For example, in Kenya, the term 'social audit' refers to a process that differs from the way social audits have been defined in Guatemala. Rather than being fixed to single definitions, the methods tend to be flexible, experimental and evolving.
- Methods and tools are often presented as a sequence of steps. This simply makes it easier to explain the different activities involved. However in reality, it may not be necessary to include all the steps, or to implement them in the order presented. Your context will dictate what is most suitable, and possible.
- The difference between a 'method' and a 'tool' is, of course, open to interpretation. In this Sourcebook, a method is seen as a series of activities undertaken to achieve certain results. A tool is treated as a more specific activity – for example, drawing up a survey. Therefore, many of the methods above involve several different tools.

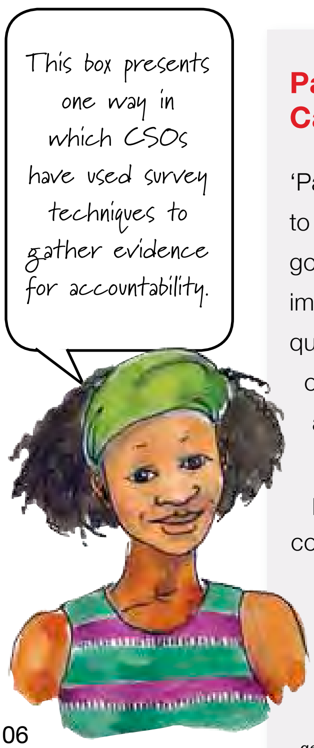
Surveys

A survey is a tool for gathering information from a small or large number of people. It can be designed to capture facts, opinions and/or attitudes. The information is collected by means of a questionnaire containing a number of pre-formulated questions and options for answers. The people who answer the questions in a survey can be referred to as **respondents**. Surveys can be used in a range of situations and for a variety of purposes. This basic tool plays a role in several of the methods explored in this chapter. For example, survey techniques are used to:

- Gather public perceptions of government services from service users (citizen report cards and participatory service delivery assessments);
- Record collective assessments of public services or facilities (community scorecards);
- Track public resources through the budget process (public expenditure tracking surveys).

How can surveys contribute to participation and transparency?

- A survey provides a tangible vehicle to focus and organise community participation in gathering evidence.
- The involvement of different stakeholders in the survey process is likely to spur ownership of the survey results.
- Stakeholder participation in the design of the questionnaire provides an immediate quality check on the content and relevance of the questions and answer options.
- It is vital to be transparent about how a survey is conducted. Any credible survey should provide information on how its results were obtained.
- Surveys help to increase transparency when the findings are disseminated and discussed openly and constructively amongst state actors, citizens and others.



Participatory Service Delivery Assessments (PSDAs) and Citizen Report Cards (CRCs)

'Participative Service Delivery Assessments' and 'Citizen Report Cards' are two terms used to refer to a single method. This survey-based method invites public service users to give government authorities systematic feedback about the services they have received. An important feature of the PSDA/CRC method is its emphasis on gathering sound and reliable quantitative data on public perceptions of government services. Each survey usually focuses on one specific sector, like health or sanitation, and asks people to report on whether they have access to services, whether the services are adequate in scope, how they rate them in terms of quality, and so forth. The aim is for the findings to be used to engage officials, service providers and service users in constructive dialogue on how services could be improved. If conducted regularly, this tool is well-suited to 'bottom-up' monitoring of multi-year government commitments like Poverty Reduction Strategies. By tracking changes in public satisfaction with government services over time, CRCs and PSDAs can provide valuable insight into which sectors and services are improving and the kinds of problems experienced in others.

Source: This summary was informed by TANGO et al (2007) *Pilot Participatory Service Delivery Assessment on agriculture, health, gender and HIV/AIDS*. See bibliography for full reference.

Main steps in a survey process

Decide on the objective of the survey

What is it you want to find out?

Select the sample of people to survey

Who among all the possible respondents will be selected to answer the questions?

Decide how to engage with the respondents

For example, face-to-face interviews or written instructions?

Develop the survey questionnaire

Do you have the right mix of knowledge and skills amongst those involved? Do you need to draw in extra expertise?

Train the interviewers

Do those who will ask the questions and record the answers have the knowledge and skills they need?

Carry out the survey

Are plans and instructions in place to carry out the survey as planned?

Analyse and summarise

Who will data capture, collate and analyse the survey answers, and summarise the results in an accessible way?

TOOL 17: Selecting a survey sample

It *may* be possible to speak directly to every person who falls within the group you want to survey. For example, this may be so if you are conducting a survey in a tiny village, on a single street or within a small organisation. However, more often than not, you will have to make a selection from amongst all the possible respondents so that you end up with a more manageable number of people to survey. This smaller group of people you select is called a **survey sample**. There are three main types of samples:

- In a **random sample**, all the possible respondents have the same chance of being selected. *For e.g., you pick 250 people (out of a possible 1000) at random by drawing their names 'out of a hat'.*
- In a **systematic sample**, you use a fixed counting pattern to select the sample from a list of possible respondents. As long as the list does not have a hidden order, this method is very similar to the random sample. *For e.g., you pick every fourth person from a list of 1000 people. This means every respondent has a 25 percent chance of being picked.*
- In a **stratified sample**, all the possible respondents are divided into groups with different characteristics and a random sample is then taken from each group. The first step is to define the characteristics of the different groups. The second step is to divide the survey population into those groups. Finally, the random sample is selected from each group. *For e.g., you divide a group of 1000 possible respondents into sub-groups based on their gender, age, mode of travel, home district and/or income level. From each sub-group, you select a random sample.*

Source: Modified from *Monitoring government policies - A toolkit for civil society organizations in Africa* (2007) by Anna Schnell & Erika Coetzee. See bibliography for full details.

Designing a survey questionnaire

The way survey questions are formulated influences how people will respond to them. It is worthwhile investing enough time to make sure each question is worded as clearly and unambiguously as possible. The task of designing a survey is best tackled by a team. Ideally such a team would include people who have knowledge of survey techniques, as well as people who understand the context in which the survey will be carried out. For a survey to work well, the questions must be suited to the context and target respondents. In some instances, this might mean formulating different surveys for women and men, girls and boys, literate and illiterate respondents, those with and without disabilities, different income levels, and so forth.

Every question posed in the questionnaire has to be accompanied by a choice of answers, from which respondents will select. There are different ways to formulate the answers. For example:

- Some answers may be of the 50/50 kind (such as 'Yes or No', or 'Often or Seldom');
- Multiple choice answers may represent a range of options (like from 'Strongly Agree', 'Agree', 'Undecided', 'Disagree' to 'Strongly Disagree').

Ways of engaging with respondents to a survey

Besides designing the survey questionnaire and selecting the survey sample, another important component of any survey process is administering the questionnaire. This means posing the questions to the sample group of respondents and ensuring that their answers are recorded. The most obvious method for engaging with the respondents is to do so in person. However, some surveys are self-administered; that is, the respondents fill them in themselves, often in their own time. If the latter method is used, it is important to ensure that the questionnaire includes clear instructions for the respondent to read and answer accordingly. A survey can be administered by:

- Sending the questionnaire to the selected sample of respondents by mail or email.
- Interviewing respondents verbally as they enter or leave a venue relevant to your monitoring, such as a hospital, government agency, market or school.
- Interviewing respondents over the telephone.
- Asking service users to complete the questionnaire within a facility, directly after using the service.
- Knocking door-to-door and interviewing respondents at their homes.
- Posting the questionnaire on a website where answers can be submitted.

Community Scorecards

The Community Scorecard is a participatory, community-based approach for assessing government services or facilities by grading them according to a range of scores. The method draws different stakeholders into discussion with the aim of finding out:

- Whether inputs promised for a service or facility have actually reached the frontline;
- How community members grade the performance of that service or facility;
- How frontline service providers themselves grade their own performance or that of their facility; and
- What can be done to overcome problems at a facility and improve service delivery.

cross reference

Learn more about interface meetings in Tool 19 on page 113.

When are community scorecards most suitable?

- Community scorecards are useful when you want to gather evidence about a specific facility, such as a school, hospital or police station.
- They work best when applied to a single sector, like health, or water or agriculture. If you are assessing government performance in more than one sector, it would be a good idea to use multiple scorecards.
- This method is geared towards monitoring those government programs that involve frontline service providers.
- The scorecard works more easily in rural areas – or anywhere where it is possible to identify a clearly demarcated community. Because the scorecard is created by the community itself, it is difficult to implement in contexts where community membership is fluid or unclear.
- For the scorecard process to succeed, there needs to be willingness on the side of both frontline service providers and community members to participate.
- Getting government staff to take part in the scorecard process may require support from higher levels of government.

How can community scorecards contribute to participation and transparency?

- The community scorecard method is highly **participative**. The entire process relies on group discussion and active participation by community members and service providers.
- The community members generate the scorecard themselves, and then use it to assess a service or facility. There is a high degree of community ownership of the process and outcomes.
- One of the first steps in the scorecard process is to clarify what commitments and standards exist – and then to take these to the community and to service providers so that everyone knows exactly what rights and duties have been agreed to. This promotes **transparency** about the social contract that exists between a government department or facility – and the people it is meant to serve.
- By involving both community members and service providers in the assessment of facilities or services, this method fosters open exchange of information and views.

Main steps in a community scorecard process

Preparation

Collecting information & mobilising support

↓

Community Gathering

Raise awareness about commitments & standards:

- What are community members entitled to?
- What do service providers have a duty to deliver?

Establish: What is the social contract?

↓

INPUT SCORECARD

(to track inputs like funds and medicines to a service site)

↓ Establish focus groups

↓ Develop input indicators

↓ Collect evidence on inputs Conduct site visits if appropriate

↓ Record & discuss findings

COMMUNITY SCORECARD

(to assess the quantity and quality of services received)

↓ Establish focus groups

↓ Develop performance indicators

↓ Community members score government performance

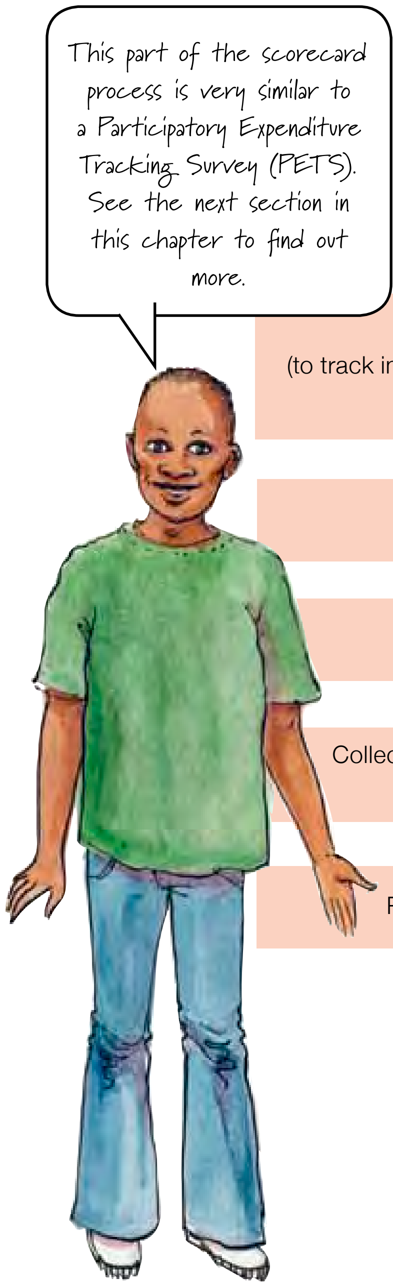
↓ Service providers self-score own performance

↓ Record & discuss findings

↓

INTERFACE MEETING

- Feedback from public to service providers
- Dialogue & problem-solving



TOOL 18: Generating a community scorecard

Community members are divided into focus groups of more or less 15 to 20 members. You might consider creating groups based on gender, age and so forth. However, most often community scorecards are generated by heterogeneous focus groups. This means every focus group has a mix of women and men, different age groups and social status levels. It is essential for each focus group to contain members who actually use the facility or the services being graded.

Whatever facility or service is being monitored, everyone concerned should have a clear idea of the relevant commitments and standards that form the basis of the social contract between government and the community. The first task of the focus groups is then to brainstorm possible indicators that could be used to track whether those commitments and standards are being met.

Through discussion, each focus group agrees on their preferred indicators. Consensus is then reached amongst the focus groups on a single, agreed set of 5 to 8 indicators that will go into the community scorecard. For each indicator, there should be range of possible scores, ranging from negative (low score) to positive (high score).

COMMUNITY SCORECARD: KARIBU PRIMARY SCHOOL

Indicator	**SCORE**					**Remarks**
	1 - Very bad	**2 -** Bad	**3 -** Fair	**4 -** Good	**5 -** Very good	
A. Positive attitude of teachers						
B. Management provided by principal						
C. Cleanliness of facilities						
D. Teachers' preparedness for class						
E. Teachers' ability to maintain attention of learners						
F. Disciplined behaviour of learners						

Once the scorecard has been drawn up, it can be used immediately by community members to grade the relevant services or facility. The scoring is usually done in one of two ways:

- Every community member allocates scores individually, after which all the figures are tallied to arrive at a set of combined group scores; or
- Group discussion is used to reach consensus on an agreed score for every indicator.

There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches. The individual scoring method may give a more accurate picture of what all the members of the community really think. However, the consensus approach can raise important issues that may otherwise not have been brought to light.

The findings from all the focus groups in one community are collated to arrive at a community average score. All the scores from communities in the same district can also be computed to work out a district average score. The same scorecard is used by service providers at the relevant facility or site to assess their own performance. Differences and overlaps in the findings are then discussed at the interface meeting.

This section is especially informed by *The Community Scorecard Approach for performance assessment*, by Emmanuel Addai, Emma Kpenu & Martin Dery. See bibliography for full details.

Challenges of using community scorecards

- The success of this approach depends at least in part on good facilitation, to ensure that group discussions stay on track and really elicit authentic views.
- The scorecard process does not overtly address power imbalances within communities.
- The consensus approach could obscure significant disparities amongst community members.
- Frontline service providers usually have very little authority to make changes in service delivery systems and facilities. The process can be thwarted if the solutions flowing from interface meetings cannot be implemented.
- This could lead to heightened expectations amongst communities and service providers, followed by loss of trust in the accountability system to effect real change.

Advantages of community scorecards

- This method is relatively simple, inexpensive and can be conducted in a short period of time (for example 3 to 6 weeks with one community).
- It lends itself to being repeated and institutionalised as a regular means for communities to provide feedback to government service providers.
- The group discussions often allow important issues and concerns to surface.
- The scorecard process can directly inform planning for future service delivery.
- When successful, this method builds the confidence of community members and service providers to tackle problems constructively and generate their own solutions.

TOOL 19: Using evidence for accountability - Interface meetings

In the community scorecard process, the main vehicle for advancing accountability is the interface meeting. This is where community members and service providers get together to compare scores, identify problems and decide how to overcome them. Community-level interface meetings can be followed up by a district-level forum, where community representatives and service providers meet with district officials and politicians to discuss higher level systemic problems and solutions. The evidence presented at interface meetings may embarrass officials. It is important to consider the risks and consequences of this beforehand. Community members might plan in advance how they will respond if officials become defensive or threatening. The aim is not to back down but to focus on achieving the desired change through the process.

Typical agenda for an interface meeting

1. Introductions
2. Ground rules and purpose of the meeting
3. Role of the moderator
4. All parties present their scores
5. Discussion & identification of agreed problems
6. Draft practical recommendations for improvement
7. Agree on roles, responsibilities, deadlines and follow-up

Before an interface meeting:

- Select a neutral, quiet venue for the meeting.
- Arrange the seating so that participants face one another around a table or U-shape.
- Meet with all the groups in advance to explain the purpose of the meeting.
- It may be necessary to coach some participants in advance, so that they will be confident enough to speak out in the meeting.
- Choose a moderator for the meeting who could be seen as independent or neutral.

Moderating an interface meeting:

- Encourage everyone to speak and ensure that no-one dominates the discussion.
- Clarify the agenda and purpose of the meeting and re-state these when necessary.
- Be aware of hidden and internalised power in the room.
- Don't allow powerful factions to hijack the agenda.
- Focus on the scores; avoid finger-pointing and accusations.
- Help the groups to exchange information and generate practical solutions.
- Record the way forward.

Source: Adapted from "*Moderating the Interface Meeting*" by the Ethiopian Social Accountability Project. See www.ethiosap.org

Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS)

PETS are used to track the flow of public budget resources through different levels of government. Information is gathered from the central, local and service provider levels. This method traces the amounts originally allocated to each level to see what share of these allocated funds actually reach where they were supposed to. The aim is to identify and rectify weak points in the system, so as to improve the quality of service delivery for users at the local level.

When are PETS most suitable?

- PETS can be used to gather evidence about different public services, such as tracking resources going to schools, hospitals or water pumps.
- This method is most suitable when the development problem you are tackling appears to be linked to obstacles in the flow of funds from one level of government to another. If resources intended for the frontline regularly do not reach their intended beneficiaries, a PETS is geared to investigate where the problem occurs.
- Some PETS include analysis of the reasons behind deviations in the flow of public funds, while others simply make the results public for others to analyse.
- This method may form a component of a larger civil society accountability project; it can be built into a social audit or community scorecard process (in the latter case, this has been referred to as an "input scorecard").

How can PETS contribute to participation and transparency?

- PETS can increase peoples' access to information on how public resources are spent.
- With more knowledge about public expenditures, people are better equipped to participate meaningfully in decision-making about public resources.
- When multiple stakeholders participate in a PETS process, this is likely to enhance shared ownership of the results.
- PETS can contribute to reforming the public finance management system in a country or district, so that the flow of resources becomes more transparent.

Main steps in a PETS process

Choose a budget focus

Decide which government budget programs and line items the PETS will focus on

Analyse budget commitments and standards

What obligations are there on the government to spend funds as budgeted?

How are allocated funds meant to be transferred through the different levels of government? Who is obligated to do what?

Gather information on original budget

How much was originally budgeted and approved for the programs and line items you are investigating?

Design questions to investigate transfers of resources

What can you ask government officials at central/ district/local level including front line service providers?

Identify respondents and gather answers

Select a sample of possible respondents to your questions. Conduct the survey to gather their responses.

Compare original budget figures with transferred amounts

Are they the same or is there a difference?

Compare with budget commitments and standards

Are the findings flowing from your survey in line with the government's budgetary commitments and standards?

Analyse differences and summarise

Investigate why there are discrepancies, or not, emerging from the two comparisons above. Summarise your findings in an accessible format.

cross reference

To learn more about formulating survey questions and selecting a survey sample, see the section on Surveys in this chapter. Also look back to TOOL 14 in Chapter 11 on selecting budget indicators.

TOOL 20: Comparing original and transferred budget funds with expenditures

Once a government's budget is approved, it reflects the commitments of the state about how it promises to use public funds. To find out whether these promises are being kept, you need indicators against which to measure the commitments. TOOL 14 in Chapter 11 modelled how such indicators can be extracted from a budget document. The same example of a district health budget is used again below to illustrate this tool.

With the participation of relevant stakeholders at every step, you could track the flow of district health funds as follows:

1. Gather a team of people with knowledge on the budget and the health sector.
2. Select the budget programs to track, and apply the next three steps to each program.
3. Determine what budget allocations were made to the program.
4. Find out how much was transferred from central government to the department of health.
5. Establish how much was transferred from the department of health to the district level.
6. Compare the budgets allocated to the programs in 2009 with what was transferred and spent in that year. Make notes of what you find.
7. Summarise your findings.
8. Decide what to do next, together with relevant stakeholders.

TRACKING BUDGET PROGRAMS OF THE DISTRICT HEALTH BUDGET 2009

Budget program in 2009	Budget allocated in 2009 (in millions)	Transferred from central government to dept of health	Transferred from dept of health to district level	Indicator	Confirmed expenditures at the clinics in the district	Notes: Our comparison of original, transferred and spent budget resources
Salaries: doctors	1, 897,990	1,503,875	1,232,863	Amount spent on doctors' salaries	1,252,895	• Transfers significantly less than budget allocated to the district level. • Slight overspending on doctor's salaries in comparison to transfer from department of health.
Construc-tion of 4 new clinics	1, 022,320	1,020,320	1,018,320	Number of new clinics built	824,673 (2 new clinics built)	• Transfers almost the same as allocated to the district level. • Bad budget planning – clinics more expensive to build than planned? But still, was the money all spent on the clinics?
Incubators	58,456	52,983	25,837	Number of incubators received	15,786 (4 incubators received)	• Transfers to district level almost only half of what was budgeted. • What does an incubator cost?
Total:	2,978,766	2,577,178	2,277,020	-	2,093,354	• In total 885,412 less than originally budgeted was spent on the three programs (2,978,766 – 2,093,354). • The amount transferred to the district level was 701,746 less than originally allocated to the three programs (2,978,766 – 2,277,020). • Across the three programs, 2,093,354 was spent out of the 2,277,020 transferred to them to the district level.

Challenges of using PETS

- In countries where the right to information is not recognised, state actors may refuse to cooperate with your survey.
- Finding reliable figures on actual transfers and expenditures can be time-consuming.
- Some of the information needed to conduct a PETS may be hard to access. It may not be documented on paper, but exist only in peoples' heads.
- Conducting PETS in a participatory way means building budget literacy and budget research skills, which requires dedicated resources and time.
- This method calls for relatively high levels of technical assistance in a number of areas, including budget systems and budget analysis, surveys and interviewing techniques.
- Good working relationships with government officials can prove vital to the success of a PETS. Such relationships may be difficult to establish and maintain.

Advantages of PETS

- A PETS process can provide an opportunity for community members and frontline service providers to start a dialogue on what has, or was supposed to, come their way in terms of funds.
- People participating in PETS gain knowledge about budget processes, how to make sense of budget documents and how to monitor budget execution.
- When people are informed about budgets and how they work, they are more likely to participate in budget debates and try to influence budget decision-making.
- Findings emerging from PETS can be used to reform the public finance management system, and enhance budget transparency.
- If PETS are conducted regularly, the flow of funds through the system can be compared over time, to see if and where improvements have been achieved.

Economic Literacy and Budget Accountability for Governance (ELBAG)

Action Aid's ELBAG is a valuable resource to learn more about tracking public resources. It shows how communities can build public accountability and transparency by engaging with budget formulation, execution and economic policy. The approach includes, amongst other elements, community-based processes for:

- Mobilising people and ensuring the participation of poor and excluded people;
- Facilitating empowerment;
- Building understanding of the political economy of development;
- Promoting peoples' access to information;
- Developing mechanisms to monitor accountability, including relationships with the media, think-tanks and other movements; and
- Advocating for increased accountability.

ELBAG is used to promote economic justice and democratisation by different groups, social movements and NGOs in African, Asian and Latin American countries. The ELBAG website explains the approach in more detail and provides access to a range of relevant resource materials. Visit www.elbag.org

Social Audits

The term 'Social Audit' is understood in many different ways. It is sometimes used as a general umbrella term for all the ways in which civil society stakeholders assess their governments' performance. This section, however, sees a social audit as a specific kind of monitoring process – one inspired by the pioneering work of Indian grassroots organisation Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS). This process has since been adapted by CSOs in several countries, included some in Africa. The description below is not confined to a single organisation's work.

In this sourcebook, a social audit is defined as a participatory method for investigating whether government projects have been implemented as planned. When there are discrepancies been project plans and actual delivery, this approach generates detailed evidence to show where problems occurred or standards have not been meet. The social audit process culminates in a public hearing, where the responsible politicians and government officials are expected to answer questions based on evidence presented by community members.

When are social audits most suitable?

- Social audits, as defined here, are geared towards strengthening accountability between local leaders and the men and women in their constituencies. This method works well when the government service or project being monitored can be linked very clearly to a particular elected leader or to ring-fenced public funds. For example, social audits have been used effectively to monitor projects financed under the Constituency Development Fund in Kenya.
- Social audits are only feasible in contexts where it is possible for CSOs and community members to gain access (even if it is not easy) to primary government documents and records (see the box on page 119).
- The public hearing plays an essential role in the social audit process and this may be alien to the political culture in some countries. This method is more likely to succeed where networks of community activists already exist, who can mobilise broad-based public interest in the accountability failures discovered through the process.

How can social audits contribute to participation and transparency?

- The social audit approach is designed to de-mystify government documents and processes. It directly increases transparency by facilitating public access to government information, and assisting communities to engage with the material.
- Social audits show that ordinary citizens are more than capable of analysing project budgets and records. Men and women build the capacity and confidence to participate more effectively in civic oversight.
- Social audits provide a window on what really matters to people. Official financial audit reports, which are produced in most countries, usually only ask whether the money was spent correctly. Social audits make a valuable addition by investigating whether the money has made a difference to peoples' lives.

This section is informed especially by the second social audit facilitated by Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) in Kilifi, Kenya in 2009. Report by Manuela Garza & Sowmya Kadimbi. See bibliography for full details.

Main steps in a social audit process

Preparation & groundwork
Raising awareness, identifying stakeholders & building relationships

↓

Information-gathering
Negotiate access to primary documentation about the project or facility you want to audit (see the box on this page)

↓

Create social audit teams
- Draw together members of communities and CSOs – and make sure different groups, such as women and/or the most poor, are represented
- Ensure that audit teams are independent of government (or other partisan) influence

↓

Social audit teams develop skills & knowledge
- Social audit teams study copies of all relevant project documents
- Teams analyse, organise and simplify documents
- Teams identify discrepancies, irregularities & gaps

↓

Project verification and site inspection
- Social audit teams visit project sites and compare plans to reality
- Teams gather information from local residents and intended project beneficiaries

↓

Dialogue & analysis
- Audit teams analyse and collate all findings
- Findings presented back to communities in accessible formats
- Findings disseminated via print, street theatre, public meetings

↓

PUBLIC HEARING
- Evidence presented to public officials
- Called to account for (e.g) missing funds, misleading reports or incomplete projects

↓

Follow-up
- Legal consequences for corruption
- On-going access to information & monitoring

Typical project documents needed for a social audit

Budget allocations
Actual spending reports
Beneficiary lists
Waiting lists
Accounts
Invoices
Vouchers
Order forms
Contracts
Licenses
Permits
Scopes of works
Project plans
Project reports
Minutes of meetings
Payrolls
Bills of quantities
Specifications
Completion certificates
Receipts

TOOL 21: Verification of a project site

The analysis of primary documents relating to a government project can usually help audit teams to identify discrepancies in dates, amounts of money, quantities of materials or goods and so forth. This auditing process will also reveal where signatures or dates are missing, or entire documents are absent from the audit trail.

Before visiting a project site, the social auditors can then draw up checklists of issues and details to verify. Once in the field, they follow up on such questions by:

- Inspecting a facility to verify that it really exists and has been completed according to specifications;
- Inspecting a building site to monitor work-in-progress and verify how far it is from completion;
- Measuring, counting or quality-testing physical structures or supplies;
- Inspecting whether infrastructure, like roads or water sources, match records;
- Asking for verification from on-site managers or workers, for example, to establish whether actual wages correspond with payroll figures; and
- Asking for verification from intended beneficiaries of a project, for example to establish whether waiting lists correspond with real people and/or whether the benefits received actually match project plans.

Site visits need to be conducted with sensitivity and due respect for peoples' rights to confidentiality, information and to participation in the social audit process. It is also essential to record all the information gathered from project sites and intended beneficiaries, no matter how anecdotal. Everyone who provides information to the social audit team should be encouraged to attend the public hearing and invited to voice their concerns in person, if they so choose.

Verification visits to project sites have, in the past, revealed instances, amongst many other examples, where:

- Project workers were given meals in stead of wages, even though the payroll recorded that wages were paid.
- User fees were being charged for access to a water pump, even though project plans indicated that it would be freely available to community members.
- Wages or social grants were being paid to fictitious (or deceased) people.
- Project-related bills were paid to local companies which, on inspection, did not exist.

Challenges of conducting social audits

- It may be very difficult to get copies of primary project documents and government records. If the decision-makers involved have anything to hide, they are unlikely to cooperate freely. In countries with Freedom of Information laws, formal channels can be used to gain access to such documents. Where no right of access to public information is recognised, CSOs will need to rely on their relationships with gate-keepers and other key government stakeholders. Ideally, there will be powerful stakeholders in government who could benefit from the social audit process.
- Although social audits are conducted and steered by community members, the process requires relatively high levels of technical assistance and facilitation. It is important to ensure that social auditing skills are successfully transferred to communities.
- Social audit processes run the risk of "getting personal" especially if a well-known politician or official is exposed through the process. It is often wise to focus on the conduct and performance, rather than the personality, of those involved.

Advantages of social audits

- The social audit process builds capacity within communities to hold decision-makers and project implementers to account.
- Community members are empowered to voice their concerns with new confidence, as they can back up their claims with solid evidence.
- Social audits often create demand for ongoing access to public records. If social audits are repeated at regular intervals, transparency and public participation can become permanent features of local governance.
- The findings flowing from social audits help to alert policy-makers and government officials to specific problems in the implementation of projects.
- If government stakeholders in the process are receptive, social audits can contribute to positive change in the management and performance of implementing agencies.

TOOL 22: Using evidence for accountability - Public hearings

A public hearing is typically a full-day event, conducted in a large, accessible public area, with as many people attending as possible. A great deal of publicity and fanfare builds up to the event, often with music, street theatre and a public procession to the venue. The agenda for the hearing is carefully planned in advance, with prominent community members chairing the proceedings. Local media are usually invited, as well as the specific government officials and political leaders responsible for the audited projects. Community members are invited to give testimonies, revealing the evidence gathered through the process. Those responsible are given an opportunity to respond, and firm facilitation is sometimes needed to keep the meeting from becoming volatile. All the inputs and responses are carefully recorded.

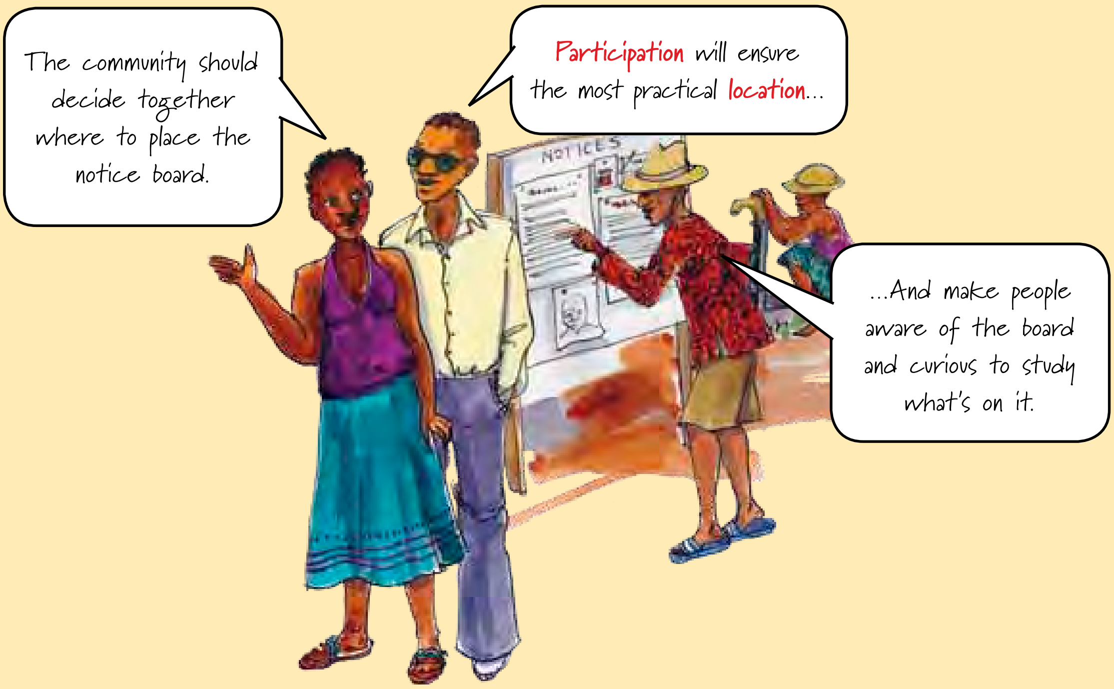
Follow-up is essential after a public hearing. There is nothing that will undermine peoples' trust in the accountability process more than seeing powerful figures get away with corruption or poor performance. Depending on the record of the hearing, formal and informal accountability mechanisms need to be set in motion and monitored until all sanctions have been enforced.

Other ways of using evidence for advocacy

So far this chapter has highlighted a few ways of using evidence to strengthen advocacy, namely interface meetings (see page 113) and public hearings (see page 121). Below we consider some additional methods for presenting evidence to the public and to the decision-makers you aim to influence with your findings.

TOOL 23: Community notice boards

These are variably also known as **transparency boards** or **social accountability notice boards** and are ideal for displaying evidence flowing from civil society accountability work. At a minimum, such a space can be created against any agreed bare wall in a public area. However, it is much better (and not very expensive) to install a notice board that has a lockable front glass pane, so that information is protected from the weather, and can easily be updated and replaced.



The **types of information** to display on the community notice board could include:

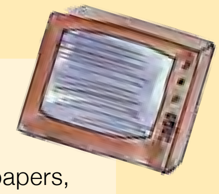
- The names of community members who are involved in accountability work, for example those participating in social audit teams or scorecard focus groups.
- Information about (planned, current and completed) activities of community monitors.
- The findings from scorecards, surveys and social audits.
- Notices of upcoming events, like public hearings.
- Agreements to be implemented and followed up.
- Who to ask for more information.

The **format for the display** of information should make use of:

- Local language(s) as far as possible;
- Accessible language that matches the lower levels of literacy in the community;
- Visual material to get the message across with the help of cartoons, photographs, graphs and charts.
- Simplified ratios to express findings. For example, "2 people out of every 5 said that…" is easier to follow than "40% of respondents said that…"

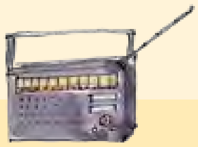
TOOL 24: Raising awareness about accountability failures

There are literally dozens of methods and tools for communicating with the public. Before you choose your means, be sure you know exactly what you want people to realise about government conduct or performance. Take time to clarify and fine-tune your message. The box below lists some of the media and performance tools to consider to get your message across.



Media and performance tools

- Ask to have an article or editorial placed in **print media** like newspapers, magazines or journals – as well as their online sites.
- Issue a **press release** to the media and/or host a press conference.
- Write and print your own **brochure**, pamphlet, report, comic or newsletter.
- Request coverage or rent regular airtime on local **radio** or **television**.
- Team up with community radio or video producers to record a dedicated program.
- Spread your findings via **digital media**, such as e-mail, SMS or social networking sites on the Internet.
- Use **street theatre** or puppet shows to dramatise your findings.
- In more urban settings, guerrilla marketing tactics can draw a lot of attention at little cost - for example, flash mobs, performance art and eye-catching messages in public places.



TOOL 25: Advocating for sanctions

Accountability is only achieved if and when appropriate sanctions are imposed for misconduct or poor performance. Chapter 5 of this sourcebook sets out a range of formal and alternative sanctions that can be applied when state actors fail to meet their commitments and standards. Sometimes it is possible for CSOs to work together with government officials to tackle problems identified through the monitoring process. However, when the state's own horizontal accountability mechanisms are weak or manipulated, instances of misconduct and poor service delivery may simply be ignored or swept under the carpet. It is then up to the people in a country, including CSOs, to take the initiative in calling for sanctions to be imposed. The most feasible routes for doing so usually include:

- lodging official complaints;
- naming and shaming;
- giving evidence in formal accountability spaces, like disciplinary hearings;
- bringing a class action through the courts; and/or
- running advocacy campaigns.

cross reference

Learn more in Section 1
See Chapter 5 for a more detailed discussion of different kinds of sanctions.

Advocacy tools

Advocacy means putting pressure on decision-makers to bring about a desired change. In the context of accountability work, a well-planned advocacy campaign may be needed before those responsible for accountability failures are brought to book. You could consider:

- **Lobbying** a particular decision-maker or powerful stakeholder by communicating directly with him or her via telephone, email, letter or a formal meeting.
- Gathering signatures for a **petition** and delivering it to the relevant decisionmaker(s).
- **Boycotting** a service or facility until your findings are given due attention.
- Holding a peaceful **protest march** or **mass rally** with banners, songs and slogans calling on decision-makers to address the problems you have highlighted.
- Organising a non-violent **sit-in** or **lie-down** at the offices of relevant decision-makers, or at the facilities or service sites where accountability is needed.
- Creating a **picket line** with people holding placards outside a government building or facility.
- **Symbolic acts**, for example when hundreds of people all wear black in protest, or lay down flowers or other symbolic objects in a public square.

cross reference

See Chapter 9 for ideas on identifying stakeholders and analysing stakeholder relationships

In planning how to communicate your findings, it is important to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of different strategies. For example, there may be risks involved in exposing powerful stakeholders and shining the public spotlight on corruption or poor performance. In some contexts it may be essential to do so; in others it may be short-sighted or place those involved under threat.

This is an ideal time to review your stakeholder analysis and clarify who may be directly and indirectly threatened by your findings. The idea is not to back down if powerful interests are involved, but rather to proceed as strategically as possible. Always give priority to protecting whistle blowers and other vulnerable participants. Identify the allies and gatekeepers who can help ensure that your evidence makes a constructive impact.

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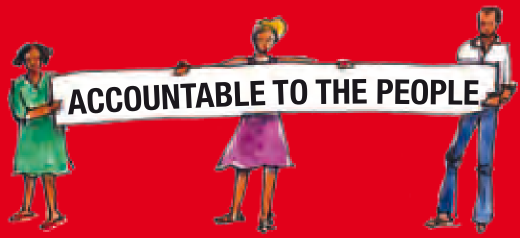
- International Budget Partnership: **www.internationalbudget.org**
- U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre: **www.u4.no/about/main.cfm**



This Sourcebook was written for those who would like to explore and work for improved accountability relationships between governments and the people they are meant to serve. It was created with readers in mind who are strategic planners, managers, facilitators or trainers at African Civil Society Organisations. Much of the information and many of the tools presented could, however, also relate to people and countries outside Africa. The content of the Sourcebook was inspired and informed by a range of other publications, papers and reports. It is intended to be a source of inspiration that provides ideas and tools for accountability work, but gives no single recipe for how to establish accountability.

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