TOPIC GUIDE ON

Empowerment and Accountability

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GSDRC

**Governance and Social
Development** Resource Centre

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About this guide

Approaches to promoting Empowerment and Accountability aim to support poor and marginalised people to build the resources, assets, and capabilities they need to exercise greater choice and control over their own development and, in the process of doing so, hold decision-makers to account. The empowerment and accountability agenda can be understood as: (a) an overall approach to development; (b) a means of achieving a development objective; or (c) as an objective in itself. Primarily, however, empowerment and accountability interventions involve long-term change in which unequal power relations at household, community, local and national levels are transformed by citizens themselves.

This guide introduces key debates and evidence on concepts of empowerment and accountability, and how they have been operationalised. It discusses participatory approaches, citizenship, voice, power and transforming the relationship between citizens and the state, and emphasises the cross-cutting nature of empowerment and accountability work.

The GSDRC appreciates the contributions of John Gaventa (Institute of Development Studies), Katja Jobes (DFID), and Isabelle Cardinal (DFID). Comments, questions or documents for consideration should be sent to enquiries@gsdrc.org.

About the GSDRC

The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) provides cutting-edge knowledge services on demand and online. It aims to help reduce poverty by informing policy and practice in relation to governance, conflict and social development. The GSDRC receives core funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).
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Overview

The Empowerment and Accountability agendas have emerged as the academic and development community's response to the increasing recognition that traditional approaches to promoting voice and accountability have failed to bring about sustained policy change and improved development outcomes. It is argued that these traditional approaches were too focused on strengthening state institutions and/or creating spaces for public consultation, without addressing power relations between citizens and the state, and the interactions and interfaces between them.

Whilst increasing attention is now given to strengthening the capacity of ordinary citizens to participate directly in policymaking, it is generally recognised that empowerment does not work on its own: an empowered citizen requires capable and responsive decision makers whom they can hold to account. Accountability is therefore a precondition of effective empowerment. Conversely, empowerment is also understood as a precondition for accountability: a degree of empowerment is needed if people are to participate and engage meaningfully with decision makers and development processes. Thus, the underlying logic of empowerment and accountability approaches is that where people have a stronger voice, they are more able to influence decisions about policies and the distribution of resources and are more able to hold officials to account for their actions.

This guide introduces the debates surrounding empowerment and accountability approaches and its relationship to concepts such as power, participation and human rights. It presents an overview of how people become socially, politically, legally, and economically empowered. This includes considerations of the role of social movements and coalitions, as well as access to information and the role of ICTs as emerging areas of interest for donors. The evidence base around the impacts of empowerment and accountability intervention on development outcomes is also discussed, as are the challenges around measuring increases in voice and accountability. The challenges and opportunities around promoting empowerment and accountability in fragile and conflict-affected contexts are also presented.

Conceptualising empowerment and accountability

There is little consensus about the definitions of 'empowerment' and 'accountability'. While there is recognition that the two overlap, empowerment and accountability approaches have been understood and operationalised in a variety of ways.

Empowerment

Empowerment has been defined in many ways, but in general it refers to people's (increased) ability – through the development of resources, assets, capabilities and transformed institutions – to make choices and decisions regarding their development. This is a relational approach, recognising that development is about power and the ability of ordinary people to influence the institutional arrangements that affect their lives. Some definitions of empowerment, for example, emphasise the role of changed aspirations, suggesting that empowerment occurs when people "are able to imagine their world differently and to realise that vision by changing the relations of power that have been keeping them in poverty" (Eyben et al 2008).

The concept of empowerment is historically associated with the Brazilian educational theorist Paolo Freire, who, in the 1970s, advocated for the liberation of the oppressed through education. Empowerment, including the use of the term itself, has also been a central tenet of the feminist movement, and as a result, many organisations still use the term in relation to gender issues. However, over the last 15 years, conceptions of empowerment have come to encompass a broad spectrum of 'capabilities' – from challenging power relations through collective action, to the consciousness of individuals and their ability to express choice and act on it. Thus, empowerment can refer to change occurring at multiple levels (individual, family, community, or polity), and across various domains (state, market, or society) or dimensions (political, social, cultural, economic, and legal).

Whether empowerment is a concrete outcome or 'state', or a process is unresolved – it is often understood as both. However, the lack of precision around this question has led to both confusion and concerns over the breadth of the concept: does empowerment have intrinsic value, being desirable in itself, or is its value instrumental – as a means to another end?

Luttrell, C. et al., 2009, 'Understanding and Operationalising Empowerment', Working Paper 308, Overseas Development Institute, London
What are the implications of the various concepts of empowerment for development practice? This paper argues that a failure to define empowerment can weaken its value as an agent for change and as a tool for analysis. Empowerment can be broadly defined as a progression that helps people to gain control over their own lives and increases their capacity to act on issues they themselves think are important. A multidimensional approach to empowerment must consider both individual capacities and collective action to address inequalities that cause poverty. Awareness of the different forms of power and their dynamic nature can help to identify the strategies needed to shift unequal power relations.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4077

Various World Bank publications have offered a conceptual framework that sees empowerment as a process of poor people increasing their power to make choices and then transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. This process is shaped by the interaction between 'agency' and 'opportunity structure':

- *Opportunity structure*: This includes the institutional climate and social structures within which poor groups have to work to advance their interests. This can include the opportunities available to disadvantaged groups through information, inclusion, accountability and local capacity.

- *Agency*: This is about people's ability to act individually or collectively to further their own interests. Individual and family assets can be material, human, social, political or psychological. Collective assets include voice, organisation, representation and identity.

Some organisations focus on agency, whereas others stress the importance of reforming structures and political institutions. However, it is commonly argued that empowerment is a dynamic process affected by changes in norms, values and rules. Therefore it is argued that the separation between structure and agency should not be over-emphasised and that attention should be paid to a combination and sequencing of both forms of approach.

World Bank, 2011, 'Promoting Women's Agency', in World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development, ch. 4
What gender gaps exist in women's and men's capacity to exercise agency—defined as the ability to make effective choices—both in the household and in society more broadly? This chapter looks at how economic growth, formal and informal institutions and markets interact to enable or constrain women's agency.
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1299699968583/7786210-1315936222006/chapter-4.pdf

Alkire, S., 2008, 'Concepts and Measures of Agency', Working Paper No. 9, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, Oxford
This paper uses Amartya Sen's concept of agency to examine some of the different ways of measuring agency at the individual or household level. Sen describes agency as a person's ability to act on behalf of what he or she values and has reason to value. Alkire makes four conceptual distinctions in order to broaden measurement of agency beyond traditional proxy measures such as literacy, members of organisations, and land ownership.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4119

The following publications offer similar frameworks which aim to capture the multidimensionality of empowerment and the interrelationships between the different dimensions of power.

Alsop, R., Bertelsen, M. F. and Holland, J., 2006, 'Empowerment in Practice: From Analysis to Implementation', World Bank, Washington DC
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/WBI/Resources/EmpowermentLearningModulebody.pdf

Alsop, R. and Heinsohn, N., 2005, 'Measuring Empowerment in Practice: Structuring Analysis and Framing Indicators', World Bank, Washington DC
How can we determine whether and how projects and policies aimed at empowering stakeholders reach their intended goals? Empowerment is recognised by the World Bank as one of the three pillars of poverty reduction, and is found in the documentation of hundreds of its projects. This paper presents an analytic framework that can be used to measure and monitor empowerment processes and outcomes. It argues that the framework is useful both within single countries and for cross-country comparison of degrees of empowerment.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4146

Some donors, such as the World Bank and the OECD-DAC, have taken a growth-based approach to empowerment, arguing that empowerment is a key component of pro-poor growth and of overall development effectiveness. This approach also recognises the centrality of accountability and demand-side governance in transforming the institutional context within which poor people must negotiate empowerment.

DFID's conceptual framework for empowerment and accountability envisages a series of 'step changes' that may lead to poor people exercising more choice and greater control over their own development.

DFID, 2011, 'Empowerment and Accountability Summary Note', DFID, London
How do DFID define empowerment and accountability and what conceptual framework do they use? This paper outlines how and why DFID aim to enable poor people to exercise greater choice and control over their own development and to hold decision-makers to account.
http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/empower-account-summary-note.pdf

Narayan, D. and Petesch, P., 2007, 'Agency, Opportunity Structure and Poverty Escapes', in Narayan, D. and Petesch, P, Moving Out of Poverty, World Bank, Washington DC, pp 1-44
Why are some people able to move out and stay out of poverty while others remain in chronic poverty? There is little consensus on the underlying causes of poverty and processes determining access to economic opportunity and mobility. This introductory chapter looks at different approaches to analysing poor people's mobility. It recommends an empowerment approach that seeks to understand underlying factors of exclusion and inequality.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3384

Empowerment also occurs across various domains, spheres and levels. The paper below proposes a framework for understanding the complex and mutually dependent processes that development actors can support and facilitate to achieve empowerment for the poor. It identifies three kinds of empowerment that are inter-connected and iterative:

- *Economic empowerment* is the capacity of poor women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes on equitable terms which are commensurate to the value of their contributions. Areas to focus on include: a) the promotion of the assets of poor people; b)

transformative forms of social protection; c) the 'decent work' agenda'; and d) voice and organisation for economic citizenship.

- *Political empowerment* refers to increasing equity of representation in political institutions and enhancing the voice of the poor and marginalized communities so that they can engage in making the decisions that affect their lives.

- *Social empowerment* is taking steps to change society so that one's own place within it is respected and recognised on the terms on which the person themselves want to live, not on terms dictated by others.

Eyben, R., Kabeer, N., Cornwall, A., 2008, 'Conceptualising Empowerment and the Implications for Pro-Poor Growth', Paper prepared for the DAC Poverty Network by the Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
This paper proposes a framework to enable the empowerment of the poor to be conceptually understood and operationally explored. It examines the different facets of 'social', 'economic' and 'political' empowerment. International development actors often lack awareness of much that is already known about these issues. These are the conceptual tools for identifying complex and mutually dependent processes that development actors can support and facilitate for achieving pro-poor growth.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3401

Fraser, E., 2010, 'Empowerment, Choice, and Agency', Helpdesk Research Report, GSDRC, Birmingham
There are over 30 definitions of 'empowerment' in current use amongst development scholars and organisations, and a similar proliferation of definitions of 'agency'. Similarities and differences in the ways in which the terms are understood include whether empowerment is viewed as just a process, or as both a process and outcome; whether agencies focus on agency or on reforming structures and political institutions; and whether organisations believe that empowerment is a 'self-help' process or one in which outsiders have a role. A key factor in operationalising empowerment is the extent to which development agencies are able to understand and address the power dynamics embedded in social relations. Organisational culture and marginalised people's psychological barriers also require attention.
http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Helpdesk&id=615

The empowerment discourse within international development theory and practice has been subject to some critique. There are concerns, for instance, that the varying ways in which empowerment and its associated concepts have been defined, has resulted in a problematic malleability. The authors cited below have observed that empowerment is not only a "buzzword", but a "fuzzword" with multiple meanings. While this fluidity allows room for greater creativity, and ownership at the national level, it also makes it more difficult to operationalise, results in a lack of coherence, and undermines accountability among the donor, their partners and target groups.

Cornwall, A. and Brock, K., 2005, 'Beyond Buzzwords: 'Poverty Reduction', 'Participation' and 'Empowerment' in Development Policy', UNRISD, Geneva
What do 'poverty reduction', 'participation' and 'empowerment' really mean? Has their use influenced mainstream development policy? This paper argues that the terms we use are never neutral. Different configurations of words frame and justify particular kinds of development interventions. Terms are given meaning as they are put to use in policies, and the policies influence how those who work in development come to think about what they are doing. 'Poverty reduction', 'participation' and 'empowerment' have been emptied of meaning by a lack of specificity that masks differing opinions. This 'one size fits all' apolitical approach undermines their ability to deliver the aspirations that they promote. Significant difference could be achieved in policies and actions if greater attention were paid to specificity in choosing words.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4059

Accountability

It is argued that lack of accountability keeps poor people from taking equal advantage of opportunities, benefiting from basic services, and achieving a decent standard of living. In addition, increased citizen voice will have little impact if the state and other power-holders are not responsive and accountable to the needs and interests of its people. Accountability thus involves officials and politicians being answerable for their actions and being held to account for delivering on their commitments and responsibilities. Accountability mechanisms can be formal top-down processes (e.g., elections, hearings, consultations) or bottom-up strategies (e.g., citizen juries, popular protests, participatory budgeting).

Traditionally, accountability work has focused on strengthening state mechanisms such as political checks and balances, administrative rules and procedures, auditing requirements, and formal legal institutions. The

underlying logic of these interventions was that electoral politics would allow citizens to express their preferences, and their elected candidates would make representative policies and hold the state accountable. These state-based accountability methods have met with limited success. Recognition of this led to a shift in the late 1990s towards new measures of horizontal accountability, involving oversight of state agencies by independent public agents or ombudsmen, and the development of 'participatory development' approaches, more recently, there has been an increasing focus on strengthening the capacity of ordinary citizens (particularly the poor and marginalised) to engage with citizen-led forms of accountability) so that they can exercise voice beyond elections, and participate directly in policymaking.

Accountability is also deeply rooted in social relationships and power structures. A relational accountability approach involves understanding the ways in which people perform in their roles as social actors, and how the quality of relationships influences the character of accountability.

Moncrieffe, J., 2011, 'Relational Accountability: Complexities of Structural Injustice', Zed Books, London
This book examines the concept of accountability – what it is and the best route to achieving it. Using empirical data (from Jamaica, Haiti, Ethiopia and Uganda), Moncrieffe argues that the traditionally narrow interpretation of accountability obscures relationships, power dynamics, structures, processes and complexities.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4230

Goetz, A. M., and Jenkins, R., 2002, 'Voice, Accountability and Human Development: The Emergence of a New Agenda', Occasional Paper, United Nations Development Programme, New York
This study examines the multiple dimensions of accountability and surveys the experiments that have sought to implement a new, expanded accountability agenda. The new agenda seeks a more direct role for ordinary people and their associations in demanding accountability across a more diverse set of jurisdictions. It uses a broader repertoire of methods, and is based on a more exacting standard of social justice. However, this agenda must be actively shaped if it is to have a positive impact on human development.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4070

Lindberg, S., 2009, 'Accountability: The Core Concept and its Subtypes', Africa Power and Politics Programme Working Paper no.1, Overseas Development Institute, London
The concept of accountability has become increasingly popular in diverse fields, including development policy. This paper argues that new meanings and dimensions risk diluting its content and creating conceptual confusion - with significant implications for empirical analysis. A classic approach to concept formation is required, which suggests that accountability refers to a class of concepts under the category 'methods of limiting power'. It is important to distinguish between accountability and responsiveness.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3674

A central element of both empowerment and accountability is the promotion of citizens' responsibility, power, participation, and engagement at local levels in order to encourage more accountable and responsive government. The report below considers the framework of relationships between the client, provider and policymaker, including the 'long' and 'short' routes of accountability.

World Bank, 2003, 'Making Services Work for Poor People, World Development Report 2004', World Bank, Washington D.C, Chapters 3, 5 and 6
How can countries accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals by making services work for poor people? How does the integration of poor people into determining the quality and quantity of services they receive ensure higher success rates? The 2004 World Development Report from The World Bank looks at successful innovations and failures to guide policymakers on improving the delivery of basic services.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=718

UNIFEM, 2008, 'Chapter 1: Who Answers to Women?', in Progress of the World's Women 2008/9: Who Answers to Women? Gender and Accountability', UNIFEM, New York
This chapter examines how women, including the most excluded women, are strengthening their capacity to identify accountability gaps and call for redress. Women's efforts to remedy their situation when their rights are denied have ranged from 'voice'-based approaches that emphasise collective action, representation of interests and the ability to demand change, to 'choice'-based approaches that promote changes in the supply of responsive public services or fair market practices. For 'voice' and 'choice' solutions to work, they must take into account the specific challenges that different groups of women face in asking for accountability. Gender-responsive accountability institutions must ensure that decision-makers answer to the women who are most affected by their decisions.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3249

The centrality of power

The concept of power is central to discourses around empowerment and accountability. Power dynamics are embedded in formal and informal relations, processes and institutions, and empowerment and disempowerment result from the complex interplay between these. Power relations are also a product of differing political and social cultures and histories – which must be adequately understood in order to meaningfully address issues of citizen voice and accountability.

VeneKlasen and Miller (2002) (cited below) outline different types of power, demonstrating how it is expressed in different ways:

- *Power over* – the power of an 'upper' over a 'lower', usually with negative connotations such as restrictive control or denial of access;

- *Power to*, or agency – effective choice, the capability to decide on actions and carry them out;

- *Power with* – collective power where people, typically lowers, exercise power together through organisation, solidarity and joint action; and

- *Power within* – personal self-confidence.

Such a conceptualisation allows for a more nuanced understanding of power as diffuse, and of shifts in power as not always 'zero-sum'. Cited elsewhere in this guide, Eyben, Kabeer and Cornwall (2008) argue, for example, that power should not be viewed "as a resource that can be possessed, acquired or lost, but rather as part of all social relationships and institutions, shaping the limits of what is possible for people to do or to envisage themselves doing".

VeneKlasen, L., with Miller, V., 2002, 'Power and Empowerment', in A New Weave of Power, People & Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation, Practical Action, Rugby, ch. 3
How can a deeper understanding of power and empowerment contribute to citizen-centred advocacy? This chapter looks at power as an individual, collective and political force that can facilitate, hasten or halt the process of change. It draws on practical experience and theory related to poverty and women's rights and includes a number of exercises and frameworks for exploring power and empowerment.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2653

Chambers, R. 2006, 'Transforming Power: From Zero-sum to Win-Win', IDS Bulletin Vol. 37, No. 6, pp.99-110
Current approaches to power transformation are limited because they restrict the extent to which the powerful are included. There is a tendency in the development arena to discuss transformations of power with a zero-sum mindset. However, there is extensive unrealised potential for win-win solutions through 'uppers' using their power to empower. Top-down transformations of power, when used in certain ways, can result in gains for the powerful as well as for those who are empowered.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4083

The creation of new spaces for public participation is intended to enable more direct forms of citizen engagement in policy making. However, simply creating new spaces for participation does not guarantee greater inclusion, nor does it automatically enable the most marginalised segments of the population to articulate their voices and demand accountability. The outcomes of participatory approaches are affected by power and power relations, which shape participatory spaces and can create exclusion and inequality.

Mosse, D., 2004, 'Power Relations and Poverty Reduction', in Power, rights and poverty: concepts and connections, ed. R Alsop, The World Bank, Washington D.C., pp.51-67
The concept of power is central to social science, but receives relatively little attention in development policy analysis. This paper presented at a joint World Bank/DFID workshop argues that power inequalities have a significant impact on the achievement of poverty reduction goals. Examples from DFID partner states in India show that the politicisation of poverty is necessary for the empowerment of the poor. Formal decentralisation may fail to challenge informal power relations and be ineffective in addressing the needs of the poor.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2625

In an article cited below John Gaventa (2006) argues: "Power relations help to shape the boundaries of participatory spaces, what is possible within them, and who may enter, with which identities, discourses and interests". Therefore, power needs to be understood in relation to how spaces of engagement are created, the

levels of power that exist within them, and the different forms of power that flow across them. It is essential to consider who participates, on what basis and whose interests they represent.

Gurza Lavalle, A., Houtzager, P., and Castello, G., 2005, 'In whose Name?: Political Representation and Civil Organisations in Brazil,' Working Paper 249, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
Civil organisations (COs) have become representatives of particular segments of the population in design, implementation and monitoring of public policy. But who are they representing, and how is this representation constructed? This Institute of Development Studies working paper examines the dilemma of how an organisation engaged in representational activities establishes that representativeness: Elections, membership, or something else? Findings from a survey of COs in São Paulo, Brazil, demonstrate that their representative function is principally one of mediation between the poorly or under-represented, and the State.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1748

Simply getting female (or other marginalised) individuals or organizations into existing political structures and formal institutions does not guarantee space for meaningful participation in politics. Achieving true participation may require changing political systems to make them genuinely inclusive.

Cornwall, A. and Goetz, A.M., 2005, 'Democratising Democracy: Feminist Perspectives', Democratisation, Vol. 12, No. 5, pp. 783-800
Increasing numbers of women have gained entry to formal political spaces. To what extent has this translated into their political influence, or into gains in policies that redress gendered inequities and inequalities? This article explores the factors that affect and enable women's political effectiveness in different democratic arenas. It argues that women's political interests are not necessarily influenced by their sex, but by their "political apprenticeship", or pathway into politics. To enhance the potential of women's political participation, democracy itself must be democratized; including building new pathways into politics.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2017

Citizens' ability to demand accountability and the capacity and willingness of the state and service providers to respond to calls for accountability also assumes relations of power between the state, civil society and market actors.

Newell, P. and Wheeler, J., 2006, 'Taking Accountability into Account', in Rights, Resources and the Politics of Accountability, Zed Books, London
It is widely assumed that a notion of accountability is crucial for ensuring that political and business actors respond to the needs of poor people. This chapter from Rights, Resources and the Politics of Accountability explores the relationship between power and accountability. The changing relations between state, civil society and market actors both create and restrict new forms of accountability as new power dynamics evolve.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2648

However, the extent to which development agencies are able to understand and address power relations varies. For example, the concept of power does not appear in various donor definitions of empowerment. However, there are a range of analytical tools and approaches that have been developed by donors and academic researchers that aim to help build a dynamic understanding of how power operates, how different interests can be marginalised from decision-making, and the strategies that are needed to increase inclusion.

Gaventa, J., 2006, 'Finding the Spaces for Change: A Power Analysis', IDS Bulletin, Vol. 37, No. 6, pp.23-33
Development actors are increasingly aware of the need to understand and engage with power relations as a means of promoting pro-poor change. So where should they target their efforts and which strategies should they use? This article explores an approach to power analysis known as the 'power cube'. If the development community wants to change power relationships to make them more inclusive, it must reflect on power relationships in all of its dimensions. The power cube may represent the first step in making power's most hidden and invisible forms more visible.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2677

Bjuremalm, H., 2006, 'Power Analysis: Experiences and Challenges', Swedish International Development Agency, Stockholm
What can be learned from Sida's use of power analysis? Power analysis can help donors to understand underlying structural factors that impede poverty reduction as well as incentives and disincentives for pro-poor development. Such analysis must consider the ability of the poor to articulate their concerns; the institutional channels and arenas for voicing these concerns; and the legal basis of poverty reduction.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3195

For further information on this, please see the Social exclusion as a process section in the GSDRC's Social Exclusion guide.

Citizenship, rights and participation

Rights-based approaches (RBAs) emphasise that every citizen has an inherent right to engage in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. RBAs share with empowerment approaches the belief that people can act as agents of change given the right circumstances or environment. RBAs and accountability approaches also share a concern with the relationship between citizens and institutions – namely that rights holders have both entitlements and obligations, and should be able to demand that their entitlements are realised.

Miller, V., VeneKlasen, L., and Clark., C., 2005, 'Rights-based Development: Linking Rights and Participation – Challenges in Thinking and Action', IDS Bulletin Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 31-40
Rights-based development aims to combine the community-level, participatory focus of development organisations, with the legal and institutional expertise of human rights organisations. There is much potential for increasing the impact of both human rights and development programmes by integrating these very different approaches. However, greater clarity on the objectives, strategies and limitations of rights-based approaches to development is needed. This article identifies a need for strategies and approaches that seek to build consensus and legitimacy about newly emerging rights and forms of participation.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2671

However, the process of demanding increased rights, or change, cannot be expected to emerge spontaneously. In contexts where entrenched inequalities exist, a focus on 'power within' is needed to change individuals' own perceptions about their rights, capacities and potential in order to tackle internalised power relations.

Chapman, J. et al, 2005, 'Rights-based Development: The Challenge of Change and Power', Global Poverty Research Group
This paper explores the benefits and challenges of a rights-based approach for strengthening the voice and power of marginalised sectors of society. The positive outcomes of rights-based approaches depend largely on linking them with lessons about participation, empowerment and social change. Rights-based approaches hold considerable potential for putting politics and power back into development. However, RBAs need to be grounded in more careful analysis of power in all its forms, and in a more nuanced understanding of how change happens and is sustained.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2660

Kabeer, N., 2005, 'The Search for Inclusive Citizenship: Meanings and Expressions in an Interconnected World', in Kabeer, N. (ed), Volume 1: Inclusive Citizenship – Meanings and Expressions, IDS Series on Claiming Citizenship: Rights, Participation and Accountability, Brighton
What does 'citizenship' mean for excluded groups around the world? This chapter considers how debates around citizenship, rights and duties can be interpreted in the light of the values associated with citizenship. Values that marginalised groups associate with citizenship include the following: (i) justice: when it is fair for people to be treated the same, and when it is fair for them to be treated differently; (ii) recognition: of the intrinsic worth of all people, but also of their differences; (iii) self-determination: people's ability to exercise some degree of control over their own lives; and (iv) solidarity: the capacity to identify with others and to act with them in their claims for justice and recognition. These perspectives challenge state-centred views of citizenship. The chapter discusses the emergence of an explicit rights-based approach in the development agenda.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1665

A number of donors have made an explicit connection between rights based approaches and empowerment, where empowerment is understood in terms of a process through which marginalised and disadvantaged people are able to realise their rights.

Department for International Development (DFID), 2000, 'Realising Human Rights for Poor People', DFID, London
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.dfid.gov.uk/policieandpriorities/files/poor_people.htm

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), 2004, 'Creating the Prospect of Living a Life in Dignity: Principles Guiding the SDC in its Commitment to Fighting Poverty', SDC, Berne.
http://www.mtnforum.org/sites/default/files/pub/4203.pdf

Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), 2006, 'Handbook in Human Rights Assessment: State Obligations, Awareness and Empowerment', Norad, Oslo
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display/document/legacyid/1581

For further information please see the Right Based Approaches section in the GSDRC's Human Rights Topic Guide.

Transforming relations between citizens and the state

It is widely agreed that citizen and civil society participation in the decision-making processes are key to good governance and pro-poor development initiatives. Traditionally, efforts to promote citizen voice and government accountability and responsiveness have been undertaken separately. Development efforts to build citizen engagement have centred on promoting either bottom-up or top-down mechanisms, and isolated forms of public consultation between citizen and state. The DAC evaluation of donor Voice and Accountability interventions (cited below) finds that these – by themselves – have had little effect on policy or deeper change.

O'Neil, T., Foresti, M. and Hudson, A., 2007, 'Evaluation of Citizens' Voice and Accountability: Review of the Literature and Donor Approaches', Overseas Development Institute, London
This paper reviews the strategy and policy documents of seven DAC donors in order to contribute to the design of a V&A evaluation framework. Donors need to give higher priority to evaluation research and the development of performance measures to generate more systematic evidence about the effectiveness of their activities.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2918

Over the last ten years, DFID has commissioned a range of research programmes to consider questions around citizenship, power and state-society relations. The key findings of these programmes – which include the Citizenship Development Research Centre, Centre for the Future State, and the Africa Power and Politics programme – have contributed to shaping current discussions on empowerment and accountability. One of their key findings has been that it is not enough to raise citizens' voice or to increase local government responsiveness. Rather, it is essential to work on both sides of the equation - that is - by working simultaneously on both citizens' ability to participate and the state's ability to respond. These interventions are equally important and mutually reinforcing.

Citizenship DRC, 2011, 'Blurring the Boundaries: Citizen Action Across States and Societies', Citizenship DRC, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
What does 'citizenship' mean for excluded groups around the world? What do these meanings tell us about the goal of building inclusive societies? This introductory chapter from 'Inclusive Citizenship: Meanings and Expressions' outlines some of the values and meanings associated with citizenship. It considers how debates around citizenship, rights and duties can be interpreted in the light of these values, and discusses the emergence of an explicit rights-based approach in the development agenda.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4123

The Centre for the Future State's publication 'Upside Down View of Governance' (below) highlights the importance of state-society bargaining and of informal relationships in creating accountable public authority. The author argues: "in the short-to-medium term informal arrangements and relationships can help stimulate investment, improve services, connect citizens to the state and facilitate the transition to more inclusive, rules-based governance" (p. 70).

Unsworth, S. (ed.), 2010, 'An Upside Down View of Governance', Centre for the Future State, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
How can effective, accountable public authority be increased? This paper synthesises research findings from the Centre for the Future State. It explores how public authority is created through processes of bargaining between state and society actors, and the interaction of formal and informal institutions. Findings highlight the need for a fundamental reassessment of existing assumptions about governance and development. Informal institutions and personalised relationships are pervasive and powerful, but they can contribute to progressive as well as to regressive outcomes. Rather than focusing on rules-based reform, policymakers should consider using indirect strategies to influence local actors.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3849

The above document notes that to help identify ways of supporting more constructive bargaining between public and private actors, analysts need to ask five key questions:

- What shapes the interests of political elites? (Sources of revenue are likely to be critical.)

- What shapes relations between politicians and investors? Are there common interests among and between public and private actors which could produce 'win/win' outcomes?

- What might stimulate collective social action to demand better services, or to support or resist public policy?

- What informal local institutions are at work and how are they interacting with formal institutions?

- Where does the government get its revenue from? Is there scope for productive bargaining around taxation?

Empowerment and accountability have emerged as important agendas for DFID in particular. The UK government's 'Big Society' initiative, for example, reflects – and arguably, informs – current efforts to transform 'top-down' relations between state and citizens. A Cabinet Office policy note (below) explains that the Big Society initiative seeks "to give citizens, communities and local government the power and information they need to come together, solve the problems they face and build the Britain they want."

The following note outlines the core elements of the approach as:

- Giving communities more powers (to bid to take over local state-run services, for example)

- Encouraging people to take an active role in their communities

- Transferring power from central to local government

- Supporting co-operatives, mutuals, charities and social enterprises

- Publishing government data.

Cabinet Office, 2011, 'Building the Big Society', Cabinet Office of the UK Government, London
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/building-big-society_0.pdf

There are reservations about the Big Society initiative, however, including doubts over whether transferring power and responsibility to communities will lead to pro-poor outcomes, and concerns that the proposed transference of power is a way of 'window dressing' cuts to public services.

New Economics Foundation, 2010, 'Ten Big Questions About the Big Society and Ten Ways to Make the Best of It', NEF, London
http://www.neweconomics.org/sites/neweconomics.org/files/Ten_Big_Questions_about_the_Big_Society.pdf

Additional Resources

For further information on social exclusion and power, please see Identifying Exclusion section of the GSDRC's Social Exclusion Topic Guide.

For more information on citizenship, participation, and the state please see the following:

- Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability
  http://www.drc-citizenship.org/

- Centre for the Future State
  http://www2.ids.ac.uk/futurestate/

- Africa Power and Politics Programme
  http://www.institutions-africa.org/

Political empowerment

Empowerment and accountability are interrelated, with considerable overlap between them. The empowerment and accountability agenda thus takes an integrated view of how people can gain the necessary resources, assets, and capabilities to demand accountability from those who hold power. This requires not only social and political empowerment, which forms the basis of transformed relations with the state, but also economic empowerment, which enhances people's abilities to engage. The underlying logic is that greater empowerment also allows for greater accountability.

Work to empower poor people and give them greater control over their own development is closely linked to, and reinforces, work to build accountable and responsive government institutions that can meet the needs of poor people. It also supports the development of inclusive political institutions through which poor people's interests can be meaningfully represented. Access to information, for example, is an important pre-condition for citizens' ability to hold decision makers to account. Free and independent media, civil and political society can also strengthen the demand for accountability. They play a key role in providing, collecting and analysing information to inform advocacy as well as citizen engagement in social accountability mechanisms. Civil society mobilisation is a way of supporting citizens' political empowerment by amplifying their voices, as well as an important vertical accountability mechanism for holding state institutions and service providers to account.

It is commonly argued that supporting people to influence the policy-making process and participate in decision-making is critical to the development of policies that reflect the needs and interests of the poor. Promoting political participation is an important way of improving state accountability and responsiveness, and empowering the poor. This can encompass a range of approaches, including strengthening democratic citizenship, promoting engagement between the state and civil society, promoting access to information, and strengthening citizens' associations. Decentralisation, civil society activism, and the transparency of and access to information also play a key role in strengthening accountability.

Deepening democracy

While democracy is a highly contested concept, it is generally agreed that, fundamentally, it relates to how people exercise control and scrutiny over political institutions. There is also broad consensus that in order for democratisation processes to be sustainable, they need to come from within. The 'deepening democracy' debate – which traditionally focused on the consolidation of democratic norms and principles in governance and society – has evolved from discussing whether and how citizens should engage in the political process, to analysing how to ensure inclusiveness of participation and deepen citizen engagement in decision-making processes. Donors support pro-poor political participation as a means of improving state accountability and responsiveness, and empowering the poor. But have democratisation processes really increased pro-poor political participation? If not, what are the barriers to poor people's participation?

Gaventa, J., 2006, 'Triumph, Deficit or Contestation: Deepening the "Deepening Democracy" Debate', IDS Working Paper 264, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
What are the strengths and weaknesses of current approaches to democracy? What challenges exist in efforts to promote 'deeper' democracy? This paper surveys current debates, covering four main strands: 'civil society' democracy, participatory democracy, deliberative democracy and empowered participatory governance. It argues that democracy is an ongoing process of contestation, rather than a set of standardised institutional designs: approaches to democracy should combine a range of democratic models.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2011

Rakner, L., Rocha Menocal, A. and Fritz, V., 2007, 'Democratisation's Third Wave and the Challenges of Democratic Deepening: Assessing International Democracy Assistance and Lessons Learned', Research Paper for the Advisory Board to Irish Aid, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London
What are the main challenges facing incipient democratic regimes in the developing world? How can donors best support democratisation in these countries? This paper from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) argues that incomplete democratisation processes and the predominance of 'hybrid regimes' pose serious challenges to the sustainability, capacity, responsiveness and effectiveness of democratic institutions. In order to be sustainable, democratisation impulses need to come from within. External actors have a positive role to play in efforts to strengthen democratic structures, but they cannot act as substitutes when domestic support is lacking.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2860

A growing body of literature discusses how democratic politics can embody popular demands for participation, social justice and peace. The papers below argue that approaches to building democratic political systems need to go beyond the introduction of minimal, procedural democracy.

Shankland, A., 2006, 'Making Space for Citizens: Broadening the 'New Democratic Spaces' for Citizen Participation', IDS Policy Briefing No. 27, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
The limits of democratisation strategies which focus only on the formal electoral arena are becoming increasingly clear. There is a growing emphasis on deepening democracy, and emerging 'new democratic spaces' seek to extend the range and scope of opportunities for citizen participation. This briefing highlights the key challenges involved in making these spaces effective forms of citizen participation. It argues that much more attention needs to be paid to contextual factors and institutional design.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display/document/legacyid/2064

Smith, G., 2005, 'Power Beyond the Ballot: 57 Democratic Innovations from Around the World', The Power Inquiry, London
Which democratic mechanisms might increase and deepen popular participation in the political process? This paper assesses the capacity of various 'democratic innovations' to broaden citizen engagement and deepen participation in agenda-setting and decision-making. It also assesses their adaptability and cost-effectiveness. It argues that creative approaches can improve democratic engagement, although political resistance and civic suspicion need to be countered through cultural change, well-resourced support and imaginative institutional design.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2008

Cornwall, A. and Goetz, A. M., 2005, 'Democratising Democracy: Feminist Perspectives', Democratisation, Vol. 12, No. 5, pp. 783-800
Increasing numbers of women have gained entry to formal political spaces. To what extent has this translated into their political influence, or into gains in policies that redress gendered inequities and inequalities? This article explores the factors that affect and enable women's political effectiveness in different democratic arenas. It argues that women's political interests are not necessarily influenced by their sex, but by their "political apprenticeship", or pathway into politics. To enhance the potential of women's political participation, democracy itself must be democratised, including by building new pathways into politics.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2017

Decentralisation

Decentralisation is believed to improve service delivery, bring government closer to the people, and allow citizens greater opportunity to participate in decision making, as well as to learn democratic skills and how to exercise their rights. The 'empowerment' of local authorities through decentralisation is seen as a way of localising democracy and making public services more accountable. It is also argued that decentralisation can empower communities to hold authorities to account through direct contact with service providers.

Wong, S. and Guggenheim, S., 2005, 'Community-driven Development: Decentralisation's Accountability Challenge', in East Asia Decentralizes: Making Local Government Work, The World Bank, Washington D.C., pp. 253-267
How have community-driven development (CDD) projects contributed to the effectiveness of decentralisation reforms? This paper surveys CDD programmes in Indonesia, Cambodia and the Philippines to assess how far this approach improves accountability, service delivery and regulatory frameworks in local government. It concludes that CDD presents opportunities for enhancing civic participation, state responsiveness and cost-effective service provision, although it requires further evaluation.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2000

Helling, l., Serrano, R., Warren, D., 2005, 'Linking Community Empowerment, Decentralized Governance, and Public Service Provision Through a Local Development Framework', World Bank, Washington DC
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTCDD/544090-1138724740952/20802848/decnetralization05.pdf

There is a risk that decentralisation can serve to empower local elites rather than the population as a whole. In order to make decentralised governance truly empowering there is a need to recognise, understand, and address underlying structural inequalities.

Gaventa, J., 2004, 'Towards Participatory Local Governance: Assessing the Transformative Possibilities', in Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation, eds. S Hickey and G Mohan, Zed Books, London, pp. 25-41
The concept of participation is increasingly being related to rights of citizenship and democratic governance. This is apparent in the multitude of programmes for decentralised governance in both Southern and Northern countries. Linking citizen participation to the state at the local or grassroots level raises important questions about the nature of democracy and how to achieve it. This chapter outlines the importance and potential for assessing the transformative possibilities of

citizen engagement with local government.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display/document/id/2682

International Development Research Centre (IDRC), 2008, 'Policy Recommendations of the International Conference on Decentralization, Local Power and Women's Rights: Global Trends in Participation, Representation and Access to Public Services', policy recommendations from the international conference, Mexico City
How can equal, equitable, and effective citizenship be promoted in relation to decentralisation? This report defines a global agenda on gender and decentralisation. Decentralisation has the potential to empower citizens, including excluded groups such as women. However, it can also reinforce elite power and discrimination against women. It frequently fails to address not only gender discrimination, but also other structural divisions and inequalities. Women's effective participation must be facilitated through measures that include quotas and reserved seats in political bodies, and support for women's capacity development and networking.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3229

Cornwall, A., Romano, J. and Shankland, A., 2008, 'Brazilian Experiences of Participation and Citizenship: A Critical Look', IDS Discussion Paper 389, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
What lessons does Brazil offer for democratisation in other countries? This study examines the meanings and practices of participation and citizenship in the north and north east of Brazil. Participatory budgeting, sectoral policy councils and conferences at each tier of government have provided spaces for new meanings and expressions of citizenship and democracy. These innovations may offer lessons on the pre-conditions for effective participatory governance as well as on institutional design.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3231

Transparency and access to information

Access to accurate, clear and relevant information enables poor people to know about issues that are critical to their lives – such as, amongst other things, their basic rights and entitlements, the availability of basic services, and work opportunities. It also helps them to understand government policies and programmes, how participation and decision-making works, and their role in these processes. Greater knowledge about these matters enables citizens to engage in an informed way in governance and other decision-making processes, and to effectively monitor and hold government to account. Communication structures and processes - including a free media and access to information – thus enable the two-way exchange of information between the state and its citizens. Some experts argue that access to and use of information is a precondition to any form of citizen-led accountability.

Leach, M., and Scoones, I., 2007, 'Mobilising Citizens: Social Movements and the Politics of Knowledge', IDS Working Paper No. 276, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
What motivates citizens to mobilise, and why? This paper reflects on case studies of citizen mobilisation in the North and South, arguing that the politics of knowledge is central to how movements are mobilised, framed and identified. Mobilised citizens are knowledgeable actors engaged in dynamic, networked politics, involved in shifting forms of social solidarity and identification at local, national and global levels. Understanding mobilisation processes and the implications for citizenship requires analysis from a combination of perspectives.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2613

UNDP, 2003, 'Access to Information', Practice Note, United Nations Development Programme, Oslo Governance Centre
How does access to information support good governance and poverty reduction? What needs to be included in the effective design of access to information programmes? This note argues that access to information is an empowerment tool that underpins democratic governance, and which is also fundamental to other priority programme areas. It is important to: strengthen the legal and regulatory environment for freedom and pluralism in information; support capacity strengthening, networking, and higher national and local media standards; raise awareness of rights to official information and strengthen mechanisms to provide it; and to strengthen communication mechanisms for vulnerable groups.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display/document/legacyid/1978

Often, people who do not have access to basic services are not able to demand better service from providers. Providing information is the first step to improving accountability to excluded groups – information helps people to understand the services they are entitled to, and the mechanisms available to them to demand this level of service.

Banerjee, A., et al., 2006, 'Can Information Campaigns Spark Local Participation and Improve Outcomes? A Study of Primary Education in Uttar Pradesh, India', Policy Research Working Paper 3967, World Bank, Washington DC
What role can local community participation in basic service delivery play in promoting development outcomes? This World Bank working paper considers the participation of Village Education Committees (VECs) in improving primary

education services in Uttar Pradesh, India. It reports findings from a survey of public schools, households and VEC members on the state of education services and the extent of community participation in delivering such services. Findings suggest that local participation might be constrained by lack of information regarding VECs and that substantial apathy exists towards education as an area for public action.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2575

The media can play a powerful role in shaping and influencing public debate and opinion. An independent media can improve governance by raising citizen awareness of social issues, and creating a civic forum for debate. It can also amplify the voice of marginalised and excluded groups. In this way, the media can act as a powerful accountability mechanism and means through which people are empowered to hold other actors to account.

Hudock, A., 2003, 'Hearing the Voices of the Poor: Encouraging Good Governance and Poverty Reduction Through Media Sector Support', World Learning for International Development, Washington DC
This paper argues that a robust and independent media can provide timely, relevant and clear information to facilitate dialogue between policymakers and citizens and serve as a watchdog of political processes. Facilitating media involvement in PRSPs can enhance informed participation by encouraging serious debate and disseminating representative information. The PRSP can also propose legal and regulatory reforms to support the development of an independent media.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display/document/id/880

Berger, G., 2009, 'Freedom of Expression, Access to Information, and Empowerment of People', UNESCO, Paris
How can media freedom and access to information support the wider development objective of empowering people? This book highlights freedom of expression and the right to information as fundamental human rights. Press freedom and access to information support participatory democracy and empower people by giving them information that can help them gain control over their own lives. An open, pluralistic media sector relies on political will and an enabling legal and regulatory environment.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4053

See also the discussion of media development in the topic guide on Communication and Governance.

The potential contribution to good governance of access to information lies in both the willingness of government to be transparent, as well as the ability of citizens to demand and use information. In many developing countries, there are real structural and political barriers which hinder both the capacity and incentives of governments to produce information, and the ability of citizens to claim their right to information and to use it to demand better governance and public services. For example, the capacity of public bodies to provide information can be weak, and officials may be unaware of their obligations. Or governments may not be actively supportive of the right to information, particularly in contexts where there is a legacy of undemocratic political systems or closed government. Many developing countries do not have adequate legal provisions for the right to information, which if enforced adequately and acted upon by rights-holders, provides a key accountability mechanism between citizens and decision-makers, and in theory, should increase government openness and responsiveness to requests for information.

Daruwala, M. and Nayak, V. (eds), 2007, 'Our Rights, Our Information: Empowering People to Demand Rights through Knowledge', Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, New Delhi
This Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative report provides case studies to show that information empowers people to demand adherence to the whole range of their human rights. By establishing the right to information in domestic law and by setting up public information systems, governments can enhance citizens' participation in governance, advance equitable economic development, reduce poverty and fight corruption.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3078

Pande, S., 2008, 'The Right to Information and Societal Accountability: The Case of the Delhi PDS Campaign', IDS Bulletin, vol. 38 no. 6, pp 47-55
To what extent can tools like the Right to Information (RTI) help ensure transparency and accountability? This article from the IDS Bulletin draws on the example of Parivartan, a Delhi-based citizens' group working on issues of corruption and accountability. This group has used the RTI to mobilise poor people and has used information to generate awareness through the media, holding government to account. The combination of a dedicated grassroots activist organisation and a RTI Act was necessary for achieving successful accountability.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3735

Citizens and civil society organizations often do not have the skills and knowledge to process, analyse or use complex information. They may also have limited capacity to conduct advocacy, and to develop the networks and platforms that are needed in order to ensure that the concerns of their constituencies are heard.

Experience suggests that effective communication plays a critical role in building consensus, cooperation and support among key stakeholders in the pursuit of reforms. The paper below argues that communications can persuade stakeholders to join a coalition through 'framing for collective action' – which emphasises their shared purpose, as well as the potential benefits for individual stakeholders. However, it is important that communications are able to: (a) build trust among members to enable them to collaborate effectively; and (b) draw on members' diversity by using their access to different networks and interest groups to increase the coalition's scope and influence.

CommGAP, 2008, 'Coalition Building', Communication for Governance and Accountability Program (CommGAP), World Bank, Washington DC
This report provides an introduction to the issue of coalition-building and provides some information about how coalitions are built. Drawing on a wide range of case studies, the paper outlines several key coalition building stages that increase the likelihood of success of change initiatives. It adds the caveat that coalition building can be carried out in different sequences and that reform leaders should always take stock of the ways in which coalitions have previously been successfully built and made sustainable.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3746

Some analysts have found that the actual evidence on transparency's impacts on accountability is not as strong as one might expect. Others argue that the process through which information accessibility affects accountability is still poorly understood.

Bellver, A., and Kaufmann, D., 2005, 'Transparenting Transparency: Initial Empirics and Policy Applications', Draft discussion paper presented at the IMF conference on transparency and integrity 6-7 July, World Bank, Washington DC
Can access to information and transparency reforms improve governance and development outcomes? How can transparency reforms be empirically measured and effectively implemented? This World Bank paper reviews existing literature and develops and applies a new transparency index for 194 countries. While causality remains difficult to determine, transparency is associated with better socio-economic and human development indicators, and with higher competitiveness and lower corruption. Where there is political will for transparency reform, much progress can be made without excessive resource requirements.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3753

McGee, R. And Gaventa, J., 2010, 'Review of Impact and Effectiveness of Accountability and Transparency Initiatives', DFID, London
Transparency and accountability have emerged over the past decade as key ways to address both developmental failures and democratic deficits. In the development context, the argument is that through greater accountability, 'leaky pipes' of corruption and inefficiency will be repaired, aid will be channelled more effectively, and in turn development initiatives will produce greater and more visible results. For scholars and practitioners of democracy, a parallel argument holds that following the twentieth-century wave of democratisation, democracy now has to 'deliver the goods', especially in terms of material outcomes, and that new forms of democratic accountability can help it do so. While traditional forms of state-led accountability are increasingly found to be inadequate, thousands of multi-stakeholder and citizen-led approaches have come to the fore, to supplement or supplant them.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4124

However, several studies – both at the macro and micro level, and including econometric studies – have found a correlation between political and economic transparency and improved governance and socio-economic indicators. The research study below analysed empirical data on mass media penetration, the spread of ICT and press freedom to assess their impact on corruption, inequality and poverty, and found that higher mass media penetration (in terms of newspapers, radio and TV ownership) is associated with lower corruption.

Bandyopadhyay, S., 2009, 'Knowledge-Based Economic Development: Mass Media and the Weightless Economy', STICERD, London School of Economics and Political Science, London
This paper finds that several mass media and ICT penetration variables are negatively associated with corruption, inequality and poverty. Of the media variables, newspapers are observed to have a robust negative association with both corruption and inequality. Radios and TV are also observed to have a robust negative association with inequality and poverty. ICT and telephony infrastructures' association with corruption, inequality and poverty are mixed. There is some robust evidence of the negative association of ICT expenditures with corruption. An ICT index is constructed, which also has a negative association with corruption. ICTs' association with inequality varies with the sample chosen – it is positively associated with inequality for the sample with both developed and developing countries, but negatively associated with inequality for the developing country sample. Finally, ICT expenditure is negatively associated with poverty.
http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/darp/DARP74.pdf

The paper below finds that literacy rates among school children in Benin are higher in villages exposed to signals from a larger number of community radio stations. The authors argue that households with greater access to community radio are more likely to make financial investments in the education of their children.

Keefer, P. and Khemani, S., 2011, 'Mass Media and Public Services: The Effect of Radio Access on Public Education in Benin', Policy Research Working Paper, World Bank, Washington DC
Does radio access improve public service provision? And if so, does it do so by increasing government accountability to citizens, or by persuading households to take advantage of publicly-provided services? Using data from Benin, this paper finds that literacy rates among school children are higher in villages exposed to signals from a larger number of community radio stations. However, government inputs into village schools and household knowledge of government education policies are no different in villages with greater access to community radio than in other villages. Instead, households with greater access are more likely to make financial investments in the education of their children.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4063

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can also promote government transparency and accountability, and empower people by increasing flows of information between government and citizens. The increasing use of mobile telephones for film and photo documentation and the use of SMS for networking and mobilisation have created new opportunities for citizen participation.

Social media has played a critical role in recent uprisings, such as 2011's Arab Spring, when political blogs, Facebook, Twitter and other online content helped to organise political action and build solidarity between opposition groups.

Howard, P. N. and Hussain, M.H., 2011, 'The Role of Digital Media', Journal of Democracy, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 35-48
What role did digital media play during the Arab Spring? At first, digital media allowed democratization movements to develop new tactics for catching dictators off guard. Eventually, authoritarian governments worked social media into their own counter-insurgency strategies. What have we learned about the role of digital media in modern protest? Digital media helped to turn individualized, localized, and community-specific dissent into structured movements with a collective consciousness about both shared grievances and opportunities for action.
http://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/journal_of_democracy/v022/22.3.howard.html

Manrique, M. 2011, 'Supporting Africa's new civil society: the case of Kenya', Policy Brief, FRIDE, Madrid
International support for Kenyan NGOs working on democracy promotion faces important limitations. An emerging layer of activists and initiatives is changing the tools and discourses through which democratic demands are voiced. Donors should respond to this by reassessing their relations with, and even ideas of, domestic actors.
http://www.fride.org/download/PB_83_Kenya.pdf

Hoffmann, B., 2010, 'Civil Society 2.0? – How the Internet Changes State-Society Relations in Authoritarian Regimes: The Case of Cuba', GIGA Working Paper no. 156, German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Hamburg
How has the spread of digital media across international boundaries affected the role of civil society under authoritarian regimes? Examining the case of Cuba, this paper compares civil society dynamics prior to the internet – in the early to mid-1990s – and a decade later. It finds that in the pre-internet period, civil society's focus was on behind-the-scenes struggles for associational autonomy within the state-socialist framework. A decade later, digital media has supported the emergence of a new type of public sphere in which the civil society debate involves autonomous citizen action. However, its effects on political reform depend on the extent to which web-based voices connect with off-line debate and action.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4066

The use of ICTs is also thought to increase people's access to markets and jobs, and to help make public services more responsive and accountable to users. Donors have supported public information and literacy campaigns via mobile telephones, as well as citizen monitoring of government and donor policies and programmes from the ground up.

Berdou, E., 2011, 'Mediating Voices and Communicating Realities: Using Information Crowdsourcing Tools, Open Data Initiatives and Digital Media to Support and Protect the Vulnerable and Marginalised', Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
Can the new generation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) enhance community empowerment and democratisation? This report looks at the challenges and opportunities for vulnerable and marginalised communities presented by the latest wave of ICT innovations. Assessing ICT projects in Kenya, Haiti, Peru, Georgia and Egypt, it notes the challenges of sustaining participation and of governing new information commons in under-resourced and politically contested spaces.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4117

Beardon, H. et al., n.d., 'ICTs for Development: Empowerment or Exploitation? Learning from the Reflect ICTs project', ActionAid UK, London
This report considers the value of ICTs for development (ICT4D) from a rights and empowerment perspective. It presents lessons from ActionAid's Reflect ICTs project that challenge how ICT4D is currently understood and practiced. ICTs cannot create communication capacity, and should not start from scratch. They should be built into existing structures to enhance what works, or to increase equal participation in existing communication channels. This means enhancing resources provided by other projects, such as community radio, television stations or telecentres, and recognising less formal communication arenas and structures.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4076

Walton, O., 2010, 'Helpdesk Research Report: New ICTs for Development', GSDRC, University of Birmingham
ICTs are being used to support development outcomes in five primary areas. First, they have helped to improve poor people's access to markets, financial services and employment. Second, they have helped to improve the provision of services to poor people by governments, the private sector and NGOs, and to make these services more responsive to the needs of poor communities. Third, they have supported improvements in accountability, transparency and participation, by allowing citizens to publicise their concerns and grievances, share ideas, present information and hold governments to account. Fourth, they have contributed to improvements in security and supported efforts to protect human rights. Fifth, ICTs have affected the operational approaches of donors and other development actors. Recent research has stressed the need to shift from a technology-led approach, where the emphasis is on technical innovation, towards an approach that emphasises innovative use of already established technology (mobiles, radio, television).
http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HD691.pdf

Increased access to technology is thought to be particularly empowering for women, especially in terms of enhancing decision-making ability and social standing.

Melhem, S., Tandon, N., and Morrell, C., 2009, 'Information and Communication Technologies for Women's Socio-Economic Empowerment', World Bank, Washington DC
How do ICTs impact women and men differently? What are the implications of women's lack of engagement, participation and leadership in the use of ICTs for business and development? This report provides an overview of issues relating to women and Information and Communication Technology, including issues of: access and education; inclusion in the ICT workforce; qualifications and appetite for ICT career adoption; and opportunities and threats of ICTs on women's lives. A 'one policy fits all' approach to mainstreaming ICTs has thus far been unsuccessful; a 'female first' policy is required. The impact on and engagement of women should be a key consideration in all projects.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4084

GSMA/Cherie Blair Foundation/Vital Wave Consulting, 2010, 'Women and Mobile: A Global Opportunity', GSMA/Cherie Blair Foundation/Vital Consulting, London
How can mobile phones advance the socio-economic development of women? This report highlights the gender gap in mobile phone ownership in low- and middle-income countries. Closing this gap would bring the benefits of mobile phones to 300 million women and represent a 13 billion US dollar opportunity for mobile operators. Mobile phone ownership offers women opportunities such as improved access to education, health, business and employment. Empowering women with mobile phones requires the involvement of the private, non-profit and public sectors.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4047

However, the success of ICTs is dependent on the political will of organisations to be transparent. In addition, ICTs can only bring about improvements in government-citizen communication if citizens have the capacity to access and use them. In many developing countries, access to ICTs is still limited, particularly in remote areas.

Association for Progressive Communications, 2009, 'ICTs for Democracy: Information and Communication Technologies for the Enhancement of Democracy – with a Focus on Empowerment', Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Stockholm
What is the potential of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to support processes of democratisation and empowerment in developing countries? This report, prepared for the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, outlines the theoretical background to discussions on ICTs and democracy, and presents case studies from Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. It argues for raising awareness and understanding of ICTs, and for making ICTs central to development cooperation and support for democratisation in the case study countries.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3737

For more information on the role and impact of ICTs in development, please see the Social media section of the GSDRC's Communication and Governance Topic Guide.

The topic guide on Communication and Governance also discusses Access to information and its constraints.

Citizen engagement with policy processes

It is increasingly argued that the role of organised citizens in influencing change by articulating their needs and concerns, mobilising to press for change, and monitoring the performance of government institutions should receive greater attention from development actors. Through its research, the Citizenship DRC has collected evidence which shows that – even where formal mechanisms of accountability are weak – citizens can and do engage with states through collective action to create policy reforms. Poor people's organizations, associations, participatory fora, federations, networks, and social movements are thus key players in the institutional landscape. Therefore, as important as the relationship between citizens and the state, is a 'horizontal' view of citizenship - one which focuses on the relationship between citizens.

Citizenship DRC, 2011, 'Blurring the Boundaries: Citizen Action Across States and Societies', Citizenship DRC, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
This report synthesises the findings of ten years of research from the Development Resource Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability. Findings suggest that governments often become more capable, accountable and responsive when state-led reform to strengthen institutions of accountability and social mobilisation occur simultaneously. Further, change happens not just through strategies that work on both sides of the governance supply and demand equation, but also through strategies that work across them: it is important to link champions of change from both state and society.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4123

Katito, G. and Aggad, F., 2009, 'Strategies for Effective Policy Advocacy: Demanding Good Governance in Africa', Research Report 3, Governance and APRM Programme, South African Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg
What strategies have been effective in influencing policy reform? This study distils lessons learned by a handful of African civil society coalitions on the dynamics of demanding improved governance of governments that are often averse to governance reform.
http://www.saiia.org.za/images/stories/pubs/reports/saia_rpt_03_katito_aggad_20090618.pdf

Stalker, C. with Sandberg, D., 2011, 'Capacity Building for Advocacy', Praxis Paper 25, INTRAC, London
What has been learnt about how civil society organisations should be engaging with and influencing key policies and decision makers? This paper examines current practice, experiences and theory in advocacy capacity building.
http://www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/698/Praxis-Paper-25-Capacity-Building-for-Advocacy.pdf

Jha, C., et al., 2009, 'Citizen Mobilisation in Nepal: Building on Nepal's Tradition of Social Mobilisation to make Local Governance more Inclusive and Accountable', Report prepared for DFID, World Bank and SDC
This report analyses social mobilisation in Nepal. Transformational mobilisation processes are needed to build people's capacity to actively participate in their own governance. Lessons learned include providing evidence of change in the 'capability to demand' and addressing obstacles in processes that target the disadvantaged by engaging elites as 'champions of the poor'.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3682

Tadesse, E. et al., 2006, 'The People Shall Govern: A research report on public participation in the policy processes', Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) and Action for Conflict Transformation (ACTION), Johannesburg
How can public participation in government policy formulation and implementation be improved? This paper examines two South African case studies to evaluate the extent and effectiveness of citizens' engagement in domestic and foreign policy. It argues that, despite important post-Apartheid reforms, public participation is still limited. Two-way information flows between governments and communities need to be fostered. Capacity-building and organisational change in government, civil society and the media could encourage a more participatory governance approach.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2012

The presence of active, informed and coordinated civil society organisations (CSOs) is generally regarded as another important precondition to amplifying the voices of the poor. CSOs play a key role in collecting, analysing and using information to bridge information gaps. They also contribute significantly to empowering marginalised groups, acting as checks and balances, and providing opportunities for people to engage in collective action and social mobilisation.

Tandon, R., 2003, 'Civil Society and Policy Reforms', IDS Civil Society and Governance Policy Brief No. 9, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
How can civil society's engagement in the policy-making process benefit the marginalised? This brief draws on case studies from India. It identifies three ways in which civil society engages in the policy making process in that country: resisting policy reform, including certain constituencies in policy making and implementing existing progressive public policies. It concludes that the latter type of intervention is the least visible and analysed, yet the most urgently needed to realise

better and more concrete results in favour of marginalised communities.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=437

Civil society actors are also becoming involved in independent budget analysis and advocacy initiatives designed to enhance the transparency and poverty focus of public budgets.

Robinson, M., 2006, 'Budget Analysis and Policy Advocacy: The Role of Non-Governmental Public Action', Working Paper no. 279, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
What effect do civil society budget groups have on public budget allocations and implementation? Can they contribute towards social justice objectives or strengthening democracy? This working paper from the Institute of Development Studies examines the impact and significance of independent budget analysis and advocacy initiatives designed to enhance the transparency and poverty focus of public budgets. Using research on six civil society budget groups in Brazil, Croatia, India, Mexico, South Africa and Uganda, it argues that while the structure of the budget process makes substantial changes in expenditure priorities difficult to achieve, budget groups can increase the accountability of decision-makers.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2579

Increasingly, efforts are being made to help civil society organisations to influence policy more effectively. Support involves promoting understanding of the socio-political context, better research communication and use of evidence, and the creation of an explicit influencing strategy.

Court, J, et al., 2006, 'Policy Engagement: How Civil Society Can be More Effective', Rapid Programme, Overseas Development Institute, London
How can civil society organisations strengthen their influence on government policy processes? This report argues that a combination of unfavourable political contexts and weaknesses in the strategies, evidence-use and capacities of CSOs has limited the effectiveness of civil society. It recommends that CSOs enhance their networking, research and communication skills and their understanding of political processes in order to improve their policy engagement.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1955

However, the dynamics of how citizens mobilise differs depending on the political context. The general relevance of social movements to poverty reduction is clear; poverty is a product of prevailing relations of power, and social movements emerge to challenge or deepen these prevailing relations of power. But the roles of civil society mobilisation in poverty reduction will vary significantly depending on the political context and the space provided by the state for citizen engagement. This can range from the state providing constitutionally mandated 'invited' spaces for civil society actors, to fragile and conflict-affected contexts where power-holders are less willing to open up debate to citizens. This in turn shapes the most appropriate and effective strategies adopted by civil society actors.

Bebbington, A., 2009, 'Poverty Reduction and Social Movements: A Framework With Cases', paper prepared as a background paper for UNRISD's forthcoming Poverty Report, Institute for Development Policy and Management and Brooks World Poverty Institute, University of Manchester, UK
This paper argues there are many causal pathways through which social movements can affect poverty, but that the relative significance of any particular pathway depends on the domain of contention in question, the type of social movement involved, and the more general political economy context. The general relevance of social movements to poverty reduction is clear; poverty is a product of prevailing relations of power, and social movements emerge to challenge or deepen these prevailing relations of power. But the roles of movements in poverty reduction will vary significantly depending on the political regime of the moment – and that context defines both the most likely, as well as potentially the most productive, strategy for movements to assume. One of the most important effects of movements (when they are "successful") is to induce the creation of new public institutions that contribute to poverty reduction.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4120

Mohanty, R. et al. (eds.), 2011, 'States of mobilisation? A comparison of modes of interaction between states and social actors in India, Brazil & South Africa', African Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, University of the Western Cape
In what circumstances is citizen mobilisation to claim rights and entitlements responded to by democratic states in ways that deepen democracy? This book explores the interaction between citizen mobilisation and the state in India, Brazil and South Africa. It finds that the gains won through mobilisation are often selective and partial, and sometimes non-existent. Mobilisation that adopts a critique or protest approach seems less likely to elicit a positive state response than collaborative engagement. State actors prefer to interact with citizens within their own policy frameworks and spaces, and within their own ideologies. State engagement with mobilised citizens has had both progressive and regressive outcomes: it has increased space for participation in policymaking, and increased state resistance to critique.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4121

Haider, H., 2010, 'Community Empowerment Outcomes – South Asia', Helpdesk Research Report, GSDRC, Birmingham
The vast majority of the literature focuses on the empowerment of women in the community. Some of the key outcomes

of empowerment initiatives in South Asia can be categorised into personal, economic, political and social outcomes. The literature is split on whether the empowerment of women necessarily translates into community empowerment and collective action. Other lessons from the literature highlight that firstly, the mere set-up of participatory community institutions is not self-activating. Secondly, it may be beneficial to extend targeting beyond the poor. Thirdly, it may be beneficial to rely on indigenous culture and local values as a foundation for social transformation, rather than the adoption of universal values.
http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HD742.pdf

Amplifying the voices of the poor will have little impact if there is not a strong commitment within the government to respond. Institutional arrangements that preserve the rights of citizens to participate are important enabling conditions.

Fung, A., 2003, Recipes for Public Spheres: Eight Institutional Design Choices and Their Consequences', The Journal of Political Philosophy, Vol. 11, No. 3, Pp. 338-367
How can the quality of civic engagement and public deliberation be improved? This article examines 'minipublics' (deliberately convened publics). Educative forums and participatory advisory panels, for example, inform officials of citizens' interests, values and preferences, and problem-solving and participatory governance minipublics provide richer information about what is and is not working in operations, strategies and project design. Institutional design choices have implications for the character of participation, how officials and citizens are informed, the fostering of citizenship skills, connections between public deliberation and state action, and public mobilisation. Citizens are more likely to gain democratic skills and dispositions where deliberations have tangible consequences for them. Iterated interaction increases both incentives and opportunities for cooperation.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display/document/legacyid/2146

National and local laws and policies mandating citizen participation can be important enabling conditions, although their effectiveness will depend on the historical and cultural context in which they are applied and the actors involved.

McGee, R. et al, 2003, 'Legal Frameworks for Citizen Participation: Synthesis Report', Learning Initiative on Citizen Participation and Local Governance (Logolink), Sao Paulo
What kind of legal framework best enables citizen participation in local governance? What contextual factors constrain or enable citizen participation? This report from the Learning Initiative on Citizen Participation and Local Governance (LogoLink) synthesises the findings of a research project on frameworks for citizen participation in East Africa, Latin America, South and South-East Asia and the North.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display/document/id/2651

Social movements and coalitions

In order to exert real influence, citizen action must scale up from the local to the national. While poor people's membership-based organisations may be effective in supporting their immediate survival needs, these organisations are often constrained by limited resources and technical knowledge. They also often lack bridging and linking social capital – in that they may not be connected to other groups unlike themselves or to the state. It is when groups connect with each other across communities and form networks or associations - eventually becoming large federations with a regional or national presence - that they begin to gain collective bargaining power and influence government decision making.

Earle, L., 2008, 'Social Movements and Citizenship: Some Challenges for INGOs', International Training and Research Centre (INTRAC), Oxford
How can social movements in developing countries use concepts of citizenship to demand basic rights from the state? This report by the International NGO Training and Research Centre examines a social movement focusing on low-income housing in São Paulo. In Brazil, the concept of citizenship is linked to service provision. Lack of access to basic services is regarded as having 'limited citizenship'. Framing basic rights as 'citizenship rights' is a powerful weapon in social movements' state-focused campaigning. International donors can best support social movements through flexible approaches that fund communications and training.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3198

Research from the Citizenship DRC has found that, across various contexts, broad-based coalitions (formal collaborative structures that aim to combine their influence and resources to carry out joint or coordinated activities) have been most successful in bringing about policy change. Coalitions can promote governance reform by highlighting issues and pressuring power-holders to initiate and implement change. They can achieve what one citizen or organisation cannot do alone, making those members perceived to be weak less vulnerable to harassment and intimidation.

Beall J., and Ngonyama M., 2009, 'Indigenous Institutions, Traditional Leaders and Elite Coalitions for Development: The case of Greater Durban, South Africa', Leadership, Elites and Coalitions Research Programme (LECRP) managed by the World Bank and Crisis States Research Centre, London
What factors facilitate inclusive political settlements and developmental coalitions within a hybrid political order? This study, building on earlier work undertaken for the Crisis States Research Centre, further developed for the Leadership, Elites and Coalitions Research Programme (LECRP) and also published by the Crisis States Research Centre, suggests that in South Africa, state-making and peace-building has been facilitated by: (1) the creation of an administrative machinery that can contain customary authority institutions within a broader polity; (2) political structures that channel the ambitions and grievances of traditional leaders; and (3) a system of local government that draws on the experience and access of chieftaincies to bring development to hard-to-reach areas. A key success factor is inclusive coalitions and the commitment to development of influential political leaders able to forge broad coalitions through their links to multiple institutions.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3560

The mobilisation of citizens around the tax system is another approach for participation in public policy. The paper below argues that larger, flexible budgets, higher proportions of tax revenues from a local base, and the lower costs for public participation all promote citizen and local government empowerment.

Raich, U., 2005, 'Fiscal Determinants of Empowerment', World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 3705, World Bank, Washington
How do local fiscal conditions relate to, and stimulate, citizen and local government empowerment? This paper explores how varying forms of local revenue-raising and expenditure provide incentives and impediments to citizen engagement and local government accountability. It argues that three factors – large, flexible budgets; higher proportions of tax revenues from a local base; and lower costs for public participation – promote citizen and local government empowerment.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1963

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2008, 'Governance, Taxation and Accountability: Issues and Practices' OECD DAC Guidelines and reference series, Paris
How can taxation policy help to improve governance and accountability in developing countries? This paper argues that taxation systems contribute significantly to shaping accountability relationships and strengthening state capacities. Further coordinated efforts from both developing countries and donors are needed to secure larger tax bases, better tax compliance, and comprehensive tax reform in order to improve state responsiveness and accountability. Donors should combine high-level international efforts with work to improve the enabling environment and with more direct support to organisational changes.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3247

Prichard, W., 2009, 'The Politics of Taxation and Implications for Accountability in Ghana 1981-2008', IDS Working Paper 330, Centre for the Future State, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
Is a government that relies on tax revenue, as opposed to natural resources or foreign aid, more likely to be accountable to its citizens? Have government efforts to raise taxes in Ghana produced successful demands for greater accountability? This paper examines the evolution and political dynamics of Ghana's central government tax system. It finds that taxation has often catalysed demands for greater accountability, but that outcomes have varied. State-society bargaining over taxation seems to be shaped by the broader state of politics, the role of elites, the mobilising capacity of civil society, the motives for the tax increase and the type of tax in question.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4051

The following paper from the Citizenship DRC also highlights the increasingly common, but under-researched, practice of 'democratic mediation'. Democratic mediation involves organisations, ranging from local CSOs to international NGOs, linking citizens' claims to existing local, national or international policy debates or decision-making processes, in order to gain profile or legitimacy for citizens' demands. In contexts where certain groups can remain systematically excluded, these actors step in to act for the poor and marginalised, without necessarily being of the marginalised. Whilst this invites important questions of political legitimacy, the authors note that almost all successful cases of public participation involve some form of democratic mediation.

Piper, L. and von Lieres, B., 2011, 'Expert Advocacy for the Marginalised: How and Why Democratic Mediation Matters to Deepening Democracy in the Global South', Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, Brighton
The paper argues that the practice of democratic mediation is an increasingly common, yet under-researched, component of engagements between citizens and public authorities across the globe. While the actors who mediate (and their tactics) are diverse and are not necessarily of the marginalised group, they share a commitment to overcoming representational, knowledge or ideological deficits in decision-making for the marginalised group. While the 'speaking for' nature of democratic mediation clearly opens up critical legitimacy problems, the practice of democratic mediation appears to be

remarkably common, and even effective.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4143

So far, however donors have paid little attention to these processes of mobilisation and coalition building.

Haider, H., 2009, 'Helpdesk Research Report: Donor Engagement with Social Movements', Governance and Social Development Resource centre, University of Birmingham
There is very limited literature on donor engagement with social movements. Of the literature that exists, the majority have been critical of such engagement. It is argued that donor funding of social movements, often through the funding of civil society organisations (CSOs) and NGOs, has co-opted and diluted these movements and led to the defection of its members. This has occurred primarily through donor pressures to institutionalise movements in the form of professionalised NGOs and CSOs.
http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HD645.pdf

Mcloughlin, C., 2009, 'Helpdesk Research Report: Social Movements and Poverty Reduction', Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham
There is limited research available on the role of social movements in development processes. It is widely acknowledged that establishing a causal relationship between social movements and any observed change in societies is problematic. In particular, attribution is difficult because there are usually multiple variables involved in any process of social change, including other actors and networks. The vast majority of the available case study material on social movements does not focus specifically on assessing their impact, but rather on describing their goals, tactics and experiences of engagement with the state.
http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HD639.pdf

Public participation in service delivery

Participation and accountability initiatives used to adopt a state-centric approach which viewed citizens as clients or consumers of services or policies (see World Bank, 2003, 'Making Services Work for Poor People, World Development Report 2004', World Bank, Washington D.C, Chapters 3, 5 and 6). Now, however, the active involvement of citizens in shaping the policies that impact their lives is being emphasised, and the operational meaning of 'participation' has shifted from beneficiary involvement in community-level projects to citizen engagement in policy formation and implementation to influence and hold governments accountable. Recent research has found that community participation in service delivery can significantly enhance the responsiveness and accountability of service providers to users, and contributes to the functioning of public services that are accessible and equitable.

Commins, S., 2007, 'Community Participation in Service Delivery and Accountability', UCLA, Los Angeles
How can citizens affect service delivery and accountability? This paper, from the University of Los Angeles, provides an overview of issues and experiences with diverse forms of community participation in the provision of services. Service provision arrangements linked to various forms of community participation may improve MDG-related outcomes. Community participation also affects public sector accountability at local, regional and national levels.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2911

DFID, 2010, 'Improving Public Services', in The Politics of Poverty: Elites, Citizens and States: Findings from ten years of DFID-funded research on Governance and Fragile States 2001–2010', Department for International Development, London, ch. 7
How can public services in developing countries be improved? How can poor people be encouraged to participate in service delivery? There is little evidence that market-oriented reforms have improved public services in developing countries. As a result, donors have begun emphasising the importance of strengthening service providers' direct accountability to users. Involving citizens in service delivery can improve accountability, but formal participatory mechanisms can exclude the poor.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3998

How can service provision be designed and delivered in a way that ensures the opinions of the users, socially excluded groups and the voices of the poor are heard and represented? Access to and broad dissemination of information is a key precondition for this. This is used to inform citizen participation in various mechanisms designed to improve participation and accountability of services, for example user groups and resource management committees, citizen report cards, etc. State accountability to citizens can also involve participatory budgeting and various public oversight initiatives.

The IDL Group, 2008, 'Accountability and Voice for Service Delivery at the Local Level', A background paper for the UNDP regional training event: Developing Capacities for Accountability and Voice, Sofia, Bulgaria, October 1-2, 2008, United

Nations Development Program and the IDL Group
How can service providers and governments become more accountable to citizens? This background paper, published by UNDP and the IDL Group, examines the crucial role of accountability and voice (A&V) and methods for implementing A&V mechanisms. The issue is two-fold: bolstering the responsiveness of service providers and local government, while also enabling poor people to demand promised poverty reduction results. Capacity development should not proceed in an overly technocratic fashion, but should take account of the environment's complex political realities.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3255

Logolink, 2002, Participatory Planning Process IUCN Pakistan Experience with Environmental Rehabilitation in NWFP and Punjab (ERNP), case study, Logolink International Workshop on Participatory Planning Approaches for Local Government, Bandung, Indonesia
What can be achieved through social organisation? What is needed for successful participatory planning? This Logolink case study recounts the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Pakistan experience of participatory planning processes within the seven-year (1996-2003) Environmental Rehabilitation in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Punjab (ERNP) programme.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=380

Subedi, B. et al, 'Local Communities and Natural Products: a Manual for Organising Natural Resource Management Groups for Resource Management Planning, Enterprise Development and Integration into Value Chains', USAID/ANSAB
Policies promoting community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) have created an important role for communities in the conservation, management, and use of natural resources. Government agencies, non-governmental organizations and other service providers are supporting local people to get organized in various forms of Natural Resource Management (NRM) groups. Such groups are also taking up responsibilities to achieve their objectives and have made significant progress in several areas of resource governance and management. Critical to the success of CBNRM efforts is ensuring that local communities' livelihoods needs are met through the sustainable management of natural resources. Natural resource based enterprises play an important role in helping communities realize economic benefits from such resource management. Learning how to organize communities to effective manage natural resources, and natural resource based enterprises is an essential skill for any NGO or government agency dedicated to promoting CBNRM.
http://www.ansab.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/report300731441.pdf

However, poor people and other vulnerable minorities can often be excluded from participating in policy design and programmes that have a direct impact on their lives. Their voices can be constrained by low awareness of rights, government resistance, poor access to information and complex laws and procedures for involvement in local decision-making. It is also important to recognise that the poor face particular barriers to participation, for example, illiteracy, lack of time and an inability to travel long distances. As a result participatory mechanisms can suffer from elite capture, and poor credibility. They can also become politicised, and adopt undemocratic and non-inclusive practices. In some instances, efforts to improve participation and accountability may increase inequalities between organised groups from better-off areas and the urban poor. Women are at particular risk of being marginalised - at all stages of the policy process.

Kabeer, N., 2010, 'Women's Empowerment, Development Interventions, and Management of Information Flows', IDS Bulletin Vol. 41, Issue 6, pp. 105-113
How can development interventions manage information and ideas so as to empower women more effectively? This paper suggests that particular attention must be given to strengthening women's capacity for voice and action at five 'critical moments' of an intervention's planning cycle: conception, design, implementation, evaluation, and learning. At these moments, the ideas, values and knowledge of key actors profoundly affect how an intervention plays out in practice, and thus what it is able to achieve. Gender equality concerns are especially important at the conceptualisation stage, so as to plan follow-through.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4065

For more information on community involvement in service delivery, please see the User involvement and accountability section of the GSDRC's Service Delivery Topic Guide.

Social empowerment

Social empowerment is understood as the process of developing a sense of autonomy and self-confidence, and acting individually and collectively to change social relationships and the institutions and discourses that exclude poor people and keep them in poverty. Poor people's empowerment, and their ability to hold others to account, is strongly influenced by their individual assets (such as land, housing, livestock, savings) and capabilities of all types: human (such as good health and education), social (such as social belonging, a sense of identity, leadership relations) and psychological (self-esteem, self-confidence, the ability to imagine and aspire to a better future). Also important are people's collective assets and capabilities, such as voice, organisation, representation and identity.

Blomkvist, H., 2003, 'Participation, Social Interaction, and the Quality of Democracy in India', Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia Mariott Hotel, Philadelphia, PA
Is government responsiveness to citizen's demands affected by different types of political participation? Is responsiveness affected by social interaction and does it depend on historically evolved political structures? This paper from Uppsala University, Sweden draws on evidence gathered from 3,200 personal interviews with citizens in five Indian states; Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Kerala and West Bengal in exploring these questions.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display/document/legacyid/707

Poor people's involvement in local associations and inter-community cooperation mechanisms can contribute to social empowerment by improving their skills, knowledge and self-perception. Local associations also act as self-help mechanisms through which poor people organise their economic activities, such as farming cooperatives, or microfinance groups.

Goetz, A. M., and Jenkins, R., 2002, 'Voice, Accountability and Human Development: The Emergence of a New Agenda', Background Paper for the Human Development Report 2002: Deepening Democracy, UNDP, New York
This study examines the multiple dimensions of accountability and surveys the experiments that have sought to implement a new, expanded accountability agenda. The new agenda seeks a more direct role for ordinary people and their associations in demanding accountability across a more diverse set of jurisdictions. It uses a broader repertoire of methods, and is based on a more exacting standard of social justice. However, this agenda must be actively shaped if it is to have a positive impact on human development.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4070

Alatas, V., Pritchett, L. and Wetterberg, A., 2002, 'Voice Lessons: Local Government Organizations, Social Organizations, and the Quality of Local Governance' World Bank Working Paper 2981, Washington DC
Do certain types of citizen participation improve local governance more than others? This paper, coming out of the World Bank's Local Level Institutions study of local life in villages in rural Indonesia, examines the relationship between the involvement of villagers in social activities and the quality of local governance. Local governance indicators consist of the ability of the community to participate in village decisions, voice their opinion about village problems and access information about village funds, in addition to the perceived responsiveness of the village government to citizens' problems. It finds that household involvement in social organisations, such as religious organisations, youth groups and credit unions, has a more positive net effect on local governance than does involvement in village government organisations. This suggests that greater attention should be paid to how local level participation is structured, rather than merely creating local participation mechanisms.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display/document/legacyid/505

It is also important to recognise that associational life at the local level takes place predominantly within the informal sphere, such as religious organisations, traditional and customary institutions, and informal community-based groups. It is these organisations that exert the most influence on poor people's lives.

Unsworth, S. (ed.), 2010, 'An Upside Down View of Governance', Centre for the Future State, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
How can effective, accountable public authority be increased? This paper syntheses research findings from the Centre for the Future State. It explores how public authority is created through processes of bargaining between state and society actors, and the interaction of formal and informal institutions. Findings highlight the need for a fundamental reassessment of existing assumptions about governance and development. Informal institutions and personalised relationships are pervasive and powerful, but they can contribute to progressive as well as to regressive outcomes. Rather than focusing on rules-based reform, policymakers should consider using indirect strategies to influence local actors.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3849

Vulnerable groups, such as the very poor, women and marginalised communities can often lack the skills and confidence to engage in community decision-making. It may therefore be important to support mechanisms designed to specifically target marginalised groups in order to ensure that they can participate. It is argued that participation in local associations can empower poor people to engage in public politics and collective action. However, research shows that building individual and collective capacities to engage is a long-term process.

Kabeer, N., with A. H. Kabir and T. Y. Huq, 2009, 'Quantifying the Impact of Social Mobilisation in Rural Bangladesh: Donors, Civil Society and 'The Road not Taken'', Working Paper 333, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Brighton
What impact can social mobilisation NGOs have on democratic knowledge, practice and engagement? International donors have increasingly encouraged development NGOs to take up a service delivery function, to the detriment of social mobilisation functions. This paper reports on a quantitative study of the impact of an NGO in Bangladesh, Nijera Kori (NK), which prioritises rights, social mobilisation and solidarity. The results of NK's focus have important implications for enhanced democratic accountability and suggest an alternative civil society approach to improving democratic citizenship.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4116

The following article aims to empirically test the extent to which participation in associations increases what the authors terms 'active citizenship' – that is, citizen efforts to directly engage with public officials in order to secure access to public goods and services.

Houtzager, P. P., and Acharya, A. K., 2010, Associations, active citizenship, and the quality of democracy in Brazil and Mexico', Theory and Society
To what extent does participation in associations increase active citizenship? How does associationalism impact on the quality of citizenship? Civic engagement theory suggests that associations empower members to engage in public politics and improve the quality of democracy. Empirical demonstration of this argument outside affluent countries is rare, however, and so this paper examines associationalism in São Paulo and Mexico City. It finds that associationalism leads to higher levels of active citizenship, but does not improve the quality of citizenship practices.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4142

For more information on barriers to achieving capabilities, please see the GSDRC's Social Exclusion Topic Guide.

Economic empowerment

Economic empowerment is thought to allow poor people to think beyond immediate daily survival and to exercise greater control over both their resources and life choices. For example, it enables households to make their own decisions around making investments in health and education, and taking risks in order to increase their income. There is also some evidence that economic empowerment can strengthen vulnerable groups' participation in the decision-making. For example, microfinance programmes have been shown to bolster women's influence within the household and marketplace. The evidence also suggests that economic power is often easily 'converted' into increased social status or decision-making power.

The literature on economic empowerment is vast, and a large part of this focuses on the economic empowerment of women - a key strategy in addressing gender inequality. More generally, the discourse on economic empowerment centres around four broad areas: a) the promotion of the assets of poor people; b) transformative forms of social protection; c) microfinance; and d) skills training.

Eyben, R., Kabeer, N., Cornwall, A., 2008, 'Conceptualising Empowerment and the Implications for Pro-Poor Growth', Paper prepared for the DAC Poverty Network by the Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
This paper proposes a framework to enable the empowerment of the poor to be conceptually understood and operationally explored. It examines the different facets of 'social', 'economic' and 'political' empowerment. International development actors often lack awareness of much that is already known about these issues. These are the conceptual tools for identifying complex and mutually dependent processes that development actors can support and facilitate for achieving pro-poor growth.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3401

DAC Network on Gender Equality, 2011, 'Women's Economic Empowerment: Issues Paper', OECD Publishing, Paris
In 2007-08, of the USD 22 billion aid (average per year) committed to the economic and productive sectors by OECD Development Assistance Committee members, USD 4.6 billion targeted gender equality and women's empowerment. Much of this focused on gender equality in agriculture and rural development. Only small shares of aid targeted gender equality and women's empowerment in mining, construction, transport/storage (including road building), energy, communications and trade. This paper highlights the need for innovative approaches and partnerships to scale up women's economic empowerment.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4224

Golla, A. M., Malhotra, A., Nanda, P. and Mehra, R., 2011, 'Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: Definition, Framework and Indicators', International Center for Research on Women
This paper provides a framework to guide the design, implementation and evaluation of economic advancement programmes.
http://www.icrw.org/publications/understanding-and-measuring-womens-economic-empowerment

Kabeer, N., Mahmud, S. and Tasneem, S. 2011, 'Does Paid Work Provide a Pathway to Women's Empowerment? Empirical Findings from Bangladesh', Working Paper 375, IDS, Brighton
This paper uses a combination of survey data and qualitative interviews to explore the impact of paid work on various indicators of women's empowerment, ranging from shifts in intra-household decision-making processes to women's participation in public life. It finds that forms of work that offer regular and relatively independent incomes hold the greatest transformative potential.
http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Wp375.pdf

Bertini, C. and The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2011, 'Girls Grow: A Vital Force in Rural Economies', The Chicago Council on Global Affairs
This report highlights how adolescent girls, as the backbone of rural economies, have powerful potential to be agents of economic and social growth and change. The report highlights ways in which governments and bilateral donors can better support rural girls' personal and professional empowerment.
http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/UserFiles/File/GlobalAgDevelopment/Report/GirlsGrowReportFinal_v9.pdf

Malhotra, A., et al., 2009, 'Innovation for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality', International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), Washington D.C.
http://www.icrw.org/publications/innovation-womens-empowerment-and-gender-equality

Broadbent, E., 2010, 'Helpdesk Research Report: Access to Economic Opportunities and Changes in Power Relations', Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham
The range of interventions relevant to this question is extremely broad, and this review therefore presents a limited number of examples in the following areas: microfinance, cash transfers, technology and skills development, labour market

interventions, and land and inheritance rights. Research into the impacts of interventions aimed at increasing access to economic opportunities mostly exists in relation to women's empowerment, and even then the impacts are rarely expressed in terms of 'power relations'. In this review the bulk of the interventions presented are aimed at women (who are also often further marginalised by their location and class).
http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HD731.pdf

Land and property rights

Land and property rights, especially for women, are considered an important way of addressing underlying economic, social and political inequalities. Addressing entitlements to land has been shown to improve productivity and access to credit, increase income, and encourage social and economic investments in land and property as well as education, health or other income-generating activities. In contexts where the management of natural resources may pose problems, empowering communities through land titling or investing ownership with private entities, mandatory consultations and benefit-sharing, mandatory social impact assessments, cash or in-kind compensations, and legal redress for damage to property are a central focus of discussions.

UN Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor, 2008, 'Empowering the Poor Through Property Rights', In Making the Law Work for Everyone Volume II, United Nations Development Programme, New York, pp.64-128
How can property systems be reformed in a way that enables the poor to access and secure property? This chapter suggests that a pro-poor reform strategy for effectively functioning property systems should be based on land tenure security, the creation of opportunity for investment, and adequate management of risk.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4081

Kanji, N., Cotula, L., Hilhorst, T., Toulmin, C., and Witten, W., 2005, 'Can Land Registration Serve Poor and Marginalised Groups?' Summary Report, Research Report 1, Securing Land Rights in Africa, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), London
This research examines the current processes of land rights registration in Ethiopia, Ghana and Mozambique and assesses their outcomes for vulnerable groups. It shows that land registration is not inherently anti-poor. The distributional consequences of land registration depend on the design of the registration process and of the institutions responsible for its management. It is important to design land registration systems that secure the land rights of marginalised groups in specific geographic and historical contexts, rather than adopting blueprint solutions based on Western models.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4050

Cotula, L., 2007, 'Legal Empowerment for Local Resource Control: Securing Local Resource Rights within Foreign Investment Projects in Africa', International Institute for Environment and Development, London
How can the benefits to local groups of foreign investment into local resources be maximised and the costs minimised? This study analyses legal tools that have been used in several African countries to secure the resource rights of local groups affected by foreign investment projects. Empowerment can occur through opening to negotiation decisions that were previously closed to local groups, or by providing local groups with tools to aid their negotiations with external actors.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4082

Keita, A., et al, 2008, 'Legal Tools for Citizen Empowerment: Increasing Local Participation and Benefit in Mali's Mining Sector', International Institute for Environment and Development, London
http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/12554IIED.pdf

Broadbent, E., 2010, 'Land and Property Rights Interventions for Pro-Poor Outcomes', Helpdesk Research Report, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham
A review of past and existing interventions suggests the importance of the following design and implementation issues: sustaining significant government commitment; supporting land and property rights interventions with wider efforts to promote good governance, reform rural areas and livelihoods, mitigate the negative effects of urbanisation, and tackle problems in the labour market; mainstreaming gender concerns; supporting interventions with comprehensive education, awareness and training activities to ensure that the population – including government officials – understand what land and property rights are; being aware of and sensitive to existing legal systems (e.g. customary law); and considering the impact of interventions on non-beneficiaries.
http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HD703.pdf

For more information please see the Access to justice and Human rights, gender, and social exclusion sections of the GSDRC's Justice Topic Guide.

Social protection

Social protection is increasingly being discussed in terms of its potential to bring about transformational change to the status and opportunities of marginalised groups. Social protection schemes are believed to empower poor people by helping them to adopt strategies to balance their immediate needs with their investments in future livelihoods. They enable people to invest in more productive, but also riskier, activities such as entrepreneurship or keeping their children in school. Social protection mechanisms are particularly important for those who do not have the means even to save small amounts. There is evidence that social protection interventions have: promoted investments in children's human capital and capabilities; increased the productivity of household livelihood efforts; contributed to a sense of inclusion and citizenship; mobilised the poor around entitlement claims; and impacted the local economy.

Cook, S. and Kabeer, N., 2009, 'Socio-economic Security over the Life Course: A Global Review of Social Protection', Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
This paper draws on a series of regional studies to provide an overview of the current field of social protection. It suggests that social protection needs to move beyond risk management and safety nets to support productive or developmental trajectories out of poverty that can strengthen citizenship rights and claims to security. Innovative, more developmental social protection approaches adapted to particular contexts are emerging around the world. However, greater attention should be paid to the political economy of redistributive policies, the challenge of financing such policies, and their implications for the social contract between state and citizens. The state has a key role in coordinating inclusive social protection provision.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3830

Lund, F., 2009, 'Social Protection and the Informal Economy: Linkages and Good Practices for Poverty Reduction and Empowerment', in Promoting Pro-Poor Growth: Social Protection, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Geneva, pp.69-88
How can social protection in developing countries empower people to create employment-related ways out of poverty? This paper examines empowerment in the context of social protection for informal workers. It argues that social protection can help to improve the health and well-being of informal sector workers, especially poorer women, and build their capacity to organise and demand better working conditions. Interventions must consider the sector's diversity, its permanence, and the limited choices that drive people to work in it.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3811

Cash transfers are thought to promote self-esteem, status and empowerment amongst vulnerable people, enabling them to become active members of their households and communities, rather than perceived as 'burdens'. There is strong evidence, for example, that cash transfers can address age-based social exclusion. Research has found that social pensions in Namibia and Lesotho have improved the status of older people without relatives, who otherwise have been isolated and excluded from community life. Cash transfers are also regarded as a particularly effective way of empowering women and girls within the household. By addressing gender imbalances in access to economic resources, and putting cash directly in the hands of women, cash transfers can increase women's bargaining power within the home and improve intra-household allocation of resources. However, it is argued that conditional cash transfers (CCTs) (requiring that children are taken to school and for health check-ups) reinforce gender stereotypes of women as responsible for the household, while men maintain a role as income earners. Overall, the evidence on the impact of cash transfer programmes on empowerment is still patchy.

Arnold, C., Conway, T. and Greenslade, M., 2011, 'Cash Transfers: Evidence Paper', Department for International Development, London
What impact do cash transfers have on reducing poverty and increasing the resilience of poor households? This paper assesses the evidence and looks at the extent to which it can be generalised. It shows how design and financing features help to maximise transfers' effectiveness in a range of circumstances. Ultimately, cash transfers work as part of a broader strategy to achieve economic and social development.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4104

Molyneux, M., 2008, 'Conditional Cash Transfers: a Pathway to Women's Empowerment?' Pathways of Women's Empowerment Working Paper 5, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
This review of Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) argues that although these programmes are widely replicated due to their perceived positive impact in reducing poverty, they reinforce asymmetric gender roles. Women involved in the programmes report that, in general, they experience greater self-esteem, well being and autonomy. However, the programmes' gender bias reinforces the position of women as mothers, tying them more closely to the home.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4069

Concern Worldwide and Oxfam GB, 2011, 'Walking the Talk: Cash Transfers and Gender Dynamics', Concern Worldwide and Oxfam GB, London
Do cash transfers (CTs) in emergency contexts currently benefit women and contribute to women's empowerment? How can NGOs and donors develop more gender-sensitive CT programmes that help to redress inequality and work towards empowerment? This report examines the impacts of cash transfers on gender dynamics within households and communities. It finds mixed impacts and insufficient consideration of gender inequality and gender analysis in programme processes. To realise the potential value of CTs for women, NGOs and donors need to ensure, for example, that all emergency responses include a gender and social analysis; that clear and attainable gender aims are specified for each stage of the intervention; and that more investment is made in staff training.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4089

McDevitt, A., 2010, 'Helpdesk Research Report: Promoting the Economic Participation of Women', Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham
Facilitating the participation of women in economic life is seen to provide financial gain at both household and national level, as well as having long-term impacts upon poverty reduction through creating changes in the intergenerational transmission of poverty processes. However, enabling women to participate in economic life is subject to both formal and informal constraints: women face various institutional barriers, as well as discrimination played out within social relations. Removing these barriers, and actively creating mechanisms through which women are able to add value to the economy, are explained in the following review in terms of: access to jobs, access to credit and financial services; land and property rights and; agricultural inputs and technology.
http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HD706.pdf

The paper below argues that while access to financial services and microfinance can and does make important contributions to the economic productivity and social well-being of poor women and their households, it does not automatically empower women.

Kabeer, N., 2005, 'Is Microfinance a "Magic Bullet" for Women's Empowerment? Analysis of Findings from South Asia', Economic and Political Weekly, October 29 2005, pp. 4709-4718
Is microfinance a 'magic bullet' for women's empowerment? This article published in the Economic and Political Weekly, India, examines the empirical evidence of the impact of microfinance on poverty reduction and the empowerment of poor women. Focusing on experiences in South Asia, it argues that while access to financial services can and does make important contributions to the economic productivity and social well-being of poor women and their households, it does not automatically empower women.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1837

For more information on interventions designed to increase economic empowerment, please see the Types of Social Protection section of the GSDRC's Social Protection Topic Guide.

Skills Training

Interventions which promote skills acquisition and training amongst marginalised groups (such as youths or informal workers) are another way of supporting empowerment. Gaining knowledge and skills is thought to alter people's self-perceptions and status, whilst also increasing their employability and encouraging engaged citizenship.

Liimatainen, M-R., n.d., 'Training and Skills Acquisition in the Informal Sector: A Literature Review', Informal Economy Series, ILO, Geneva
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_104010.pdf

UNECA, 2005, 'Youth, Education, Skills, and Employment: The Way Forward in Africa', Economic and Social Policy Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa
http://www.uneca.org/Eca_Programmes/Policy_Analysis/Publications/Youth_Educ_Skills_Emp.Pdf

Microfinance

Microfinance refers to financial services for those without access to traditional formal banking. It includes micro-credit (the provision of loans), micro-savings, insurance and money transfer services. Microfinance interventions have long been seen as a way of empowering people to invest in their futures and lift themselves out of poverty. However, there is a growing concern that the impact of microcredit and microloans on poor people's empowerment may not be straightforward, and the emphasis on reaching the 'poorest of the poor' may be flawed.

Duvendack, M, et al., 2011, 'What is the evidence of the impact of microfinance on the well-being of poor people?' EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London
The report finds no robust evidence of positive impacts on women's status, or girls' enrolments, which may be partly due to these topics not being addressed in valid studies (RCTs and pipelines). This report shows that almost all impact evaluations of microfinance suffer from weak methodologies and inadequate data, reducing the reliability of impact estimates.
http://www.dfid.gov.uk/R4D/PDF/Outputs/SystematicReviews/Microfinance2011Duvendackreport.pdf

R. Stewart et al, 2010, 'What is the impact of microfinance on poor people? A systematic review of evidence from sub-Saharan Africa' Technical Report, EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, University of London
This report finds that some people are made poorer, and not richer, by microfinance, particularly by micro-credit. This seems to be because: they consume more instead of investing in their futures; their businesses fail to produce enough profit to pay high interest rates; their investment in other longer-term aspects of their futures is not sufficient to give a return on their investment; and because the context in which microfinance clients live is by definition fragile. There is some evidence that microfinance enables poor people to be better placed to deal with shocks, but this is not universal.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4225

Accountability and responsiveness of the state and society

Introduction

Efforts to empower citizens need to be accompanied by state mechanisms to ensure accountability and responsiveness. Accountability mechanisms can include formal top-down processes (such as elections, hearings, consultations) or bottom-up strategies (such as participatory budgeting, social mobilisation, and citizen monitoring). Accountability also requires mechanisms through which citizens can hold government to account. These include direct mechanisms, such as citizens' scorecards on service delivery; institutions such as civil society organisations and political parties representing citizens' views in engagement with decision-makers; and more formal accountability mechanisms like elections, parliaments and ombudsmen at local and national levels.

It is increasingly recognised that greater accountability and responsiveness can only be brought about by working across these levels. Fox (2005) (cited below) argues: "Pro-poor reforms require changes in three distinct arenas: within the state itself, within society and at the state-society interface."

Fox, J., 2005, 'Empowerment and Institutional Change: Mapping "Virtuous Circles" of State-Society Interaction', in Alsop, R (ed.), 'Power, Rights and Poverty: Concepts and Connections', World Bank/DFID, London
How do pro-poor reform innovations scale up and spread out to influence entire agencies, regions or nation-states? How can pro-poor policymakers and social actors gain leverage against those who oppose reform? This article looks at pro-poor institutional change in rural Mexico. It argues that the empowerment of poor people is important for the success of anti-poverty policies. 'Virtuous circles' of mutual empowerment between institutional reformers and social actors in the public interest need to be triggered and sustained.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1620

Benequista, N., 2010, 'Putting Citizens at the Centre: Linking States and Societies for Responsive Governance - A Policy-maker's Guide to the Research of the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability', Prepared for the DFID Conference on 'The Politics of Poverty, Elites, Citizens and States', 21-23 June, Sunningdale, UK
How does citizen engagement contribute to responsive governance? This paper summarises ten years of research from the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation, and Accountability, presenting the key findings of more than 150 case studies of citizen engagement. It argues that existing donor programmes fail to recognise the full potential of citizen engagement, resulting in lack of understanding of the complex relationship between citizens and the state that shapes governance outcomes. Citizens need greater political knowledge and awareness of rights and of agency as a first step to claiming rights and acting for themselves. Involvement in associations has been an effective way of strengthening notions of citizenship and citizen engagement, which can contribute to more responsive states.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3863

UNDP Capacity Development Group, 2006, 'Mutual Accountability Mechanisms: Accountability, Voice and Responsiveness', UNDP, New York
How can one increase the responsiveness and accountability of development agents, decision makers and service providers to the concerns of the poor? This paper examines the building of accountability mechanisms as part of developing capacity. The capacity of any system requires appropriate feedback loops to self-regulate, adapt and effectively achieve its objectives. Accountability strategies need communication strategies.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3980

The chapter below argues that for social accountability mechanisms to be effective in enabling citizens to hold power-holders to account, some level of state support is required. Experience shows that such support can range from intensely active to extremely reluctant. However, governments can view civil society involvement in advocacy less positively than service delivery. Advocacy activities can often be subjected to government controls and legal barriers, which is frequently the case in fragile states with weak governance and accountability.

Blair, H., 2011, 'Gaining State Support for Social Accountability', in Accountability through Public Opinion: From Inertia to Public Action, eds. S. Odugbemi, S. and T. Lee, World Bank, Washington DC, pp.37-52
If social accountability is to be successful in holding public power-holders responsible for their actions, then the state must support the mechanisms used in exacting it. This chapter examines the many types of state support for social accountability.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4144

One of the reasons for accountability failures is the capture of public institutions by powerful and resourceful groups, and the lack of representation of poor people. The ability to demand accountability and the capacity and willingness to respond to calls for accountability is shaped by relations of power between the state, civil society and market actors.

Lindberg, S., 2009, 'Accountability: The Core Concept and its Subtypes', Africa Power and Politics Programme (APPP), Working Paper no. 1, Overseas Development Institute, London
The concept of accountability has become increasingly popular in diverse fields including development policy. This working paper from the Overseas Development Institute argues that new meanings and dimensions risk diluting its content and creating conceptual confusion - with significant implications for empirical analysis. A classic approach to concept formation is required, which suggests that accountability refers to a class of concepts under the category 'methods of limiting power'. It is important to distinguish between accountability and responsiveness.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3674

Newell, P. and Wheeler, J., 2006, 'Taking Accountability into Account', in Rights, Resources and the Politics of Accountability, Zed Books, London
It is widely assumed that a notion of accountability is crucial for ensuring that political and business actors respond to the needs of poor people. This chapter from Rights, Resources and the Politics of Accountability explores the relationship between power and accountability. The changing relations between state, civil society and market actors both create and restrict new forms of accountability as new power dynamics evolve.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2648

Mukhopadhyay, M and Meer, S., 2004, 'Creating Voice and Carving Space: Redefining Governance from a Gender Perspective', Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam
How have approaches to improving governance addressed the question of gender inequality? This book explores what good governance and citizenship means for poor women who belong to groups excluded from power, resources and decision-making. Based on action research by sixteen organisations in eight countries, it analyses how women can stake their claim to participation in governance, and make institutions accountable to their interests and rights.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1446

The political economy of accountability is a growing area of interest. It considers how informal relations between state actors and citizens often act as a stronger means of holding elected representatives to account than formal processes. While this kind of 'rude' accountability is important because it highlights how relationships of accountability are embedded in social relations, the gains derived from it can be short-lived. Thus, it is important to connect the power and accessibility of informal mechanisms of accountability to the sanctions, rules and neutrality of official mechanisms.

Lindberg, S., 2010, 'What Accountability Pressures do MPs in Africa Face and How Do They Respond? Evidence from Ghana', Journal of Modern African Studies, vol. 48, no. 1, pp. 117-142
What is the role of clientelism in African politics? How are MPs held accountable in Ghana? This article examines the daily accountability pressures and responses of Ghanaian Members of Parliament, the strength of the institution, and the formal and informal aspects of their role. It finds that these MPs devote a significant proportion of their time to producing and distributing private goods to constituents, and to constituent service. Marginal attention is devoted to legislating and executive oversight. Some MPs have been able to counter political clientelism, however, through civic education and by reformulating constituent expectations toward the production of collective, public goods.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3884

Hossain, N., 2009, 'Rude Accountability in the Unreformed State: Informal Pressures on Frontline Bureaucrats in Bangladesh', IDS Working Paper 319, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
How successful are the informal pressures that poor citizens exert on officials to provide services in Bangladesh? This paper examines how poor people experience safety nets, schools and health services. Local political and social pressures provide responsiveness to demands for service through shame and the threat of violence. The gains from 'rude' accountability are often short-lived, however, and may backfire. It is important to bridge the informal and official mechanisms of accountability.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3228

Blunt, P., 2009, 'The Political Economy of Accountability in Timor-Leste: Implications for Public Policy', Public Administration and Development, vol. 29, pp. 89-100
What conditions facilitate corruption in Timor-Leste and what measures should be taken to address it? This article examines the social, economic, political and governance context of Timor-Leste and suggests that it is conducive to state capture and systemic grand and petty corruption. It is also resistant to conventional short-term technocratic anticorruption remedies. Anticorruption progress is a long-term endeavour that requires sustained impartial service delivery, the

emergence of leaders of integrity and a middle class, and the establishment of the rule of law.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3230

Forms of accountability: vertical accountability

There are various forms of official accountability mechanisms. Vertical accountability measures allow citizens to hold institutions and states to account, whether through elections or through social mobilisation or advocacy and lobbying. Horizontal accountability mechanisms involve state entities monitoring and demanding answers from (and sometimes sanctioning) other state entities. More recently, citizens have begun to engage directly with the state and service providers through budgeting, monitoring and other oversight processes in what are variously referred to as 'direct', 'social' or 'demand-side' accountability processes.

Vertical accountability refers to direct engagement by individuals and groups with governments and other duty-bearers through participation in democratic political processes, and with service providers through advocacy and oversight channels and mechanisms. The effectiveness of vertical accountability mechanisms thus depends on citizens' awareness of rights and choice, and their ability and readiness to engage and use voice, either through political cycles or through civil society mobilisation and involvement in monitoring mechanisms. The latter has been addressed in the 'Political empowerment section' above. This section focuses on a discussion of elections – traditionally considered the ultimate means of exercising political voice.

Elections

Elections are the main political mechanism for allowing citizens to choose their government, and form a central pillar of any democratic political system. How electoral systems are designed determines the political representation of certain groups, including minorities and excluded groups, and ultimately citizen satisfaction with the electoral process.

Merloe, P., 2008, 'Human Rights - The Basis for Inclusiveness, Transparency, Accountability and Public Confidence in Elections', in Promoting Legal Frameworks for Democratic Elections: An NDI Guide for Developing Election Laws and Law Commentaries, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, New York, pp 9-36
What are the fundamental principles for genuinely democratic elections? How can states realise these principles in practice? This section from the National Democratic Institute publication Promoting Legal Frameworks for Democratic Elections examines electoral-related human rights law and principles. Honouring citizens' collective right to genuine elections and establishing and maintaining public confidence in elections requires inclusiveness, transparency and accountability.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3124

Bratton, M., and Logan, C., 2006, 'Voters but not yet Citizens: The Weak Demand for Vertical Accountability in Africa's Unclaimed Democracies', Afrobarometer, Cape Town
Why has democracy failed to secure better governance and accountability in Africa? This article from Afrobarometer finds that how Africans understand their own roles and responsibilities for securing vertical democratic accountability – between leaders and the public – is important. Democracy in Africa remains unclaimed by 'voters' who have embraced multiparty elections but failed to grasp their rights as 'citizens' - notably to regularly demand accountability from leaders.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2587

Access to justice and the rule of law

As key guarantor of the rule of law, the justice system is a strong mechanism of accountability. A strong, independent and well-respected judiciary can provide a check on the arbitrary exercise of state power and citizens (and non-citizens) can use the justice system to formally claim their rights and seek redress. However, poor people face significant barriers in accessing justice, and are particularly susceptible to being excluded from property, labour and business law protections. Legal empowerment strategies improve the accessibility of justice systems and help citizens demand accountability from officials. These involve increasing awareness among citizens about their rights as well as giving them the skills and opportunities needed to access institutions and services. However, state institutions and leaders may attempt to undermine this accountability channel if it threatens their interests, for example by removing judges.

UN Commission on the Legal Empowerment of the Poor, 2008, 'The Four Pillars of Legal Empowerment', in Making the Law Work for Everyone Volume I, Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor and United Nations Development Programme, New York, pp. 25-42
Most of the world's poor live outside the ambit of the law and their poverty is both a cause and consequence of their lack

of effective legal rights. This chapter argues that addressing the issue of legal empowerment is both smart politics and good economics. It presents a framework of legal empowerment based on 1) access to justice and the rule of law; 2) property rights; 3) labour rights; and 4) business rights.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4054

Bruce, J., et al., 2007, 'Legal Empowerment of the Poor: From Concepts to Assessment', USAID, Washington DC
What does Legal Empowerment of the Poor (LEP) mean? How can it be achieved and assessed? This paper outlines LEP's components – the enhancement, awareness, enablement and enforcement of rights. Synergies could be realised if projects pursued components simultaneously. It is difficult to address legal empowerment issues at the appropriate level: an intervention might fail because it is too superficial, or because it is too ambitious and is blocked by vested interests. However, some LEP interventions can be combined in ways that avoid losing important but risky opportunities. Indicators for assessing LEP could be divided into those which reflect efforts to deliver LEP, and those which measure its realisation.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4064

Traditional, customary or informal justice systems also play an important role in the lives of poor people, especially in contexts where the official justice structures are largely absent or incapable. Traditional rulers, religious leaders, village elders, local elites – even illegal groups such as paramilitary or guerrilla groups that control an area – may be asked to arbitrate disputes. Such systems can be more relevant and accessible for poor people than state institutions. Where they work well, they can empower people and lead to real, local-level accountability. However, they can also reinforce local power inequities, patterns of social exclusion and human rights violations. In many contexts, women are not allowed to occupy positions of authority within these processes. It is therefore important that any support to non-state systems pays heed to issues of accessibility and equity.

Unsworth, S. (ed.), 2010, 'An Upside Down View of Governance', Centre for the Future State, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
How can effective, accountable public authority be increased? This paper synthesises research findings from the Centre for the Future State. It explores how public authority is created through processes of bargaining between state and society actors, and the interaction of formal and informal institutions. Findings highlight the need for a fundamental reassessment of existing assumptions about governance and development. Informal institutions and personalised relationships are pervasive and powerful, but they can contribute to progressive as well as to regressive outcomes. Rather than focusing on rules-based reform, policymakers should consider using indirect strategies to influence local actors.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3849

Goetz, A-M., 2007, 'Gender Justice, Citizenship and Entitlements - Core Concepts, Central Debates and New Directions for Research', in Gender Justice, Citizenship and Development, eds. M. Mukhopadhyay and N. Singh, International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, pp. 15-57
Why have efforts at law reform and progress in exposing gender biases in formal legal systems failed to bring about gender justice? This chapter, from the International Development Research Centre's (IDRC) book Gender Justice, Citizenship and Development, links current thinking on gender justice to debates on citizenship, entitlements, rights, law and development. It argues that equal citizenship, whilst key to the struggle for gender justice, does not guarantee it.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2755

For further information about legal empowerment and access to justice for vulnerable groups, please see the Access to justice and Human rights, gender and social exclusion sections of the GSDRC's Justice guide.

Forms of accountability: horizontal accountability

Horizontal accountability involves state institutions engaging in mutual scrutiny to prevent abuses of office. This can take a variety of forms. For example, judicial institutions can review the constitutionality of executive decisions; the public audit function can monitor public spending; parliamentary committees can provide government oversight; and ombudspersons or human rights commissions can investigate citizens' complaints.

Effective legislatures

The legislature has an accountability relationship with both the executive and to citizens. The key functions of parliaments are legislation, oversight and representation, and an effective parliament is one which performs these functions in light of the wishes of citizens. To fulfil these roles effectively, parliaments require appropriate powers, committed members and adequate resources. But many parliaments in developing countries are weak and can become vehicles for 'rubber stamping' legislation. This leads to unaccountable executive powers and can leave a state more susceptible to autocracy and corruption.

UK Department for International Development (DFID), 2004, 'Helping Parliaments and Legislative Assemblies to Work for the Poor', Policy Division, DFID, UK
How can legislatures and parliaments be better at helping development and poverty reduction? How can they improve the way they perform their key constitutional roles? These guidelines from the Department for International Development are part of an international effort to address these issues.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display/document/legacyid/971

Barken, J. at al, 2004, 'Emerging Legislatures: Institutions of Horizontal Accountability' in Levy, B. and Kpundeh, S. (eds.) 'Building State Capacity in Africa: New Approaches, Emerging Lessons', World Bank Institute, Washington DC
The wave of political liberalisation that swept across Africa during the 1990s gave rise to an expansion of legislative authority in some countries, but not in all. What determines the nature and power of African legislatures in the context of liberalisation? This study, published by the World Bank Institute, analyses the situation in Kenya, Benin, Ghana and Senegal and suggests that the extent of the legislature's authority is largely a function of the evolving incentive structure confronting individual members of the legislature.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1431

For more information on this, please see the Effective Legislatures section in the GSDRC's Political Systems guide.

Justice

The justice system is an important channel for horizontal accountability also because state entities can use legal and judicial proceedings to demand answers from and sanction other state entities.

Department for International Development, 2008, 'Guidance Note: Justice and Accountability', DFID, London
This guidance note illustrates the relevance of justice sector reform for promoting accountability: political accountability, bottom-up participatory accountability, and accountability within the justice sector. It provides examples of DFID programmes.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2755

Forms of accountability: social accountability

Social accountability aims to increase accountability through civic engagement, and to complement and reinforce conventional mechanisms of accountability such as political checks and balances, accounting and auditing systems, administrative rules and legal procedures. Social accountability mechanisms – such as, for example, community monitoring or public expenditure tracking – allow communities to be directly involved in monitoring government performance, generating evidence and demanding accountability. These citizen-led monitoring mechanisms have proven successful in developing and transitional countries such as India, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mexico and Uganda, in terms of improving governance institutions, relations between citizens and these institutions, and service delivery.

Ackerman, J., 2003, 'Co-governance for Accountability: Beyond "Exit" and "Voice"', University of California, Santa Cruz
How can government accountability be improved through a combined strengthening of civic participation and state engagement? This paper surveys various accountability strategies, focusing on 'co-governance for accountability' programmes in Brazil, Mexico, the US and India. It argues that, by giving social actors direct access to state institutions, these projects' approaches have achieved significant pro-accountability success. Co-governance is the best way to tap into the energy of society.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1999

Joshi, A., 2008, 'Producing Social Accountability: The Impact of Service Delivery Reforms', IDS Bulletin, vol. 38, no. 6, pp. 10-17
Which types of state reform improve public services and citizen engagement? How can accountability mechanisms improve service delivery? This paper draws on the polity approach, which suggests that the organisation of state institutions influences who engages in collective action and around what issues. Collective action is essential for the poor if direct accountability is to work. Successful cases of social accountability are often the result of alliances that cut across class and public-private divides.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3015

Social accountability mechanisms are, however, predominantly information-based and are most suitable for enhancing the capacity of already informed publics to articulate their needs and interests. They are less well designed to engage marginalised communities which have neither the confidence nor the skills to make their voices heard. In this sense, social accountability needs to consider not just 'power over' – as in the state's

power over its subjects - but also collective conceptions of 'power with' and 'power to' – that is, citizens' ability to work with one another to collectively demand change, responsiveness and accountability.

Effective social accountability approaches seem to therefore require two key elements: 1) capacity among citizens and civil society organisations to monitor government and service providers; and 2) an effective information and communication system which acts as a 'feedback mechanism' between the state and citizens.

Agarwal, S. Heltberg, R. and Diachok, M., 2009, 'Scaling up Social Accountability in World Bank Operations', Social Development Department, World Bank, Washington D.C.
What are the lessons from piloting and scaling up social accountability approaches in development projects supported by the World Bank? Findings suggest that social accountability holds considerable promise for achieving better governance and service delivery. However, the World Bank needs to focus more on areas such as such as linking the supply and demand sides of governance, upgrading staff skills, improving monitoring and evaluation, increasing the evidence base, and expanding external partnerships to create coalitions for change.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4062

CommGAP, 2007, 'Generating Genuine Demand with Social Accountability Mechanisms', workshop report, Communication for Governance and Accountability Program, (CommGAP), World Bank, Washington DC
What factors contribute to the success or failure of Social Accountability (SA) initiatives? This paper reports on a 2007 workshop organised by the World Bank's Communication for Governance and Accountability Program. It examines what works in: (1) analysing the public sphere and political context; (2) gaining official support for the use of SA tools; (3) informing citizens; (4) mobilising citizen activism; and (5) achieving behaviour change in public officials through public opinion.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3761

Citizen-driven accountability tools in use

There are various mechanisms for empowering citizens to participate in the delivery of public services. These include participatory budgeting, public expenditure tracking, social audits, community score cards, and participatory monitoring and evaluation. Citizen-led initiatives are particularly well developed in the area of budget processes.

The World Bank, n.d., 'From Shouting to Counting: A New Frontier in Social Development', The World Bank, Washington D.C.
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPCENG/214574-1116506074750/20511078/Social+Accountability+Booklet+Feb+26+04.pdf

McNeil, M., and Mumvana, T., 2006, 'Demanding Good Governance: A Stocktaking of Social Accountability Initiatives by Civil Society in Anglophone Africa', Community Empowerment and Social Learning Program, World Bank Institute, Washington D.C.
This report reviews civil society-initiated social accountability practices in the public budgetary process of 10 Anglophone African countries. It finds that, while the practice of social accountability in these countries is still in its infancy, demand for it is high. However, the staffs of civil society organisations need greater technical skills. They need to be able to develop and implement innovative and credible tools and methodologies to give weight to the results of social accountability initiatives. Capacity building is therefore crucial.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4073

Arroyo D., and Sirker K., 2005, 'Stocktaking of Social Accountability Initiatives in the Asia and Pacific Region', World Bank Institute Community Empowerment and Social Inclusion Learning Program, Washington DC
What can be learned from social accountability initiatives in the Asia and Pacific region? This World Bank report summarises a review of such initiatives. It finds that social accountability tools are not confined to the public expenditure management cycle, and that initiatives that use advocacy and information strategies are more successful than those that do not. While governments sometimes take the lead in promoting accountability, different groups involved in social accountability mechanisms can link together in advocacy chains to hold the state accountable for pro-poor service delivery. Ultimately, government and civil society must collaborate.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3363

Massuanganhe, I. J., 2005, 'Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation at District and Local Level: Mechanisms, Evidences and Practices', UNDP/UNCDF Mozambique
This United Nations Capital Development Fund working paper examines participatory monitoring and evaluation practices at district and local level in Mozambique. Its aim is to test the usefulness of a selected set of qualitative and quantitative indicators in providing insights into local level poverty processes. It finds that such indicators, when collectively designed and appropriately combined, can provide policy-relevant information on wide-ranging issues covering the dynamics of

poverty and associated processes at the local level.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3362

Ramkumar, V., 2008, 'Our Money, Our Responsibility: A Citizen's Guide to Monitoring Public Expenditures', International Budget Project, Washington D.C.
This guide looks the work of organisations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It argues that civil society organisations have many opportunities to monitor budget implementation. Strategies include creating new monitoring methodologies and collaborating with the legislative branch on oversight. A wide variety of organisations around the world have had an impact on budget execution. Their success should inspire others.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3036

Sundet, G., 2004, 'Public Expenditure and Service Delivery Monitoring in Tanzania: Some International Best Practices and a Discussion of Present and Planned Tanzanian Initiatives', Working Paper no. 7, HakiElimu, Dar es Salaam
How effectively have initiatives to enable public service users to monitor government expenditure and service delivery worked in practice? How can service users' oversight of government programmes be improved? This paper surveys the various instruments for enabling communities to monitor and provide feedback on the public services they use. It argues that a co-operative relationship needs to be established between government and civil society to strengthen monitoring and governance.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1792

Singh, R and Vutukuru, V., 2010, 'Enhancing Accountability in Public Service Delivery through Social Audits: A Case Study of Andhra Pradesh', Accountability Initiative, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi
http://www.accountabilityindia.in/article/working-paper/789-enhancing-accountability-public-service-delivery-through-social-audits-cas

McNamara, B. 2006, 'Provider-Specific Report Cards: A Tool for Health Sector Accountability in Developing Countries', Health Policy and Planning, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 101-109
http://heapol.oxfordjournals.org/content/21/2/101.abstract

For more information on citizen participation in governance, please see The Learning Initiative on Citizen Participation in Local Governance (Logolink): http://www.logolink.org/

Additional resources

More information on tools for participatory governance can be found on the CIVICUS' Participatory Governance Programme website, PG Exchange http://www.pgexchange.org/.

Empowerment and accountability in fragile environments

The failings in state authority, legitimacy and capacity, weak social and human capital and high levels of inequality and exclusion that often characterise fragile contexts also present opportunities and challenges for empowerment processes. In fact, problematic citizen-state relations are considered to be both a cause and consequence of violent conflict. Societies in fragile states are often polarised along ethnic, religious or class lines groups, usually as a result of conflict. These societies can become dislocated from – and ambivalent towards – the state. So, addressing a lack of citizen engagement and participation is being increasingly viewed as a key strategy for rebuilding fragile and conflict-affected societies.

Eyben, R. and Ladbury, S., 2006, 'Building Effective States: Taking a Citizen's Perspective', Development Research Centre, Citizenship, Participation and Accountability, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
How can a citizen-centred approach to development build effective states by improving relations between state and society? This paper gives an overview of current debates and analyses citizens' own views on these issues. It argues that a state's legitimacy is strengthened by civic participation, which often grows up around local issues, and can be empowered through donor support.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1994

Current statebuilding practice places great emphasis on restoring public sector capacity and service delivery, with additional resources set aside for bolstering civil society and media organisations. Little attention, however, is paid to the residual societal and perceptual consequences of conflict, such as lack of civic trust, societal fragmentation, and exclusion. These can serve to limit people's perception of their political community, and their willingness to engage in the public sphere. It is argued therefore that in order to build effective state-society interactions in fragile and conflict-affected states, attention must be given to supporting the capacity of non-violent civil society organisations. These can provide a safe space for citizens and civil society groups to participate in dialogue and debate with each other, and with the state. The Citizenship DRC finds that existing associations are important for providing a building block for citizen participation in fragile contexts.

Kaltenborn-Stachau, 2008, 'The Missing Link: Fostering Positive Citizen-State Relations in Post-Conflict Environments', CommGAP, World Bank, Washington DC
Why does the public sphere warrant greater attention in post-conflict assistance? How can this be achieved? Citing examples from Timor-Leste, Liberia and Burundi, this chapter argues that effectively addressing the 'invisible' consequences of conflict requires civil society, the media and the state to connect and engage constructively. The analytical framework that best captures these connective processes is that of the public sphere – a platform for national dialogue.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4055

Mclean Hilker, L., 2010, 'Broadening Spaces for Citizens in Violent Contexts', Citizenship DRC Policy Briefing, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
How can people be directly involved in finding solutions for their security and livelihood needs? Research suggests that, although violence deters citizens from taking action, external actors in violent contexts can help to facilitate citizen action that is non-violent and socially legitimate. To do this, donors need a locally nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between violent and non-violent actors, and between forms of everyday and political violence. Recommended actions include undertaking detailed analysis of local power dynamics, actors and relationships, and building on existing sources of resilience, 'safe spaces' and structures for change.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4036

Pearce, J., 2007, 'Violence, Power and Participation: Building Citizenship in Contexts of Chronic Violence', Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
Can civil society organisations play a role in building citizenship and confronting violent actors and acts of violence? This paper argues that they can, and explores civil society participation in Colombia and Guatemala. Building citizenship amidst chronic violence requires simultaneous attention to citizenship and to violence. It is also important to clarify the relationship between power and violence.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3257

There is also evidence that the building of inclusive coalitions by governments which capitalize on the capacity of the traditional institutions, NGOs, and the private sector have helped to restore the confidence of stakeholders and citizens in collective capacities for change. This has been a crucial first step in moving away from the brink of violence.

World Bank, 2011, 'Restoring Confidence: Moving Away from the Brink', in World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development, World Bank, Washington DC
This report provides an insight into the World Bank's policy in fragile and conflict-affected states. It emphasises fostering 'collaborative, inclusive-enough coalitions'. It explains that 'unlike elite pacts, these coalitions involve broader segments of society—local governments, business, labour, civil society movements, in some cases opposition parties' (p.xvii). These kinds of coalitions work at a broad level, 'by building national support for change and bringing in the relevant stakeholders, through collaboration between the government and other sectors of society' and at the local level, 'by promoting outreach to community leaders to identify priorities and deliver programmes' (p.13). Coalitions do not need to be 'all inclusive'.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4145

Ongoing fragility and conflict can result in high levels of mistrust - both between communities and between citizens and the state. In fragile states, social empowerment includes overcoming feelings of isolation and powerlessness that often result from ongoing conflict and violence and bringing about changes in how people see themselves and others. Community-level accountability mechanisms are thought to be effective in empowering citizens who had previously lacked voice, as well as in promoting better service delivery. Community-driven development projects have also been adopted as a mechanism that can unite diverse groups within communities, but may also link communities to the state through decentralisation, thus strengthening social cohesion.

Galtung, F., and Tisné, M., 2009, 'A New Approach to Post-Conflict Reconstruction', Journal of Democracy, Vol. 20, Issue 4, pp. 93-107
How can post-war reconstruction support democratisation and prevent the early entrenchment of corruption? This study examines democracy assistance in eight countries recovering from war. It argues that citizens need to be involved in the allocation of the public resources that affect their lives. Community-driven accountability can stem corruption and re-engage people in the democratic process. Such measures can begin in the earliest post-war stages, building on local skills and resources.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3716

UNDESA, 2010, 'Promoting Citizen-Centric Public Service Delivery in Post-Conflict Situations', in Reconstructing Public Administration after Conflict: Challenges, Practices and Lessons Learned - World Public Sector Report 2010', United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), New York, pp.105-122
What challenges and strategies are involved in rebuilding public service delivery after conflict? This chapter considers the benefits of a multi-stakeholder approach and the potential of information and communication technologies. Effective delivery of public services contributes to peace and stability, which in turn facilitates economic development. Post-conflict situations offer opportunities as well as challenges in public administration.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3795

Haider, H., 2009, 'Community-based Approaches to Peacebuilding in Conflict-affected and Fragile Contexts', GSDRC Issues Paper, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC), Birmingham UK
The 'community' has often been resilient in conflict-affected and fragile contexts, providing survival and coping mechanisms for violence, insecurity and fragility. Growing attention has thus been paid to the adoption of community-based approaches to help address the extensive needs in these contexts. This paper from the GSDRC explores the principal aims of community-based approaches and key challenges and considerations in designing and implementing such approaches, particularly in environments of conflict and fragility.
http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/EIRS8.pdf

Earle, L. 2011, 'Literature Review on the Dynamics of Social Movements in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States', Issues Paper, GSDRC
This literature review assesses the available academic and policy-oriented literature on social movements in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. It examines who becomes involved in collective action and why, the barriers to mobilisation and, where social movements do emerge, how these are able to sustain mobilisation and broaden their membership base to reflect the interests of the wider community. Evidence from this review suggests the importance of considering the interplay of movement activity and state stability, and of taking into account existing state-society relationships. Donors could focus on creating a supportive environment for social movements.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4155

Additional resources

For more information on state-society relations and citizenship in situations of conflict and fragility, please see the GSDRC Topic Guide supplement on State-Society Relations and Citizenship in Situations of Conflict and Fragility.

Challenges and risks

There are considerable challenges involved in supporting people to exercise greater control over their own development. The nature and extent of these will differ according to the social, economic and political context. Certainly, the literature shows that context is all-important when it comes to designing empowerment and accountability interventions. For example, the overall political context shapes the way in which collective action may or may not produce democratic change. Political institutions shape civic engagement and attitudes and beliefs about civic participation. The absence of accessible channels of political participation, for instance, will not only hinder some forms of participation, but also shape citizens' perceptions about participation. Because patterns of political participation differ across settings, patterns of civic engagement will vary as well.

Cornwall, A., Robins, S. and Von Lieres, B. 2011, 'States of Citizenship: Contexts and Cultures of Public Engagement and Citizen Action', Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
Drawing on case studies from the Citizenship Development Research Centre, this paper contends that mechanisms aimed at enhancing citizen engagement need to be contextualised in the states of citizenship in which they are applied. It calls for more attention to be focused on understanding trajectories of citizenship experience and practice in particular kinds of states. It suggests that whilst efforts have been made by donors to get to grips with history and context, less attention has been given to exploring the implications of the dissonance between the normative dimensions of global narratives of participation and accountability, and the lived experience of civic engagement and the empirical realities of 'civil society' in diverse kinds of states. By exploring instantiations of citizenship in different kinds of states, the paper reflects on what citizen engagement comes to imply in these contexts. In doing so, it draws attention to the diverse ways in which particular subject-positions and forms of identification are articulated in the pursuit of concrete social and political projects.
http://www.ids.ac.uk/download.cfm?file=wp363.pdf
IDS Research Summary of this paper: http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Rs363.pdf

Experience has shown that interventions designed to promote empowerment and accountability through greater participation are often skewed or limited by existing power relations. For example, attempts to democratise political systems face a number of difficulties in overcoming embedded social exclusion. Civil society actors are often criticised for being unrepresentative and elitist. A key concern is that for empowerment and accountability interventions to reach the poorest and most marginalised, a nuanced appreciation of the context and its power relations is needed. It is essential to consider who participates, on what basis and whose interests they represent.

Hearn, J., 2001, 'The Uses and Abuses of Civil Society in Africa', Review of the African Political Economy, No. 87, pp 43-54
What are the implications of the development paradigm that aims to bring civil society into a closer relationship with the state? This article argues that donor influence in Ghana, South Africa and Uganda during the late 1990s resulted in a vocal, well-funded civil society that builds societal consensus for the state's development strategy. The development agenda of 'partnership', in which civil society organisations work closely with 'participatory and accountable governments', undermines autonomy and can contribute to civil society in Africa helping to stabilise rather than challenge the social and political status quo.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4056

Manor, J., 2004, 'Democratization with Inclusion: Political Reforms and People's Empowerment at the Grassroots', Journal of Human Development, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 5-29
Democratisation has not automatically benefited poor people. Many governments in developing countries have undertaken political reforms to promote the empowerment and inclusion of ordinary people, especially the poor. This article reviews these reforms and looks at how they can be measured and facilitated. Mechanisms are needed to promote downward accountability, bottom-up participation and greater responsiveness to ordinary people, and support from broad-based coalitions is required. Integrated local councils and user-committees are the best way to ensure that local residents or elected members have significant impact on decisions.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1076

Haider, H., 2010, 'Civil Society and Excluded Groups', Helpdesk Research Report, GSDRC, Birmingham
There is little available systematic evidence that demonstrates that aid to CSOs is effective in reducing poverty as a result of CSOs? links to and targeting of the poor and vulnerable. This report thus relies on more general literature on civil society and thematic and country case studies, drawing out information and findings on positive impacts from civil society engagement with excluded groups. Findings highlight the variation in the extent to which civil society actually and effectively engages with and benefits marginalised groups. Organisations considered to have the greatest potential for benefiting excluded groups are those that: 1) adopt a solidarity approach and engage marginalised groups as equals; 2) emerge from the grassroots with leaders drawn from within marginalised groups; and 3) focus on a particular target group

rather than a broader constituency.
http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HD676.pdf

Ideas about universal citizenship ignore the reality of unequal power, which can exclude people on the basis of race, class, ethnicity and gender. For example, 'community' participation often translates into 'male' participation, with women excluded from decision-making processes. Even the idea of a male consensus is misleading, and inevitably reflects the interests of particular group of men, since all men do not have a homogenous set of needs, interests and concerns.

Even where the opportunities to engage exist, certain policy decisions may be off limits to ordinary citizens due to structural barriers, cultural barriers, fear, dependency relations or lack of self-confidence. Women in particular often fail to benefit from such opportunities due to these barriers.

UNIFEM, 2008, 'Chapter 2: Politics', in Progress of the World's Women 2008/9: Who Answers to Women? Gender and Accountability', UNIFEM, New York
What progress have states made toward increasing political accountability to women and how can that progress be accelerated? This chapter argues that increased political accountability to women comes not only from increasing their numbers amongst decision-makers; it must be linked to improved democratic governance overall. Recommendations include: electoral reforms that afford voters more choice of representatives, increasing the likelihood of women gaining seats; quotas for women in party leadership; temporary affirmative action to remove other constraints on women's access to office; and building state capacity to respond to women's needs.
http://www.unifem.org/progress/2008/media/POWW08_chap02_politics.pdf

Hoodfar, H., 2009, 'Against All Odds: The Building of a Women's Movement in the Islamic Republic of Iran', Concordia University
This paper outlines how women advocates in post-revolutionary Iran have worked towards mobilising women. It examines the evolving and diverse, multi-pronged strategies that focus on politicising everyday forms of social and legal discrimination against women, and rendering them unacceptable.
http://www.dfid.gov.uk/r4d/PDF/Outputs/WomenEmpMus/Hoodfar_AgainstAllOdds_Iran.pdf

Clisby, S., 2005, 'Gender Mainstreaming or Just More Male-streaming? Experiences of popular participation in Bolivia', Oxfam, London
The Law of Popular Participation (LPP) in Bolivia represents the first significant attempt by policymakers in the region to mainstream gender into a national development initiative. The LPP aims to increase the prominence of women in local politics and development spheres. But has it in fact had the effect of displacing women from their traditional forms of political activism? This paper examines how a lack of effective, systematic gendered analysis of structural barriers to women's participation and inadequate capacity building have impacted on the achievement of the LPP's intended goal.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2695

Tadros, M., 2010, 'Introduction: Quotas – Add Women and Stir?', IDS Bulletin, Vol. 41, No. 5, pp. 1-10
Is women's empowerment directly related to the proportion of women in parliament? Have various forms of quota been successful in transforming gender relations? This article examines different pathways to women's empowerment and the assumptions about gender, power, and politics that underlie quotas. It concludes that the focus on women's representation in parliament is too narrow; gender hierarchies that have remained unchallenged in other power bases (such as key ministries) must be identified and targeted. Further, women's representation must be viewed in terms of the agendas pursued and their influence.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3993

Even within social movements intended to benefit the poor, uneven power relations can be replicated at the local level, resulting in the exclusion of the most marginalised citizens.

Waldman, L., 2005, 'When Social Movements Bypass the Poor: Asbestos Pollution, International Litigation and Griqua Cultural Identity', IDS Working Paper 246, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
Why was a successful legal case against a British asbestos mining company regarded by many of its South African claimants as a defeat? This paper explores the divergent interpretations of the case, focusing on two towns in the Northern Cape: Prieska and Griquatown. Griquatown's geographical marginalisation from the process led residents to perceive the case in local religious and cultural terms rather than in terms of international justice. Social movement theory must include perspectives which integrate history, everyday experience and cultural values with modern mobilisation processes to address questions of local cultural interpretations.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2673

For a more detailed discussion of power relations, see The Centrality of Power section earlier in this guide.

Promoting political inclusion and social accountability can undermine the status quo, and threaten vested political interests. As a result, initiatives to improve accountability by means of innovative accountability mechanisms are likely to encounter resistance. Some government representatives criticise donor-supported social accountability measures on the grounds that they divert attention and resources from building state capacity. There may also be trade-offs with promoting short-term political stability.

LeVan, A. C., 2011, 'Power Sharing and Inclusive Politics in Africa's Uncertain Democracies', Governance, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 31-53
How should international policymakers respond to evidence of a 'stolen' election? This article argues that support for inclusive political institutions needs to take account of the distinction between strengthening states and strengthening democracy. When used in response to flawed elections, pacts guaranteeing political inclusion can promote short-term peace, but they undermine democratisation, accountability and effective government performance. Potential adverse effects of political inclusion can be assessed by: 1) contrasting extra-constitutional pacts with stable political frameworks; 2) differentiating between post-war contexts and low-level conflicts; and 3) weighing short-term benefits against long-term costs. The drawbacks of inclusive political institutions can be moderated by options such as sunset clauses, the even-handed prosecution of human rights violations, and by strengthening checks on executive authority.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4045

Many donors still view governance through a state-centric perspective. Chapter 1 in the following book argues that they do not yet see governance as "a textured, embedded, networked process in which citizens and government officials argue, bargain, and, sometimes, come to agreement" (pp.5-6). This has important implications for the extent to which donors can encourage governments to be responsible to their citizens.

Lee, T., and Odugbemi, S., 2011, 'How Can Citizens be Helped to Hold their Governments Accountable?' in Accountability through Public Opinion: From Inertia to Public Action, eds. S. Odugbemi and T. Lee, World Bank, Washington DC, ch. 28
This book addresses some questions that are crucial to understanding accountability and for understanding why accountability is important to improve the effectiveness of development aid. We ask: What does it mean to make governments accountable to their citizens? How do you do that? How do you create genuine demand for accountability among citizens, how do you move citizens from inertia to public action? The main argument of this book is that accountability is a matter of public opinion. Governments will only be accountable if there are incentives for them to do so—and only an active and critical public will change the incentives of government officials to make them responsive to citizens' demands. Accountability without public opinion is a technocratic, but not an effective solution.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4147

In many developing countries, the state is not the primary provider of services. Non-state, private and informal service providers are often of poor quality, unaccountable and do not necessarily increase access for the poorest. In these context, finding real strengthen the services provided by existing public, voluntary and private sector providers rather than encouraging engagement from a broader range of organizations. For more on this, please see the section on Social Empowerment earlier in this guide. Accountability is also not limited to the state. One of the most complex challenges facing civil society organisations is the question of their legitimacy as social and political actors and their accountability to key stakeholders.

Brown, L. D., and Jagadanda, 2005, 'Civil Society Legitimacy and Accountability: Issues and Challenges', CIVICUS, Washington DC
What are the challenges to the legitimacy and accountability of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and how can these be addressed? This draft scoping report from the World Alliance for Citizen Participation (CIVICUS) and the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations analyses existing systems and practices for responding to these challenges. It suggests steps for developing systems to enhance the legitimacy and accountability of CSOs and multi-organisation domains.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2691

The impact of empowerment and accountability interventions

The evidence base on both the impact of and 'what works' in empowerment and accountability interventions is at its early stages, although there are clear indications that empowerment is a key component of achieving development objectives, as well as being a worthy objective in itself. There is evidence, for example, that citizen participation and engagement, as well as the use certain empowerment and accountability tools, such as cash transfers, citizen scorecards, social audits, participatory budgeting, and gender quotas can improve development results.

Pathways of Women's Empowerment, 2011, 'Empowerment: A Journey not a Destination', Pathways of Women's Empowerment Research Programme
This report synthesises the findings of five years of research in 15 countries.
http://www.pathwaysofempowerment.org/PathwaysSynthesisReport.pdf

Eyben, R., 2011, 'Supporting Pathways of Women's Empowerment: A Brief Guide for International Development Organisations', Pathways of Women's Empowerment Research Programme
http://www.pathwaysofempowerment.org/Supporting_Pathways_of_Womens_Empowerment.pdf

Gaventa, J., and Barrett, G., 2010, 'So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement', Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
This paper presents results from a meta-analysis of 100 research studies of citizen engagement in 20 countries. By mapping over 800 observable effects of citizen participation, the authors created a typology of four democratic and developmental outcomes – the construction of citizenship; the strengthening of practices of participation; the strengthening of responsive and accountable states; and the development of inclusive and cohesive societies. Citizen participation produced positive effects across these outcome types in 75 per cent of the outcomes studied, although in each category there were also examples of negative outcomes. A key finding was that in the least democratic and stable countries, citizen associations were found to have a very strong presence and to play very important roles across each of the outcomes studied.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3981

DFID, 2011, 'A Preliminary Mapping of the Evidence Base for Empowerment and Accountability', DFID, London
This document reviews empirical studies of empowerment and accountability interventions, particularly the impact of donor interventions. It finds fragmentary evidence, with some areas (beneficiary participation in water systems projects, citizen report cards, interventions to strengthen education and employment status, and electoral interventions) yielding examples of evidence of positive effects, and their enabling conditions. Other areas, such as the difficult area of impact on long term political dynamics, appear from the empirical literature to have been less researched.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4223

McGee, R. and Gaventa, J. et al., 2010, 'Review of Impact and Effectiveness of Accountability and Transparency Initiatives: Synthesis Report', Department for International Development, London
This report distils findings from reviews of transparency and accountability initiatives (TAIs) in the areas of public service delivery, budget processes, freedom of information, natural resource governance and aid transparency. The evidence base on these initiatives' effectiveness is weak, uneven, and sometimes contradictory. While few meta-level studies exist, micro-level studies suggest that in some conditions, TAIs can contribute to positive outcomes. Success factors seem to include coalitions of both state actors and citizens that bridge the demand and supply sides of accountability. It is important to understand accountability and transparency not only as formal mechanisms, but as relationships involving power dynamics across state and society.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4124

A more recent version is also available – **'The Impact of Transparency and Accountability Initiatives'**, forthcoming 2012, Development Policy Review: http://www.dfid.gov.uk/R4D/PDF/Outputs/Mis_SPC/60827_DPRGaventaMcGee_Preprint.pdf

Carlitz, R., 2012 (forthcoming), 'Improving Transparency and Accountability in the Budget Process: An Assessment of Recent Initiatives'. Development Policy Review
This article reviews budget-related transparency and accountability initiatives (TAIs) to analyse their impact. While there are many examples of success in terms of budget processes around the world being opened up to greater participation and scrutiny, there is no single recipe for creating a successful initiative to enhance transparency and accountability in the budget process. A consistent set of factors does however appear across those TAIs defined as successful in various ways. These include building horizontal and vertical alliances between stakeholders, the production of legitimate information, legal empowerment and international support.
http://www.dfid.gov.uk/R4D/PDF/Outputs/Mis_SPC/60827_DPRCarlitz_preprint.pdf

Calland, R. and Bentley, K., 2012 (forthcoming), 'The Impact and Effectiveness of Accountability and Transparency Initiatives: Freedom of Information', Development Policy Review
Analysis of the impact and effectiveness of Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation has been hampered by lack of systematic evidence and conceptual confusion about what kind of right it represents. This article discusses some of the main conceptual parameters of FOI theory, before reviewing the available evidence from a range of studies. It presents cases studies of civil society activism on FOI in India and South Africa to illustrate the extent to which access to information is having an impact, in particular on socio-economic conditions. After reviewing the range of approaches used to research impact, it concludes that the academic community and the FOI community of practice need to come together to devise robust and rigorous methodologies for impact assessment.
http://www.dfid.gov.uk/R4D/PDF/Outputs/Mis_SPC/60827_DPRCallandBentley_preprint.pdf

Tembo, F., 2012, 'Citizen Voice and State Accountability: Towards Theories of Change that Embrace Contextual Dynamics', Project Briefing No. 73, Overseas Development Institute, London
This paper argues that current approaches to Theories of Change (ToCs) are inadequate for citizen voice and accountability (CV&A) interventions: linear ToCs do not capture the complex and dynamic realities of state-citizen relations and of the influences of the wider context on these interactions. It suggests a model for developing ToCs that are better grounded in dynamic socioeconomic and political contexts. The model, which blends outcome mapping and political economy analysis, can facilitate an ongoing process of analysis, intervention and learning. ToCs need to be subjected to a continuous process of construction and deconstruction to improve knowledge of what works and what does not, and in what circumstances.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4253

Student Partnership Worldwide and DFID-CSO Youth Working Group, 2010, 'Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies and Policy Makers', Student Partnership Worldwide/DFID-CSO Youth Working Group, London
This guide emphasises three issues that are critical to young people: 1) governance, voice and accountability; 2) post-conflict transitions and livelihoods; and 3) sexual and reproductive health and rights. Evidence from case studies demonstrates that effective youth participation leads to better results and greater awareness of young people's needs, capacities and aspirations.
http://www.ygproject.org/sites/default/files/6962_Youth_Participation_in_Development.pdf

However, the existing evidence base of donor impact through empowerment and accountability interventions is patchy and varies in quality. This is for various reasons. While it builds on existing models, methods and tools, the focus on empowerment and accountability is relatively new. As a result, many interventions, such as citizens' scorecards for example, have only been tried on a small scale. Further, evaluations tend to focus on discrete interventions, rather than on more integrated approaches to empowerment and accountability. It is also difficult to collect and aggregate evidence when the results are so dependent on context.

Mansuri, G. and Rao, V., 2004, 'Community-Based and -Driven Development: A Critical Review', The World Bank Research Observer, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 1-39
This review examines issues such as whether community-based targeting is pro-poor, whether participation increases the capacity for collective action, and the effects of external agents on the quality of participation and on project success and sustainability. It finds that decentralised targeting is not always effectively pro-poor due to political economy considerations and perverse incentives. While there is some evidence that participatory projects create effective community infrastructure and improve welfare outcomes, there is little evidence of causality. External agents can create competition among different interests. More research is needed to understand these dynamics. Meanwhile, the evidence suggests that community-based and -driven development projects are best undertaken in a context-specific manner, with a long time horizon and with careful and well-designed monitoring and evaluation systems.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2617

While empowerment is thought to contribute significantly to poverty reduction, there are indications that citizen engagement can lead to negative outcomes, such as disempowerment or a loss of agency. Furthermore, for citizen engagement to work it has to be perceived as meaningful by citizens and must be sensitive to the barriers which prevent marginalised people from participating.

van der Gaag, N., and Rowlands, J., (eds), 2009, 'Speaking Out: Case Studies on How Poor People Influence Decision-Making', Practical Action/Oxfam, Rugby/Oxford
How can poor and marginalised people break through the material, organisational, systemic, and psychological barriers that prevent them from being heard by those in power? This book draws on Oxfam GB's global programme of work on 'the right to be heard'. Only strategies which address the many-layered nature of power and the specific power inequalities of a particular context can lead to effective, sustainable change.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3702

There is, however, evidence to suggest that interventions which aim to increase empowerment and accountability can lead to a positive impact in sectors including health, education, and water and sanitation. Much of the literature on this addresses the barriers to accessing particular services and how these can be overcome through citizen engagement. For example, health interventions which address empowerment can have multi-level impacts, ranging from the capacity of an individual or community to demand better services to the empowerment of women to make effective health-related decisions within the household. It is argued that strategies to promote empowerment and accountability should focus on access to health service information and should build on genuine patterns of participation within communities.

Joshi, A., 2012 (forthcoming), 'Do They Work? Assessing the Impact of Transparency and Accountability Initiatives in Service Delivery', Development Policy Review
Transparency and accountability initiatives (TAIs) have emerged as a key strategy for improving public services, but the links between transparency and accountability and their impact on service delivery are often largely assumed. This article reviews a range of TAIs to assess their impact. It finds a mass of evidence suggesting that a range of accountability initiatives have been effective in their immediate goals, and that there is also strong evidence of impact on public services in a range of cases, but that evidence of impact on the quality and accessibility of services is more mixed.
http://www.dfid.gov.uk/R4D/PDF/Outputs/Mis_SPC/60827_DPRJoshi_Preprint.pdf

Wallerstein, N., 2006, 'What is the Evidence on the Effectiveness of Empowerment to Improve Health?', WHO Regional Office for Europe's Health Evidence Network (HEN), Copenhagen.
Evidence based on multi-level research designs shows that empowering initiatives can lead to health outcomes and that empowerment is a viable public health strategy. However, the effectiveness of empowerment initiatives may depend as much on the agency and leadership of the people involved, as on the context in which they take place. The most effective empowerment strategies are those that ensure autonomy in decision-making, a sense of community and local bonding, and the psychological empowerment of community members. Participatory processes alone are insufficient. It is also important to build the capacity of community organisations and individuals in decision-making and advocacy.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4052

Laverack, G., 2006, 'Improving Health Outcomes Through Community Empowerment: A Review of the Literature', Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 113-120
How can empowerment lead to an improvement in the health status of individuals, groups and communities? This review examines the impact of nine 'domains' of empowerment that have led to improvements in health outcomes: participation; community-based organisations; local leadership; resource mobilisation; asking 'why?'; assessment of problems; links with other people and organisations; the role of outside agents; and programme management. This 'domains approach' helps to unpack the complex concept of empowerment and its different areas of influence on health outcomes.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4046

While education is thought to be a mechanism for achieving empowerment, there is also evidence to suggest that the way in which education services are delivered affects their outcomes. Community participation in schools is thought to be particularly effective in improving educational outcomes, whilst also contributing to the empowerment of the community. However, even here the evidence is mixed, and points to the importance of context in influencing results.

Pradhan, M., et al., 2011, 'Improving Educational Quality through Enhancing Community Participation: Results from a Randomised Field Experiment in Indonesia', World Bank, Washington DC
As school enrolment and attainment rise across developing countries, policymakers are increasingly directing attention to interventions that affect student learning. How effective is making schools accountable for performance in addressing deficiencies in service provision? This study evaluates the effect of four randomised interventions aimed at strengthening school committees, and subsequently improving learning outcomes, in public primary schools in Indonesia. It concludes that measures that foster outside ties between the school committee and other parties are more effective than reinforcing existing school committee structures or providing grants and training interventions.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4058

Nielsen, H. D., 2007, 'Empowering Communities for Improved Educational Outcomes: Some Evaluation Findings from the World Bank', Prospects, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 81-93
How effective are community empowerment programmes in World Bank-supported educational programmes? Can community-led school management help to improve the quality of teaching and learning for the poor and disadvantaged? This article reviews 12 country case studies for evidence of their effectiveness. It suggests that school development features that contribute to learning outcomes – such as curriculum development, teacher assessment and student assessment – need to remain the responsibility of education professionals. A realistic model of community empowerment in support of basic education would involve both community and professional involvement.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4080

Banerjee, A. V. et al., 2008, 'Pitfalls of Participatory Programs: Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation in Education in India', World Bank, Washington DC
This paper evaluates three different participatory interventions aimed at improving education in Uttar Pradesh, India: providing information, training community members in a new testing tool, and training and organising volunteers to hold reading camps for illiterate children. It seems that participant attitudes are important – for example, the large group action entailed in information and testing was perceived as unsustainable and not worth the effort. Small group action, however, was found to be effective and requires little coordination. Sector differences are important: individuals can observe the non-delivery of health services more easily than the non-delivery of teaching. Other findings were that poor people may not perceive quality of education as worth fighting for, and that collective action needs to be learned over time.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3030

Online mobile and technology tools are also improving government accountability, through new and improved channels of participation and citizen monitoring. Technology does not need to be sophisticated, but it should be quick, usable and suitable to the local context.

Avila, R., Feigenblatt, H., Heacock, R. and Heller, N., 2011, 'Global Mapping of Technology for Transparency and Accountability', The Transparency and Accountability Initiative, London
This paper documents current trends in the way technology is being used to promote transparency in different parts of the world. It reviews over 100 projects from across Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, examining how new technologies are re-energising traditional methods. In particular, it focuses on how these new technologies are helping to engage different actors - citizens, media, authorities and the private sector.
http://www.transparency-initiative.org/reports/global-mapping-of-technology-for-transparency-and-accountability

Glewwe, P. and Kremer, M., 2005, 'Schools, Teachers, and Education Outcomes in Developing Countries', University of Minnesota/University of Harvard
http://www.givewell.org/files/DWDA%202009/Interventions/EconEducationHandbook.pdf

Osumanu, K. I., et al., 2010, 'Urban Water and Sanitation in Ghana: How Local Action is Making a Difference', International Institute for Environment and Development, London
http://pubs.iied.org/10586IIED.html

Community involvement in water and sanitation systems is also thought to yield positive results.

Joshi, D., and Fawcett, B., n.d, 'Water Projects and Women's Empowerment', DFID, London
http://www.dfid.gov.uk/r4d/PDF/Outputs/R65752.pdf

Measuring empowerment and accountability

A major problem with gathering evidence on empowerment and accountability is the difficulty of measurement – and in particular of measuring change. Measurement is made difficult by the broad definitions of 'empowerment' and 'accountability'. Understandings of these concepts vary widely and associated concepts such as 'voice' and 'participation' present similar problems. Measuring empowerment poses particular difficulties, as operational understandings of what this relates to within development interventions are in their early stages. Particularly challenging is how the multidimensionality of empowerment (e.g. different domains and levels) can be reflected in its measurement. Other measures include participation, choice, access, assets, voice, and mobility. There are continued efforts to integrate empowerment into human development indicators, although the often subjective nature of data gathered poses questions of comparability and robustness.

Attempts to go beyond purely quantitative measures – such as numbers of participants – require that more robust qualitative measures of these concepts are introduced into assessments. Measures of impact also need to take into account unintended or secondary impacts which occur as a result of greater empowerment and accountability.

McGee, R., and Gaventa, J., 2011, 'Shifting Power? Assessing the Impact of Transparency and Accountability', Working Paper No. 383, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
What does impact mean in relation to accountability programmes and projects? This paper argues that current approaches to impact assessment in this field are inadequate: methodological wars are overshadowing key issues of power relations and politics. A learning approach to impact assessment is needed that gives power and politics a central place in monitoring and evaluation systems. Instead of looking at the extent to which the desired impact was achieved, it is important to look at what happened as a result of the initiative, how it happened and why. It is also important to test and revise assumptions about theories of change continually and to ensure the engagement of marginalised people in assessment processes.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4209

Solava, I., and Alkire, S., 2007, 'Agency and Empowerment: A Proposal for Internationally Comparable Indicators', OPHI Working Paper Series, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, Oxford
The benefits of empowerment for deprived people have often been put forward without the backing of a large and well-established body of empirical research. This article proposes indicators that could be added to individual or household surveys to generate internationally comparable data. Using such data, researchers could improve our understanding of connections between variables (such as empowerment and income, governance, health and nutrition outcomes) in different contexts and of their durability over time. The proposed indicators include: control over personal decisions; domain-specific autonomy; household decision-making; and the ability to change aspects of one's life at the individual and communal levels.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4079

Jupp, D. and Ibn Ali, S., with Barahona, C., 2010, 'Measuring Empowerment? Ask Them – Quantifying Qualitative Outcomes from People's Own Analysis', Sida Studies in Evaluation 2010:1, Sida, Stockholm
How can empowerment be measured? This paper presents the experience of a social movement in Bangladesh, which found a way to measure empowerment by letting the members themselves explain what benefits they acquired from involvement and by developing a means to measure change over time. These measures have also been subjected to numerical analysis to provide convincing quantitative data which satisfies the demands of results-based management. The study shows how participatory assessments can empower and transform relationships, while at the same time generating reliable and valid statistics for what were thought to be only qualitative dimensions.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3982

Graham, C., 2010, 'The Challenges of Incorporating Empowerment into the HDI: Some Lessons from Happiness Economics and Quality of Life Research', Human Development Research Paper 2010/13, UNDP, New York
https://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2010/papers/HDRP_2010_13.pdf

Kabeer, N., 2001, 'Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment', pp 17-59 in Discussing Women's Empowerment - Theory and Practice', Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Stockholm, Sweden
In efforts to measure empowerment, do indicators mean what they are supposed to mean? Are the values they reflect appropriate? This paper examines the measurement of three dimensions of empowerment: resources (the conditions under which choices are made); agency (the process by which choices are made); and achievements (the outcomes of choices). It highlights problems of meaning and values – particularly the need for indicators to be triangulated – and

suggests that methodologically pluralist approaches to measuring empowerment are required.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4085

McDevitt, A., 2010, 'Helpdesk Research Report: Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment', Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham
It appears that the majority of efforts to measure women's economic empowerment programmes focus on quantitative outcomes - such as increased access to credit or increased revenue - even where the stated objectives include broader empowerment goals. Whilst some evaluations include variables to show that women have not been disempowered, few succeed in showing that specific aspects of women's power have actually increased.
http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HD706.pdf

USAID, IFPRI, and OPHI, 2012, Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index, USAID, IFPRI, and OPHI
This new index measures the roles and extent of women's engagement in agriculture in: 1) decisions about agricultural production, 2) access to and decision-making power over productive resources, 3) control over use of income, 4) leadership in the community, and 5) time use. The WEAI was developed by the US government, the International Food Policy Research Institute and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative.
http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/weai_brochure.pdf

The following paper presents the World Bank's framework for conceptualizing and measuring empowerment. This sees empowerment as resulting from improvements in an individual's personal agency and opportunity structure. Agency refers to an individual's capacity to make purposive choices, and is measured by asset endowments, which can be psychological, informational, organizational, material, social, financial, or human. Opportunity structure is the institutional context in which choice is made, and this is measured by the presence and operation of formal and informal institutions, including the laws, regulatory frameworks, and norms governing behaviour.

Alsop, R. and Heinsohn, N., 2005, 'Measuring Empowerment in Practice: Structuring Analysis and Framing Indicators', World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 3510, World Bank, Washington D.C.
How can we determine whether and how projects and policies aimed at empowering stakeholders reach their intended goals? Empowerment is recognised by the World Bank as one of the three pillars of poverty reduction, and is found in the documentation of hundreds of its projects. This paper presents an analytic framework that can be used to measure and monitor empowerment processes and outcomes. It argues that the framework is useful both within single countries and for cross-country comparison of degrees of empowerment.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4146

A growing number of studies have sought to use Randomised Control Trials to measure empowerment and accountability processes and programmes. The following report outlines some of the key challenges associated with using RCTs for these programmes and notes that scholars are divided about the ability of these methods to generate reliable results.

Walton, O., 2011, 'Helpdesk Research Report: RCTs for Empowerment and Accountability Programmes', Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham
This report examines the extent to which RCTs have been used successfully to measure empowerment and accountability processes and programmes. Field experiments present immense opportunities, but the report cautions that they are more suited to measuring short-term results with short causal chains and less suitable for complex interventions. The studies have also demonstrated divergent results, possibly due to different programme designs. The literature highlights that issues of scale, context, complexity, timeframe, coordination and bias in the selection of programmes also determine the degree of success reported. It argues that researchers using RCTs should make more effort to understand contextual issues, consider how experiments can be scaled up to measure higher-order processes, and focus more on learning. The report suggests strategies such as using qualitative methods, replicating studies in different contexts and using randomised methods with field activities to overcome the limitations in the literature.
http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HD756.pdf

Existing approaches to measuring Voice and Accountability are also useful.

Holland, J., and Thirkell, A., 2009, 'Measuring Change and Results in Voice and Accountability Work', DFID Working Paper 34, DFID, London
How can the often intangible results of Voice and Accountability (V&A) interventions be measured? This paper adapts DFID's 'Capability, Accountability and Responsiveness' (CAR) governance framework for use with V&A work. It maps existing indicators onto this adapted framework, developing a menu of V&A indicators and data collection instruments. Measures need to take account of the costs as well as benefits of poor people's voices being heard, and should reveal the obstacles to poor people's engagement. V&A indicator data can effectively combine observable and measurable changes in

behaviour with perception scoring of the quality of those changes.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3768

Mcloughlin, C., 2009, 'Helpdesk Research Report: Voice and Accountability Indexes', Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham
This report identifies tools, indicators and indexes that have been developed to measure the impact of development interventions on voice and accountability. In terms of tools, theory-based approaches are prevalent, and there is some consensus about the value of participatory evaluation and mixed-methods designs combining surveys and interviews. It was not possible, however, to identify any cases of the use of rigorous impact evaluation methodologies to assess changes in voice or accountability as the result of donor interventions. In relation to indicators, there does not appear to be a single set of combined indicators for assessing voice and accountability - indeed this may not be possible or desirable. The World Bank's Voice and Accountability Index is widely cited. Indexes commonly draw on indicators of participation, budget transparency, access to information, freedom of the press, the status of women, and citizens' views of the quality of democracy.
http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HD575.pdf

Other donor approaches to empowerment and accountability

A number of interventions have been designed and implemented by donors to increase national ownership, enable participation in the design and implementation of initiatives and encourage 'country-led approaches'. In many cases these have resulted in government-led approaches, rather than giving a voice to the poor. Mechanisms that ensure meaningful participation can enhance the capacity of a government to design appropriate policies and deliver effective and appropriate services. Donors have aimed to support participation in the policy process by institutionalising national and local level participation in policy planning in a number of ways.

Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs)

Although Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) are the main framework in the current aid architecture for ensuring the participation of poor people, PRSs can give the appearance of country ownership without truly empowering the poor.

Rowden, R. and Irama, J.O., 2004, 'Rethinking Participation: Questions for Civil Society About the Limits of Participation in PRSPs', ActionAid International, Washington D.C. and ActionAid International Uganda, Kampala
This paper argues that structural adjustment reform policies have not been meaningfully debated in government-led public consultations in Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) processes. For example, CSOs were prohibited from raising public policy debates about alternative economic policies in PRSP consultations. Possible improvements to PRSP consultations include: IFIs accepting PRSPs only if they have been subjected to public debate; greater transparency on PRSP goals deemed realistic; and disclosure of draft Country Assistance Strategies (CASs). CSOs could create alternative public spaces in which to foster debate.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display/document/id/2632

Tembo, F., (ed) 2005, 'Poverty Reduction: Are the Strategies Working?', World Vision, Milton Keynes
How effective are Poverty Reduction Strategies in accommodating the voices of the poor and promoting accountability in the decision-making process? This report calls for greater accountability to the poor as a means of improving aid effectiveness. The engagement of poor people largely depends on how the PRS is located within the domestic political and decision-making architecture and whether donors can better align and coordinate their development aid. Fundamental improvements to PRSs are required if they are to become mechanisms by which poor people influence national poverty reduction processes.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&legacyid=1982

Molenaers, N., and Renard, R., 2006, 'Participation in PRSP Processes: Conditions for Pro-Poor Effectiveness', University of Antwerp
What conditions should be in place for participation to make a meaningful contribution to PRSPs? This paper argues that participation makes sense only under restrictive conditions, and proposes a four-level readiness assessment framework to bring structure and sequencing into donors' engagement with local civil society. The framework covers PRSP prerequisites, PRSP issues to be addressed, participation prerequisites and participation issues to be addressed. Even if a country is ready for a PRSP, this does not mean it is ready for participation.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1901

Poverty and social impact analysis (PSIA)

PSIA is intended to enable the design of better pro-poor reforms. Results have been mixed and success depends on whether the analysis is carried out in an open and inclusive manner.

Hayes, L., 2005, 'Open on Impact? Slow Progress in World Bank and IMF poverty analysis', European Network on Debt and Development
What is the impact of poverty and social impact analysis in developing countries? Has it strengthened national institutions and improved reform designs? This study examines the effectiveness of PSIA undertaken by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund using case studies from Ghana, Nicaragua, Mali and Vietnam. It finds that PSIA has not had any clear effects on national policymaking processes and recommends that both the quality and the process of carrying out PSIAs be improved, taking into account increased country ownership.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1927

Donor accountability

Donor practices increasingly emphasise both country ownership and alignment with existing country systems, and seek to ensure that aid is empowering for recipient country governments and their citizens. However, difficulties persist. The need for the downwards accountability of donors and other international development actors is acknowledged, but there are no direct accountability mechanisms to enable this. Further, there is growing interest not only in the accountability relationship between donors and recipients, but in how the provision of aid influences domestic accountability (the relationship between the state and its citizens).

Winters, M. S., 2010, 'Accountability, Participation and Foreign Aid Effectiveness', International Studies Review, vol.12, no. 2, pp. 218-243
This paper reviews five different accountability relationships that exist in foreign aid projects among donors, governments, implementing agencies and end users. It summarises empirical evidence demonstrating that foreign aid functions better—both at the macro-level of aid flows and at the micro-level of individual aid projects—when there is more government and implementing agency accountability. It finds, however, that in terms of donor accountability to aid-receiving countries and the end users in them, recent pushes for increased participation have not resulted in more accountability in the design of aid programmes. Ultimately, although enthusiasm for participatory models of aid design and delivery is warranted, participation is not a panacea for all the accountability problems in foreign aid programmes.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4141

Hayes, L. And Pereira, J., 2008, 'Turning the Tables: Aid and Accountability under the Paris Framework', European Network on Debt and Development (Eurodad)
This report focuses on progress against two principles of the Paris Declaration, ownership and accountability, in Cambodia, Honduras, Mali, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, and Sierra Leone. It finds that power imbalances, lack of transparency, and limited aid accountability mean that the goal of mutual accountability between donors and recipient governments is still aspirational. Accountability to citizens, the people in whose name aid is being provided, is non-existent. Donors are progressing in some areas but all can improve their operations.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3018

Eyben, R. and Ferguson, C., 2005, 'How Can Donors Become More Accountable to Poor People?', in L. Groves and R. Hinton, Inclusive Aid: Changing Power and Relationships in International Development, Earthscan, London
This chapter explores the new pressures placed on stakeholders who have begun to adopt a rights-based approach to accountability in terms of power, procedures and relationships. Although highly problematic, this process is a positive step towards Northern governments being prepared to be held accountable by poor people in the South.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2658

Hudson, A., and GOVNET Secretariat, 2009, 'Aid and Domestic Accountability', Background Paper, DAC Network on Governance, OECD, Paris
Domestic accountability provides states with an incentive to respond to the needs of their citizens. It is driven in large part by domestic politics, but the actions of donors and other 'external' actors do have influence. This paper sets out a conceptual framework and approach that will enable donors and other stakeholders to explore the complexities of real-world governance, consider aid impact, and analyse the role that politics and incentives play in shaping domestic accountability. Support often focuses on building the capacity of individual institutions rather than systems of accountability. Donors need to ensure that their support to capacity development is effective and that the ways in which they deliver aid do not limit the scope for domestic accountability.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3963

Hall, J. and Howell, J., 2010, 'Good Practice Donor Engagement with Civil Society', Working Paper, Office of Development Effectiveness, AusAID
How do bilateral donors engage with civil society in developing countries, particularly in fragile contexts? This paper looks at what has worked well, drawing on good practice among bilateral development agencies, multilateral agencies, foundations, NGOs and other donors. The first section outlines the changing landscape of aid and civil society. The paper then looks at why and how donors have sought to engage with civil society, before summarising concerns about donor practice. It then highlights examples of good practice that minimise the potential pitfalls and broaden the application of aid effectiveness principles. The review concludes with good practice principles for donors engaging with civil society.
http://www.ode.ausaid.gov.au/current_work/documents/donor-engagement2010.pdf

Prichard, W., 2010, 'The Role of Development Partners in Building Tax-Governance Linkages', in Citizen-State Relations: Improving Governance Through Tax Reform, OECD, Paris, pp. 51-58
This chapter examines how aid influences the relationship between tax and governance. It notes that by reducing the dependence of governments on tax revenue, aid can reduce political pressures for greater responsiveness and accountability. On the other hand, conditionality and technical assistance, when applied carefully, can foster tax systems that are likely to promote broader governance improvements. Research suggests that in order to support increased

accountability in recipient countries, donors could consider: 1) making revenue-raising processes an entry point for efforts to strengthen domestic institutions of accountability; and 2) supporting downward accountability to citizens for aid funds, instead of upward accountability to donors.
http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/19/60/46008596.pdf

The role of donors in providing timely, accessible and relevant information about aid is coming under increasing scrutiny. Such information is needed if citizens of both donor and recipient countries are to hold their governments to account.

aidinfo, 2008, 'Better Information, Better Aid', Draft Consultation Paper, Development Initiatives, Wells
What are the potential benefits of aid transparency? What information is needed and how could donors make this more accessible? Survey results indicate that improved transparency of aid information would contribute to faster poverty reduction by making aid more effective and accountable. Users of aid information need more accessible, detailed, timely, and consistent information to enable them to make aid work better. Donors should therefore publish information (electronically) in more detail, using common definitions and a common format. This could both reduce costs for donors, who repeatedly provide the same information in different forms, and increase the information's value to users.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3771

UNDP, 2010, 'Comparative Experience: Aid Information Management Systems in Post-conflict and Fragile Situations', UNDP, New York
http://content.undp.org/go/cms-service/download/publication/?version=live&id=2838574

Publish What You Fund, 2011, 'Pilot Aid Transparency Index 2011', Publish What You Fund
http://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/resources/index/2011-index/

However, although donors use the language of empowerment, its meaning is mediated by their organisational cultures and by their interactions with others in implementing development interventions.

Bebbington, A., et al., 2007, 'Of Texts and Practices: Empowerment and Organisational Cultures in World Bank-Funded Rural Development Programmes', Journal of Development Studies, vol. 43, no. 4, pp. 597-621
How far have the World Bank's textual commitments to empowerment generated efforts to rework unequal power relations? What is the influence of organisational culture on the practice of empowerment? Drawing on the case study of a silk development project in Bangladesh, this article finds that there is no simple linear relationship between policy and practice. Rather, cultural interactions among various organisations – the World Bank, government agencies, NGOs, organisations of the poor, social enterprises – shape how textual commitments to empowerment are translated into diverse practices. Who is employed, and which organisations are subcontracted, matters a great deal because the organisational cultures involved influence project practice and outcomes.
One-page summary: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4049