

Social accountability
perspectives and practices
in East Asia and the Pacific

CAMBODIA INDONESIA
MONGOLIA PHILIPPINES



Introduction

Social
accountability
stocktaking
reports



Affiliated Network for Social Accountability In East Asia and the Pacific
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INTRODUCTION

ANSA-EAP refers to stocktaking as the process of bringing together current available information on social accountability within clearly defined geographic, thematic, or sectoral parameters. It is an appraisal of a situation that seeks to highlight social accountability perspectives, including the socio-political, historical, economic, and cultural contexts.

But why “take stock”? Why go through the process of asking questions, gathering and analyzing data, writing a report, and so on? If social accountability aims to “deliver services, improve people's welfare, and protect people’s rights”, why not go ahead and start implementing what needs to be done? Problems and issues in governance and politics are quite obvious, so why not just plunge into them and start giving solutions (as many are apt to do)?

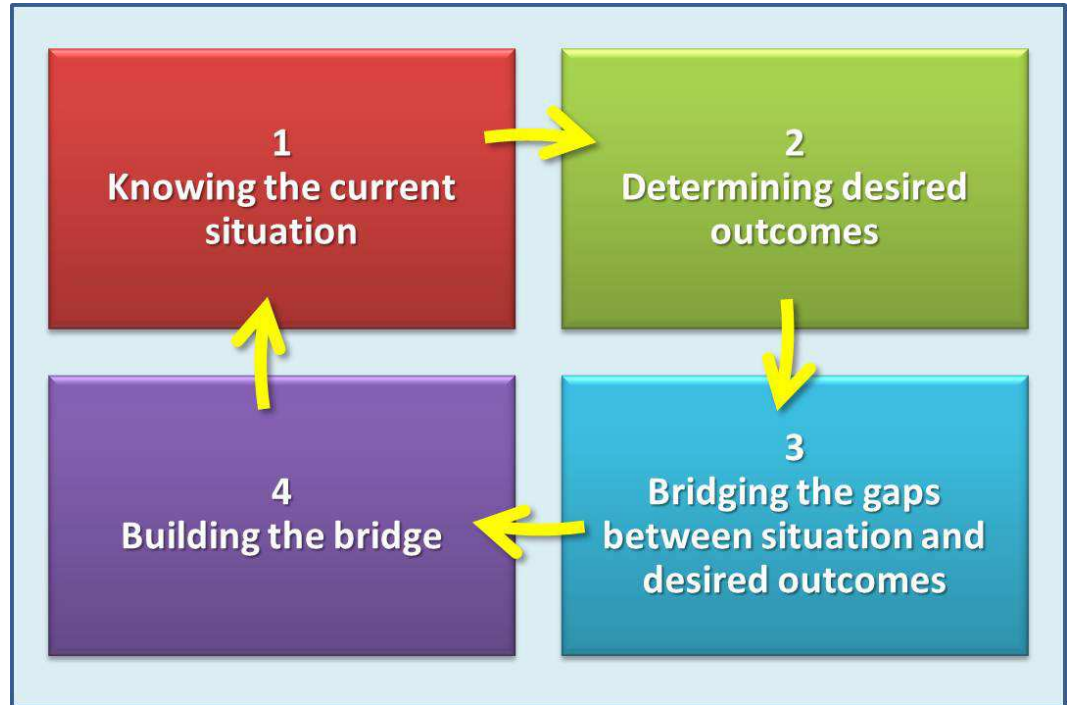
THE ROADMAP OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY STOCKTAKING

The answer to such questions hinges on the roadmap that social accountability follows. It is based on the discipline of gathering empirical and measurable evidence, which is generally intended to be as objective as possible to reduce biased interpretations of results needed for solutions.

Without claiming to be at the cutting edge of social research, ANSA-EAP's methods allow for a certain amount of research discipline as it tries to seek the best ways to show results. The “inquiry roadmap” looks like the illustration in Figure 1.

The inquiry starts with *knowing the situation*. Usually the questions asked are “What is going on?” “What is happening?” “What are the issues and concerns?” “Who are the players?” “What are the dynamics of the players, and how do they impact on the situation, and vice-versa?” etc. The first step

Figure 1. ANSA EAP's inquiry roadmap.



then is to “look at the lay of the land”, to get a good grasp of the current environment. Its aim is to analyze and understand the situation in as objective and unbiased manner as possible.

The second step is *determining desired outcomes*. It tries to paint an ideal future, of “what should be” in contrast to “what is the current situation”.

Imagining what could be the future makes clear and obvious those gaps between the “now” and the “ideal”. The gaps create tensions that seek for solutions. The next step then is to *identify these gaps and find ways to bridge the gaps* between the situation and the desired outcomes. Strategies are formulated that should lead to results.

The final step is to *build the bridge*—that is, plugging in the details (activities, inputs, resources), then actually implementing these.

Following the basic steps in the “inquiry roadmap” assures one of ending up with the desired outcomes, the ideal future state.

This is the story of ANSA EAP’s attempt to know and understand the “lay of the land” of social accountability in four countries—the paths that it followed and the various tools that it employed.



THE TOOLS OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY STOCKTAKING

The term “stocktaking” commonly refers to the physical verification of the quantities and condition of items held in an inventory as part of an audit or valuation.¹ TheFreeDictionary, on the other hand, defines stocktaking as “a reappraisal of a situation, a person, or one’s own position or prospects”.² This second definition appears to go beyond business, emphasizing its socio-political value.

It is this second sense that ANSA EAP has adopted “stocktaking” as the collective term given to the tools in getting to know and understanding the social accountability situation of a specific area or sector. For ANSA EAP, stocktaking means a re-appraisal (or assessment) of a social accountability situation, including its key players and stakeholders, the processes and dynamics, the tools and methods, etc.

Scanning refers to a preliminary examination of the wide arena of governance in a given area, looking for agents, processes, and activities in the context of social accountability.

Scoping “carves out” information from the scanning activity and focuses the spotlight on all known social accountability work within that environment. Scoping sets the boundaries or demarcates the coverage of possible social accountability initiatives or interventions.

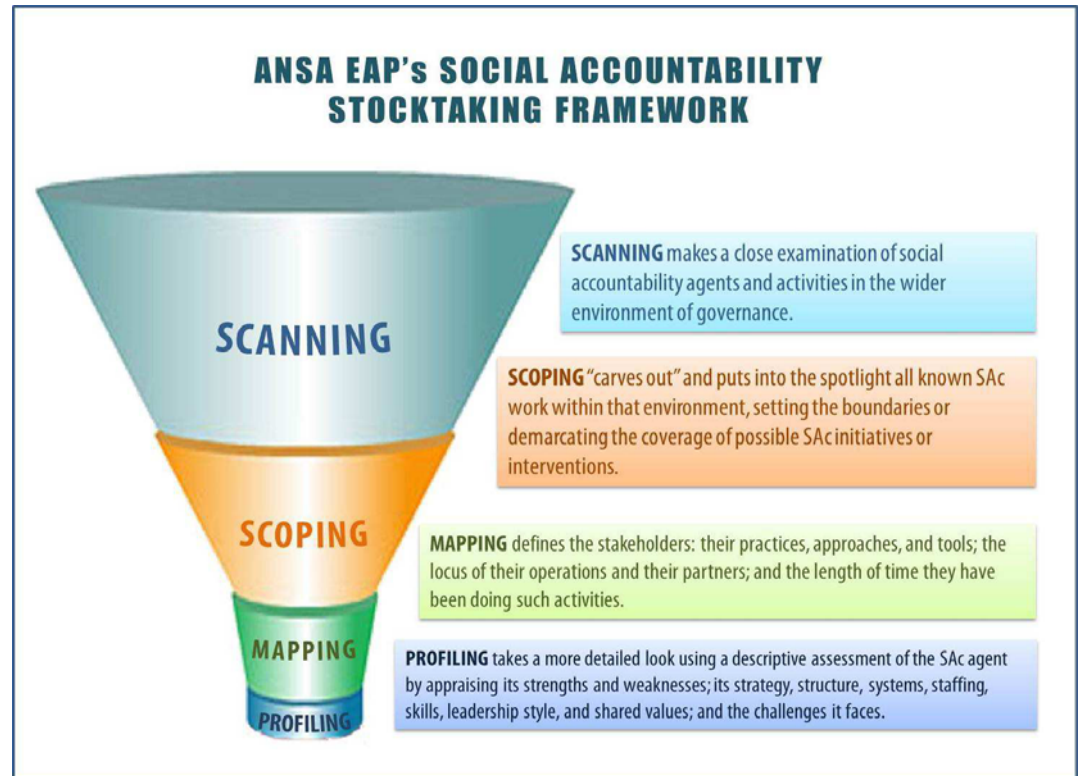
Mapping deepens the scoping results by identifying and describing the stakeholders and their practices, approaches, and tools; the locus of their operations and their partners; and the length of time they have been doing such activities.

Profiling takes a more detailed look using a descriptive assessment of the mapping questions, detailing the makeup of specific social accountability agents and intermediaries (organizations or institutions doing social accountability work) by appraising its strengths and weaknesses; its strategy, structure, systems, staffing, skills, leadership style, and shared values³; and the challenges it faces.

Figure 2 illustrates the “funnel relationship” of the tools of stocktaking.

But social accountability stocktaking, it must be said, is never a smooth ride.

Figure 2. ANSA-EAP's social accountability stocktaking framework.



ANSA-EAP's stocktaking framework uses four tools: scanning, scoping, mapping, and profiling. Each one, as it were, precedes and prepares the other like a funnel.

THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY STOCKTAKING

Like a warehouseman appraising his inventory of supplies, stocktaking involves a lot of work.

ANSA EAP adopts the exploratory research approach in its stocktaking activities because it is trying to understand a situation that has not been clearly defined. Because of its preliminary nature, this approach often relies on secondary research such as reviewing available literature and/or data, or qualitative approaches such as informal discussions with varied respondents, and more formal approaches through in-depth key informant interviews, focus groups, case studies, or pilot studies. It also allows for quantitative data gathering approaches, such as surveys. The internet allows for research methods that are more interactive in nature.



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The stocktaking process of the four countries took four years to complete. Aside from being an expensive undertaking, the stocktaking activities were designed to anticipate and prepare for the sequence of strategic implementation of social accountability programs in the four countries. In hindsight, the undertaking can be described as an iterative endeavor not only of zeroing in on the right answers from the right sources, but of asking the right questions that proceed from an appropriate framework.

As evidence of this struggle, one may notice the divergence and dissimilarity in approach and format among the four stocktaking studies in this report. This variation can be attributed to the following factors.

First, while the World Bank and other support institutions has published a number of stocktaking studies on social accountability,⁴ the format and approach varied from one work to the other. Understandably so, because the assumption was that social accountability and other governance themes are situation-specific and thus dynamic. ANSA EAP had to come up with its own templates for social accountability stocktaking, which, because of the nature of the study, took time to evolve.

Second, preliminary investigations showed great variations among the priority countries in terms of governance reforms, political situation, and cultural uniqueness. Cambodia's social accountability situation cannot be compared with Philippine practice simply because of the huge disparity in terms of history and experience. And while Indonesia's activists are enthused on consolidating their anticorruption efforts, Mongolia's CSOs are engrossed with getting their voices heard by government. All these had to be taken into account from the conceptualization stage up to the final editing of the report output—from determining the angle of attack, so to speak, to the final implementation.

Third, the individuality of each country—and this includes the variations *within* each country—required the customization of the stocktaking tool. While still following the basics of social inquiry, initial information about the country entailed a “made-to-order” template or format for data gathering. The way the stocktaking tools were crafted accounts for the apparent variations and “uneven treatment” in terms of depth and analysis in the



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country reports. Note, for example, that ANSA EAP conducted the first stocktaking activity in Cambodia in 2008, followed by the Philippines in 2009, Mongolia in 2010, and Indonesia in 2011. In a way, the stocktaking tools—scanning, scoping, mapping, and profiling—also evolved as experience and expertise deepened.

Fourth, grappling with language differences was a major factor in the stocktaking exercise. The constraints were not only about communication issues between the ANSA EAP team and the contracted researchers, but also, and more importantly, conceptual in nature. Important terms taken for granted by English-speaking readers, for instance, do not have their exact equivalent in the languages of the priority countries. For example, the Khmer equivalent for social accountability is *kanak neiyapheap sangkhum*. This Khmer phrase, however, is primarily understood as responsibility, honesty, and transparency. Among the reasons cited for this lack of understanding is the dearth of experiences in the country of a responsible and accountable state; and the retarded development of effective state or intermediary institutions as a result of Cambodia's recent history of protracted conflict and violent transitions.

Finally, the rigor of validating the information required a back-and-forth process of communication between the ANSA EAP research team and the locally-contracted researchers. (This on top of the former's constant and detailed interactive exchange on the actual conduct of the research.) While internet facilities made it easier to communicate with each other, the process of getting back to the sources and vetting the data was not quite straightforward given that most the respondents are working professionals. Setting up and preparing local validation sessions and workshops—then documenting the proceedings—took much of the researchers' time. In several instances, the researchers had to revise and rewrite the information as it had been overtaken by events, such as developments in policymaking.

These and other minor variables became part of the evolution of the stocktaking process and shaped the tools used in gathering social accountability information.

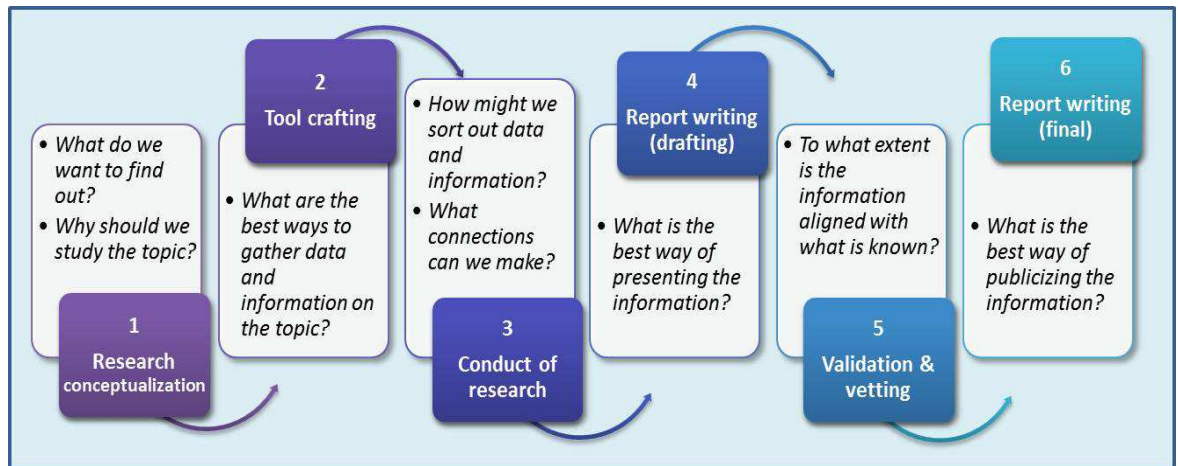
But while this work emphasizes variations in social accountability stocktaking, the process followed a generic pattern of social inquiry.

STOCKTAKING AS A METHOD FOR UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

An essential part of ANSA EAP’s mission is its commitment to the exploration of the social accountability condition in all of its social, legal, economic, political, and technological complexity.

While allowing for the uniqueness of each country and culture, ANSA EAP follows the conventional process of social inquiry, here loosely understood. This is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. ANSA EAP's social inquiry process.



The inquiry into the social accountability situation of a country begins with *research conceptualization*. This initial stage “scopes” the themes to be studied and establishes the rationale of the study. The output is a “concept note”, which is a summary of the proposal. It contains a brief description of the main ideas of the investigation, the objectives to be pursued, and proposed methodologies.

Upon approval of the concept note, the next stage is *tool crafting*. It asks the question, “What are the best ways to gather data and information on the topic?” This usually involves a scanning of social inquiry tools (e.g. as may be found in the internet—no need to re-invent the wheel), selecting those which may be appropriate, and adapting these to specific needs of the country to be investigated. Some of the tools for investigation, however, are customized based on what is known so far about social accountability in the region. For



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example, ANSA EAP, in the latter part of the stocktaking activities, made a conscious shift to base its inquiry tools on two major social accountability tools: one, the “Four Pillars of Social Accountability” and, two, the “Tales, Tools, and Techniques (3Ts) of Social Accountability”. While allowing for customization and adaptation, these features firmly anchor the inquiry on ANSA EAP’s understanding of social accountability principles and approaches.

The third step is the actual *conduct of the research*, which begins with the screening, selection, and contracting of a local partner to do the task. An important consideration is not only the local partner’s research competencies and experience, but its objectivity as well as depth of engagement with government and non-government institutions. A second consideration is the partner’s ability to communicate not only in the local language (which is an assumed competency) but in English as well, especially because the final written output is in English. A third is the partner’s ability to convene and run a workshop validation event, including documenting its content and process, as part of vetting the information with targeted respondents.

The fourth step is *drafting the report*. While ANSA EAP suggests a format, the local research partner usually makes the decision on the final look of the report. It is at this point that ANSA EAP and the local partner go into a higher level mode of interactive exchange as drafts are exchanged, comments and suggestions are proposed, revisions are made, and more data gathering activities are conducted.

The fifth is the conduct of a *validation workshop* to vet the information with respondents and key stakeholders. The local research partner is responsible for designing, preparing, running, and documenting the workshop. In addition to providing advice, ANSA EAP monitors—and where possible, actively joins—the event.

The final step is the *re-drafting/re-writing* of the draft report based on the outputs of the validation workshop.



SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC REGION

In the East Asian and Pacific Region, ANSA-EAP has established a regional networking facility geared towards mainstreaming social accountability.

To advance its work in the region, ANSA-EAP has developed an approach that revolves around building an enabling environment where social accountability can thrive. An enabling environment must be in place for social accountability to happen. This enabling environment includes the so-called Four Pillars of Social Accountability: (1) organized and capable citizen groups; (2) government champions who are willing to engage; (3) context and cultural appropriateness; and, (4) access to information.

Organized and Capable Citizen Groups

The capacity of civil society actors is a key factor of successful social accountability. The level of organization of citizen groups, the breadth and scope of their membership, their technical and advocacy skills, their capacity to mobilize resources, effectively use media, to strengthen their legitimacy and quality of their conduct and actions including their internal accountability practices are all central to the success of social accountability action. In many contexts, efforts to promote an enabling environment for civil society and to build the capacity (both organizational and technical) of citizen groups are required. After all, citizen groups, who drive the demand for good governance, need to powerfully give voice to their concerns in order to assert their rights to participate in governance. The power of citizen groups and civil society organizations must stand on the quality of their capacity to organize themselves, their partners who are from the sectors and communities they serve and other development stakeholders. This capacity also has technical and substantive as well as procedural requirements so that the efficient and effective initiatives in the form of agenda, platforms, projects and programs bring for the outcomes and changes aspired for.



Responsive Government

Government's receptivity to citizens' participation is embodied in the combination of the set of laws, rules, practices and cultural mores in any given political and economic situation. All these circumscribe the actual space for citizens to hold government officials accountable for their conduct and performance in terms of delivering better services, improving people's welfare, and protecting people's rights. Space for citizen participation is opened in government institutions that have reform champions. Therefore, an important part of social accountability initiatives is finding and nurturing those champions from the ranks of bureaucrats, government officials, and public servants.

Context and Cultural Appropriateness

The parameters for social accountability are largely determined by existing contextual and cultural conditions. To a large extent, social accountability action must respond to and operate within the larger context and framework of a sector, nation, or region. The appropriateness of the social accountability approach—including tools, techniques and other mechanisms—are determined against political, socio-cultural, legal and institutional factors.

The likelihood of social accountability action succeeding depends on eco-political realities. Is there protection of basic civil rights (including access to information and freedoms of expression, association, and assembly)? Is there is a culture of political transparency and honesty? Legal, institutional, and socio-cultural factors also need to be considered because they can influence the success of social accountability activities. In East Asia-Pacific, for instance, so-called "backdoor channels" are important to policy-making. To ignore context and culture is to risk alienating local stakeholders.

To be sure, context and culture will, sometimes, be unfriendly to social accountability action. Social accountability action should still be pursued if the need for it is urgent. It should be done strategically, however, with foreknowledge of the environment, the barriers, and the risks. Appropriate what-if scenarios and courses of action should be worked out, based on an analysis of political, socio-cultural, legal, and institutional conditions.



Access to Information

Information is power. Essential to social accountability practice is the availability and reliability of public data. Such data, analyzed and correctly interpreted by competent citizen groups, lies at the core of constructive engagement. Social accountability fails when data and information is either absent or willfully denied. This underscores the need for an unambiguous law guaranteeing freedom of information.

Access to information can mean two things: physical access to source documents; and their availability in a format that is understandable to users. Because not all information comes from documents, “access” also means access to people who have the information (such as officials) and know where the information is lodged. One other aspect of access to information is easy retrieval and proper processing. This makes possible timely and appropriate use of the information.

What marks the ANSA-EAP strategy is its intense partner relations; learning-in-action approach to building capacity; and production of high quality, usable and appropriate knowledge products. ANSA-EAP strives to develop a shared understanding among the stakeholders about what exactly social accountability perspectives and practices entail in the context of East Asia and Pacific and how its targeted outcomes are fulfilled based on effective and appropriate social accountability approaches and initiatives in the Region. To achieve this, ANSA-EAP has recognized the need to document the social accountability initiatives in the Region.

RESEARCH BASICS

This section briefly describes the variety of research approaches and methodologies applied to the studies conducted in the four priority countries:

Cambodia

The Cambodian study sought to answer the following questions:

- What is the nature of social accountability in Cambodia? What is the historical, socio-political and cultural context that influences how social accountability is understood?



- Who are the social accountability stakeholders? How is social accountability perceived by different stakeholders?
- How does social accountability in Cambodia work? What are the mechanisms and tools of social accountability practices by different groups of people in Cambodian society and what are its core features?

The methods used for data-gathering included: (1) reviewing related literature that sheds light on Cambodia's historical context, political culture and institutions, citizen-state relations, and the nature of civil society in the country; (2) exploring Khmer vocabulary on social accountability; and (3) interviewing key informants from civil society organizations, the government, and the private sector in Phnom Penh, Kompong Speu, Siem Reap, and Battambang provinces.

Within a period of four months, the research team conducted in-depth and semi-structured interviews with 34 key informants—directors of 34 organizations ranging from Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), government officials, the private sector, workers' unions, media groups, youth associations, and other civil society organizations (CSOs) in Phnom Penh, Kompong Speu, Siem Reap, and Battambang provinces.

The study also reviewed archival materials in Khmer and various documents related to social accountability.

Indonesia

The Indonesian study was a critical exploration of existing policies and the situation map of social accountability in the country. Prior to this, various international agencies funded researches on this particular theme, but exploration on Indonesia's social accountability situation was only partial.

The Indonesia social accountability mapping study primarily explored what policies have been put in place to improve social accountability in Indonesia, what their objectives are, and what facilitates and hinders the development of social accountability. It investigated the practices of social accountability and identified/analyzed the actors, actions taken, and gaps and needs.



The study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative data-gathering methods, including:

- Review of documents including laws on participatory planning and formal budgeting of development activities (such as Law # 25, Year 2004 about stakeholder consultation forum for development planning at all levels of societies, etc.),
- A diagnostic study of the Government of Indonesia's development planning regulations that hinder the social accountability practices, i.e. flow of knowledge to government from citizen groups and outside sources. The study attempts to describe the interaction between the demand side (government institutions) and the supply side (universities, think tanks, NGOs, etc.) and the role of certain legislations in hindering the growth of an effective market in intellectual services and research.
- Review of newspaper reports or investigations related to monitoring and evaluation of the government's performance on PFM.
- Expert rating on related aspects of social accountability (conducted as part of the interviews).
- A writeshop to produce a written output documenting innovative social accountability practices, methods or projects from the perspective of the actors. Participants in the process included individuals who have, in one way or another, been involved in the experiences documented. The writeshop brought together a wide range of individuals, each with his/her own experiences and specific knowledge, who worked together to tell their stories and draw lessons from these. Prior to the writeshop, the facilitators interviewed the participants as part of the selection process. Group discussions were also part of the writeshop.

It made use of the "Guide Questions for the Policy Review on Social Accountability in Indonesia" developed by ANSA-EAP and "Guide Questions for the Social Accountability Mapping for Indonesia" as tools. The inquiries were conducted at the national, provincial, and district levels since many citizen groups operate across province and district borders. For the western part of Indonesia, the focal area was Java, especially Jakarta, as the capital of Indonesia where a wealth of information about social accountability at the national level was gathered. It also covered Bandung City where provincial and district level information was gathered. For the Eastern part of Indonesia, the focal area was Sulawesi, especially Makassar (the capital of South Sulawesi) and Kendari (the capital of Southeast Sulawesi).



Mongolia

The Mongolian study was an attempt to draw a comprehensive map of social accountability understanding and practice in Mongolia. The purpose of the study was to portray the current situation of social accountability in terms of how the concept is understood; the practices related to its use and application; the gaps between the understanding and the practice; who are the actors and what has been done so far; the opportunities and challenges facing social accountability work; and what can be done to improve on the practices.

The outcome of the study is expected to help inform strategic interventions on initiating, fostering, and sustaining citizen-government engagement and provide insights and direction to social accountability experts and practitioners not only in Mongolia, but in the region as well. It can also serve as a guide to the government and to donor organizations on what priorities to support in order to maximize meager resources for targeted governance and development outcomes.

Specifically, the study aimed to:

- Identify and document social accountability initiatives that involve citizens and citizen groups in strengthening government accountability;
- Examine and describe the historical, socio-political, economic, and cultural factors that contribute to the current practice of social accountability;
- Expand the knowledge base of social accountability approaches, tools, and mechanisms;
- Identify and define elements, opportunities, and entry points for social accountability networking and capability building in Mongolia; and
- Identify gaps as well as emerging issues and concerns related to social accountability work in Mongolia.

In addition to the Four Pillars of social accountability framework of ANSA -EAP, the Mongolian researchers developed their own framework on Level of Relations in Social Accountability that they used to explore the various dimensions of relationships involved in social accountability work.

The Philippines

The Philippine study on social accountability was built on a number of scoping studies on social accountability mechanisms in the Philippines and



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in the region that had already been conducted in the past (Sirker and Cosic, 2007; Arroyo and Sirker, 2005). This time, a more in-depth analysis was undertaken to define, from actual practice, the following: (1) social accountability framework that contains a set of principles and indicators of performance; (2) environmental factors that enable civil society to play the role of informing and engaging citizens in exacting accountability from government; (3) approaches, tools and techniques used to ensure significant outcomes from SA interventions; (4) significant outcomes of social accountability mechanisms in governance, sustainable development and citizen empowerment; and (5) challenges facing civil society and strategies to address these challenges.

The main elements of the methodology used in the study were the following:

- **Survey of Literature:** Review of studies on social accountability to understand the content and substance of the discourse as well as the issues that theorists, practitioners and advocates continue to deliberate on. The literature review covered social accountability practices in the Philippines as well as in other parts of the world.
- **Scoping:** Inventory of social accountability initiatives of civil society organizations based on review of literature, extensive Internet searches and previous scoping studies. Interventions were selected based on the proposed definition and framework of social accountability.
- **Template:** Adaptation of the World Bank's template that was used in initial scoping studies conducted by Arroyo and Sirker (2004), Sirker and Cosic (2007) and the more recent preliminary scoping by Songco (2008). Questions to understand how the spaces for engagement were created had been added to the template. Information was initially gathered through the Internet and literature review. Identified civil society organizations (CSOs) were requested to complete the template.
- **Deepening and Clarification of Facts:** Face-to-face interviews, email exchanges and telephone conversations were conducted to clarify and amplify the information gathered through the completed templates
- **Data Analysis:** Data gathered from the accomplished templates were reviewed and analyzed. Patterns and trends were identified across the different social accountability interventions.

Other past social accountability interventions were also considered. On the whole, the study identified 40 social accountability interventions and completed the templates for 34 social accountability interventions.



The studies conducted in the four priority countries generated information-rich reports that built on existing paradigms of accountability in general and social accountability in particular. The succeeding section presents the definitions of terms and concepts that the researchers used as guide in framing their findings and analyses, and enabled them to firm up new theories and understanding of social accountability and other related concepts.

UNDERSTANDING ACCOUNTABILITY VIS-À-VIS SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Social accountability stemmed from the principle of *accountability* which involves “the construction of a grammar of conduct and performance and the standards used to assess performance of public sector actors which, then, defines expectations and order social relationships”. It is said to exist “when there is a relationship where an individual or body, and the performance of tasks or functions by that individual or body, are subject to another’s oversight, direction or request that they provide information or justification for their actions.” (Stapenhurst and O’Brien, n.d.)

Traditionally, there are two types of accountability: (1) horizontal accountability, among different state agencies via separation of powers; and (2) vertical accountability, between the state and the public. Each type has its own set of mechanisms for operations.

The Mongolian report lists these various mechanisms: *Internal* or *horizontal mechanisms* include (1) political mechanisms such as constitutional provisions and allocation of power; (2) financial mechanisms such as audits and formal financial reporting systems; (3) administrative mechanisms such as step-by-step procedures, minimum norms and standards as applied to public organizations, rules and regulations for governance and management; laws and regulations demanding transparency and openness; and (4) self-correcting mechanisms such as the court system, anti-corruption bodies and ombudsmen.

External or *vertical mechanisms*, on the other hand, include elections (a direct way of asking for accountability and responsibility from government) and actions by civil society, including NGOs and civil movements, to



participate in public decision-making and to monitor government actions. Since the government must account for the use of its authority and of public resources as well as for the results, *internal administrative accountability* must be complemented by *external accountability* through feedback from service end-users and the general public.

A basic principle in political science states that a key function of civil society is to ask for and to demand from the government, both accountability and responsibility. (Malena and Janmejey 2004)

The report from Mongolia explores the term “accountability” and finds it as having two components: **answerability** (which has some reference to the original meaning of “responsibility”) and **consequences** (Davaadulam, 2010). *Answerability* refers to the requirement for public officials to respond periodically to questions on how they have used their authority, where public resources went, and what was achieved with these resources. At the same time, there is a parallel need for predictable and meaningful *consequences* of one’s behavior or action—not necessarily punitive, not necessarily monetary, not necessarily for the benefit of the individual.

Caroline Hughes and Nick Devas (2008) classify accountability into three aspects: First, it requires a relationship of externality between the body owning accountability and the body to whom it is owed in order to avoid conflicts of interest. Second, it requires a process of social exchange such as mechanisms for the flow of information, explanation and feedback, including the possibility of imposing sanctions. Third, it requires that clear rights of authority are vested in the body to whom accountability is owed.

Social accountability came to the fore with the growing need for “constructive engagement between citizens and government” as ANSA-EAP puts it. It has a supply side (government) and a demand side (citizens). The Cambodian report asserts that, “Both citizen groups and the government are important players of social accountability. The government has the duty to facilitate access to all information while citizens must assert their right to participate in governance. Citizens must organize themselves to be able to engage in this kind of participation. The power of collective and organized advocacy work can make citizens a potent force for social transformation.”

ANSA-EAP believes that citizens have a direct stake in the allocation and use of public resources, and thus are inherently motivated to participate in



the government's decision-making. When citizens band together to form an organization or a group, and collectively decide to direct their efforts toward the achievement of common developmental goals, they constitute what ANSA-EAP refers to as a "citizen group".

The term "citizen group" is described by ANSA-EAP as any collection of citizens who direct their efforts toward the achievement of common developmental goals. In the context of social accountability, citizen groups drive the demand for good governance and have the capacity to voice out their concerns powerfully in order to assert their rights to participate in governance.

The concept of a citizen group, as used in the studies, is generic and encompassing, to include non-government organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), sectoral groups (including the private sector), civic groups and associations, faith-based groups, and the like. The Mongolian mapping report states that, "even those in government, such as government employees, who establish a group for the purpose of exercising their rights and duties as citizens, can be categorized as a citizen group".

ABOUT THIS SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY STOCKTAKING REPORT

This report features a collection of mapping writeups from ANSA-EAP's four priority countries—Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. It is composed of three parts: Part I gives an overview and introduction of social accountability and other related concepts. It contains a brief description of ANSA-EAP's social accountability mapping project and the process employed by each of the four priority countries in conduct the research. Part II presents the four country reports, covering mainly the findings, analyses, and recommendations from the partner research teams. Each report paints a tentative picture of the nature and status of social accountability perspectives and practices in its respective area of coverage. Charts, tables and other graphic representations aid the reader in gaining an understanding and appreciation of the facts and figures contained in the reports. Part III offers a synthesis of the social accountability practices and experiences, highlighting the gains and the accomplishments, looking into



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the gaps and challenges, and analyzing the factors and the impact of these on the social accountability initiatives in the East Asian and Pacific region.

It is the desire of ANSA EAP that the publication of these stocktaking results on the social accountability situation will be useful to the key actors and stakeholders of the four priority countries. It is also hoped that social accountability advocates and practitioners who may be interested in a deeper understanding of the situation in their respective areas of concern will gain lessons and insights from ANSA EAP's stocktaking experience.

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Partner-Researchers:

Mr. Vireak Kong and Ms. Raskmey Oung
Cambodian Research Team

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For more information, please contact:

ANSA-EAP Operations Team
Ateneo School of Government, Pacifico Ortiz Hall, Fr. Arrupe Road
Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City 1108
Republic of the Philippines
Telephones: +6 32 426-6062 and +6 32 426-6002 ext 4627
Fax: +6 32 920-2920
E-mail: info@ansa-eap.net
Website: www.ansa-eap.net



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For more information, see the ANSA-EAP website: www.ansa-eap.net.



ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADI	Analyzing Development Issues Project
BFD	Buddhism for Development
CAS	Center for Advanced Study
CBO	Community-based organization
CC	Commune Council
CCC	Cooperation Committee for Cambodia
CCSP	Commune Council Support Project
CDRI	Cambodia Development Resource Institute
CEDAC	Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture
CMC	Community Management Course
CNGO	Cambodian Non-Governmental Organization
COMFREL	Committee for Free and Fair Election in Cambodia
CPP	Cambodian People’s Party
CRR	Citizen Rating Report
CS	Civil Society
CSO	Civil Society Organization
D&D	Decentralization and Deconcentration
HE	His Excellency
IFC	International Finance Corporation
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
KID	Khmer Institute of Democracy
LNGO	Local Non-Government Organization
Mol	Ministry of Interior
NCDD	National Committee for Decentralization and Deconcentration
OL	Organic Law
PDV	Peace Development Volunteers
RFA	Radio Free Asia
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SAc	Social Accountability
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
TAF	The Asia Foundation
VOA	Voice of America
WB	World Bank



GLOSSARY OF KHMER TERMS

<i>Ak phibalkech laar</i>	Good Governance; refers to benevolent leadership characterized by transparency, responsibility, and absence of corruption. May also refer to the functional, responsive, and accountable administration of the state. This is a relatively new term that was first used in the 1990s.
<i>Bandaine</i>	Networking; refers to a system of interactions and relationships between groups and individuals. It can refer to individual networks or relationships. Networking happens through kinship and personal group interactions.
<i>Ka tortuol khos trov</i>	Responsibility; normally refers to individuals being responsible for their own conduct or assigned tasks.
<i>Ka tortuol khos prorkorb doy thor</i>	Moral responsibility; refers to leaders who are concerned with the welfare of and are treating the public with tolerance and fairness.
<i>Ka tuk chet/ smarmos trang</i>	Trust, honest; refers to a person who neither cheats nor lies, but instead acts with honor and respect. This is related to the moral responsibility of individuals.
<i>Kanak neiyak pheap</i>	Accountability; widely understood as responsibility or being able to explain.
<i>Kanak neiyak pheap sangkum</i>	Social accountability; refers to the moral responsibility of leaders to be transparent and responsive to the needs of the people.
<i>Kar tor sou mate</i>	Advocacy and expressing/voicing out ideas; literally means “to struggle for an idea”. This is a new term that is not widely understood outside the NGO community in Cambodia.
<i>Komlaing</i>	Force or strength or power.
<i>Ksea knaorn</i>	Patronage system; refers to the network of relationships between patron and client to promote personal interests. It refers to networking as well.
<i>Sangkhum</i>	Social or society.

THE EVOLVING MEANING OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN CAMBODIA

Cambodia has become a modern archetype of reconstruction (Ojendal, 2003) after experiencing massive social and political collapse due to violence and protracted conflict in the early 1970s and into the late 1990s. Some scholars even treat Cambodia as a “failed state” where society is disconcertingly sucked into a maelstrom of anomie (Paris, 2005).

Since its inception in the early 1990s, Cambodian democracy has struggled to survive like other unconsolidated democracies following the national elections of 1993, 1998, 2003, and 2008; and decentralization reforms that led to the commune elections in 2002 and 2007. With the broadening of democratic space and the stepping up of development efforts, it was inevitable for the state to “reconnect” with civil society to enhance its legitimacy. However, the result is some kind of “hybrid” regime characterized by the establishment of democratic institutions (i.e. regular elections and a liberal constitution) but nevertheless operating outside generally accepted democratic norms, values, and procedures (Ojendal & Sedara, 2008).

In post-conflict reconstruction society like Cambodia, more in-depth democratic processes need to be initiated, institutions built, and civic engagement encouraged. In the long run, political culture must be altered. However, the particular historical juncture, political culture, and regime legitimacy shape the mechanisms for restoring the post-conflict society. In addition, there are political processes evolving on the ground that compel



governments to take values such as accountability, participation, responsiveness, and transparency more seriously (Prum, 2005).

Currently, the importance of integrating social accountability approaches and processes in governance in East Asian and Pacific countries to improve service delivery, enhance welfare protection, and strengthen citizen's rights has been recognized.

Accountability, however, is an ambiguous and relational concept. Different social, cultural, and historical contexts shape its contents and styles. Various researches have indicated that accountability is one of the most important means in the reform process of the Cambodian government.¹ It has moved to the forefront of both the Cambodian government's and the donor community's reform agenda in recent years, particularly those that focus on good governance poverty reduction and democratic involvement.

Accountability between community-based organizations (CBOs) and local authorities remains weak and blurred (Kim & Ojendal, 2007). This is perhaps because public reform initiatives that donors introduce are Western-oriented, failing to factor in specific social and cultural conditions in the country. As a result, these efforts are poorly understood, much less owned by Cambodian policy makers.

In Cambodia, vast informal relational networks underlie the formal governance system. These informal networks also shape formal bureaucratic activities and functions. Higher and lower levels of government, civil servants, and politicians lack an adequate understanding of institutional and individual accountability. Accountability in the Khmer language is a term that the public does not understand.

In the last seven years, however, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has actively initiated different reforms as part of the process of democratic decentralization. These reforms included the holding of commune elections in 2002, the Rectangular Strategy² in 2004, and the Organic Law (OL) in 2008. The immediate objective of the decentralization and deconcentration (D&D) strategy of the RGC is to develop democratic, participatory, accountable, and effective institutions of government at the provincial/municipal, district/*khan*,³ and commune/*sangkat* levels.

Reforms in democratic representation strengthen the sub-national levels by expanding their powers, duties, responsibilities and resources.



UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE CAMBODIAN CONTEXT

Social Accountability is a relatively new term and is, as yet, poorly understood by the general public. Among the reasons cited for this lack of understanding is the dearth of experiences in the country of a responsible and accountable state; and the retarded development of effective state or intermediary institutions as a result of Cambodia's recent history of protracted conflict and violent transitions.

Participation of the people introduces systems and procedures to ensure that constituents, especially women, vulnerable groups and indigenous minorities take part in decision-making at the local government level. Public sector accountability strengthens accountability at all levels of administration and facilitates citizens' oversight of the administrative and financial affairs of those in the administration. Allowing citizens to participate in planning and monitoring public services will improve effectiveness in the delivery of public services (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2004).

Good governance is the cornerstone of the 2004 Rectangular Strategy of the RGC focusing on four reform areas: (1) anti-corruption, (2) legal and judicial reform, (3) public administration reform including decentralization and deconcentration, and (4) reform of the armed forces, especially demobilization. The 2008 Organic Law aims to redefine the administrative management and unify administration at the sub-national level of municipality, province, city, and district/*khan*.

While all these reforms promote and enhance social accountability, the concept remains ambiguous and complex to many in Cambodia.

The term social accountability, *kanak neiyapheap sangkhum* in Khmer, is primarily understood as responsibility, honesty, and transparency. Its meaning is closely linked to the moral responsibility (*ka tortuol khos trov prorkorb doy thor*) and obligation of leaders to respond to the needs of the people. It is a relatively new term and is, as yet, poorly understood by the general public. Among the reasons cited for this lack of understanding is the dearth of experiences in the country of a responsible and accountable state; and the retarded development of effective state or intermediary institutions as a result of Cambodia's recent history of protracted conflict and violent transitions.



Different stakeholders have varying perceptions of social accountability. Some are very skeptical that it can ever be applied in Cambodian society, given the existing context of political patronage and control of the dominant political party. Other stakeholders, on the other hand, see the evolving concept of social accountability as an opportunity to build trust between the state and the citizenry.

The study yielded a partial list of current social accountability practices and tools utilized by civil society organizations, donors, the private sector, and the government. These mechanisms are helping to alter, albeit slowly, the cultural and political landscape of Cambodia. They are also shaping the evolving meaning and understanding of social accountability.

CULTURE OF POWER AND KARMA ON CAMBODIAN SOCIETY

The past few decades of Cambodia's contemporary history have been characterized by a period of protracted conflict. From the early 1970s until 1993, Cambodia underwent many political and economic changes. It transitioned through different political systems—from the monarchy, republic, Stalinist communism and genocide, and more recently, democratic government.

In the 1980s, Cambodia adopted a centralized command economy and later switched to a free market economy. Although the country shifted in the early 1990s from authoritarian rule to a parliamentary form of government, democracy in Cambodia remains imperfectly realized. From one regime to another, power transitions have been usually carried out through fierce fighting and bloodshed. In Cambodian political culture, power is not shared but largely rests on individuals or groups instead of state institutions (Kim, 2009).

Two related phenomena could be seen occurring within Cambodia's historical context. First, the country has experienced the rule of many different political regimes and parties with differing and competing theories and ideologies over a short period of time. Second, the country has been unable to achieve peaceful transformation of power from one regime to another based on democratic principles. Each political regime in the recent past had not been transformed by democratic power but instead had been



overthrown quickly. These serious historical interruptions have held back the development of state institutions and created difficulty in building trust (*ka tuk chet*) and legitimacy between rulers and the ruled. This lack of trust and the dearth of experiences of a responsible and accountable state make it difficult to cultivate an awareness of the contractual relationship between citizens and state, lending weakness to social accountability.

Political Culture

Cambodian political culture shares similarities with the political systems of Southeast Asian countries, where individual performance is intertwined with traditional and cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes that affect the way state systems function (Hanks, 1962). Other factors such as patronage, kinship, religion (in this case, Buddhism), and rent-seeking behavior⁴ also influence social accountability in Cambodia (Chandler, 2003; Ebihara, 1968).

The societal structure contains a collection of formal and informal patterns, each interacting with kinship, shared beliefs and religion, the court, and the elite. Remaining largely intact in Cambodian society is the Buddhist concept of karma and merit-making, which is the belief that a person's status in society in his present life is determined by his performance in the previous life (Kim, 2001). It is widely believed that personal status can be improved by virtuous actions, sponsoring temples, and community development.

The relationship between leaders and followers is based on patronage and it shapes the perceptions of people on power, politics, and economics. Steep power differentials, which prohibit the ability of citizens to claim rights and freedom in the face of official high-handedness (Hughes, 2003), generally characterize power relations between state officials and civilians. Most Cambodians view contact with representatives of the state at any level as threatening and something that should be avoided if possible. Power is not shared; it is accumulated and protected. Cambodian rulers build their political systems based on familiar aspects of traditional political culture, aiming to promote democracy within an authoritarian political model (John, 2005).

The central symbolism of Cambodian political culture revolves around the idea of power, which is decidedly a zero-sum game. Securing compliance and power is accumulated by force or strength (*komlaing*), which is believed to



belong to the semantic nexus of the warrior image. The power of Cambodian society rests in the person of high officials, not in its offices or institutions. As such, power is personalized and serves the purpose of the leaders rather than the public. Cambodian political life assumes a form of patronage that is hierarchical and absolutist, creating weak state institutions as the channel of power goes through political/private party lines. This culture of patronage tolerates deviant behavior by those who violate the social norms without serious consequences. The way Cambodian rulers exercise power does not serve to promote democracy in the form of institutional arrangement, moral responsibility, and political tolerance. Rather, power is used as an absolute means to enforce compliance and build the coercive strength of the leaders.

Political Institutions and Elections

A weak state—controlled by all-powerful leaders with strong political machinery—figures prominently in Cambodia’s long history of conflict. In the post-war period, party competition has become more pluralist with free elections regularly organized by Cambodians themselves. Yet the degree of institutionalization has been strongly influenced by the configuration of powerful political parties. While research have shown that citizens as voters are aware of electoral accountability, elections are constrained by strong control of political parties, vote-buying, and, sometimes, intimidation (Kim, 2009). These constraints discourage people from exercising their free will when choosing their leaders. Political parties and party activists do not fully subscribe to nor practice democratic principles. Political parties that control the state do not distinguish between their private interests and those of the public. Information flows through local authorities and the political party network.

In a recent survey conducted in five provinces (Kim 2009), 583 voters were asked, “If the elected commune councillors are not accountable to voters or do not serve the voter, do you have the power to change them in the next election?” About 90% of voter-respondents said that they could vote the elected Commune Council members out of office, indicating citizens’ growing awareness of the power of the ballot.



Citizen-State Relations

Various research show that Cambodian society lacks formal organizational structures (Bit, 1991). The social interaction of peasants revolves around kinship ties at the level of the individual household and the nuclear family. Despite some forms of community coherence, most of civil society interactions in Cambodian society, particularly in rural communities, are embedded in patron-client and rent-seeking relations. The horizontal and downward accountability line of interaction largely occurs within the relationships among villagers, kinsmen, close friends, neighbors, and the Buddhist temple (*wat*). Social interaction within Cambodian society is informal and does not reach far beyond kinsmen, close friends, and neighbors. Some studies have emphasized that Cambodia lacks intermediary institutions to close the gap between the state and society or between the rural and central authorities. Bit Seanglim (1991) makes his observation of Cambodian society:

It is noteworthy that Cambodian culture has not developed any other social institutions or groups beyond the family structure which might facilitate the concept of collective social responsibility. Cambodia does not have a tradition of associations, volunteer groups, trade unions, or other networks composed of people who come together for a common purpose. The formats of religious traditions are decentralized with an emphasis on the immediate locale and the village temple. Opportunities for exchanging experiences, cooperation, or identifying with a larger group are restricted to the groups which already form the basis for a social identity, namely, the family and the village. (Bit, 1991, p. 49).

According to Bit, Cambodian society is missing two key aspects: (1) collective social responsibility/accountability facilitated by intermediary institutions, and (2) a tradition of associations that come together for a common purpose.

Restricted Democratic Space for Civil Society

Civil society is one of the most powerful forces, along with social capital and civility that could promote democratic development. Gordon White defines civil society as



[a]n intermediate associational realm between state and family populated by organizations which are separate from the state, enjoy autonomy in relation to the state, and are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extent their interests or values. (White, 1994)

Civil society organizations perform the role of raising people's political consciousness and mobilizing them to challenge the power of the state. This form of participation can help to restrain the power of the elite while increasing the power of society.

Discussions about civil society in Cambodia have largely revolved around non-government organizations (NGOs), often international NGOs (I-NGOs) and their clients (Un, 2005).

The study of Kim and Ann (2005) classified grassroots organizations in Cambodia into two primary types: (1) organic groups, which are traditional and have been in existence in Cambodian society for many generations; and (2) mandated groups, which are often established by international organizations. The latter groups are fairly new in Cambodian society. The same study identified the existing organic and mandated groups in rural areas in Cambodia (Kim & Sovatha, 2005). Table 1 shows a partial list with a description.

In his study on civil society, public space, and democratization in Cambodia, Kheang Un points out that efforts of civil society organizations to push for judicial reforms have been weak because they lack a systematic strategy. The ineffectiveness of Cambodian NGOs (CNGOs) stems from their urban-based character because they emerged from international political support and engagement. The rise of CNGOs has not been accompanied by an enlargement of democratic space in rural areas.

Another factor that makes CNGOs ineffective is the character of their internal governance (e.g. organizational structures, operations, and top-to-bottom approach), which falls short of being democratic and mirror the patron-client relationships endemic in Cambodian political culture.

There are many factors that make it difficult for genuine civil society to grow in the current political arena of Cambodia. The state continues to restrict democratic space, limiting NGOs' ability to expand their activities and promote further democratic consolidation. NGOs' dependence on



Table 1. Existing organic and mandated groups in rural areas in Cambodia.

CITIZEN GROUP	DESCRIPTION/FUNCTION
Wat or Pagoda Committee	This committee usually represents more than one village and typically consists of senior, well-respected volunteers who help and represent the pagoda. Members are not usually elected
School Support Committee (SSC)	This is usually composed of respected people such as teachers, school principals, local authority representatives, and parents. Its main task is to safeguard and ensure the sustainability of school activities
Funeral Committee	This is not a permanent group but is formed to help poor families that cannot afford a proper funeral for their loved departed
Midwife Association (also known as Health Association)	Often operating with technical support from NGOs, its primary task is to assist in promoting hygiene awareness and to help bring the sick to provincial clinics if necessary
Help the Ages Association	This group is formed to help poor, elderly people in the community. It usually consists of senior, respected people and members of the Wat Committee
Water Users Association	This association is formed in communes with a need for active water management. It is responsible for allocating water use among farmers, and for maintaining and constructing irrigation systems
Dry Season Rice Cultivation Association	This is formed only in locations where there is a possible water source for dry season rice cultivation. Its task is to mobilize resources and improve the water supply. In some provinces, it is the same as the Water Users Association
Savings Association	Sometimes this association is synonymous to a rice or piggy bank to provide mutual help to members
Community Fishery	This organization is often formed in areas adjacent to a fishing ground. It assumes the role of a watchdog for illegal fishing activities and cooperates with fishery officers and local authorities to stop illegal fishing. The local fishing community often gets technical support from different I-NGOs
Forest Community Association	This association is set up among local communities to protect forests from illegal logging and to replant fallen trees. It often receives technical support from I-NGOs but is not explicitly part of commune jurisdiction
Road Maintenance Committee	This committee is often created through the CCs (commune councils) but does not exist in all communes



foreign funding and lack of membership prevent them from sustaining their activities. Within this political context, CNGOs mostly adhere to a non-confrontational stance vis-à-vis the state, focusing on persuasion to transform government leaders' moral values by alerting them to the problems of human rights abuses, corruption, nepotism, and lack of rule of law.

Despite the restricted space for civil society engagement in government affairs, it is worth noting that citizens are opening up spaces for participation in governance. Cambodians are learning new labels for what is slowly becoming a part of their everyday concerns. A Khmer vocabulary on accountability and related concepts has been evolving.

In the English-Khmer dictionary, the term *kanak neiyapheap* (accountable/accountability) means *tortoul khos trov* (responsibility) or *arch ponyul bann* (explainable or able to explain) (Huffman and Im, 1987). *Sangkhum* is the Khmer word for social or society.

The Khmer word for social accountability is *kanak neiyapheap sangkhum*. However, an overwhelming majority of respondents in two surveys (95% of voter respondents in Kim's upcoming study⁵ and 80% of respondents in the NCDD survey (NCDD, 2008) do not know or have not heard of the term *kanak neiyapheap*. In Kim's study, 81% of CC member-respondents have heard of *kanak neiyapheap* but have given mixed definitions.

Kanak neiyapheap (social accountability) is primarily understood as responsibility, honesty, and transparency. A closer look at the Khmer term for responsibility, *tortoul khos trov*, shows that its meaning is related to the definition of accountability.

It means "taking responsibility" for doing the wrong thing (*tortoul khos*) and "being responsible" for doing the right thing (*tortoul trov*). The meaning of social accountability is also linked to the moral responsibility (*ka tortoul khos trov prorkorb doy thor*) and obligation of leaders to respond to the needs of the people. *Ak phibalkech laar* (good governance) is an ideal type of leadership—benevolent leadership characterized by transparency, responsibility, and absence of corruption. This is a relatively new term that was used in the 1990s to describe the functional, responsive, and accountable administration of the state.



Neak Doeuk Norm is the Khmer word for leader or someone who takes the lead for a particular task or duty. One of the valued characteristics of a leader is honesty and trustworthiness. *Ka tuk chet* or *smarmos trang* (being trustworthy or honest) refers to a quality of a person who neither cheats nor lies, and acts with honor and respect. This is related to the moral responsibility of individuals, especially those in positions of authority or power (*komlaing*).

Kar tor sou mate or advocacy and expressing or voicing out ideas is one of the ways in which citizens can exact accountability from the government. *Kar tor sou mate* literally means “to struggle for an idea”, a term coined by NGOs in the late 1990s (Clamor, 2000). This term is not widely understood outside the NGO community. Many NGOs form networks (*bandaine*) to promote or advance their causes.

STUDIES ON SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN CAMBODIA

There are few academic researches on social accountability in Cambodia. The following is a review of some pertinent studies.

Accountability Toward Donors

Michael Barton’s *Empowering a New Civil Society* (2001) reveals that the growth and strength of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Cambodia has depended on the presence of donor agencies, the prevailing political situation, government support and recognition, and the development of local communities and Cambodian society as a whole. Since most CSOs are financially dependent on donors, they are more accountable toward the latter.

The prevailing political situation presents a challenge for CSOs to mount large scale demonstrations because many NGOs fear a direct confrontation with the government. It is also difficult for grassroots CSOs to grow in a sustained manner because it is hard to mobilize people who are more oriented to material output. With a weak civil society, demanding social



accountability remains a stiff challenge in Cambodia. The government should allow more space for NGOs and civil society to work effectively.

White Hat and Black Hat Governance

Hughes and Un's *Cambodia Governance Analysis* (2006) examines three main elements of governance: state capacity, accountability, and responsiveness. They distinguish between two types of governance in state capacity: white hat and black hat. *White hat* governance conforms broadly to rational-legal modes, while black hat governance operates via entrepreneurial and personal relationships. *Black hat* governance is devoted to a great extent to rent-seeking practices. Organized around allegiances based upon marriage, kinship, and a network of patronage, black hat governance predominates in Cambodian politics. However, in the past 15 years, it has been necessary for black hat governance to be counterbalanced by sufficient white hat activity to maintain cordial relations with Cambodia's donors.

At any rate, the government continues to be reluctant to establish systematic accountability measures through the promotion of an independent judiciary with real powers to scrutinize the activities of the state. Thus, the two types of governance co-exist and shape the level of accountability in Cambodia. With the prevalence of corruption and rent-seeking practices, government is largely unresponsive to the promotion of political, civil, and economic rights of the poor. However, there have been some improvements in government responsiveness through decentralization and deconcentration reforms (Hughes & Un, 2006).

Local Governance and Community Organizations

In "Where Decentralization Meets Democracy: Civil Society, Local Government, and Accountability in Cambodia", Kim and Ojendal (2007) look at the relationship between CBOs and local government, particularly elected Commune Councils.

The participation and mobilization of CBOs is generally weak because people lack commitment. Only the chiefs and deputies of CBOs are active at the beginning but they cease implementing activities when funding dries up.



Individual self-interest largely drives the social dynamics in rural communities.

Nonetheless, the current relationship between CBOs and the elected commune council is generally good because it does not involve money and power. The study shows that CCs are performing relatively well. They are downwardly accountable and responsive to voters but face many difficulties because most of the powers that are supposed to be devolved to them are still with the line agencies (Kim & Ojendal, 2007).

Accountability and Patronage

The study, “Accountability and Neo-Patrimonialism in Cambodia: A Critical Literature Review”, describes Cambodian society as hybridized, combining many informal elements such neo-patrimonialism⁶ and rent-seeking. Patronage networks especially penetrate ministries in charge of exploiting resources and disrupt effective public administration and service delivery. Entrenched and institutionalized from the national to local levels, the current state of neo-patrimonialism in Cambodia undermines judicial accountability and the formal system of checks and balances (Pak, 2007).

Covering 310 communes and randomly sampling 620 councilors and 1,420 voters as respondents, the survey conducted by Ninh and Henke (2005) shows that more than 90% of voters trust the CCs more than the provincial and national governments. About 85% of voters expressed that all projects carried out by CCs are beneficial to the community. However, respondents do not make a clear distinction between the work of the political party and the commune. About 70% of the CC members surveyed endorse the statement that they are subordinate to district and provincial authorities. Voters see the following challenges of elected CCs: not being responsive and accountable due to the lack of funds, limited skills and capacity, lack of authority to generate local revenues, and interference by district, province, and national government.

Voices from the Ground

In “Linking Citizens and the State: An Assessment of Civil Society Contributions to Good Governance in Cambodia”, Malena and Chhim (2008)



analyze the concept of social accountability in Cambodia along four major dimensions: (1) information, (2) voice, (3) association, and (4) constructive dialogue and participation. According to the study, 80% of public information is obtained from broadcast media, mostly radio and TV; and 30% to 40% of public information is obtained through local authorities (i.e. village chiefs and CCs), relatives, friends, and neighbors. While information is crucial in enabling people to find out about government performance, the report has found that there is a lack of demand for information from public and government officials who, in turn, are not accustomed to sharing information with the public.

Findings by Malena and Chhim show that citizens are interested to voice out their opinions to their leaders. A high percentage of respondents (71%) have attended commune meetings but their participation has been largely passive. They are physically present but are reluctant to express their ideas, especially any form of criticism of government actions.

The study also shows that about 66% of CSOs belong to traditional associations that adopt more informal ways of engagement. This is a positive sign that decentralization at the commune level has created more space to increase the relationship between CBOs/CSOs with elected CCs. However, many urban-based NGOs in Cambodia are rarely membership organizations and most of them lack grassroots constituencies.

Malena and Chhim's study confirms the lack of awareness of citizens' rights and the responsibilities of government officials and the citizenry resulting in weak social contract. Even civil society actors engaged in advocacy assess their impact as limited, especially with regards to influencing policy implementation, budgeting, and expenditures. Unable to mediate more effectively between state and society, they feel that they have not succeeded in bringing about broad-based impacts or structural reforms. Thus, there is a lack of constructive dialogue and meaningful participation in the public sphere.

A 2008 baseline survey conducted by the National Committee for the Management of Decentralization and Deconcentration Reforms (NCDD) in five provinces shows that more than 80% of respondents have not heard of the word "accountability" in Khmer. More than 90% of respondents have not



lodged a formal complaint against their commune council. About 65% of respondents agree that CCs are more accountable to voters and the public. Half (56%) of the respondents feel that CC authorities keep citizens properly informed. About 72% of respondents agree to some extent that their CCs are responsive to their priority needs, which are mostly small-scale infrastructures. However, most of the voters do not know the funding sources of commune projects (NCDD, 2008).

An upcoming study by Kim has initially found that people generally agree that CCs are responsive to voters' needs to a certain extent. However, the quantity and speed of CCs' responsiveness remain limited. The concept of accountability and its Khmer term is not understood by the majority of the people. The study has also found that citizens and government officials' awareness of rights and social contract is limited and weak. Since CCs are not allowed to collect local revenues, their limited financial resources make it difficult for them to be responsive and accountable to voters. Their only sources of revenue are the central government and political parties. (Kim, 2009)

Another survey conducted by the Center for Advanced Study (CAS) and Pact in 2008 shows that after more than six years since the first commune elections, many citizens remain unclear about the mandate of CCs, with nearly a quarter of respondents (22%) unable to independently identify any role attributable to the commune council. Contact between the CC and voters is as limited as the information regarding CC functions. While recognizing a degree of local corruption, voters largely trust the CC and would not object to increasing the powers of the CC (Center for Advanced Study and PACT, 2008).

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY: A CAMBODIAN PERSPECTIVE

All informants interviewed affirm that the concept of social accountability is new to the Cambodian people. I-NGOs and donor agencies recognize that social accountability works differently depending on the social, economic, cultural, and political context. In the Cambodian context, the political culture of patronage system, hierarchy, and rent-seeking practices has always been



interwoven into the fabric of Cambodian society. Party politics remains the dominant factor shaping people's interaction with the state.

Social Accountability: A Cultural Anomaly?

Mr. Heang Path, program officer of Access to Justice Project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), says that

The concept of social accountability is very new in Cambodian society... Traditional norms such as patronage, hierarchy, kinship ties, and rent-seeking... are very much alive in contemporary Cambodia. (Heang Path, personal communication, September 2, 2008)

Mr. Heng Monychenda, director of Buddhism for Development and an experienced civil society actor in Battambang province, is skeptical and regards the concept of social accountability as complex and difficult to apply in the social realm.

When we talk about social accountability, one needs to think about the term of accountability which can't be applied in Cambodian society. There is a lack of explanation of this new and complex term and concept. If you look carefully, the concept of accountability is related to financial figures and numbers. As such, the concept needs to be exact and quantifiable, which is not possible in the social realm. To clarify its meaning, it is good to ask the question, 'Accountable to whom and by whom?' The concept is related to social responsibility and state responsibility or state and people responsibility. (Heng Monychenda, personal communication, October 30, 2008)

Mr. Heng Raksmeay, reporter for the Voice of America (VOA), likewise expresses his pessimism on the nature of social accountability in Cambodia and its CSOs.

In order to improve citizens' engagement, every institution in Cambodia has to be independent. The laws should be the basic foundation. There are more than 2,000 CSOs established in Cambodia but these organizations work for different purposes. Some work for government, political parties, individuals, and for public interest. About 80% of CSOs serve the party in power and pay no attention to the interests of citizens. (Heng Raksmeay, personal communication, October 4, 2008)



Many respondents from the NGO sector tend to take a critical position vis-à-vis the government when expressing their views on social accountability. Some informants, however, see the concept of social accountability as a new chance to enhance trust between state and society.

Factors that Contribute to Social Accountability Practice

H.E. Ngy Chanphal, a senior government official at the Ministry of the Interior (MoI), says that focusing on the practical application of social accountability is more important than the way the term is called.

Social accountability is a new concept in the Cambodian context. However, if we can understand it well and implement it properly, it would bring in new opportunities for our country. The term is viewed differently by different actors. To me, the term is similar to the Buddhist teaching which is understood in Cambodian society as social responsibility. The way we call it is not important. The practical mechanism is more important whatever is suitable for this society. (Ngy Chanphal, personal communication, November 5, 2008)

Many respondents have suggested linking the concept of social accountability to practical issues of social responsibility. What is the state's responsibility to its citizens? What are the responsibilities of citizens?

Social accountability is normally initiated by NGOs that embrace ideas imposed by I-NGOs or donor agencies. There are currently more than 3,000 NGOs operating in Cambodia but they do not work closely together. They follow different agenda, work on a short-term basis, and are only accountable to their donors. Mr. Murari Prasad Upadhyay, director of the Commune Council Support Project (CCSP), says that

[W]hen NGOs work individually, they have no voice and are not strong enough to ask for involvement from local authorities. NGOs and CBOs should work collectively to build up a good network and be answerable to the citizens. (Murari Upadhyay, personal communication, November 7, 2008)

The weak demand for good governance from citizens could be attributed to poverty and low educational attainment. As Monychenda puts it,



the 10-year National Democratic Development Plan that was scheduled for approval in November 2009.

NGOs also worry about the local authorities' limited capacity, at the commune level, to respond to the needs of citizens. As a result, there are no substantial changes undertaken. In the absence of these, people do not see the benefits of participating in the local governance process, and they are not motivated to take part in governance-related community initiatives. They also note that some NGOs do not communicate with local authorities when they implement their activities.

Moreover, information-sharing among NGOs is still limited, even among those working for the same causes and in the same sectors. Coordination and networking among civil society members are weak. Some NGOs seek immediate benefits when joining any network, which does not help in coalition-building or in creating partnerships essential to engaging with government meaningfully. Further, most NGOs are donor-driven and might not have the community support that will sustain them when donor funding dries up.

Capacity for social accountability is still limited. Graduates of the Social Accountability School (SAS) may have a good grasp of social accountability concepts and tools, but actual implementation remains weak.

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY TOOLS AND PRACTICES IN CAMBODIA

Despite the weak state of social accountability in Cambodia, the increasing number of initiatives from NGOs appears to be promising. For instance, the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC) has played a major role, since its inception in 1991, in strengthening cooperation between NGOs in Cambodia and has actively liaised with the RGC and donor agencies on NGO matters.

Through its Analyzing Development Issues (ADI) Project, the CCC has offered training courses to Cambodian NGO managers and field workers to develop critical thinking that would improve their work and respond to changing conditions in Cambodia. The ADI courses enable participants to understand development issues in Cambodia, develop their ability to link



micro experiences with macro trends, and build their confidence to meaningfully contribute to discussion and debates. Through the ADI, NGOs are equipped with the skills and knowledge to engage with government on policy issues.⁹

The Commune Council Support Project (CCSP), a project of a coalition of nine international and national NGOs in Cambodia, has a program to award best practices in civil society-commune council partnerships and collaboration towards local governance reform. These best practices invariably involve elected officials who are responsive to the needs of their constituents, which is the primary indicator of social accountability.¹⁰ CCSP also has the NGOs Liaison Office (NGO-CCSP) that links government and CSOs to sustain a positive relationship and enable CSOs to give feedback to RGC on the implementation of Decentralization and Deconcentration (D&D) reform policies.¹¹

The Committee for Free and Fair Election in Cambodia (COMFREL) conducts education and public for a to encourage citizens to participate in politics and decision-making, and to advocate/lobby for electoral reforms that increase accountability of elected officials and provide comprehensive monitoring data to enable an objective, non-partisan assessment of the fulfilment of political platform and performance of elected officials. COMFREL has its origins in the Task Force on Cambodia, which came together to provide an independent, non-partisan domestic monitoring team for the May 1993 UNTAC (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia) elections. COMFREL worked in close collaboration with the relevant international organizations throughout Cambodia to monitor the electoral processes before, during, and after polling day. In 1995, a decision was made to establish COMFREL as a permanent election monitoring organization. In 1997, COMFREL registered with the MoI and, thereafter, was recognized by the National Election Committee (NEC) as one of three organizations to be given priority in observing the 1998 National Assembly election.

During the 1998 National Assembly election, COMFREL's network extended to the village level nationwide, with 11,000 volunteer observers covering almost 95% of polling stations. COMFREL is currently revamping



Table 2. A sampling of social accountability tools used in Cambodia and the donor agencies using them.

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY TOOLS	AGENCY USING TOOL
Outreach, monitoring, and social development	PACT
Training, advocacy, assisting in forming CBOs or grassroots networks, and information-sharing	
Coordinating with government to form private sector-government public forum	IFC
Assisting private sectors in creating a cartel of rice millers, brick-making, and construction associations/unions to improve investment climate	IFC
Research and survey	CCSP, PACT
Improving capacity of the Chamber of Commerce	IFC
Citizen Rating Reports (CRR), improving capacity of elected CCs, networking, improving capacity of NGOs/CBOs	CCSP
Cooperating with government on D&D and work on the reform process of the sub-national level (district and provincial)	
Community Management Course (CMC)	Fur Die Freiheit

GOVERNMENT AND CSO INITIATIVES FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Despite the observed lack of coordination with civil society groups, some government agencies have helped push for social accountability initiatives with civil society. The MoI helped coordinate the Demand for Good Governance (DFGG) project in three state institutions: the “One Window Services” of the MoI, the National Radio of Kampuchea (NRK), and the Arbitration Council of the Ministry of Labor. The DFGG is being carried out to support state institutions. It also supports non-state institutions by providing partnership and citizen grants through The Asia Foundation (TAF). The 10-Year National Program for Sub-National Democratic Development has also been drafted. The Project Coordination Office (PCO) of DFGG is now in the process of recruiting Research and Training Organizations (RTOs).

Demand for Good Governance Initiatives

As a result of the DFGG, public administrative reforms are in progress after the election at sub-national levels such as in provinces, municipalities,



programs for its provincial departments to acquaint them with their roles and responsibilities. It is also going to organize a National Industrial Relations Conference to share lessons learned. The AC also plans to hold collective bargaining training for union workers and to publish decisions.

The MONASRI has also used a public forum to increase awareness for land laws among the citizens of Takeo. It plans to use the RNK program to educate people on legal matters. Tools to be used include roundtable discussions, talk-back programs, mobile news, and other IEC materials and strategies. Despite its limited experience in working with local NGOs, MONASRI plans to work with CSOs in the future. Partnerships with CSOs will prove helpful as MONASRI pushes the legislation of the access to information law.

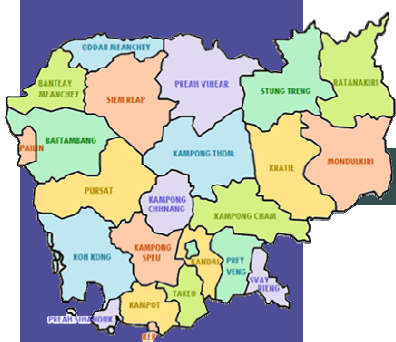
Program to Enhance Capacity in Social Accountability

To promote the reform process toward good governance, government officials recommended that the Program to Enhance Capacity in Social Accountability (PECSA) should continue to be involved in initiatives to build the capacity of local NGOs and CBOs on good governance and social accountability. The NGO groups shared this outlook.

PECSA is implemented by the World Bank, and is endorsed by the MoI. It responds to the Rectangular Strategy of the RGC, which recognizes that weak governance is a major obstacle to sustainable and broad-based development and poverty reduction in Cambodia.¹³ PECSA is the precursor of the DFGG project, and is implemented to fulfil two main objectives: (1) to enhance civil society capacities in designing and implementing social accountability and good governance, and (2) to build on and scale up the existing efforts of civil society to help the government be more effective.

Through PECSA, projects to support good governance and social accountability have been implemented. These are mainly in the form of training and capacity building. So far, over 2,000 people, including 55 women, have been trained on the concepts and tools of social accountability and good governance.

PECSA also funds social accountability projects administered by TAF. STAR Kampuchea also maintains a social accountability provincial network



covering 15 provinces. A resource center has, likewise, been set up in each province.

NGOs say the LAAR of PACT Cambodia is a move in the right direction. This is being undertaken in cooperation with the MoI and operates in eight provinces covering 356 communes in partnership with 13 NGOs.

Table 3 shows the social accountability tools that local NGOs use, which are similar to the tools that donors and international agencies use.

Table 3. A sampling of social accountability tools used in Cambodia and the local NGOs using them.

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY TOOLS	AGENCY USING TOOL
Advocacy, networking, information sharing, training, rural livelihood development	Most local NGOs
Citizen Advisor	KID
Collaboration and networking with local and sub-national government	COMFREL, CCC
Hearing, speaking, complaining, demanding role and responsibility of leaders or state	BFD
Advocacy, electoral education, election monitoring, training	COMFREL
Mediation and conflict resolution	Arbitration Council
Teaching children and raising awareness on hygiene, environment to school children	Youth associations, Mlup Bai Tong
Training, research	ADI, CCC
Spot-checking, staff capacity-building, monitoring, and coaching. Cooperating with sub-national government and improving capacity of CCs	Amara
Public dialogue, training, advocacy	SILAKA
Tripartite mechanism for conflict resolution	Arbitration Council Foundation
Monitoring the national budget	NGO Forum

THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The private or business sector is an emerging civil society stakeholder that can contribute to social accountability in Cambodia even if a segment of this sector, the economic elite, is strongly criticized for being closely associated with top politicians and for adopting rent-seeking practices. However, most private sector groups are not aware that they are using social accountability



tools and mechanisms that influence the government, such as the formation of networks and associations, because they view themselves as entirely operating separately from the state, with very limited and occasional engagement on social issues.

Nonetheless, the Federation of Rice Millers is a good example of a civil society stakeholder that is using the strength of its increasing membership to lobby with the government. It was established to represent the interests of Cambodian millers, and to increase value added to domestic rice processing.

The following is an initial list of the social accountability tools that the private sector is using:

- Public forum between the private sector and government that is held twice a year.
- Formation of eight working groups (such as export processing, SME, tourism, agriculture and rice miller associations, banking, finance, energy, transportation, and infrastructure) that participate in public forums.
- Active engagement to influence policy through the Chamber of Commerce.
- Creation of different occupation associations such as rice millers' associations, brick mill associations, construction associations, and labor unions.
- Engaging with international agencies such as IFC, WB, ADB, and JICA for professional business development through training and study tours.

Many media organizations, particularly newspapers, do not exercise independence and professionalism, and often act as mouthpieces of political parties. Only a few media groups (such as VOA and Radio Free Asia) operate independently of the government and political parties. Those that push for social accountability from the state use tools that are risky or confrontational and make them vulnerable to reprisals. Labor unions use similar social accountability tools as listed below:

- Advocacy via print media (newspapers and magazines)
- Broadcast media (radio and TV)
- Training and creation of associations
- Public demonstration and strikes
- Advocacy with government on labor laws to improve the working conditions of workers

At any rate, the government has shown increasing signs of being socially accountable. Many leaders, especially those who are elected, are listening



and cooperating with CSOs. Below are some of the tools that the Cambodian government uses to exercise social accountability:

- Formulating relevant policies and conducting policy dialogues
- Inter-ministerial collaboration
- Training and dissemination of information
- Coordination with donors and NGOs/CSOs
- Construction of needed local infrastructure and delivery of basic services

ADVANCING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICE IN CAMBODIA

Government and NGOs have many ideas on how to advance good governance through social accountability tools in Cambodia. Most of these acknowledge the importance of engaging each other and involving the community to achieve meaningful results. For instance, government officials say that CBOs and local authorities should share responsibility in implementing joint activities at the local level. In this case, the NGOs could facilitate the activity while local authorities can mobilize the people to ensure participation in the event.

If they are to work for reforms that will lead to good governance, Cambodia's citizens need capacity-building. Government representatives have identified the need for training on social accountability for the district governor or the deputy governor in charge of One Window Services. Likewise, the Provincial Accountability Committee Working Group also needs to build its capacity in understanding the new governance structures.

NGOs also need to build their capacity in communicating as well as in planning for activities to be undertaken at the district and *khan* levels. To improve engagement, NGOs should learn how to communicate more effectively with local authorities and government, especially in providing positive feedback and constructive criticism.

They also acknowledge the need to build the capacities of communities so that they can continue to be involved in development concerns so that they can continue to be involved in development concerns even in the absence of NGOs. The grassroots have to be empowered and engaged to



ensure the delivery of services and benefits. It is important to focus on building the demand side of good governance by involving the grassroots in pilot activities. More work should be carried out to find a model on how to provide support to grassroots organizations such as CBOs, community groups, and minority committees.

To further build up the capacity of local NGOs/CBOs on good governance and social accountability, concepts can be localized or indigenized and local resource persons can be tapped. Echo training should also be carried out to ensure that more people learn about the concepts and tools of social accountability. A network of social accountability practitioners should also be established to sharpen people’s skills in tools application, especially in the local communities. To do this, it is important to expand the discussions to the provinces and with government agencies at all levels.

Best practices in the Cambodian context should be shared. Success stories should be documented so that these can serve as models.

To build demand for good governance, public awareness should be raised among Cambodians. Media and government institutions have important roles to play in achieving this. Government and NGO representatives suggest that public institutions such as the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports should look at how it can incorporate social accountability in their curricula. NGOs should also take an active part in raising public awareness, especially on important programs like the DFGG, by using appropriate materials such as leaflets and other audio visual aids.

The passage of the Access to Information Law is also deemed important by stakeholders as necessary to improve social accountability. This should be accompanied by an appropriate feedback or grievance mechanism.

Government and CSOs acknowledge the need to improve coordination between themselves and with other stakeholders to ensure the support and sustainability of projects.

Coordination will also eliminate the duplication of work in some areas, and will balance work on the supply and demand side of good governance. In the interest of efficiency and expansion, NGOs should build on their existing projects and work on expanding these to the provincial, municipality, and district levels.



Partnerships should also be nurtured and harnessed. NGOs recommended the establishment of a NGO directors' forum to share information as well as to develop a common long-term vision and strategic plan for civil society in Cambodia. As organized groups, NGOs will be able to leverage their collective strength especially in dealing with government and donors. Beyond coalition-building, this will help build trust among NGOs and will enable them to reach out to NGOs in other sectors—possibly using one of the 15 existing networks set up by Star Kampuchea around Cambodia.

In all these, integrity is most important. NGOs and all involved in good governance should remain neutral and be mindful that they do not take sides with political parties. In the end, they are accountable only to the people.

ALTERING THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF CAMBODIA

From the review of available literature and interviews with key informants, the term social accountability, *kanak neiyapheap sangkhum*, appear to be a relatively new concept in Cambodia that is poorly understood by the general public. Among the reasons cited for this lack of understanding is the dearth of experiences in the country of a responsible and accountable state. Cambodia's recent history of protracted conflict and violent transitions has retarded the development of effective state or intermediary institutions beyond the family and kinship system that could facilitate the concept of collective social responsibility.

By and large, political power has rested on individuals or groups instead of state institutions. Power (*komlaing*) has been used to enforce compliance and build the coercive strength of leaders with a system of patronage instead of serving the interests of the public. With the lack of legitimacy and trust between the rulers and the ruled, there is little awareness of the contractual relationships between citizens and state. As a result, the people do not demand social accountability from the state and the state does not practice it. The weak demand for good governance from citizens can also be attributed to poverty and low educational attainment.

The increase in development efforts in post-conflict Cambodia has led to the establishment of democratic institutions, such as the ratification of a liberal constitution and the holding of regular elections, and the broadening



of democratic space through decentralization and deconcentration. The result is a hybrid regime where rational/legal (white hat) and patronage/neo-patrimonial (black hat) modes of governance co-exist.

Respondents who are familiar with the concept of social accountability primarily understand it as responsibility, honesty, and transparency. Social accountability is semantically related to the concept of social responsibility (*kanak neiyapheap sangkhum*) or moral responsibility (*ka tortoul khos trov prorkorb doy thor*) of the leaders and citizens. Responsibility (*tortoul khos trov*) is a popular term that ordinary people use and understand. The Buddhist belief in *karma* and merit-making play an important role in reinforcing moral behavior. Leaders are morally responsible to use their authority to respond to the needs of the people. After many elections on the national and local levels, people are starting to be aware of their rights as citizens to hold their elected officials accountable.

The primary social accountability stakeholders are CSOs because they perform the role of raising people's political consciousness and mobilizing them to challenge the power of the state. In Cambodia, there are two types of grassroots organizations: (1) organic groups, which are traditional and have been in existence in Cambodian society for many generations; and (2) mandated groups, which have recently emerged through the support of international organizations. Other civil society stakeholders are media organizations, labor unions, occupational groups, youth associations, and private sector.

These different stakeholders have varying perceptions of social accountability. Some NGOs critical of government are skeptical that social accountability could ever be applied in Cambodian society—given the existing context of political patronage and control of the dominant political party; the lack of awareness and demand from the public; and the disjointed efforts and conflicting agenda, and sometimes undemocratic character, of NGOs, including their dependence on external financial support. On the other hand, some key informants see the evolving concept of social accountability as an opportunity to build trust between the state and the citizenry.

The increasing number of initiatives from NGOs shows that despite the weak state of social accountability in Cambodia, there have been some



modest gains in closely collaborating with government and enabling them to be more responsive to the needs of the public. The tools include training and capacity-building, monitoring of elections and government performance, public forums and dialogue, advocacy, education and awareness-raising, mediation and conflict resolution, and formation of associations and networks. Confrontational modes include public demonstrations and strikes. Emerging civil society stakeholders, such as federations and occupational associations, use the strength of their numbers to engage and lobby with the government.

To enable the public to understand social accountability, the focus should be on its practical application—the tools and mechanism used by citizens and stakeholders—rather than its conceptual explanation. However, the largely state-controlled media in Cambodia presents veritable constraints in disseminating information on social accountability to the public.

At the grassroots level, it is important to use existing local and traditional mechanisms instead of introducing new social accountability mechanisms. For instance, each CC is required to set up an “accountability box” and bulletin board. After seven years, however, villagers neither come to write any suggestion or file any complaint in the box nor come to read the information posted on the bulletin board. Instead, information is disseminated in meetings and spread through word-of-mouth.

The best mechanism to help Cambodian society internalize the importance of social accountability is to introduce it in the educational curriculum and to target the youth (i.e. aged 24 and under), who roughly comprise 60% of the country’s population, in awareness-raising programs. The post-war generation would be more exposed and more open to democratic practices and new ideas. An educated citizenry is more likely to demand accountability from the government.

Persuasive and collaborative modes of demanding social accountability from the government appear to produce more favorable results than confrontational approaches.

The government, in turn, has exercised social accountability in various forms, such as construction of needed infrastructure and delivery of basic services at the local level and conducting policy dialogues with CSOs at the national level. In recent years, the RGC has actively initiated various



democratic reforms, especially decentralization and deconcentration, and place good governance at the center of the RGC’s economic policy agenda. This bodes well for further democratic consolidation in the country.

Increasing civil society engagement and recent democratic reform are the important processes that are slowly altering the cultural and political landscape of Cambodia. They are shaping the evolving meaning, understanding, and practice of social accountability in the country.



ENDNOTES

¹ Examples include Pak, et al. (2007); Kim (2009); Burke & Nil (2004); Kim and Ojendal (2007); Rusten et al. (2004).

² The Rectangular Strategy is the economic policy agenda of the RGC that aims to enhance economic growth, full employment, equity and social justice, and enhanced efficiency of the public sector. Good governance is at the core of the Rectangular Strategy.

³ A *khan* is a political subdivision of the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh.

⁴ Rent-seeking happens when an organization or an individual uses their resources to obtain economic gain from others without reciprocating any benefits back to society through wealth creation.

⁵ Respondents in this survey included 583 voters and 74 CC members.

⁶ *Patrimonialism* is a type of rule in which the ruler does not distinguish between personal and public patrimony and treats matters and resources of state as his personal affair.

⁷ Government officials joined a consultative meeting in September 2009 in preparation for the World Bank's Program to Enhance Social Accountability (PECSA) strategic meeting. Ten senior government leaders from four implementing agencies that worked on the Demand for Good Governance (DFGG) project attended. The meeting was organized by SILAKA.

⁸ In preparation for a strategic meeting for PECSA, SILAKA invited 13 senior officials from the project coordination office of the DFGG to a consultative meeting in September 2010 to discuss their views on social accountability in Cambodia.

⁹ From the webpage of CCC: <http://www.ccc-cambodia.org/ADI%20Project/ADIPProject.htm>

¹⁰ From the webpage of CCSP: http://www.ccspcambodia.org/doku.php?id=programs:info_and_doc

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² From the webpage of CCC: <http://www.ccc-cambodia.org/ADI%20Project/ADIPProject.htm>

¹³ World Bank's Country Assistance Strategy for financial years 2005 and 2006.



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Partner-Researcher:

Indonesia Society for Social Transformation (INSIST)
Campus PERDIKAN: Jl. Kingdom Kaliurang Km: 18, Hamlet Sambirejo, Sempu,
Pakem, Sleman
Yogyakarta 55 582, Indonesia
PO Box 296, MPC Yk 55000
tel: +62-274-895380
<http://www.insist.or.id/>

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For more information, please contact:

ANSA-EAP Operations Team
Ateneo School of Government, Pacifico Ortiz Hall, Fr. Arrupe Road
Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City 1108
Republic of the Philippines
Telephones: +6 32 426-6062 and +6 32 426-6002 ext 4627
Fax: +6 32 920-2920
E-mail: info@ansa-eap.net
Website: www.ansa-eap.net



PREFACE

In November and December 2010, with the support of The Affiliated Network for Social Accountability-East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP), INSIST Yogyakarta conducted a mapping study on Social Accountability (SAC) in Indonesia. The objectives of the study were to review existing policies, regulations, and guidelines pertaining social accountability and to draw a map of current social accountability practices in Indonesia as well as for use as baseline data on SAC related studies.

It is expected that through this report the reader will gain valuable information about the SAC policy support system including mechanisms and activities and comprehensive map of social accountability thinking, concepts, and practices in Indonesia as well as the challenges to advance the implementation of these policies towards improving the accountability of public agencies and officials in Indonesia. INSIST welcomes feedback and comments to improve the analysis and the knowledge on SAC in Indonesia.

*Indonesian Society for Social Transformation (INSIST)
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ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

ACSI	Active Society Institute
BAPPEDA	Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah (Local (Provincial/ District) Development Planning Agency)
BAPPENAS	Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional (National Agency for Development Planning Agency)
BNPB	Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana (National Board for Disaster Management)
CRC	Community Report Card
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DPRD	Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (Local House of Representatives)
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
FIK ORNOP Sulsel	Network of NGOs of South Sulawesi
FITRA	Forum Indonesia untuk Transparansi Anggaran (Indonesia Forum for Budget Transparency)
FPRB	Forum Pengurangan Risiko Bencana (Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction)
IWC	Islamic Women Studies
KOPEL	Komite Pemantau Legislatif (Legislative Watch Committee)
KPI	Komisi Penyiaran Independen (Independent Broadcasting Commission)
KPRM	Komite Perjuangan Rakyat Miskin (Poor People's Struggle Committee)
LBH	Legal Assistance Organization
MBO	Moslem-based organization
Musrenbang	Musyawaharah Perencanaan Pembangunan (Development Planning Consultation Meeting)
PERAM	Posko Pengaduan Rakyat Miskin (Complaint Centers for the Poor)
PFM	Public Financial Management
PME	Perencanaan, Monitoring, dan Evaluasi (Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation)
PNPM	Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat (National Program for Community Empowerment)
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
SAC	Social Accountability



SKPD	Satuan Kerja Pemerintah Daerah (Local Government Unit)
RPJP	Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Panjang (Long-term development planning)
RPJM	Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah (Mid-term development planning)
TAc	Transparency and Accountability (Transparansi dan Akuntabilitas)
TAF	The Asia Foundation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WALHI	Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (The Indonesian Forum for Environment)
YPSHK	Yayasan Pengembangan Study Hukum & Kebijakan



GLOSSARY OF BAHASA TERMS

Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana (BNPB)	National Board for Disaster Management
Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah (BAPPEDA)	Local (Provincial/District) Development Planning Agency
Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional (BAPPENAS)	National Agency for Development Planning Agency
Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (DPRD)	Local House of Representatives
Forum Indonesia untuk Transparansi Anggaran (FITRA)	Indonesia Forum for Budget Transparency
Forum Pengurangan Risiko Bencana (FPRB)	Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction
Kelurahan	Village
Komisi Penyiaran Independen (KPI)	Independent Broadcasting Commission
Komite Pemantau Legislatif (KOPEL)	Legislative Watch Committee
Komite Perjuangan Rakyat Miskin (KPRM)	Poor People's Struggle Committee
Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan (Musrenbang)	Development Planning Consultation Meeting
Perencanaan, Monitoring, dan Evaluasi (PME)	Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation
Posko Pengaduan Rakyat Miskin (PERAM)	Complaint Centers for the Poor
Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat (PNPM)	National Program for Community Empowerment
Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah (RPJM)	Mid-term development planning
Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Panjang (RPJP)	Long-term development planning
Satuan Kerja Pemerintah Daerah (SKPD)	Local Government Unit
Tranparansi dan Akuntabilitas	Transparency and Accountability
Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI)	The Indonesian Forum for Environment

THE SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY SITUATION IN INDONESIA

Social accountability has been practiced in Indonesia since decentralization took place soon after the so-called Reformation Era in 1998. At that time, the label had yet to be invented and introduced worldwide.

Initially, Local Government Law No. 22 (Year 1999), Fiscal Relations Law (No. 25, Year 1999), and Clean and Good Governance Practice Law (No. 28, Year 1999) constituted the legal framework and mechanisms for community participation and empowerment in government activities. On the civil society's side, a local network alliance on budget transparency, called Forum Indonesia untuk Transparansi Anggaran (FITRA), was founded to increase people's awareness of their rights regarding budget process and to encourage practices to promote accountability and improve the quality of public services.

Since then, social accountability practices have been expanded and enhanced to include various areas and issues as initiated by, either government, or citizen groups. The donor community has, likewise, played a big role in advancing the agenda of good governance and social accountability in Indonesia. A multi-donor organization for governance reform called Kemitraan or Partnership for Governance Reform was established with managerial support from UNDP Indonesia to link civil society initiatives and the government development planning process.

A few studies on particular social accountability issues or cases had been conducted in the past, though a comprehensive study of the social



accountability situation in Indonesia (that will portray the current situation of social accountability practices including the actors, their initiatives, the gaps between documented policies and practices, and recommendations) has yet to be done. Among these was a study on participatory planning and budgeting in Solo City, where the local government (Mayor and Bappeda), civil society organizations (CSOs), and people worked together to create better conditions for their city. Another study tackled accountability in the education sector of Jembrana, Bali, where the local government capitalized on the efficiency of participatory budget management. This resulted to free education for elementary and high school students of Jembrana. Another study, conducted by Sirker and Cosic (2007), investigated social accountability practices of FITRA in budget analysis and expenditure tracking, and of Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia in participatory gender budget formulation and gender budget analysis. The study covered the scope and development of initiatives, objectives, tools and approaches, partners and stakeholders, resources, constraints and problems, outputs, as well as mechanisms for institutionalization, replication and scaling up of these citizen groups' efforts.

Generally social accountability mechanisms can be applied in four key functions of government: (1) policies and plans, (2) budgets and expenditures, (3) delivery of goods and services, and (4) public oversight. Among these functions, social accountability in Indonesia is most effectively exercised in budgeting and public spending (Malena, 2004). In this function, social accountability is integrated into Public Financial Management (PFM) cycle that covers development planning, budgeting, expenditure tracking, and performance monitoring and evaluation.

This study will focus on social accountability tools for PFM that include participatory planning, participatory budgeting, participatory expenditure tracking, and public monitoring and evaluation on government performance. It will also look into the dynamics between the supply side and demand side of social accountability, given the fact that synergistic action between the two is essential for the enhancement of social accountability practices.

The study will also explore the interface between the citizen groups' knowledge on the policy-making process and knowledge flow in the government's policy-making process.



Indonesia

In the past ten years, Indonesia has seen dramatic reforms in its public policy, covering a diverse range of policy arenas—economic, fiscal management, banking etc. The reforms are complex, interrelated and consequential. However, many policy changes are perceived to have been developed too quickly and with insufficient participation from citizen groups, who were only allowed to participate as a matter of procedure. The more sound reforms have been due, in large part, to inputs from international technical assistance. Social accountability principles require the use of evidence and analysis in order to improve the quality and implementation of policies. To accomplish this, the Indonesian society needs an enhanced capacity to analyze and understand complex problems, the



SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN INDONESIA: A POLICY REVIEW

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Reform in Indonesia brought two significant changes in governance—democratization and decentralization. Democratization allowed more voice and participation in governance and decision-making through legislations intended to empower civil society. Decentralization brought decision-making on development and finance matters closer to the people. Democratization and decentralization were the precursors of social accountability in Indonesia.

Freedom of Information Law

The New Order Regime under Soeharto nullified the freedom of information and expression stipulated in the 1945 Constitution and in other laws. Information was systematically hidden from the public and any attempt by citizens to disclose it merited sanctions and punishment. Journalists and citizens also could not report the outcome of their journalistic investigations since the government did not think twice about assaulting those who dared to tell the “truth”.

The situation began to change when Soeharto slid down from power and the Reformation Era emerged. As President Habibie and, later, Abdurrahman Wahid led the nation towards democracy, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) began to proliferate, lending their voices to the growing clamor for good governance. Good governance, as the NGOs perceived it, required the free flow of information, and there was no legislation guaranteeing freedom of information at that time.

In 2000, the civil society movement pressed for the enactment of a law to establish freedom of information in Indonesia. The Indonesian Center for Environmental Law drafted the Freedom of Information Bill. This move was complemented by the establishment of the Coalition on Freedom of Information, a coalition of 30 NGOs and some individuals who banded



together to support the passage of the bill. The coalition submitted the draft to the Commission 1 of the House of Representatives for review in 2002.

After eight years of drafting and deliberation spanning three administrations, the Indonesian House of Representatives finally passed the Freedom of Information bill, also known as Law No. 14/2008 on Public Freedom of Information in May 2008. It compelled the government to disclose information that affected public interest, including information related to state companies.

The passage of the bill into law has enhanced Indonesia's image as a democratic country. It expresses Indonesia's recognition of Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinion without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers." It is also in compliance with Article 28F of the Amended 1945 Constitution, which states: "Everybody has the right to communicate and the right to inform, to develop his or her personal and social environment, and has the right to seek, receive, possess, keep, develop and give the information by any means."

From the perspective of civil society organizations, the law is an assurance of freedom to obtain transparency and accountability from government. The law does not consider civil society as passive actor; instead, it invites civil society to actively engage in governance activities. As stipulated in article 3b and c, the law seeks to "encourage public participation in policy-making and good administration of public institutions". Therefore, civil society organizations can participate in policy-making and public financial management especially in monitoring government spending, public officials' performance, and delivery of goods and services.

From the point of view of journalists, the law means a further guarantee of press freedom in addition to Law No.40/1999 on Freedom of the Press. With its passage, journalists anticipated greater freedom to obtain information from government, which would help them in writing investigative reports on government activities. Article 35 of the Freedom of



Information Law allows journalists to take legal action against officials who refuse to provide the requested information.

The Freedom of Information Law has been regarded, not only by civil society organizations and the press but also by the government, as a deterrent to chronic corruption at all levels of government. It has been a widely recognized fact that corruption happens when people are not privy to information about various aspects of government transactions such as the range of services, terms of payment, proper mechanisms, rights and responsibilities of parties involved, etc. When information is available and accurate, chances for corruption are diminished.

Freedom of the Press

Law No.40/1999 on Freedom of the Press is closely related to the Freedom of Information Law. Before it was enacted, members of the Indonesian press were not free to express their honest opinions, much more to disseminate information related to government issues. Censorship was high and any breach on restrictions imposed on the press led to punishment. During the New Order Era, the government withdrew more than 25 press licenses. One of the most popular incidents was the banning of Tempo Magazine in 1994.

The enactment of the press law transformed the government's way of treating the press. At present, the government's respect for freedom of the press has improved. The assurance given by the law itself provides democratic spaces. One important feature of the law is its protection of the press based on the sovereignty of people, and the principles of democracy, justice, and human rights.

Freedom of the Press also provides for:

- No prior censorship for print and broadcast media – Article 4(2).
- The right to seek, acquire, and disseminate ideas and information – Article 4(3).
- Protection of journalists where they are free to join journalists' associations – Article 7(1).
- The right of citizens to establish a press company or news agency – Article 9(1) and 13.



Decentralization

Among the fundamentals of social accountability in Indonesia are the policies related to decentralization and democratization, since these are correlated to the more direct forms of participation in public financial management (i.e. participatory development planning and budgeting).

One of the policies related to decentralization is Law 22/99 with its superseding revisions of Law 32/2004 on Regional/Local Governance. It grants power and authority to regional/local governments over a number of sectors. It is guided by the principle of public participation in the arrangement, allocation, and utilization of national resources.

In relation to civic engagement, it cites the word “community participation” in local government activities in articles 150, 151, and 199. It stipulates that

...local government, who regulates and administers its own governance according to autonomy and co-administration principles, is aimed to accelerate accomplishment of community welfare through community enhancement, service, empowerment, and participation.

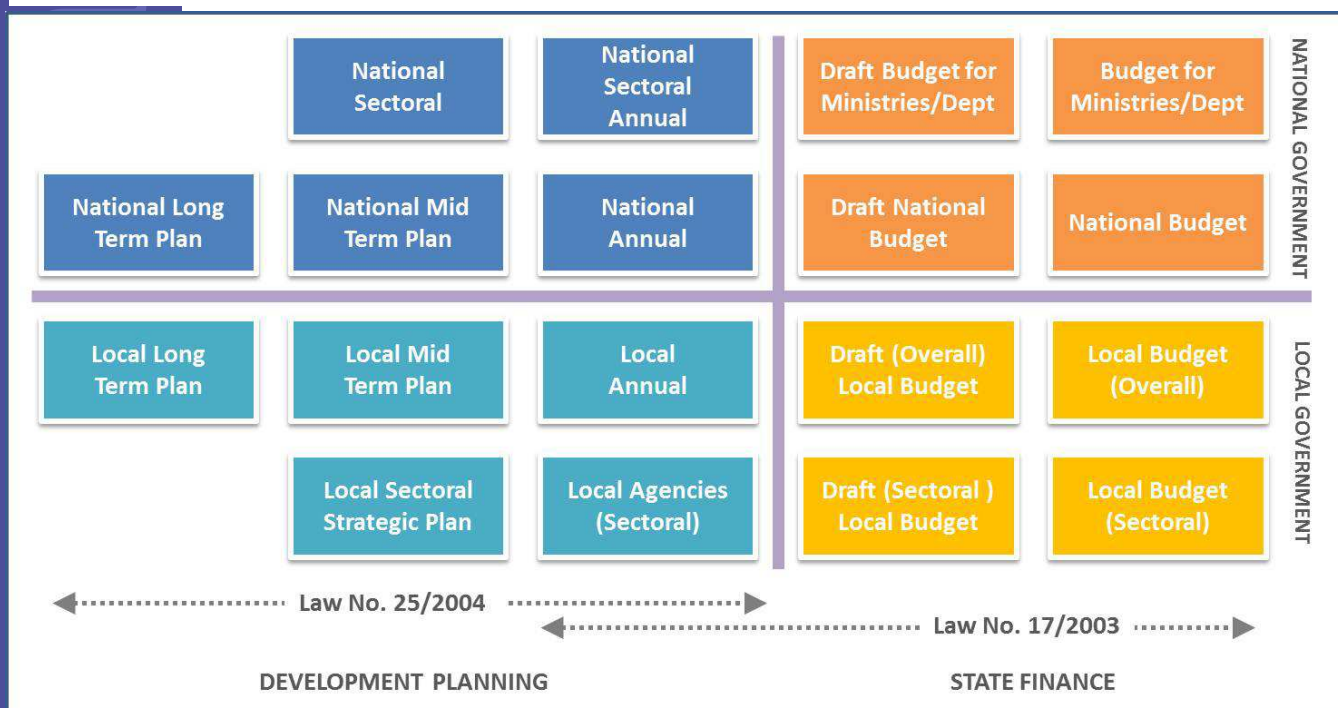
The policy related to local finance is Law No.25/1999, which was replaced by Law No.33/2004 on the Fiscal Balance between National and Regional/Local Government. The law comes as a consequence of task sharing between the national and regional/local governments as stipulated in Law No.32/2004. Essentially, it devolves authority to the regional/local government in terms of financial management, which is comprised of financial authorization, planning, monitoring, allocation, and distribution. The policy on local financial management is strengthened by Law No.17/2003.

Article 150 of Law No.32/2004 mentions that development planning consists of (1) long-term development planning (RPJP), (2) mid-term development planning (RPJM), and (3) local development planning. Likewise, it stipulates that the direction of local finance should be in line with the mid-term development plan. It implies that planning and budgeting are inseparable since a plan always comes with a budget. In the context of



national and local government, Figure 1 describes the relationship between development planning and budgeting.

Figure 1. Relationship between development planning and budgeting.



Participatory Planning and Budgeting

Law No.32/2004 mentions citizen participation in development planning and budgeting but it does not describe the terms of participation in detail. A more direct and detailed description on participatory development planning and budgeting, especially at the regional/local level is contained in Law No.25/2004. This law created and established mechanisms for the institutionalization of the Musyarawah Perencanaan Pembangunan (*musrenbang*), a multi-stakeholder consultation forum, at all levels of government over long-term (RPJP), mid-term (RPJM), and annual (Rencana Tahunan) timeframes. It also emphasized the need to synchronize all approaches—political, democratic, participatory, bureaucratic, technical, bottom-top, and top-bottom—into regional planning.

The State Minister for National Development Planning (BAPPENAS) and Home Ministry issued Joint Ministerial Decree No.1354/M.PPN/03/2004



and 050/744/SJ on the Guidelines for the Implementation of Musrenbang and Local Participatory Planning. The guidelines established spaces for public participation in planning and budgeting and regulated entry points into these processes. These decrees also provided guiding principles on how *musrenbang* forums should be convened at different levels. In 2007, the government issued the Joint Ministerial Decree No.0008/M.PPN/01/2007 and 050/264A/SJ on the Technical Directives for the Convening of Musrenbang, which set new procedures, processes, and mechanisms. These, likewise, incorporated more principles and requirements such as flexibility, inclusivity, gender responsiveness, the need for organizations to possess competency in participation skills, organization of working groups, and framework for discussion.

In addition, there are laws, regulations, and guidelines related—directly or indirectly—to participatory development planning and budgeting. Among these are:

- Participatory planning:
 - ◆ Government Regulation No.20/2004 on Government Work Plan
 - ◆ Government Regulation No.21/2004 on Ministerial Work Plan and Budget
 - ◆ Government Regulation No.39/2006 on Monitoring and Evaluation Procedure for the Implementation of the Development Plan
 - ◆ Government Regulation No.40/2006 on the Procedures for Formulating the National Development Plan
 - ◆ Ministerial Decree of Home Ministry No.050/2020/SJ on the Directives for the Formulation of Local Long-term and Mid-term Development Plans
 - ◆ Ministerial Decree of Home Ministry No.050/987/SJ on Guidelines for Convening of Participatory Development Coordination Forums
- Participatory budgeting:
 - ◆ Ministerial Decree of Home Ministry No.29/2002 on the Guidelines for Local Financial Administration, Responsibilities, and Monitoring
 - ◆ Law No.1/2004 on State Treasury
 - ◆ Law No.15/2004 on the Inspection of Administration and Responsibilities of State Finance
 - ◆ Government Regulation No.58/2005 on Local Financial Management
 - ◆ Ministerial Decree of Home Ministry No.59/2007 on the Guidelines for Local Financial Administration



- ◆ Ministerial Decree of Home Ministry No.30/2007 on the Guidelines for Formulation of Local Budget for the 2008 Fiscal Year

The abovementioned laws, regulations, and guidelines provide direction and description about participatory planning and budgeting at the national level. For their part local governments have issued counterpart regulations and resolutions to guarantee citizen participation. Table 1 shows some regions that have such issuances.

Table 1. Local regulations on citizen participation.

REGION	REGULATION
Kabupaten Bone	Local Regulation No. 8/2008 on Musrenbang
Kabupaten Garut	Local Regulation No. 17/2008 on Transparency and Participation
Kota Bandar Lampung	Local Regulation No. 13/2002 on Community Participation in the Formulation of Local Revenue and Expenditure Budget
Kota Gorontalo	Local Regulation No. 2/2002 on Community-Based Development Planning Local Regulation No. 3/2002 on Transparency Local Regulation No.4/2002 on Monitoring of Government Administration
Kota Palu	Local Regulation No. 5/2006 on Transparent and Participatory Local Government Administration
Kota Pontianak	Local Regulation No. 2/2009 on Public Information Transparency, in article 1 verse 20
Kota Semarang	Local Regulation No. 9/1007 on Procedure of Local Development Planning Formulation
Kota Pare-Pare	Local Regulation No. 17/2004 on Community-Based Development Administration
Kabupaten Wajo	Local Regulation No.11/2004 on Participatory Development in Kabupaten Wajo
Kabupaten Kendal	Local Regulation No. 6/2006 on Procedure for the Formulation of Local Development Planning and Implementation of Musrenbang Kabupaten Kendal
Kota Blitar	Mayor's Decree No. 67/2004 on Participatory Development Management System
Kabupaten Sumedang	Local Regulation No. 1/2007 on Procedure for Local Planning and Budgeting in Kabupaten Sumedang
Kota Surakarta	Mayor's Decree No. 17/2008 on Preparation for Musrenbang Implementation
Kabupaten Padang Panjang	Mayor's Decree No. 31/2003 on Procedure for Participatory Planning in Kota Padang Panjang



As mentioned above, the main mechanism for citizen participation in development planning and budgeting is the *musrenbang* or Multi-Stakeholder Consultation Forum. There are eight stages in *musrenbang* and each stage has stakeholders. Table 2 summarizes the stages and their corresponding stakeholders.

Table 2. *Musrenbang stages and the stakeholders for each stage.*

SCHEDULE	STAGE	STAKEHOLDER
January	Musrenbang Desa (Village Musrenbang)	Village head, hamlet head, neighborhood chairperson, tradition elder, representatives of women group, youth group, community organization, etc.
February	Musrenbang Kecamatan (Sub-district Musrenbang)	Head of sub-district, village delegations, representatives of community organizations at sub-district scale
March	Forum SKPD Kabupaten/ Kota (Forum of Local Development Working Unit at district/ municipality level)	District bureaucrats, sub-district delegations, representatives of community organizations at district/municipality
March	Musrenbang Kabupaten/ Kota (District Musrenbang)	Delegations of sub-district Musrenbang and Forum of Local Development Working Unit
March	Forum SKPD Propinsi (Forum of Local Development Working Unit at provincial level)	Community organizations at the provincial level that are directly related to the function of Local Development Working Unit and delegation of local government at district level including Bappeda or Local Development Planning Agency
April	Musrenbang Propinsi (Provincial Musrenbang)	Delegations of Forum of Local Development Working Unit and District Government, all regents/ mayors, Local Development Planning Agency, representatives of State Ministry for Development Planning, representatives of Home Ministry
March	Musrenbang Pusat (Central Musrenbang)	All ministry/Non-department Government Agencies, Governors as observers
April	Musrenbang Nasional (National Musrenbang)	All ministries, governors, and head of Local Development Planning Agency at provincial level

Table 2 indicates that citizens at the grassroots level participate in village *musrenbang* only. In the next stages up to the district *musrenbang*, participation involves the delegation system. It means that only a few



citizens are involved in sub-district *musrenbang* and forum of Local Development Working Unit at district *musrenbang*. Citizens do not participate in the higher forums anymore since the participants of these forums are usually public officials.

The period for *musrenbang* forums that allow citizen participation is relatively short. *Musrenbang* at village, sub-district, and district levels are implemented for a period of three months only, usually from January to March. To ensure accountability, citizens should monitor the implementation of the higher level *musrenbang* and the implementation and reporting of development programs agreed in lower level *musrenbang*. In this sense, the Public Freedom of Information Law plays an important role in facilitating the monitoring of development activities and budgeting of expenditures especially outside *musrenbang* forums. The law provides that all public documents, including government work plans (central, provincial, and district/municipality) and budget documents, should be made accessible to citizens.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Political, socio-cultural, and economic factors appear to have greatly influenced the policy environment of social accountability in Indonesia.

Political Factors

Before the Reformation Era, Indonesia lived under a collusive democracy and centralized government. For 32 years under the Soeharto regime (1966-1998), the political system in Indonesia only accommodated three political parties that competed in the elections for House of Representatives at the national and local levels. The president was elected by the People's Consultative Assembly, whose members were a combination of the House members plus Regional Delegation. The ruling government with Golongan Karya as its political vehicle always had absolute control over the House and Assembly members through the mobilization of public officials and military to force people to elect Golongan Karya. To maintain its control over the state, the Soeharto administration implemented a centralized type of



governance where decision-making on all state affairs was controlled by the national government.

When Soeharto's administration ended, Indonesia had three multi-party elections conducted in a relatively peaceful and orderly manner. In the last two elections, people elected the president directly. The elected president's party did not obtain a majority vote in the House elections. To secure support from majority of the House, the president's party coalesced with other political parties. Unfortunately, the driving forces for the coalition did not include unity of ideology or political platform. Instead, the coalition was based on vested and short-sighted interests, (i.e. securing the required quota in government seat). As a result, government power has rested greatly on the House and the political parties in the House themselves cannot claim to be truly representative of their constituents.

The coalition in the parliament under the current presidency is the best example of a coalition that does not represent public interest. To secure Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's government, Partai Demokrat—the president's party—coalesced with a few parties and one of them was Partai Golkar. These are the parties with the biggest number of seats in the parliament. Unfortunately, this coalition has weakened government's efforts to settle a corporate-made disaster in East Java—namely the Lapindo mudslide—which has become a major cause of concern for citizens, given the fact that the owner of the corporation is the chairperson of Partai Golkar.

The Reformation Era also brought in a decentralized government. The beginning of decentralization has been marked by the rise of 'little kingdoms' in local governments across the country. Local governments are currently imbued with so much authority to plan and design their own budget, which they take as an opportunity to manage the budget for their own gains. Since mechanisms for checking have not been properly installed, the local government does not disclose/provide related documents to the public. This has rendered the local governments' resources vulnerable to misuse and abuse in a variety of ways such as bloated budget, false procurement, and pre-arranged tender. This has given rise to "decentralized corruption", which replaced the "centralized corruption" of the New Order regime.



In fact, people have become aware of the rampant and chronic corruption, which has become a part of Indonesia's political landscape. The International Transparency Corruption Perception Index has demonstrated this clearly. From 1999 to 2003, Indonesia's index was between 1.7 and 1.9. In comparison, the 1998 index was 2.0. Interestingly, the 2010 index was 2.2., which showed an insignificant change from the previous years' rating. The World Justice Project Rule of Law Index affirmed this result as they gave the score of 0.44 in the aspect of Absence of Corruption to Indonesia, which ranked 7th in the list of 7 Asia Pacific countries in 2010. This implies that corruption has not eased up despite the fact that mechanisms to combat it have been put in place during the decentralization era.

The small gains in the fight against corruption cannot be ignored, however. The central government considers corruption as a special crime that needs to be managed in a special manner. As a result, it formed the Corruption Eradication Commission in 2003. The formation of the commission was also a response to the inability of the regular institutions—namely the police and the judiciary—to combat corruption due to systematic corruption within these institutions. The integrity of the commission was gravely challenged when a police institution charged two of the commission's senior members of accepting bribery in a corruption case that they were handling. In this unlikely battle, public support for the commission—not the least from more than one million citizens who started a “lizard vs. crocodile movement” via Facebook—has gained sympathy for the embattled commission officials and shaped an opinion that the charges were a form of manipulation by the police institution to weaken the commission.

Civil society has, likewise, taken up the cudgels in the fight against corruption. Indonesian Corruption Watch has been playing the role of a ‘watch dog’ monitoring public officials’ conduct. The organization actively publishes its researches and reports to inform people about public officials’ acts of corruption. Lately, its determination was rewarded with the selection of Bambang Widjojanto, one of its senior members, as candidate for Chairperson of the Corruption Eradication Commission. Another civil society organization fighting corruption is FITRA. The organization is an alliance of academicians, NGO activists, development practitioners, journalists, and



government officials. It scrutinizes budget formulation and expenditure both at national and local government levels.

Socio-Cultural Factors

Freedom of expression in Indonesia has dramatically improved over the years. The euphoria over the newly established democratic spaces and the issuance of Press Law No.40/1999 opened communication channels between the citizens and the government. Journalists have been able to express their opinions and thoughts freely. Publishers have been allowed to publish or re-publish books that were formerly prohibited or banned by the government such as Pramodya Ananta Toer's books.¹ Citizens have also been able to voice out their concerns through mass media. Kompas Daily, one of the players in the print media, regularly runs public polls to get the citizens' views and opinions on government performance.

A few challenges have been noted in exercising the freedom of expression in Indonesia. First, some mass media entities hold a political agenda, being owned by people engaged in politics. In this case, mass media is used as a means to promote the political agenda of the moneyed and those in power. As a result, objectivity is greatly diminished. Second, some civil society groups have the tendency to express their opinions in a less savory and, at times, violent manner, which intimidates the media. Third, the government still actively exercises censorship and prohibits the publication of documents perceived to be detrimental to its stability. A recent example is the banning of Pretext for Mass Murder (*Alasan untuk Pembantaian*) by the Justice and Human Rights Ministry and the Attorney General's Office,² which featured the September 30 Movement and Soeharto's coup d' etat in Indonesia (*Gerakan 30 September dan Coup d' Etat Soeharto di Indonesia*).

Faith-based organizations also hold a pivotal role in civic engagement. Historically, Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama—the biggest Moslem-based organizations—have been the traditional forces for citizens to engage with government. In the beginning of the Reformation Era, Muhammadiyah endorsed the foundation of a political party, named Partai Amanat Nasional, while Nahdatul Ulama was the supporter of another party named Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa. The leading figures of these organizations, then, became the first national leaders elected through a widely-accepted democratic



election. Abdurrahman Wahid of Nahdatul Ulama became the president while Amien Rais of Muhammadiyah became Chairman of the People's Consultative Assembly.

Economic Factors

The Harvard University JFK School of Government's recent study on Indonesia's economy and institutional transformation asserts that the current Indonesian economy has inherited the legacy of economic oligarchy.³ Along with collusive democracy, it creates barriers that prevent new players from entering into a wide range of industries. Among the Indonesian economy's handicaps are the following: a dysfunctional legal system, a paternalistic political system, and disempowered citizens. The legacy is said to have left Indonesia ill-equipped to face the challenges of the current global financial crisis.

In relation to government accountability the legacy, as described by the study, has formed government-businesspeople patronage where the players protect each other's interests. This trims down the government's ability to exercise the rule of law. It is especially evident when people look at the political map and see that political parties are dominated by moneymakers; or when they are confronted by the fact that presidential candidates are usually backed by businesspeople. In consequence, the government eventually cannot take strong, decisive action against improper business conducts. In this case, it also opens itself up to the danger of entering into fraudulent, often abusive transactions favorable to the businesspeople that put the officials in power.

An example is the case of rapid deforestation in Kalimantan. Curran et al (2004) reported that forest depletion in the protected areas was not due to smallholder agriculture, as often claimed by the timber industry. Rather, it is due to logging activities by the industry giants. The timber concessions, granted in 1960-1970s, had been exhausted by the 1970s-1980s. Soon enough, the loggers began entering the protected areas. Decentralization has accelerated the depletion because local governments can issue small logging leases since control from the central government is weak. As a result, uncontrolled logging in the remaining areas occurs without any significant opposition and action from the government.



Further, the Saich et al. (2010) states that there are some constraints on Indonesia's economic progress, including:

- Over-reliance on natural resource exploitation especially mining and forest,
- Underinvestment in people especially on education and preventive health,
- Overvalued exchange rate,
- Exhaustive business licensing both financially and psychologically, and
- Inefficient state-owned enterprises

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY-RELATED POLICIES

As a mechanism for participatory development planning and budgeting, the accomplishments of *musrenbang* may be viewed in many ways. *Musrenbang* in Sumedang, for example, is considered as a model since the degree of participation is high and the local government is responsive to the people's aspirations. *Musrenbang* in Surakarta is also considered a success story due to the collaborative engagement between a citizen group (Indonesian Partnership for Local Government Initiative) and the government. In Malang, however, people at the grassroots level have a negative regard for the *musrenbang* since all the development programs that they proposed in the past were rejected. *Musrenbang* is also seen as a formality only – a part of the procedure that should be implemented annually as provided for by law.

Among several key issues in the implementation of *musrenbang* include (1) the uneven commitment from the regional leadership; (2) limited legislative oversight of budget preparation and disbursement; (3) minimal influence of *musrenbang* process in resource allocation; (4) limited capacity of CSOs to understand the planning process; (5) limited capacity of citizen groups to dialogue and negotiate with the government.

Uneven Commitment from Regional Leadership



The degree of commitment from local leaders to implement a participatory approach varies across regional administrations. Corruption and influence of political parties are also major concerns. For example, political parties often direct development programs along their agenda and claim credit for these programs.

Limited Legislative Oversight of Budget Preparation and Disbursement

Local House of Representatives (DPRD) often do not consult their constituents to identify community needs or to prepare information and analyses for public debate. Elected members of the House are said to interact with constituents only before election time. After that, they forget the people who voted for them. This attitude is driven by the structure of political power in Indonesia where party loyalty prevails over and above loyalty to the constituents.

Minimal Influence of *Musrenbang* Process in Resource Allocation

Budget preparation and implementation are dominated by political parties, with little involvement of the community. *Musrenbang* seems to be a forum where citizens are allowed to list the development programs needed by their community, but the resource allocations are determined by government officials who are driven by political party priorities. The list of programs prepared by the community, thus, remains as a wish list. As one of the key informants stated, “This may result to the community’s apathy and indifference to efforts enhancing social accountability, initiated either by the government or civil society organizations. Community participation in the *musrenbang* is only considered as an effort to fulfil procedural requirements rather than an effort to truly provide a space for genuine participation.”

Limited Capacity of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on Technical Matters

Civil society organizations that participate in the *musrenbang* do not have sufficient knowledge (e.g. about complex budgetary preparation process and about communities’ economic rights) to assert their perspectives on



development outcomes. In addition, there is a perception that the *musrenbang* process does not satisfy communities' needs and is only a form of window-dressing by regional elites to push for and legitimize their agendas. This lack of confidence leads to a weakening of efforts to advocate for the communities' needs.

Limited Capacity of Citizen Groups to Engage Government Constructively

To enter into a dialogue and negotiation with the government, citizen groups do not only need political room (such as *musrenbang*) but, more importantly, information about government policy and budget (specifically for the evidence-based policy dialogue/negotiation type). Enhancing the capacities of citizen groups to conduct simple research is a critical path towards the development of negotiation as a tool for engaging government. World Bank PEACH study and The Asia Foundation Local Budget Study⁴ are examples of promoting evidence-based local budget dialogue through enhanced capacity of citizen groups in data collection and analysis.

The Asia Foundation Local Budget Index in May 2011, which covered 43 districts, shows that there is no correlation between the practice of *musrenbang* in districts and the quality of budget (in terms of transparency, accountability, *musrenbang* and gender equality).

PROMOTING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE SECTOR

Knowledge organizations (think-tanks or university-based research organizations) can contribute to a stronger civic engagement by influencing public policy-making with their research products (knowledge). A mechanism for civic engagement and participation in public policy-making has been established; however, some specific forms of participation (technical participation) are limited—i.e. supplying knowledge (research data) for public policy making. The capacity among (non-government) knowledge sector organizations in conducting policy researches is limited to a few organizations in Java (for example SMERU for poverty issue and CSIS for public policy). This situation is best exemplified in how the government



EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY MAKING

In the past five years, Indonesia has seen a dramatic reform of its laws and public policy in disaster-related issues. However, many policy changes are being made hastily, in part to respond to the never ending disaster and rapid social change that is driving a high level of demand for reform. Both national and local legislations on DRR have been developed too quickly and with insufficient information to determine the nature and dimensions of the problems at hand.

The government authorities mandated for disaster management have been making policies largely independent of other stakeholders and there is yet a mature enough public space for discourse. There is the risk of policies being of low quality, less relevant, and incoherent. It is, therefore, critical that evidence basis is presented to the public sphere to improve the quality of policy making.

of Indonesia developed its policy on disaster risk reduction as described in the “Evidence-based policy making”, below.

The challenge is, as Mr. Kristanto Sinandang observed,⁵ for strong research/knowledge organizations in Indonesia (in disaster the risk reduction sector) to provide sound policy recommendations and be able to convince policy makers to use their products. On the other hand, policy makers also need support in developing their skills to formulate effective and practical solutions, and to build consensus in support of the proposed solutions.

Another challenge is the need to clarify the technical aspect of citizen participation in public policy making, rather than dwell on the political aspect (e.g. regulation, mechanism, etc.) alone. These technical elements are part of the research-policy interface, starting from agenda creation to advocacy work. Most research agenda developed by non-government think-tanks is donor driven—the problem of “being”. Some of these think-tanks are also struggling to conduct good quality research and how to develop policy recommendations (problems of doing), while others struggle with their skills in effective networking and coalition-building (problems of relating).

AusAID defines the knowledge sector as the overall institutional landscape of government, private sector, and civil society organizations that support the development of public policy. It includes think-tanks, educational institutions, specialized agencies, certain types of private sector contractors, and a wide range of non-governmental organizations. A strong



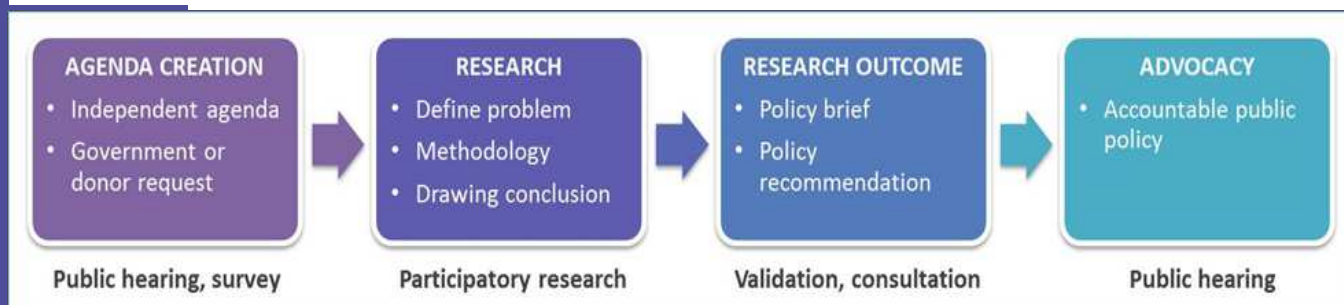
and powerful knowledge sector will strengthen social accountability through ensuring that public policy is culturally appropriate and developed based on high quality and valid evidence that had passed the public’s quality assurance system.

ODI’s “Bridging Research and Policy” project defined research as a systematic effort to increase the stock of knowledge through “critical evaluation, theory building, data collection, analysis and codification related to development policy and practice”. In contrast, policy includes both “declarations and plans” as well as “courses of action” carried out on the ground (Crewe and Young, 2002). In simple terms, research for policy is about understanding the whys and wherefores of public concerns (e.g. What is the problem? How to address it?) In contrast, public policy is concerned with the intent to do something in practice to address a problem. This means that public policy, inevitably, involves normative questions such as “What should we do to address public problems?” Advocacy, on the other hand, is distinctly concerned with taking action to change a policy. This means that research, advocacy and policy-making are distinct practices that face distinctly different challenges; but each process could bring the government and non-government actors closer.

Each aspect in the chain of activities set out in Figure 2 raises its own set of challenges in enhancing partnership between government and citizen groups.

The crucial step to ensure social accountability practice in a research-policy interface is to define both policy and research questions that represent the public’s concerns. Good research agenda can use a strong empirical knowledge base. However, the empirical knowledge base needs to

Figure 2. The chain representing the interface in research, policy and advocacy.





be generated through credible research practices, known to and tested by the public, or at least by the research community.

It is often assumed that policy works according to what is often called the “rational model”. In this view, policy-makers assess and compare policy choices and weigh social, economic and political costs and benefits before coming to a rational decision (McCarthy & Ibrahim, 2010). However, public policy is a political decision with economic-political considerations. McCarthy and Ibrahim advise that although research can aim to inform policy questions, it is difficult to expect that research will directly lead to policy formulation. The kind of research that is concerned with generating knowledge relevant to policy will tend to have a more significant impact if it builds on the dynamics of influence between researchers and policy makers.

Considering the above situation, applying social accountability principles will require researchers to acquire skills as “policy entrepreneurs”. This role can also be played by intermediaries within policy networks. In addition, researchers may target public agenda to affect public opinion and increase receptivity to their ideas. To aid in advocacy, they can coordinate with civil society coalitions and other interests groups involved in policy formulation. In addition to building networks with policy makers and other civil society groups in building their influence, research organizations can be plugged into knowledge hubs, and use mass media and advocacy groups to disseminate their findings.

REVIVING INDONESIA'S KNOWLEDGE SECTOR

Policy-relevant research can promote efficiency directly by expanding the stock of knowledge; however, public policy is a political product. Policymaking does not take place in a vacuum, but in the political context where policymakers rule. That is why, public policy does not always use evidence generated through research; instead, it reflects the interests and demands of the politicians, albeit in varying degrees (Park, 1998). Politicians are not always accountable to their constituents.

A key criterion of accountability is the efficiency of resource allocation within the public sector. Indonesia has been shifting its accountability focus from the efficient use of public resources to effective public revenue (tax)



collection. For instance, as an impact of intensive mass media coverage on the “Gayus-gate”,⁶ the public now cares not only about how public funds are used, but also on the efficiency of public revenue collection. Public opinion (pressure) is proven as an effective way of promoting the effective management of public resources. The Gayus case involved politicians from a ruling party as well as high ranking law officers. This exhibited the responsiveness of the government to the demands of the people, especially if aided by media coverage. The former Minister of Finance, Sri Mulyani, was forced to resign due to her strong opposition to interference from politicians in public financial policy making. She has moved to the World Bank in Washington DC as a managing director. In this kind of situation, collaboration between the media and policy-oriented social science research centers gains significance. Park (1998) said, “The better informed the general public is about the misallocation of public funds, the more likely they are to seek recourse to remedies that cut short the lives of policies responsible for the misallocation. Knowledge is power, and social science research empowers the citizenry.” In terms of how it manages public resources, the government of Indonesia is likely to be more reliant on public opinion (e.g. through surveys) rather than on the regulations or evidences provided by think tanks or citizen groups. The government applies an “evidence-based policy making”. In truth, however, it is really about popularity over substance and soundness of the policy.

The challenge, therefore, lies in supporting collaboration between media and citizen groups (knowledge sector organizations, in this case) to promote research-based evidence as alternative to the “evidence” preferred by the government in its policy-making process.



UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN INDONESIA

The emergence of social accountability in Indonesia started during the period of *reformasi* (Reform) in 1998. Since the *reformasi*, the Indonesian government has been caught in a careful political balancing act between long established socio-political norms and several emerging forces in Indonesian society. The process of *reformasi* in Indonesia has been marked by better exercise of the freedom of speech in contrast to the censorship of the New Order era. This has led to more open political debate in media, as well as the development of various cultural expressions. A general election in June 1999 produced the first freely elected national, provincial, and regional parliaments in over forty years. Since then, regions have been given more autonomy to manage some responsibilities and powers. At the same time, citizen participation in government has been encouraged and outlined in several laws and regulations. The process of *reformasi* has increased the level of citizens' participation in policy formulation, planning, budgeting as well as in the monitoring of public service delivery. Since then, citizen groups, the media, as well as government officials have become aware of the existence of cultural forces demanding openness and clean government, or what has come to be known as "Social Accountability".

In Indonesia, social accountability is perceived to be related to public accountability, good governance, and other academic terms related to government accountability. People, generally, do not make a distinction

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY: MEDIA COVERAGE?

For the Kendari City Government, social accountability is similar to good governance. The concept of social accountability, which was introduced by the ANSA-EAP's Southeast Sulawesi network, is neither something new nor different from the concept of openness. Specifically, one form by which social accountability is applied is when government programs are covered by the media.



between “horizontal” and “vertical” mechanisms nor between the “supply” side and the “demand” side of governance.

Social accountability is, likewise, perceived to be related to the ideas of freedom of speech, transparent governance, and people’s participation in policy-making as well as in financial planning and implementation. To some, social accountability means “engagement of citizens in demanding accountability from the government through various direct or indirect political communication channels. These channels and mechanisms may be initiated by the state or by the citizens, but in most cases the initiatives come from the latter”. This hews closely to Malena et al.’s definition.⁷

Table 3. Varying perceptions of the social accountability conceptual framework.⁸

ACTORS	SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY CONCEPT	
	Understanding of Social Accountability	Who are Responsible
National civil organizations	Social accountability is about the respect of civil/human rights by the authorities, about democratic elections, people’s right to gain access to public information, government transparency, and citizen’s participation in government policy-making and financial planning and implementation; freedom of speech.	Government agencies (executive), people’s representatives (DPR), legal apparatus, and political parties.
Local citizen groups or civil organizations (including network members of ANSA-EAP)	Social accountability is about people’s right of access to public information; government transparency and citizens’ participation in policy-making and financial planning and implementation; clean government (i.e. elimination of corruption of any form).	Government agencies (executive), people’s representatives (DPR), legal apparatus, and political parties.
Media	Social accountability is freedom of speech, freedom of the press, democratic elections, people’s right of access to public information, government transparency, and citizens’ participation in government policy-making and financial planning and implementation.	Government agencies (executive), people’s representatives (DPR), legal apparatus, and political parties.



THE EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN INDONESIA

The following section presents the findings of the social accountability mapping in Indonesia, based on actual experiences in the regions of Java (West Indonesia) and Sulawesi (East Indonesia). For purposes of organization, these findings have been clustered around the Four Pillars of Social Accountability Framework developed by ANSA-EAP.

Strengthening Government Openness in Social Accountability

Indonesia has the necessary laws, regulations, and guidelines to encourage social accountability. In terms of citizens' participation in policy-making, financial planning and implementation, there have been a number of initiatives of which the degree of success has yet to be determined.

Act #25 of 2004 concerning National Development Planning System states, in Article 1, Paragraph 1 that, "Planning is a process for determining appropriate future action, through a sequence of choices, taking into account available resources." Article 21 states that "the Council of Development Planning (*Musrenbang*) is a forum for interaction in the framework of national development plans and regional development plans." Article 27, Paragraph 2 clarifies that, "Further provisions concerning the procedures for preparing the Local RPJP (Long Term Development Plan), Local RPJM (Middle Term Development Plan), Strategic Plan of SKPD, RKP, Renja (work plan) of SKPD and implementation of the Regional *Musrenbang* are governed by Local Regulation."

Referring to Government Regulation No. 40/2006 on Procedures for Formulation of the National Development Plan in the context of preparing the annual Government Work Plan (RKP), a preparatory agenda is to be formulated at the national and local levels through the implementation of *musrenbang* at each level of government, from village, sub-district, district/city, provincial to central level. To operationalize the Act and the PP (Government Regulation), a SEB (Joint Letter) was issued by the Minister of State for Planning/Head of Bappenas and the Ministry of Home Affairs on Technical Guidelines for Implementation of the Annual *Musrenbang* No.



008/M/PPN/01/2007 and No. 050/264.A/SJ of 2007 on the Technical Directions of Musrenbang Implementation. However, since 2008, the central government has stopped issuing new SEBs. As basis for organizing *musrenbang* from 2008 to 2010, the local government referred to SEB No. 008/M/PPN/01/2007 and No. 050/264.A/SJ of 2007.

Table 4 (next page) presents a summary of the laws supporting social accountability practice in Indonesia. Analysis of the laws (in terms of legality) was done based on the legislation effectiveness measure proposed by Malaluan (ANSA-EAP). In terms of practicality, the bases for evaluation were reports from www.kebebasaninformasi.com, a review of the law by Jakarta Post and Tempo Magazine, and comments from prominent politicians such as Bagir Manan.

Social accountability experience in western Indonesia (Java)

In Java, the government is perceived to be the only actor obliged to be accountable. Among the key government agencies in Java are Bappeda (Regional Planning Agency), SKPD (Regional Working Unit Agency), BPS (Central Statistics Bureau), and the Agency of Public Relations.

Although a variety of laws and legislations are available and implemented (in compliance with the prescribed procedure), *effectiveness* remains to be the main concern of citizens. *Musrenbang* is one of the institutionalized mechanisms regulated by law, but its effectiveness has long been a cause for concern. Despite its aim to provide spaces for citizens to participate in development planning, *musrenbang* is actually conducted for the sake of complying with the prescribed procedure only. The process of deliberation does not really happen as development planning is dictated by the government. Citizens' suggestions on priorities for planning are rarely taken into account as the government sometimes has its own priorities. This is also, partly, due to the lack of information and understanding on the government's development agenda and the lack of ability of government officials to simplify their presentation using uncomplicated terms.

The government's commitment to obey the rules that it issues is also questionable. According to a key informant, not all prescribed steps of the *musrenbang* are followed. The pre-*musrenbang* is often omitted. The window for citizens' participation in the *musrenbang* activity is small and

Indonesia



Table 4. Laws supporting social accountability action in Indonesia.

REGULATIONS	REVIEW
<p>Law No.14/2008 on Public Freedom of Information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bill was drafted in 1999 by the Indonesian Center for Environmental Law and submitted to the House of Representative in 2000 by the Coalition of Freedom of Information. The draft was reviewed starting 2002. After a prolonged period of debates and discussions, the House passed the bill into Law. Based on the evaluation, the law is seen to provide the necessary foundation for the promotion of accountability and transparency in government. The scope of information contained therein covers the procedure for information request and release, protection for the citizen requesting for information, safeguards against violations, and dispute- resolution mechanisms that encourage the vertical accountability practice. However, the law also contains provisions that allow the government to withhold information on sensitive matters.
<p>Law No.40/1999 on Press Law</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The law has been accepted as a pivotal point in transforming the practice of freedom of expression. As opposed to many restrictions and sanctions during the New Order Era, the present environment enables mass media, journalists, and individual citizens to express thoughts and ideas freely. Some implications of the law include: no prior censorship for print and broadcast media, right to seek, acquire, and disseminate ideas and information, protection of journalists where they are free to join journalists' association, and right of citizens to establish a press company or news agency. Despite those encouraging points, some challenges that hinder social accountability practice remain. For instance, some sectarian groups resort to coercing mass media agencies and practitioners when they have dissenting opinions on certain issues. In effect, citizens are not free to express their honest opinions and thoughts. Another challenge is the political agenda of some mass media agencies and practitioners, which prevents them from being objective and hinders the practice of internal accountability.
<p>Law No.32/2004 on Administrative Decentralization and Law No. 32/200 on Fiscal Decentralization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both laws bring the decision-making process of development planning and budgeting closer to citizens, as well as create a sense of ownership among local government leaders and stakeholders. These also provide a foundation for initiatives in participatory planning and budgeting. Despite their much-vaunted accomplishment as one of the biggest decentralization moves in the world, their implementation triggered the formation of 'little kingdoms' across the country. This was brought about by lack of transparency since budget-related information was not disclosed to the public. The law gave regional/local government authority over the preparation and allocation of their respective budgets. This situation encouraged the civil society to draft the Freedom of Information bill.

Indonesia

Table 4. (Continued)

REGULATIONS	REVIEW
<p>Law No.17/2003 on State Finance, Law No.58/2005 on Regional Government Financial Planning, and Home Ministry Regulation No.13/2006 on Local Government Financial Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These policies institutionalized accountability, transparency, efficiency, and effective public resource allocations.
<p>Law No 25/2004. General Regulation on Musrenbang (Participatory Planning and Budgeting)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The law institutionalized the creation of Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan (Musrenbang), a multi-stakeholder consultation forum at all levels of government over long-term (RPJP), middle-term (RPJM), and annual (Rencana Tahunan) timeframes. It also emphasized the need to synchronize all approaches – political, democratic, participatory, bureaucratic, technical, bottom-top, and top-bottom – into regional planning. It also contained operational guidelines of the musrenbang: Joint Ministerial Decree No.1354/M.PPN/03/2004 and 050/744/SJ on Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of Musrenbang and Local Participatory Planning. These establish spaces for public participation in planning and budgeting and provide entry points into this process. These also provide guiding principles on how Musrenbang forums should be convened at different levels Joint Ministerial Decree No.0008/M.PPN/01/2007 and 050/264A/SJ. These contain sets of procedures, processes, and mechanisms in conducting Musrenbang. These also incorporate more principles such as inclusiveness, gender responsiveness, the need for organization teams to enhance competency in participation skills, organization of working groups, framework for discussion and flexibility.
<p>List of related regulations on the participatory planning and budgeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government Regulation No.20/2004 on Government Work Plan Government Regulation No.21/2004 on Ministerial Work Plan and Budget Government Regulation No.39/2006 on Monitoring and Evaluation Procedure for the Implementation of the Development Plan Government Regulation No.40/2006 on the Procedures for Formulating the National Development Plan Ministerial Decree of Home Ministry No.050/2020/SJ on the Directives for the Formulation of Local Long-term and Mid-term Development Plan





Table 4. (Continued)

REGULATIONS	REVIEW
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministerial Decree of Home Ministry No.050/987/SJ on Guidelines for Convening of Participatory Development Coordination Forums • Ministerial Decree of Home Ministry No.29/2002 on the Guidelines for Local Financial Administration, Responsibilities, and Monitoring • Law No.1./2004 on State Treasury • Law No.15/2004 on the Inspection of Administration and Responsibilities of State Finance • Government Regulation No.58/2005 on Local Financial Management • Ministerial Decree of Home Ministry No.59/2007 on the Guidelines for Local Financial Administration • Ministerial Decree of Home Ministry No.30/2007 on the Guidelines for Formulation of Local Budget for the 2008 Fiscal Year



narrow since the participation is by invitation, which implies government's power to choose the representatives. Despite seemingly accommodating laws on public participation, there is an observable dissonance between what is being prescribed and what is being practiced.

Selection of participants is not as inclusive as the law prescribes. *Musrenbang* participants are often the community elites (village heads and personalities at the village-level *musrenbang*, for example) or citizens who, basically, have less knowledge on development planning and prioritization. In some regions, such as Pekalongan District, the ones invited are those who have bargaining power (e.g. large number of inter-sector members).

Public hearing is another mechanism which lacks clarity in its definition. What is meant by "public hearing" is face-to-face interaction with government officials and DPRD members. Though there is a legal basis for the conduct of public hearings, there are no guidelines in carrying these out.

Appealing for public hearing, exerting pressure by giving statements and publishing position papers in media, as well as lobbying with government officials are strategies that have been commonly employed by citizen groups. These, however, have certain requirements such as the availability of contacts in government agencies and local parliament, and the ability of groups to compel public officials to pay attention to them. This is to say that only citizen groups with certain bargaining power (e.g. with large membership and inter-sector connections) can possibly participate while others who are not well organized, and who turn out to be the most vulnerable, can never have the chance to participate.

In Java, it appears that accountability is only for certain people under certain conditions. There seems to be little interest in formal ways of government-citizen engagement. Some organizations believe that *musrenbang* has insignificant influence over the planning and budgeting process, so much so that citizen groups resort to other informal means such as by appealing for public hearings or face-to-face interactions with public officials. *Musrenbang* is deemed insufficient in efforts to enhance public participation. Participation means providing all citizens, whether individuals or groups, an opportunity to hold the government accountable for its policies, activities, and programs, ensuring that the government responds to



the peoples' needs, delivers quality services efficiently and uses funds judiciously.

This study found that most citizen groups in Java lack interest in monitoring the planning and budgeting process. The results of *musrenbang* at the lower levels of governance are often nullified by the *musrenbang* conducted in the higher levels of governance. Development plans proposed by citizens in the village level are often nullified during *musrenbang* in sub-district level. The government asserts that the citizens' plan must be synchronized with the government's plan. It is, therefore, necessary for citizens to be watchful of every stage of the budgeting process to make sure that the citizens' agenda is taken into consideration.

Social accountability experience in South and Southeast Sulawesi

The main government agencies responsible for exercising social accountability include all the local government units. All SKPDs (Local Government Unit) are formally mandated to carry out social accountability activities although, in reality, the processes of budget planning, spending, and performance tracking lack transparency.

Social accountability awareness of government officials involved in policy making and in public financial management is relatively high, considering the existence of rules in both national and local levels. There appears to be a gap, though, between awareness and action. NGOs and staff of government offices claim that although there is involvement of citizens at the *kelurahan* level in the process of development planning meetings, participation is limited (quantitatively, with only about 20-30 participants). Furthermore, only the

ON AWARENESS OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Trikora, the Head of Public Relations of the Kendari city government, says that the Act on Disclosure of Information and Public Service is not a foreign concept among municipalities. He asserts that long before the national act was stipulated, they had already issued a local regulation related to this, namely Perda No. 15 of 2005 on public participation in local policy formulation. In preparing the budget, the government involves several NGOs and other stakeholders through open discussion and public consultation. He adds that local government policies are also always open to scrutiny.



local elite are invited and the marginalized sectors (women, workers, senior citizens, children, and the poor in general) are ignored.

Interestingly, in 2005, the Bappeda (Planning Body) of Kendari city implemented a policy to conduct pre-*musrenbang* for the village-level development planning after a technical training on PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) in several villages, in cooperation with Yayasan Pengembangan Study Hukum & Kebijakan (YPSHK).⁹ The purpose of this pre-*musrenbang* was to allow the residents of each village to learn about the components to be discussed in the meetings and to be able to differentiate between their wants and their actual needs. The city government provided a budget of Rp250.000 per *kelurahan* to carry out pre-*musrenbang* in 64 villages.

Musrenbang and women's participation¹⁰

Increasing the awareness and understanding of the community on social accountability is not sufficient to foster effective engagement of women and the poor in local development processes. Mechanisms that promote their active participation must also be strengthened and sustained. To facilitate the engagement of women in the *musrenbang* process as well as to strengthen the *musrenbang* process, The Asia Foundation (TAF) and its partners have implemented the following activities:

- **Public decision-making fora.** Reducing cultural, social, and structural barriers is essential to ensure women's participation and inclusion of their priorities in local development planning and budget processes. Effective and gender sensitive facilitators can play crucial roles in ensuring that local development planning meetings are inclusive and responsive to the needs of women and the poor.
- **Village forums for women.** The program involves organizing village-level forums targeted to increase the participation of women in development issues at the grassroots level. These regular quarterly meetings seek to provide a venue for women to voice out their concerns, develop their skills and confidence in public speaking, and to provide a supportive environment for them to engage in developing solutions to shared problems in their community. Issues raised during these meetings are documented and brought up during the village *musrenbang*.



- **Citizen Report Cards.** Citizen Report Cards (CRC) are a simple but powerful tool to provide public agencies with systematic feedback from users of public services. CRCs are used to collect feedback on the quality and adequacy of public services from actual users; these provide a proactive agenda for communities, civil society organizations and local governments to engage in dialogue with service providers to improve the delivery of public services. TAF has introduced the use of CRCs as a way of engaging the community in the budget execution stage. The CRCs have been used to systematically record information and present the results to the respective government officials responsible for the selected services. The use of CRCs seeks to empower women and the community to track and monitor budget expenditures throughout program implementation and to facilitate open and productive discussion on local government performance.

The engagement of women in local public policy deliberation and implementation in Sulawesi remains to be poor. According to the Asia Foundation (2008), less than 7.3% of public officials are women, which implies their low level of participation in social accountability processes such as budgetary and policy-making.

Table 5 is a summary of the issues and opportunities of the *musrenbang* experiences.

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE: INDONESIA'S VIBRANT CIVIL SOCIETY

The government (at all levels) and civil society organizations have been the main actors on the development of social accountability thinking and practice in Indonesia. Civil society, in this case, refers to the arena outside family, the state, and the private (market), organized to pursue public interest in demanding government accountability.¹¹ Civil society organizations include media, non-government organizations, religious, and cultural organizations. Political parties and military-based organizations are not included.



Table 5. Summary of issues and opportunities in the musrenbang process.

ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insignificant influence of <i>musrenbang</i> in development planning. • Development plans proposed by citizens are rarely accepted due to variations from the government’s priorities • <i>Musrenbang</i> is often conducted in a formal way, using formal language, which is sometimes difficult for ordinary citizens to understand. • Resource allocations are actually determined by the government and political parties. • Participation in <i>musrenbang</i> is by invitation, which implies that not all citizens can participate in <i>musrenbang</i>. This explains why <i>musrenbang</i>’s participants are local elites (village heads and prominent figures in village level <i>musrenbang</i>, for example) or citizens have basically less knowledge on development planning and priority needs of the poor. • <i>Musrenbang</i> often omits the participation of marginalized sectors such as women, the poor, etc. • The number of participants is limited to around 20-40 people and often dominated by government officials. • In order to participate in <i>musrenbang</i>, citizen organizations must prove themselves to possess bargaining power (such as large membership, having contacts in government or parliament’s inner circle, etc.). • Citizen groups lack knowledge and capability to fully understand the budgeting process. • Citizen groups also lack the interest in monitoring <i>musrenbang</i> from village to district level to ensure that the development plan firmed up at the lowest level of <i>musrenbang</i> is not nullified by <i>musrenbang</i> in the higher level of government. • Citizen organizations need to improve their capacities on budgeting and planning to ensure better participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Musrenbang</i> remains as the only formal way of citizen participation that reaches the lowest level of government, i.e. village level. • In order to maximize it, the government should improve and find innovative ways of reaching out to the citizens to know their aspirations (e.g. by disseminating information on the government’s development planning, conducting forums for citizen organizations before holding <i>musrenbang</i>, presenting the development plan in simple language, etc. • To ensure fulfilment of its function to facilitate citizen’s participation, the government is required to involve more members from marginalized groups such as women and the poor.



Citizen Groups in western Indonesia (Java)

There are various civil society organizations pushing for social accountability in Java. Most are NGOs and peoples' organizations concerned with social accountability-related issues (e.g. participatory planning and budget formulation, budget analysis, and government performance monitoring).

Strategies and tools are diverse and dependent on the nature of citizen groups applying them. NGOs usually start with community organizing, encouraging the establishment of community-based organizations (CBOs), then increasing their capacity and awareness on participation and budget transparency as well as budget reading and analysis. This type of group is considered to have better access to information and knowledge sources. They also consider themselves "intermediary organizations", whose function is to facilitate the participation and connection between the government and citizens. Among this type of organizations are Pattiro, FITRA, Lakpesdam NU, IDEA Yogyakarta.

Pattiro, a national NGO, has worked in 20 regions in partnership with local citizen organizations. They have helped organize the local organizations, train the members and promote their participation in *musrenbang*, as well as encourage women participation in *musrenbang*. In addition, Pattiro also gives consultancies to SKPDs, supplementing ideas on development priorities that are contextual to the regions in question.

Forum Warga Jepara, a Jepara based inter-sector citizen group, was consolidated with the assistance of Lakpesdam NU, a national NGO. It has identified its needs and formulated its demands for a bigger budget allocation for small-scale enterprise, education and agriculture sectors. It has held hearings with the Mayor, SKPD, Bappeda and parliament members to push for their demands.

Jaringan Masyarakat Bantul (Bantul Society Network) has taken an attempt to improve the educational system in its area. Engagement began with identifying problems, the amount of budget allocated for the sector, and government policies regarding the sector before filing a demand for hearing with the government. It has been collaborating with media to disseminate its



concerns. It has also been lobbying with parliament members and government officials to get them to respond to its demands for hearing.

FITRA, for its part, releases an annual report on government budget usage at the end of the fiscal year. It analyzes then criticizes certain budget allocations that do not have anything to do with welfare improvement for the poor. Its reflections on the 2010 fiscal year budget, for instance, highlighted an increase in allocation for welfare that, in reality, did not have significant impact for poverty reduction. It also noted the inefficiency in budget allocations for government and parliament members' travel.

Citizen Groups in the South and Southeast Sulawesi Region

Sulawesi has also displayed a great potential for social accountability in terms of civil society initiative. As in other parts of Indonesia, women face significant challenges in increasing their participation in local public policy deliberations and implementation. Women make up less than 7.3% of officials of decision-making rank in local governments. Thus, women officials are seldom involved in planning or drafting budgets for their own offices or for the sectors they work with. All the provinces of Sulawesi, except for North Sulawesi and West Sulawesi, are at the bottom 10 in Indonesia's Gender Development Index, with Gorontalo province ranking last. The average percentage of women members in district/city legislatures in Sulawesi is 6 %, which is unacceptably low in comparison to the national average of 7-8%.

Some of the civil society organizations operating in the South and Southeast Sulawesi region are:

- Inninawa: working on literacy campaign and social movements to build critical mass
- Active Society Institute (ACSI): organizing street vendors and traders from traditional markets.
- Islamic Women Studies (IWC): engaged in the education of children from poor families in Lette village, Mariso Sub-district;
- KOPEL (Komite Pemantau Legislatif/Legislative Watch Committee)
- KPRM (Komite Perjuangan Rakyat Miskin/Poor People's Struggle Committee) Makassar: Facilitates and articulates the interests of the poor people. Since 2003, the cadres of KPRM have been advocating for



the economic, and socio- cultural rights of the poor, and have been directly dealing with the bureaucratic public services apparatus at the village up to city level. KPRM members have been working for the fulfillment of the basic rights and needs of the citizens, especially the poor (e.g. food, water, etc.).

- FIK ORNOP Sulsel (Network of NGOs of South Sulawesi)
- LBH (Legal Assistance Organization) Makassar,
- KPI (Komisi Penyiaran Independen/Independent Broadcasting Commission) South Sulawesi,
- Student Executive Board (Social Political Faculty of Hasanuddin University)
- Media (Tribun Timur Daily and its media networks and the Fajar Daily and its media networks) The Research and Development agency of Fajar has been involved in assessing the performance of local government units and in encouraging the government to improve the quality of services by granting awards as incentives.
- Yascita (Kendari City and neighboring districts)
- KPI Sultra (Kendari City and Konawe, Kolaka and South Konawe districts)
- YPSHK (Kendari City, 15 villages in Konawe District)

ORGANIZED SMALL RETAILERS IN MAKASSAR

Besides the issue of public information disclosure, another aspect of public service that has been a problem in Makassar is waste management. Pasar Terong, one of the largest “traditional” markets in Makassar, generates huge amounts of trash daily. The city government has failed to perform its role, despite the fact that the merchants have been paying garbage levy on a regular basis. The oft-repeated question is, “Where has the 'garbage money' gone? Has it really been used to handle the waste problem, or has it been diverted to other unlawful expenses?” This question needs an immediate response, given the fact that the management of traditional markets is handled by the local government-owned company belonging to the city of Makassar, which is managed by a team dominated by politicians rather than professionals.

Fortunately, in Pasar Terong, through SADAR (Persaudaraan Pedagang Pasar Terong or Brotherhood of Terong Market Traders) and supported by an NGO called Active Society Institute (ACSI), the demand for the market managers to work professionally has been widely expressed. This is not the situation, though, in the other markets in Makassar (16 large markets and 30 small markets) where the traders are relatively poorly organized. *(From a focus group discussion with NGOs, South Sulawesi)*



- Komnasdesa Sultra (Wawonii Island, Konawe District) and some other networks such as Walhi, Medikra, Jauh Sultra, Telapak, and Indonesia Journalist Alliance

So far, in South Sulawesi, fighting corruption has been the main motivation for creating networks and initiating actions among CSOs and NGOs. ANSA-EAP partners in Southeast Sulawesi have been working on various social accountability-related issues including participation in policy formulation and financial planning and implementation

Similar to what their Java counterparts have been experiencing, CSOs in Sulawesi have also been confronted with the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of implementation of social accountability-related legislations at various levels of governance. A list at the end of this writeup provides an inventory of citizen groups involved in social accountability work in Indonesia in Java and Sulawesi.

THE CHALLENGE OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN INDONESIA

Law No.14/2008 on Public Access to Information has become the legal basis for the public to obtain information from the government. The law mentions what kind of information can be accessed by the public and what are the rights and duties of the public and state institutions in relation to accessing information. The Indonesian Republic Government's Regulation No. 61 of 2010 on the "Implementation of Law No. 14 Year 2008 on public information disclosure" was issued later to guide and regulate implementation of the law. According to this law, all government units are mandated to provide information that is demanded by the public. Yet, in most cases, citizens are invariably referred to Bappeda, SKPD, Office of Public Relation and BPS (Statistical Bureau) on matters concerning budget and development.

Access to Information in Western Indonesia (Java)

Websites are among the tools of the government in disseminating information to the public. Almost all local governments in Java, and probably in all of Indonesia, have their own official websites. Regional BPS offices have



their own websites as well. The government websites commonly provide information on regional demographics, economic and cultural profiles as well as the potentials of the region in question. Yet, with regard to social accountability practice, only a few of them provide information on the government's development plan and budget. The Kebumen District in Central Java is one of the few that comply with this social accountability requirement.

The information on development and budget usually takes on the form of numbers and allocations that barely make sense to common people. In addition, basic information that would enable citizens to participate in planning and budgeting is generally unavailable. The way information is prepared and packaged makes for a limited audience.

Those who have better access to government documents are likely to be the ones who have "connections" with government officials or DPRD members. FITRA and Pattiro, for example, mentioned that their regional chapters had no difficulty accessing government documents.

According to FITRA, this easy access is due to their organization's reputation as playing an active role in the budgeting process. The government, according to FITRA, seems to trust the organization because the latter has been providing consultancy services and assistance to the government regarding the budgeting process. This appears to be the case because there were instances when FITRA sent its requests through mail under a different, unfamiliar name and it did not receive any response from the government agencies involved.¹²

The reluctance to give information to the public may have been due to the fear that the documents would be misused by people who have no legitimate purpose for acquiring it. Another reason may be the poor archiving system of government agencies, leading to claims that some documents are "not in their office", as reported by Kompas, on FITRA and its partners' request for public documents from some national level government institutions (Kompas, 2 December 2010, p.19).



Access to Information in Eastern Indonesia (Southeast Sulawesi)

The City of Kendari has adopted the Law No.14/2008 on Public Access to Information by issuing City Regulation No. 15 of 2003 on public participation in policy formulation and City Regulation No. 14 of 2003 on freedom of information.

Despite the issuance of the two city regulations, there are no technical guidelines on their implementation. There is no government agency in the local area that is mandated to carry out the task of information disclosure. The effectiveness of the two adopted regulations, therefore, remains vague and doubtful.

Like the other regions in Indonesia, the government of Kendari City maintains a website that provides data ranging from local regulations to several reports on the performance of city government. Unfortunately, some information is lacking and even outdated. The most recent data posted on the site date back to 2005 and 2006.

Another way of obtaining information from government agencies, such as the Office of Public Relations, BPS and Bappeda, is through formal request (e.g. official communication sent via postal mail). The process can be very bureaucratic and complicated at times. The BPS is less demanding as it does not require data about the person/institution requesting for information.

Media networks, such as the print media, play an important role in the dissemination of public information, but there are times when the information conveyed by the media leans favorably towards the government side. There are media entities, though, who take the risk in disseminating information favorable to and grounded on people's interests such as Radio Suara Alam and Kendari TV.

As in the case of Java, the information provided by the government related to budget is in the form of numbers and may appear to be too technical to laypeople who might find it difficult to appreciate and understand such technicalities.

The challenge in the arena of access to information is the lack of willingness of local governments to provide information to citizens. The other side of the equation is the weak demand from citizens for the government to disclose information.



CULTURE AND CONTEXT IN SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY INITIATIVES

Some existing cultural beliefs and values in Indonesian society affect the way citizen participation is conducted. To some extent, it also affects the interpretation and understanding of social accountability itself. The issues being highlighted here are the inclusion (or non-inclusion) of women and other marginalized groups in social accountability practice, as well as the power relations between the government and the citizens. The following experiences illustrate the interplay of cultural values and belief with the practice of social accountability.

Listening to the Voices of Moslem Mass-Based Organizations

The influence of Moslem mass-based organizations (MBOs) in creating public demand for reform in some districts in Indonesia cannot be underestimated. The two largest MBOs, i.e. Muhhamadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) have had experiences in monitoring poverty, using tools such as the following:

- **Citizen Report Card (CRC).** Used to monitor citizens' perception of health service delivery, particularly their perception of those services provided at community health centers (*puskesmas*).
- **User-Based Survey.** Used to monitor programs on road infrastructure.
- **Government Programme's Monitoring Team.** A participatory scheme to monitor and evaluate free health and education programs.
- **Simple Community Monitoring.** Mobilizing various stakeholders including teachers, students, parents and health practitioners to observe the free health and education program schemes implemented by their respective local governments
- **Complaints Handling.** The establishment of "Complaint Centers for the Poor" (Posko Pengaduan Rakyat Miskin or PERAM). The members of the centers, particularly those from the MBOs, help the community by providing them information and assistance in filing complaints, mostly related to health and education services, with respective LG offices.

Partnership with Moslem MBOs reflects the cultural appropriateness in increasing citizen's participation in poverty reduction programs. It is built on



existing networks of Indonesian mass-based Muslim organizations and, therefore, brings the influence and credibility of Islamic organizations together, which is then enhanced by the technical advocacy experience of economic reform groups.¹³ Mobilizing large numbers of poor citizens (as a Muslim organization's constituent), especially in rural areas, and bringing their seldom-heard voices to bear down on the political process is the central work of this initiative.

Culture and Context in the Java Experience

The traditional view of women as being good only for domestic tasks prevails largely in Java, despite a rigorous campaign on women inclusion in engaging government. Women commonly consider engagement activities (even in its simplest forms such as village or neighborhood "RT/RW" meetings) as men's business.

Yet, despite this cultural norm, a number of women organizations have emerged in recent years. In Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta, there is an organization of women that attempts to participate in budgeting, namely Jaringan Kelompok Perempuan Gunung Kidul (Gunung Kidul Women Network). FITRA also mentioned that among the members of their local partner organizations are women who have been actively participating in the organizations' activities. They are few in number though.

The political culture of government is characterized by lack of openness to all public elements, which explains the reliance of citizen groups on traditional forms of engagement such as lobbying and informal, often personal ways of negotiating with the government.

One way of describing the government bureaucracy is "procedure-oriented". While it is true that administration means following procedures, too much adherence to procedure can render the government non-flexible and rigid, which leaves little room for innovations. A manifestation of this is the inability of government officials to explain development planning in plain language that can be easily understood by the majority.

Culture and Context in the Southeast Sulawesi Experience

Government officials and citizen groups in Kendari City have become aware of the significance of social accountability practices (engagement of



citizens in governance and transparency) in the development of the city and the society.

Unfortunately, due to the prevailing politics of ethnicity and kinship that emanated from the era of New Order, the belief and awareness has yet to be translated to actual practice. Politics in Kendari City shows symptoms similar to that of other Indonesian regions. In Kendari, kinship-based politics, which relies on blood ties or personal affinity among political actors (e.g. governors, chairman of the parliament, the mayor and local officials) is a major concern.

The distribution of power is uneven and generally based on “family ties”, which means that those holding official positions of authority belong to the same ethnic group as the highest figures of authority (e.g. mayor). Even when dealing with private parties for infrastructure construction, transparency in the selection process is practically non-existent because of kinship-based politics. This has a divisive effect on the citizens and causes resentment among various ethnic groups.

While the engagement of citizen organizations in the development process has been deemed as a requirement for social accountability, tension continues to exist between the government and local NGOs. Engagement tends to be “critical” rather than constructive in nature. Several other NGOs (such as WALHI¹⁴) continue to adopt an adversarial stance in relating to government due to lack of mutual trust and respect for each other’s nature and activities.

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN INDONESIA

Following a presentation on learning from actual social accountability implementation in the regions of Java and Sulawesi, the succeeding section lists down the gaps and challenges to social accountability practice in Indonesia: difficulty in measuring the impact of civic participation, emphasis on compliance to process rather than real participation, dilemma between project-based participation versus the regular development process, and the accountability of citizen groups.



Difficulty in Measuring Developmental Impact

The idea that inspired a number of policies on citizen engagement and participation is that citizen engagement and participation can contribute to improve governance and deliver pro-poor development outcomes. However, the impact of civic participation on measurable democratic and developmental outcomes has proven to be difficult to assess. Some “best practices” are limited to single interventions, and almost of them are strongly associated with personalities with strong leadership, a factor that is not easy to create or replicate in other set-ups.

Procedure Versus Participation

In a country like Indonesia where premium is placed on procedures and the cartel of politicians is at the top, one can expect citizens to interact with the state through formal governance spaces (including through parliament). In reality, though, associations and social movements from the ground are as important inspirations and means for change.

Aside from formal mechanisms of participation, one must give value to community initiatives (such as community organizing from below and mobilizations by citizen organizations) in creating real change in public policy. When international aid mechanisms in Indonesia are working through government structure, government is in charge of the task of citizen engagement. The assumption is that development interventions must support state institutions first, and then the government will foster civic engagement. In fact, it has been recognized that the government adheres more on procedure rather than on the quality of civic engagement outcomes. Procedure becomes a ritual without value. Accountability is, thus, reduced to a set of procedures that need to be complied with rather than a matter of influencing public policy, for instance. In a way, the procedural concern does open channels of participation. But it allows only bits and pieces of citizen participation in planning and budgeting activities, and leaves the more essential parts of decision-making to the government.

Constructive citizenship, improving practices of participation, strengthening accountability, and contributing to social cohesion are, therefore, still domains of citizen groups. While the government has



provided mechanisms and opened ample space for participation, such as the *musrenbang* and public hearing mechanisms, their effectiveness and impact remains to be seen. The Court of Justice, however, has played a significant role in handling corruption cases that have become a central issue in Indonesia. Yet, as some corruption cases become more political than legal, the significant role of courts of justice in ensuring accountability is critical. In addition, the government has actually established the Office of the Ombudsman where the public can address its complaints on public services. Yet, considering the fact that it is mainly national- and provincial-based, the Ombudsman has not yet succeeded in reaching citizens at the lowest level of governance.¹⁵

Project-Based Participation Versus the Regular Development Process

The Government of Indonesia has been implementing a bottom-to-top, multi-level civic engagement and participation in the development planning process called “*musrenbang*” at various levels of government. Due to its complexity in representation issues and significant lag time between planning and implementation, *musrenbang* is losing its credibility among the development actors and is considered only as a formality or part of a procedure. On the other hand, a large government poverty reduction program called Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat (PNPM)¹⁶ also applies a participatory planning process, which is attended by the same development actors in the *musrenbang* process. While the development planning process in PNPM is facilitated by professional (meaning private, well-paid) facilitators, the facilitators of *musrenbang* are ordinary civil servants from a government agency who are less motivated, compared to the PNPM’s facilitators. The result is such that the regular *musrenbang* now gets less attention from development actors and has become a planning ritual with low quality output.

Government can both be a major competitor or a potential donor in the eyes of national NGOs. This is in recognition of the fact that the local state—with its administrative repartitions—represents the primary and most important agency for sustainable development processes in developing



countries. Hence the typical areas of development cooperation, such as health, education, safety, social welfare, human rights, etc. constitute the core responsibilities of the state. Therefore, with the exception of very small initiatives, development programs and projects can reach long-term sustainability only if they are embedded in, or, at the minimum, in line, with the respective programs and/or initiatives of the local government. But the question is, which government? The government is not homogenous. It consists of various interests which may be contradictory to the development agenda of citizen groups. Some local governments operate like private sectors when the governor/head of district is also a businessman/woman, or is dictated by the private sector. At present, it is sometimes challenging for the local CSOs to establish meaningful cooperation with the government. Also, the participation of civil society in local development dialogues is often quite difficult although improvements have been noted from time to time.

Accountability and Governance of Citizen Groups

Media accounts have alleged that with the proliferation of NGOs in 1998, funding has been misused, with some NGOs organized mainly for the money. NGOs have also been accused of lacking transparency towards the Indonesian people, and of deliberately keeping their ideological commitment hidden to get more funds. Many other NGOs feel uncomfortable about the situation. Money matters have cast a cloud of doubt on NGOs and damaged the reputation of the NGO movement.

Although many of the Java-based NGOs have branches in provincial centers, these are typically dependent on the head office and lack financial or programmatic autonomy from the Java office. The overall lack of non-Java-based organizations results in an under-representation of non-Java citizens.

Although a full discussion of CSO accountability issue is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to note that the perception of CSO accountability is critical to their capacity to promote social accountability. Public officials are unlikely to respond to an organization that is not representative of a constituency, or one that is not accountable to the beneficiaries of its services. (Beck, Mendel, and Thindwa, 2007)

A study was conducted by FITRA and TAF towards the end of 2010. Titled *Kajian Pengelolaan Anggaran Daerah* (Study on Local Budgeting), it aimed to



EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY ON LOCAL BUDGET

Using research-based advocacy is effective in maximizing the policy advocacy strategies, but partner capacity to conduct budget analysis should be strengthened. Presenting their local budget study (which consists of comprehensive analysis on budgeting processes) and budget analysis help [The Asia] Foundation's partners to dialogue with the senior government officers. Some local governments have responded positively to our partners' recommendations such as in Palangkaraya, East Lombok, Cilacap. As a result, some local regulation was adopted through the use of Local Budget Study's data. However, the partners should improve their capacity for budget analysis to be at par with that of the government. For instance, in Bojonegoro, the Bupati has an expertise in budget analysis. When the PWA presented their findings and recommendations, the Bupati showed another set of data to disprove our partner's data.

The national law No. 14/2008 on freedom of public information pressures the local government to promote the transparent policy. Even though decentralization opens the opportunity for the public to access the policy and information, there are still difficulties in getting information from the government especially when it comes to budget concerns. However, when this law was implemented, many local governments responded rapidly by establishing the information committee. The committee is a room for CSO activist to monitor and get involved in these processes.

*Civil Society Initiatives Against Poverty Project
Lessons Learned documented by The Asia
Foundation (Jakarta)*

assess the performance of 42 city/district governments in five provinces in Indonesia on the budgeting and planning process based on the principles of good governance (namely transparency, participation, accountability and equality). The study highlighted several issues such as the lack of commitment in gender issue mainstreaming, limited spaces for participation in *musrenbang* and the lack of budget commitment following public participation in *musrenbang*. The study, nevertheless, noted some progress in transparency as indicated by the availability of documents on budgeting, better access to the documents, and publication of the documents on the websites.



IS SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY THE ANSWER TO INDONESIA'S WOES?

Transparency and accountability have emerged over the past decade as key ways to address both developmental failures and democratic deficits. Corruption has been suggested as a major contributor to the low growth rates of many developing countries (Mauro, 1995). Therefore, corruption and inefficiency are two target areas for social accountability. In the development context, the argument is that through greater accountability, the “leaky pipes” due to corruption and inefficiency will be repaired, aid will be channelled more effectively, and in turn, development initiatives will produce greater and more visible results. (McGee & Gaventa, 2010).

An alternative approach to reducing corruption, which has gained prominence in recent years, is to increase participation by community members in local-level monitoring. Citizen group participation is now regarded in much of the development community as the key, not only to reduced corruption, but to improved public service delivery. Shanta Devarajan, the World Bank Chief Economist for Africa, believes that social accountability is the answer to these developmental failures:

There is increasingly good evidence that transparency and accountability make a significant difference, that are, in some cases, surprisingly transformational. There is an increasingly impressive collection of individual case studies, rigorously evaluated, which demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach. For example, Jacob Svensson and Martina Björkman conducted a randomized field experiment in Uganda to test the effect of increasing community-based monitoring. They found that when communities more extensively monitored providers, both the quality and quantity of health services improved, including reducing infant mortality by a third. (Devarajan, 2010).

However, Olken’s study (2007) on over 600 road projects in Indonesia found that participation is not always used for purely benevolent purposes and does not always generate positive results. In his study, increasing grassroots participation in monitoring had little average impact, reducing missing expenditures only in situations with limited free-rider problems and



limited elite capture. Overall, he suggested that traditional top-bottom monitoring can play an important role in reducing corruption, even in a highly corrupt environment.

Cases in Uganda and Indonesia have given two different impacts of community participation. Does it mean that transparency and accountability are really having significant influence? What factors affect these? McGee and Gaventa (2010) suggest that it is very difficult to come up with definitive, evidence-based generalizations and that any conclusions on the impact of transparency and accountability must also be located within a broader discussion of the contexts in which these occur.

The following sections will discuss the contexts and development trends in Indonesia that are considered important in assessing the impact of social accountability. This will look at trends on development aid in Indonesia, widening the citizens' sphere of influence, stripping social accountability of its technical nature, and a social accountability roadmap for the country.

Trends on Development Aid Delivery in Indonesia

One of the important factors in assessing the impact of social accountability in Indonesia is the trend of development aid delivery after the donors signed The Jakarta Commitment—a commitment to channel aid through government structure, as an implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. For instance, AusAID's approach to supporting education improvements in Indonesia has evolved in recent years—from contract-managed activities parallel to the Government, to greater alignment with and use of Indonesian systems. The latter will continue to evolve, and Australia's support will be increasingly delivered through country (government) systems. Presently 60% of Australia's education assistance is delivered through Indonesian Government systems. However, it is envisaged that closer to 95% of funding will pass through country systems by 2015. (Nugroho, 2009)

There is a growing tendency for institutional donors' spending mechanism to be channelled through international development companies and multi-donor trust fund (including the United Nations), thereby excluding citizen groups from access and participation and in shaping the policy. In the



Indonesian context, the tendency is towards a growth in the portion of aid to government (and marginalization of CSOs in terms of funding). Within this mechanism, citizen group participation is assumed as the responsibility of the government. The government will manage it through its regular participation mechanisms—described in the preceding chapters as procedural and often resulting to low quality participation.

The Other Costs of Social Accountability

The many benefits of social accountability had been previously documented¹⁷, but studies on the other costs of social accountability have yet to be conducted. If social accountability is considered as a development mechanism and if improving everyone's access to information will strengthen accountability frameworks, consequently, social accountability initiatives will require additional work (which translates to additional cost). While evidence on the benefits of social accountability had been documented, our understanding on the cost of social accountability initiatives is limited.

There are two types of costs of social accountability. The first is cost related to knowledge management, information dissemination, and data analysis—i.e. the operational costs. The second is cost of transparency (political cost). A comparison between the planning process in the PNPM—a multi-donor poverty reduction program—and the planning process in the regular development programs in Indonesia provides a good example of these two types of costs. Planning, monitoring and evaluation processes in PNPM are considered more effective and efficient because it invested a bigger proportion for data management than the regular development program of the government of Indonesia. The PME process in regular development program is considered weaker not only because of less investment for data management, but also because of the reluctance of government staff to take on additional tasks as a consequence of transparency. For example, due to broader participation in a *musrenbang* process in a district in South East Sulawesi, the government was required to conduct other consultation meetings with other citizen groups and it was pressured to revise the planning documents. This caused a bad impact on the “image and popularity” of the Mayor as this plan revealed his hidden agenda



in favor of a crony. The Mayor, then, considered *musrenbang* as a risky development procedure. He later opted to publish the city's plan on local newspapers and called it "transparency".

In addition to the above, possible costs and risks to the government in allowing more spaces for social accountability include:

- Reputational risks arising from the public's access to information about projects which are controversial or which may turn out to be unsuccessful;
- Accountability costs which may increase, if greater transparency leads to closer examination of development programs, resulting in more requests for information and questions about the details of the projects; and
- Data-cleaning costs—some government agencies will want to re-examine information that was collected and recorded for internal use before it is released to the public. (Barder, 2009)

Widening the Citizens' Sphere of Influence

While transparency and accountability aim to inform development policies, one cannot expect these to lead directly to policy formulation on development. There is no direct link between transparency and accountability and development-related policies. This means that, while transparency and accountability actors/facilitators need to justify the social value of their work among the donors and the communities they serve, it is not easy to measure the direct impact of transparency and accountability on their development policies.

Transparency and accountability work can have a significant impact on development policies if it will also work on building the capacity of actors to influence policy makers. Formulation of development policies is a political decision. Hence, it is but fitting to explore ways of bringing political forces (i.e. policymakers and government officials) within the citizens' sphere of influence by enhancing the latter's capacities and improving their credibility and reliability in engaging the former. A case in point is the experience of Forum Pengurangan Resiko Bencana or FPRB (Disaster Risk Reduction Forum) in Yogyakarta, which was able to influence government policies on



disaster risk reduction after it was able to access the right information, process and package it, and present it to the government.

The Merapi case is a fine example of how enhanced capacities of citizens can influence and persuade government officials to honor provisions in national laws warranting civil society participation in crucial processes related to development. It also shows that when policies and decisions are subjected to public inquiry and scrutiny (where citizens are armed with reliable information and documentation), government officials and lawmakers become more open and careful in making decisions.

Stripping Social Accountability of Its Technical Nature

Among various government and non-government organizations in Indonesia, understanding and appreciation of transparency is limited to the

MERAPI ERUPTION: ACCESS TO DATA CHANGED POLICY

From 26th October to 5 November 2010, Yogyakarta province and parts of Central Java province were hit by disaster. Mount Merapi had erupted, causing the death of 300 individuals and damage to infrastructure and agriculture amounting to approximately US\$ 555,000,000. The eruption affected 53,000 households and displaced thousands of families. As part of its response to this disaster, FPRB decided to participate in designing the policies on rehabilitation programs and management, as mandated in the Disaster Management Law.

FPRB assisted the district and province levels in the planning process by supplying data on the damage and recovery needs. To facilitate the proper and effective implementation of rehabilitation and reconstruction programs, FPRB emphasized the importance of involving the civil society in the monitoring and evaluation activities.

On January 5, 2011, BNPB (National Body for Disaster Management) facilitated a meeting to design the Action Plan, with national and local government agencies and FPRB representatives as participants. A debate ensued over the “Decision on the Disaster Status” and the involvement of civil society in the monitoring and evaluation process. BNPB was initially reluctant to involve civil society organizations, but after FPRB invoked the provision in the Disaster Management Bill warranting civil society involvement in planning, monitoring, and evaluation of disaster risk reduction-related (DRR) activities and programs, it was allowed full participation in DRR-related activities. FPRB’s capacity to gather and process data for monitoring and evaluation contributed to this gain.

Saleh Abdullah, Member of FPRB Yogyakarta



presentation of figures and statistics in annual reports usually distributed among a limited audience (e.g. partner institutions, donors, etc.) at the end of each fiscal or calendar year. It would help for these entities to sit down, discuss and arrive at a consensus on what data to publish, how to process and package the information, and what format to use for easier access. This will make information-sharing and benchmarking less-complicated.

Transparency has been generally regarded as a technical term and a jargon among CSOs that has yet to be internalized and substantiated because of lack of understanding and capacity to give flesh to it. Documenting social accountability practices—e.g. gains, benefits, as well as challenges at hand—and cascading these down to the local level can help arouse interest in transparency. The Yogyakarta-based Institute for Research and Empowerment, for instance, has been actively empowering communities and local institutions to engage in social accountability work. Through its endeavors, it has shown that bringing the government closer to the people can be beneficial to society, especially the poor in rural Yogyakarta.

WANTED: A ROADMAP FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN INDONESIA

As its economic and political situation improves and stabilizes, Indonesia is getting more opportunities to explore new approaches to development work and to consolidate the gains made on social accountability implementation. Based on the results of this study, among the basic challenges confronting social accountability implementation in Indonesia are¹⁸:

- A lack of consensus and clarity in the understanding of the term “Social Accountability”, “Transparency”, and “Accountability”, which is an epistemological problem. Among various sectors in Indonesia, social accountability is interpreted as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR);
- The complexity arising from the multiplicity of key players in social accountability work. Each has his/her own outlook, interests, values, mandates, and agenda that greatly shape the outcomes. In addition, decentralization in Indonesia has led to a multi-level structure and has multiplied the layers and number of players in social accountability work;



- Gaps and lack of standards (e.g. methods and tools) for assessing and analyzing the impact (e.g. cost and benefit) of social accountability; and
- Documenting/maintaining data relevant to the development of social accountability over the years to aid the evaluation of social accountability practices.

As earlier mentioned, the enabling conditions for social accountability practice are present in Indonesia, and that a variety of tools and approaches are being utilized by citizen groups. It has been noted, though, that some initiatives are donor-driven and are dictated by the priorities and agenda of funding agencies. For instance, DRR, which is very relevant to Indonesia as a “supermarket of disaster”, has been left out in the development agenda. It might help to incorporate DRR with development programs since it is highly relevant to Indonesia where the majority of the population lives in disaster-prone areas.

Development programs, which are generally developed using a logical framework, are generally concerned with fostering change. It might help to supplement this framework with the social framework which focuses on the human actors within the social change process. Many of the development programs in Indonesia (including social accountability-related initiatives for good governance, anti-corruption, etc.) are not clear on the kinds of change that these intend to achieve, in what way the desired change may be attained, and the assumptions or bases for the actions and interventions. This situation has led to some difficulties in identifying what impact to measure, how to measure it, and what factors influenced it.

There is a large number of social accountability initiatives implemented by the government (through legislations), the citizen groups (through programs funded by donors or through internal resources), and the private sector (through abidance with good governance principles). Outcomes of these, however, are measured in terms of efficiency and effectiveness of implementation rather than in terms of relevance to developmental and democratic empowerment. A social accountability roadmap will help consolidate these initiatives and identify a common direction for social accountability practice in Indonesia.



LIST OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACTORS IN INDONESIA

No.	Partner Name	Scope of Work and Contact Information	Focus of Work
1	Bandung Institute of Government Studies (BIGS)	Jl. Kidang Pananjung No.5C, Bandung 40135 E-mail: bigs@bdg.centrin.co.id Website: www.bigs.co.id	Budget transparency, Public service accountability, Legal reform to promote public participation in budgeting planning.
2	Civic Education and Budget Transparency (CIBA)	e-mail: ciba_yti@yahoo.com Jl. Kebagusan Dalam I no.56 Pasar Minggu	Budgetary advocacy.
3	Forum Warga Kota Jakarta (FAKTA)	Jalan Pancawarga IV No 44 RT 003/07 Cipinang Muara (Belakang Gudang Seng - Kalimalang) Kode Pos : 13420 Telepon : +62-21-856-9008 Fax : +62-21-856-9008 e-mail: faktajakarta@yahoo.com	Advocacy for participative public policy, urban-poor community organizing for participation in budgeting, planning and evaluation of policy implementation.
5	Seknas FITRA	Jl. Kalibata Utara II No.34 RT. 011 RW. 002 Kel. Kalibata, Kec. Pancoran Jakarta Selatan 12670, Po Box 7244 Phone: 6221-7947608 Fax: 6221-7947608 e-mail: seknas_fitra@yahoo.com website: www.seknasfitra.org	Budget study and analysis, budgetary advocacy, provision of training for grass roots communities in budget analysis.
6	FITRA North Sulawesi	Jl. Arief Rahman Hakim, Gg.Sukmawati No.1A Medan 20217 Phone/Fax: 061-7340303 e-mail: fitra_su@inde.net.id	Budgetary analysis, pro-poor advocacy budget, transparency and accountability.
7	Indonesian Corruption Watch (ICW)	Jl. Kalibata Timur IV/D No. 6 Jakarta Selatan, Indonesia Phone : +62 - 21 - 7901 885, 7994 015 Fax : +62 - 21 - 7994 005 e-mail: icwmail@indosat.net.id website: www.antikorupsi.org	Anti-corruption campaign and advocacy.
8	Lakpesdam NU	Jl H. Ramli No. 20A Menteng Dalam, Tebet, Jakarta Selatan, 12870, Telp: 021-8298855 Faks: 021 8354925 e-mail: lakpesdam@cbn.net.id website: www.lakpesdam.or.id	An umbrella organization of 17 provincial chapters and 75 regional chapters. The chapters are involved in participatory planning, government monitoring through deliberation.



List of Social Accountability... (cont'd.)

No.	Partner Name	Scope of Work and Contact Information	Focus of Work
9	Smeru	Jl. Cikini Raya No. 10A Jakarta 10330 Indonesia Ph: (62-21) 3193 6336 Fax: (62-21) 3193 0850 e-mail: smeru@smeru.co.id website: www.smeru.or.id	Research on governance, poverty, gender, government policy implementation.
10	Pattiro	Jl. Tebet Timur Dalam VIII No.39. Tebet. Jakarta Selatan 12820 Telp: (021) 8379 0541, 7098 6724 Fax: (021) 829 4691 e-mail: pattiro@yahoo.com, pattiro@cbn.net.id website: www.pattiro.org	Gender budgeting, participatory budgeting.
11	Women Research Institute (WRI)	Jl.Kalibata Utara II No.25A RT. 016 RW.02 Jakarta Selatan 12740 DKI Jakarta Ph: 021 - 799.5670; 798.7345 Fax: 021 - 7987345 e-mail: womenresearch@cbn.net.id	Research on gender budget implementation, advocacy on gender budget.
12	Kopel (Komite Pemantau Legislatif)	Address: Jl. Batua Raya 9 No.3 Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan Email: kopelmakassar@yahoo.com Website: www.kopel_online.com	Government and parliamentary monitoring, political education for communities,
13	KPPA (Komunitas Peduli Perempuan dan Anak) Sulawesi Tengah	Jl. Cemara VI. No.6 Kelurahan Donggala Kodi Kecamatan Palu Barat, Palu Sulawesi Tengah. Telephone/ Fax: (0451) 461088 Email: kppasulteng@gmail.com	Advocacy for victims of violence, women, and children; monitoring and advocacy of women and children responsive policy and budget.
14	LP2G (Lembaga Pengkajian Pembangunan Gorontalo)	Kompleks Perum PLN Kelurahan Dulalowo Kec. Kota Tengah Location: Jl. Makassar NO. 24, Gorontalo, Indonesia Email: lp2g_gorontalo@ymail.co.id	Good governance, water and coral management, children protection.
15	Lembaga Pemberdayaan Perempuan (LPP) Bone	BTN Soddangnge Jln. Andi Malla No.4 Kel. Biru Kec. Tanete Riattang Kabupaten Bone Sulawesi Selatan e-mail: asia_bone@yahoo.com	Advocacy on women, children, marginalized group related policy; capacity building for marginalized groups.
16	Pilar Nusantara (Pinus) Sulawesi Selatan	Jl. Hestaning Raya No. 38 Makassar Sulawesi Selatan e-mail: pinus.sulsel@gmail.com	Advocacy of public policies
17	Institute for Community Justice, Makassar	Jl. Topaz Raya Ruko Zamrud Blok G/12 Makassar e-mail: icj_mksr@yahoo.co.id	Legal reform towards gender, local community responsive regulations



List of Social Accountability... (cont'd.)

No.	Partner Name	Scope of Work and Contact Information	Focus of Work
18	Swadaya Mitra Bangsa (YASMIB)	Jl. Tamalate IV No. 9 Makassar 90222 – Sulawesi Selatan Telp. (0411) 883 427 Fax . (0411) 883 427 Jl. Andi Latanratu No. 175 Takatidung 91313 – Polman, Sulawesi Barat Telp. (0428) 22546 Fax. (0428) 22546	Budget analysis and advocacy
19	Women Institute Research and Empowerment of Gorontalo (WIRE-G)	Jl. Rajawali No.77 Kota Timur Kota Gorontalo Email:wire.gto@gmail.com	Research on women, women’s education and advocacy



LIST OF LOCAL-LEVEL PARTNERS

No.	Partner Name	Partner's Base	Sites Supported
1	Center for Socio-Cultural and Economic Studies (PKSBE)	Padang - West Sumatera	Kota Padang, Kota Padang Panjang
2	The Maarif Institute for Culture and Humanity (Maarif Institute)	Jakarta Jl. Tebet Barat Dalam II No.06 Tebet, Jakarta Selatan 12810 Phone : +62-21-83794554 Facsimile : +62-21-83795758 email : maarif@maarifinstitute.org Alamat e-mail ini dilindungi dari spambot, anda harus memampukan JavaScript untuk melihatnya web : www.maarifinstitute.org	Kota Bandar Lampung, Sleman
3	Nahdlatul Ulama's Institute for Human Resource Studies and Development (PP Lakpesdam NU)	Jakarta Jl H. Ramli No. 20A Menteng Dalam, Tebet, Jakarta Selatan, 12870, Telp: 021-8298855 Faks: 021 8354925 e-mail: lakpesdam@cbn.net.id website: www.lakpesdam.or.id	Cilacap, Kota Surabaya, East Java Province
4	Pilar Nusantara (PINUS)	Bandung - West Java	Garut, South Sumatera Province
5	Sanggar Bandung	Bandung - West Java	Sumedang
5	Labda Yogyakarta	Yogyakarta	Kota Palangka Raya
6	Center for Regional Study and Analysis (PATTIRO), Semarang	Semarang - Central Java Jl. Wonodri Joho II no.986G Kelurahan Wonodri Semarang 50242 Jawa Tengah Ph: 024-8441357 Fax: 024-8441357 E-mail: pattiro_semarang@yahoo.group	Kota Semarang, Kota Blitar, West Java Province
7	Center for Regional Study and Analysis (PATTIRO), Pekalongan	Pekalongan - Central Java Jl. Parang Garuda III No 1 Perum Medono Indah Pekalongan, Jateng Telp.: (0285) 4415868, 7910277 E- mail: pattiro_pkl@yahoo.com	Kota Pekalongan, Kota Surakarta, Central Java Province
8	Bina Swagiri Foundation (Fitra Jatim)	Tuban - East Java	Serdang Bedagai, Situbondo
9	Aisyiyah, East Java Chapter (PW Aisyiyah Jawa Timur)	Surabaya - East Java	Bojonegoro



THE ASIA FOUNDATION'S PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS ON CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES AGAINST POVERTY PROGRAM

NATIONAL-LEVEL PARTNERS

No.	Partner Name	Partner's Base	Scope of Work
1	Center for the Study of Islam and Society, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (PPIM UIN)	Jakarta Jl. Kertamukti No. 5 Pisangan Barat, Ciputat 15419, Jakarta Indonesia Telp. +62 21 742 3543, 749 9272 Faks. +62 21 740 8633 Email. admin@ppim.or.id Web: www.ppim.or.id	Provide a national survey on Mass Based Organizations (MBOs)
2	Civil Society Alliance for Democracy (YAPPIKA)	Jakarta Jl. Pedati Raya 20 RT007/RW09 Jakarta 13350 DKI Jakarta Ph: 021-8191623 Fax: 021-8900670;85905262 E-mail: yappika@indosat.net.id Web: www.yappika.or.id	Organizational capacity assessment of the civil society partners implementing pro-budget advocacy.
3	Institute for Innovation and Participatory Development (INISIATIF)	Bandung - West Java Jl.Guntur Sari IV no.16 Bandung 40264 Jawa Barat Ph: 022-7309987 Fax: 022-7309987 E-mail: inisiatif@bdg.centrin.net.id Web: www.inisiatifbandung.org	Provide technical assistance and trainings to improve the capacity of budget advocacy organizations. Develop modules on health financing at the local level.
4	National Secretariat of Indonesia Forum for Budget Transparency (Seknas FITRA)	Jakarta Jl. Kalibata Utara II NO. 34 RT. 011 RW. 002 Kelurahan Kalibata, Pancoran Jakarta Selatan DKI Jakarta Ph: 021-797608; 08159590511 Fax: 021-797608 E-mail: sekretariat@seknasfitra.org Web: www.seknasfitra.org	Conduct a Local Budget Study to analyze local government allocations from a pro-poor perspective in 42 districts.



Local-Level Partners... (cont'd.)

No.	Partner Name	Partner's Base	Sites Supported
10	Gorontalo Development Analysis Institute (LP2G)	Gorontalo	Kota Gorontalo, North Gorontalo
11	Community and Economic Development Study Foundation (YLP2EM)	Parepare - South Sulawesi	Sidrap, Wajo
12	Humanity Study Institute (LenSA)	Mataram - West Nusa Tenggara	West Lombok, East Lombok, West Sumbawa, Dompu, West Nusa Tenggara Province



LIST OF LOCAL BUDGET ADVOCACY CENTERS

No.	Name of Budget Centers	Members	Site
1	Salam Center	NU, Muhammadiyah, BITRA and other NGOs	Serdang Bedagai
2	Community for West Sumatra Development (Masyarakat Peduli Pembangunan Sumatra Barat – MaPP)	Muhammadiyah, NU, MUI Indonesia Churches Association (PGI), IMM, HMI, GMNI	West Sumatra Province
3	Forum Bahtera Serambi (FORBAS)	Muhammadiyah, Aisyiah, Pemuda Muhammadiyah, Naswiatul Aisyiah dan Tarbiyah	Kota Padang Panjang
4	MITRA Center	Muhammadiyah dan Tarbiyah Islamiyah, Perwati, Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, Komhamda, Muslimat NU, KPI Sumbar	Kota Padang
5	Community Discussion Forum (Forum Rembug Warga)	Muhammadiyah, Pemuda Muhammadiyah, NA, IRM, IPM, PPKL, Jaringan Perempuan Pesisir (JPRP)	Kota Bandar Lampung
6	Forum for Poverty Eradication (Forum Musyawarah untuk Pengentasan Kemiskinan – Forum MUSTAKIM)	NU, Muhammadiyah, Pilar Nusantara Palembang	South Sumatra Province
7	Forum Dumai Madani	NU and Muhammadiyah network, academics from Universitas Riau	Kota Dumai
8	Majelis Masyarakat Madani Ogan Ilir	NU and Muhammadiyah networks, Pesantrens	Ogan Ilir
9	Budget Advocacy Working Group (Pokja Advokasi Anggaran)	PUI, Matlaul Anwar, NU, Muhammadiyah, Persis, NU	West Java Province
10	Garut Community for Local Budget (Masyarakat Peduli Anggaran Garut – MAPAG)	MUI, NU, Muhammadiyah, Persis, BKSWI, Futuwah, Shafat, Hamida, Sarekat Islam, SII, Riyadul Alfiyah, Garut Governance Watch, Pilar Nusantara Garut, LSG	Garut
11	Health-Care Forum (Forum Peduli Kesehatan – FPK)	Lakpesdam, IPNU, IPPNU, Marif, Aisyiyah, ANSOR, LSM Sumedang Sehat Sejahtera, Pemuda Muhammadiyah, Saliimah, P3ML, BKSG, BKSPPI	Sumedang
12	Committee for the City’s Budget (Komite Masyarakat Peduli Anggaran Kota-KOMPAK)	PC NU, PC Lakpesdam, IPNU, Muslimat	Kota Banjar
13	Presidium Anggaran	MUI, PD, Muhammadiyah, PC NU	Cilacap
14	Community Forum for Pekalongan (Forum Masyarakat Peduli Pekalongan - FORMAP)	NU, Muhammadiyah, other Muslim MBOs, CSOs, press, individual	Kota Pekalongan



List of Local-Level Budget Advocacy Centers (continued)

No.	Name of Budget Centers	Members	Site
15	Moslem Forum for Budget-Care (Forum Umat Islam Peduli Anggaran - FORMIPA)	Coalition of various MBOs	Kota Semarang
16	Tim 9	Nahdlatul Ulama City of Semarang Branch	Kota Semarang
17	SALIMAH Center	Woman wing of Welfare Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera)	Kota Semarang
18	Nahdlatul Ulama Surakarta Study and Network Forum (Forum Studi dan Silaturahmi NU Surakarta - FOSMINSIA)	Muslimat, Fatayat, Anshor, IPPNU, IPNU, PMII, NU Sub district chapters	Kota Surakarta
19	NU Working Group on Public Policy Transparency (Pokja Pemberdayaan Umat untuk Transparansi Kebijakan – Pokja PUTK PWNU)	Lakpesdam, Fatayat, Muslimat, IPPNU, Lembaga Bahtsul Masail, Lembaga Pertanian, Lembaga Kesehatan, PC NU	Province of Central Java
20	Coalition for People-based Budget Advocacy	Pattiro, NU	Province of Central Java
21	Forum Ki Semar	Muhammadiyah, NA, Aisyiyah, Pemuda Muhammadiyah, IRM	Sleman
22	Sleman Youth Association (Himpunan Pemuda Sleman – HIMDA)	Pemuda Ansor, Pemuda Muhammadiyah, KNPI, Karang Taruna	Sleman
23	Kaum Jagad Bersinar	Coalition between NU and Muhammadiyah	Kota Blitar
24	Forum M-PATI	PD Muhammadiyah, NA, Aisyiyah, Pemuda Muhammadiyah	Bojonegoro
25	Nahdliyin Society Center	PC NU, Anshor, Fatayat, Muslimat, PMII, IPPNU, Partai Demokrat	Kota Surabaya
26	Citizen Forum – (Forum Warga)	Muslimat, Fatayat, Aisyiyah, IPPNU, IPNU, LP2KP, LPSM	Bondowoso
27	Forum for Budget Transparency (Forum Situbondo untuk Transparansi Anggaran – FOSTRA)	PC NU, Muslimat NU, Fatayat NU, Muhammadiyah, Aisyiyah, Fitra Jatim, CENTRIS	Situbondo
28	Nahdliyin Forum for Budget Care (Forum Nahdliyin Peduli Anggaran – FNPA)	Lakpesdam, Fatayat, IPNU, IPPNU	Province of East Java
29	People Aspiration Forum (Forum Aspirasi Umat-FAU)	MUI, NU, Fatayat NU, Muslimat NU, Pemuda Ansor, Muhammadiyah, Aisyiyah, Pemuda Muhammadiyah, HMI, PMII	Kota Pontianak
30	Budget-Care Communication Forum (Forum Komunikasi Peduli Anggaran – FKPA)	PC NU, PWNU, IPPNU, Fatayat NU, Ibtihadul Mubalighin, Pemuda Muhammadiyah, Mosque Council, Nasyiatul Asyiah, Hidayatullah, HMI, PMII, An Nur Foundation, Darul Amin	Kota Palangka Raya



List of Local-Level Budget Advocacy Centers (continued)

No.	Name of Budget Centers	Members	Site
31	Babussalam Center	NU, Muhammadiyah, Syarikat Islam, Pemuda Ansyor, NA, Pemuda Muhammadiyah, Musloimat NU, Al Khairat, Forum Komunikasi Dakwah Remaja, IRM, IPPNU, Idealis	North Gorontalo
32	SYALOM Center	Pantekosta Churches, Protestan Churches, Catholic Churches, Advent Churches	North Gorontalo
33	PERSIS Center	Persatuan Islam	Kota Gorontalo
34	Forum for the Poor (Forum Peduli Mustada'fin)	Dewan Dakwah Islam, PCNU, Fatayat, Remaja Masjid (BKPRMI), KAHMI, PD Muhammadiyah, Pemuda Muhammadiyah, Nasyatul Aisiyah, Ikatan Pelajar Muhammadiyah, KNPI, Gerakan Sidrap Membangun (GSM)	Sidrap
35	Forum AlMaun	PD Muhammadiyah, Aisiyah, Pemuda Muhammadiyah, Ikatan Pelajar Muhammadiyah, As'adiyah	Wajo
36	Budget Care Council (Dewan Peduli Anggaran-DPA)	NU, Muhammadiyah, MUI, Pesantren Salman Pemuda Ansor, IRM, women activist, Lensa, informal leaders,	Kota Dompu
37	Budget Care Forum (Majelis Peduli Anggaran)	NU, NW, Muhammadiyah, Muslimat NU, Muslimat NW, Aisiyah, Pesantrens Association for Anti Corruption (APPGAK), Pesantrens Forum (FKSPP)	West Lombok
38	Budget-Care Council (Dewan Peduli Anggaran – DPA)	NU, Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Waton	Central Lombok
39	Budget Care MBO Forum (Forum Ormas Peduli Anggaran-FORPA)	Muhammadiyah, NU, Muhajirin, Quwwatussidiqin, NW, Maraqitta'limat, Hidayatullah, Al Ma'arif Pesantren	East Lombok
40	Muhammadiyah Center	PDM, Youth and womens' wings of Muhammadiyah	West Sumbawa
41	Nahdliyin Committee on Budget Care (Komunitas Nahdliyin Peduli Anggaran – KNPA)	PP Lakpesdam, Fatayat, PMII, IPNU, IPPNU	National Level



LOCAL BUDGET STUDY

In 2010, FITRA, supported by The Asia Foundation, conducted a study that aimed to observe the performance of local government in budgeting based on the principles of good governance, i.e. transparency, accountability, participation and gender responsiveness. In doing so, the study assessed four stages in budgeting cycle, namely: budget planning, discussion, implementation as well as accountability.

The study was conducted in 42 districts and cities in 5 provinces in Indonesia from September 2010 to January 2011. The evaluation of local government's performance in budgeting was conducted by assigning index measurement, which ranged from 1 to 100. With the help of the index value, the study categorized the performance into very good, good, average and less than average. The index value was determined by studying 21 compulsory documents made in planning and budgeting. Interviews and FGDs were also conducted to verify the judgment.

To assess the performance of local government in promoting and applying transparency principles, the study investigated three main issues: 1) the availability of planning and budgeting documents, 2) the institutionalization of information provision by the government, and 3) the degree of government's openness in managing the budget. The study found that most of the regions that were assessed were transparent enough that they provided planning and budgeting documents requested by community members, both through formal and informal means (e.g. websites). From the 885 documents requested during the research period, 65% were available, while around 35% were withheld by the government. Documents were normally given in less than 17 days after the request. This study referred to the provisions of Law No. 14/2008 on Information Disclosure, which compelled government institutions to provide documents requested by the public in 17 working days at the most; it was found out that the government was faithful to this provision. Documents on budget planning were mostly available and open to the public, while those on implementation, deliberation and accountability were difficult to access. Furthermore, most



local governments have yet to establish special units to handle information dissemination to the public and formulate operational procedures on information dissemination. Interestingly, the study also noted that regions outside Java gave freer access to information than their Java counterparts, providing documents that were usually withheld by the Java-based offices.

Despite the issuance of laws on public participation in budgeting and planning process, the rate of participation in the studied regions remains to be poor. Most regions were not innovative enough in creating alternatives more suited to local contexts (other than the existing Musrenbang). Musrenbang itself had a limited number of participants, whose ideas were, oftentimes, ignored. The degree of participation in the budget planning stage was generally better than in stages of the budget cycle. Women and other marginalized sectors were given minimal opportunity for participation in the planning.

In some regions, the government had established special units to receive complaints from the citizens and set up a complaints database system to speed up response to concerns. Some mechanisms, though, have yet to be out in place. Another good practice that was observed was to timely submission of budget documents to the parliament for as aids for the discussion. This enhances participation in the succeeding stages of the budget cycle (e.g. budget implementation). Although some local governments had no integrated system for procurement, most had instituted a procurement scheme before holding public biddings (commonly conducted in public). Some of the local governments had set up an online bidding system, which may be considered as a step towards the prevention of corruption. Unfortunately, most of the local governments had yet to publish the list of blacklisted companies with poor track record in procurement, as mandated by Presidential Regulation No. 54/2010.

The study, likewise, suggests that planning and budgeting in most regions in Indonesia are not yet gender responsive despite the existence of a law related to it. Spaces provided for women participation is limited to members of women's organizations, women activists, and women from the academe. In addition, only 60% of the sample local government units had established special units for gender mainstreaming. Among these, only five had formed gender-responsive budgeting units that have not been functioning effectively



since gender-based analysis was not considered in the problem analysis. In addition, the number of women holding top official positions in most of the regions was less than 20% of the total (number of officials in the regions).

The study concluded that most regions in Indonesia had not implemented the principles of good governance fully. Their performances were categorized as 'average' according to the index value set up for this study. In addition, there was no significant difference in the performance between cities and districts as well as between Java and non-Java regions. Considering its results, the study posted several recommendations for the national and local governments and for citizen groups to consider. These include: a) building the capacity of district/city government in actualizing good governance principles by encouraging inter-district/city learning; b) establishing units to evaluate the efficiency of the district/city governments in providing information; c) providing more spaces for public participation; d) establishing local accountability agencies to ensure government accountability; and e) paying close attention to every budgeting cycle and providing easy-to-understand and easy-to-access information to the public related to the budget cycle.



ENDNOTES

¹ A prominent writer, candidate for Nobel Prize in Literature whose writings represent the socialist perspective. In the beginning of the New Order Era, Pramodya Ananta Toer was exiled to Buru Island due to his association with Indonesian Communist Party.

² Saich, Dapice, Masoud, Perkins, Pincus, Rosengard, Valley, Wilkinson, and Williams, (2010).

³ Ibid.

⁴ The study was coordinated by Seknas-FITRA and implemented by 28 local CSOs in 42 districts/municipalities and five provinces in Indonesia in 2010-2011.

⁵ Personal communication with Kristanto Sinandang, Head of Crisis Prevention Unit, UNDP Indonesia on 29 November 2010.

⁶ The so-called “Gayus-gate” dominated the headlines of the Indonesian mass media in 2010. As a low level tax officer with a monthly salary of US\$1,200, Gayus had US\$11 million in his bank account. In the court he admitted that he received the money from some companies as compensation for his “kindness” in helping them reduce their tax. This case has opened eyes of the public to the fact that the revenue side needs also “accountability”. In the past, focus was more on the use of public funds.

⁷ Compare with Malena, Forster, and Singh (2004): “Social Accountability can be defined as an approach towards building accountability that relies on civic engagement, i.e. in which it is ordinary citizens and/or civil society organizations who participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability. Mechanisms of social accountability can be initiated and supported by the state, citizens or both, but very often they are demand-driven and operate from the bottom-up. Social accountability mechanisms are sometimes referred to as “external” or “vertical” mechanisms of accountability.” (p. 3)

⁸ The data in this table is not intended to represent the general perception of government and non-government agencies’ understanding of social accountability. The data in this table contains findings from a series of semi-structured interviews with a number of government officials and NGO leaders conducted for this study.

⁹ YPSHK or Foundation of Development Study for Law and Policies was founded on July 21, 2001 and incorporated on October 18, 2002. The organization cooperates with CSOs toward community development, with emphasis on respect for human rights, law and pluralism. Retrieved from <http://www.ansa-eap.net/networking/geographic-focus/east-indonesia-conveners-group-indonesia/country-partners/yayasan-pengembangan-study-hukum-kebijakan-yphsk/>

¹⁰ Information from this section was collected from The Asia Foundation project “Building Better Budgets for Gender Responsive Governance” in 2009.



¹¹ Compare with the conceptual framework of civil society by Heinrich (2005) and Chandoke (2005).

¹² Interview with FITRA staff, 22 December 2010. Pattiro staff, in a separate interview, also related a similar experience.

¹³ Activities with Moslem MBOS expand the Muslim leaders' understanding of the budgetary processes (budget literacy training), thereby providing opportunities for pro-poor policy advocacy. The second module, PP Lakpesdam NU guided the Moslem leaders on how to conduct *bathsul masail*, a forum of Islamic leaders (*kyai*) that discusses social problems from an Islamic perspective. .

¹⁴ WALHI (Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia, or The Indonesian Forum for Environment) is an Indonesian environmental non-governmental organization, which is part of the Friends of the Earth network. It describes itself as "Indonesia's largest environmental NGO," and its scope is broader than just environmental concerns: "It stands for social transformation, people's sovereignty, and sustainability of life and livelihoods." Retrieved from <http://www.eng.walhi.or.id/ttgkami/>

¹⁵ The Indonesian Ombudsman recorded that in 2010, they received 5942 complaints. The figure is low when measured against the Indonesian population of 237.6 million (www.ombudsman.go.id).

¹⁶ National Program for Community Empowerment.

¹⁷ McGee and Gaventia (2010) listed the benefits as follows: (1) increased state or institutional responsiveness; (2) lowering of corruption; (3) building new democratic spaces for citizen engagement; (4) empowering local voices; and (5) better budget utilization and better delivery of services.

¹⁸ This categorization was adopted from Talisayon's "Monitoring and Evaluation in Knowledge Management for Development" (2009).

¹⁹ An example of a PNPM program that works in more than 15,000 villages of more than 450 districts.



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Social accountability
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Partner-Researchers:

Mapping Research Team
Independent Research Institute of Mongolia (IRIM)
301, 'Internom' bldg, Prime Minister Amar's Street
Suhkbaatar District
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
www.irim.mn, telephone +976-70117101

Partnership for Social Accountability in Mongolia (PSAM)
Democracy Education Center (DEMO)
Aprt. #1, Baga Toiruu 44, Sukhbaatar District, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

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For more information, please contact:

ANSA-EAP Operations Team
Ateneo School of Government, Pacifico Ortiz Hall, Fr. Arrupe Road
Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City 1108
Republic of the Philippines
Telephones: +6 32 426-6062 and +6 32 426-6002 ext 4627. Fax: +6 32 920-2920. E
-mail: info@ansa-eap.net
Website: www.ansa-eap.net

MAPPING RESEARCH TEAM

Team Leader	ARIUNTUNGALAG Munkhtuvshin Executive Director Independent Research Institute of Mongolia
Researchers	BAYARTSETSEG MA, Researcher of Center for Social Responsibilities Lecturer, Department of Politics and Sociology Mongolian State University of Education ODGEREL Tserendorj Director of “Infratest” Research and Development Center Lecturer, Department of Politics and Sociology Mongolian State University of Education ODONCHIMEG Tsevegmid Researcher, Independent Research Institute of Mongolia MOILTMAA Sarantuya Researcher, Independent Research Institute of Mongolia SARANGEREL Lhamsuren, MA “Infratest” Research and Development Center, Lecturer, Department of Politics and Sociology Mongolian State University of Education TUMENDELGER Sengedorj, PhD Director of Center for Social Responsibilities, Lecturer, Department of Politics and Sociology Mongolian State University of Education
Advisor	BOLD Tsevegдорж, MA Lecturer, Sociology and Social Work Department National University of Mongolia
Translator	GANKHUYAG Demid

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ANSA-EAP	Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CBO	Community-based organization
CSC/CSC-NGO	Civil Society Council of Non-Government Organizations
CSO	Civil society organization
CSR	Center for Social Responsibility
DEMO	Democracy Education Center
FGD	Focus group discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IPO	Informal people's organization
IRIM	Independent Research Institute of Mongolia
MCG	Mongolia Conveners Group
MNT	Mongolian Tugrik (currency)
MP	Member of Parliament
MPRP	Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party
NGO	Non-government organization
OSF	Open Society Forum
PSAM	Partnership for Social Accountability in Mongolia
PWYPE	Publish What You Pay and Earn
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

GLOSSARY OF MONGOLIAN TERMS

<i>Aimag</i>	Province; the name <i>aimag</i> is derived from the Mongolian and Turkic languages word for “tribe”
<i>Soum</i>	A second level administrative subdivision of Mongolia; translated as “district”
<i>Bag</i>	An administrative subdivision of a <i>soum</i> . Most <i>bags</i> are of an entirely virtual nature. Their purpose is to sort the families of nomads in the <i>soum</i> into groups, without a permanent human settlement.
<i>Khoroo</i>	An administrative subdivision of Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia. The term is often translated as subdistrict or microdistrict
<i>Khural</i>	Legislative assembly
<i>Khot ail</i>	The basic unit of nomadic Mongolian life is the herding camp, generally composed of two to 12 households.

PREFACE

The Partnership for Social Accountability in Mongolia (PSAM), a network of civil society organizations, was founded in November 2009. Its mission is to promote the exchange of social accountability knowledge and experiences in Mongolian civil society through information sharing. PSAM was also established to facilitate efforts toward capacity building in partnership with the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP).

To better understand the state of social accountability in Mongolia, it was important to map out how institutions and individuals understood and practiced social accountability. The study focused on the two key actors of social accountability, the government and citizen groups.

For a clearer focus on how social accountability is understood and practiced in Mongolia, the research team utilized ANSA-EAP's "Four Pillars of Social Accountability" framework. These four pillars, or enabling conditions for social accountability, are (a) government responsiveness, (b) organized and capable citizen groups, (c) access to information, and (d) social and cultural appropriateness.

Three research organizations affiliated with PSAM conducted the study between May and August of 2010. The Center for Social Responsibility (CSR) worked on the section on "government responsiveness", while the Infratest Research and Training Institute focused on "organized and capable citizen groups". The Independent Research Institute of Mongolia (IRIM) was responsible for the sections on "access to information" and "social and cultural appropriateness".

The research team gratefully acknowledges the guidance of ANSA-EAP, especially Dr. Angelita Gregorio-Medel, Project Director; Adelfo V. Briones,



Research and Knowledge Management Coordinator, and Cody S. Rabe, Research Officer.

The team likewise extends its special gratitude to the members of PSAM who contributed their valuable comments and recommendations.

Finally, the team would like to thank all the participants and respondents from civil society organizations, government agencies, experts from donor organizations and others. Without their collaboration and contribution, this study would not have been possible.

— *Mapping Research Team*



OPENING THE SPACE FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN MONGOLIA

Despite the rapid economic growth in the last few years, poverty remains a major problem in Mongolia. According to the Poverty Assessment Study done in 2003-2004, around 36% of the population lived below the poverty line. The Poverty Measurement Survey conducted in 2005-2009 showed that more than three out of ten Mongolians live below the poverty line (National Statistical Office of Mongolia, 2010).¹ Conversely, the per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2005-2009 increased 2.11 times.² Clearly, despite the steady increase in the GDP, it has not had a positive impact on the government's poverty alleviation efforts.

The increase of the GDP has been attributed to the boom in the extractive industries (popularly known as the mining sector) in Mongolia in recent years. Investment agreements have been made in strategically important large-scale mineral deposits throughout the country. This boom has resulted in the steady increase of revenues for the government. It appears, however, that the windfall from the mining boom has not trickled down to the majority of Mongolians in the form of services and benefits.

While exploration and utilization of natural resources has led to an increase in public revenues, the quality of basic services has not improved. Citizen participation in government decision-making processes is, for the most part, absent. The need for an active citizenry in Mongolia is now being felt more than ever, whether this emanates from individual citizens or from organized citizen groups, to conduct oversight and monitoring activities of where and how public revenues are being spent. As a result, the demand

for accountability mechanisms has increased not only within government (supply-side) but also from the citizens (demand-side).

With the current trend towards exploring and developing strategically important natural resources, it is crucial to map out the existing social accountability environment in Mongolia. This is premised by the assumption that the practice of social accountability will play an important role in the process of development leading towards poverty reduction. As it is, a number of civil society organizations in Mongolia are now in the process of network- and partnership-building, a crucial step in consolidating the forces that help drive social accountability.

This study was conducted in partnership with ANSA-EAP. An added value to the Mongolian study is the formulation of the Levels of Relations in Social Accountability Framework, developed by the Mongolian Research Team, to complement ANSA-EAP's Four Pillars of Social Accountability framework.

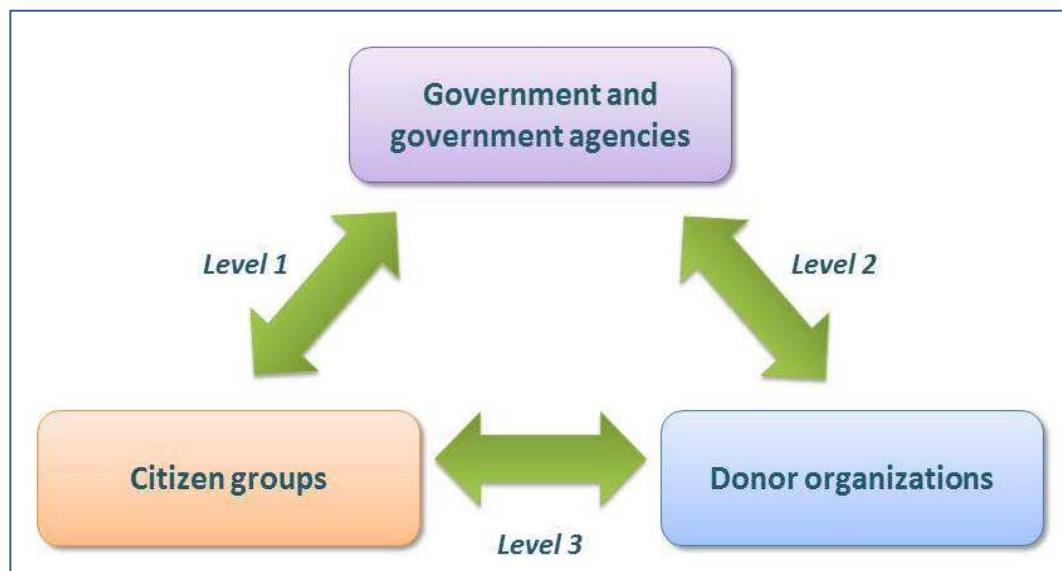
UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY RELATIONSHIPS

By its nature, social accountability involves relationships. This is precisely the reason why the “engagement” in “constructive engagement” is “social”—it revolves around the interface and dynamics between and among the demand-side and supply-side of governance as they engage one another towards specific governance outcomes. Figure 2 illustrates the social accountability relationship.

Government and Citizen Groups

Government vis-à-vis citizen group relationship/engagement refers to the day-to-day operational engagement. The instruments of government engagement with citizen groups at this level include (1) legal regulations, policy and program documents, and cooperative agreements; and (2) official government websites. Citizen groups engage government through the following instrumentalities: (1) legally-established rules and regulations, cooperative agreements, and contracts; (2) demands, requests, notices, and declarations expressing opinions on certain issues; and (3) official government websites.

Figure 1. The levels of social relations of key actors of social accountability. (Source: Authors)



To get an indication of the degree of engagement under Level I, the researchers ran a qualitative survey that covered the following:

- Document review of legal, policy, and program documents on certain issues, as well as agreements for cooperation between stakeholders on specific common concerns. (Sample questions: What are the issues in existing policy and program coordination regarding social accountability? When and for what purpose were these adopted and approved? What kinds of legal regulations are included in these documents? To what extent do policy and programs link or integrate social accountability goals and objectives? Etc.)
- Content analysis of government websites established purportedly to enable public access to information; and
- Document review and analysis of impacts and outcomes (if any) of citizen group activities including demands, requests, notes, and declarations addressed to government agencies, as well as final results of agreements for cooperation and contracts between stakeholders. (Sample questions: How many demands, requests, and notifications have citizen groups submitted to government agencies and officers? How many were given attention? How were they resolved? What was the impact or outcome? Etc.)

Government, Citizen Groups, Donor Agencies

The instruments of engagement between government and donor organizations include: (1) legal regulations and forms of coordination; (2) policy and program documents on specific issues; and (3) cooperation in various areas of concern.

Donor organizations, for their part, engage the government and its agencies through tools such as legal regulations and coordination; policy and program documents on specific issues; and demands, requests, and notes expressing opinions on various issues. For the engagement between donor organizations and citizen groups, the main instrument is often the form of programs and projects in various areas.

To get an indication of variations in the degree of engagement at this level, the researchers conducted an analysis of the legal and policy environment using the following strategies:

- Interviews with officials of international donor agencies who have indicated interest in the area of social accountability. (Sample questions: What is your assessment of the current situation of social accountability in Mongolia? What factors contribute to the current situation? What is your assessment of the capacity of citizen groups to engage government? What is the state of the policy and regulatory environment, and how may it be improved? Etc.).
- Initial profiling of citizen groups perceived to be working in the area of social accountability: membership; goals and objectives; types of activities; capacity (financial and human resources); experience (previous work and projects, impacts and outcomes, lessons); challenges; etc.
- Creation of a database of citizen groups and other stakeholders: membership, contact information, goals and objectives, key activity directions, operations, etc.

EXPLORING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN MONGOLIA

The study focused on three priority areas where social accountability is thought to be at its most active and where its impact can be seen from the perspective of governance and development outcomes. These areas are (1)

Table 1. Government agencies and websites included in this study.

GOVERNMENT AGENCY, PROVINCE, DISTRICT	URL/WEBSITE ADDRESS
Office of the President	http://www.president.mn/mongolian/
Government website	http://www.open-government.mn/
Ministry of Nature, Environment and Tourism	http://www.mne.mn/mn/
Ministry of Finance (for budget-related information)	http://www.mof.gov.mn/
Ministry of Finance	http://www.iltod.gov.mn/
Ministry of Judicial and Home Affairs	http://www.jurists.mn/web1/main.aspx?code=10
Human Rights Commission of Mongolia	http://www.mn-nhrc.org/
Office of the State Great Khural (Parliament)	http://www.parliament.mn/
Sukhbaatar district	http://sbd.ub.gov.mn/news.php
Songino-Khairkhan district	http://shd.ub.gov.mn/
Bayanzurkh district	http://www.bzd.ub.gov.mn/
Khovd province	(No official website found)
Umnugobi province	http://umnugobi.gov.mn/
Darkhan-uul province	http://info.e-darkhan.com/

government budget and expenditure, (2) the extractive industry and the environment, and (3) access to information.

The study selected government agencies perceived to be involved with social accountability issues, that is, where citizens and citizen groups have more at stake in terms of transparency, accountability, and participation. To do this, the study included a survey of each agency's website in order to define the extent to which information was made available and accessible. The government agencies/websites are listed in Table 1.

The study reviewed a number of official documents related to laws and policies. The documents were categorized according to the general content and relevance to the three priority areas of budget, extractive industry and environment issues, and access to information. A total of 57 documents were reviewed. Table 2 shows the types and number of legal and policy documents reviewed at various levels.

The study also entailed face-to-face and telephone interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and email inquiries. Table 3 (next page) shows the method of data-gathering, respondents, location of respondents' offices, and the number of respondents.

Table 2. Types and number of legal and policy documents reviewed for the study.

LEVEL	TYPE OF DOCUMENT			
	General	Budget-related	Extractive industry & environment	Access to information
National laws	15	2	4	4
Policy pronouncements at national level	6	6	6	1
Policy pronouncements at national & local levels	4	1	2	1
TOTAL	25	9	12	6

Table 3. Method of data gathering, respondents, location of respondents' offices, and the number of respondents.

LOCATION	RESPONDENTS	NUMBER
Interview		
Ulaanbaatar	NGO leaders	11
	Social movement leaders	2
	Individual citizens involved in social development projects	2
	Relevant local program & project staff	2
	Staff of international donor organizations supporting social accountability initiatives	3
	Government officials (national & sub-national levels)	4
Aimags		
Khovd/Jargalant soum	NGO leaders	9
	Social movement leaders	3
Umnugobi/Dalanzadgad soum	Individual citizens involved in social development projects	3
	Relevant local program & project staff	3
Darkhan-uul/Darkhan soum	Staff of international donor organizations supporting social accountability initiatives	2
	Government officials (national & sub-national levels)	6
Focus group discussion		
Ulaanbaatar	NGO staff	4
Aimags	NGO staff	3
Phone interviews and email inquiries (on the registration of NGOs)		
Ulaanbaatar and aimags	Various government agencies	

MAPPING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN MONGOLIA

To understand the concept and practice of social accountability in Mongolia, the study followed the framework of the Four Pillars of Social Accountability. These enabling conditions or Four Pillars—(1) government openness, (2) organized and capable citizen groups, (3) access to information, and (4) social and cultural appropriateness—provide a multi-dimensional view of social accountability in the country.

GOVERNMENT OPENNESS TO SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The role and effectiveness of citizen groups as partners in ensuring good governance are, to a large extent, dependent on the efforts of both government and citizen groups to create such an enabling environment. Citizen action in the context of governance requires that government is open to citizen participation, whether it is in the area of planning and policy-making, budget monitoring, expenditure tracking, and performance monitoring and evaluation.

The backbone of government's openness to citizen participation is the country's legal and policy framework. Social accountability is strengthened depending on the extent to which initiatives are given recognition and support through legislation and institutionalization. Such a situation, of course, presupposes two things: first, that there are "champions" of social accountability within the government, and second, that what is stated in paper is actually implemented and monitored on the ground.

Policy Support for Social Accountability

Mongolia is bound by international, national, and local laws to guarantee civic participation in government action.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which the State of Mongolia is a signatory, states that “Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government.” (Article 21) This article is the foundational framework for citizen participation in countries that embrace democracy. In addition, several other international legal covenants complement this pronouncement. For example, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976) guarantees the rights to freedom of expression and harbor a personal point of view, and to partake directly in government through elected representatives. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976) likewise asserts the right of everyone to form trade unions and join a trade union of his/her choice, subject only to the rules of the organization concerned, for the promotion and protection of his/her economic and social interests.

The provisions of these international legally-binding agreements are likewise enshrined in Mongolian laws. Mongolia’s Constitution, ratified in 1992, emphasizes that “state power shall be vested in the people of Mongolia. The Mongolian people shall exercise it through their direct participation in state affairs as well as through the representative bodies of State authority elected by them.” (Article 3.1) This provision is the fundamental legal basis for social accountability in Mongolia.

More specifically, a number of laws clarify the relationship between the government and citizen groups and the direction that both actors need to take. The Law on Non-Governmental Organizations (popularly known as the “Law on NGOs”), enacted in 1997, clarifies the role of NGOs vis-à-vis the government. Article 9.5 of this law says that “NGOs may participate in developing draft resolutions of legislative and executive agencies at their own request” and Article 9.6 adds that “NGOs are entitled to express their positions on decisions made by government agencies and make statements.” The Law on Sessions of the State Great *Khural* (2007) granted citizen groups the right to participate in decision- and policy-making by the highest law-making body of the country, the Parliament of Mongolia. This law outlines the six steps in drafting a law or resolution; the first five steps provide for a working group that involves citizen-stakeholders and experts:

- 16.5. Depending on the importance of the relationships and affairs that the draft law would regulate, and its scope, the Speaker of the Parliament, Standing Committees and Party/Coalition Groups may hold a Working Group, consisting of MPs and experts, to develop the draft legislation, obtain opinions and conclusions to be submitted to the Parliament for discussion.
- 16.6. A Working Group based on Article 16.5 of this law shall operate within the scope of the following rights and obligations:
 - 16.6.1. May demand additional information and surveys from the initiators and other related agencies and officers for analysis.
 - If deemed necessary, may call upon highly-skilled experts in the subject matter.

Likewise, the Law on Developing and Submitting Drafts of Laws and Parliament Resolutions (2001), Article 18, states the following:

Law initiators shall get comments and inputs from central state administrative bodies, experts, academics, NGOs and citizens on the subject matter, which may be included in the draft if deemed necessary. Unless otherwise stated in the legislation, the law initiator shall obtain input from citizens and legal entities in the following ways: a) place a draft law on the website for no less than 10 days for public access, and b) directly deliver a copy of the draft to citizens and legal entities or hold meetings and discussion.

The Law on Government (1993), considered to be the supreme authority in executive matters, provides that

Supporting ideas and initiatives from public organizations to help develop the country, strengthen the State and social structures and ensure implementation of government policy and decisions may be heard, and the State shall work with these organizations on required measures and action. (Article 28.3)

Local governments are, likewise, enjoined to recognize and allow citizen participation in local decision-making. This policy is embodied in the Law on Administrative and Territorial Units and Their Management enacted in 2006. In Article 24.2, it is provided that “Government and non-government

organizations, legal entities and citizens may submit issues for discussion and resolution to the representative *khurals* at their level (*soum* and district Representative *Khural*; *bag* and *khoroо* Community *Khural*)." The same law also assigns local governors to oversee elections and public referendums at all levels (presidential, parliamentary, and local) and to organize actions with citizen groups to discuss and resolve pressing local issues.

In summary, the above-mentioned laws legitimize citizen participation in government policy-making by allowing citizens to:

- Take part in working groups in developing draft laws and regulations;
- Access draft laws and regulations and express their opinions, comments, and inputs directly to the lawmakers or through other media (such as websites);
- Take part in meetings and discussions on the development and drafting of laws and regulations;
- Take part in events conducted by local government units to provide inputs for draft laws and regulations and on pressing local issues; and
- Submit ideas, opinions, and comments to help strengthen development plans and social structures, as well as to ensure implementation of laws and regulations.

Citizen groups, however, have raised three issues regarding the implementation of these laws. These issues are:

- The lack of detailed implementing rules and regulations to guide the operational implementation by individual government agencies and local government units;
- The lack of a framework for sanctioning government bodies that either go against the provisions or simply ignore them; and
- The passive role of citizens and citizen groups while waiting for government agencies and officials to initiate events where the former can participate.

State Recognition of Citizen Groups as Legal Entities

The transition period in the 1990s saw the blossoming of diverse citizen groups in Mongolia, which some perceived as a measure of the State's attitude toward citizen participation in governance decision-making. This

situation, however, has led to some confusion as to the nature and functions of such citizen groups in a democracy.

Non-government organizations include

... many groups and institutions that are entirely or largely independent of government and that have primarily humanitarian or cooperative rather than commercial objectives. They may be private agencies in industrial countries that support international development; indigenous groups organized regionally or nationally; and member-groups in villages. NGOs include charitable and religious associations that mobilize private funds for development, distribute food and family planning services, and promote community organization. They also include independent cooperatives, community associations, water-user societies, women's groups and pastoral associations. Citizen groups that raise awareness and influence policy are also NGOs. (Definitions of an NGO, 1990)

A crucial issue for citizen groups in Mongolia is the implementation of the set of laws and policies regulating the recognition and accreditation of NGOs and civil society organizations.

In Article 16.10 of the Constitution of Mongolia, citizen groups have “the right to form a party or other mass organization, with freedom of association with these organizations on the basis of social and personal interest and opinion.” The same article likewise says that “Discrimination and persecution of a person for joining a political party or other mass organization, or for being a member, shall be prohibited.”

The Law on NGOs, the General Law on State Registration, and the Law on State Registration of Legal Entities regulate the establishment of any citizen group and its registration as a legal body.

The term “non-governmental organization” or “NGO” was first introduced in Mongolia in the mid-1990s. The term replaced the socialist “public (or mass) organization” established by, and designed to support, the ruling Central Committee of the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party (MPRP) and the mainstream party ideology. The Law on NGOs was adopted with support from The Asia Foundation in 1997, with a number of amendments in 1998, 2003, and 2009.

The Law on NGOs defines an NGO as “an organization which is independent from the state, self-governing, non-profit, and established voluntarily by citizens or by legal entities other than state agencies (i.e. organs that exercise legislative, executive and judicial powers) on the basis of their individual or social interests and opinions.” (Article 4.1)

An important aspect of this provision is the departure from the previous state-controlled citizen organization. In this law, space is provided to citizens and non-government entities to establish self-determined organizations that are, to a large extent, free of state and party control and direction. Furthermore, citizens cannot be compelled to join such organizations, nor are they to be discriminated if they want to do so.³ In sum, the Law on NGOs defined and legally established any citizen’s right and freedom to associate based on one’s own interest and belief.

There are two ways by which an NGO may be dissolved or disbanded. The first is for a court of law to disband an NGO if it is found to be operating outside its expressed mission or scope of work, or if it violates the law. The second is when the NGO’s governing body decides to dissolve the organization because it has already achieved its purpose.

Citizen Participation and Monitoring of Government Action

In a 2009 assessment by the Global Integrity Report showing the Mongolia Integrity Indicators Scorecard, one of the items asked was “Are good governance/anti-corruption CSOs able to operate freely?” Under the sub-item, “In practice, anti-corruption/good governance CSOs actively engage in political and policymaking process”, the score was “50” (out of 100), with the following comment:

There is no formal mechanism for access to decision-making processes at any level. There is no formal channel to access and deliver information to decision-makers. Under these circumstances, CSOs largely rely on informal channels to influence policy-making.

The above report does not seem to agree with Article 3.1 of the Constitution, which says, “In Mongolia, state power shall be vested in the people of Mongolia. The Mongolian people shall exercise this through direct

participation in state affairs as well as through representative bodies of State authority which they shall elect.” Likewise, Article 16.12 says, “Citizens shall exercise the right to submit complaints and petitions to government agencies and officers for resolution” and “government agencies and officers shall have the duty to resolve complaints and requests submitted by citizens.” All these sections serve as a legal background for implementation of government policy and decisions, and for citizen oversight and monitoring of government actions. As in many other things, policy does not jibe with reality.

The Law on Government (2003) says that it is legal to outsource to citizen groups duties and services assigned to government agencies (Article 19.1). This provision enables citizen participation in government decision- and policy-making.

The Law on State Audit and Inspection (2003) states that the audit organization may get input and assistance from NGOs and citizens in performing its inspection and audit duties. The audit agencies may conduct audit and inspection actions in response to information provided by a citizen if the subject matter is within the scope of the auditing agency. A limitation of this policy is that it is up to the auditing and inspection agency whether or not to accept citizen involvement.

The right of citizens to participate is expanded in the Law on Environment Protection (1995). It states that

Public organizations shall exercise the right to conduct public oversight on implementation of environment-related legislation, carry out site checks, demand elimination of violations, submit opinions and comment on environment protection to central state administrative agency in charge of

“CSO” OR “NGO”?

The UNDP describes CSOs as “non-state actors whose aims are neither to generate profits nor to seek governing power. CSOs unite people to advance shared goals and interests” (UNDP, 2006, p. 3). The term CSO is currently the term of choice, as it encompasses a wider variety of organizations engaged in development work. CSOs comprise the full range of formal and informal organizations within civil society: NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), indigenous peoples’ organizations, academia, journalist associations, faith-based organizations, trade unions, and trade associations, and the like. (UNDP, 2006; ADB, n.d.) NGOs are subsumed under the more generic descriptor of CSO.

environment protection and all levels of governor, organize ecology education activities, alone or in partnership with professional organizations, and submit the methodology and tools for environment protection to relevant agencies for effective decision-making. (Article 32.1-4)

Other policy documents express the government's desire for citizen groups to participate, monitor, and oversee government decisions and policy implementation, as well as to demand for government reports on these actions. The Conceptual Framework on the Development of Mongolia (1996), for example, directs government agencies to:

- Encourage citizen participation in governance and create sustainable mechanisms to ensure that the constitutional concept of state power is vested in the people of Mongolia;
- Allow direct participation in state affairs as well as through representative bodies of the State authority as elected by citizens; and
- Make government information open and transparent by using ICT [information and communication technology] extensively to get citizen input and allow citizen overseeing and monitoring of government actions.

The Government Action Plan (2008-2012) is quite clear on the role of citizen participation. Under Section 4.5, with the heading "Civil Society and Public Administration Policy", the following mechanisms for social accountability are enumerated:

- Reform the operational environment for civil society to enable oversight of government action, inspection of government agencies, advocacy, and to support and develop public-private partnership and cooperation.
- Eradicate corruption from central and local public agencies to create citizen-centered, skilled and responsible service providers and free the public service from bureaucracy by making it open and transparent.
- Introduce mechanisms of responsibility for budget managers and administrators for effective expenditure of public funds, making such mechanisms quick and efficient.
- Amend the Law on Management of Public Funds to increase the powers of local government, to create a more favorable business environment, eliminate government bureaucracy, create citizen groups and civil

POLICY SUPPORT FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS

The Anti-Corruption Law of 2006 enables community and citizen groups to take part in fighting corruption by lodging complaints and opinions and setting up a non-staff community council to advise the agency against corruption. This council, at the head of the Anti-Corruption Agency, shall consist of 15 members and excludes politicians and civil servants. The council is appointed by the President of Mongolia for a four-year term. This enables civic participation against corruption and in overseeing agency operations.

The main drawback of this legislation is that it entitles the President alone to appoint the council. The anti-corruption legislation allows citizen groups to submit complaints and requests to the anti-corruption agency; to provide information to the agency; encourages the agency to support citizen initiatives to fight corruption; increases citizen group participation; and encourages cooperation between the agency and citizen groups. This enables citizen groups to participate in oversight and monitoring of the agency fighting corruption.

society oversight of government actions, and monitor expenditure of public funds by oversight and public discussion.

- Create legal conditions for citizen oversight and monitoring and ensure citizen rights to submit requests and complaints when they feel their rights have been violated.

The same Government Action Plan also states that the government aims to develop partnerships between and among government, private sector, and civil society. One of its goals is to increase transparency and responsibility by intensifying legal reforms. A sub-goal is to “create a permanent and on-going web-based system to monitor the status of resolution of complaints and requests from citizens to government.”

A number of government resolutions ensure that citizen groups may oversee government implementation of policy implementation and service delivery. Some of these resolutions include the following:

- The Government of Mongolia Resolution No. 93 (2008) on “Cooperation with NGOs”. This resolution supports an agreement of cooperation with the Civil Society Council of NGOs (CSC-NGOs). It also directs line ministries and the governors of *aimags* and the capital city to work with CSOs in monitoring the implementation of the Key Directions of the Socioeconomic Development of Mongolia, including the budget expenditure. This resolution was a result of intensive advocacy work by the CSC-NGOs.

- The Government of Mongolia Resolution No. 143 (2009) on “Criteria for Reporting the Transparency of Government Agencies” (Annex). The main drawback of this resolution, however, is that it does not indicate how CSOs are to be involved in evaluating government agencies under these criteria.

The CSC-NGOs, with a membership of 300 NGOs, citizen movements, labor unions, and non-profit organizations, was established by various Mongolian civil society organizations on February 1, 2008. Acting as an umbrella organization, the CSC-NGOs helps bridge government and civil society organizations.

In March 26, 2008, the CSC-NGOs and the Government of Mongolia signed the Cooperative Agreement to contract NGOs to implement specific services. This agreement would enable NGOs and other citizen groups to monitor the implementation of policies and the budget expenditure, cooperate in policy development, and exchange information and mutual support.

There is no doubt that this agreement is a positive step toward engendering a more transparent government and bringing about an enabling environment for social accountability.

Since then, the CSC-NGOs has created sub-councils that work hand in hand with relevant line ministries. The Citizen Council for the Environment, for example, works with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism; the Citizen Council for Social Welfare also works closely with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor Citizen; the Council for Education, Science and Culture also works closely with the relevant line ministry.

Some specific agreements between the CSC-NGOs (or its sub-councils) and the line ministries are the following:

- The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture issued Resolution No. 150 (2009) outsourcing specific projects, through contracts, to a number of CSOs;
- The Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor issued Resolution No. 64 (2009) endorsing a regulation to outsource to CSOs specific duties and services. This was followed by Resolution No. 77 (2009), which specifies the types of services outsourced to NGOs in the same year. These services include training and education, research and monitoring, and goods and services.

- The partnership between the Ministry of Environment and the Citizen Council for Environmental Issues resulted in the implementation of 34 projects managed by a number of NGOs.
- Local government units in the provinces also inked agreements with civil society organizations.

These projects and activities show the extent to which CSOs are now working with the government and its institutions—from outsourcing contracts to monitoring government projects. To a certain extent, constructive engagement between citizen groups and the government are working in Mongolia.

But a recurring issue is the faithful implementation of the law, which is often contingent on the motivation, will, and interest of concerned government officials and decision-makers.

Citizen Groups Working With Government

While the law ensures the right of citizen groups to participate in and monitor government actions, the situation is that there are no clear and detailed parameters, criteria, and guidelines for the screening, selection, and accreditation of NGOs to work with government. Table 4, for example, illustrates this situation.

In 2009, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor approved a set of guidelines entitled “The Regulation to Outsource to NGOs for Government and Duties”. It provides for the publication of outsourced services to NGOs. It mandates the Working Group to include NGOs in the implementation of its functions.⁴ The Ministry issued a set of criteria for the selection of NGOs, which includes the following:

- The NGO must have been set up to serve society, working for the well-being of society.
- The NGO must have been in operation for at least three consecutive years.
- The NGO must have operational experience in labor, social welfare, human development and protection of human rights.
- The NGO must have sufficient financial and human resources.

The other line agencies and local government units (*aimags, soums, districts, and Ulaanbaatar*⁵) are yet to develop, approve, and issue similar

Table 4. An assessment of the parameters, criteria, and guidelines in the screening, selection, and accreditation of NGOs

NATIONAL/LOCAL	NATIONAL LEVEL	DARHAN UUL AIMAG	UMNUGOBI AIMAG	HOVD AIMAG
Existence and implementation of selection regulations	Only in some areas	None	None	None
Criteria for the selection	Only in some areas	Set by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor	None	None
Cases of government being “selective”, or selection based on nepotism	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Selection based on discussions with CSC-NGOs members	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Selections based on demand from civil society organizations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

guidelines. The Darhan-uul *aimag* agencies generally follow the resolution approved by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor.

Issues Surrounding Citizen-Government Engagements

According to respondents, the process of screening, selection, and accreditation of NGOs is not open and competitive. Allegations of conflicts of interest, nepotism, and favoritism have been raised. A civil movement leader alleged that for the last three years (2007-2010), ministries have set up “artificial NGOs, making it appear that they are working with civil society.” This respondent added that “some ministers have even financed these NGOs that are ‘in their pocket’.” (Civil movement leader, personal communication, March 2010).

Another group of respondents from Darhan-Uul *aimag* also made similar allegations. They said that “ministries patronize their ‘own’ NGOs without any criteria or standard for the selection.” There are government officials that have “establish[ed] their NGOs, and they use these ‘NGOs’ to monitor government services, but it is clear that these ‘NGOs’ work only for the government.” (NGO respondents, personal communication, March 2010)

CO-OPTATION OF SO-CALLED “NGOs”?

There are “NGOs” established by government officials or former *soum* governors; these are the ones that receive funding. (FGD with members of a CSO, *Hovd aimag*)

Our organization submitted a project proposal to conduct a survey in an area that was eroded as a result of mining operations in 21 provinces. We have approached a number of agencies since 2007, but they were consistent in their reply: We have no budget. Later, we found out that a government agency hired a company to do exactly what we proposed. In fact, we found out that they used our proposal. (FGD with members of a CSO, *Ulaanbaatar City*)

Despite these drawbacks, there are efforts to overcome the shortcomings. The Governor’s Office of *Darhan-Uul aimag*, for example, complies with the criteria approved by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor in the selection of NGOs (e.g. at least three years in operation, owns an office, etc.). Members of the CSC-NGOs are also working on a procedure in identifying and endorsing skilled NGOs that have the capacity to work with government agencies.

Citizen groups that have worked with various government agencies appreciate the experience. Citing his work with the Professional Inspection Department, a civic leader said the experience has taught him to value the importance of improving the legal environment so that citizens like him are provided the opportunity to help the government. When the agency opened themselves to citizen monitoring, his organization—without hesitation—immediately volunteered its services. (Civil movement leader, personal communication, March 2010)

The next section takes a closer look at the second enabling condition (or pillar) of social accountability: organized and capable citizen groups.

FROM KHOT AIL TO CITIZEN GROUPS: THE DEMAND-SIDE OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

This section describes citizen engagement with government, the capabilities of citizen groups, and the understanding and practice of social accountability. It tells of the evolution of citizen groups—from the primeval civil society called *khot ail* to the present-day civil society organizations. It takes a quick survey at their programs, projects and activities with

IMPRESSIONS OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ON THE STATE OF NGO PARTICIPATION

[Our agency] is willing to work with NGOs in conducting consumer evaluation. The problem is that they [NGOs] don't have any professional survey organizations. So what we do instead is to ask a representative from each NGO to work with us.

- Interview with a government official of Darhan-uul aimag

The Ministry has a special advisory council with 30 members representing both government and non-government organizations. The council monitors the allocation and expenditure of funds by the Ministry. But we still have to develop a detailed set of criteria for the selection of NGOs that work with us.

- Interview with a Ministry officer

government agencies. It looks at the social accountability approaches, strategies, tools, and mechanisms they use. Their experiences and insights in working with government institutions and government officials are presented along with opportunities, obstacles, and challenges.

The Development and Formation of Civil Society in Mongolia

Countries that made the transition from a socialist/communist regime to an open and democratic system invested huge amounts of resources to revive their weakened economies and to provide support to a disoriented populace. The Mongolian government, while trying to adjust to a new system of government, practically left the task of civic education to civil society organizations that were, for the most part, unprepared and lacking the capacity to take on the responsibility.

This part reviews how civil society in Mongolia evolved and developed in the context of historical and cultural contingencies.

Khot ail: Mongolia's primeval civil society

Civil society in Mongolia evolved from and was shaped by the traditional Mongolian lifestyle, a feature of which is the *khot ail*, which continues to exist in rural areas. The *khot ail* is a group of families living in proximity with each other. The *khot ail* has a strong collective culture necessary for the clan's survival and continuity in an inhospitable environment. It has also strengthened the culture of collective problem solving among family members, friends, and neighbors.⁶ This traditional collective lifestyle has developed into a positive and open attitude among citizens and local

governments and has become the foundation of the *kheseg*, which is Mongolia's official local administrative unit. Mongolia's first civil societies must have sprung from such familial and intimate settings.

The pull and push of historical events in Mongolia appeared to have not seriously affected the integrity of the *khot ail*, which continues to flourish in Mongolian society.

The evolution of Mongolia's civil society

The end of the Manchu occupation in the early 1900s saw the rise of informal citizen movements advocating for independence. In 1924, Mongolia followed the way of Russia by becoming the second socialist country in the world.

The communist regime mandated all kinds of citizen groups to support the state. Student groups, women groups, labor groups, youth groups—all kinds of groups were established to comply with and prop the government's agenda. These groups were no more than instruments of the state in pursuing its goals.

The collapse of the communist regime in 1991 brought about the proliferation and growth of independent citizen groups, variously called civil society organizations, non-government organizations, and community-based organizations. The 1992 Constitution enshrined universal principles and values, including civil and political rights that recognize and support the work of these citizen groups.

How did this transition come about? What events led to the establishment and proliferation of civil society organizations in Mongolia?

Influenced by the opening up of the Soviet Union whose *glasnost* (freedom of information) and *perestroika* (re-structuring) led to social, political, and economic changes in the region, citizen-led movements were organized to oppose the Mongolian totalitarian system. In 1989, three major civil movements joined forces in Mongolia: the Democratic Union, the New Progressive Union, and the Students' Union. While openly calling for democracy, these movements were deliberately non-violent.

In March 1990, an estimated 90,000 demonstrators—led by the Democratic Union—showed up to oppose the government. This led to the resignation of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP). In May

that year, the Mongolian Constitution was amended, effectively eliminating the MPRP's political domination in the country. The People's Great *Hural* was elected in July 29, 1990 during the first multi-party elections.

The New Constitution took effect in February 1992 and established Mongolia as an independent and sovereign republic with a unicameral legislature, the State Great *Khural*. Unlike the previous regime, the state now recognized and legalized opposition parties.

The significance of the transition was not lost on Mongolia's civil society. The change opened Mongolia's democratic space and provided opportunities for civil society organizations to sprout and bloom. Hundreds of CSOs, NGOs, and CBOs rushed to fill the space.

Expectedly, the enthusiasm over the unfolding events waned given the differences in ideology and interests among the leaders, not to mention the lack of capacity to lead and consolidate their gains. The Democratic Union, which was at the forefront in toppling the communist regime, became a political coalition.

But thanks to the 1992 Constitution, the seeds of a more engaged civil society had been sown and were taking root in the arena of governance.

Organized Citizen Groups in Mongolia

The 1997 Law on Non-Governmental Organizations (popularly known as the "Law on NGOs") is the last arbiter when it comes to the role of CSOs and NGOs vis-à-vis the government.

The Law on NGOs says there are two types of NGOs: the "public benefit NGO" and the "member benefit NGO". "Public benefit NGOs" operate for the benefit of the general public in the fields of culture, arts, education, science, health, sports, nature and environment, community development, human rights, protection of sectoral interests, charity, and similar fields. The "member benefit NGOs" are those that operate primarily to serve the legitimate interests of its members. (DEMO, n.d.)

There are currently more than 12,400 citizen groups registered with the State Registration Office of Mongolia. Among these, 7,465 (or 60.2%) are categorized as "public benefit NGOs" while 4,935 (or 39.7%) are identified as "member benefit NGOs". (State Registration Office of Mongolia, 2010)

Another way of looking at citizen groups in Mongolia is by structure and organization. Civil movement organizations, for example, are identified as NGOs. Trade unions and the Red Cross are categorized under “special organizations”. Political parties and faith-based organizations are classified as associations. As of 2010, there were 25 registered political parties in Mongolia. (State Registration Office of Mongolia, 2010)

The phone survey included 161 citizen group members. Twenty percent of these consider their organizations as “permanent and stable”, while 80% said their organizations are “non-permanent and not operating on a regular basis.”

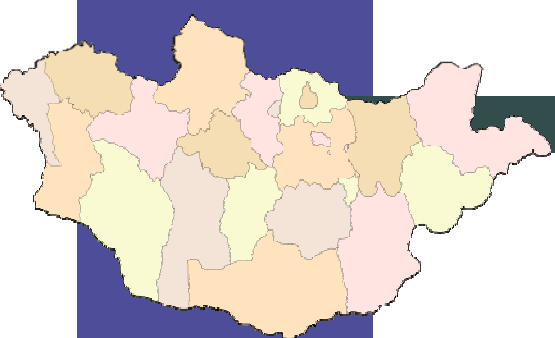
Table 5. Socio-demographic information covered by the phone survey. (N=161)

INDICATORS	NUMBER	PERCENT DISTRIBUTION
Sex		
Male	56	34.8
Female	103	63.9
No answer	2	1.2
Age group		
18-25	16	9.9
26-35	25	15.5
36-45	34	21.1
46-55	58	36
56+	27	16.8
No answer	1	6.2
Education		
None	1	0.62
Less	1	0.62
Primary	-	-
Secondary	5	3.1
College	5	3.1
University	148	91.9
No answer	1	0.62
Total	161	100.0

The respondents were mostly females (64%). Males represented roughly 35% of the respondents. Nearly all the respondents had university education (91.9%). Table 5 shows the socio-demographic profile of the respondents.

Nearly all the organizations classified themselves as “NGOs”, as shown in Figure 2. Many of these NGOs began operations in 2001. In 2006, most of these started to grow and expand, with projects and programs increasing yearly and activities becoming more diverse. Mongolian social accountability advocates claim that this phenomenon demonstrates two things: first, the impact citizen groups have been making on the economic, social and political conditions in Mongolia; and, second, the widening of spaces for engagement provided by the government (Undral, 2004).

The study categorized and ranked the respondent organizations according to their areas of sectors of engagement (see Table 6). The top five were NGOs working in education/democracy and civil education



(17.4%); second were those in environment, nature protection and reclamation (15.5%); third, those serving society/society centered (13%); fourth, those in citizen empowerment, capacity building, protection of interests (12.4%); and fifth, those in women and gender equality (11.8%).

Half of those surveyed rely on external funding support from international donor agencies such as the OSF, Mercy Corps, ADB, TAF, the World Bank, and the various agencies of the United Nations. Another source of funding support come from the private and public sectors, also considered as external funding sources. A small share comes from internally-generated incomes as service providers and membership/tuition fees. More than one in five citizen groups depend on government contracts in order to survive.

Figure 3 illustrates the sources of funding of citizen groups that participated in the study.

Figure 2. Proportion based on classification of CSOs included in the study.

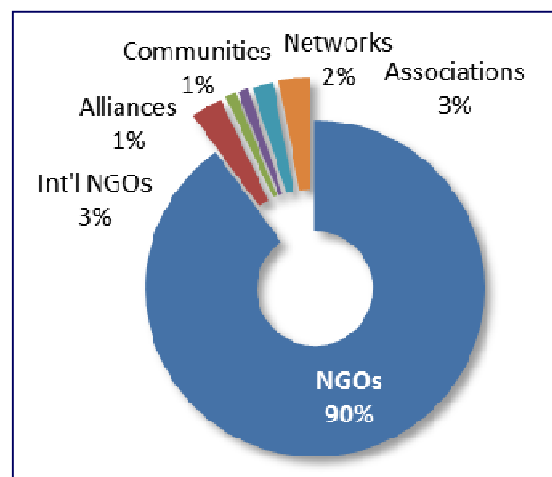


Table 6. Sectors and areas of engagement of CSOs included in the study.

Ranking	Areas or sectors of engagement	Number	% of Total
1	Education/democracy and civil education	28	17.4
2	Environment, nature protection and reclamation	25	15.5
3	Serving society/ society centered	21	13.0
4	Citizen empowerment, capacity building, protection of interests	20	12.4
5	Women and gender equality	19	11.8
6	Health/reproductive health	14	8.7
7	Social welfare	14	8.7
8	Training, research and evaluation	9	5.6
9	Human rights	7	4.3
10	Ultra poor citizens	6	3.7

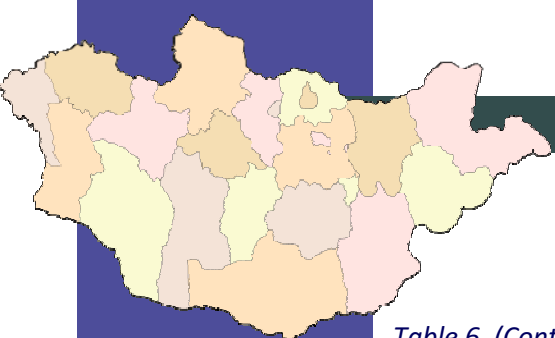


Table 6. (Continued)

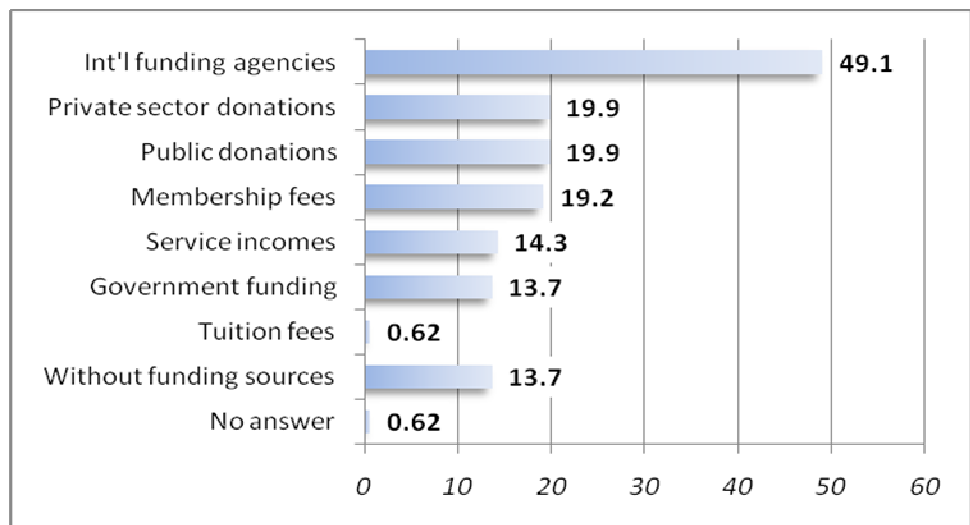
Ranking	Areas or sectors of engagement	Number	% of Total
11	Family and children	5	3.1
12	Agriculture and animal husbandry	5	3.1
13	Media, information dissemination	4	2.5
14	Business development	4	2.5
15	Working for people with disabilities	3	1.9
16	Legal consultation	3	1.9
17	Unanswered	3	1.9
18	Advocacy and participation	2	1.2
19	Trade unions	2	1.2
20	Interests of residents	1	0.62
21	Extractive industry transparency	1	0.62
22	Fighting corruption	1	0.62
TOTAL		197	100.0

Women manage more than half of the surveyed organizations (58.4%). Most citizen groups have an average of five full-time staff members supported by 20 or more volunteers and part-time staff.

Social Accountability Initiatives of Citizen Groups

For purposes of this study, the citizen groups were clustered around general thematic areas: (1) monitoring of government activities in budgeting, environment and extractive industries, and access to information;

Figure 3. Percentage of CSOs and their sources of funding support.



(2) ensuring budget transparency; (3) involvement in policy research; (4) advocacy on environmental issues; and (5) strengthening civic education and network expansion.

Monitoring of government activities

Many CSOs and NGOs monitored government activities in budgeting, environment, extractive industries, and access to information. Table 7 shows the specific monitoring activities conducted by citizen groups at the national and local levels.

In 2009, 47 citizen groups (15 local and 32 national) were selected to monitor the following government activities: budgets and expenditures in public services; performance assessments of government workers; implementation of environmental programs as well as other sectoral programs in public health, public education, social welfare, human rights, and the extractive industry.

In recent years, citizen groups in the rural areas have started to monitor local government budgets, expenditures and procurement. In Umnugobi *aimag*, for example, local civil society representatives sit as observers in the Tender Evaluation Committee (similar to procurement processes in other

Table 7. Monitoring activities of citizen groups on government projects. (Source: OSF Annual Report, 2005-2009, pp. 12, 28, 54-55.)

NATIONAL LEVEL	LOCAL LEVEL
Budget	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulation and expenditure of public agency equity • Expenditure of the reserve fund of the Songinohairhan district governor • Expenditure of the Chingeltei district government on street lighting and establishing a green area • Income and expenditure of waste management fund in Bayangol district • Formulation of budget income from interests and fines • Citizen oversight of local budget formulation • Expenditure of Science and Technology Fund • Selection of vendors for construction and urban development sector work, funded by the Mongolian Development Fund and government budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen participation in the local budget • Expenditure of Governor's Reserve Fund • Services fee income • Local budget monitoring • Expenditure of Health - Insurance Fund • Monitoring of Public Procurement • Development of gateway-budget monitoring • Monitoring of the operations of <i>aimag</i> Development Fund

Table 7. Monitoring activities of citizen groups... (continued)

NATIONAL LEVEL	LOCAL LEVEL
Budget (continued)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation of the Health Support Fund and its financial management • Advocacy, capacity-building of public agencies to ensure budget transparency • Financing of political parties • Expenditure of Special Fund supporting employment for those with disabilities 	
Environment and extractive industry	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process of licensing exploitation of minerals • Activities on environment protection • Payments and taxes from mining companies to the local budget • License monitoring • Tuul River basin • Expenditure of Environment Protection Fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring re-forestation • Status of businesses in the Eastern Mongolian Protected Area in environment reclamation
Access to Information	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency of information of government agencies • Violations of the right to free speech • Content of Transition Period program • Supporting freedom of expression and free media • Content of websites of government organizations • Implementation of judge's decision to restrict rights • Roles of citizen representatives in collective settlement of disputes • Recommendations from the Independent Anti-Corruption Agency • Improving responsibility of citizen representatives to ensure openness of court hearings, legal background for court decisions and enhancing the legal environment for selection of representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness and transparency of information at local government agencies • Openness and transparency of information at government agencies • Citizen participation in rural areas • Activities of public radio and TV of Gobi-Altai <i>aimag</i> • Implementation of Governor's action plan to improve citizen participation

countries). Some citizen groups also monitor local governments' environmental programs.

The Open Society Forum (OSF) has encouraged monitoring activities by citizen groups, supporting 90 CSOs from 2006 to 2009. The OSF support ranged from developing a monitoring framework to working with government agencies in policy implementation. Short-term monitoring activities focused on foreign funded government projects in human rights protection, the extractive industry, and social welfare, among others. The

positive performance of CSOs even at this early stage indicated the need to extend and sustain monitoring activities through networking and resource mobilization. (OSF Annual Report, 2008, p. 18)

According to respondents, citizen groups always make it a point to present the results of their monitoring work to concerned government agencies. The findings are likewise disseminated to the public during meetings with stakeholders, or through community billboards, or sharing these with the media. Relevant monitoring information also finds its way into the design of ongoing interventions, such as in re-planning activities.

Generally, the public and the government in general are now more open to monitoring activities (OSF Annual Report, 2007, p. 11). As a result, a number of government agencies and local government units are discussing with citizen groups on how to foster and institutionalize constructive engagement, starting with building good relationships among the various stakeholders.

Ensuring budget transparency

In 2006, a number of CSOs, NGOs, and experts initiated budget analysis and budget monitoring activities with support from the Civil Education Center and the OSF. These activities were conducted even as local governments were in the process of consulting citizen representatives for the purpose of revising the Annual Budget for 2007. A group of CSOs held a campaign called the “Glass Wallet”⁷ in partnership with the governors’ offices and citizen representatives from the *Khurals* of Baganuur and Bayanzurh districts. Participating CSOs included the New Administrative Initiative, Local Governance Development Foundation, Independent Research Institute of Mongolia (IRIM), and the Mongolian Education Alliance.

A milestone in ensuring budget transparency was the “Glass Wallet” activity during the government-sponsored Open Day Event.⁸ The handbook simply titled “Glass Wallet” was launched. The handbook’s goals were twofold: first, it aimed at raising public awareness on citizen participation in the budget process, and, second, as a tool for replicating the initiative in other localities.

TRIPARTITE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT MODEL: "GLASS WALLET" PROJECT

The administration of Bayanzurh district and the Citizen Representative *Khural*, in partnership with the IRIM, developed a model tripartite agreement to help create mechanisms for citizen participation and monitoring of the formulation and expenditure of the budgets of government organizations in the district, and to create conditions for effective cooperation by ensuring budget transparency. In addition, regulations on the creation of a transparent budget were developed jointly and attached to the model agreement. This agreement delineates the potential cooperation of stakeholders in running a transparent budget Glass Wallet campaign, upgrading transparent budget regulations, and publicizing the need for a transparent budget for the community. (Source: IRIM, 2009, pp. 1-3)

Other monitoring initiatives on budget transparency include the following:

- In the Baganuur district, a set of new regulations to enhance citizen participation in budget-related activities.
- In the Umnugobi *aimag*, monitoring the Governor's Reserve Fund expenditure by the Rural Women's Support Foundation. The foundation was also responsible for including new provisions in the regulations that allowed for more efficient monitoring and inspection procedures.
- In the Umnugobi *aimag*, improvement of accountability procedures in public procurement in the governor's office and parliament by the Women Leaders' Foundation.

Involvement in policy research

Policy research has focused on enhancing citizen participation in policy building. To support these initiatives, the OSF implemented a Policy Research Grant Program in 2004.

The OSF program has published a total of 25 research studies proposing alternative ways to enhance government transparency. Research themes ranged from improving citizen and civil society participation in policy-making at the local and central levels, supporting transparency in the budget and financial processes, and formulating strategies to encourage citizen participation in tracking government expenditure. Table 8 shows the research agenda from 2004 to 2009.

Table 8. Five-year CSO Research Agenda (2004-2009) to support government transparency.

YEAR	POLICY RESEARCH AGENDA
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding election campaigns • Media and press freedom and IT opportunities • ICT development in rural areas • Ways to fight white collar crime and fraud • Central and local government - suitable balance
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To purchase products and services by state property • To increase civil participation in decision-making: Legal and institutional environment • To reform public administration and public units and public and social service quality and access
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget and finance centralization and independence • Legal support for NGO participation in decision-making • Mining sector demands and educational sector supply
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil participation in Citizen Representative Hurals in 2007 • Encourage civil participation in <i>aimag</i> and <i>soum</i> Citizen Representative Hurals in policy and decisions
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouragement mechanisms for NGO and civil participation in government monitoring and evaluation • Relationship between medical institution service quality and financing • Methods to develop legal and activity environment to support investigative media
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal procedure to stop the mining sector • Micro-economic policies to share mining sector profits • Funding for political parties • Judicial empowerment and independence

Advocacy on environmental issues

In 2007, the Human Rights and Development Center and the Huvsgul Lake Owners Association carried out strategic advocacy work in ten court cases on environmental issues. The work of these NGOs serves as a model for the protection of the common public interest. Their experience has provided citizen groups guidance on how to build their capacities in this field. Their advocacy encouraged government officials to see human rights in a new light. According to CSO leaders, the July 1, 2008 riots could have been prevented, or at least resolved peacefully, had the model been applied to prevent the violation of human rights by government agencies.⁹

Other citizen groups have also applied strategic advocacy on issues such as land disputes, privatization and licensing, and the abrogation of

“unrealistic” legal provisions. Citizen groups working in this area include the Coalition of Environmental NGOs, Lawyers’ Association for the Environment, Women Lawyers’ Association, the Zorig Foundation, and the National Center Against Violence.

Strengthening civic education and network expansion

CSOs with strong civic education and social accountability orientation include the Academy of Political Education, OSF, the Human Rights and Development Center, Mercy Corps, Democracy Education Center, and the Soyombo Movement.

A number of citizen groups in Mongolia have established networks to strengthen their collective efforts in mainstreaming social accountability. Three of these networks are the Civil Society Council of NGOs, the Coalition of Environmental NGOs, the Citizen’s Oversight of the Budget Coalition, and the Publish What You Pay and Earn (PWYPE) Coalition.

Civil Society Council of NGOs

The Civil Society Council of NGOs (CSC-NGOs) was established on February 1, 2008. It has a membership of 300 organizations. Its goal is to coordinate programs and activities between the government and CSOs. Thus, for example, through the work of the CSC-NGOs, the government published Resolution No. 93 creating the conditions for NGO involvement in monitoring the implementation of Key Directions of Mongolia’s socio-economic development. Resolution No. 93 sets the ground for central and local governments to work with CSOs particularly in laying out the preparatory work in outsourcing government services and contracts to CSOs at the local level. The Democracy Education Center (DEMO) was selected to coordinate CSC-NGOs activities and regularly update the network through its website, www.demo.org.mn.

In general, the CSC-NGOs’ efforts have been recognized by the government and its member organizations.

Citizens’ Oversight of the Budget Coalition

Established in 2008, the Citizens’ Oversight of the Budget Coalition has gained practical experience in monitoring the public finance management

activities. Its 13 member organizations monitor the government's budgeting and expenditure procedure, analyze budget-related information, and publish the findings through its information portal, www.tusuv.mn. Table 9 shows the areas where the coalition has carried out budget monitoring activities on the 2010 local and central government budgets.

The Citizens' Oversight of the Budget Coalition applies a number of budget monitoring tools and processes. Some of these include:

- Selection of the agency for monitoring; collection of preliminary data and discussion with coalition members;
- Collection of detailed information (media resources, reports, audit reports, financial reports from all sources including citizens);

Table 9. Budget monitoring information of the Citizens' Oversight of the Budget Coalition, 2010.

VENUE	AREA BEING MONITORED	RESPONSIBLE
Ulaanbaatar (capital city)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ulaanbaatar Fund, a reserve fund for the Mayor • Income from privatization of municipal property • Expenditure of funds allocated to political parties with seats in the Ulaanbaatar city parliament • Tender for roof repairs of second maternity house • Expenses for settlement of land disputes and reclamation (700 million MNT) • PR and media expenses (190 million MNT) • Central Cultural Palace (893 million MNT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRIM • Progressive Union • Local Government Development Foundation
Bayangol district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditure of 500 million MNT for MPs • Governor's Reserve Fund (Local Reserve Fund) • District Development Fund • Khoroo Support Fund • Social Welfare Fund for Senior Citizens • Emergency Fund • Waste management and removal service fund • Funds for political parties holding seats in the Ulaanbaatar city parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer Foundation
Sukhbaatar district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditure of 500 million MNT for MPs • Governor's Reserve Fund (Local Reserve Fund) • District Development Fund • Khoroo Support Fund • Social Welfare Fund for Senior Citizens • Emergency Fund • Waste management and removal service fund • Funds for political parties holding seats in the Ulaanbaatar city parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women for Social Progress Movement

Table 9. Budget monitoring information of the Citizens' Oversight of the Budget Coalition, 2010. (Continued)

VENUE	AREA BEING MONITORED	RESPONSIBLE
Songinokhairhan district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditure of 500 million MNT for MPs • Governor's Reserve Fund (Local Reserve Fund) • District Development Fund • Khoroo Support Fund • Social Welfare Fund for Senior Citizens • Emergency Fund • Waste management and removal service fund • Funds for political parties with seats in the Ulaanbaatar city parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zorig Foundation
Bayanzurh district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditure of 500 million MNT for MPs • Governor's Reserve Fund (Local Reserve Fund) • District Development Fund • Khoroo Support Fund • Social Welfare Fund for Senior Citizens • Emergency Fund • Waste management and removal service fund • Bayanzurh-One heart program 850000,0 • Unallocated local expenses • Bayanzurh Development program 500,000 MNT • Funds for political parties with seats in the Ulaanbaatar city parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Alliance
Khan-Uul district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditure of 500 million MNT for MPs • Reserve Fund of the Governor (Local Reserve Fund) • District Development Fund • Khoroo Support Fund • Social Welfare Fund for Senior Citizens • Emergency Fund • Waste management and removal service fund • Funds for political parties with seats in the Ulaanbaatar city parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center for Human Rights and Development, Zuv Tusgal
Baganuur district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditure of 500 million MNT for MPs • Governor's Reserve Fund (Local Reserve Fund) • District Development Fund • Khoroo Support Fund • Social Welfare Fund for Senior Citizens • Emergency Fund • Waste management and removal service fund • Funds for political parties with in the Ulaanbaatar city parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuurentein Ich NGO

Table 9. Budget monitoring information of the Citizens' Oversight of the Budget Coalition, 2010. (Continued)

VENUE	AREA BEING MONITORED	RESPONSIBLE
Dundgobi aimag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditure of 500 million MNT for MPs • Reserve Fund of the Governor (Local Reserve Fund) • Aimag Development Fund • Social Welfare Fund for Senior Citizens • Emergency Fund • Funds for political parties with seats in the aimag parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steps Without Boundaries NGO

- Requesting government organizations and officials, both verbally and in writing, for more information if necessary;
- Observing the budget expenditure;
- Analyzing all data gathered and arriving at conclusions;
- Discussing the monitoring results with coalition members;
- Preparing and distributing the budget information sheet;
- Advocating, i.e. filing a demand for corrective action from the agency and/or officials; and
- Evaluating budget transparency procedures according to criteria; arriving at a final evaluation. (Citizens' Oversight of the Budget Coalition, 2010)

The PWYPE Coalition

The PWYPE Coalition was established in 2006 to enhance transparency by strengthening social accountability mechanisms in the extractive industry. Supported by the OSF, it works with the US-based Revenue Watch Initiative (RWI), the International PWYPE Coalition, and the World Bank. The PWYPE Coalition, together with the OSF, represents Mongolian CSOs in the National Council of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative.

The PWYPE Coalition analyzes the flow of revenues from the mining sector, disseminates information about the extractive industry to the public, and organizes public forums on transparency initiatives in partnership with the industry's key players, such as the government and the private sector. The PWYPE Coalition has put forward a number of policy recommendations to the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Trade

and Industry, the National Council of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative, and the National Mining Association, among other players in the field.

In 2009, Mongolia underwent an annual audit reconciliation with the International Extractive Industry Initiative. The findings were submitted by the OSF to the International Secretariat of Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative. The PWYPE Coalition held discussions with CSOs to review preliminary reports of international validation of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative. It also works with the Mongolian government to facilitate the establishment of transparency mechanisms in the environment and mining sectors.

The PWYPE Coalition uses the following tools and mechanisms to ensure transparency in the mining sector:

- Comments on the final report of the National Council of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative validation, especially on five indicators concerning Mongolia, which are submitted to the International Secretariat of Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative.
- Publication of the validation report in the media and on websites.
- A press conference on the final results of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative validation.
- Submission of demands to the National Council of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative and Technical Working Group¹⁰ on the findings of the validation report.
- Representation of civil society in the Technical Working Group and the National Council of Mongolia Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative.
- Making information from the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative on mining companies open and transparent. (OSF, Annual Report, 2006, pp. 20-21)

Partnership Agreements With Government

Many government officials prefer to work with umbrella organizations rather than individual groups in outsourcing government services. Representing civil society's interests, and promoting the common goals of more than 300 citizen groups in Mongolia, the Civil Council of Environment

NGOs and the Civil Society Council of NGOs have provided the space for more meaningful partnerships with the government.

Civil Council of Environment NGOs

The Civil Council of Environment NGOs has played a key role in mainstreaming social accountability in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.¹¹ It is a network composed of around 600 NGOs governed by a nine-member board and supported by a three-person secretariat.

The engagement has resulted in a four-year cooperative agreement between the network and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. One of the major outcomes of the partnership is a set of policies promoting collaboration between the government and citizen groups. An important aspect of the agreement is an annual performance assessment.

For 2010, the ministry has contracted the network to implement 34 activities in line with Government Resolution No. 143. The resolution provides that government agency programs and activities, including budgets, are to be evaluated by independent organizations such as citizen groups. The policy allows accredited network members to carry out monitoring activities on government programs such as the prohibition of illegal logging in protected forests and mining in designated river basins, the application of regulations on water laws, and other similar programs. The activities are aimed at mainstreaming social accountability in the agency.

The Civil Council of Environment NGOs uses a number of tools and mechanisms such as the following:

- Implementation of contracts;
- Representation in the Policy Council of the Ministry as well as in the program work groups;
- Participation in action planning activities;
- Provision of inputs on improvement of human resource capacities; and
- Helping build the Council's capability to work closely and effectively with the government.

Civil Society Council of NGOs

Established through Government Resolution No. 93 (2008), the Civil Society Council of NGOs is instrumental in bringing together various citizen

groups from all over the country and representing their interests vis-à-vis the government. The partnership is marked by two milestones: the yearly celebration of the “Civil Society Day” starting 2009, and the implementation of the policy that opened the doors for citizen groups to work with government.

The Council works at the local, national, and international levels. Locally, the Council helps build the capabilities of citizen groups, supports local council branch offices, conducts advocacy work, and disseminates information to the public. At the national level, the Council formulates cooperative agreements and develops joint action plans with the government. At the international level, the Council provides assistance to international organizations in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of various policies and programs in areas such as human rights, the Millennium Development Goals, and women and gender equality.

The Council’s local level offices have implemented a number of social accountability activities. For example, the Darhan Uul *aimag* has put together an action plan promoting citizen participation in local governance. Some of the activities include:

- Signing of a contract on cooperative agreement and ensuring its proper implementation.
- Holding of common events, such as the celebration of a Civil Society Day (through a decree by the Governor), joint sessions, and other events.
- Development of general guidelines for activities in Darhan Uul *aimag*, under the framework of Resolution No. 64 of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor.
- Appointment of representatives from local citizen groups to the Livelihood Support Council and the local Tender Evaluation committees.
- Monitoring of expenditures of government programs, projects and funds in partnership with professional organizations.
- Establishment of an information network among local citizen groups.
- Implementation of training and advocacy activities on human rights, gender equality, child rights, occupational safety, and ecology education.
- Holding of an NGO Open Day.
- Promotion of citizen groups in local media.
- Organizing a participatory campaign on environmental protection.

- Encouraging citizen groups to report annually on their activities to the local Governor and to parliament.
- Giving of awards to exemplar citizen groups.

Table 10 shows the accomplishments of the members of the Council in their work with the national government and selected local government units.

Table 10. Accomplishments of citizen groups in their work with the national government & selected local government units.

LEVEL	GOVERNMENT	COUNCIL MEMBERS
National level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolutions and regulations supporting citizen groups (e.g. Resolution Nos. 43, 93) • Cooperative agreement signed • Government agencies appoint staff to working with citizen groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract between Civil Society Council of citizen groups • CSC-NGOs established • Government agencies celebrate Civil Society Day
Hovd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSC-NGOs established • Monitoring of public procurement in the School Tea Break program • Tripartite partnership agreement • Citizen group representation in Tender Evaluation Committees • Citizen groups outsourced for some government activities • Government staff appointed to work with citizen groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen group network established • Tripartite agreement on outsourcing government activities • Citizen group outsourced for some government activities
Umnugobi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative agreement reached • Civil society hall established • Appointment of citizen group representation on tender evaluation committees • NGO survey of quality and delivery of government services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSC-NGOs and network established with agreement with Governor • Local Governor's Reserve Fund starts funding citizen group activities •
Darhan-Uul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tripartite agreement: Governor's Office and Trade Union and Employers' Association • Cooperative agreement to work with CSC-NGOs • Citizen group representation in working groups and in other government activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government is open to working with citizen groups • Civil Hall established at the local parliament • Citizen group network established • CSC-NGOs develops action plan in cooperation with (and approved by) the Governor's Office • Tripartite partnership program implemented

Opportunities and Challenges of Citizen Groups in Mongolia

Citizen groups engaged in social accountability in Mongolia are confronted with a number of challenges as well as opportunities. Most of these revolve around financial stability and upgrading human resource capability, partnership risk management, trust-building between government and citizens, and enhancement of citizen group partnerships.

Financial stability and upgrading human resource capability

Like most CSOs and NGOs all over the world, Mongolian citizen groups often find themselves under financial straits. For good or for bad, most of these citizen groups are dependent on external funding support from international donor organizations. Because of this, not a few respondents expressed concern about the extent to which such funding support may influence social accountability agenda-setting. While donor support is appreciated, they also long for the day when they would be self-sufficient and self-sustaining. Internally-sourced funding support is ideal, but they also realize that such a situation is still far into the future.

The other major challenge is building their human resource capability. A requirement to address the demands of social accountability is the need to scale a steeper learning curve. Areas that need critical upgrading include technical proficiency (especially those dealing with government bureaucracy and procedures), organizational capability (including coalition-building and networking), knowledge generation and information management, political sensing, and ethical competency.

Partnership risk management

Majority of the respondents believe that a way out of their financial difficulties is outsourcing specific government duties and services through long-term government contracts. The goal of many citizen groups, in effect, is to become the government's partners as service providers—"for-a-fee". Such a scheme would be a good source of revenues for their sustainability.

But many government agencies, however, prefer working with established and experienced citizen groups. This leaves out those that are still trying to make a name and making ends meet in terms of financial and

human resources. This in turn raises the question of equity—how government should farm out service contracts, given government’s preference for more experienced citizen groups. In addition, how level is the playing field among the citizen groups themselves, given the enormous governance problems facing the country?

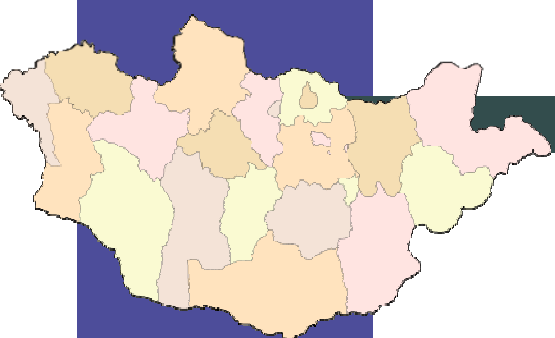
Another issue is the framework for partnership management between a government agency and citizen groups. As service delivery providers “for-a-fee”, NGOs and CSOs are assured of revenues, giving the latter a sense of financial stability. But this arrangement also opens itself to the possibility of co-optation of the latter actors.¹² The risk of co-optation becomes greater because of the asymmetrical relationship between the key actors, the government being the “sponsor” and the CSO being the “client”. To what extent are all parties aware of such possibility and the implications thereof? How are these risks to be mitigated?

A deeper concern is the likelihood of “role reversal”, with the government taking on the role of “monitors” of citizen groups as contracted parties. Social accountability is supposed to highlight the demand-side of governance, that is, to bring the “voice” of citizens—represented by citizen groups—into the arena of politics and decision-making. This is why citizen groups are referred to as “a key actor” in social accountability, the government being the other one. Being under contract by the government as a service provider would raise the question of “Who will monitor whom?” as far as third-party monitoring is concerned. Inevitably, citizen groups will have to be ready to answer questions like “If citizen groups are, in effect, acting as government proxies, then who will do the monitoring?”

Building trust between government and citizen groups

The period of transition between socialist and democratic regimes has been very short for the government and citizen groups (and among citizen groups themselves) to forge a strong relationship. Respondents candidly admitted of difficulties and inevitable conflicts while trying to engage each other in the governance arena.

Pushing for democratic reforms often finds government officials and citizen group representatives on opposite sides of the table. The problem is not only a case of divergent interests but of framing how one side perceives



the other. Labelling one or the other as “incompetent” does not help any—the epithet only serves to “demonize” the other. While in some ways true, such misperceptions often take on proportions that do not match reality.

As in other developing countries, government officials are always in the glare of the public spotlight, making them easy targets of allegations, wrongly or rightly. In Mongolia, suspicions abound about “private NGOs” that are “fronts of, “owned”, or “deliberately set up” by high-ranking government officials, often suspected as conduits of “money laundering”. Whether or not this allegation has basis, such charges often becloud relationship-building among social accountability actors.

Enhancement of citizen group partnerships

One also hears of the “lack of trust” among members of citizen group. Some high profile CSOs are perceived to look down on new and less-experienced CSOs. This gives the impression that the latter’s “inexperience” and “lack of competence” are reasons why government do not give them preference. There are also citizen groups that tend to cast a wary eye on government-CSO agreements, saying that such agreements are as “fragile as the contract paper” on which the agreements are written. Some complain about how some citizen groups have withheld information from their peers. These and other grievances often indicate the shaky relationship between citizen groups and government and even among citizen groups themselves.

Table 11 (next page) presents the challenges and difficulties as perceived by government on one hand, and citizen groups on the other hand. The data in this table were taken from interviews and focus group discussions conducted among key informants.

The next section looks at the third pillar of social accountability, which is access to information. It reviews the environment surrounding access to information in Mongolia, and the extent to which this pillar has advanced—or constrained—social accountability initiatives in the country.

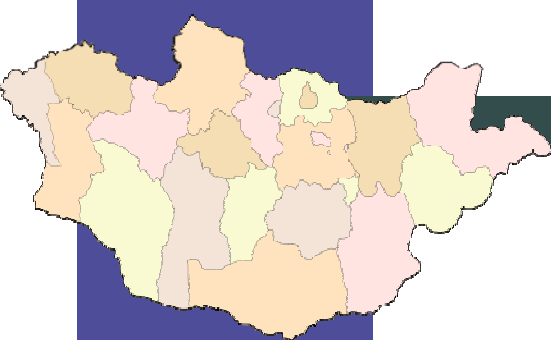


Table 11. Summary of challenges and difficulties of social accountability as perceived by key actors.

LEVEL	RESPONDENTS	
	Government	Citizen Group
National level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGO law is outdated • NGOs are not united in terms of views and activities • No implementing rules and regulations on “government openness” and access to information • No officially designated information officers (task is perceived as minor and unimportant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clear mechanisms on which government level to work with and how to interface with each other’s work • Government officers in charge of civil society lack the capacity to understand and deal with CSOs • While some ministries and agencies respond to requests for cooperation, they have no experience of working with NGOs • No mechanisms to ensure long-term stable cooperation
Hovd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs require funding for administrative costs • NGOs appear to have a suspicious attitude toward government • Many NGOs are not stable in terms of operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government officers lack understanding and appreciation of social accountability • Poor legal environment for NGO participation in government decisions and actions • Government agencies are not supportive of NGOs
Umnugobi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some NGOs are inactive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak implementation of cooperation and enforcement of rules and regulations • Where there is a legal environment, there is no enforcement • Government chooses to work only with experienced NGOs • Some government officials fear that NGOs will take over their work
Darhan-Uul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs do not present a united front; fragmented views • NGOs do not report their activities • NGOs lack initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs continue to face financial constraints • Legal environment is not conducive for social accountability • Government is hesitant to provide information to the public • No support for NGOs • No trust in NGOs

THE MEANDERING FLOW OF INFORMATION IN MONGOLIA

The third pillar of social accountability is “access to information”. Because social accountability is “constructive engagement” between two actors—government and citizen groups—it is important that they regularly engage in dialogue and problem-solving. These two essential activities—dialogue and problem-solving—require the availability, accessibility, reliability, and usability of high quality information. Accessibility of information, at the minimum, is a key determinant of success of all social accountability mechanisms.

Accessibility can mean four things. First, it connotes physical acquisition (such as physical documents) or, in this electronic age, virtual acquisition (such as information acquired through the internet or in electronic form) of information. Second, because not all information is in document form, accessibility may also mean the availability of government officials—and this includes their ability—to disseminate and share information relevant to the public. Third, accessibility implies the availability of information in a form that is understandable and usable to inquirers and/or end-users. Finally, accessibility also refers to places—physical or virtual—where information is archived, stored, and retrieved.

This section scans the environment surrounding access to information in Mongolia. It looks at whether the legal conditions, policies, rules, and regulations in Mongolia support the basic right of citizens to information as part of its good governance framework. It attempts to identify state-supported mechanisms, if any, that facilitate the flow of information to the public. It seeks to answer the question of the extent to which government provides the conditions for citizens and civil society to gain access to government information. Finally, it seeks to determine the gaps, obstacles, challenges, and opportunities where government and citizens are able to share information to advance the aims of social accountability.

The Legal Environment Surrounding Access to Information

Mongolia is a signatory to and is legally bound by international agreements that guarantee people’s rights to seek for and gain access to information. This fact is, likewise, reflected in Mongolia’s constitution. Only

information that is legally bound to be protected as classified and secret is exempt from this general policy.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19, for one, says that

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. (United Nations, 1948)

Article 19 of The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by Mongolia in 1974, provides that

- Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.
- Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.
- The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:
 - For respect of the rights or reputation of others;
 - For the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals. (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1966)

Mongolia's "Freedom of Information and Expression", as provided for in the National Human Rights Program and approved by the Parliament in 2003, specifies the

[Creation of] legal conditions for citizens to ensure the right to seek and receive access to information, and for government agencies to provide access to information at the request of the media and citizens, to ensure transparency of operation by state executive, legislative and judiciary agencies and officers, eliminating restrictions set by legislation on state secrets. (Provision 2.2.5)

Two laws regulate the right of access to information in Mongolia. These are the *Law on State Secrets* and the *Law on the List of State Secret*

MONGOLIAN PARLIAMENT OKs TRANSPARENCY LEGISLATION 17 June 2011

The Parliament of Mongolia June 16 approved the Law on Information Transparency and Right and Freedom to Access Information.

“We believe that the new law will help us to consolidate democracy, freedom of expression and human rights in Mongolia,” commented Naranjargal Khashkhuu, President of Globe International.

Passage of the law was supported by Globe International and the Open Society Foundations, among other groups. The effort to pass a law has been under way for about eight years

In January 2011, the Mongolian Ministry of Justice submitted to parliament a Draft Law of Mongolia on Information Transparency and Freedom of Information. By some reports the final bill is little changed on passage. (No English version of the law as passed exists.) An analysis of the draft bill was done by the Centre for Law and Democracy.

CLD’s Toby Mendel summarized his analysis:

The draft Law has a number of strengths. It defines public bodies quite widely, it has good rules on the processing of requests for information and it puts in place a very broad and progressive set of obligations regarding proactive publication.

At the same time, there are some significant problems with the draft Law. The regime of exceptions is particularly problematical. It is both too wide and too narrow, failing to protect key confidentiality interests while throwing a veil of secrecy over some matters which should be open. Furthermore, it is not based on the idea of preventing harm to protected interests, and it does not include a public interest override. Other problems including the narrow definition of information, sanctions for disclosing confidential information and a rather limited set of promotional measures.

- Retrieved from <http://www.freedominfo.org/2011/06/mongolian-parliament-oks-transparency-legislation/>

Information. But a survey conducted by the Ulaanbaatar-based Globe International NGO (n.d.)¹³, which envisions an “established democratic culture, informed and empowered citizens” in Mongolia, revealed¹⁴ the following shortcomings and drawbacks of Mongolia’s existing laws on the right to information:

- The scope of the Law on State Secrets and the Law on List of State Secrets is too broad. Almost anything can be classified as “state secret”.
- The classification period is very long (up to 60 years) and the items protected for indefinite periods are too many (11 items out of 58 are deemed to be “protected”).

- A number of provisions in the Law on State Secrets overlap those in the Law on List of State Secrets.
- Criminal Law provides up to eight years of imprisonment for disclosing state secrets. This is not consistent with the Johannesburg Principles on National Security, Freedom of Expression and Access to Information (1996). The media and journalists are often under pressure and feel harassed because of censorship laws and harsh penalties.
- A number of laws are used to protect state secrets, but some of these laws contradict each other and often overlap with the general laws. These laws include the Law on National Security, Law on Foreign Trade Arbitration, Law on Resolution of Petitions and Complaints Issued by Citizens to Government Organizations and Officials, Law on Criminal Investigation and Charge, Law on Statistics, Law on Archive, Law on Geodesy and Mapping.

While Mongolian laws and policies support citizen right to access of information, this does not seem to reflect reality. More often than not, the restrictions effectively limit the actual exercise of citizen right. While the law says one thing, government and government officials say and do another thing. Government officials invariably give reasons ranging from “state secrets” to “personal confidentiality”. Efforts by citizens and citizen groups to access information are often effectively stymied. For many Mongolian CSOs, these restrictions have put boundaries on social accountability practice where access to information is a sine qua non in the practice of good governance.

Mechanisms to Facilitate Access to Information

This study surveyed channels or mechanisms of public information, first by identifying government channels to disseminate information, and second by assessing the extent to which citizens and CSOs are able to access and/or receive government information.

There are two ways by which the government disseminates public information: “permanent” and “non-permanent”.

Permanent channels

“Permanent” channels refer to conduits *regularly* used by government agencies and officials to disseminate information to their constituents. For

purposes of this study, “permanent” information channels include websites of selected government agencies, government officials (as conduits of information), and the state bulletin publication.

Websites of selected government agencies

Interviewed government officials said government agency websites are the main conduits of public information. This was made possible because of the e-Mongolia Project (2005-2012) of the Information and Communication Technology Authority. The policy mandates all government agencies to set up websites for the purpose of disseminating public information, specifically on government activities.

This study made a rapid assessment of the websites of 15 government agencies and local governments. (One of the local government units did not have a website, however.) (Please refer to Table 1 for the list of government agencies/units and their official websites.)

The selected websites were assessed using a set criteria and a scorecard. The criteria used were accessibility of information, availability of information, and effectiveness of information.

Table 12 shows the indicators and key questions asked.

Accessibility of information in government websites. Access to information, which is the other face of transparency, is the basis of and a primary step for citizens and citizen groups to oversee and monitor government decisions and actions. Social accountability initiatives have more chances of success if and when government information is accessible, and more so if and when openness and transparency become part of the bureaucratic culture of the government.

Transparency is a key indicator of good governance. Information about government structures, systems, procedures, and operations—with few and limited exceptions—should be made accessible and available to any citizen who demands it. Information should, likewise, be sufficient to allow reasonable oversight and monitoring of government activities, among other things. (Pope, 2006)

In determining the accessibility of information from government websites, this study used a number of criteria, such as the number of times the sites were accessed; whether operational and financial reports—if

Table 12. An assessment of the selected government websites, showing the criteria used, the factors measured, and the key questions asked.

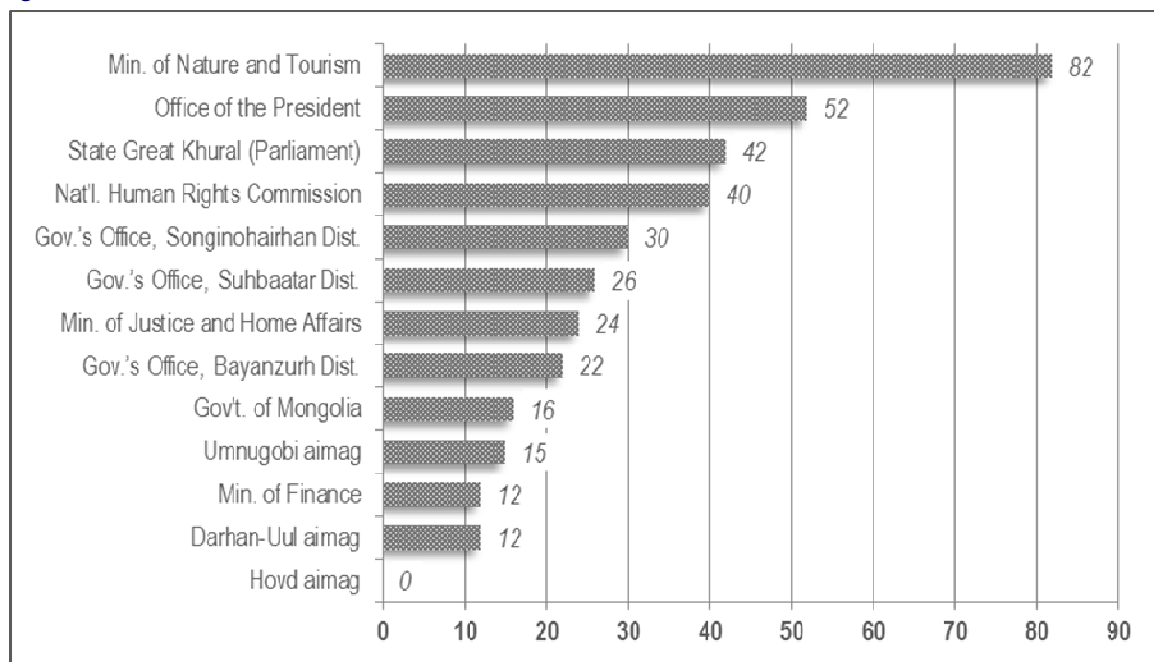
CRITERIA	FACTOR TO BE MEASURED	DIRECTION OF QUESTION
Accessibility of information ¹⁵	Number of times website is accessed—in terms of content and coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often is the website accessed? • Whether there is an easy version of operational and financial reports for the citizens. • Number of opinions, comments and feedbacks in the website. • Are there language options on the website?
Availability of information	Availability of information provided by government for citizens re: products and services delivered by the government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether the agency's operational direction, structure, and division of duties are clearly expressed. • Whether the website contains information on legislation coordinating the agency operations. • Whether the agency's financial and operational reports are displayed on the website. • Whether audit report is on the website. • Whether it is possible to get information on agency activities.
Effectiveness of information	If the information is disseminated in a timely way, at certain intervals and frequency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How frequently is the website updated? • Whether the duration for use of new information is sufficient. • What are the opinions and feedback from users on effectiveness of information? • Whether the content of website meets the requirements of citizens and other interested stakeholders.

posted—were easily understood; the number of opinions, comments, and feedbacks in the website; and the existence of language options.

Figure 5 shows the ratings given by the study's respondents on the accessibility and openness of information based on the set indicators. A perfect score is 50 points (100%), and the "passing" grade is 70%.

The results show that only the Ministry of Nature and Tourism "passed" the "transparency test" out of the 13 government agencies/units evaluated. The Office of the President of Mongolia, which was ranked second, was described as having a website that is "partly open" in terms of transparency

Figure 5. Ratings (in percentage) given by respondents on accessibility of information in selected government websites.



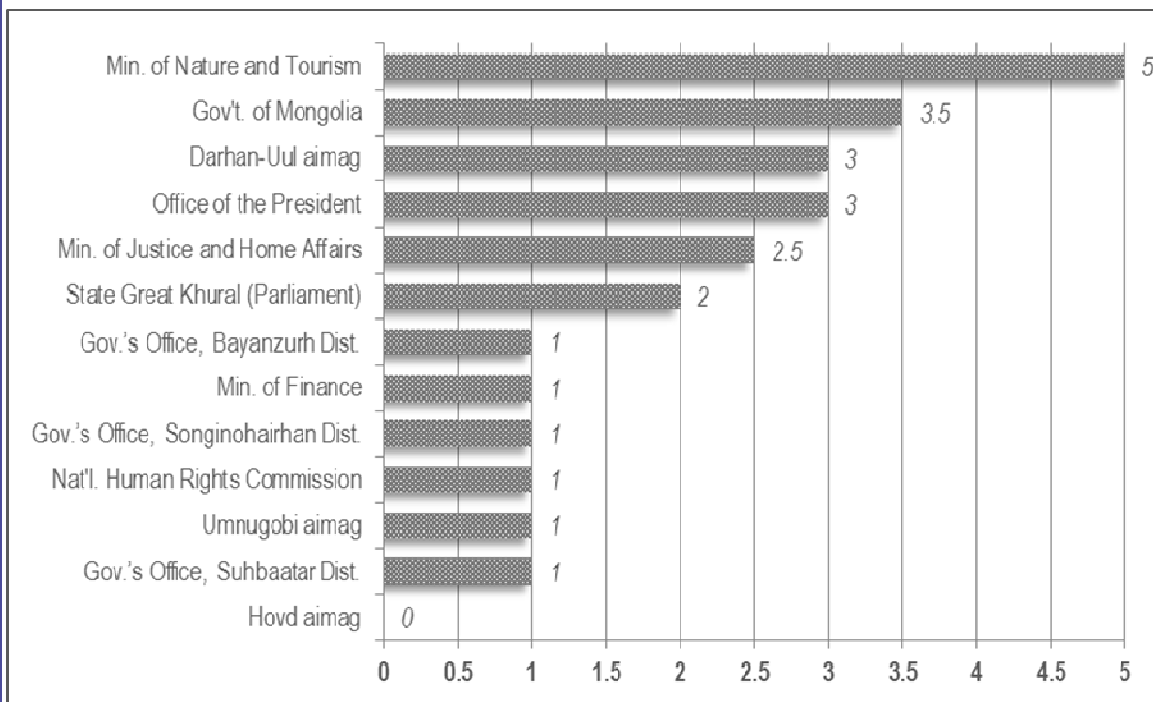
of information. The other websites were perceived to have “insufficient openness of information”.

Availability of information in government websites. In addition to accessibility, information should be sufficient to meet public demand. The criteria used to measure availability of information had four indicators, such as clarity of content of information, availability of language options, and the number of users who accessed the website. The highest possible score is 20 points. Figure 6 shows the findings of the extent to which information is available in the selected government websites.

Again, the Ministry of Nature and Tourism got the highest number of points; however, it was still very low at only five points. The rest were well below the median. In other words, none of the selected government websites met the public’s expectations regarding availability of information. Clearly, availability of information from the selected government websites was considered very poor.

This finding appears to support a survey conducted by Globe International NGO (n.d.) that looked into the content and quality of government websites. Of the 430 who answered the survey, 28% said

Figure 6. Ratings given by respondents on availability of information in selected government websites. (Highest possible score is 20.)



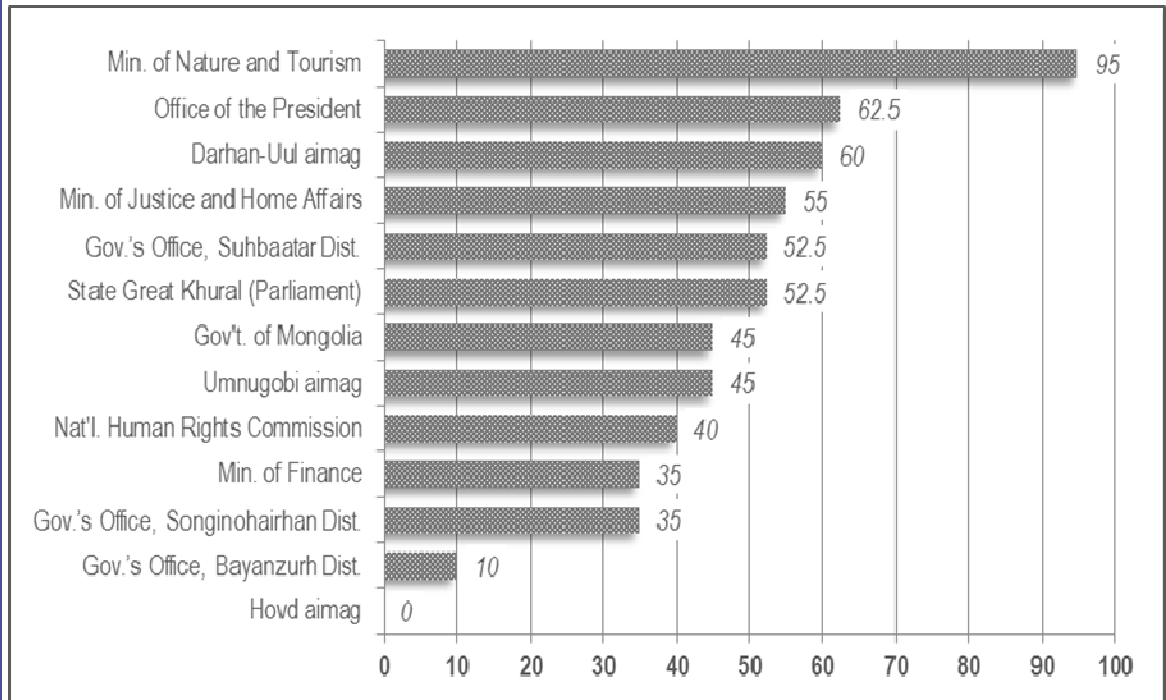
sufficient information was available in the websites, while 16% said the information was insufficient. Twenty percent said the websites did not contain any useful information. Thirty-six percent said they have no knowledge about the websites.

Effectiveness of information in government websites. “Effectiveness of information” refers to whether the content of the website (and the way the information is presented) meets the requirements of citizens and other interested stakeholders. Other indicators include the timely dissemination of information, that is, at predictable intervals and frequency; how often the website is updated; whether the duration for use of new information is sufficient; and the type of opinions and feedback from users on effectiveness of information.

Figure 7 shows the results of the perception survey on “effectiveness” of information among government websites.

Again, the respondents gave the Ministry of Nature and Environment the thumbs-up with a rating of 95%, the highest among the government institutions reviewed. Websites found to be only “partly effective” include

Figure 7. Ratings (in percentage) given by respondents on effectiveness of information in selected government websites.



the Office of the President of Mongolia, Darhan-uul *aimag*, the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs, the Parliament of Mongolia and the Governor's Office of Suhbaatar district. The rest were deemed as failed cases in terms of "effectiveness of information".

Overall, one gets the impression that government websites—at least those included in the study—have not actually addressed issues on accessibility, availability, and effectiveness of information, but are more focused on "appearance", that is, projecting the image of a government that is open and transparent.

The experiences and observations of those who tried to access information through government websites could not agree more. A local NGO official related: "When we asked for information from a government agency, officials there said go to our website because it has everything. But when we checked the website, the information was incomplete and the contents were confusing. When we clicked the links for reports or documents, there was nothing there, or the page was still 'under construction'". (Local NGO official, personal communication, March 2010)

Table 13 summarizes the general points of perceived insufficiency of government websites.

Table 13. Summary of the assessment of the selected government websites.

CRITERIA	POINTS OF INSUFFICIENCY
Access to information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of access counters, thus, there is no way of knowing whether and how many users have accessed the website (or “hits”) • Links that could provide additional information have non-existent pages or “page under construction” notice • No clear directions on how to access specific information • No language options menu (except for the website of the Office of the President) • No mechanisms for public opinion and feedback
Availability of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While general information is present (organizational structure, key officials and personnel, systems), crucial operational and financial information is missing, e.g. budget allocations, actual and projected expenditures, procurement information, personnel qualification, etc.
Effectiveness of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcement of events are posted late (if posted at all), thus, there is not enough time for users to be informed and to prepare for the event • Mainly historical type information is available

Government officials as information sources and conduits

Inherent in a democratic society is the exchange of information and, at a deeper level, dialogue among governance stakeholders. It is natural for constituents to seek and demand for information from their leaders who, in turn, have the obligation to provide such to the former. In a democratic society, government officials are regarded as sources and conduits of public information.

Part of a government official’s mandate is to account for his/her official decisions and actions. The principle of accountability in a democratic society highlights the obligation of government officials to make information accessible and available “horizontally” and “vertically”. Horizontal accountability, in general, means answerability of one’s decisions and actions to one’s superiors and other government institutions. Vertical accountability, on the other hand, refers to the external accountability of government officials toward the public to whom they are ultimately answerable for their decisions and actions.

Government Resolution No. 143 lays down the guidelines for accountability reporting of government activities and operations in Mongolia. Some of these guidelines include the following:

- Information, other than those restricted by legislation, regarding the operations of the agency shall be provided to citizens free of charge and without hindrance through systematic activities.
- Inputs from relevant government and non-government organizations, academic institutions, experts and citizens, if deemed necessary, shall be collected and reflected in developing government policy documents and draft resolutions for common compliance.
- There shall be a hotline operating permanently and a sealed box for receipt of requests, complaints and opinions of citizens, and actions shall be taken in response to input from citizens.
- Requests and complaints shall be resolved within the legally-approved period.
- These provisions serve as guidelines for government officials and institutions to facilitate the public's access to information.

While the legal environment for access to information appears to be conducive, experience says otherwise. The situation has improved, but access to information continues to be a challenge to concerned citizens. As one local NGO official noted:

When we approach government officials for information, they often assume that we—who are thought of as 'outsiders'—are there to 'inspect' their operations. So they refuse our requests. But after the tripartite agreement [among government, civil society, and the private sector], the situation has somewhat improved. They are now providing us with information upon request, albeit with some reluctance. But in general, it is still difficult to get information from the government through formal requests. (Local NGO official, personal communication, March 2010)

Again, this observation was supported the study conducted by Globe International NGO (2008). Of the 330 citizens surveyed by phone, 65% said they had to wait between two years and one month before they were able to get the information they needed. Of this group, 35% said they waited for one month, 21% waited for seven months to one year, 17% waited for four to six months, and 12% waited for over two years.

A major reason for the undue delay for information from the government—which some interpret as “reluctance”—is that many government officials seem to believe their authority precludes their giving out information to the public.¹⁶ Their job descriptions do not mention anything about providing information to citizens. This is the reason why people use informal mechanisms and unofficial channels to access information from the government. This strategy requires establishing personal relationships with government officials, which is often risky. As one respondent said,

Our *aimag* is small and we know each other. We touch base with our friends and relatives in the bureaucracy to get information we need. It’s probably much harder to get information in a big city. (*Local NGO official, personal communication, March 2010*)

The use of informal mechanisms—usually through personal relationships—outside of official channels has led some to question the ethical and legal implications of such a practice.

On the part of many government officials, there seems to be a prevailing thought that providing information to the public is “merely a secondary task”. There are no explicit guidelines on what information is allowed for public consumption, and how to deliver it to the public, so government officials are not motivated to do so.

Full implementation of access to information has a long way to go in Mongolia. Asked to assess the extent of availability of information to citizens, government respondents, on the average, rated the situation at “3” on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 as “very poor” and 5 as “excellent”).

State Information Bulletin

The State Information Bulletin is a weekly government publication that contains information on legislative amendments, presidential decrees, new laws, parliamentary and government resolutions, constitutional court decisions, and Supreme Court explanations and comments on legislations. The bulletin publishes income and revenue declarations of high-ranking government officials, information from the Independent Anti-Corruption Agency and the National Human Rights and Freedom reports.

The bulletin has a current circulation of over 4,000 distributed through four postal delivery companies. All government agencies, including rural Offices of Governors and Citizen Representative *Khurals*, subscribe to the bulletin.

Non-permanent channels

In contrast to “permanent” channels, “non-permanent” channels refer to information conduits that are, strictly speaking, outside the jurisdiction of the government and are only used to disseminate information as the need and opportunity arises. These include the mass media (print and broadcast) and printed materials prepared by government agencies.

Mass media

Like in other countries, the mass media in Mongolia¹⁷ is regarded not only as a conduit of public information but also as a “fourth estate”, that is, as a social or political force that can influence government behavior.¹⁸ One can consider the mass media as a “watchdog”. From the perspective of social accountability, the mass media should be regarded as a key mechanism and tool for information openness and transparency, often leading to positive outcomes. There is no guarantee, however, that the mass media are used as channels to disseminate information useful to the public.

Interviewed government officials do not seem to regard the media as an important channel to disseminate information. Asked to identify the main mechanism for information dissemination, majority mentioned their agency’s website; only a few said “media”. Probably one of the reasons why the media is not extensively used is that it covers only government special events or activities. Government agencies that do use the media do so indirectly by passing information on to a journalist or a reporter.

Printed materials (brochures, leaflets)

Government officials claim that one way of disseminating information is the publication of agency “brochures” and “printed reports”. While this may be true in some government agencies, it has been the experience of NGOs and the general public that such materials are often unavailable and difficult to access.

How access to information is perceived in Mongolia

To assess the current situation on access to information from the government, part of this study was to conduct a survey aimed to determine the various ways by which citizens and citizen groups attempt to access information from government agencies. Specific objectives for the survey were: to identify the manner by which government agencies respond to and process requests, petitions, representations, proposals, and statements from citizens and citizen groups; and to highlight experiences, methods, and ways of working among government agencies and citizens/citizen groups in the context of access to information.

The respondents were CSO members and ordinary citizens who in the past submitted requests for information from a particular government agency. Covered in the survey were the Office of the President of Mongolia, the State Great *Khural* (Parliament), Government of Mongolia National Human Rights Commission, Ministry of Nature and Tourism, Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs, and the Ministry of Finance.

The study asked the respondents to trace back official communication sent to a government agency within the past two years. The communication could be in the form of a request, petition, representation, proposal, or statement. Table 14 shows the requests, petitions, representations, proposals, and statements made by CSOs and citizens within a two-year period. It also shows the manner by which concerned government agencies responded to and acknowledged these.

The results show that, generally, government agencies were slow in acknowledging and responding to citizens' requests, petitions, representations, proposals, and statements, if these were responded to at all. Some of the respondents revealed that they had to make repeated requests. A major factor that appeared to contribute to the delays (or the non-response) was the multi-tiered decision-making process within the agencies. Also, government respondents justified the delay by saying they wanted the information "double-checked" before releasing it to the public.

The Ministry of Nature and Tourism and the Ministry of Finance, however, are more open in accepting formal applications from citizens. The process is for the formal application to be addressed to the ministry's secretary, which is then approved by the minister and by the state secretary.

Table 14. Requests, petitions, representations, proposals, and statements from citizens and citizen groups and government agencies' manner of response.

GOVERNMENT AGENCY	REQUESTS, PETITIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, PROPOSALS, AND STATEMENTS BY CSOs AND/OR CITIZENS	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND/OR RESPONSE BY GOVERNMENT AGENCY
State Great Khural (Parliament of Mongolia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1996-2000 Parliament: 3 of 10 letters sent by citizens were proposals 2000-onwards: fewer number of letters sent by citizens Most letters were unrelated to policy formulation 	No information received.
Government of Mongolia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2008 to first half of 2010: A total of 391 letters (requests, demands, proposals) were received by the Office of the President Election year: Noticeable rise in the number of letters requesting for financial assistance Most letters were unrelated to policy formulation Most letters that were political in content were addressed to the Prime Minister Most letters requested for financial assistance for organizational activities Most letters from individuals pertain to salaries, pensions, grants, and requests for housing Most letters received in autumn were requests for assistance for school fees 	The response rate for letters addressed to the Government in 1992-2004 was comparatively high. However, on resolution of citizen requests, it was observed that the most applications were addressed to lower level organizations or positions, and were recorded as resolved. There were no notifications or reports on the matters from lower level organizations and positions.
National Human Rights Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 2008-December 2009: Most of the requests, petitions, representations, proposals, and statements were from other government organizations 	Most business-like and fastest in acknowledging citizen/citizen group petitions, proposals, and statements.
Ministry of Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Least number of applications from citizens and citizen groups; but the number has increased nevertheless A number of applications pertain to the Oyu Tolgoi (from a protest demonstration) Most of the applications are requests for financial assistance and addressed to the Minister of Finance and the State Secretary 	No information

Table 14. (Continued)

GOVERNMENT AGENCY	REQUESTS, PETITIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, PROPOSALS, AND STATEMENTS BY CSOs AND/OR CITIZENS	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND/OR RESPONSE BY GOVERNMENT AGENCY
Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most applications were concerned with the following issues: • Implementation of court decisions • Disagreements with the decisions of the Prosecution, Court of Appeals, and Retrial Courts • Constabulary decisions and actions • Review of delayed investigations • Petitions for reversal of decisions • Estimates of loss due to collapse of Savings Unions • Selection of lawyers • Job applications, descriptions, and dismissals • Seasonal issues • Registration, terms, and addresses of organizations 	The date and timetable for receipt of citizen proposals is advertised on the internet. The proposals must be sent in written form or through the internet, and by January 2010 all proposals and petitions should have been resolved and the sender notified. All issues are examined by agents of the Minister of Justice and Home Affairs and the issues decided.
Ministry of Nature and Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By end of 2008: Total of 138 applications • 45% were from NGOs and increasing yearly • Mainly on the issue of environmental protection • Number of NGOs in environmental sectors has increased noticeably • Plenty of opportunities for cooperation between NGOs and the Ministry • Many proposals seek to resolve problems and issues in a constructive manner 	At least 5 proposals and petitions from the community and 2-3 proposals from NGOs are addressed to the Ministry of Nature every month. All these issues are decided within the legal framework.

The bottleneck, however, happens when the application is forwarded to a civil servant, who receives the proposal—but offers no answer or reply.

The difficulty in accessing information from government agencies has affected the public's perception of government. Table 15 provides an "expert analysis" of citizens' perception of government responsibility towards its citizens, openness to citizens in government activities, and provision of opportunity for citizens to attend government activities. It also rates citizen acceptance of the government (UNDP Mongolia, 2006).

The fourth pillar—social and cultural appropriateness—provides the human face to social accountability. The next section explores how social

Table 15. Expert analysis of citizen perception of government.

CRITERIA	CONTENT CRITERIA				
	<i>Very good</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Very poor</i>
Expert analysis of government responsibility to citizens	0	1.7 %	32.5%	47.9%	17.9%
Expert analysis of openness in government activity	0	7%	33.9%	43.5%	17.3%
Expert analysis of opportunity for citizens to attend government activities	0	7.2%	52.3%	36.9%	3.6%
Public acceptance of the government	8%	6.8%	33.1%	29.8%	17.2%

accountability initiatives are grounded on Mongolia's social and cultural context.

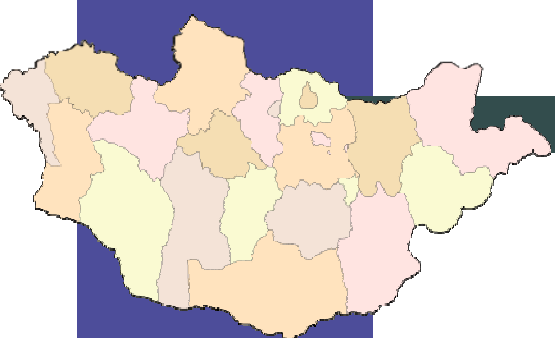
A Culture of Subservience

The parameters of social accountability are largely determined by the existing social and cultural context. The success of social accountability initiatives is often highly contingent on a range of factors: the openness of government, the political culture of the people, the extent to which civil rights are guaranteed, and the bureaucratic culture of probity and transparency. These factors must be taken into account when considering social accountability initiatives.

The political development of Mongolia's civil society

While Mongolia's known history dates back to 2,200 years (Shikii Hutag, 2009), citizen participation and a free market economy—hallmarks of a democratic society—became institutionalized only during the past 20 years.

Mongolia remained under a single-party rule for 70 years, with a centrally-planned economy and a totalitarian system. Freedom House¹⁹, an independent watchdog organization that supports the expansion of freedom around the world, classified Mongolia as “not free” with a score of 4.00 up to the mid-1990s; “partly free” with a score of 2.5 between 1991 and 2002; and “free” with a score of 2.00 since 2003. Loosely, these indicators show that



Mongolian regimes up to the early 1990s (or roughly prior to the democratic transition) were far from respectful of civil and political rights of its citizens.

The amendment of the constitution in May 1990 allowed free elections with a multi-party system, abolished the MPRP's dominant role, and adopted a presidential system. These changes were facilitated by reform-leaning MPRP members, who assumed power following the resignation of the hard-line leadership. Facing an unprepared opposition, the newly reformed MPRP easily won the country's first free parliamentary elections held in July 1990.

Political liberalization has continued since, and the 1996 elections saw the MPRP being swept out of Parliament and a subsequent peaceful transfer of power to the Democratic and Social Democrat Parties. (Freedom House, n.d.)

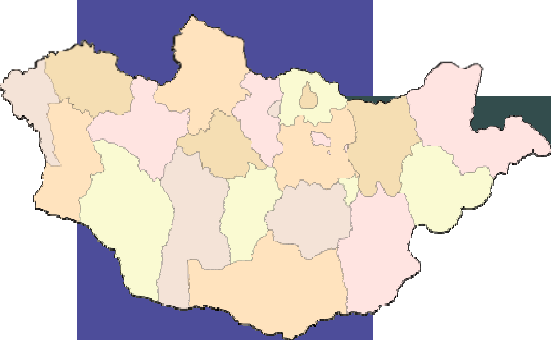
Despite this relatively short experience in democracy, it is worth noting that Mongolia has gained some headway in developing and deepening democratic and social accountability principles and mechanisms.

Various organizations have conducted a number of studies on social accountability in Mongolia. These include government agencies (the Ministry of Finance) and non-government organizations.²⁰ The studies highlighted citizen participation in government action especially in the areas of budget and public expenditure, transparency in the extractive industries and its impact on society, anti-corruption, election monitoring, human rights, and media freedom. Some examples include citizen participation in the budgeting process conducted by the Poverty Reduction Unit and the Ministry of Finance.

The World Bank promotes citizen participation among its local partners, the UNDP has its program on social accountability, and the Women for Social Progress Movement supports the monitoring of the formulation and expenditure of public agency equity.

Social accountability or social responsibility?

In determining where a society is coming from culturally, it is important to look at how its citizens understand terms and concepts related to their development. This study sought to understand how Mongolians understand the term "social accountability" and its variations.



Majority of the respondents understand social accountability in the context of “social responsibility”. For them, social responsibility is action by NGOs, citizen movements, and [individual] citizens working with the government, in monitoring government activities, and participating in and overseeing government action. A research participant explained social accountability this way:

... [P]eople are responsible for each other. Those who earn should receive food that meets their needs in well-being and security, but they should also spend some of their income to benefit others. Social responsibility in highly-developed countries is higher, which results in reduced poverty and increased opportunities for livelihood. But there is still inequality in other countries. So the idea is, if you earn money, you should spend some of it on some target group for social development. That is what I understand as social responsibility. Mongolians have a nomadic civilization, so we are always responsible for others and for our relatives. (Focus group discussion of local government officials, Darkhan-Uul *aimag*, March 2010)

Other respondents defined social accountability as “NGO intervention in government action to participate in and oversee government action” (personal communication, NGO official, March 2010).

A cursory survey of existing literature as well as the results of the interviews shows that the concept of “social accountability”, as used in Mongolia, is closely associated with the term “social responsibility”. The word “responsibility” implies duty, obligation, and performance of one’s task. The word “accountability”, on the other hand, is closer to “reportage, reporting one’s performance of duty, and being responsible for one’s action.” Reporting one’s responsibility, therefore, is the goal of “accountable governance”.

A milestone in the history of social accountability in the country was the publication of a handbook simply entitled *Social Accountability* (Davaadulam, 2010). The handbook introduces social accountability as “oversight”, a reference to the idea that citizen monitoring is a key function of social accountability.

Public officials as power-holders

Part of understanding the people's perceptions about social accountability is to look at their traditional outlook on power relations as shaped by their history. Social accountability has two main actors who are in constant interaction with each other—the government on one hand, and citizens and citizen groups on the other. Obviously, how citizens perceive and regard their government will affect how these actors relate with each other.

Traditional Mongolian respect for public officials

Power holders in ancient Mongolian society were placed at the top of the public totem pole. Some even went to the extent of “worshipping” public leaders. This reverence was applied to the state as a “god”, and public leaders were regarded as “statesmen”.

The tradition of reverence for the state—and the state's perceived power over its constituents—is a major factor that continues to impact on government-citizen relationship. For example, the high self-regard of public officials toward their office, on the one hand, reinforces the power asymmetry in favor of the government and tends to discourage active citizenship. On the other hand, constituents look at the government as a beneficent patron, thus fostering a culture of dependence. These tendencies—deeply rooted in Mongolian society—are still strong and evident (IRIM, 2010).

Culture of subservience towards authority

For over 200 years, up to the early 20th century, Mongolia was under the Manchu Dynasty.²¹ The domination of a foreign power had left traces of subservience in Mongolian culture especially towards public authority. It is not surprising, then, that “social distance”²² between government officials and ordinary citizens in Mongolia is more pronounced. For example, ordinary citizens are not comfortable before government officials. They tend to kowtow and flatter them; worse, they offer bribes to gain favors. Many people say this is one of the reasons for the rise of corruption incidence in Mongolian society today.²³

The 70-year old communist regime made an indelible impact on people's attitude toward the state and those in authority. The ruling communist party regulated and strictly controlled all public affairs. Those who opposed the state were sent into exile. There was no opportunity for citizens to engage the government in a constructive manner, nor monitor government action. This has resulted in what is called the "Mongolian mentality". A study, for example, posits that:

"Mongols have a tendency to seek charismatic leaders and then perceive the individual representing the state as the state itself. This brings about the belief that that individual is more powerful and capable than anyone else. Therefore it is a common ambition to become a chairman, not to be satisfied with being an ordinary person. But the Mongolians are sure that their fate is decided by the state, not by themselves, and seldom accept that government policy may be nonsense. Instead, they prefer to follow and be dependent on a person of higher position. For a Mongolian, the state is the sole truth and heavenly thing, so their own attitude is to accept governance by the state, with no opposition." (Gankhuyag, n.d.)

A UNDP study supports this finding on the way this unique "Mongolian mentality" was shaped by historical, political, and cultural factors:

"The long-established mentality of the Mongols to "respect the state" and the immaturity of the notion that the government provides services to the public

TRADITIONAL MONGOLIAN SAYINGS SHOWING RESPECT FOR THE STATE AND PUBLIC LEADERS

A number of sayings or proverbs express this unique regard toward government institutions and public personalities. Some of these are:

"When someone goes against the King, he loses his head as someone against the dog loses his sleeve."

"The state shows its iron face to its people."

"May the state emblem bless you."

These sayings or proverbs show the respect which people give to the government and its representations. This perception of state power gives a unique understanding of the concept of "public agency". This also goes with how "public organization" is understood; it is more like a state administrative organization that exercises power over ordinary citizens.

continue the tradition that discards legality, creating favorable conditions for public officials to put themselves above the citizens, enjoy special perks and reputation.” (UNDP Mongolia, 2006, p. 15)

The citizen culture toward authority has made it difficult for Mongolians to be self-reliant and self-sustaining (Sosormaa, 2008). For social accountability to be mainstreamed in Mongolia, it is crucial that the strategies, tools, and mechanisms are sensitive to the unique features of Mongolian culture.

THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN MONGOLIA

Going through the data and information, the researchers were provided with an opportunity to look at the panorama of how social accountability is understood and practiced in Mongolia. Using the Four Pillars of Social Accountability as its framework, the study attempted to examine and describe the historical, socio-political, economic, and cultural factors that have contributed to the current practice of social accountability.

Hopefully, this study will expand the knowledge base of social accountability approaches, tools, and mechanisms not only in Mongolia but in the East Asia and the Pacific region as well. More importantly, the outcomes of this study can be used as a platform to promote and advance social accountability in Mongolia.

The study shows that Mongolia does not lack laws and policies supportive of social accountability—beginning with the 1992 Constitution down to specific legislations. In fact, Mongolia has a “Law on NGOs”, enacted in 1997, which clarifies the role of NGOs vis-à-vis the government and recognizes citizen groups as legal entities representing citizen and sectoral interests.

More importantly, the law departs from the socialist notion of state-controlled citizen organizations whose only purpose is to support state policies and programs. In fact, the law allows citizens and citizen groups to monitor government decisions and actions, and to provide feedback. In addition, the Law on Government (2003) makes it legal for government to outsource duties and services to accredited citizen groups.

But while Mongolian laws and policies are supportive of social accountability, there are a number of gaps and challenges that need to be addressed. One is the discrepancy between what is written in the law and its actual implementation. In many instances, government officials make arbitrary decisions despite provisions allowing citizen groups to engage with government. Two, there is a need to establish an ethical code of conduct to guide the behavior of government officials as well as members of citizen groups in carrying out their engagements. The code of conduct should be culturally sensitive, yet at the same time an instrument to overcome cultural constraints to social accountability practice. Three, a unifying legal framework that will guide and facilitate the work of all stakeholders should be in place. Such a framework should, likewise, address contradictory provisions in existing laws.

The State Registration Office of Mongolia recognizes more than 12,400 citizen groups, of which more than 60% are “public benefit NGOs” while the rest are “member benefit NGOs”. The study had a sample of 161 citizen groups. Majority of these organizations work in the following areas: civic education and democracy, environment protection, delivery of basic services, citizen capacity building and protection of public interests, and women and gender.

In terms of actual constructive engagement with government, citizen groups in Mongolia have focused on the following activities: monitoring of government activities specifically in terms of budget and expenditure, the environment and extractive industries, and access to information; ensuring budget transparency; focusing on policy research; advocating for environmental issues; and strengthening civic education and network expansion. Broad-based citizen coalitions have been working with government in various capacities to help mainstream social accountability. These coalitions include the Civil Society Council (of NGOs), the Citizens’ Oversight of the Budget Coalition, Civil Council of Environment NGOs, and the PWYPE Coalition.

One of the major constraints of social accountability work in Mongolia is the dependence of most citizen groups on external funding for operations and sustainability. Other challenges include coming up with a common understanding of social accountability, enhancing the capacity of citizen

groups, avoiding the issue of co-optation by government agencies, and trust-building between and among social accountability key actors.

While Mongolian laws have provisions that, in effect, allow access to information by citizens, there is no specific law that puts together a legal framework mandating the State to open itself to citizen scrutiny. Understandably, this “delay” in the promulgation of such a law, if it can be termed as such, is probably a spillover of the decades-old socialist regime. In fact, the two sets of laws that regulate access to information—the *Law on State Secrets* and the *Law on the List of State Secret Information*—reflect this thinking.

A number of issues on access to information have been identified, such as which information should be classified as “state secret”, the length of time for a piece of information to be classified “secret”, legal provisions that contradict each other, and many more.

A so-called permanent channel of information is the website of a government organization. Using accessibility, availability, and effectiveness of information as criteria, the study conducted a rapid assessment of a sample of government websites. The results showed that nearly all the government websites failed in all three aspects. Overall, however, the website of the Ministry of Nature and Tourism got the highest scores.

Using ANSA-EAP’s Four Pillars of Social Accountability as guide, this section looks into gains, issues, and gaps related to social accountability initiatives and practice in Mongolia. Where areas for improvement have been noted, recommendations from the research participants are forwarded as take-off points for adjustment and social accountability enhancement towards sustainability.

Government Responsiveness and Openness

Social accountability involves two key actors—the government and citizen groups—engaged in a dynamic relationship as they carry out actions that have developmental impact. What is clear from the study is that the government, while showing openness in terms of policy pronouncements, has still a long way to go in molding the attitudes and mind-set of its workers.

Policy- and principle-based decision-making

Decisions to allow citizen participation are often erratic and arbitrary. While the law encourages citizen participation in governance, experience of citizen groups show that the final decision remains at the hands of government officials. Policy-level standards and criteria are not followed, and this practice generates feelings of resentment and envy among citizen groups, especially those that are “disqualified”.

The same problem hampers the continuity and sustainability of activities common to NGOs and government agencies. It is often the case that activities are dropped or discontinued when a government agency’s leadership is replaced, leaving NGOs empty-handed. In other cases, guidelines are changed unilaterally to the dismay of NGO workers. Not a few NGO leaders commented that practices like this are such a waste of resources.

Probably, one of the reasons for this arbitrariness is the lack of a clear policy framework that would tie up legislations and policies related to social accountability. Lacking a unifying frame, not to mention inconsistencies among the various provisions, many government officials—and, for that matter, any social accountability practitioner—find it difficult to make sense of the laws and policies supporting citizen participation and engagement.

A second reason is partly historical and partly cultural - reverence for traditional authority reinforced by decades of foreign domination (during the Manchu Dynasty) and followed by years of state-controlled socialism. In addition, 20 years of democracy have yet to erase the mind-set of state monopoly on decision-making in governance matters. The interaction of these factors may have shaped in the so-called “Mongolian mentality”, as discussed earlier.

But while nearly 80% of respondents in the study expressed reservations about the government’s openness due to legal and policy constraints, most of them said the situation has definitely improved.

A more open government

A good example is the Ministry of Nature, Environment and Tourism. It allows citizen participation in drafting its plans and conducting its activities. It has endorsed a bill specifying the NGOs it would work with, has a cooperative agreement with the CSC on Environment, and has enjoined the



CSC on the Environment to sit in the Council and Environment Evaluation Committee. In 2010 alone, the Ministry farmed out a total of 34 government contracts to NGOs.

Likewise, some local government units have welcomed citizen groups by signing agreements with the CSC and the Civil Hall, allowing citizen groups to participate in and monitor tender and procurement processes, and farming contracts to NGOs. Uvurkhangai and Dornogovi provinces have been open to the research findings of Mercy Corps. Provinces that work openly with citizen groups include Umnugovi, Khovd, Darkhan-Uul, and Uvurkhangai.

A legal framework informed by an ethical code of conduct

First, a new Law on Administrative Procedure should be adopted, one that establishes an ethical code of conduct to guide the behavior of government officials. (For that matter, citizen groups might, as well, develop and implement an ethical code of conduct for themselves.) The proposed code should spell out the appropriate manner—maybe by adopting international ethical standards—by which government and citizen groups should carry themselves as they work together in their common endeavors.

Second, in addition to a comprehensive legal framework for social accountability, the government needs to legislate implementing rules and regulations. These should include detailed guidelines on how to operationalize government action in social accountability. The rules and regulations should contain guidelines and procedures that would facilitate the work between government agencies and citizen groups.

Third, representatives of the CSC-NGOs—the national network of civil society organizations—should take part in the screening and selection of citizen groups that will be officially accredited to work with government agencies. The standards and criteria for the screening and selection should be an outcome of collective efforts among citizen groups, and between citizen groups and the government.

Fourth, the existing regulations on NGO taxation and social insurance payments should be revoked. Many NGOs simply do not have the financial capacity to pay these obligations. In addition, the NGOs' lack of financial resources often results in a situation of dependence on funding agencies

including government. Some quarters fear that such dependence would compromise their objectivity.

Compliance to the law

Fifth, the judicial courts are a vital mechanism in facilitating a more conducive legal environment for social accountability. A civil movement leader says that “the parliament and all government agencies, which issue decisions and regulations, should comply with the Constitution. The Constitutional Court, which monitors compliance with the Constitution, is legally mandated to receive complaints from citizens if government agencies violate constitutional provisions.” (A civil movement leader, personal communication, March 2010)

Finally, the government should consider the following specific policy proposals:

- Government agencies are duty-bound to allow participation of citizen groups in government decision- and policy-making; implementation of programs, projects, and activities; and evaluation thereof;
- Government agencies are to include in their official records the comments and opinions of citizen groups, and to provide the reasons if these are omitted;
- Government officials are duty-bound to respond to citizen complaints within a specific period of time; and
- Government agencies are to invite citizen groups in the Working Group to select NGOs in outsourcing government services, and to ensure citizen participation in developing the criteria and the regulations.
- Adopt a Law on Administrative Procedures that will include a code of conduct for government officials.
- Exempt from taxation all donations and funds from the private sector for NGOs. Revoke the legal obligation of NGOs to pay for the social insurance for NGO part-time and non-permanent staff.

Organized and Capable Citizen Groups

The manner and speed by which social accountability is mainstreamed into governance practices and structures are contingent on key actors’ understanding and appreciation of the concept in the context of Mongolian society.

A common understanding of social accountability

Government officials tend to understand social accountability as “social responsibility”, that is, the obligation of individuals, businesses, and society in general to *fulfill their duties toward* the government. Somehow, this notion does not exactly fit with CSOs’ understanding of social accountability, which focuses on the *demand-side of governance*, that is, citizens exacting accountability from government as a matter of right.

Respondents understand social accountability as participation and oversight/monitoring by citizens, represented by citizen groups, in government decisions and actions, which is precisely the expression of the demand-side of governance. But it should be equally emphasized that the quality of citizen engagement with government is *constructive*. “Constructive” means the engagement is anchored on *dialogue* between and among key actors as well as *problem-solving* on issues that crop up along the way. In addition, it means the engagement is evidence-based and results-oriented, not one that is in peril of being co-opted. The goals of such an engagement should result in better delivery of services, improved community welfare, and protection of people’s rights.

What is clear, however, is the need for all key players to level off and come up with a standard understanding of social accountability and similar concepts. At the minimum, a leveled off understanding of concepts and terminologies would help sort out terms that tend to obfuscate the message. At the maximum, it will provide the frameworks and structures by which experience from the ground can be readily understood, appreciated, synthesized and actualized.

A scaled up information dissemination and raising people’s awareness on social accountability should, likewise, be made a priority. Specifically, there should be a more focused advocacy campaign targeted at government officials and institutions for the purpose of deepening their understanding of social accountability concepts and developing a more positive attitude toward citizen groups.

The responsibility of facilitating a systematic advocacy campaign seems to be within the purview of citizen groups that are already into social accountability. The campaign—the form and content of which may be

customized—should focus on the actual experiences of citizen-government engagement, the lessons gained from such experiences, the citizens' right to demand for good governance, their duty to participate in governance processes, the benefits accruing to them through a more efficient and effective delivery of services, etc.

Strengthening of social accountability initiatives in Mongolia

What is certain is the growing interest in social accountability not only among citizen groups but also in government. A number of government agencies and local government units have opened their doors to social accountability initiatives. In the same manner, citizen groups have shown interest in working with the government at various levels in areas such as public service delivery (through partnership agreements, with citizen groups as service-providers); monitoring the flow of revenues (specifically in the booming mining industry); overseeing the budget and public expenditure; participating in policy decision-making processes; etc. Engagements with the government are quite diverse, including: environment conservation, democracy and civil education, women empowerment and gender equality, citizen engagement, rights and interest protection, the extractive industry, social welfare, and many more. It will do well for the government not to overlook these initiatives because they provide the balance necessary for a democratic society to function.

Somewhere at the top of the CSOs' priority list should be an agreement to lay out a shared thrust or direction toward achieving common governance and development outcomes, using social accountability as a major approach. CSOs need to level off and share information about each other's' experiences and plans, including goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics. Citizen groups can also add to the growing body of knowledge on social accountability in Mongolia by sharing their lessons and insights in dealing with government, not to mention the tools and techniques they use—all for the purpose of clarifying their social accountability advocacy and agenda.

Accessing and sharing information

As emphasized in this study, social accountability can only work if information is accessible. The experiences of other countries show that even

with the presence of the appropriate legal and policy support, information can still be withheld or denied because of the intransigence of government officials. In Mongolia, this attitude can be attributed as a carry-over from the previous dispensation. (Citizen and citizen groups, however, may also project a “holier-than-thou” attitude when demanding for information from government agencies, thus creating a negative reaction on the part of government officials.)

This is the reason why there is a need for attitudinal and behavioral changes among the key actors of social accountability in Mongolia—with the special mention of government officials—as far as access to information is concerned. Citizen groups, on the other hand, will gain the confidence of other stakeholders if they are open in sharing information with the government, including the methods, tools, and mechanisms they use in monitoring government actions, as well as the results of such activities. For citizen groups, there is need to develop and nurture an environment conducive for information sharing to facilitate social accountability initiatives.

The results of the monitoring and evaluation activities of cooperative ventures between government agencies and citizen groups at the region, *soum*, and *aimag* levels (including those in Ulaanbaatar) should further enhance citizen-government engagements, highlighting the lessons and insights gained from the experience, and identifying opportunities and challenges. The outcomes could, then, be used as platforms for higher-level engagements with specific government agencies as well as for regular sharing with other citizen groups.

Sustaining the work of social accountability

Majority of citizen groups are, for the most part, currently being supported and sustained by international funding organizations. Without such support, these citizen groups will be forced to close shop.

Having identified this as a major constraint, respondents admit the necessity of continued support from external donors. Currently, international donor agencies provide funds for NGO operations as well as technical and capacity-building support for specific sectors.

To be self-sustaining, there is a need to maximize internally-generated resources, with the government as a key resource. Not a few respondents mentioned that it would help citizen groups if the government will include contracts for CSOs in its regular budgets for the outsourcing of identified services. A number of initiatives in this direction are already being implemented at various government levels.

It is also recommended that the Executive Branch (through the Office of the President) and the State Great *Khural* (the Parliament) formulate policy guidelines on the selection criteria, scope of citizen group involvement, roles and responsibilities, etc. Needless to say, citizen groups should be involved in the development of such guidelines. In addition, it would help if government can put together an annual plan listing the programs, projects, and activities—including timelines and budgets—in which citizen groups can participate through formal agreements and contracts.

It is likewise proposed that government agencies and units set up offices dedicated to facilitate government- citizen group partnership and collaboration. Needless to say, a pre-condition for the creation of such offices would be an openness of mindset and attitudes among heads of ministries and government units, down to the level of key staff and personnel.

Building the capacity of key players in social accountability

Citizen groups need to upgrade their capacities because social accountability demands organizational, political, leadership, technical, and ethical competencies. Social accountability covers facilitating dialogues between and among key stakeholders, promoting an environment conducive for negotiation and coalition-building, problem-solving, developing and applying context-sensitive tools, generating data and sharing information and knowledge, and many more. While citizen groups should be concerned about lack of human resources, they also need to give attention to a more focused and systematic capacity-building.

Technical training should be emphasized for staff and personnel, specifically for those who specialize in the multi-faceted work of government bureaucracy including: understanding government organization and administration, policy-making procedures, public finance management and

systems, etc. At a minimum, workers should be familiar with government language and civil society jargon.

There should be a mechanism to oversee, monitor and evaluate contracts between government and citizen groups, not only to assess the performance of the stakeholders, but as a way of highlighting the lessons and insights—including challenges and opportunities—of the various social accountability experiences. The lessons and insights could then be used as a platform for regular sharing with other citizen groups.

Expanding the knowledge base on social accountability

As constructive engagement intensifies, the need to broaden and deepen the social accountability information and knowledge base has become more pronounced. For this purpose, it is imperative to document social accountability experiences in the country using the Tales, Tools, and Techniques (or 3Ts) framework of social accountability recommended by ANSA-EAP. Knowledge sharing should be encouraged not only among social accountability practitioners and experts in the country, but also with peers in the East Asia-Pacific region. Such sharing is sure to enhance theory and practice.

Social development researchers, the academic community and those in established higher education institutions are perhaps in the best position to articulate the theoretical foundations of social accountability. They can also provide the scientific rigor needed in developing and testing tools, mechanisms, and systems. It is, thus, important that social accountability practitioners and experts—both in government and in citizen groups—work closely with those in the academe, and vice-versa. Social accountability practitioners can provide the experiential grounding, while academicians will have a venue for grounded theory formulation.

Government and CSO research institutions are encouraged to develop a priority research agenda and to lay out a plan of collaboration in the years to come. At the same time, international donor organizations that support good governance initiatives are most welcome to include a research agenda in their development activities.

Access to Information

Three major points appear to be highlighted in the area of access to information: (1) the need to address contradictory provisions in the law (specifically in reference to access to information and transparency), (2) the need to improve the government's conduits of information, and (3) the need to close the gap between policy pronouncement and policy implementation.

Addressing contradictory provisions in the law

Officially, legislation and policy in Mongolia guarantee the right of any citizen to access information from any government agency at any government level. But the law's effectiveness has been limited because of a number of contradictory provisions in the current legislation, such as those in the Law on State Secrets and the Law on List of State Secrets.

This is a real problem among citizens and citizen groups who want to access information from the government. Yet, it is the primary obligation of the government to review, analyze, and take the necessary action in order to address those provisions that contradict each other.

There is, likewise, a need for the government to review and clarify the policy on "state secrets". One way to do this is to make public the classifications and to provide a list and a description of classified materials.

Government agencies should work closely not only with citizen-experts but also with citizen groups in reviewing contradictory provisions. Another way by which CSOs can help is in making people aware of their basic right to information. This can be done through advocacy activities, capacity building (e.g. training), and acting as conduits for citizen demands.

International organizations—especially those that provide much-needed resources to both government and non-government organizations—would do well not only as a third-party advocate but to actively support legislations that promote access to information.

Improving channels of information

Many government agencies see their websites as tools or mechanisms for information dissemination. However, an analysis of their websites shows a number of weaknesses in terms of content, availability of information, and

effectiveness. One can only conclude that government websites do not appear to be fully responsive to citizen demand for information.

Table 16 shows the strengths and areas for improvement of government conduits of information: websites, government officials, media, and printed materials. The table also puts forward corresponding recommendations.

Table 16. An assessment of government conduits of information and some recommendations.

CHANNELS	STRENGTHS	AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT	RECOMMENDATION
Government organization websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most organizations have a website under the government run e-Mongolia program • Websites provide primary information about the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many websites are “symbolic”, i.e. merely to comply with policy requirements • No one is in-charge of, and hence accountable for, the administration of the website • No budget/lack of resources to maintain the website 	Include the website administration duties in the scope of work or job description of officers appointed specifically for the task
Government officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While government officials may provide information, this is mainly due to the “push” that citizens exert, without any due diligence on the former’s part 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No designated person to provide the necessary information • Access to government officials is often difficult due to multi-level bureaucratic channels 	Separate regulation on provision of information to citizens and civil society through a separate set of rules and procedures
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the initiative of media and journalists, government information has become more accessible to the public about the government organizations and their actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited budget for information dissemination that hinders government initiative to disseminate information 	Budgets need to be allocated to support citizen right to access to information
Print materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publications distributed to citizens during Open Day events provide basic information about government organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of budget limits printing of required number of copies for information dissemination 	Budgets need to be allocated to support citizen right to access to information

Two things are crucial in moving the agenda of access to information in Mongolia forward. The first is the availability of qualified and capable human resources in each government agency to focus on the management of information in relation to citizen demand. The second is the allocation of public resources or budgets for the establishment and maintenance of mechanisms—such as websites—to facilitate information dissemination and access by citizens. Underlying these two assumptions, of course, is the need for those in public office to change their way of thinking as far as citizens' right to public information is concerned.

Closing the gap between policy pronouncement and policy implementation

It has been noted repeatedly in this study how citizens and citizen groups find it difficult to access information from government agencies. The difficulty is compounded by the perceived huge gap between what is stated in the law and its actual implementation (or lack of it), such that citizens find the process time-consuming, redundant, and a waste of resources.

To address this problem, the government bureaucracy should seriously consider the following recommendations:

- Review systems and procedures and put in place a more systematic and efficient way of providing information to the public;
- Each government agency should designate an official, with clearly defined terms of reference, who will be accountable in providing information upon citizen demand and in ensuring transparency; and
- Put in place the corresponding system for reward and sanctions in the performance of duties.

Citizen groups can provide support by assessing government openness to provide information to the citizens, and by providing them feedback on their performance. To maintain fairness, the criteria to be used in the regular assessment should be developed both by citizen groups and the government agencies.

International organizations may act as a “third-party bridge” between citizen groups and government agencies. This “bridging” role may take the form of technical and resource assistance to promote good governance outcomes.

Social and Cultural Appropriateness

The democratic system in Mongolia has only been around for 20 years. The government has, since, been enjoined to account for its actions and decisions, and the citizens encouraged to participate. The practice of social accountability—supposedly an essential feature of democracy—is largely determined by the existing social and cultural context.

Listening to the community's voice

Traditional Mongolian culture is characterized by a) small clan systems based on herder families living together, and b) a lifestyle that is closely tied to nature. The first, a small clan system, is a fundamental springboard for encouraging citizen group initiatives. The second, close affinity with nature, is key to strengthening Mongolians' natural disposition toward environmental conservation. These two characteristics are, in all likelihood, the key to developing a cooperative and participatory capacity directed toward addressing environmental issues.²⁴ If so, social accountability initiatives should emphasize community-based social accountability action geared toward making the government accountable for any decision and activity affecting the environment. More importantly, communities affected by decisions that touch on the environment, such as in the extractive industries, should have their voices heard in the chain of decisions that eventually impact on their lives. The time when only the voices of “key players” (in the environment and extractive sectors, referring mainly to the government and “big business”) were heard is a bygone era .

Alignment of capacity building efforts with the local culture

Building the capacity of social accountability actors has been recognized as a major need. This is true, both for citizen groups and government actors, who need to enhance their “soft” and “hard” competencies to advance social accountability initiatives.²⁵ Very crucial in shaping the capacities and competencies of the actors—and thus the probability of success of social accountability initiatives—are the recognition of and inputs from the local and ethnic social and cultural factors. A capacity building design, for example, that takes into account local social and cultural norms has a better

chance of shaping the appropriate and specific behaviors that make constructive engagement efforts more successful.

This point is highlighted because of the rising interest in social accountability and, thus, the urgent need to address capacity building requirements. The easiest way is to scan, identify, and borrow capacity building designs, activities, or “best practices” of social accountability from other countries. While there are social accountability designs and practices that can be easily adapted to the Mongolian setting, one should consider the risk of implementing programs that do not take into account the social and cultural sensibilities of the local people.

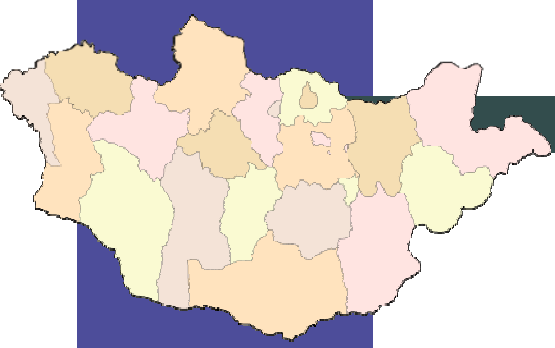
While there are capable local experts who can (and should) serve as resource persons in capacity building activities, it may still be necessary, at this point, to invite foreign experts and practitioners. Part of the requirements should be for these non-Mongolian consultants to be given a comprehensive orientation session on Mongolian culture relevant to social accountability.

The point is that all capacity building designs and activities should seriously take into account the social and cultural context of the Mongolian society.

Addressing Mongolian society’s “social distance”

While Gankhuyag’s “Mongolian mentality” (n.d.) is not unique to Mongolia (as similar mindsets and behaviors are also found in other cultures), there is a need to bring about a change in the way people think and behave toward each other, specifically in the context of advancing democracy and social accountability. In this regard, CSOs are crucial in raising socio-civic awareness among the people by promoting the values of democracy, human rights, and civic participation. CSOs should lay out a comprehensive strategy to: a) strengthen the capacity of citizen groups to engage government, and b) support government efforts in formulating policies and implementing plans to enhance civic action.

In addition, CSOs should support government efforts in creating and fostering a strategic and sustainable development policy—that can easily be translated into programs and projects—that integrates social accountability with outcomes that benefit Mongolian society.



The other aspect is to promote and enhance government openness toward citizen initiatives where these are found. Government agencies can work hand in hand with CSOs in providing information to the public, maintaining partnerships in various sectors (environment, human rights, etc.) and in public management (revenue generation, budget and expenditure). Government policies can provide the necessary mechanisms that will allow citizen participation to flourish. In addition, the government can develop an educational curriculum that will enhance democratic principles, especially the right of citizens to participate in governance.

Members of citizen groups and officials of government agencies should undergo capacity-building together, where warranted. Studies have found that the problem of the so-called “interactive social distance” is minimized when common learning activities are conducted together (Answer.com, n.d.). The idea is that the more the members of two groups interact and learn together *and* from each other, the closer they become socially. Such learning activities can be framed under ANSA-EAP’s “learning-in-action” framework, which emphasis “mutual learning” that leads toward the formation of a “community of learners and practitioners”.

ENDNOTES

¹ According to the National Statistics Office of Mongolia, the population of Mongolia as of October 2010 was 2,777,560. (National Statistical Office of Mongolia, 2010).

² Retrieved from the website: <http://www.asuu.mn/medleg/ediin-zasag/175/1007140011>

³ Under the socialist system, the ruling party tended to discriminate against and penalized those who were not members of the state-approved public organization.

⁴ This mandate has not been implemented because the Working Group has not listed any NGO up to this writing.

⁵ As the country's capital, the City of Ulaanbaatar has its own local government category separate from the *aimags*, *soums*, and districts.

⁶ The researchers believe that the predisposition toward collective problem solving has found its application in the management and resolution of labor issues and in the practice of corporate social responsibility.

⁷ The initiative was called "Glass Wallet" to highlight transparency in the budgeting process.

⁸ The Open Day Event is organized by various government agencies to introduce their programs, projects, and activities and disseminate information on services being offered, one of which is a public discussion of budget-related information.

⁹ The July 1, 2008 riots stemmed from accusations of election fraud. The ruling party's headquarters and other government buildings were torched as thousands of stone-throwing rioters battled police. Five were killed during the riots. (Quinn, 2008.)

¹⁰ Established by the National Council of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative, the Technical Working Group facilitates participation in policy making, drafting of reports, developing recommendation and conclusions, etc.

¹¹ The administrative expenses of the Council, as well as its secretariat's office space and furniture, are shouldered by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, while its day-to-day operations are funded by various donors.

¹² "Co-optation" means to assimilate, take, or win over into a larger or established group. Retrieved from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/co-optation>.

¹³ Globe International NGO is a "non-profit-making, non-membership and tax-exempted NGO...founded in March 1999 to "sustain Mongolian democracy and civil

society, and spread power of information and knowledge". It claims to be "the only group working on freedoms of expression, information and media" [sic]. (Globe International NGO, n.d.)

¹⁴ The survey was conducted in collaboration with an international organization called "Article 19", which advocates for a global campaign for free expression. (Article 19, 1996)

¹⁵ Accessibility of information means the ability of citizens to receive, check and download information regarding government services, service quality and distribution.

¹⁶ Such thinking is probably a relic of the socialist regime, during which authorities tended to be on the safe and conservative side. This was often interpreted by non-government people as "being suspicious".

¹⁷ Though the media provide an important channel/tool for information, they were not included in the survey. The observations and conclusions referred to here are from the qualitative survey.

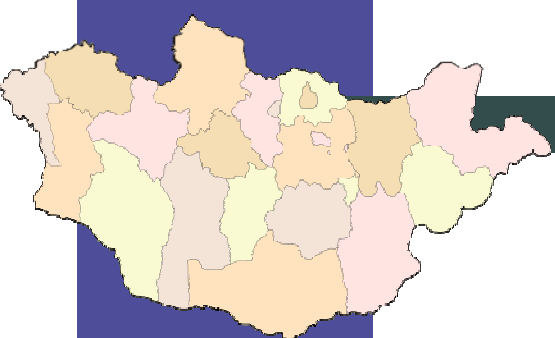
¹⁸ The "fourth estate" is the public press, referred to as a collective and encompassing photographers, journalists, television broadcasters, and radio announcers, among others. Many people generally agree that the fourth estate has immense political and social power, thanks to the fact that the press can be used to shape societies while imparting news of note and commentary of interest. Because the fourth estate is recognized as such an important body, many nations have laws which protect the rights of the press, ensuring that citizens have access to reporting on matters of interest and of note. (WiseGeek, n.d.)

¹⁹ Freedom House is an independent watchdog organization that supports the expansion of freedom around the world. Freedom House supports democratic change, monitors freedom, and advocates for democracy and human rights. *It publishes* standard-setting comparative assessment of global political rights and civil liberties. The *Freedom in the World* data and reports are available in their entirety at the Freedom House website. See <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>

²⁰ NGOs that have conducted studies on social accountability and similar themes include the World Bank, UNDP, Open Society Forum (OSF), Asia Foundation, Globe International, AusAID, Mercy Corps, Mongolian Press Institute, Women for Social Progress Movement, Zorig Foundation and the Human Rights Development Center.

²¹ The Qing (Manchu) Dynasty (1644-1912) was China's last dynasty. The Manchu emperors were unpopular because they were non-Han Chinese and they descended from horsemen from the north and opened up China to exploitation from the West. Even so they made many improvements in the lives of ordinary Chinese and expanded China to its present size. (Facts and Details, n.d.)

²² "Social distance" is the perceived distance between social strata, as in different socio-economic, racial, or ethnic groups. This is usually measured by the



amount of contact between groups, such as through friendship and marriage. This distance may have arisen spontaneously, as certain groups prefer to ‘keep themselves apart’; but it is often imposed on one group by a dominant group. The charter group, for example, may keep a distance between it and a minority group, through discriminatory practices. (Answers.com, n.d.)

²³ One of the major findings of the report “Assessment of Corruption in Mongolia” (2005), consistent with other quantitative and qualitative studies conducted previously, is that opportunities for corruption are increasing in Mongolia at both the “petty” or administrative and “grand” or elite levels. (USAID, 2005)

²⁴ At present, environmental issues and nature conservation are two areas where civil society and the government seem to be working effectively.

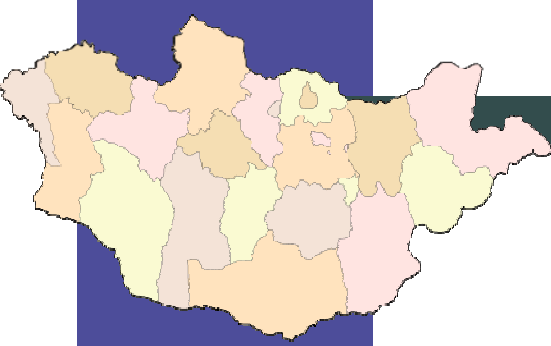
²⁵ “Soft” competencies in social accountability include basic knowledge and skills (including right attitude) in constructive engagement, which include dialogue and collective problem-solving. “Hard” competencies include data and information processing and analysis.

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Social accountability
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Henedina Razon-Abad
Writer

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For more information, please contact:

ANSA-EAP Operations Team
Ateneo School of Government, Pacifico Ortiz Hall, Fr. Arrupe Road
Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City 1108
Republic of the Philippines
Telephones: +6 32 426-6062 and +6 32 426-6002 ext 4627
Fax: +6 32 920-2920
E-mail: info@ansa-eap.net
Website: www.ansa-eap.net



ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AER	Action for Economic Reforms
ANSA-EAP	Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific
ATIN	Access to Information Network
CAC	Coalition Against Corruption
CBCP	Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines
CCAGG	Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government
CMFR	Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility
CNGG-Negros	Citizens' Network for Good Governance Negros
Code-NGO	Coalition of Development NGOs in the Philippines
CSO	Civil society organization
DepEd	Department of Education
FDC	Freedom from Debt Coalition
G-Watch	Government Watch
GPRA	Government Procurement Review Act
InciteGov	International Center for Innovation, Transformation, and Excellence in Government
IPD	Institute for Popular Democracy
IPER	Institute for Political and Electoral Reform
IRA Watch	Internal Revenue Allotment Watch
LGU	Local government unit
MBC	Makati Business Club
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
NASSA	National Secretariat for Social Action
NGO	Non-government organization
PAJDGG	Provincial Advocates for Justice Development and Good Government
PCIJ	Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism
PDAFWatch	Priority Development Assistance Fund Watch
TAN	Transparency and Accountability Network
WAND	Women's Action Network for Development

THE GROWING DEMANDS OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE PHILIPPINES

In recent years, the world has witnessed a growing apprehension about the quality of governance and accountability of public officials for their decisions and actions. Public investments have failed to reduce poverty. Lack of transparency, absence of rule of law, and corruption continue to beleaguer developing countries, revealing the inability of existing accountability mechanisms to resolve these problems (Paul, 2005). In a 2005 survey for the World Economic Forum to measure citizen trust in government, respondents identified four deficiencies: responsiveness, accountability, transparency, and effectiveness (Ramkumar and Krafchick, 2007).

In the Philippines, democracy is handicapped by the continuing dominance of a political aristocracy whose wealth is derived from their control of the state apparatus. Likewise, by an economic oligarchy whose economic base may be independent of the state apparatus but whose access to the state is, nonetheless, its principal way of accumulating wealth. The result is a situation that has been caricatured over and over again in political commentaries about the Philippines' condition: a small network of families and clans monopolizing power and economic wealth, while the great mass of people live in abject poverty and misery.

A very thin layer of middle class in the pyramidal structure exists but most have staked their meager resources and reluctantly left their families to seek for greener pastures abroad as overseas workers toiling to earn a decent living in unfamiliar cultures. Over the years, this condition has fostered a culture of political patronage, which breeds and thrives on the



insecurity and helplessness of the poor. The deeper the poverty gets, the greater the dependence of the poor, the more secure the hold of the few over power. One of the persistent problems plaguing the Philippines is this culture of corruption and patronage that permeates its political and governance institutions. The result is a weak state engaged in rent-seeking activities that cause corruption and mismanagement of the Philippine political economy.

Amidst this context, several non-government organizations (NGOs) in the country have initiated various actions to assert their right to participatory governance and to make government account for its policy choices and decisions. This is not surprising since the Philippines is known to have one of the most vibrant, dynamic, and capable civil societies in the world—providing policy inputs, delivering social services, pursuing socioeconomic development and generating accountability. Early on, their interventions may not have been known as social accountability interventions until the World Bank introduced the label (Sirker & Cosic, 2007).

As the sector substantially responsible for the transition from authoritarian rule, the civil society in the Philippines believes that it is still needs to play a critical role in deepening democracy in the country amidst persistent problems of weak political institutions, unabated corruption, and increasing poverty. The invaluable role of civic engagement in development is similarly argued by Reuben as he asserts that the “existence of a healthy and active civil society does not preclude the existence of a robust state, and vice-versa” (Reuben, 2003).

ACCOUNTABILITY: AT THE HEART OF A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

The virtues of social accountability have been extolled in various good governance literature. Most recently, it has been a favorite buzzword. If social accountability is to be regarded as something more essential and lasting than a fad, conceptual and analytical clarity is necessary.

In clarifying the concept, it is hoped that the fundamentals are laid out to ensure that social accountability adds enduring value to anti-poverty work and sustainable development outcomes.



Power Relationship Between State and Citizen

Accountability is about how to control the exercise of power. How to restrain power, prevent abuses, and keep it in line with established rules—this is the question that has preoccupied political thinkers since the time of ancient philosophers (Newell & Bellour, 2002). Today, the notion of accountability continues to reflect the same concern: how to apply checks, oversight, and institutional constraints on the exercise of power.

Accountability implies both an obligation of public officials and a right of people or citizens. It means “being held to account” (compliance) as well as “giving an account” (transparency) of one’s performance while “taking account of” (responsiveness) the needs and aspirations of constituents. It also implies both answerability and enforceability. The very function of accountability is to ensure that those who wield power on behalf of others are answers for their conduct. Political and bureaucratic officials have the obligation to inform citizens and explain to them what they are doing. They are morally and legally bound to account for their conduct or adherence to rules; and the performance of their responsibilities and mandates to the citizens who, in turn, have the right to demand accountability from them (Singh, 2004).

This obligation of public officials to report their actions to their citizens can be traced back to the Roman period when public examination of accounts was done. These were verified through reference to witnesses and vouchers called *auditus* or “hearings” that were conducted. The *auditus*, however, was presented orally because of the parties were illiterate.¹

Accountability involves the construction of a “grammar of conduct and performance as well as the standards” used to assess the performance of public sector actors, which then defines expectations and orders social relationships (Paul, 2005).

There are two universal expectations. First, public sector actors are expected to obey the law and not abuse their powers. Second, they should serve the public interest in an efficient, effective, and fair manner. To enforce this code of conduct and standards of performance, there must also be the capacity to sanction—capacity on the part of the accounting agencies to impose sanctions on power holders who have violated the code of conduct



and standards of performance. This is to provide incentives so that public officials become strongly motivated to perform at their maximum capacity and not to break the rules. For example, this may take the form of voting a scoundrel out of office or imposing a penalty or issuing an indictment.

The principle of accountability lies at the heart of a democratically governed society. How it is articulated and implemented determines the manner in which the social contract between state and society is enforced. In a democracy, the state performs many essential functions for the welfare and development of its citizens and provides essential services many of which are “public goods”. It collects taxes from the people to discharge its functions and is accountable to society for proper use of the resources entrusted to it.

Precisely because citizens have delegated certain responsibilities to individuals in public office to carry out specific tasks in their behalf, citizens have the right to hold those in power answerable for their decisions. Those holding positions of power have the obligation to listen and respond to the views of the citizens. A system of sanctions should be in place to enforce these rights and obligations. It is this understanding of accountability in which rulers explain and justify actions to the ruled, which traditionally distinguishes a democratic society from a tyrannical one (Sollis and Winder, 2005).

Horizontal and vertical accountability

Traditional mechanisms to enforce accountability can be both horizontal and vertical. Horizontal accountability is the most direct form of accountability. It refers to the formal power of state institutions to monitor one another. Horizontal accountability systems include the following: (1) political mechanisms (constitutional constraints to power, separation of powers, legislative oversight, investigative bodies); (2) fiscal mechanisms (formal systems of auditing and financial accounting); (3) administrative mechanisms (hierarchical reporting, norms of public sector probity, public oversight); and (4) legal mechanisms (corruption-control agencies, judiciary, and ombudsman).

The vitality of the horizontal accountability hinges on strong and capable institutions that are able to check and monitor one another while protecting their independence, rising above patronage or partisanship. The separation



of powers, the recognition of fundamental rights, and the system of checks and balances are all aimed at curbing the arbitrariness of power (Diamond & Morlino, 2005). For mechanisms of legal accountability to function effectively, the legal system must be capable of enforcing the law and to make the rulers obey the law (March & Olsen, 1995).

Vertical accountability, on the other hand, is the obligation of electoral political leaders to answer for their political decisions demanded by citizens and civil society groups.² The ballot is the classic formal mechanism of vertical accountability that allows citizens to hold the government accountable for its rule. Political competition and informed participation are crucial conditions for strong vertical accountability. For citizens to effectively use the ballot to hold public officials and political parties accountable through elections, they must be engaged and knowledgeable about the issues and performance of those in power and turn out to vote in large numbers (Diamond & Morlino, 2005).

To be effective, good governance accountability discourse emphasizes that horizontal accountability should be reinforced by strong vertical accountability in which citizens, mass media, and civil society organizations have the right to scrutinize public officials and government practice. But it is also important that public officials are not simply open to criticism but must proactively work with society to improve honesty and performance of government. They need to engage in dialogue to explain and justify their plans of action, behavior, and the results of these actions. Consequently, they gain the approval and trust of the public. Hence, accountability by itself is a process (Ackerman, 2005).

FACTORS FOR STRONG ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

The following factors help in building capable political accountability mechanisms:

- Established rights for civil society groups to function competently and independently, such as freedom of association, right to information and a rule of law to protect them from intimidation and retribution;
- Political competition, fair distribution of power and informed participation to enable voters to hold their public officials and ruling parties accountable through elections; and
- Legal system with the capability to enforce the law and to make the rulers obey the law.



Claiming the People's Right to Development

There is widespread perception that traditional forms of accountability—vertical mechanism such as elections and horizontal mechanisms such as institutional checks and balances fail to ensure an effective watch on the use of public authority (Joshi, 2008). This perception is created by evidence of corruption and poor decision-making by public authorities in most governments. In response to this “crisis in accountability” civil society organizations (CSOs) began to engage in different forms of collective action demanding accountability from government.

Social accountability does not replace traditional institutions of accountability. This is because social accountability includes a broad range of actions and mechanisms that rely on civil engagement to hold the state to account for its decisions, policies, programs, and actions (Malena, 2004). In effect, social accountability complements and strengthens horizontal and vertical accountability mechanisms.

At the core of social accountability are the principles of citizen's rights, inclusion, empowerment, and social justice. It involves informed action based on rigorous analysis of data, where citizens use their rights responsibly to put an end to abuse and misuse of public power. Since social accountability is anchored on rights, it does not merely focus on asserting interests and concerns of the poor. More importantly, it includes developing people's abilities to influence and negotiate directly with official decision-makers (Fischer, n.d.).

In their most promising forms, “social accountability” innovations offer disadvantaged people opportunities to operationalize rights and to shift the terrain of governance from technical solutions to social justice issues (Mangahas, 2007).³ In other words, accountability systems are expected to, not just satisfy concerns with procedural integrity, but also respond to norms of social justice. In the context of development, this means holding state and non-state actors accountable for their contribution to poor people's opportunities to reach substantive levels of human of human development and to realize substantive freedoms.



Social accountability can be done after the fact or ex post accountability where citizens mobilize and sanction public officials for specific transgressions that had already occurred. It could also be continuous accountability, i.e. citizen groups participate in institutions designed for continuous citizen involvement in policy formulation and implementation to minimize the risk of misuse of public resources.

Accountability has traditionally been based upon an assessment of whether procedures have been followed diligently, not whether a social desirable outcome has been produced. However, Brinkerhoff (2004) asserts that social accountability is not simply concerned with procedures but rather it is concerned with three governance issues. The first issue is how to prevent or control the misuse and abuse of public resources and/or authority. The second is ensuring the citizens that resources are used and authority is exercised according to appropriate and legal structures, professional standards, and societal values. The third is improving service delivery and management through feedback and learning.

Social accountability practice show that citizens' efforts to hold officials responsible for their actions have moved beyond the periodic elections and have also begun to engage in a number of activities aimed at exacting fiscal, administrative, and political or democratic accountability from the government. These actions are concerned with making sure that (1) public resources are used according to the rules—responsibly and efficiently, (2) government agencies perform according to agreed-upon performance standards and targets, (3) government officials (both elective and appointive) are true to their oath of office, and (4) public institutions are governed by the rule of law in carrying out their functions.

DEFINITION OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Social accountability is a set of principles with a range of tools and activities—that includes the perspectives of those who are traditionally and structurally disadvantaged and, with rigorous analysis of information and evidence, seeks to hold public sector actors responsible for the performance of their functions (Clark: 2007). Social accountability initiatives and practices are based on principles of citizen's rights, inclusion, empowerment and social justice.



Social accountability strategies simultaneously focus on citizen participation, enforcement of the rules, and improving performance. The standard is no longer mere adherence to procedure but the achievement of outcomes assessed in terms of improving the lives of the poor and vulnerable groups.

SOWING THE SEEDS OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The emergence of social accountability in the country was brought about by political and constitutional reforms that created spaces for CSO involvement and participation in deliberation processes and service delivery. However, sustaining these reforms to further deepen democracy and improve the lives of the poor remains to be a gargantuan challenge.

An Accountability Deficit?

Institutions, whether formal or informal, are the means through which authority is exercised in the management of resources of the state. The most significant contributions of the 1987 Constitution to democratization are the provisions for direct participation such as people's initiatives to recall officials and propose laws and charter amendments, question the sufficiency of the factual basis of the declaration of martial law or the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, and form party-list groups to run for Congress in the case of sectoral groups (Pangalanan, 2002; Sison, 2002).

The enactment of the Local Government Code (LGC) in 1991 devolved powers from the central government to the local government units (LGUs).⁴ The Code aimed to bring the government closer to the people, with LGUs bearing the responsibility for providing services to meet the development needs of the people. Shift from the center to the local also provided opportunities to practice participatory governance as enshrined in the 1987 Constitution.⁵

Public office is a public trust and public officials and employees must at all times be accountable to the people, serve them with utmost responsibility, integrity, loyalty, and efficiency, act with patriotism and justice, and lead modest lives. (Art. XI, 1987 Constitution)



This provision in the Constitution sets the standard as to how public sector actors should behave. The Constitution not only provided in detail the obligations and the available mechanisms that provide checks to the exercise of authority; it also provided, in detail, an impeachment procedure and the creation of an independent Ombudsman⁶ and a special anti-graft court called Sandiganbayan as the mechanisms to sanction erring officials.

The accountability deficit in the Philippines, therefore, refers not so much to the absence of laws and regulations and formal institutions aimed at providing for accountability in governance, but to the lack of enforcement and actual application of accountability. While there is no dearth of laws and institutions, there has been a marked relegation of these to mere formalities. Clientelism and bureaucratic capture continue to characterize governance institutions in the country. They are not driven by public interest but are, in fact, captured by economic and political interests.

Bureaucratic capture and corruption has resulted, not only in monetary costs, but also in weakened trust relationships between government and citizens that constitute the basis of all social interaction. Getting information from the government is difficult. It does not easily release information despite Section 5 of Republic Act 6713, or the “Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards”, which provides that “all public documents must be made accessible to and readily made available for inspection by the public within reasonable working hours.”⁷

There is also no viable Freedom of Information Act in the country. Without this piece of legislation, citizens and CSOs find it difficult to access important documents and records for monitoring and scrutinizing public affairs. This limits the opportunities for public oversight and renders the policy decisions and public actions vulnerable to the discretion of those who are in positions of authority. When politicians and public officials are not required to disclose information regarding their actions and transactions, the administration of public funds is susceptible to the prerogatives of individuals in power rather than dictated by public interest, for their actions and decisions need not be justified to an affected public.⁸ (Grimes, 2008)

According to the Access for Information Network (ATIN), the government resists full transparency because of the following reasons:⁹ (1) providing access is seen not as a part of the regular duties of government, but as a



favor that can be dispensed subject to the custodian's discretion and convenience; and (2) vested interest in the non-disclosure of information—especially if the information is controversial and may open an agency to questions and criticisms or if the information is related to some anomaly or irregularity in the official transaction of an office.

Diamond and Morlino (2005) assert that political competition and the distribution of power must be fair and robust enough to allow for genuine alternatives at the various levels of government. It is necessary to produce some electoral alternatives over time, so that incumbents face a credible threat of electoral punishment. Robust political competition does not only affect the responsiveness of political leaders but also strengthens the capability of citizens and organizations for social accountability work. The existence of public officials who are sincerely supportive of and sympathetic to the cause of social accountability, whether they are in institutions of public oversight or in political office, affects the feasibility of civic action to hold public officials accountable.

In the Philippines, however, strong and healthy political competition does not exist. Rocamora and Hutchcroft (2003), in analyzing political institutions in the country, lament that “political parties and the electoral process in the country remain dominated by personalities rather than programs; legislative institutions continue to be the domain of many of the same old political clans and *trapos* (traditional politicians); and the legislative process is still driven by the politics of pork and patronage.”

Adequate freedom and pluralism in media, likewise, strengthen the ability of media to take up a cause and assist in mobilizing a broader segment of the population for social accountability causes. Media should be protected from intimidation and retribution. There should be freedom of speech, information, and assembly.¹⁰

In recent years, Philippine media have been subjected to legal harassment in the form of libel suits and continuing murders of journalists. According to the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR) in its report entitled “The State of Press Freedom Report 2007”, 71 journalists were killed in the line of duty since democracy was restored in the country in 1986. Of these, 54 were killed during the term of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. CMFR also noted in its report that 90% of those killed



had exposed corruption in government (Inquirer.net, 2008). Freedom House classified the country since 2005 until the present as “partly free” noting many freedom indicators for the Philippines have declined since 2005 with press freedom being undermined by killings of journalists and gravely threatened by a poor record of prosecuting those responsible for media killings. (Freedom House Report, 2008)

*Table 1. Freedom House Scores, Philippines.**

SCORES	2005	2006
Accountability and Public Voice	4.46	4.16
Civil Liberties	3.92	3.85
Rule of Law	3.30	3.29
Anti-corruption and Transparency	3.50	3.38

**Scores are based on a scale of 0 to 7, with 0 representing weakest and 7 representing strongest performance.*

To date, the persistent problem that continues to plague the country is how to build institutions for democratic and accountable governance. As most reform advocates realize, good governance does not simply happen. Definitely, it requires a particular kind of politics and leadership (Leftwich, 1993).

Pervasive Corruption

Another reality that continues to impair the government’s consistency, effectiveness and efficiency is the presence of rent-seeking agents in government. Corruption minimizes the gains of democratization, stunts productivity, makes prompt response difficult, and strains and obstructs state-society interaction (Magadia, 2003). CSOs responded to this problem through various methods and approaches—from confrontation to constructive engagements with government (Arugay, 2005).

According to a World Bank study released in June 2008, corruption in the Philippines is perceived to be the worst among East Asia’s leasing economies. The ranking of the Philippines on corruption control has worsened over the past 11 years, from 45.1% in 1996 to 22.0% in 2007 (World Bank, 2007). Transparency International gave the country a score of 2.5, on a scale of 10,



with 10 as the cleanest. The Philippines ranked 117th among 159 countries, indicating that the country has a “severe” corruption problem (PCIJ, 2005).

In September 2006, a World Bank Report on World Wide Governance Indicators showed a sharp decline in the Philippines’ ranking in the control of corruption, from 50.5% in 1998 to 37.4% in 2005 (World Bank, 2007). The Philippines was perceived as the most corrupt in the 2008 survey of the Hong Kong-based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy. Based on a grading system with 10 as the worst possible score, the Philippines got 9.4, worsening from its grade of 7.8 in 2006.

MAPPING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICE: MAIN FINDINGS

Despite this indication, social accountability initiatives in the country continue to emerge and take on the difficult tasks of scrutinizing government performance, as well as addressing the weak public accountability prevailing in the country. Intermediary CSOs have also played critical roles in enhancing poor people’s capabilities, assisting them to access and understand information and use that information to demand from government responsive and efficient delivery of services.

The proliferation of social accountability projects is related to the increasing interest of the international donor community in good governance plus the mounting desire of ordinary citizens to hold public sector actors accountable.

Social accountability work of CSOs in the Philippines is a response to the need to deepen democratic politics and good governance, specifically to monitor and assess performance of government, as well as to curb corruption that seems to be endemic to and embedded in the culture of government. While a good number of organizations seeking to exercise social accountability are anti-corruption organizations, there are also those seeking to secure entitlements for their own community or for marginalized communities.

Most of the social accountability practices were initiated by the CSOs themselves as a response to the weak accountability institutions of the state.



These are supported by multilateral and bilateral funding agencies. There are 34 practices included in the scoping exercise.¹¹ Through their social accountability initiatives, CSOs are gaining access to arenas of public account and procurement processes, as well as performance monitoring of public sector actors. Citizens are beginning to assert their citizenship by demanding answers directly from power-holders—auditing local spending, observing public bidding, and demanding to know the whereabouts of funds that are missing. These are relatively new arenas for most CSOs.

What Drives Social Accountability Practice

While there may be different initiatives, there are common aspirations and objectives that unify the different initiatives. These are the following: (1) put an end to pervasive corruption and arrest further weakening of institutions by pushing for institutional transparency and responsible leadership from public sector actors; (2) exercise of the people’s right to influence the public choices that shape their lives; (3) show that democracy works by pushing anti-poverty agenda and better service delivery through community-driven development strategies; and (4) actualize participatory citizenship through inclusion and empowerment in social accountability work.

Table 2 summarizes trends in the Philippines based on five fundamental questions that should be asked to enable people to understand social accountability relationships. (A more detailed matrix is presented in Annex A.)¹²

VARIOUS SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY APPROACHES

Classifying social accountability initiatives in categories that would capture the full range of experiences as well as distinctly differentiate one initiative

DRIVING FORCES FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICE

- Put an end to pervasive corruption.
- Exercise of the people’s right to influence the public choices that shape their lives.
- Demonstrate that democracy works for the poor.
- Actualize participatory citizenship through inclusion and empowerment.



Table 2. Five fundamental questions for social accountability.

QUESTIONS	TRENDS IN THE PHILIPPINES
Who is seeking accountability ?	Civil society organizations (coalitions and networks) mobilizing ordinary citizens to directly engage power-holders to answer for their decisions and actions as state actors.
From whom?	Bureaucrats and elected officials of national government agencies and local government units; Members of Congress
Where?	There are more avenues for social accountability: Local and sub-national government National government
How?	Diverse set of approaches and tools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy advocacy • Self-awareness workshops • Information dissemination • Participatory budgeting • Budget analysis • Expenditure tracking • Monitoring of government procurement process • Monitoring of government infrastructure projects • Report cards • Opinion polls
For what?	Strengthen transparency, responsiveness, and accessibility of government

from the other was difficult. This stocktaking study classified initiatives according to objectives, using the three categories of Brinkerhoff (2004): political or democratic accountability, financial accountability, and accountability performance. Table 2 summarizes this typology of social accountability practices.

Political and Democratic Accountability

Essentially, political/democratic accountability involves actions that create and strengthen the societal institutions to actualize social accountability and, in the process, increase citizens’ trust in government and enhance its legitimacy. It includes defining and enforcing the standards and code of conduct and ethics for assessing government performance. In the Philippines, this includes campaigning for a Freedom of Information Act,¹³ lobbying for electoral reforms,¹⁴ facilitating the creation of a “graft intolerant culture”¹⁵, or ensuring that appointees of the President of the Philippines are persons of integrity and competence.¹⁶



Financial Accountability

According to Brinkerhoff (2004), financial accountability is concerned with how government “allocates, disburses and utilizes financial resources”. Social accountability practices under this category can be further differentiated into the following sub-categories: (1) informed budget advocacy, (2) public expenditure tracking, and (3) participatory budgeting.

Table 3. Types of accountability based on objective, tool/technique, and outcome.

TYPE	OBJECTIVE	TOOL/TECHNIQUE	OUTCOME
Political/ Democratic Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that government delivers on electoral promises, fulfils the public trust, and responds to ongoing and emerging societal needs and concerns. Effective political accountability enhances the legitimacy of government in the eyes of citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparency and openness of government records and transactions Policy advocacy and lobbying Public discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased levels of citizens’ trust in government Clear agreed-upon standards of probity, ethics, integrity, and professional responsibility Enhanced legitimacy of government
Financial Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tracking and reporting on allocation, disbursement, and utilization of financial resources, including procurement and contracting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tools of auditing, budgeting, and accounting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proper financial management Reduced opportunities for graft and corruption
Performance Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrating and accounting for performance based on agreed-upon targets Focus is on the services, outputs, and results of public agencies and programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance measurement and evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies, projects, and programs are responsive to the needs of the poor Achievement of service delivery targets Service delivery improvement Public sector management reform



Informed budget advocacy

Budgets are the basic instrument of governments to mobilize, allocate, and monitor scarce resources.

Thoughtful and methodical scrutiny of the public budget enables citizens and civil society groups to raise important governance and policy issues and advocate reforms—on public expenditure priorities, distribution of benefits to different groups of people, and revenue-raising schemes.

Informed budget advocacy focuses on the impact of the budget on transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to development needs of the country, especially the needs of the poor. It involves solid fiscal research; production and dissemination of timely, accessible and useful information to a wide range of stakeholders; and mobilization of people to influence budget processes and outcomes.

Public expenditure tracking

The primary objectives of this practice are to identify leakages and to improve efficiency in the delivery of public goods and services. This involves scrutinizing how specific government agencies actually spend the money appropriated to them.

Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting is related to the involvement and consultation of citizens in the budgeting cycle. Citizens participate in the different phases of budget formulation, decision-making, and monitoring of budget execution. Social accountability practitioners hope to increase government responsiveness to the needs of the poor and at the same time increase transparency to allow citizens and officials to understand and commit themselves to difficult trade-offs inherent in budgeting processes. Social accountability practices such as Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) Watch and Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) Watch introduced the social justice element in the accountability discourse. These practices recognize the imperative of addressing the pressing needs of the poor as well as actualizing their right to hold government officials accountable. After all, the poor are the group most affected by corruption.



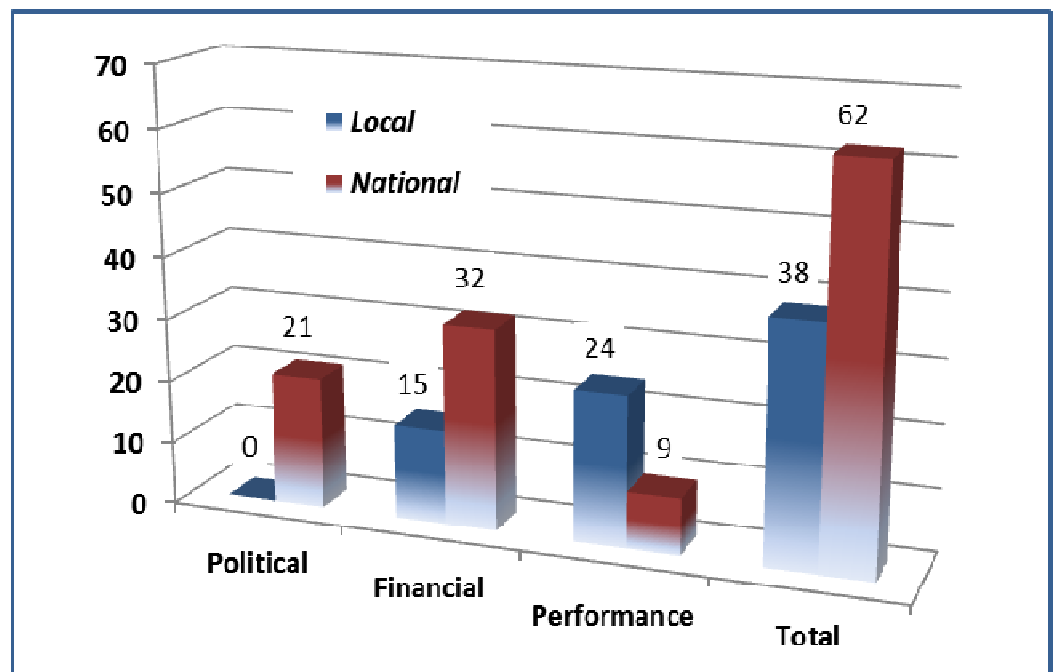
Accountability for Performance

The principal focus of social accountability practices under this category is the delivery of public goods and services and how public sector actors fulfil their roles and responsibilities. The main strategy in this type of social accountability practice is monitoring by citizens through the use of report cards, citizen feedback through opinion polls, and participatory audits. The principal motivation is to ensure relevance, responsiveness, and sustainability of local development programs and services.

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES IN THE PHILIPPINES

Figure 1 shows that 47% of the social accountability practices scoped in this study were focused on financial accountability. Thirty-three percent of scoped practices centered on accountability for performance with 24% of the initiatives implemented at the LGU level while 21% were aimed at enabling and strengthening political/democratic accountability.

Figure 1. Social accountability practices, according to type.





Sixty-two percent of the social accountability practices were being done at the national level with 32% of these practices focused on financial accountability. Twenty-one percent centered on political/democratic accountability and 9% on performance.

Thirty-eight percent of the practices were being implemented at the local level with 24% of these practices concerned about holding local governments accountable for their performance and 15% focused on financial accountability.

Table 4. Clustering of social accountability practices by objective.

TYPE BY OBJECTIVE	SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICE	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION
Political/ Democratic Accountability	Freedom of Information Act Campaign	ATIN
	Lifestyle Check	PCIJ
	Citizens’ Participation in Lifestyle Check	TAN
	Electoral Reform	Consortium for Electoral Reform, IPER
	Pera’t Pulitika (monitoring of campaign funds)	TAN, Libertas, ATIN
	Ehem! (anti-corruption)	Society of Jesus (Philippine Province)
	Appointment Watch	TAN
	Co-Financing and Co-Production of Basic Services	IPD
Financial Accountability	Department of Agriculture Budget Analysis	Code-NGO
	Education Watch	AER
	Philippine National Budget Monitoring Project	InciteGov, The Budget Network
	PDAF-Watch	Code-NGO
	ODA Watch	MODE
	Debt and Public Finance Campaign	FDC
	Local Gender Budgeting	WAND
	IRA Watch	CBCP-NASSA
	CSO Participation in Monitoring	Procurement Watch
	Alternative Budget Initiative	Social Watch Philippines
	Textbook Count and Textbook Walk	G-Watch (Ateneo School of Government)



Table 4. Clustering of social accountability practices by objective (cont'd.)

TYPE BY OBJECTIVE	SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICE	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION
Financial Accountability (cont'd.)	Building Bridges Towards Good Governance with LGUs and Other Agencies	CNGG-Negros
	Participatory Local Governance	La Salle Institute of Governance
	Counter Corruption in Procurement and Delivery of Services	CAC-MBC
	Capacity-Building for BAC Observers	MSAC and EBJF
Performance Accountability	Participatory Planning and Budgeting	Naga People's Council and City Government
	Report Card Survey	Development Academy of the Philippines
	Monitoring Infrastructure Projects for Good Governance	CCAGG
	Localized Anti-Poverty Program 2	Code-NGO
	Road Watch	TAN
	SWS Surveys	Social Weather Station
	Transparent and Accountable Governance	Iloilo-CODE
	Participatory Monitoring of Barangay Infrastructure Projects and Procurement of Medicines in the Province of Isabela	PAJDGG

Social accountability work, both at the local and national levels, is undertaken predominantly by coalitions rather than individual organizations. Although there is a wide breadth of social accountability practices, there is a narrow spectrum of groups and organizations involved in such practices. There is an overlap of membership in the various networks and coalitions involved.

Majority of the social accountability practices reviewed at the national level were being implemented independently from the government and were primarily driven by the desire to curb corruption and promote transparency and accountability within the framework of participatory governance. It is interesting to note that at the local level, the social accountability practices reviewed by the study were implemented in partnership with the local government.



Table 6. Social accountability practices, according to type of engagement with government.

TYPE OF PRACTICE	LOCAL		NATIONAL		TOTAL
	Coalition	Single Org.	Coalition	Single Org.	
Political	-	-	15%	6%	21%
Financial	6%	9%	32%	-	47%
Performance	15%	9%	3%	6%	32%
Total	21%	18%	50%	12%	100%

Partnership with the government was covered by a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that defined roles and responsibilities of the various parties involved in the partnership. Working with government was largely driven by the need to have access to reliable and relevant data. Again, without a Freedom of Information Act, such access was difficult to gain. However, CSOs also expressed that even with a MOA, access to relevant data remains to be challenge.

Social Accountability Tools and Approaches¹⁷

Social accountability work challenged CSOs to venture in unfamiliar terrain, such as budget processes, government accounting, public procurement, and public sector oversight. The practices reviewed in this study showed a variety of tools and approaches: (1) policy advocacy, (2) corruption sensitivity seminars, (3) budget advocacy and analysis, (4) observing procurement procedures, (5) field monitoring of government service delivery, (6) social covenants, (7) Report Card Surveys, (8) opinion polls and surveys, (9) networking with media, and (10) use of the internet.

Policy advocacy

The principal focus of policy advocacy in social accountability is to strengthen the accountability mechanisms of the government, as well as to create the enabling environment in holding public leaders accountable. Among the social accountability approaches reviewed in this study were: campaigns launched to enact important legislations (e.g. freedom of information act), electoral reforms, and effective enforcement of anti-corruption laws.



At the local level, policy advocacy takes on a different form through the co-financing and co-production approach of the Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD) where communities identify projects or services that they need and raise funds, which they use as leverage with the LGU for additional funding.

Corruption sensitivity seminars

Unlike other anti-corruption campaigns and programs that are exclusively oriented towards exposing wrongdoings in government, the Ehem! Self-Awareness Workshops aim to sensitize people to their own involvement in dishonest and corrupt practices. It is premised on the behavioral principal that sustained action in combating corruption emanates from self-aware individuals. The focus is value transformation. It is introspective and aimed at individual and personal change.

Corruption sensitivity workshops are conducted to facilitate the individual's self-examination of his/her role in perpetuating corruption in Philippine society and, likewise, to assist participants in crafting their own individual action plans.

Budget advocacy and analysis

Fifty-six percent (56%) of the financial accountability- social accountability practices center on budget advocacy and analysis. Recognizing that the budget is the most important public policy produced by the government every year, there is an increasing number of initiatives aimed at making public sector budgets—local and national—transparent, accountable and responsive. The practices using this approach utilized a number of methods including: formulation of alternative budgets, fiscal research for sectoral and national budget analysis, website-maintenance, and networking with media to provide timely and reliable information on the budget.

Guarding procurement as observers

The enactment of the Government Procurement Reform Act provided CSOs an avenue to engage government as observers in the public procurement process. A number of CSOs got initiated in Sac, primarily



through their involvement in improving the transparency, efficiency and accountability of government procurement processes. When the policy reforms were put into place through the enactment of the Government Procurement Review Act (GPRA), CSOs also re-tooled themselves to make sure that the law was properly implemented. Procurement Watch, G-Watch, Transparency and Accountability Network (TAN), and Multi-Sectoral Coalition Against Corruption (MSAC), and the Coalition Against Corruption have partnered with government agencies—playing the role of independent observers aimed at curtailing corruption that is widely perceived to be prevalent in most bidding activities of the government.

Field monitoring of government projects and service delivery

A number of CSOs focused on scrutinizing government transactions as citizen watchdogs engaged in field monitoring of government projects and delivery of services. Infrastructure for transport, such as roads and bridges; public education, such as textbook delivery and construction of school buildings; and delivery of health services, such as procurement of medicines were the areas covered by the SAC practices reviewed in this study. One of the more outstanding CSOs in this field is Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government (CCAGG), a pioneer in the area of monitoring public projects. Using community organizing to mobilize the people, on-sight monitoring to collect facts, and public meetings to analyze findings, they have inspired the spirit of volunteerism for social accountability.

Social covenants

This is a performance evaluation and public disclosure/feedbacking mechanism through active citizens' query in the form of public meetings and forums. The process begins during the electoral campaign period. Political candidates are asked to sign "covenants for clean and honest elections, with the winners committing to hold themselves accountable to the people through performance evaluation undertaken by constituents". The basis for such evaluation would be the promises made by the winning candidates during the election campaign, as reflected in the "platforms" or agenda. Iloilo -CODE created this innovation and has been implementing it to monitor the City Government of Iloilo.



Table 7. Summary of social accountability practices in the Philippines

OBJECTIVE	PUBLIC SECTOR FUNCTION	SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICE	METHODS AND TOOLS
Political/ Democratic Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and plans that build or strengthen the enabling environment for democratic practice and accountable institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political and electoral reforms • Campaign for a graft-sensitive culture • Participatory policy-making and planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy advocacy • Self-awareness workshops • Engaging and empowering communities for service improvement
Financial Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue, appropriations, allocations, expenditures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed budget advocacy • Tracking public expenditure • Participatory budgeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget advocacy and budget analysis • Training workshops
Accountability for Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of goods and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public monitoring and oversight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring by public watchdogs • Citizens' Charter • Social covenants • Report cards • Opinion polls

Report Card Survey (RCS)

In a Report Card Survey, the idea is to establish what the local residents think about the quality of selected services provided by the local government units. These services include garbage collection, traffic management, public (neighborhood) safety; public market management, and permit issuance/licensing (Development Academy of the Philippines, 2002).

The findings, as well as the experiences in implementing the RCS, demonstrated the tool's ability to empower citizens to provide feedback on public services, even for those who were not members of organized groups. RCS implementation efforts, however, were not sustained.

Opinion polls/surveys

Scientific surveys of the general public and of various stakeholder-groups to monitor the quality of governance are useful approaches in evaluating the performance of government. Among the social accountability practices reviewed was the regular survey conducted by the Social Weather Survey (SWS) on corruption, which was part of the Transparent and Accountable



Example of an Innovative Practice

COVENANT FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY: BEYOND LIP SERVICE (The Philippine Experience)

Concrete practices of social contracts or covenant-types of agreement between the citizen-electorates, politicians and bureaucrats, pro-actively promoted a performance-based, platform-oriented politics and good citizenship. In the late 1990's, with graft and corruption issues reaching the heights of unabated notoriety, innovations for Transparent Accountable Governance that took the form of Social Contracts were introduced by Iloilo-CODE. The key model was the *Kwentahan Hindi Kwentuhan*, (literally: Accountability Not Lip Service), a performance evaluation and public disclosure/feedbacking mechanism through Citizens' Query.

Politicians have the penchant for talking and making empty promises in order to win the people's votes. Adopting the principle that elected officials have social contract with the electorate, Philippine CSOs have introduced innovative modes of citizens' engagement with politicians to open up opportunities to be heard. At the same, it was an attempt to minimize the vulnerability of the electorate to money politics and empty promises. The key is the participation of a critical mass... since a politician's fear is always the greater numbers.

In the course of the election campaign, candidates' forums were organized by multi-sectoral stakeholders (church organizations, peasant/laborer organizations, media, professionals and academe) for platform watch. Political candidates were asked to sign a "Covenant" for clean, honest, and peaceful elections, with the winners holding themselves accountable through performance evaluation.

The CSOs would gather the platform of each candidate, and a body would prepare and keep a documentation of these platforms for future reference. The electorate could use these, later, as tools and solid evidences in exacting social accountability. The politicians have learned the lesson: "Keep your promises... or bust."

Mr. Emmanuel C. Areño

Executive Director, Iloilo-CODE

Governance Project funded by The Asia Foundation. The survey focused on the perception of the business sector in the prevalence of corruption, as well as the effectiveness of government efforts in curbing corruption.

Networking with media

An important tool of social accountability practitioners is media. It is through media that information generated and analyzed by social accountability groups reaches the general public. In fact, in a number of



innovations, media people are involved either as observers or initiators of social accountability practices.

Use of the Internet

The use of the internet is seen as another means of reaching a wider public and making information readily available and easily accessible. It has taken on the form of website maintenance, social networking and electronic exchanges—where documents can be easily uploaded and downloaded.

Significant Outcomes

The ultimate test of success of social accountability is whether it results in fundamental reforms/changes in how the government does things—promoting the principles of citizens’ rights, inclusion, empowerment, and social justice. Despite the potential power and impact of social accountability work of CSOs, they could not, by themselves, address the accountability deficit. Pressure may make service providers and public agencies more accountable, but they cannot assume the role of the institutions of government that have been assigned the responsibility of making accountability mechanisms work. In the final analysis, it is the government that has the duty to make accountability a reality (Arugay, 2005). Increasingly, the standard is no longer the simple adherence to procedure but the achievement of outcomes, assessed in terms of their value for poor and vulnerable groups.

The scoping study yielded vague answers to the question of impact and outcome of social accountability work. Responses were general and neither measurable nor verifiable. This may be a reflection of the fact that social accountability practice in the Philippines is a work in progress.

Critical Factors

The study identified two crucial factors of social accountability practice in the Philippines, among others: (1) a professional bureaucracy lodged in credible public institutions, and (2) a responsible and reform-oriented leadership.



Professional bureaucracy and credibility of public institutions

Framework of social accountability work of CSOs in the Philippines is premised on an analysis that poverty could not be eradicated without the necessary political reforms and that many of the development outcomes cannot be achieved, much more sustained without changes in the way socio-economic and political resources are managed. Good governance, however, requires a capable and more professional state rather than a government mobilized by political patronage. CSOs, through their involvement in social accountability, seek to help in building this capable state, described as “having the required political and institutional capacity to respond to issues of security, entitlements, social justice and social delivery” (Grindle, 1997).

Responsible and reform-oriented leadership

Experience tells us that leadership matters in the practice of good governance to ensure that development outcomes endure (Leftwich, 1993).

The implication of an “empowered citizenry” includes a healthy attitude and enhanced capacities of CSO actors. Change in the mentality of the people is critical, from one of patronage and mendicancy—i.e. waiting for help from those in power—to one of responsible citizenship. Local grassroots organizations can help the poor assume responsibility, to a certain extent, for their own welfare and that of their communities. These local groups of individuals, asserting not only their rights but also their duties as citizens concerned for the common good, are the building blocks of true democracy. (Carroll, 2006)

Dilemmas and Challenges

One of the hurdles in the practice of social accountability is the “inability or unwillingness of society to call powerful and prominent people for their wrongdoings”, which Carroll (2006) refers to as the weakest spot in Philippine political culture. In his book *Engaging Society*, he points out stories in Philippine history that reflected the failure of Filipinos to mete out the punishment that wrongdoers rightfully deserved (such as the amnesty granted to the collaborators of Japanese occupation and the easy treatment accorded family members and former allies of President Marcos). These



actions convey the message that the public interest is not that important after all and that a “thick face”—with power and wealth—could violate it with little risk.

The greatest challenge to social accountability advocates and practitioners in the Philippines is the culture of impunity and the policy framework of the Macapagal-Arroyo Administration against information disclosure and transparency, as well as the continuing perception of worsening corruption. How can CSOs engage the government in this environment? How do CSOs guard and preserve their independence and integrity as they partner with government? The answers to these questions continue to elude social accountability practitioners, but one can glean helpful clues and hints from their actual experiences and practices.



INFORMATION ON THE DIFFERENT SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES IN THE PHILIPPINES

Social Accountability Practice	Who is Seeking Accountability?	From Whom?	Where?	How?	For What?
Campaign for the passage of a Right to Information Act	Access to Information Network	Legislature and Executive branches	Nationwide	Policy advocacy and lobbying Coalition building	Access to information on decisions and actions done by government
IRA Watch	Diocesan social action networks of the Catholic Church	LGU-Barangay officials	144 barangays, 3 dioceses	Monitoring the use of Internal Revenue Allotment of the barangay	Transparent and responsible utilization of the IRA
Monitoring Infrastructure Projects for Good Governance	Citizens of Abra through the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Governance	LGU	Province of Abra	Field monitoring and evaluation of infrastructure projects	Responsible use of public funds and efficient delivery of services
Ehem!	Society of Jesus in the Philippines Ateneo de Davao University	Government officials General public	Nationwide	Anti-corruption seminars that link anti-corruption work with value formation Publication and dissemination of Ehem!	Build a graft-intolerant culture
PDFAF Watch	Code-NGO and the Coalition Against Corruption	Members of the House of Representatives	Legislative districts nationwide	Public expenditure tracking of funds released for legislators' PDFAF	Transparent and responsible utilization of the PDFAF and CA funds
Dept. of Agriculture Budget Analysis	Code-NGO	Executive Branch, specifically officials of the Dept. of Agriculture	National	Independent budget analysis	Transparency and accountability in the DA budget process—from preparation to execution



Information on the different SAC practices in the Philippines...2

Social Accountability Practice	Who is Seeking Accountability?	From Whom?	Where?	How?	For What?
Localization Anti-Poverty Program 2	Code-NGO	LGU	9 provinces 100 barangays	Poverty indicator monitoring Participatory budgeting Participatory monitoring & evaluation	Improved responsiveness of local government priorities to poverty situation
Monitoring of Procurement	Citizens of Negros through the Citizens' Network for Good Governance (CNGG) in the Province of Negros	LGU of Negros Occidental and regional offices of DPWH, SSS, PPA, and the DOH-run regional hospital	Province of Negros Oriental	CSO participation (as observers) of the agency procurement process	Transparent, accountable, and professional public procurement process
Debt and Public Finance Campaigns	Freedom from Debt Coalition	Legislature and Executive	Nationwide	Policy advocacy and lobbying Public audit of public debt and contingent liabilities	Public finance policies to address national debt burden
Transparent and Accountable Governance	Caucus of Non-Government Organizations in Iloilo	LGU	Provinces in Region 6	Public feedbacking Performance reporting Participatory monitoring Citizens' service satisfaction index Use of social contracts and covenants Public expenditure management	Utilization of public funds and fulfillment of campaign promises and commitments of public officials



Information on the different SAC practices in the Philippines...3

Social Accountability Practice	Who is Seeking Accountability?	From Whom?	Where?	How?	For What?
Philippine National Budget Monitoring and Analysis	Network of NGOs Philippine National Budget Monitoring Project	Legislature and Executive	National	Independent budget analysis Mentoring of NGOs in budget analysis and monitoring	National budget process and priorities
Monitoring the procurement of textbooks, medicines, and school buildings	G-Watch-Ateneo School of Government Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of the Philippines NAMFREL Barug! Pilipino Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government Naga City People's Council Social Watch-Visayas Negros Center for People Empowerment and Rural Development Coca-Cola Bottling Philippines, Inc. Kaakbay	Textbook publishers and Department of Education officials (national and local levels)	Districts Nationwide	Monitor textbook delivery Systems improvement	Procurement of textbooks – from procurement to contract implementation



Information on the different SAC practices in the Philippines...4

Social Accountability Practice	Who is Seeking Accountability?	From Whom?	Where?	How?	For What?
Participatory Planning and Budgeting	Rural communities	LGU	20 LGUs and 2,000 barangays	Building community capacity for tariff and service delivery designs that includes communities contributing to the financing of services that they need	Delivery of basic local services, particularly water and health
Policy Advocacy – Campaign for Electoral Reform	Members of Consortium of Electoral Reform	Legislature and COMELEC	Nationwide	Campaign and legislative lobbying	Comprehensive reform in the Omnibus Election Code to ensure fair and honest electoral competition Changes in election-related laws such as party list accreditation, automation and campaign finances
Training CSOs for Good Governance	Local CSOs	LGUs	Northern Luzon	Capacity building for CSO members in local special bodies in the arena of local budgeting and project monitoring	Local budgets and development priorities
Coalition Against Corruption	CSOs, business groups, Integrated Bar of the Philippines	Government procurement agencies	Nationwide	Training of BAC observers, procurement monitoring, information dissemination	

Philippines



Information on the different SAC practices in the Philippines...5

Social Accountability Practice	Who is Seeking Accountability?	From Whom?	Where?	How?	For What?
Multi-Sectoral Coalition Against Corruption	Network of CSOs participating as observers in the bidding process of government	Procurement entities Ombudsman	Nationwide	Participation of CSOs in bids-and-awards committees	Effective enforcement of GPPRA Abatement of corruption



SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES: POLITICAL/DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Classification/Type Based on Objective	Objectives	Focus	Social Accountability Practice		Organization
			Local	National	
Political/ Democratic Accountability <i>Focus on establishing the fundamentals for political and social accountability to be feasible and effective</i>	Push for the passage of a freedom of information law based on the principles of disclosure and public interest	Information disclosure		Freedom of Information Bill Advocacy	Access to Information Network (ATIN) Secretariat: AER
	Investigate the lifestyle of government officials of the BIR to weed out the corrupt from the bureaucracy	Lifestyle check		Lifestyle checks	Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ)
	Develop a tool that the public can utilize in conducting a citizens' lifestyle check of public officials	Lifestyle check		Citizen's participation in lifestyle checks	Transparency and Accountability Network (TAN)
	Push for reforms in existing electoral laws to ensure clean, honest and fair elections	Electoral reforms		Electoral reform	Institute for Political and Electoral Reform (Secretariat) Consortium for Electoral Reform (40)
	Identify areas where reform on campaign finance can be proposed and considered by policy makers Heighten public awareness of the importance of monitoring campaign expenditures of parties and candidates	Campaign finance reforms		Monitoring of campaign funds "Pera't Pulitika"	TAN (Secretariat) Consortium for Electoral Reforms



Social accountability practices: Political/democratic accountability (continued)

Classification/Type Based on Objective	Objectives	Focus	Social Accountability Practice		Organization
			Local	National	
Political/ Democratic Accountability <i>Focus on establishing the fundamentals for political and social accountability to be feasible and effective</i>	Sensitize every Filipino about corruption	Value formation		Ehem! Anti-Corruption Movement	Society of Jesus (Philippine Province)
	Facilitate a process for various sectors to understand the culture of corruption and allow serious reflection on societal values that reinforce corruption				Ateneo de Davao University
	Build a graft- intolerant culture			Appointment Watch	TAN
	Encourage civil society participation in the appointment process to ensure transparency and accountability	Credible appointment process of national government officials			
	Cause politicians to respond to real needs of people			Co-financing and co-production of basic services	
	Replace patronage politics with new practices of service delivery				



SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES: FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Classification/Type Based on Objective	Objectives	Focus	Social Accountability Practice		Organization
			Local	National	
Financial Accountability	Promote transparency and accountability in the formulation and execution of the budget of the Department of Agriculture	Independent Budget Analysis Public Expenditure Tracking		DA budget analysis	Code-NGO
	Monitor the national budget thoughtfully and systematically to ensure efficient and responsible allocation and utilization of public funds Build interest and capacity of Philippine NGOs and media in national budget monitoring to influence policy and program priorities of the legislative and executive branches of	Independent Budget Analysis Public Expenditure Tracking		Monitoring the national budget	InciteGov
	Influence individual legislators towards a more transparent and responsible utilization of the PDAF and CA funds	Public Expenditure Tracking		PDAF-Watch	Code NGO
	Build broadest unity among CSOs in promoting ODA that serves the people and social accountability in the conduct of ODA projects Create awareness on ODA Engage governments (host and donors) in ODA policy, priority, design and processes	Public Finance Policies		ODA Watch	Management and Organizational Development for Empowerment – Secretariat



Social accountability practices: Financial accountability (continued)

Classification/Type Based on Objective	Objectives	Focus	Social Accountability Practice		Organization
			Local	National	
Financial Accountability	<p>Push for specific progressive changes on debt and public finance policies of the government, such as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive audit of all public debts and contingent liabilities Institute a transparent and participatory budget process and progressive spending, revenue generation and borrowing policies 	Debt and public finance policies		Debt and Public Finance Campaign	Freedom from Debt Coalition
			WAND Local Level Gender Budgeting		Women in Nation-Building and Development
	<p>Move from quota based budgeting system to a totally gender responsive one; results-oriented and rights-based planning and budgeting</p> <p>Assess gender impact of local government policies, budgets and expenditures on maternal health and agriculture</p> <p>Curb corruption at the barangay level</p> <p>Explore how funds can be used for community</p>	Local Gender Budget		IRA Watch	CBCP-NASSA



Social accountability practices: Financial accountability (continued)

Classification/Type Based on Objective	Objectives	Focus	Social Accountability Practice		Organization
			Local	National	
Financial Accountability	Develop a tool that would be easy to use by the procurement observers	Monitoring Procurement		Development of a Diagnostic Reporting Template	Procurement Watch
	Develop a tool/template that would provide reports/feedback to an agency in relation to its				
	Develop and demonstrate a process of public participatory assessment of government expenditures	Monitoring Procurement		Differential Expenditure Efficiency Measurement Tool	Procurement Watch
	Develop a tool that would provide accurate baseline data for future measurement of efficiency/inefficiency in an agency				
	Ensure adequate funding for social services, health, education, environment and agriculture	Informed Budget Advocacy		Alternative Budget Initiative	
	Institutionalize CSO participation in the budget process				
	Broaden CSO participation in the budget process				
	Strengthen CSO capacities for research work on budget analysis. Information and media work, campaigns, lobbying and networking				
	Build awareness and development champions in government				



Social accountability practices: Financial accountability (continued)

Classification/Type Based on Objective	Objectives	Focus	Social Accountability Practice		Organization
			Local	National	
Financial Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove corruption in textbook procurement Systematize deliveries of textbooks nationwide Make suppliers more responsive to clients' needs Establish benchmark for Department of Education performance Mobilize citizens for monitoring and inspection for greater transparency 	Guarding Public Procurement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook Count Textbook Walk 	G-Watch – Ateneo School of Government (in partnership with the Boy Scouts of the Philippines, Girls Scouts of the Philippines, NAMFREL)



SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES: PERFORMANCE PUBLIC OVERSIGHT/ MONITORING

Classification/Type Based on Objective	Objectives	Focus	Social Accountability Practice		Organization
			Local	National	
Performance Public Oversight/Monitoring Citizen groups or communities monitoring and evaluating the execution of plans and programs as well as the performance of roles and functions of public agencies and officials according to indicators they themselves have selected.	Establish what the local residents think about the quality of the following services: garbage collection, traffic management, public safety (within the neighborhood), public market management and permit issuance/licensing Develop a tool to empower citizens to provide feedback on public services	Performance Monitoring	Report Card Survey on Specific Services in NCR - LGUs		Development Academy of the Philippines
			Participatory Monitoring of Infrastructure		Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government
Performance Public Oversight/Monitoring Citizen groups or communities monitoring and evaluating the execution of plans and programs as well as the performance of roles and functions of public agencies and officials according to indicators they themselves have selected.	Create a sense of citizenship and enhance capability of ordinary citizens to be public watchdogs of government infrastructure projects Monitor implementation of government projects to ensure that funds meant for the projects are judiciously used and that project plans and specifications are followed Enforce honesty and integrity in public service	Public Expenditure Tracking			
Performance Public Oversight/Monitoring Citizen groups or communities monitoring and evaluating the execution of plans and programs as well as the performance of roles and functions of public agencies and officials according to indicators they themselves have selected.	Track public satisfaction with performance of key government officials and institutions in general, as well as along specific tasks such as fighting corruption	Public satisfaction on government performance		SWS Surveys	Social Weather Station



Social accountability practices: Performance public oversight/monitoring (continued)

Classification/Type Based on Objective	Objectives	Focus	Social Accountability Practice		Organization
			Local	National	
Performance Public Oversight/Monitoring Citizen groups or communities monitoring and evaluating the execution of plans and programs as well as the performance of roles and functions of public agencies and officials according to indicators they themselves have selected.	Exercise role of CSOs as watchdogs and hold political leaders accountable for campaign promises Train local CSO/community for better governance responsive to poverty situation Gather poverty data through the use of Poverty Indicator Monitoring Involve community in budget planning to make local budget more responsive and involve them in Project Evaluation and Monitoring Mobilize NGO and private stakeholders and official development assistance partners to work hand-in-hand with the Dept. of Public Works & Highways (DPWH) and other government stakeholder agencies in facilitating the delivery of quality national road services through more responsive, efficient and transparent use of public resources Minimize corruption in DPWH	Performance Monitoring Responsiveness of local budget to poverty alleviation Participatory Monitoring of Road Construction Projects	Transparent and Accountable Governance Localized Anti-Poverty Program 2		Iloilo –CODE Code-NGO TAN – Secretariat Members: Roads Users: Alliance of Unified Transport and Telecom Organizations; Automobile Association of the Philippines; Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines; Inter City Bus Operators Association; Provincial Bus Operators Association of the Philippines



Social accountability practices: Performance public oversight/monitoring (continued)

Classification/Type Based on Objective	Objectives	Focus	Social Accountability Practice		Organization
			Local	National	
<p>Performance Public Oversight/Monitoring</p> <p>Citizen groups or communities monitoring and evaluating the execution of plans and programs as well as the performance of roles and functions of public agencies and officials according to indicators they themselves have selected.</p>					<p>Good Governance</p> <p>Advocates: Ateneo School of Government-GWatch; Procurement Watch, Inc.; Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government; TAN; Investigative Journalism (observer)</p> <p>Road Service Providers: Confederation of Filipino Consulting Organizations of the Philippines; National Constructor Association of the Philippines; Philippine Constructors Association National</p> <p>Road Asset Managers: DPWH Government Partners; Office of the Ombudsman; PAGC; Regulators and Enforcers; LTO Centers of Expertise; National Center for Transportation Studies; Road Board; Philippine</p>



Social accountability practices: Performance public oversight/monitoring (continued)

Classification/Type Based on Objective	Objectives	Focus	Social Accountability Practice		Organization
			Local	National	
Performance Public Oversight/Monitoring Citizen groups or communities monitoring and evaluating the execution of plans and programs as well as the performance of roles and functions of public agencies and officials according to indicators they themselves have selected.	Provide training to volunteer observers and the members of the BAC-Secretariat and TWG members on the GPRA and its IRR to serve as deterrent to collusion, connivance and other acts detrimental and disadvantageous to government Improve transparency in the utilization of provincial funds allotted to barangays under the Ugnayan ng Bayan project of the Governor and health projects Introduce monitoring and evaluation by end users of village level infrastructure Establish standards for transparency in the allocation and utilization of public funds at the local level Build capacity of CSOs in local special bodies, specifically on budgeting, project monitoring and implementation Influence LGUs Upscale capacities of CSO-BAC observers Link BAC observers with their government counterparts Bring to the city government the sectoral agenda of empowering communities	Monitoring of Procurement Participatory Monitoring	Building Bridges Towards Good Governance with LGUs and Other Government Agencies Participatory Monitoring of Infrastructure Projects and Drug Procurement in Public Hospitals, Isabela CSOs on Participatory Local Governance: Participatory Planning and Budgeting		People's Alliance for Justice, Democracy and Good Governance Incite Gov Multi-Sectoral Coalition Against Corruption Naga People's Council and City Government



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¹ The root word of “accountability” is the Latin verb *audire*, which means “to hear”. (Sollis & Winder, 2005).

² Vertical accountability is also referred to as political accountability.

³ Former Philippine Senator Jose Diokno’s definition of social justice reflects the connection between governance and development: “Social justice, for us Filipinos, means a coherent intelligible system of law, made known to us and enacted by a legitimate government freely chosen by us and enforced fairly and equitably by a courageous, honest, impartial, and competent police force, legal profession, and judiciary, that:

- 1) Respects our rights and our freedoms both as individuals and as a people;
- 2) Seeks to repair the injustices that society inflicted on the poor by eliminating poverty as rapidly as our resources and ingenuity permit;
- 3) Develops a self-directed and self-sustaining economy that distributes its benefits to meet, at first, the basic material needs of all, then to provide an improving standard of living for all, but particularly for the lower income groups, with enough time and space to allow them to take part in and enjoy our culture;
- 4) Changes our institutions and structures, our ways of doing things and relating to each other, so that whatever inequalities remain are not caused by those institutions or structures, unless inequality is needed temporarily to favor the least favored and its cost is borne by the more favored; and
- 5) Adopts means and processes that are capable of attaining those objectives.”

⁴ The Local Government Code declared that it is the policy of the state “to ensure the accountability of local government units through the institution of effective mechanisms of recall, initiative, and referendum.” The Code also provided for the following: (1) mobilization of people’s participation in local development efforts, and (2) the preparation of *barangay* [village] development plans based on local requirements.

⁵ The Local Government Code also provided for membership of CSO representatives in Local Special Bodies and a process of consultation through *barangay* assemblies.

⁶ The Office of the Ombudsman is believed to be the most potent institution created by the 1987 Constitution. It is seen as the answer to the clamor of the people for greater public accountability. The mandate of the Ombudsman is to act



promptly on complaints fielded in any form or manner against public officials or employees of the government, or any subdivision, agency, or instrumentality, including government-owned or –controlled corporations. (Hilbay, 2002; Gutierrez, 2002)

⁷ Advances in technology have been enabling agencies to increase transparency in their dealings and make data available. However, data available online is outdated and is not useful for closer and deeper scrutiny.

⁸ Examples would be the following: grave allegations of corruption, such as the NBN-ZTE deal, where the right not to divulge information to the public was rationalized under the so-called “principle of executive privilege”.

⁹ Position Paper of ATIN.

¹⁰ The Philippines ranked in the bottom 20 (142nd place out of 168 countries surveyed) of the 5th Annual Worldwide Press Freedom Index released by international press freedom watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

¹¹ Information on two of the 34 practices included in the scoping study was based on write-ups and published reports. These are the Lifestyle Check of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) and the Report Card Survey by the Development Academy of the Philippines.

¹² Social accountability experiences of other countries show that the more varied the methods and tools used to hold state actors accountable for their actions, the higher the number of ordinary people seeking to engage directly in efforts to make power holders answer for their actions, rather than relying upon intermediaries. There is also an emergence of a wider range of accountability jurisdictions intended to expose poor governance or abuses of power—from local governments to national to international public domains (Goetz, 2005). Philippine experience, likewise, is not far behind. Goetz (2005) in her article “Reinventing Accountability: Making Democracy Work for the Poor” enumerates five fundamental questions that should be asked to understand accountability relationship: (1) Who is seeking accountability? (2) From whom? (3) Where? (4) How? (5) For what?

¹³ The campaign for a Freedom of Information Act was started by ATIN in 2002. Through a series of consensus-seeking meetings, the network produced a draft bill aimed at compelling disclosure from government through a uniform, simple and speedy procedure (ATIN Position Paper).

¹⁴ Institute for Political and Electoral Reform (IPER).

¹⁵ Ehem! Anti-Corruption Movement.

¹⁶ *Bantay Korte Suprema* (literally: Supreme Court Watch) was one of the activities of Appointments Watch. The objective was to ensure that President Arroyo appointed only those deserving to the upcoming seven vacancies of the Supreme



Court. Involving people with integrity and competence, such as magistrates, former and incumbent legislators and lawyers' associations, law deans and businessmen, *Bantay Korte Suprema* led the public in monitoring the screening process of the Judicial Bar Council that is authorized by law to short-list and nominate candidates for the position. The final decision, however, still rests on the President.

¹⁷ Complete descriptions of practices are in Attachments A and B.



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DIVERSE SITUATIONS, COMMON ASPIRATIONS

The mapping project is viewed as a stepping stone to focus the networking requirements and to enhance the capacity building services of ANSA-EAP. It looks at the cross-cutting social accountability understanding and practices, the state of the countries in terms of the enabling factors of social accountability (or the so-called Four Pillars), and the opportunities for constructive engagement between citizen groups and governments.

The four countries featured in this report are of a diverse setting, each with its unique historical, social, political, economic, and cultural background. The Republic of Cambodia shares international borders with Thailand and the Lao People's Democratic Republic on the West and the North, the Social Republic of Viet Nam on the East, and the Gulf of Thailand on the Southeast (Tourism of Cambodia, n.d.). Its history is characterized by a period of violence and protracted conflict before settling into a democratic set-up in the early 1990s.

Mongolia is a landlocked country in East and Central Asia, and is bounded on the north by Russia, and on the south, east, and west by the People's Republic of China. It was under a single-party rule, with a centrally-planned economy and a totalitarian system of government before it became a democratic society in 1990.

Indonesia shares borders with Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and East Timor. Other neighboring countries include Singapore, Philippines, Australia,



and the union territory of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in India (Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia, n.d.). Before democratization and decentralization took place, Indonesia was under the rule of Pres. Soeharto whose administration (from 1967 to 1998), known as New Order regime, was marked by authoritarianism and a strong, centralized and military-dominated government.

The Philippines is an archipelagic nation that lies at the heart of Southeast Asia. This strategic position has led to its becoming “a cultural crossroads - a place where Malays, Chinese, Spaniards, Americans, and others have interacted to forge that unique cultural and racial blend known to the world as Filipino” (Dolan, 1991). Colonization of the Philippine Islands by foreign invaders (Spanish, Japanese, and Americans) altered what could have been a Muslim nation lorded over by *datus* and *sultans*. It became an independent republic in 1946. Its history is marked by a bloodless revolution referred to as the 1986 EDSA People Power mounted by citizens who demanded an end to the administration of former President Ferdinand Marcos. Another case of people power revolution, EDSA *Dos*, which unseated former President Joseph Estrada, followed in 2001. Like its East Asian-Pacific counterparts, periods of social unrest and civil strife had occurred throughout the country’s history.

The richness of information offered by this publication comes from the diversity of contexts and the ensuing variety in social development practices among the priority countries. In this section, the gains and successes will be discussed, along with the challenges and issues that have to be addressed to sustain the initiatives.

The following seem to be the cross-cutting themes that highlight the situation of social accountability in the four countries included in this exercise:

- A widening space for social accountability in the region;
- Indigenizing constructive engagement with the government;
- Nurturing champions and donors for social accountability; and
- Difficulty of finding impacts on the ground.



WIDENING THE SPACE FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE REGION

Foremost among these gains on social accountability practice in the East Asia-Pacific is the growing number of democratic societies across the region that are opening spaces for citizen-government engagement (whether borne of a need to conform with global trends or a felt need to make things work for both the government and the citizens through accountability).

In all of the four countries covered by this study, it is evident that the government officials have not been remiss in their duty to lay out the foundation for social accountability in their respective countries and institutions through the enactment of laws and legislations meant to support and encourage social accountability practice. These laws contain provisions warranting citizen participation in processes traditionally assigned to government only (e.g. budget planning and allocation, implementation, etc.). A number of laws, likewise guarantee access to information, which is one of the enabling conditions for social accountability.

INDIGENIZING CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE GOVERNMENT

Interestingly, citizen groups had been taking initiatives and implementing programs supporting or fostering accountability in the past, long before the concept of social accountability gained prominence in social development circles around the world. There was no proper label to these initiatives early on, and mechanisms for institutionalization were unheard of. Engagements were initially intermittent, unorganized and informal. Citizen groups were stereotyped as rabid and confrontational, preferring to engage the government through informal, sometimes violent means (e.g. rallies and other forms of mass mobilizations). With the introduction of social accountability, citizen groups are learning and taking to heart constructive engagement that make use of non-confrontational, participatory means that involve bargaining, persuading, negotiating, coordinating, etc. With the growing interest in it, mechanisms are now being



installed, and tools and approaches are being discovered and willingly shared. The willingness to learn from and share skills and knowhow with others is a factor that greatly contributes to the development of social accountability.

A positive indication that social accountability is slowly weaving its way into the hearts and minds of citizens is when they begin to invent and use local terms for it. In Cambodia, for instance, citizen groups have developed their own vocabulary for social accountability and related concepts in the Khmer language (e.g. *kanak neiyak pheap sangkum* = social accountability). While these local terms are currently used and understood by a small circle of citizens only, there is always the potential of these gaining popularity and acceptability in the near future, especially if social accountability becomes a way of life.

NURTURING CHAMPIONS AND DONORS FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Given the growing popularity and recognition of social accountability's significance, it has become easier to find champions in government who may take up the cudgels for social accountability in their respective domains and offices; ditto for local and international funding organizations that have made social accountability a part of their development agenda. Aside from funds, these organizations have been providing technical assistance to enhance the capabilities of citizens and citizen groups to engage the government properly. The entry of influential, international funding organizations in the picture, in a way, speeds up the process of formalization and institutionalization of social accountability in developing countries, where graft and corruption is rampant.

With these elements in place, citizen groups and government institutions have initiated a variety of social accountability-related activities and programs. Among these are programs and activities that are either related to political accountability (e.g. policy advocacy and lobbying), financial accountability (e.g. participatory budgeting and auditing), or performance accountability (e.g. performance evaluation).



DIFFICULTY OF FINDING IMPACTS ON THE GROUND

At the outset, the East Asia-Pacific region appears to be a fertile ground for social accountability work, with all the necessary elements in place. Why, then, does poverty persist in the region? And why do stories about corruption in government continue to abound? Transparency International gave the Philippines a score of 2.5 (on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 as the cleanest) and ranked it 117th among 159 countries with corruption problems (indicating severe corruption in the country) in 2005. A similar trend was noted in Indonesia, which got a rating of 2.2 in 2010, implying that the culture of corruption cultivated under the New Order Regime, has not diminished in this era of decentralization.

The country reports provide clues as to what and why the success of social accountability has been limited in the region:

- The disparity between legislation and enforcement;
- The need to nurture social accountability champions in government;
- A code of conduct and ethics for the demand side of governance
- When “envelopmental journalism” rears its ugly head
- Kinship-based power relations
- Specific cultural considerations
- Addressing the issue of sustainability

Disparity Between Legislation and Enforcement

While there is a wealth of legislations guaranteeing the development of social accountability, there is also a pattern of a notable disparity between legislation and enforcement—with what the law provides for and what is actually implemented. Oftentimes, laws remain in paper only, collected and stacked in archives, or compiled for documentation purposes. Laws are mostly national level and may not have been cascaded to the local government units and grassroots communities where consultations can yield basic data and information relevant to social accountability work. There appears to be a selective implementation of certain provisions only, particularly those that do not threaten the interests of the government or of the individuals running it. In the case of Indonesia, where the national laws



have been adopted at the local level (e.g. Musrenbang which invites citizen participation at the village level), outputs of local level discussions are generally ignored at the higher levels of government. In most cases, the venues provided by the government (e.g. local development councils in the Philippines, village Musrenbang in Indonesia) are dominated by politicians, government officials and members of the elite. Given this reality, it is imperative for citizen groups to go beyond advocating for reforms and venture into monitoring how these reforms are effected.

Nurturing Social Accountability Champions in the Government

Another challenge to social accountability work is keeping the social accountability champions in office. First, these champions are battling traditional norms that may not sit well with their other colleagues. Hence, they can be subjected to a lot of pressure when pushing for reforms. Second, public officials come and go, and have limited terms of office. In the Philippines, local government officials with elective positions have a three-year term at the minimum, running up to 9 years if one is lucky. Appointive positions serve at the pleasure of those in power. There is a need to continuously search for champions and allies who believe in the principles of social accountability. Once found, they have to be nurtured, their skills and knowhow enhanced, and cordial relationships maintained with them. There is a need for a support mechanism for social accountability champions. As the Mongolia study recommends, mutual learning where venues for common learning and exchange of insights and reflections should be provided. The framework for establishing a “community of learners and practitioners” can begin with this.

Ethics and a Code of Conduct for the Demand Side

In social accountability work, the role assigned to citizens and citizen groups is to demand for accountability from the government and assert the right to participate in government processes and make this work for the benefit of the community. In fulfilling this responsibility though, citizens and citizen groups may lose sight of their own shadows and weaknesses. Worse, some may develop a ‘holier-than-thou’ attitude that can repel people from



the government/supply side and hinder the initiation of constructive engagement. To temper this tendency, it might help for the demand side of social accountability to remember that the power to demand for accountability comes with a responsibility to practice internal accountability and transparency (among themselves and within their own organizations). This will give them the moral authority to exact accountability from and engage the government.

It is important to note that social accountability is not only about politics and governance; it also has a spiritual and ethical dimension. Formation of values and the right attitudes is a pre-requisite for social accountability to work. In this regard, the Ehem! of the Society of Jesus in the Philippines and Ateneo de Davao University, where individuals are taught to look into their inner beings, recognize and feed their innate thirst for honesty, integrity, and other values can help build a graft-intolerant culture. The Mongolian report's recommendation to start them young – referring to a move to introduce social accountability in the educational curriculum, targeting primarily the youth, is a laudable idea to help the populace internalize the principles of social accountability.

Social accountability goes beyond loyalty to political parties and personalities. There have been cases where citizen groups involved themselves in putting public officials in power through extra-constitutional and extra-legal means such as in the peaceful people power revolution in the Philippines in 1986 and again in 2001. There have also been cases of CSO members crossing over to the government side to serve as public officials supposedly to give flesh to their visions and ideals. How should citizen groups conduct themselves when the candidates they supported and voted for falter? How can they demand accountability from an ally without turning him/her into an enemy? In the past, these and other similar experiences led to the fragmentation and weakening of the civil society. Such concerns call for the drafting of a code of conduct/ethics for the demand side to avoid a repeat of past mistakes and oversights.

Addressing the Issue of “Envelopmental Journalism”

The media is an important ally of both government and citizens in social accountability practice. The practice of “envelopmental journalism”,



however, where journalists are gifted with cash or material things in exchange for publicity or favorable opinion, diminishes their integrity. With envelopmental journalism, media entities lose their ability to be objective and assertive about issues concerning graft, corruption, political patronage and the like. In this aspect, citizen journalism, where ordinary citizens are trained and given the opportunity to voice out their opinions through various forms of mass media can provide an alternative means of bringing the truth to light.

Kinship-Based Power Relations in Society

Asian societies are characterized by kinship/close family ties. On one hand, this tendency to band together, to form groups and associations, to unite for a common cause, which is deeply-rooted in the Asian culture of kinship makes the Asian region a fertile ground for social accountability. On the other hand, too much adherence to social ties makes for weakened check-and-balance function. It can lead to cronyism and nepotism (a political-cultural problem in most EAP countries), and open public resources to abuse and misuse.

This kinship-based culture also affects power relations in society. In Asian cultures, patrimonialism is dominant; power flows from the elders and the younger ones do not have the right to question their authority. In Mongolia, for instance, there is a tradition of reverence for public officials, where citizens can go to the extent of “worshipping” them as “statesmen”. In Cambodia, where steep power differentials prevail, “power is not shared; it is accumulated and protected”. These traditional outlooks may prove to be unsound for social accountability practice in the long run. As Baron John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton said, “Absolute power corrupts absolutely.” This is the sure path to political patronage, leaving the poor and the weak at the mercy of the power holders. Thus, public officials cease to be public servants and start to be public idols and bosses who refuse to serve but demand to be served.

Other Cultural Considerations

The decision of ANSA-EAP not to prescribe a package of how-tos and what-tos for social accountability work allows bigger room to bring forth the



voice from the ground, specifically practitioners, and to respect the uniqueness of cultures in each locality or community. In the Philippines, for instance, *“utang na loob”* (debt of gratitude) is a cultural trait that works against social accountability. It is among the root causes of political patronage and renders an individual inutile in exacting accountability from an institution or public official who has extended help or assistance in the past (never mind if the assistance was extended out of duty or obligation). Politicians bank on *“utang na loob”* to secure votes from their poor constituents during election time. Once they come into power, they make it appear that the money they use for public services and projects come from their pockets. The poor and marginalized are generally unaware that the funds that these public officials use are public funds, owned by and generated from the public and that it is the officials’ duty to provide services to the poor. Thus, it becomes a never-ending cycle of patronage politics that reinforces the hold on power of clever politicians.

Religious beliefs (e.g. Buddhism concept of karma) may affect the outcome of social accountability interventions, too. As the Cambodian report explains, there is a general belief among the citizens of Cambodia that a person’s current status in society is determined by how he/she had lived his/her life in the past. One’s status can be improved by “virtuous action such as sponsoring temples and getting involved in community development”. With this, there is always a way out, even for the most corrupt or abusive official, as long as he/she makes amends through virtuous action.

Taking into consideration the social and cultural contexts of a community, practitioners have to evaluate the appropriateness of tools and techniques before introducing them to other communities of a different culture. For instance, a publicly viewable score card (e.g. scoring of an official’s performance posted on a strategically-placed billboard) may force a public official to introduce reforms or implement programs, but only “for show”, just to please those who are watching his/her moves closely. When nobody is watching, it all becomes part of rhetoric and a promise partially fulfilled.



Addressing the Issue of Sustainability

Sustainability of social accountability practices remains an issue both operationally and financially. Many citizen groups are hampered by lack of funds and the lack of capability to mobilize funds to further their causes. When funding agencies pull out from an area, their operations die a natural death. The question of operational sustainability points to the need for citizen groups to build their capacities, strengthen their organizations (through continuous organizational development), and learn to play a complementary instead of an adversarial role in engaging government. There is a need to develop the capacity, not only to document, but to process and synthesize experiences, sharpen analytical and critical thinking skills even among ordinary folks.

When the driving force for social accountability programs is the availability (and accessibility) of funds more than community spirit and a collective desire to make government work for the good of the society, the citizens' owning of the programs is nil. Given the fact that social accountability involves a lot of technical aspects not easily understood by the uninitiated, it may appear to be intimidating to those who are not familiar with bureaucratic and development-related terms and processes. Such is the case in Indonesia, where only the members of the elite are invited to participate in the village Musrenbang. This invites apathy, which sometimes leads to resentment, from the marginalized because their concerns are left out in drafting the agenda of the community. Unfortunately, the poor and uneducated are the ones most vulnerable and most affected by the government's action or inaction. A big challenge is to make social accountability less technical, academic and intimidating. It might help to explore ways of popularizing social accountability in form and content to make it an appealing prospect among the citizens.

The study shows that while social accountability is a relatively new concept, especially among the newly-formed democratic societies in the East Asia and Pacific region, it has gained a headway in its actual implementation—in terms of legislations warranting citizen participation, in terms of the willingness of the stakeholders (the



Synthesis

government and the citizens) to give it a chance to work, and in terms of support from the international donor community. While the gaps and challenges appear to outweigh the gains and successes, the on-going initiatives across the region are proof positive that social accountability sparks hope among communities for better governance and quality of public services. Hopefully, the insights and information gained from this study can be used as take-off points for wider, better, and more serious social accountability initiatives to secure a better future for the next generation.