Engaging Citizens and Civil Society to Promote Good Governance and Development Effectiveness

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Introduction

Good governance signifies open, inclusive, accountable, and effective public institutions. Promoting good governance is a key strategic objective of the global development agenda. Poor governance has opposite characteristics and is at the heart of corruption. For more than a decade, governments and donors have recognized the importance of promoting good governance and fighting corruption, and have been implementing good governance and anticorruption reforms (supply side of governance reforms).

However, the effectiveness of good governance and anticorruption programs needs improvement. Impact evaluations by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) independent evaluation departments found the impact to be mixed.[2] Moreover, the 2013 Global Corruption Barometer report by Transparency International, covering 107 countries, found that the majority of people around the world believe that their government is ineffective at fighting corruption and

that corruption in their country has increased or increased a lot over the last 2 years.[3]

Development policy makers are recognizing that engaging citizens and civil society can complement government efforts to promote good governance. This is driving a growing movement for governments to call for greater citizen participation in the design and implementation of public policies and programs, as evidenced by the following:

(i) Elevating the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) at the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan to a negotiating status and making them signatories to the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.[4]

(ii) Recommendation of the 2013 Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda that one of the illustrative Sustainable Development Goals should be to "ensure good governance and effective institutions." This has been reinforced by the recommendation of the Open Working Group of the UN General Assembly in July 2014 that one of

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[2]   Independent Evaluation of World Bank's 2007 Governance and Anticorruption Strategy accessed at http://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/evaluations/world-bank-country-level-engagement-governance-and-anticorruption and draft report (yet unpublished) of ADB's independent evaluation of "ADB Support for Enhancing Governance in Public Sector Operations.
[3]   Global Corruption Barometer 2013 (accessed at http://www.transparency.org/gcb2013/report)
[4]   Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/fourthhighlevelforumonaideffectiveness.htm

"[Another enabler is] the rapid rise in connectivity, 24/7 instant communications, and social media [as it] enables governments to engage more extensively with citizens."

the proposed 17 Sustainable Development Goals for the post-2015 agenda should be to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."[5]

(iii) Rapid growth of membership in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) that has expanded from eight founding countries in 2011 to 65 countries in 2014.[6] The OGP calls for "a global culture of open government that empowers and delivers for citizens, and advances the ideals of open and participatory 21st century government." It supports civic engagement as a key goal and commits "to making policy formulation and decision making more transparent, creating and using channels to solicit public feedback, and deepening public participation in developing, monitoring and evaluating government activities."[7]

(iv) ADB committing in its 10-point program on strategic directions for 2014–2020 that "civil society organizations will be more involved in the design and implementation of projects, and in the monitoring of project activities and outputs.[8]

(v) World Bank formulating in 2014 a "Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Citizen Engagement in World Bank Group Operations."[9]

Engaging with Citizens and Civil Society Makes Good Government Strategy

The growing movement for governments to engage with citizens and civil society (e.g., Open Government) is also being propelled by emerging evidence that citizen engagement improves development outcomes, reduces poverty, and encourages peace by promoting social inclusion. Another enabler is the rapid rise in connectivity, 24/7 instant communications, and social media as it enables governments to engage more

extensively with citizens. Increasing citizens' access to information provides the foundation for such engagement.

How Does Citizen Engagement Promote Good Governance?

The emerging theory of change underlying citizen-led good governance efforts is summarized in the diagram below:

Provision of information and capacity development support to citizens and civil society leads to …

… Increased citizens' and civil society awareness, capability, and willingness to participate. This enables the …

… Citizens and civil society to monitor government functioning, voice concerns, and promote accountability.

Citizen and civil society voices and monitoring results are shared with authorities, media, and general public. This leads to …

… Increased public pressure on authorities to respond, change behavior, and reduce corruption. Authorities' response leads to …

… Improved governance outcomes and development effectiveness.

Source: Author.

There are several good governance outcomes that have been documented when citizen and civil society work together with the state for good governance. These are (i) increased state or institutional responsiveness, (ii) lowering of corruption, (iii) better budget utilization, and (iv) better delivery of public services.

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[5] For more information, please see High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. "New Global Partnership," United Nations-2014 (accessed at http://report.post2015hlp.org/) and *Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet*. Synthesis Report of the UN Secretary General On the Post-2015 Agenda (accessed at http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/reports/SG_Synthesis_Report_Road_to_Dignity_by_2030.pdf)

[6] ADB is a partner organization of Open Government Partnership since July 2014.

[7] Open Government Declaration (accessed at http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/open-government-declaration)

[8] ADB. 2014. *Midterm Review of Strategy 2020: Meeting the Challenges of a Transforming Asia and Pacific*. Manila. (accessed at http://www.adb.org/publications/midterm-review-strategy-2020-meeting-challenges-transforming-asia-and-pacific)

[9] World Bank. 2014. *Engaging with Citizens for Improved Results*. Washington, DC. (accessed at https://consultations.worldbank.org/consultation/engaging-citizens-improved-results)

Evidence of Impact of Citizen Engagement

Evidence is emerging that citizen engagement improves access, responsiveness, inclusiveness, and accountability in the delivery of public services such as health, water, education, and agriculture. It also improves transparency, accountability, and sustainability in natural resources management.

Global movements such as the International Budget Partnership are promoting citizen engagement as a means to make budgets and fiscal policies more transparent, participatory, and pro-poor.

Citizens' participation and monitoring of procurement processes, including contract awards, delivery of goods, and construction, has been found to improve the outcomes.

Development programs such as community-driven development programs and conditional cash transfer programs empower citizens with decision making of public resources for purposes they determine.

Citizen engagement is being increasingly used to curb corruption in a variety of development programs such as service delivery, public financial management, natural resources management, as well as to hold public officials accountable through programs such as assets and liabilities disclosure and monitoring, citizen report cards, and public interest litigation.

Examples of positive impacts of citizen engagement cited in one of the impact evaluation studies (McGee 2010) are shown in the table. Similar examples can be found in several meta-studies of evidence of impact of citizen engagement (Joshi,[10] Fox,[11] and the World Bank[12]). While noting the positive impacts of citizen engagement, these studies also note that these results are context specific—what works in one situation may not work in another if the context is not appropriate. This aspect is discussed in the next section.

Illustrations of Positive Impacts of Citizen Engagement in Transparency and Accountability Initiatives

Findings	Setting
1. *Citizen report cards* can have considerable impact on local service delivery in some settings.	India
2. *Community scorecards* can contribute to greater user satisfaction.	India
3. *Community monitoring, when combined with other factors,* can contribute to more responsive delivery of services, such as increased teacher attendance in schools.	Uganda and India
4. *Social audits* can contribute to exposure of corruption and effectiveness in program implementation.	India
5. *Complaint mechanisms* can contribute to reduction of corruption, by linking citizens directly to managers who can then hold managers to account.	India
6. *Information provision* has been found to have little impact by itself on the level of engagement by citizens in engaging for accountability with school systems in one study. In another study, when tied to a community-based information campaign, positive impacts were found.	India
7. *Participatory budgeting initiatives* can contribute to multiple outcomes, including improved public services, redirection of resources to poor communities, new civic associations, etc., strengthened democratic processes, etc., but there are also contradictory findings in some settings.	Multiple, but largely Brazil or Latin America

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[10] A. Joshi. 2013. Do They Work? Assessing the Impact of Transparency and Accountability Initiatives in Service Delivery. *Development Policy Review*. 31. Supplement s1: s29–s48.

[11] J. Fox. 2014. Social Accountability: What Does the Evidence Really Say? *GPSA Working Paper*. No. 1. Accessed at http://www.thegpsa.org/sa/news/social-accountability-what-does-evidence-really-say

[12] "Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Citizen Engagement in World Bank Group Operations." Chapter 2 – Summary of Evidence and Lessons Learned. 2014. Accessed at https://consultations.worldbank.org/Data/hub/files/consultation-template/engaging-citizens-improved-resultsopenconsultationtemplate/materials/finalstrategicframeworkforce.pdf

Table *continued*

Findings	Setting
8. *Public expenditure tracking surveys*, when combined with public information campaigns, can contribute to reduce leakages, though other studies also point to other factors. While the main source is a study in Uganda, other studies, such as in Tanzania, show less impact.	Uganda Tanzania
9. *Budget monitoring initiatives* can contribute to improved budget transparency and awareness, as well as enhanced resources and efficiency in expenditure utilization.	Multi-country case studies
10. *Budget advocacy initiatives* can contribute to better management of earthquake reconstruction funds (Pakistan) or changes in budget priorities (South Africa).	Pakistan South Africa
11. *Freedom of information requests* can contribute to responsiveness of public officials, though not always, and highly dependent on status of person submitting request and civil society pressure.	14-country study
12. *Community-based freedom of information strategies*, which go beyond simple information and disclosure, can be instrumental in leveraging other rights, such as those related to housing and water.	South Africa
13. *Extractive industry transparency initiatives* can contribute to the public's capacity to analyze fiscal policy in countries that previously lacked transparency.	Multi-country
14. *Extractive industry transparency initiatives* have the risk of simply empowering elite groups, technocrats, and policy makers with new information, rather than broader public stakeholders.	Nigeria

Source: McGee 2010.

Context Matters in Success or Failures of Citizen Engagement Initiatives

A key lesson of what works in citizen engagement programs is that contextual conditions matter in determining the extent to which they succeed or fail. Citizen-led programs can break down when (i) citizens do not have sufficient information to participate and monitor, (ii) authorities are hostile to civil society and CSOs live in fear of the state, (iii) opportunity costs of participation are high, (iv) citizens fear free riders and are less forthcoming for collective actions, (v) probability of success is perceived to be low, (vi) elite capture happens, and (vii) politicians and/or providers lack incentives (such as popularity gains, increased salary, increased social recognition, resources to be responsive).

At first glance, the number of prerequisites implied in the above list seems formidable. However, notable progress has been made in the last decade in disclosure of information by the governments and donors. According to Freedominfo (a global network of freedom of information advocates), 100 countries had established freedom of information laws or similar administrative regulations as of September 2014.[13] Another advocacy group called "Publish What You Fund" publishes an "Aid Transparency Index."[14] This index measures the transparency ranking of 68 of the world's leading donor organizations. This report shows continued progress in aid transparency. For example, ADB scored 83.8%, an increase of 26 percentage points over the previous year's score and ranked fifth overall and first among development banks. Besides ADB, other institutions in the very good category for 2014 include the United Nations Development Programme, which is ranked first, followed by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, Sweden, and the World Bank.

Some countries provide limited scope for civil society activities. In others, the officials act authoritatively and arrogantly as is evident from the State of Civil Society Report 2014 produced by Civicus.[15] However, experience has shown that

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[13] List of Freedom of Information Countries Alphabetically and by Date (accessed at http://www.freedominfo.org/regions/global)
[14] http://ati.publishwhatyoufund.org/ind. ex-2014/results/
[15] Civicus. 2014. Executive Summary of *State of Civil Society Report 2014*. (accessed at http://civicus.org/images/stories/SOCS%20 Executive%20Sum%205062014%20WEB.pdf)

opportunities for citizen engagement can be found in most countries through analysis of contextual factors.

In a recent seminar organized by ADB, civil society representatives from countries with varying degrees of civil liberties (Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Georgia, India, Indonesia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, and the Philippines) shared experiences in constructive engagement with the governments in their countries. It is noteworthy that in all these countries constructive engagement was happening even though countries differed widely in policies on civic engagement with state. The reality is that few governments however corrupt and unaccountable are monolithic. There are always winners and losers among the elite, reform-minded officials and CSOs can most often find allies by appealing to their motivations and incentives.

Moreover, political leaders are coming to realize that those in power ignore citizens' pressure at their peril. Donors are realizing that the projects best pursued are those that genuinely respond to public demands and concerns. Increasingly, development policy and practice are emphasizing listening to citizens and building projects that meet their demands.

Six Ways to Engage Citizens and Civil Society in Good Governance Programs

There are six emerging ways to engage citizens in design, implementation, and monitoring of development policies and programs. These are

(i) **Access to information.** An informed citizenry is essential for citizen engagement. It is necessary to provide citizens with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and solutions. This is usually done by (a) establishing and implementing disclosure policies and eventually right to information legislation; (b) providing timely disclosure and dissemination of information in areas such as budget, economic and social data, procurement and contract award, assets of officials, audits, development projects and programs; (c) improving quality including accessibility of information; and (d) raising awareness through campaigns and media.

(ii) **Consultations.** Increasingly, governments and donors are seeking citizens' views in the design and implementation of policies and programs. A good practice is to make consultation a two-way process that would enable those consulted to

receive feedback on how their views were taken into account or why their views were not accepted. It is also important to make consultations inclusive by ensuring that marginalized and vulnerable groups are included, geographical coverage is comprehensive, and minority languages are used.

(iii) **Collaborative decision making.** The citizens and/or CSOs are invited to be involved in decision making by the government authorities and implementing agencies. Examples include water user bodies, regulatory bodies for utilities, community demand-driven projects, participatory budgeting, planning and delivery of health services. The key expected results are more responsive decision making, improved sustainability and legitimacy, and increased access and utilization of programs.

(iv) **Citizen and beneficiary feedback.** This is akin to customer satisfaction surveys used by the private sector in services. Applications in development field are found in use of citizen report cards, short message service-based citizen feedback collection, community scorecards, focus group discussions, etc. The main expected results include improvements in the dimensions of services such as inclusiveness, quality, access, delivery time, transaction costs, targeting, reduction in bribes paid, improved financial and operational performance of the services, etc.

(v) **Citizen-led monitoring.** While there is commonality of tools between this form of engagement and the feedback collection, the focus is different. The main goal here is to increase accountability through independent monitoring, while the main focus of beneficiary collection is on improved responsiveness and beneficiary satisfaction. Some tools in addition to citizen and community scorecards are social audit, public expenditure tracking surveys, participatory auditing, etc. The main results are reduction in corruption, increased transparency and accountability, and openness in government.

(vi) **Grievance redress mechanisms.** These are becoming more commonplace among development projects driven by the fact that safeguard policies require implementing agencies to have them in place. To be effective, they need to be monitored for usage, resolution rates, and satisfaction levels among the complainants. Provision of multiple channels is key to making them accessible.

Detailed information on how to design and apply these citizen engagement approaches, as well as numerous examples of their use in development projects, are available and several of them are listed in the References.

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Conclusions and Operational Implications

Citizens and governments around the world are increasingly concerned with, and willing to confront, poor governance and corruption. Fighting corruption in a country requires actions by ministries and agencies in the executive branch of government, independent institutions of accountability as specified in the constitution of the country, and civil society and media. Effectiveness of government-led programs is widely regarded as needing improvements. Civil society role is evolving from being a watchdog to constructively engaging with the executive branch and the accountability institutions to complement their roles and actions.

Citizen and civil society engagement to demand and promote good governance can improve overall effectiveness of good governance and anticorruption programs. Increasingly, citizen engagement is no longer a choice for governments. Either they do it proactively (witness the growing number of countries joining the OGP) or citizens will politically engage to demand it (witness the people power movements across the world). Fortunately, a growing number of countries are recognizing the political and economic benefits of engaging citizens in the government policies and programs and trying to be more responsive to citizen voices and feedback. A consensus is emerging that context appropriate citizen-led programs can complement state-led efforts and improve overall effectiveness of governance programs.

Donor-funding strategies need adjusting to take advantage of the full potential of citizen engagement to improve overall effectiveness of good governance and anticorruption efforts. Currently, donors (multilaterals and bilateral) channel most of their good governance and anticorruption funding to the executive branch and provide only relatively tiny amounts of irregular short-term project funding for citizen and civil society-led (demand side) good governance programs. This bias and imbalance needs to be remedied to improve the impact of the donor-supported anticorruption programs as well as the overall effectiveness of the state-led anticorruption efforts. As noted above, evidence is growing that context appropriate citizen and civil society programs have enormous potential to improve governance and results and generate good value for money when they adopt constructive and complementary approach to state-led initiatives.

Mainstreaming citizen engagement in operations is the next frontier for multilateral development banks and bilateral donors to aim for in order to strengthen development outcomes. This should not be very difficult, as most if not all the six ways for engaging with the citizens are already featured in some of the development projects being supported. What is needed is to make them a norm rather than an exception. Scaling it up and mainstreaming will require clear operational directives to staff with supporting financial and human resources.

Mainstreaming will also require provision of financial resources to clients as well as operational budgets to staff. This is extremely important, as unfunded mandates are never implemented. The costs related to citizen engagement should be explicitly estimated and included in project costs. In addition, mainstreaming will require skill and capacity development of personnel in government, civil society, citizen activists, and donor agencies. Capacity development is already an important thematic priority for donors. So what will be required is the inclusion of capacity development as an explicit activity in business plans and country partnership strategies. This needs to be complemented by investments in capacity development technical assistance projects that support capacity development for citizen engagement.

The payoffs from investment in citizen engagement initiatives will come from better governance and reduced corruption, more effective service delivery, greater social inclusion, and increased economy and effectiveness of public financial management. Efforts to mainstream citizen engagement in development operations need to be accompanied by clear performance indicators in results monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

The Governance Brief was peer reviewed by Andrew Parker, principal social sector economist; and Haidy Ear-Dupuy, social development specialist, Civil Society and Participation.

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