



*Institute of Governance Studies,  
BRAC University*

*Promoting & Embedding Voice Mechanisms  
for Accountable Governance:  
Concepts, Tools and Practices*

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*IGS Working Paper Series No: 06/2013  
March 2013*

# **Promoting & Embedding Voice Mechanisms for Accountable Governance: Concepts, Tools and Practices**

IGS Working Paper Series No: 06/2013

Published by the Institute of Governance Studies, BRAC University, March 2013

Institute of Governance Studies

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## 1. Introduction

In an era of unparalleled progress and wealth creation, poverty continues to pose formidable challenges. As rapid changes, fuelled by technology and shrinking distances, are reshaping the economic and social contours, considerable sections of humanity finds itself in the margins of progress and well being. Central to the discourses and practices related to poverty reduction is the idea of governance – the organizing principle for decision making and exercise of power and authority through which a society manages its development process and resolves conflict. Since the 1990s, Governance and its popular triumvirate – transparency, accountability and participation – are seen as the critical ingredients to leverage democratic quotients and position countries in a virtuous cycle of progress and prosperity. Development challenges today are not seen as mere issues of resource deficits, it is more a matter of how resources are allocated and used. Given the primacy of governance and its unquestioned correlation with poverty, promoting good governance is today the top agenda for most national governments and development partners. Significant resources have been channelized to various stakeholders during the last two decades in support of the anti-corruption and good governance agenda. OECD governments now spend over US\$ 10 billion a year on governance interventions.

Despite channelling vast resources to both state and non-state actors to strengthen governance, visible outcomes on the ground have been far from encouraging. For instance, evaluations have shown the limitations of classic interventions designed to strengthen rules based approaches through civil service reform, anti-corruption measures, rule of law programmes, democracy support, or attempts to improve the investment climate (World Bank 2008; NORAD 2009). There is also a growing recognition that institutional models cannot be transferred into very different social and political environments. A recent stocking taking initiative of citizen engagement in promoting transparency and accountability (DFID/OSF 2008) notes that though democratic transitions in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America over the past two decades have strengthened civil liberties and political freedoms, there has been more limited progress in opening up government decision-making to public scrutiny and citizen participation. Opening up the public sector to enhanced probity and scrutiny remains a formidable challenge.

An increasingly vocal critique against the discreditation of many (if not most) contemporary models of governance is the conscious or otherwise strategy of ‘de-politicization’ (Wil Hout & Robison, 2009). By distinguishing between the ‘demand side’ and ‘supply side’ actors and actions in the governance equation and by treating politics exclusively as a part of the problem, most interventions have reduced governance to the level of a technical construct that can be driven and managed as part of a techno-

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deterministic model of change. The complete bypassing of legitimate political spaces and subversion of political processes has contributed to a 'crisis of legitimacy' among the critical proponents of change. An increasingly challenged and discredited polity is accused of short-changing the democratic dividends by renegading on its mandate and vested authority and an non representative and elitist civil society is seen to be a wilful or otherwise collaborator to a neo-liberal agenda of change that employs the processes of symbolic inclusion but relies on the practice of material exclusion (Harriss, 2001; Miraftab, 2004). However, there is a dawning realization that politics is the driver of change and ultimate cause of people's security and access to justice. A recent report succinctly sums up the case: "Research has shown that **political context and process** is central to shaping the way politicians and policy makers decide for or against progressive changes that can deliver legitimate, capable, accountable and responsive states. It has helped explain why some countries achieve economic growth and political stability, while others remain locked in conflict and poverty (DFID/UK Aid 2011).

The challenge in the coming years will be to bring politics back into the governance discourse and praxis by locating legitimate spaces and channels for the poor to engage with political structures, processes and actors that rely on representation and negotiation. Central to this premise is the assertion that basic needs are basic rights and that any engagement in service delivery will work only in ways that help to strengthen people's power to claim their rights from the state more effectively and sustainably. It is in this context that the Rights Based Approach (RBA) to governance has come up as a strong theme in the face of rising ascendancy of neoliberal concepts and practices. As Ackerman (2005) notes: *Specifically, the core objective of RBA is to invert the power relationships between policy makers, service providers and the poor. Instead of envisioning development as a process by which governments, foundations or international agencies channel resources to "help" excluded groups overcome poverty and suffering, the human rights approach starts by acknowledging the entitlements of the poor. As a result, according to this perspective "service providers" and "policy makers" are better conceptualized as "duty-bearers". It is their obligation, not their choice, to guarantee the human rights of the poor, the "rights-holders".*

**Box-1**  
**Customers or Rights Holders?**

One of the central premises of the neoliberal framework of public accountability is to position citizens as 'customers' of services. In this imagination, choices take precedence over entitlements. RBA on the other hand offers a strong counter narrative to the neo-liberal orthodoxy by placing human rights at the centre of the governance discourse. As Andrea Cornwall has argued, instead of talking about "beneficiaries with needs" or "consumers with choices" the human rights approach speaks of "citizens with rights" (Cornwall, 2002). In practical terms this would mean that a poor woman being denied treatment in a hospital or a child denied access to a school are not customers being denied choices, but citizens denied fundamental rights and basic entitlements.

This working paper makes an attempt to locate the concept and praxis of 'voice' as a potent trigger for opening up spaces for the poor and the disadvantaged to claim their rights and entitlements and hold the state to account.

## 2. Unpacking the Concept of 'Voice'

Traditionally in democracies, 'voice' was a metaphor for the exercise of votes during elections; a given space and opportunity in the democratic processes, when citizens signal their choices, preferences, priorities and pathways for change. However, since 1990s there has been a radical shift in this thinking and a conscious move to distinguish 'voice' from 'votes'. Democracy was increasingly been defined as "not just elections, but what happens between them". The intent of this emphasis was informed and influenced by a series of issues including, the growing gaps between 'well-intentioned policies' and 'poorly implemented practices', the re-casting of citizenship rights within the narrower domains of 'consumer' or 'client' rights, and the increasing emphasis on technocratic models of development. However, a major critique of this shift has been that development has been depoliticized (Harriss 2000), with 'politics' itself being demonized as the source for all ills plaguing the landscape of governance. The critical challenge that is incipient is the need to re-position voice not just as a technical construct but a political one that recognizes political spaces, actors and actions and engages with the same.

### 2.1 Conceptualizing Voice

Voice refers to both the capacity of people to express their views and the ways in which they do so through a variety of formal and informal channels and mechanisms. Referring primarily to the efforts of the poor to have their views heard by more powerful decision-makers, voice can include complaint, organised protest, lobbying and participation in decision making, service delivery or policy implementation (Goetz and Gaventa 2001). The concept is borrowed and contextualized from Albert O. Hirschman's 1970 publication 'Exit, Voice and Loyalty: responses to decline in firms, organizations and state'. Hirschman argued that consumers can use two options – exit or voice – as well as the more passive 'loyalty' option to demand improvements in service or product quality. Viewed in the context of public service delivery, these conceptions play out thus: In the case of monopoly provision of services (as is the case in most contexts), an exit option may not exist for the consumer, since there is no alternate provider of service. In such contexts, citizens are faced with two choices – either, exhibit 'loyalty' by becoming members of a patronage network and avail benefits or employ the power of collective 'voice' to force reforms and changes.

Voice matters for three related reasons (Goetz and Jenkins 2002, 2005): First, voice has intrinsic value – it is good for people to have the freedom to express their beliefs and preferences. Second, voice is an essential building block for accountability; it is only by speaking up – directly or through channels such as Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), legislatures and parliament – that the poor have a chance to see their preferences,

opinions and views reflected in government priorities and policies and to ensure that these are implemented. Third, the exercise of voice, and the conversations that result, plays an important role in enabling communities to arrive collectively at the standards – the values and norms of justice and morality – against which the actions of power-holders will be judged.

Voice as a capacity to express views, opinions, experiences and priorities also has a ramification on ‘change’ – demanding actions from those in power. Thus, voice is not a metaphor for passive expression but a more proactive and demand based legitimate claim for rights and entitlements. However this conceptual transition from a static definitional perspective to a dynamic operational one, renders the term voice with complex shades.

#### Box-2

##### Voice and Development Outcomes: The Causality Chain

The basic argument is that increasing citizens’ voice will make public institutions more responsive to citizens’ needs and demands and thereby more accountable for their actions. This combination of voice and accountability will in turn i) generate outcomes that will directly contribute to broad developmental outcomes, such as poverty reduction; or ii) will have considerable influence on other (intermediate) factors believed to impact poverty reduction and other broad development objectives. Schematically, the relation can be depicted as:

##### Direct Effects

Voice → Accountability → Improved development outcomes (e.g., poverty reduction)

##### Indirect Effects

Voice → Accountability → Intermediate Variables (e.g., improved governance; stronger democracy) → Improved development outcomes (e.g., poverty reduction)

(Source: Menocal & Sharma, 2008)

## 2.2 ‘Voice – Defining Elements

Two critical elements define the contours of voice:

**Character (Representation & Legitimacy):** Voice is often treated as an **unproblematic concept**, and something that can be easily exercised by the poor and marginalised, without addressing the fundamental question of ‘whose voice’ is being heard. Two issues need to be deliberated upon – the legitimacy and representative nature of the voice and the ‘poly vocationality’ of voice itself, the recognition of the heterogeneity of voices. Questions about the basis on which actors – whether individual

or collective – participate become quite paramount to the discussions. A case study from Brazil on the nature and character of public hearings for environmental licensing throws some critical observations (quoted in Cornwall 2004). The study found that affected groups actually occupied a fraction of discursive space, requesting information rather than expressing opposition to the scheme. It was left to other actors, environmental organisations and social movements, to articulate a position of dissent: one framed in terms that had barely any resonance amongst the local population. The public hearings became, in their terms, ‘ceremonial areas in which participation was ritualised’. The issue of representation has been reported to be manifest in other forms – self selected representatives coming to represent others without any accountability to, or even communication with them. One key trend observed in recent years is the growing schism between ‘social movements’ and ‘civil society’. The former represented by informal and local groups coalescing around locally relevant issues and the latter, represented by urban centric, heavily funded NGOs advocating and articulating neoliberal ideologies and agendas. Quite often, international development partners have favored working with NGOs in the voice arena, given the NGOs greater capacity to deal with the technical and financial aspects. However, a number of case studies documented recently as part of an evaluation of citizens’ voice and accountability (Menocal & Sharma, 2008) reveal that NGOs may not be the most effective intermediary to deepen and widen the universe of citizens’ voice. Key critiques forwarded include: (a) socio-economic and cultural barriers between NGO staff and the grassroots beneficiaries often limit the former’s ability to truly reflect the interest of the latter; (b) there is a risk of being co-opted by the interests of institutional funders (e.g. INGOs, governments etc.) that may impact adversely on the stated objectives of the intervention; and (c) the need for transparency and accountability applies as much to NGOs as it does to state institutions and on this count, many NGOs fall short; with the mushrooming of civil society organizations in the last two decades, issues of quality, motivation and integrity are very much in the forefront of discussions today.

The second issue is one of the multiplicity of voices. In reality, the voices of the poor (as well as those of other groups) are far from homogeneous – and this diversity may not necessarily be complementary, and may actually compete with one another. As a recent evaluation report on voice and accountability (Menocal & Sharma, 2008) notes: *There are differences in power within civil society as well, and different organisations have different motivations, interests and capacities to engage. It is therefore essential to keep in mind that addressing the demands and needs that stem from the population (including the poor) is not necessarily a consensual and conflict-free process. In fact, a key characteristic of a democratic process is that multiple groups contend to exercise voice, and the state may respond and be accountable to some of these and not to others. In other words, not all voices are equal or equally heard.*

**Conduits (Spaces of Expression and Engagement):** It has been argued elsewhere that a useful framework to locate voice and participation is to use the imagery of ‘spaces’ (Lefebvre 1991). Thinking about participation as a spatial practice highlights the



relations of power and constructions of citizenship that permeate any site for public engagement (Cornwall 2002). Central to the discourses on spaces for expression and engagement, is the focus on institutions at the interface between people, providers and implementers. While one school of thought welcomes the emergence of new mechanisms in recent years as exciting prospects for the practice of a more vibrant and deliberative democracy, others raise a concern about them as forms of cooption, and as absorbing, neutralizing and deflecting social energy from other forms of political participation (Cornwall, 2004). Spaces are also seen to manifest in two forms (Cromwall 2004). One conceptualization is that of 'invited spaces', often meaning the intermediary institutions created by the state, in response to popular demands, donor pressures or shift in policy; however, sometimes invited spaces are created through 'conquered spaces' that is the result of strong successful demands. The phenomenon of conquered space has a direct implication on rights based approaches as these demands are moored in explicit or derived sets of rights and entitlements. The other notion is about 'popular spaces', sites in which people come together at their instigation to protest, to mobilize or to network. "Popular spaces" may be regularised, institutionalised in the form of associations or groups; they may also be transient expressions of public dissent, as passions about the issues that bring people together wax and wane. Boundaries between "invited" and "popular" spaces are mutable, rather than fixed; "popular spaces" can become institutionalised, with statutory backing, and "invited spaces" may become sites for the articulation of dissent, as well as for collaboration and compromise (Cornwall 2004).

The key point for debate seems to be **where to anchor voice mechanisms - within invited or popular spaces?** In the light of evidences emerging from diverse experiences (Menocal & Sharma, 2008), there are some compelling arguments that highlight the potency of 'invited spaces' as the terrain to embed voice mechanisms. Couple of reasons can be forwarded to defend this argument. First, invited spaces offer the potential to reconfigure relations of rule, extending the practice of democracy beyond the ritual of elections (Cornwall 2004). Second, citizens' voice will have no sustained relevance unless it is linked to responsiveness of the state and invited spaces, by their very nature of being linked to institutions of the state, offer a legitimate and potent opportunity to embed voice mechanisms. However, the concept of invited spaces is not without its pitfalls. As a case study from Bangladesh shows, when invited spaces are transplanted onto institutional landscapes characterised by entrenched relations of dependency, fear and dis-privilege, it undermines the very possibility of deliberative actions they are to foster (quoted in Cornwall 2004). The second note of caution is related to the first feature of voice described above, namely representation and legitimacy. One difficulty encountered in attempts to embed 'voice' and participation into formal systems is that it is all too easy for well-intentioned attempts at inclusion to become tokenistic. Spaces that are successfully opened up for inclusion often get 'captured' by elites and lead to little real change for poor people. Such attempts can unintentionally reduce the space for voice, since power-holders can then claim that the

change has already been made (Oxfam GB 2008). The third issue is one of dynamics of participation and the rules of engagement. A case study from Brazil (quoted in Cornwall 2004) delineates some interesting pointers. Closer attention needs to be paid to the criteria for organising political representation—a far from simple issue when it is to complement, rather than substitute, existing statutory authorities, and to guarantee the presence of organised civil society and groups traditionally excluded from access to state services. Secondly, the organization of procedures for discussion and decision making makes a critical impact; enabling leadership as well as the potential use of participatory techniques in facilitating more inclusive deliberations seem to produce far reaching results. Closely related is the issue of what kinds of organizations participate in these new democratic spaces. Another case study from the city of Sao Paulo (quoted in Cornwall 2004) comparing three kinds of “invited spaces”, those of the participatory budget, the deliberative policy councils and other institutionalised forms of citizen participation, points to the significance of three factors: affiliations with traditional institutional actors – in this case, the ruling Workers’ Party or the State; institutional design, such as their legal mandate and procedures for participation; and the organisation’s form, specifically whether it serves a representative, advocacy or service delivery function. The key point here is the inference that new politics of democracy has come to rely on multiple arenas outside the formal “closed” spaces of government for gaining legitimacy or securing consent, whether through liberal or deliberative democratic means.

While, the case is being laid out for promoting the concept of invited spaces, there is a genuine need to pursue the potency and possibility of the popular space as ‘remaining outside the structure of the state offers a position from which not only to critique state policy, but imagine and enact alternatives’ (Cornwall 2004). Perhaps, one of the biggest advantages of the popular space is its ability to coalesce diverse actors. As Hajer and Wagenaar (2003) notes: *Issue-based, often composed of transient interventions characterised more by their intensity and spontaneity than their durability, one of the principal characteristics of such political spaces is their heterogeneity, and their ability to reach across and hold together segments of society that might otherwise have little in common, creating at the same time the basis for new and different ways of relating between them.* It is, however, not uncommon to see alliances being built by actors in the two spaces. Quite often, presence and visibility in the popular space provides an entry point to the invited space – either, in a straightforward way or through the notion of conquered space. As Cornwall (2004) notes: *Mobilisation, and confidence and capacity building in “popular spaces” thus provides a basis for entry into “invited spaces”, one that cannot only equip those who traverse these spaces with the resources needed to use their voice, but also the legitimacy with which to speak – as representative of constituencies who remain watchful, outside the “invited space”, rather than as individuals.*

## 2.3 Locating 'Voice' in Contemporary Discourses

The concept of 'Voice' in contemporary discourses has emerged from two vantage points: one, in the context of public service delivery, especially for the poor and marginalized. And the other, as a potent link between representative and participatory democracy, especially in light of the growing chasm between public policies crafted by representatives of the citizens and the actual needs and aspirations of the citizens. We may now proceed to explore these two trajectories in detail.

### 2.3.1 Voice in the domain of public service delivery

Four arguments are forwarded to understand the context in which voice is seen as an emancipatory tool in the domain of public service delivery, especially when it comes to claiming rights and entitlements (Paul 2002). First of all, the state has traditionally been the dominant in this area, and often the sole provider of public services in most developing countries. The downside of this 'monopoly power' is that users of most public services do not have the option to 'exit' from one supplier to another. It also creates a pronounced tendency on the part of the service providers to withhold information from the users thus creating huge information gaps that makes it difficult for the users of the services to demand accountability, aside creating huge rent seeking opportunities.

Second, there is little evidence that those in authority who are charged with enforcing public accountability and oversight of service delivery are always effective and committed to this task, and thus the poor and marginalized are often denied access or provided poor quality services. Traditional mechanisms such as public audit of government expenditure and legislative oversight focus only on a review of inputs. Expenditures are audited to see whether proper procedures and norms have been adhered to. While this is an aspect of accountability, it does not tell us anything about how well the money was spent. This is because very little attention is given to the outputs and outcomes of the inputs. The problem is exacerbated by the difficulties in measuring outputs and in monitoring field level activities. Legislative oversight has been blunted by the vastness of the scope of services and the lack of information available to the legislators. An even more disturbing problem is the collusion between service providers and those responsible for monitoring their performance. The internal working and decision making of public agencies cannot easily be monitored or even observed by those outside the system. The scope for the pursuit

#### Box-3

##### 4 D's of Service Delivery Failure

- **Deficit of Alternatives** – Lack of exit options
- **Deficit of Information** – Lack of awareness on rights & entitlements
- **Deficit of Participation** – Narrow institutional spaces for engagement
- **Deficit of Accountability** – Weak monitoring and oversight mechanisms

(Thampi, 2008)

of parochial and self-serving interests and for corruption is considerable under the circumstances.

Third, citizens—who directly or indirectly pay for all public services—are seldom able to engage in sustained collective action to demand increased public accountability from the service providers they deal with. There is an implicit assumption that once people elect a government, it is for the latter to enforce accountability on all service providers. Perhaps an even more important reason for this attitude of citizens is that their motivation to engage in collective action is usually weak. The fact that the severity of problems people face concerning public services generally tend to vary from day to day and from household to household shows that sustaining collective action is difficult even when a group is able to initiate action at some point in time. Some people may not invest time and energy for collective action as they feel they could get a ‘free ride’ from the success of the efforts of others in any case. This is a major reason why the incentives for collective action are weak except in certain critical situations.

Fourth, the legal framework of the country can be a barrier to improved public accountability. Administrators typically try to work within the framework of the laws and regulations of their organisations. Accounts get audited because a law requires them to do so. Investments are made according to the laws and regulations governing the organisation. If the law is silent on the standards and other attributes of services, provider agencies are likely to pay less attention to them.

Under these circumstances, the brunt of deficiencies in service, leave “poor people vulnerable to rudeness, humiliation and inhuman treatment by both private and public agents of the state”, even when they seek services they are entitled to under the law of the land (Narayan D et al 2000). The difficulties in accessing services are aggravated by the physical and social environment that the poor live in. These experiences of the poor reflect the inadequacy and difficulties encountered by the poor. On the other hand, these experiences also reflect more basic realities of state-citizen relationship beyond the service in question – on the manner in which the poor are organized as citizens, their relationship and mechanisms of interface with the state, and the changing character of the state.

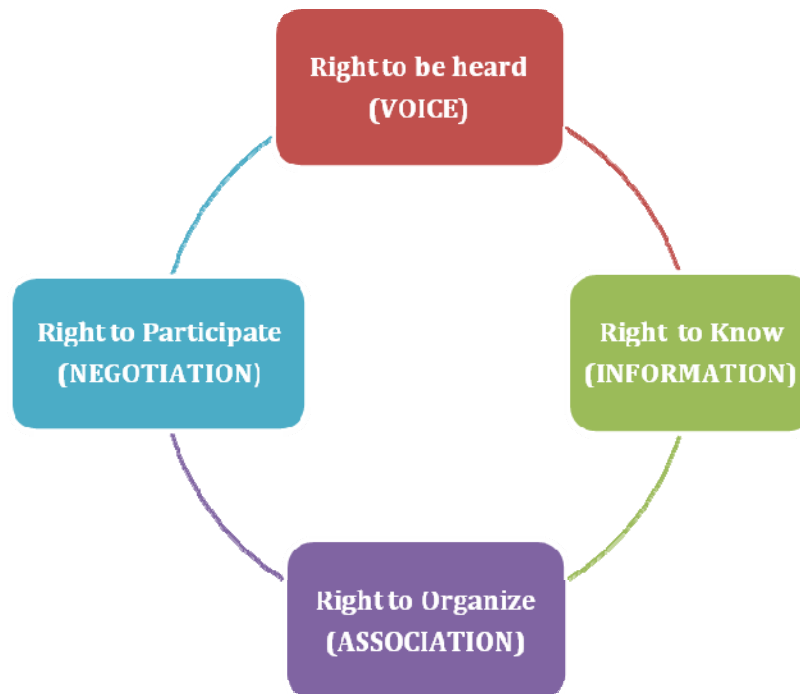
**Box-4**  
**How ‘Voice’ can make a difference?**

- Amplify interests of the poor and create a dent in power relations.
- Facilitate coalitions to overcome collective action problems.
- Create a platform to negotiate change

Given this highly disabling environment, how can ‘voice’ bring about changes in the highly disabling ambience of public service delivery? Increasing opportunities for citizens’ voice and participation can create powerful incentives for change in one major direction: when competition is absent, as in the case of most public goods, popular voice can reduce information asymmetries which can challenge service providers to perform better and lower transaction costs (Paul 1994). When low incentives and weak monitoring combine to produce inefficient public services, voice mechanisms can

inform public officials of the problems and act as pressure forces for demanding improvements (Dreze 1998).

Voice has also been conceived as a part of a 'rights based continuum' in recent literature on social accountability, especially in claiming citizenship rights and entitlements (ANSA EAP 2010):



One interpretation of the above depiction is that the Right to be heard (Voice) translates into a right to know (Information) which then coalesces actions based on the right to organize which eventually gives a rightful space to negotiate demands and claims. The corollary is that voice without concomitant actions has no meaning and potency.

### 2.3.2 Voice as a bridge between representative & participatory democracy

“Radicalizing [democracy] is too often imagined as moving toward “direct democracy,” voting directly for social outcomes. But there is much more to democratic processes than voting, and much more to politics than government. Wherever human beings engage in direct discourse with one another about their mutual rights and responsibilities, there is a politics” (Lavoie 1993). We now turn to the second vantage point where the concept of ‘voice’ finds strong and radical resonances – the link between representative democracy and participatory (or direct) democracy.

The need to bridge the principles of representative democracy with the practices of participatory democracy is articulated in the growing disconnect between political decisions taken by people's representatives and a different reality (choices, needs and priorities) that exist on the ground. Part of the reason for this disconnect is due to the way in which the relations between citizens and the modern state evolved over time. Historically, citizenship in the contemporary sense – the wide rubric encompassing legal, political, social, cultural and economic rights and duties that regulate the relationship between state and subjects – is the outcome of the rationalising activity of the rising modern state (Sartori 1991). Administrative, coercive and extractive procedures were thus homogenized in the name of greater efficiency and state capacity, consequently was greatly enhanced. The new modes of exercising power required new modes of legitimization. Thus universal consent to be ruled became a crucial factor of politics and popular sovereignty a necessary response to the intensification of state power. However, this transformation brought about radical changes in the attitudes and responses of society, mainly in terms of accepting the rationalization but simultaneously challenging the monopoly power of the state.

Perhaps the most visible form of existence of the State is the domain of public policy. Public policy effectively captures all nuances of democratic governance –ideology, representativeness, legitimacy and accountability. However, in spite of sweeping liberalism and democracy, public policy stands alienated from social aspirations and representativeness (Thampi & Balakrishnan 2002). While the basic premise underlying the use of public policy as a means of intervention has often gone unchallenged, the modalities of state actions in operationalising the public policy have increasingly come under critical scrutiny. First, public policy of the state seeking to dominate the social and economic space of a large mass of humanity has been extremely reductionist in its approach; many argue that this is because of compulsions of complexity. But this stance for public policy design and governance has come to represent insensitivity, narrow vision, opaqueness and non-responsiveness. Perhaps this reductionist approach is sustained by the continuing obsession with normative models of public policy which prescribes and seeks maximization. And the state in its obligation to impose and validate its own rationality in the exercise of power inevitably tends towards one-sidedness, absence of feedback and a dominant bureaucracy, which co-opts the political system into its role of designing and implementing equitable, efficient deterministic solutions to problems of underdevelopment. And practice of democratic tenets has unfortunately failed to address this gap effectively. The concept of 'democracy' though unchallenged in principle is increasingly being seen as flawed in practice. Especially so, when one looks at worrying issues like rising inequity, rampant corruption, abuse of power and dwindling voter participation. And civil society has come to connote a space to go beyond reactive dialectics to represent creative and sustainable proactive engagements. And participatory democracy is conceived as the pedagogy to animate that space.

But, what is participatory democracy? The origins of the two constituent terms, the Latin *partis* and *capere* and the Greek *demos* and *kratein*, which make up the phrase ‘participatory democracy’ can be translated into English as “taking part in rule by the people”. Participatory democracy embraces two central ideas: decentralization of authoritative decision making and direct involvement of ordinary citizens or non-elites in political decision making process (Cook 1971).

Though discourses on participatory democracy (and its various semantic avatars, deliberative democracy, consensus democracy, anticipatory democracy and grassroots democracy) have been in existence for quite sometime, it was globalization and the resultant questions on national sovereignty that brought the debate to the forefront. Writing on the context of the rise of micro-movements in India and its challenge to representational democracy, a noted commentator remarks: “Thus, although the micro-movements have been fighting politically on several issues concerning the poor much before they joined the debate on globalization, it is the challenge of globalization that has brought many of them together on common political platforms at the provincial and national levels, making issues of participatory democracy a part of their ongoing struggles (Sheth 2002).”

One of the key themes that keep recurring in related discussions is the notion of demographic deficits and why new instruments and approaches need to be crafted to address the same. Two central manifestations are flagged up: “The first, deficits in formal institutions of electoral democracy, are well-recognized and well-researched. The second is more recent and distinctive: deficits have appeared in the many new forms of ‘citizen engagement’, which have developed in response to deficits in electoral democracy. The first kind of deficit calls for institutional reforms, such as the redesign of electoral systems, parliamentary institutions, and basic constitutional changes, so that they are more responsive, and have greater capacities for information gathering, deliberation, and policy formation. The second kind of deficit calls for what I shall call the ‘retrofitting’ existing institutions: designing new forms of democracy which supplement and complement the formal institutions of electoral democracy, primarily in those functional policy areas where electoral institutions now have weak capacities to generate democratic legitimacy” (Warren 2009). Though articulated from a Northern perspective, the essence of the message resonates loudly universally. In many ways, tools and approaches in participatory democracy deepens the democratic discourse by creating conduits for voices to inform and influence public policies without political filters. Instead of the neo-liberal focus on avoiding politics, participatory democracy embraces the complexity of politics and embeds itself strongly within the representative democracy framework. As Sheth (2002) poignantly phrases: “*In theoretical discussions and in practice of representational politics participatory democracy has been treated, respectively, as a para-political idea and a peripheral political activity—a desirable but not an essential characteristic of a modern democracy. It is in the politics of grassroots movements, where the scope of democracy is being actively searched and expanded through their everyday political struggles, that*

*participatory democracy is conceived as not just desirable but a necessary organizational form and political practice”.*

Participatory democracy rests on two cardinal building blocks: (a) Mobilization of grassroots through building peoples’ own power and capabilities, which inevitably will involve political struggles and negotiations for establishing rights and entitlements and (b) Creating and maintaining new spaces for decision-making by people on matters affecting their lives directly. What makes this process exciting and challenging is that this dynamics takes place within institutional structures and processes. As Sheth (2002) points out in the context of the participatory democracy promoted by micro-movements: *“In fact they view institutional democracy as a necessary, though not sufficient condition for pursuing their parallel politics of movements through which they seek to raise social consciousness of people and democratise the hegemonic structures of power in society. In that sense, their politics is about working around and transcending the prevalent institutional structures of liberal democracy—rather than confronting them.”*

### **3. ‘Voice’ Mechanisms & Applications**

Mechanisms for expressing voice are key to ensuring that different preferences, opinions and views can be expressed, acted upon. Mechanisms for voice can be formal or informal. At the informal end of the spectrum, these can include a variety of citizen or civil society-led actions such as public demonstrations, protests, advocacy campaigns and public interest lawsuits. More formally, these can include working with the media, participating in policy-making and budget processes, tracking public expenditure, monitoring public service delivery, and taking part in public commissions and hearings. Voice can be directed at processes of decision-making, service delivery or policy implementation.

Voice mechanisms can be imagined, located and applied in four functions of the government (Malena et al 2004):

- a. Policies and plans
- b. Budgets and expenditure
- c. Delivery of services and goods
- d. Public oversight

These domains straddle the polity, executive and legal domains of governance.





We may now examine these domains briefly:

**Policy planning** is the process where policies, strategies (programs, projects, and activities) and development outcomes are identified at the national, provincial and local levels. Voice and representation of people is essential on two grounds – equity and efficiency. One, it promotes equity by ensuring that the government will prioritize issues and problems that are considered relevant by the citizens, especially for those who have been historically left out of the development process . Two, it enhances efficiency by ensuring that the limited resources of the government are properly allocated.

**Budgeting** pertains to the provision of financial resources to government functions to accomplish project and program objectives. The rationale for embedding citizen’s voice in budgeting can be summarized in the following points Boncodin (2007):

- a. demystifying the budget and the budget process;
- b. responding to basic needs of citizens at grassroots;
- c. improving budget allocation and facilitate fund distribution procedure; and
- d. preventing financial corruption and enhance accountability.

Integrating voices from specific enclaves like gender, socially disadvantaged and children brings in strong elements of equity into the budgeting process.

**Expenditure tracking** follows the flow of resources through several layers of the government till it reaches the frontline service providers. The emphasis here is to see how much of the originally allocated resources reach each level, especially the grassroots. Voice mechanisms can provide useful feedback on issues such as pilferage, bureaucratic corruption and other accountability issues related to accountability.

**Outcome Monitoring** implies assessing the impact of development interventions. These assessments very often emphasis issues of access, quality, reliability, and costs (legal, illegal and hidden) and hence provides many avenues to contest, challenge and supplement official statistics. Participatory monitoring approaches also provide potent channels to amplify voices to highlight issues of priorities and also, variations across demographics and geographies.

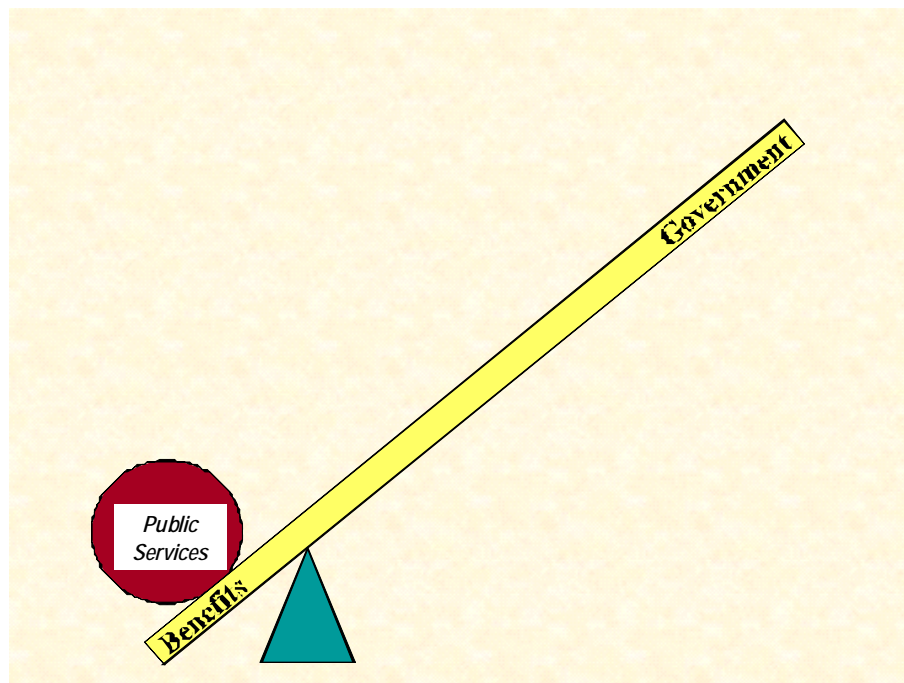
Interestingly, this interplay of 'voice' happens at various sites – at the '*political*' when it integrates into processes such as manifestos, advocacy campaigns, legislature/parliament watch etc.; at the '*executive*' when it complements or contests existing chains of accountability and stake a claim for service providers to be more accountable and responsive and within the larger '*civil society*' itself when it forges coalitions and creates converging hubs for diverse stakeholders to claim citizenship rights and entitlements. Public service delivery domain, thus incidentally becomes the larger site for democratic contestations and negotiations. It is this 'bridging' potency of voice that offers much promises and potential in widening and deepening democratic practices.

#### 4. Identifying Potent Tools & Approaches to Advance Voice & Representation

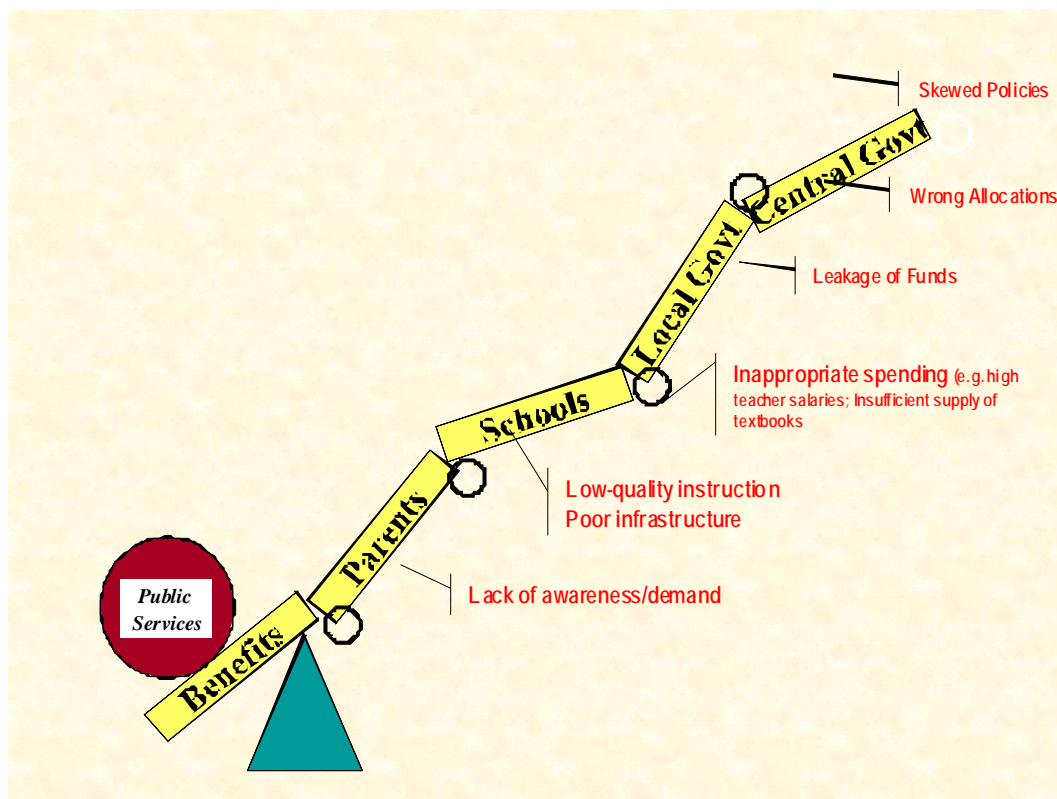
From an interventionist perspective, aberrations in governance and accountability happen due to four reasons:

- Non consultative and non representative planning process – **Policy Setting Problem**
- Governments spend on the wrong goods and people – **Budget Allocation Problem**
- Resources fail to reach service providers or users - **Expenditure Tracking Problem**
- Issues of access, reliability and quality in public service delivery - **Problem of Monitoring/Accountability**

An illustrative example would delineate the issues well. The general assumption is that countries with countries with well designed policies are supposed to leverage their own and external resources to deliver human development outcomes as depicted below.



But in reality, the seemingly robust long lever is rendered weak due to embedded interests and multiple actors resulting in a host of governance deficits and accountability gaps (see illustration below). For instance, political considerations and biases could skew policy directions and budget allocations resulting in misplaced priorities and needs. There could be leakage of funds as resources move from federal/central level to lower tiers of the government with the result that frontline service delivery units are often under-funded. The third issue is that wrong spending choices are identified, deliberately or otherwise that impact adversely on intended development outcomes, as for instance in the illustrative example, paying higher salaries is preferred over spending on essential resources like textbooks. These aberrations then cumulatively manifest itself in poor quality of outcomes like low quality teaching or lack of proper school infrastructure. Compounding this disabling cycle is the weak knowledge among citizens, especially the poor on their rights and entitlements and the lack of an effective ‘voice’ to bring about change.



‘Voice’ mechanisms and tools have the potential to impact positively on the four critical aberrations mentioned earlier. Over the last decade or so, many voice-led tools and approaches have emerged contributing to both conceptual underpinnings and practical applications in the governance and accountability domains. Most of the tools locate their rationale and power in the rights based discourse on governance and employs a unique combination of the use of participatory data collection and analysis tools and the

enhanced space given to citizens and their groups, thus resulting in a new generation of social accountability practices that emphasize a solid evidence base and direct interaction with state actors (Malena et al, 2004). One essential thrust of these new tools is to combine “participatory monitoring of poverty with a process of empowering citizens to demand accountability from government for poverty reduction investments, while at the same time, supporting government (especially at local government levels) to improve its capacity to engage with citizens for the benefit of promoting reforms in poverty-targeted policies, budgets and programs” (Apusigah, 2009:13).

Some of the dominant voice and representation tools that have emerged in recent years are:

Domain	Issue/Entry Point	Tool(s)/Approach(s)
Participatory Democracy	Policy Setting <i>Non consultative and non representative planning process</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory Planning</li> <li>• Citizens Jury</li> <li>• Local Development Councils</li> </ul>
	Budget Allocation <i>Governments spend on the wrong goods and people</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory Budgeting</li> </ul>
Public Service Delivery	Expenditure Tracking <i>Resources fail to reach service providers or users</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS)</li> </ul>
	Monitoring/Accountability <i>Issues of access, reliability and quality of public services</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen Report Card (CRC)</li> <li>• Community Scorecards (CSC)</li> </ul>

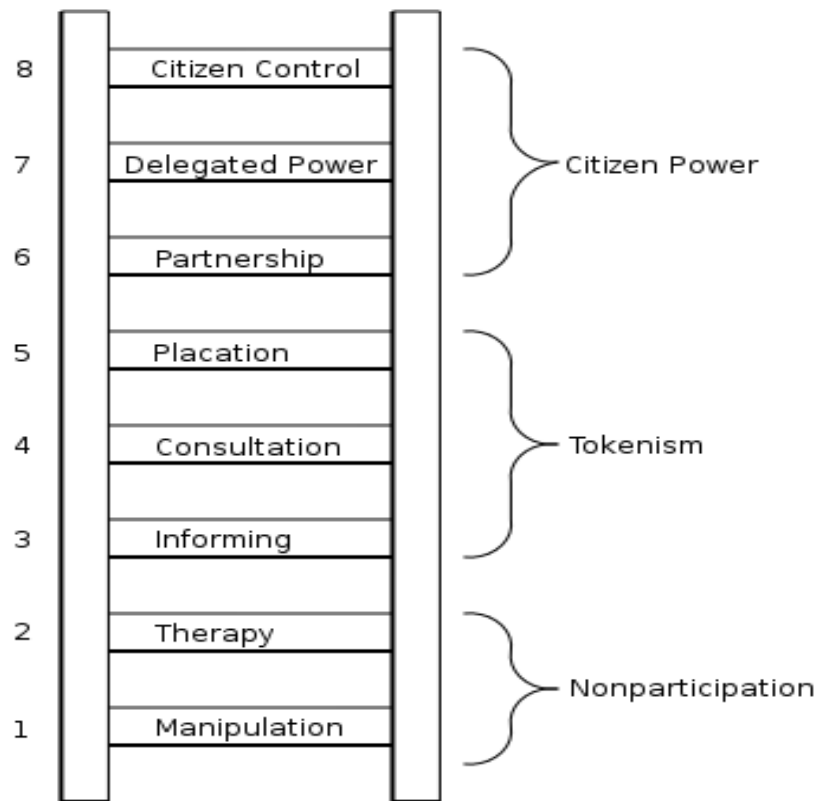
We may now proceed to examine these tools/approaches in some detail:

#### 4.2.1 Tools/approaches impacting on participatory democracy:

**Participatory Planning:** Participatory planning recognizes the legitimacy and capacity of citizens to help the government craft better policies and development strategies. It makes use of various tools and techniques such as participatory workshops, surveys, public hearings, alternative development plans, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, among others. In particular, the process involves (Thomas & Bendapudi):

- (1) Identification of the felt needs of the people
- (2) Bringing forth consensus
- (3) Empowering disadvantaged groups
- (4) Integration of local knowledge systems into project design
- (5) Facilitating a two-way learning process between the project and local people
- (6) Building political commitment and support

The extent and nature of citizen groups participation in a planning process is determined by the degree of influence citizen groups have on the decision-making process. This can be illustrated in the seminal work of Sherry Arnstein (1969) on the different levels of citizen participation:



Arnstein used the metaphor of a ladder to explain the hierarchies of citizen participation in any development programs. The level of citizen participation depends on the extent of power shared from traditional power holders such as government officials and research and development institutions to poor and marginalized citizens (Arnstein 1969). The bottom rungs of the ladder (Manipulation and Therapy) are characterized as “non-participation.” At the lowest level, citizens are seen as passive and “powerless” targets of development interventions with nothing significant to contribute to the development process. The second to the lowest level of participation is “tokenism.” At this level, citizen participation is regarded as a “token” where citizens will be informed and will have the opportunity to be heard but not necessarily to have a

voice and the power to exert influence over the decision making process. This type of participation has no “muscle” to change the status quo (Arnstein 1969). The highest form of citizen participation is called “citizen power” where citizens have the capacity to engage and negotiate trade-offs and benefits with the traditional power holders (i.e. partnership) or in some instances, citizens have the majority of seats in decision making or full managerial power (i.e. delegated power and citizen control) (Arnstein 1969).

However, the extent of citizen’s influence on planning is oftentimes constrained by the following factors (ANSA EAP 2010):

- Purpose and scope of citizen participation (e.g. to identify problem areas, to design interventions, to validate key results, etc.);
- Enabling policies that allow citizens to be involved in the planning process;
- Type of stakeholders involved and their political interests (e.g. government, private sector, nongovernment organizations, etc.);
- Organizational capacity of citizen groups to effectively engage with and build trust in the government and vice versa; and
- Available resources to facilitate a more inclusive and participatory planning process (human, financial, and technical).

Whether it is to develop a policy, management plan, a development program, or annual investment plan, the planning process will go through at least four stages, with clear options for embedding citizens’ voice in each stage:

1. Data collection (gathering information/ideas to formulate/validate the vision, the existing conditions, and the objectives);
2. Data analysis (analyzing the data to generate and evaluate options);
3. Development of a draft plan/program proposal/ budget; and
4. Finalizing the plan/program proposal/budget.

In each stage, citizen participation will have a specific purpose and options to use participatory tools as depicted below (ANSA EAP 2010).

Stages in a Planning Process	Role of Citizens Voice	Participatory Tools
1. Data Collection	Identification of issues and ideas, with an agreed overall outcome	Workshops, Surveys, Focus Groups
2. Analysis; Generation of options	Discuss the pros and cons of various options	Participatory design workshops, evaluative workshops, and staffed displays
3. Development of draft proposal	Feedback on the draft	Participatory workshops
4. Finalization of a policy, plan etc	Inform about final decisions	Stakeholder consultations, mass media

**Citizen voice and action in Brazil** **Box-5**

World Vision’s Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) increases dialogue between ordinary citizens and organisations that provide services to the public, thus empowering communities to influence the quality, efficiency and accountability of public services. This pilot project aimed to facilitate the political participation of children (aged 8-12) and youth (aged 12-18) in Brazil, within the particular ambit of monitoring government policies on investment in childhood through adapting the CVA methodology specifically for a younger audience. This is the first example (to the best of our knowledge) of a methodology to encourage the political participation of children in Brazil. For the youth, the focus was on building leadership through training in citizenship, human rights and political participation. Summary of key achievements:

- \* 60 representatives from 40 organisations and 20 youth trained in monitoring public investment, in the first Public Investment in Childhood Focusing on Ethics workshop.
- \* 12 workshops on public budgeting, helping young people understand the Brazilian budgeting process and create intervention strategies to influence it.
- \* Development and dissemination of the Public Budgeting and Socio political Education Manual to 12 groups.
- \* Creation and testing of “The Educator’s Handbook”, a teaching aid designed to promote the participation of children aged 8 to 12.
- \* Creation of three supporting booklets (political education, public budgeting, and legal and constitutional tools) and a video (CVA).

Over 120 youth from 13 cities were trained in CVA methodology, building capacity for community based budget and public service monitoring. A further 240 youth engaged in community mobilization actions, ensuring their communities benefit from improvements in public services related to water distribution, garbage collection, health care and education. The Virtual Learning Community allows youth to share achievements and challenges. Testing of the Educator’s Handbook led to improved school performance and behaviour of children; now rolled out to a further 34 municipalities where WV is working. A Pre-meeting on Child and Youth Participation Methodologies (July 2010) brought together representatives from over 10 organisations and networks, from 6 Brazilian states, representing a step forward in promoting political participation of children and youth on a wider scale. Long term benefits include increased autonomy and self esteem among children and youth, realising they have a valuable contribution to make to political life in their community. Local groups and communities learn to recognise young people as capable of working towards community well being. Resources for monitoring public services and promoting political empowerment (written in youth-appropriate language) can easily be used by other organisations and is currently being expanded to 2 other states in Brazil.

(Source: UKaid)



**Citizen Jury:** The Citizens Jury method is a means for obtaining informed citizen input into policy decisions. The jury is composed of 12-24 randomly selected citizens, who are informed by several perspectives, often by experts referred to as ‘witnesses’. The jurors then go through a process of deliberation and subgroups are often formed to focus on different aspects of the issue. Finally, the jurors produce a decision or provide recommendations in the form of a citizens’ report. The sponsoring body (e.g. government department, local authority) is required to respond to the report either by acting on it or by explaining why it disagrees with it. Usually a 4-5 day process, the Citizens Jury is intended to provide a means for more democratic decision-making.

The Citizens Jury method has been applied to a wide range of topics, including economic, environmental, social and political issues. It is most applicable when one or more alternatives to a problem need to be selected and the various competing interests arbitrated. It was invented in the U.S., but its widest use has been in the U.K. The method is also being used in Australia and has been tried in India and Brazil. Sponsors are usually government agencies, but can also be NGOs or anyone interested in providing a context in which competing alternatives can be expressed and arbitrated. However, the sponsor(s) should be seen as unbiased toward a particular outcome. The method is most likely to lead to concrete action when it is directly linked to legislation or other decision-making process.

The distinguishing characteristics of participants in a citizen’s jury compared with other methods of qualitative research or deliberative democracy are that jury members are:

- Given time to reflect and deliberate freely with each other on the questions at hand, occasionally assisted by a neutral advisor;
- Given the opportunity to scrutinise the information they receive from witnesses, whom they interrogate themselves;
- Expected to develop a set of conclusions or ‘vision’ for the future — which need not be unanimous.

Methodology: The Citizen Jury process involves the following steps (IIED):

1. ***Appoint an Oversight Panel*** - composed of range of stakeholders with relevant knowledge and a possible interest in the outcome - to oversee the process and ensure it is fair, and so as to defuse conflict that might arise over the conclusions. They take no direct part in facilitating the citizens’ jury. Members of this group subsequently decide whether to respond to, or act on, elements of this report.
2. ***Carefully determine the key question(s)*** - the way these are presented to the jury can, as in an opinion poll, influencing the response, introduce biases or lead debate in a particular way, and may discouraged jurors from discussing opposing arguments and prevent the full diversity of opinions on a topic to

emerge. Equally, the way in which discussions are framed by witnesses and the information provided can also have an influence on the extent to which citizens have opportunities to develop their own visions for the future. The Oversight Panel can carefully scrutinise the question(s) to be put to the jury.

3. **Select the jury:** usually of 12-20 people to serve as a microcosm of the public. Jurors can be recruited via a more or less randomised selection of people taken from the electoral roll. But this also suffers from two disadvantages. A proportion of the potential voting population may not be registered (this can be high in some countries) so that already voiceless citizens risk being excluded from potential membership of the jury. Supplementary methods may be used to ensure that marginalised groups are properly represented. Secondly, even if people are registered to vote, they may be excluded or put-off for other reasons, including sensory impairment or physical disability, illiteracy, or lack of confidence. Sensitivity to the situation of potential jurors is therefore crucial for everyone involved in the jury selection process. To encourage recruitment from as broad a range of backgrounds as possible, various provisions can be made available including an honorarium payment, crèche facilities, and easy access jury locations.
4. **Plan the jury hearings:** In most cases, a citizen's jury meets for sessions totalling 30-50 hours.
5. **Agree the evidence** – interrogation balance, i.e. the proportion of jury deliberation that will be devoted to the presentation of witness evidence compared with the time that is allocated for the interrogation of witnesses by the jurors.
6. **Select sensitive and competent facilitators.** Facilitators should optimise the inclusivity and deliberative fairness of the process. Elements that are often key include: the time jurors have to deliberate, the equality of opportunity between different jurors in making their voice heard, and the attitudes to jurors shown by witnesses.
7. **Hearing process.** Jurors hear from and cross question a variety of specialist witnesses – invited to provide different perspectives on the topic - and are usually able to discuss as broad or narrow range of issues as they see fit. They may wish to request additional witnesses on topics they themselves specify. Citizen's juries work best when evidence is communicated in a clear and accessible manner. The jury is not required to achieve a consensus regarding the answers it gives and in closing, the jury can vote on different possible answers, which can be formulated by the jury itself.
8. **Deliver recommendations to those in power** – through a collectively produced summary of their conclusions, typically in a short report, and preferably convene a press conference.
9. **Provide transparency** - this can be promoted by making complete audio or video recordings of all jury hearings, (though not of "jury room" deliberations if participants would prefer privacy) publicly available.

10. **Monitoring** – enable jurors to undertake work towards ensuring that some of their conclusions are implemented.

**Citizens’ Jury in Andhra Pradesh, India**

**Box-6**

In 1999, the government of Andhra Pradesh (AP), India, published its Vision 2020 - a strategy for development over the subsequent 20 years, partly funded by the World Bank and UK DFID. In 2001, a group of smallholder farmers in Andhra Pradesh (AP), India, took part in a participatory exploration of three broad scenarios for the future of food and farming in their region. This participatory process, a modified citizens’ jury known as Prajateerpu (translation: ‘people’s verdict’), allowed people affected by the vision 2020 for food and farming to shape a vision of their own. Extensive discussion between partners at the national, national and international level, including community organisations, development NGOs, academics and policy-makers informed the formulation of a methodology for Prajateerpu.

The jury was overseen by a panel that included a retired chief judge from the Indian Supreme Court, a senior official from a donor agency and a number of local NGOs. The jury of 19 consisted of mostly of indigenous farmers – most from Dalit (untouchable) or Adivasi (tribal people) castes with a majority of women, and drawn from communities all over the state of AP. Over four days, they cross questioned 13 witnesses, including representatives of biotechnology companies, state government officials and development experts. Rather than simply accepting or rejecting GM crops in the abstract, the jurors were able to build their own scenario for sustainable and equitable agriculture, and insert elements of the future scenarios to which witnesses had referred. Many people arrived at the event not knowing whether they would have anything useful to say and went away having acknowledged that they had important contributions to make.

The depth of engagement and insight they achieved went beyond what would have been possible using opinion polls, questionnaires, public meetings or focus groups. For example, rather than hearing arguments about the potential risks and benefits of particular technologies, such as genetically modified (GM) crops, participants were able to consider them alongside alternative development models. The process reaffirmed that citizen empowerment and deliberative and inclusionary processes can enrich democracy and hold decision-makers accountable for their actions. Jurors used their ability to directly cross-examine the witnesses to give illustrations of, or counter-examples to, the evidence they had heard.

Prajateerpu and subsequent events show how the poor and marginalised can be included in the policy process. By being linked with state-level and international policy processes, the jury outcomes and citizen voices have encouraged more public deliberation and pluralism in the framing of policies on food and agriculture in Andhra Pradesh. The state government that had championed Vision 2020 reforms was voted out of office in 2004. The largely rural electorate of Andhra Pradesh voted massively against a government that it felt was neglecting farmers’ needs, rural communities and their well-being. Similarly, the issues highlighted by Prajateerpu have been partly responsible for the setting up of a UK parliamentary inquiry into the impacts of British bilateral aid to India, and Andhra Pradesh in particular.

(Source: IIED)

**Participatory Budgeting:** Participatory budgeting can be broadly defined as a mechanism (or process) through which the population decides on or contributes to decisions made on the allocation of all or part of available public resources. Because most citizens who participate have low incomes and low levels of formal education, participatory budgeting offers citizens from historically excluded groups the opportunity to make choices that will affect how their government acts. Put simply, participatory budgeting programs provide poor and historically excluded citizens with access to important decision-making venues. Participatory budgeting is noteworthy because it addresses two distinct but interconnected needs: improving state performance and enhancing the quality of democracy. It helps improve state performance through a series of institutional rules that constrain and check the prerogatives of the municipal government while creating increased opportunities for citizens to engage in public policy debates. It helps enhance the quality of democracy by encouraging the direct participation of citizens in open and public debates, which helps increase their knowledge of public affairs (Wampler 2007).

Citizens participate directly or through organized groups in the different stages of the budget cycle, namely budget formulation, decision-making, and monitoring of budget execution. There are two kinds of participation in the participatory budgeting process direct and representative. Direct participation involves voluntary citizen engagement and does not require membership to an organization. Indirect participation, on the other hand, means representative participation through elected delegates and representatives of existing organizations. There are three critical building blocks to the participatory budgeting process: (a) *Budget transparency & demystification* - Citizens must have the right to obtain and access information, which can be easily comprehended by everyone especially the poor and marginalized; (b) *Meaningful participation* - Citizen participation should not be seen as a mere token for citizens to be heard or be informed. Rather, the quality of the participation that exacts accountability from government is the one that empowers citizens in return. It should allow citizens to communicate their needs and demands, to contribute to solutions, to negotiate the trade-offs, and to be involved in monitoring expenditures and development outcomes and ; (c) *Independent oversight of budget execution* - Citizen groups should have the capacity to carry out independent and participatory oversight functions of the budget execution process. This could happen through monitoring and evaluation committees that keep track of the budgeting process and project execution. The results of such assessment must be communicated back to the community. If vested stakeholders do not monitor the budget execution process, there is a probability that the projects might end up being postponed or cancelled. This can put the legitimacy of the participatory budgeting process at risk.

Participatory budgeting process consists of the following stages (ANSA EAP 2010):

## **Budget Formulation Stage**

### ***Phase 1. Regional Meetings***

The participatory budgeting cycle begins with public hearings conducted by administrative territorial units. This stage involves the information dissemination, the initial discussion of policies, citizen priorities, revenue, estimation and establishment of the general resource allocation or budgeting criteria and methodology. At this stage, organizational and institutional structures to allow and encourage civic engagement are established.

#### **Step 1. Information**

- The local government explains the participatory budgeting process as well as the current budget, revenue forecasts, and the budgetary priorities among the citizens, NGOs, and other stakeholders.

#### **Step 2. Consultation**

- A follow-up meeting is organized by the local government for the election of participatory budgeting council delegates and the identification of the needs and priorities of the citizens.
- Members of community organizations meet independently to inform citizens about the participatory budgeting process, raise awareness, and mobilize participation around specific priorities.
- Problems and needs of specific areas are identified by the local government staff, civil group representatives, and community leaders. They also assess the feasibility of proposed strategies to be included in the budget.
- Local citizens are assisted by the local government staff in the process of identifying their demands that need to be prioritized.
- By the end of this step, the rules of participatory budgeting should be clearly stated and respective responsibilities already distributed.

### ***Phase 2. Participatory Budgeting Council (PBC) Meetings***

During the meetings of the elected PBC, the priorities identified in the regional meetings are discussed and the final budget proposal is prepared.

#### **Step 3. Negotiation**

- This is where the proposal is thoroughly analyzed by the stakeholders with adequate training on the technical procedures of budgeting and accounting. Participating citizens will be informed on how decisions are made in the local

budgeting cycle and their implications to the socio-economic and political welfare of the municipality or community.

- Field visits through the participatory budgeting caravans can be conducted at this stage to better grasp the priorities and concerns that are raised by the citizens.
- Debates and discussions on the budget allocation are also conducted at this stage.

#### **Step 4. Consensus-Building**

- The PBC submits its deliberations in a form of investment plan which is part of the municipal budget.
- The municipal staff of various line agencies work with the PBC in preparing the technical plans and contracts.
- Participatory budget councilors then monitor and evaluate the implementation of the projects.

#### ***Phase 3. Legislative Council Meetings***

A series of budget debates are carried out in the legislative council and after which, the final budget proposal is presented to the Municipal Mayor and Council for approval. This legislative process is heavily monitored by the participatory budgeting delegates to ensure that the final budget proposal includes the results of their deliberations. This stage formalizes the results of participatory budgeting process.

#### **Step 5. Formalization**

- Projects and policies to be implemented in the year are discussed and all that was planned in the PBC meetings are worked on.
- The budget where PBC's inputs were incorporated are then submitted to the legislative council.
- Members of the PBC and other stakeholders may attend the sessions of the legislative chambers and witness the budget debates. They can lobby with the councilors and heads of departments to support their investment plan.
- The legislative council then takes on a vote by majority and submits the approved budget to the Mayor.

## Budget Monitoring Stage

### Step 6. Procurement

- An agreement on budget monitoring and evaluation is developed upon the approval of the budget that will provide for the monitoring of the procurement process.
- In relation to this, a PB monitoring committee is created to look over the procurement and the budget execution process.

### Step 7. Execution

- Public works and services are monitored and audited by the community.
- Local authorities hand out periodic budget performance reports to citizens that contain the state of project implementation and problems that were encountered.
- Aside from the reports, periodic site visits for inspection of projects can be conducted as well.

#### Box-7

##### Gender Inclusive Planning and Budgeting in Uganda

In Uganda, the District Development Project (DDP) made a significant contribution towards inclusion of gender concerns in planning and budgeting. In conjunction with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of Local Government embarked on a comprehensive gender orientation strategy for the Technical Planning Committees at the District and sub-county (sub-district) levels. According to the new strategy, all the sub-counties and districts are in possession of well outlined planning and budgeting guides. The planning guidelines emphasize a bottom-up approach to the soliciting of planning ideas and their prioritization. Gender inclusion in planning and budgeting systems and processes happens through ensuring that the needs of women and girls are incorporated into the village, parish, sub-county and district plans. Fair women representation in the expanded planning meetings is emphasized. Like most government programmes, the DDP design relies on the various sector-wide plans for achieving the various concerns. Notable among these is the Education Plan which is supposed to ensure equitable opportunities for women and men, correcting education and career imbalances through increased education for girls, and ensuring a cut in the illiteracy rate currently at an average of 60 percent for women and 38 percent for men. The Health Plan emphasizes promotions of health education, provision of maternal health services in order to curb maternal mortality rates currently at 130/1000.

The programme has made remarkable steps in the inclusion of gender concerns.

- The inclusion of women and men on the planning and investment committees at sub-county and parish levels.
- The programme has introduced expanded planning meetings that as much as possible incorporates the planning views of women and men.
- DDP has opened out the participation of women in non-traditional areas such as construction of health units and other facilities. This has increased ownership.
- For the first time, there is a system for tracking gender inclusion in the development plans.
- A gender task force was constituted with representatives from the Ministry of Gender, United Nations Development Programme/UN Capital Development Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and Ministry of Local Government. The Task Force will oversee the incorporation of gender concerns in the DDP and other local government development programmes.
- A study to engender all training materials and develop a mainstreaming strategy for local governments is underway,

(Source: UN-HABITAT & MDP, 2008)

## 4.2.2 Tools/approaches impacting on participatory democracy

**Participatory Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS):** The Public Expenditure Tracking System (PETS) is a methodology for tracking public expenditures that presents revenues and expenditures in a format that enables users to reconcile budgetary flows. Using PETS, an organization can track the flow of resources through various levels of government to the end users and identify leakages. For example, PETS can be used to track education funds sanctioned by the central government for school repair as the money flows through the district administration to the school itself (Ramkumar 2008).

PETS involves the following steps (ANSA EAP 2010):

### 1. Prepare for the study through consultations

The objectives of PETS must be agreed upon by stakeholders in a participatory manner. Stakeholder consultations, for instance, allow key stakeholders to contribute useful inputs and express what they hope to find out. Aside from consultations, data assessment from frontline service providers is also conducted to know whether sufficient data exist to conduct PETS.

### 2. Identify research questions and hypothesis

This step is comprised of two parts. The first part is problem identification and the second part is formulation of hypotheses. In the first part, issues and problems in public service delivery are framed in a form of research question. The second part, on the other hand, is about providing possible answers for each question. For example, a question like “Why does illiteracy rate remains high despite increased spending in education?” A possible answer is that funds do not reach public elementary schools in villages.

### 3. Map resource flows

Mapping of resource flows begins with the identification of the sources of funds. It is also important to understand how resources flow to various levels of the government. The mapping of resource flow should help identify the decision points where resource allocations and deployments are made. It should also provide better understanding of the allocation rules, administrative processes, and recording/accounting procedures used for the different types of flows.

### 4. Design the questionnaires

Questionnaires are provided for each level of the government (central, local and delivery units). Data on facility characteristics, inputs, outputs, quality, financing, accountability mechanisms and other details should be taken into consideration in the design of the questionnaires. These questionnaires should also be field-tested first before conducting the survey.



## **5. Do the sampling**

Data should be collected from facilities that are large enough to draw reliable conclusions. Moreover, the desired target population should be clearly defined. One option is to do a stratified random sampling of all facilities in the country.

## **6. Conduct the fieldwork**

Before going to the fieldwork, time, staff, and financial requirements must be considered. The results of the questionnaires' field test should also be reviewed. Lastly, enumerators must be trained and interviewer's manual be provided.

## **7. Enter and clean the data**

In entering and cleaning the data, it is useful to have a data management specialist right from the beginning to ensure consistency in coding the data. It is also practical to pre-code all variables directly on the questionnaires to reduce time required for data cleaning after the survey. Consider also return visits in case of errors and inconsistencies

## **8. Analyze the data**

In this stage, government agencies are contacted to align the analysis with the government's priorities and foster ownership. More importantly, at the end of the data analysis, questions must be answered by measuring and locating leakage, identifying variations between delivery service units, and establishing a link between other sources of data (e.g. household data on consumption).

## **9. Disseminate results**

As soon as possible, a summary report must be disseminated which contains the main findings and policy recommendations. The full report will be produced later on and shall contain the findings of the survey, detailed analysis of causes and effects, and final policy recommendations.

## PETS in Uganda

### Box-8

Uganda was the first country to implement PETS in 1996. The motivation for such an effort was the fact that though the official reports indicated that there was a substantial increase in public spending on education, primary school enrolment did not show any improvement. PETS focused on primary education and health care in its effort to compare budget allocation to actual spending through the different levels of government, including frontline service delivery units in both primary schools and clinics. Due to lack of adequate and sufficient public accounts to reflect actual spending, surveys were conducted in 19 districts (out of 39), 250 government primary school and 100 health clinics. These contributed to a five-year panel data on provider characteristics, spending (including in-kind transfers) and outputs. The school survey indicated that on average, only 13% of per-student non-wage funds provided by the central government reached the schools during 1991-1995. Eighty seven percent was misused either for personal gain or for purposes not intended for education. Roughly 70% of the schools did not receive anything. If the schools received some funds, it was a negligible amount. When we limit the survey results to the last year of the survey period (i.e. 1995), while improvements can be seen (increase of 7% of the capitation funds), only 20% of the central government capitation grants were estimated to have reached the schools. Yearly data reported less than 5% receipt of grants by 73% of schools while 10% of the schools received more than 50% of the intended funds. It was found that parents contributed about 73% of total school spending in 1991. In spite of increase in government share during the survey period, parents, on an average, still funded 60% of total primary funding by 1995. This trend seemed to continue despite higher public spending. Evaluation of the reforms, about 5 years later using two locally implemented follow-up PETSs showed that there that been a substantial improvement in the flow of funds reaching the schools - from 13% (on average) in 1991-95 to about 80 to 90 percent in 1999 and 2000.

(Source: Kanungo, P (2002))

**The Citizen Report Card (CRC):** The CRC represents an assessment of critical public services like water, health, education and electricity from the perspective of citizens. The latter are the users of these services and can provide useful feedback on the quality, efficiency, and adequacy of the services and the problems they face in their interactions with service providers. When there are different service providers, it is possible to compare their ratings across services. The resultant pattern of ratings (based on user satisfaction) is then converted into a 'report card' on public services (Paul 2002).

A citizen report card on public services is not just one more opinion poll. Report cards reflect the actual experiences of people with a wide range of public services. The survey on which a report card is based covers only those individuals who have had experiences in the use of specific services, and interactions with the relevant public agencies. Users possess fairly accurate information, for example, on whether a public agency actually solved their problems or whether they had to pay bribes to officials. Of course, errors of recall cannot be ruled out, but the large numbers of responses that sample surveys generate lend credibility to the findings. Stratified random sample surveys using well-structured questionnaires are the basis on which report cards are prepared. It is generally assumed that people from similar backgrounds in terms of education, culture, and so forth, are likely to use comparable standards in their assessments. But these

standards may be higher for higher income groups than for the poor whose expectations of public services tend to be much lower.

Some important characteristics of Citizen Report Cards are:

- **A “bottom-up” approach to reform measures.** This approach is effective in identifying key constraints that citizens (especially the poor and underserved) face in accessing public services, and benchmarking the quality and effectiveness of public services staff.
- **The use of quantitative and statistical methods.** Data is collected via a random sample, and are then aggregated and used as a basis to analyse public services. Quantitative data are used to assess overall service delivery, as well as specific aspects of public services.
- **Simple and unambiguous measures of satisfaction.** CRC surveys ask individuals to rate each public service in quantitative terms. But these surveys also glean information on a number of components of each service, in order to recognize the underlying reasons for collective opinion.
- **The recognition of the importance of citizens’ thoughts on policy.** The CRC survey asks questions not only about the current state of public services, but also about what policies they themselves would like to see implemented.
- **Credibility and reliability.** By using a carefully designed methodology and by surveying a diverse sample of users, CRC findings are met with a high level of confidence.

Citizen Report Cards fill a number of roles:

- **As a diagnostic tool.** CRCs provide information on more than just total satisfaction and its components. It can help in identifying gaps and inequalities in service delivery, as well as in assessing citizens’ awareness of their rights and responsibilities.
- **As a means to improve accountability:** CRCs can potentially reveal areas where the institutions responsible for service provision have not fulfilled their obligations, and translate findings into ‘rights based’ advocacy statements and positions.
- **To benchmark changes:** When conducted periodically, CRCs can track variations in service quality over time, which can generate pressure on poor performers to improve the quality of services.
- **To reveal hidden costs:** A powerful outcome of CRCs is the generation of user feedback on hidden costs like bribes. Furthermore, the nature of corruption (whether bribes are paid voluntarily or extorted) and the size of payments can be

effectively highlighted and tracked. Feedback can also be used to estimate the amount of private resources spent to compensate for poor service provision (e.g. water purifiers, voltage stabilizers, private tuition, etc.).

- **A self examination on the part of government.** CRCs provide valuable information to the government itself. Institutions undertaking a program to improve services could use such projects to evaluate their own performance and to determine the types of changes that are necessary.

What are the preconditions for such civil society initiatives to work? It is obvious that these initiatives are more likely to succeed in a democratic and open society. Without adequate space for participation, CRCs are unlikely to make an impact. A tradition of civil society activism would also help. People should be willing to organise themselves to engage in advocacy and seek reforms supported by credible information. Political and bureaucratic leaders must have the will and resources to respond to such information and the call for improved governance by the people. The credibility of those who craft CRCs is equally important. The initiators of the exercise should be seen as non-partisan and independent. They need to maintain high professional standards. The conduct of the survey and the interpretation of the findings should be done with utmost professional integrity. A report card does not end with the survey and its publication. Much of the advocacy work that follows will draw upon the report card findings. The CRC thus is a starting point, to be followed by further advocacy efforts.

### Box-9

#### Key stages in a Citizen Report Card Study (Paul & Thampi, 2007)

1. Assess the applicability of citizen report cards. Conditions that affect the outcomes of CRCs include the receptiveness of the political context, the extent of decentralisation, the extent to which citizens can voice opinions freely, local competency to carry out surveys and advocacy.

2. Determine the scope and plan the procedures. The next step is to identify key sectors/services to be included the survey, map service provision structures and identify local partners who will participate in the survey.

3. Design the questionnaire. Focus group discussions involving both service providers and users are necessary to provide input for the design of the questionnaire. Providers of services may indicate not only what they have been mandated to provide, but also areas where feedback from clients can improve their services. Users may give their initial impressions of the service, so that areas that need attention can be determined.

4. Sampling. To collect feedback from the entire population would require too much time and resources. Sampling, when carried out accurately, gathers feedback from a sample group that is representative of the larger population. The appropriate type of sampling design must be determined. A knowledge of statistics and prior experience in developing a sampling plan is necessary, although it may also be useful to consult an expert on sampling techniques if the population in question is complex.

5. Execute the survey. First, select and train a cadre of survey personnel. Second, after a certain proportion of interviews are complete, perform random spot monitoring of question sessions to ensure that the recording of household information is accurate. Third, upon completion of each interview, go over the information collected to identify any inconsistencies.

6. Analyse the data. Typically, respondents give information on aspects of government services on a numeric scale (for example, -5 to +5 or 1 to 7). These ratings are then aggregated and averaged, and percentage measures are produced. A typical finding may look like this: Boys tend to drop out of school more than girls. Of those children who drop out of elementary school, 60% do so in grades 4 and 5.

7. Disseminate the results. There are three important points to consider with regard to the dissemination of CRC findings:

- The findings should be constructively critical and should not aim to embarrass or laud a service provider's performance. Toward this goal, these service providers should be involved throughout the process in order to share with them preliminary findings and to gain their feedback.
- The media is the biggest ally for dissemination. Prepare press kits with small printable stories, media-friendly press releases, and translations of the main report into local languages.
- Following the publication of the CRC survey findings, service providers and users should meet in a village or town-hall type setting. This not only allows for a constructive dialogue, but also puts pressure on service providers to improve their performance for the next round. If more than one agency is being evaluated, these settings can foster a sense of healthy competition among them.

8. Advocacy and service improvements. The findings of the pilot citizen report card survey can then be used in an advocacy programme which seeks to increase public pressure, build coalitions and partnerships and influence key players.

## Box-10

### Citizen Report Card on Pro Poor Services in Ethiopia

In 2004, the Poverty Action Network of Civil Society Organization in Ethiopia (PANE) conducted a CRC on five public services – water, health, sanitation, education and agriculture extension services. These sectors were chosen because of the priority accorded to them in the country's SDPRP (a combination of PRSP and MDGs), because of their importance to the well being of citizens and as services that all governments should provide. The study covered four regions of Ethiopia, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP), Oromiya, Tigray and Dire Dawa. The first three are large regions that represent the country's population and land area, while the last is urban in nature. One of the first in its kind in the country, the pilot CRC survey is undoubtedly a significant step forward in not only informing policy planning with citizens' feedback through a complementary bottom-up approach but also providing the impetus for civil society engagement in policy process.

After series of consultations works, the results of the study has been very much acknowledged by the government and donors as well as broader CSOs even included into the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) document and used by our members for advocacy and lobbying of the facility of basic services purposes. It had helped PANE and its members to significantly influence the design of second generation of PRSP-PASDEP and monitoring the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP) during its final stage and subsequent Annual Progress Reviews (APRs).

PANE subsequently conducted a Second CRC on Pro Poor Services in Ethiopia in 2010 to sustain its advocacy efforts.

(Source: PANE 2010)

**Community Scorecard (CSC).** The Community Score Card (CSC) process is a community based monitoring tool that is a hybrid of the techniques of social audit, different participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques and citizen report cards (CRC). Like the citizen report card, the CSC process uses citizen's voice as an instrument to exact social and public *accountability* and responsiveness from service providers. However, by including an *interface meeting* between service providers and the community that allows for immediate feedback, the process is also a strong instrument for *empowerment* as well.

The CSC process uses the "community" as its unit of analysis, and is focused on monitoring at the local/facility level. It can therefore facilitate the monitoring and performance evaluation of services, projects and even government administrative units (like district assemblies) by the community themselves. Since it is a grassroots process, it is also more likely to be of use in a rural setting.

A critical feature of the CSC process is the almost immediate feedback mechanism built in its execution. This is done by means of an interface meeting between the users and the service providers or local government officials as described below (APRPRP 2004).

Using a methodology of soliciting user perceptions on quality, efficiency and transparency similar to citizen report cards, the CSC process allows for (a) tracking of inputs or expenditures (e.g. availability of drugs), (b) monitoring of the quality of services/projects, (c) generation of benchmark performance criteria that can be used in resource allocation and budget decisions, (d) comparison of performance across facilities/districts, (e) generating a direct feedback mechanism between providers and users, (f) building local capacity and (g) strengthening citizen voice and community empowerment.

As with any instrument of social and public accountability, an effective CSC undertaking requires a skilled combination of four things: i) understanding of the socio-political context of governance and the structure of public finance at a *decentralized level*, ii) technical competence of an intermediary group to *facilitate* process, iii) a strong publicity campaign to ensure maximum participation from the community and other local stakeholders, and iv) steps aimed at institutionalizing the practice for iterative civic actions.

As such the CSC process is not long-drawn and can even be carried out in one public meeting. However, the purpose of the exercise is not just to produce a scorecard, but to use the documented perceptions and feedback of a community regarding some service, to actually bring about an improvement in its functioning. For this reason the implementation of a comprehensive CSC process, does not stop at just the creation of a CSC document that summarizes user perceptions. Instead, the CSC process involves four components:

(i) The ***Input Tracking Matrix*** – this is a simple comparison of inputs, physical outputs, budgets, or entitlements as recorded in financial accounts, audits or as stipulated in project and policy documents with what is *actually* present at or received by the community. This comparison gives us a basic idea of the „variance“ between official and actual statistics, and is a first warning signal of the presence of inefficiency and/or corruption. Often the mere process of letting communities know their entitlements or what official budgets for different projects in their area were is significantly *empowering* since most of the time common people, especially the poor, have no access to such information.

(ii) The ***Community Generated Performance Scorecard*** - this is the key output that is generated through community engagement. It is a quick table summarizing the community’s feedback on the performance of different services or projects. The criteria used for judging performance are generated by the community *themselves* and often include various performance parameters like availability, access, transparency, reliability, quality and satisfaction. The community then scores these criteria through different focus groups and reasons for scores are shared using (as far as possible) actual evidence or personal anecdotes. The debate and discussion that surrounds the

generation of the community scorecard becomes the basis for inviting suggestions from the community on what reforms can be made to improve the situation<sup>5</sup>.

(iii) The ***Self Evaluation Scorecard by Service Providers*** – the community scorecard process does not stop at the community, but goes on to engage in a similar feedback process with the “providers” (Governments, NGOs, Private Healthcare providers), who will provide self-assessment on their performance. Like with the community, this is done by a focus group discussion in which they come up with criteria to assess their own performance and score them. After discussing the reasons for their scores, the providers too reflect on how things can be improved and make suggestions for reform.

(iv) The ***Interface Meeting between users and providers*** - Finally and perhaps the most significant component of the CSC process is the interface meeting between the providers and the community. This meeting will be used to provide respective feedback from the community and self-evaluation score cards and generate a mutually agreed “reform” agenda (agenda for change) through action planning on the recommendations that both sides had made independently. Even after the interface meeting, there is continued monitoring and follow-up. This drives home the fact that the CSC is indeed a *process* that does not stop at generating scorecard tables, but intends to go further into a series of local interactions between the community and providers to put in place mutually agreed upon reforms and plans. It is through the elements of direct community feedback, joint planning, as well as the sharing of key supply-side information on budgets, inputs, and entitlements with the community, that the CSC becomes a strong tool for community empowerment, transparency and accountability.

<b>Box-11</b>	
<b>Community Scorecards in Malawi</b>	
<p>The community scorecard methodology was first developed in communities surrounding the Chileka and Nthondo Health Centers in Malawi by CARE through its Local Initiatives for Health (LIFH) project in 2002. In Malawi there is a long history of deficient provision of health care services to the poor. The central objective of the project is to improve the provision of health services to the rural poor through the empowerment of the user community. Since 2002 the methodology has been expanded to many more health centers as well as “scaled up” to the district level. A repeat scorecard was conducted in 2003 to benchmarks changes. There is evidence that there was significant improvement in the service of the health center between the two scorecard processes and that most of this improvement can be attributed to the implementation of the community scorecard. Almost all of the indicators received higher scores in the second scorecard and there was quite significant improvement particularly in the areas of “respect for patients”, “listening to patients’ problems”, “honest and transparent staff”, “giving priority to serious cases”, “no discrimination in providing supplementary nutrition”, and “no preferential treatment”.</p> <p>(Source: Shah, 2003)</p>	



## 5. Summing Up

Democracy's exalted ideals can be realized only when citizens are able to actively participate in the governance process. Rule by sheer numbers, the organizing principle of representative democracy, runs the risk of responding to the loudest and in the process, undermine the principles of equity and representation. In deeply fractured societies – racially, socially or economically divided – voice becomes a key democratic instrument to make the state responsive and accountable to the needs and priorities of the citizens, especially those in the fringes of power and lacking the bargaining chip of a 'vote bank'.

However, as the preceding discussions revealed, 'voice' is far from existing as a value neutral concept. Voice is influenced by forms of representation (whose voice is being articulated? in whose interests?) and the spaces for expressing the voice. Building capacities and competencies at the cutting-edges for genuine representative people's organizations, building effective coalitions, and claiming spaces for political negotiations give 'voice' a potent pathway to create changes. And in doing so, voice acts as a powerful conduit linking the representative character of democracy with its deliberative avatar.

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