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Strategies for Empowering Communities to Demand Good Governance and Seek Increased Effectiveness of Public Service Delivery

A paper for the 2011 Asia Regional Peer-Learning and Knowledge
Sharing Workshop “Engaging Citizens against Corruption in Asia:
Approaches, Results and Lessons”

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Abstract

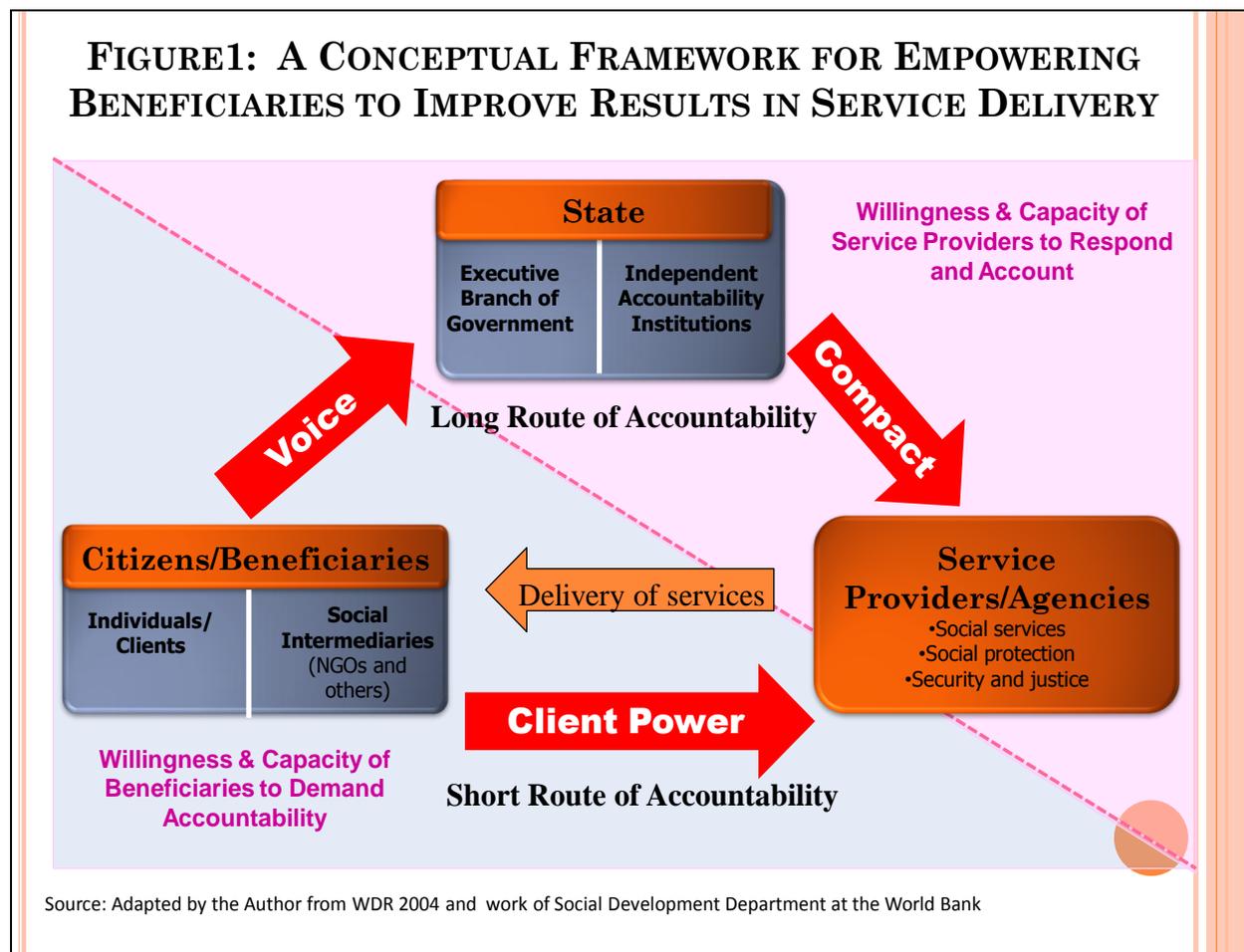
This paper provides readers with the basic idea of how demand for good governance (DFGG) strategies, in particular social accountability (SA) strategies, can be employed to help citizens demand greater authority responsiveness and thereby enhance their living conditions. Empowering Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to demand good governance through increased transparency, a higher degree of qualitative participation and the capacity to exert greater accountability from service providers, makes a difference in the effectiveness and impact of public service delivery. Fighting corruption at the grass-roots level thus becomes a two-fold priority: The empowerment of civil society is an end by itself in accountable and open societies. It allows citizens to make their rightful choices and determine the direction of community, state or even national development policy as a whole. In addition, the paper argues, that citizen engagement and empowerment to demand good governance using social accountability tools is effective in lowering corruption and holding service providers accountable. The impact of initiatives is to provide citizens with every-day efficient and effective service that affects their quality of life directly and instantaneously – preventing misery, economic distress and even the loss of life. The paper details four basic strategies how citizens around the world work to express DFGG and achieve greater responsiveness of local service providers through the “short route of accountability”. Each strategy is followed by a list of examples and details the tools most commonly used when pursuing any one strategy. Most anti-corruption projects follow more than one strategy within any one intervention. This fact can be clearly observed in chapter nine following the results chain, describing how each strategic elements builds on another until citizens have successfully experienced greater responsiveness of authorities and thus broaden their own expectations of what to rightfully expect from public service providers. Chapter 12 mentions the overall political conditions and parameters necessary to make demand for good governance measures work successfully.

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1. Introduction

Improving the responsiveness of service providers to deliver public services to users efficiently and effectively, particularly the poor, is an on-going challenge for developing countries. The World Development Report 2004 advocated strengthening the ‘short-route’ of direct accountability between users and providers of public services by showing that it could be more effective than the ‘long-route’ of accountability (Figure 1). This led to development and application of a variety of tools, empowering beneficiaries to demand services tailored to their needs and monitoring service providers through demand for good governance (DFGG) measures. Examples of such tools include among others: citizen report cards, public expenditure tracking surveys, access to information laws and tools, community score cards, social audits, etc. These tools are collectively referred to as social accountability (SA) tools. Using examples from different countries and sectors, this paper presents emerging good practices in the use of social accountability measures to improve service provider responsiveness in public service delivery.



2. Basic Concepts

Before we begin let me set out what I mean by key words in the title of this paper:

- a. **Public Services:** defined here to include: social services such as health, education, clean water and sanitation; social safety nets and livelihood enhancing programs as well as access to justice.
- b. **Empowerment for demanding good governance:** defined here as engaging citizens against corruption and other governance weaknesses through activities comprising access to information about service entitlements and standards prescribed by the law, granting voice to beneficiaries regarding design and implementation of service programs, providing grievance redress mechanisms and citizens with tools and access to demand accountability from service providers e.g. third party monitoring, public hearings, social audits etc. All activities for citizen engagement are collectively referred to as demand for good governance (DFGG) and/or social accountability (SA) measures.
- c. **Increased effectiveness of service delivery** is measured by one or more of the following outcomes (results) through the below list of performance indicators :

Outcomes/Results:

- Building new spaces for citizen engagement in improving service delivery
- Empowering local voices to demand accountability
- Lowering of corruption
- Better budget utilization and better delivery of services
- Increased state and/or institutional responsiveness

Performance Indicators: An illustrative list of the commonly used performance indicators for measuring these outcomes are as follows:

- Increased community awareness and increased knowledge on rights and entitlements
- Empowering citizens by increasing their capacity and opportunity to use access to information policies/laws to demand action
- Empowering people by strengthening their capacities to demand accountability and by establishing collective action groups.
- Enhanced user action in demanding delivery of services in line with the stipulated amounts of deliverables without corruption
- Exposing corruption measured by corrupt practices discovered/deterred and remedial actions demanded
- Number of investigations triggered by relevant authorities
- Poor governance in the operation of public services is monitored and brought to the notice of the public and authorities through constructive engagement, media and public hearings

- Number of formerly excluded beneficiaries helped to access services in a corruption free manner
- Responsiveness of service delivery provider increased as evidenced by number of effective actions by service providers on issues identified through monitoring
- Improved grievance handling (number of cases filed and satisfactorily resolved)
- Number of actions by service agencies to improve their governance by implementing administrative, regulatory and policy reforms advocated for by citizen groups/CSOs
- Increasing quality and accessibility of services

3. Increase in Initiatives to Empower Communities

Since the publication of the WDR 2004, the number of public service delivery programs that incorporate DFGG or social accountability measures has steadily increased. Four examples illustrate this trend:

- a. PTF projects: PTF mobilizes expertise and resources to provide advice and small grants to civil society organizations to engage citizens in actions to remove corruption in the public sector. PTF strives to support innovative approaches, learn from its work and share the knowledge gained. Over the last decade PTF has funded over 200 projects worldwide on the theme of ‘Supporting Citizens against Corruption’. In fiscal 2011, PTF approved 36 grants.
- b. World Bank: An independent review of over 200 World Bank funded projects approved in between 2004-2010 contained demand side governance measures and sought beneficiary participation. The projects involve several billion dollars and several dozen countries worldwide.
- c. DFID programs: DFID is a major supporter of DFGG programs worldwide, providing hundreds of million dollars each year. Its main programs are: Global Poverty Action Fund, UK Aid Match, Common Ground Initiative, Responsible and Accountable Garment Sector Challenge Fund, Program Partnership Arrangements, Civil Society Challenge Fund, Governance and Transparency Fund, and Development Awareness Fund. Some of the programs no longer accept applications. For more information: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Work-with-us/Funding-opportunities/Not-for-profit-organisations>
- d. The recent PTF-DFGG study identified 44 official aid agencies and foundations working on DFGG-related activities. While it is difficult to determine the precise level of funding, given the frequent lack of specific costing, it appears that the overall commitment by major donors approaches the \$1 billion USD mark for DFGG interventions (broadly defined). This amount includes major new programs such as the DfID £100 million Governance and Transparency Fund, the UN Democracy Fund (US\$23.7 million committed in 2008), the EU European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (€1.1 billion over 2007–2013), and significant funding by USAID, CIDA, SIDA, AusAID, and other bilateral agencies. <http://ptfund.org/special-projects/ptf-report-stimulating-demand-for-good-governance>

4. Strategies - Overview

Four Strategies are commonly used to empower beneficiaries to improve results in service delivery. These strategies are elaborated in paragraphs five to eight below. All the examples used in this paper are sourced from the case studies submitted by the participants for the 2011 Asia Regional Peer-Learning and Knowledge Sharing Workshop accessible at <http://ptfund.org/publications/case-studies/> and the following studies, listed as references at end of this paper, including: Gaventa (2010), McGee (2010), and Bhargava (2011).

5. Strategy #1: Awareness through transparency and information

Increasing awareness of rights and benefits through transparency of – and access to – information can be either demand invoked and/or service provider initiated. Elements include:

- a. **Disclosure of project-related information**
- b. **Program and sector-related information**
- c. **Adoption of access to information policy**
- d. **Demystification of information (simplicity)**
- e. **Information campaigns**

Tools that are most frequently used for this strategic purpose are: Websites, Print materials, Disclosure policy, Access to Information Laws, Public information campaigns, and Radio/TV programs.

Examples for the use of one or more of these tools include cases in:

- India: Community-based information campaigns on school performance had an overall positive impact on teacher presence and teaching efforts by teachers in three states – however the impact on pupil learning was more modest.
- Bangladesh: Mobilization by Naripokkho on issues of violence against women has led to new initiatives from the Government and UNICEF to provide support and treatment for survivors of acid attacks.
- Brazil: The Right to the City campaign in Brazil institutionalized the right to citizen participation in urban planning and gave powers to local governments to grant land use rights to poor residents.
- India: PTF's partner Ayauskam in Odissa State increased media awareness about corruption in rural health services by organizing media consultation workshop, presenting baseline survey findings. Journalists subsequently started covering stories on health right violations including service provider behavior, lack of free medicine and other instances of corruption or malfeasance. The increased awareness and media interest served as a deterrent to the corrupt practices.

6. Strategy #2: Participation through Voice

Articulating beneficiaries' voices through consultation in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation throughout the provision of public services typically involves events and defined processes to ensure informed two-way engagement with stakeholders so that

- a. **information is shared on proposed designs as well as on implementation progress, and**
- b. **stakeholders' views, particularly of direct beneficiaries and users of services, are sought prior, during and after public service delivery and are part of a feedback process**

Tools that are most frequently used for this strategic purpose are: Online and face-to-face dialogue instruments, multi-stakeholder committees, public hearings, participatory budget formulation

Examples for the use of one or more of these tools include cases in:

- Brazil: The new participatory governance councils have been significant in improving access to and quality of health care services provided.
- Bangladesh: Parents of girls were mobilized to monitor teacher attendance in schools and discourage absenteeism.
- Mexico: Parent participation in the management of schools reduced failure, drop-out and repetition rates of students.
- Argentina: The engagement in a participatory budgeting process by 14,000 local residents led to the identification of 1,000 priorities for action on urban services, 600 of which were incorporated into a development plan.
- Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Thailand: Participatory monitoring approaches in the fishery sector have significantly improved trust and collaboration between fisher communities, community groups, non-governmental organizations and government agencies.
- Vietnam: The government's focus on multi-stakeholder participation in preparing its 2006-2010 Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP) is evident in the content and focus of the SEDP on disadvantaged groups and regions, decreasing inequality, and the issue of social inclusion.
- India: As a result of Ayauskam's mobilization of citizen groups and its mounting of awareness campaigns, public officials recognize the strength of the community. Policy makers instructed the health department and the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) to involve community based organizations and the community in village health planning. The Gram Kalyan Samity (a village level institution created under the National Rural Health Mission [NRHM] for village health planning and monitoring) gained real power. Village level service providers started attending the social audits and related programs.

7. Strategy #3: Accountability through Third Party Monitoring

This strategy typically involves mechanisms for third party monitoring (TPM) and reporting of execution performance of programs, projects, and services. Monitoring and demanding service provider accountability for performance through independent third party monitoring (TPM). Independent TPM may be done by:

- a. **Specialized professionals**
- b. **Beneficiary groups and local actors**

Tools that are most frequently used for this strategic purpose are: Social audits, facilities surveys, Public hearings, Citizen report cards, Community scorecards, Beneficiary (Client) satisfaction surveys, Independent impact evaluations, Public expenditure tracking surveys, Investigative journalism, Talk back radio.

Examples for the use of one or more of these tools include cases in:

- Philippines: Budget Watch, Procurement Watch, Social Watch, Road Watch, G-Watch are several examples of projects using TPM
- Philippines: Civil society monitoring of textbook procurement and its distribution reduced the cost of textbooks, the average production time and delivery errors (G-Watch).
- Kenya: Social audits tool established a feedback loop between fund managers and ordinary citizens and communities who demanded and obtained proper use of money and services
- India: Citizen monitoring of rural roads in India using a road testing tool kit and a beneficiary survey led to improved road quality and user satisfaction.
- Uganda: Community monitoring of state primary health care providers shows that a) treatment communities were more engaged b) more effort on part of the providers to serve the community c) large increase in usage of health services and improvements in health outcomes.
- India: There are many examples. For instance:
 - Use of Citizen Report Card in Bangalore
 - Social Audit of government services in Delhi state
 - Use of Community Scorecards in Sattara, Maharashtra
 - Introduction of citizen monitoring groups and social audits by Ayauskam in Odissa.
- Cambodia: a social accountability program under the Demand for Good Governance Project

8. Strategy #4: Responsiveness through Grievance Redress

This strategy typically involves establishing beneficiary feedback and grievance redress mechanisms to exert responsiveness. Systems and procedures are designed to handle and respond to complaints and grievances from:

- a. **Beneficiaries/consumers benefitting from the service delivery**
- b. **from suppliers or contractors of services**

Tools that are most frequently used for this strategic purpose are: Hotlines, Web pages, Beneficiary Committees, Ombudsperson, Grievance Redress Mechanisms, and Crowd-Sourcing Technologies.

Examples for the use of one or more of these tools include cases in:

- India: Metro water in Hyderabad started a complaint hotline which allowed managers to hold frontline providers accountable. Performance improved and corruption was considerably reduced.
- Laos: The Nam Theun hydroelectric project involves 10 safeguard policies and has developed detailed mechanisms to address grievances. These include: village resettlement committees, project level grievance committees; NGO advisers to increase awareness and the use of support offers.
- India: In the state of Andhra Pradesh, the use of community scorecards has resulted in significant improvements in health services.

9. Results Chain Model

How are these four strategies supposed to work in producing improved service delivery?
The chart below shows the expected results using the four strategies detailed above



10. The Case of Ayaukam: Citizen Empowerment and Results

The case of the Ayaukam project is illustrative of the strategies and tools (highlighted here in italics) that were successful in lowering corruption and improving service delivery responsiveness. Ayaukam, a CSO funded by PTF, focused their efforts on helping citizens in the Khariar block of the Nuapada district in the State of Odissa, India, to fight corruption in the delivery of health services.

The Ayauskam project began with a detailed *baseline survey* in 64 villages which revealed that corruption in the delivery of rural health services was rampant. Next, Ayauskam used the survey findings to raise *awareness in the community and media about entitlements and corruption*. The next step was to *establish and strengthen community based organizations (CBOs)* through training and village meetings. *Capacity development programs* were organized to train women change agents, members of Panchayati Raj Institutions, CBOs, youth clubs, government officials and service providers. *Campaigns against corruption* were initiated in the villages. *Social audits* were conducted to discuss the problems of each village followed by *public hearings* with district level officials including the District Collector and the head of the district health department. Villages used *Right to Information law* to obtain information about services which enabled them to become more articulate. *An impact monitoring tool* was developed for community volunteers and self-help group members to monitor health service delivery and corrupt practices. *Rallies and demonstrations* were conducted to show the strength of the CBOs and the community.

Ayauskam experienced many challenges during the implementation of the project. Service providers and officials at the block and district levels initially reacted negatively: They influenced people to not cooperate with the project team while doctors tried to influence the leaders of political parties to subvert the effort. Their strategies included making threats to file criminal and false claims against the citizen group members, and withheld information. Without the relevant information, it was not possible to organize the community to make a concerted effort. All the information, Ayauskam was finally able to assess was information provided after the applicants filed appeals according to the Right to Information Act. Nonetheless, the citizen group (DBM) members persisted, wrote letters, and conducted regular discussions with higher authorities and local politicians. This forced authorities and politicians to eventually involve the people in improving health services. Gradually the situation improved. Increased awareness and greater participation of people forced the service providers to take their questions seriously. DBM members started discussions with service providers. DBM made it clear that it was fighting against corruption and not against individuals. The cooperation between the community and service providers evolved as problems were shared and solved.

The citizen empowerment and social accountability efforts have begun to show results. The public officials recognized the strength of the community. They instructed the health department and the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) to involve CBOs and the community in village health planning. The village health planning and monitoring mechanisms provided in the law were enacted and thereby gained real power. Village level service providers started attending the social audits and related programs. The rallies conducted against corruption increased the people's confidence. The impact study shows that there has been a reduction of corrupt practices in government hospitals: 80 percent of those surveyed are not paying bribes for hospital delivery. Payment of the service tax to other service providers has been reduced by 50 percent. Expenditures on medical services during pregnancy and delivery have been reduced by 82 percent. Village health committees have been formed, free medicines are available at the village level, and countersigning of checks for financial support to mothers after hospital delivery is done immediately. There is effective distribution of the full quota of Take Home Rations under the ICDS, medicine lists are displayed at government hospitals, and malnourished children

receive special care. Anti-natal and post-natal health services have improved. After the interventions, every household is now able to save more than \$55 per year due to the efforts started by Ayauskam. People's participation increased in the decision making process, implementation and monitoring of programs.

11. Evidence linking Citizen Empowerment and Service Delivery

What evidence is there to show that beneficiary empowerment resulted in improved service delivery? The Ayauskam story is not an aberration or a fluke. PTF has funded over 200 small projects involving CSOs helping citizens fight against corruption. Independent evaluations show that 80% of the projects were successful in achieving the anticipated objectives. Recent reviews of a critical mass of evidence – Gaventa (2010), McGee (2010), and Bhargava (2011) — show that citizen empowerment and citizen engagement work to lower corruption and improve service provider and authority responsiveness. There is however one caveat: citizen empowerment does not work everywhere, not for everything and not all the time (see paragraph 12).

Effectiveness, in the above studies, is expressed as:

1. Increasing awareness of entitlements
2. Empowering people to demand accountability
3. Exposing corruption
4. Triggering investigations

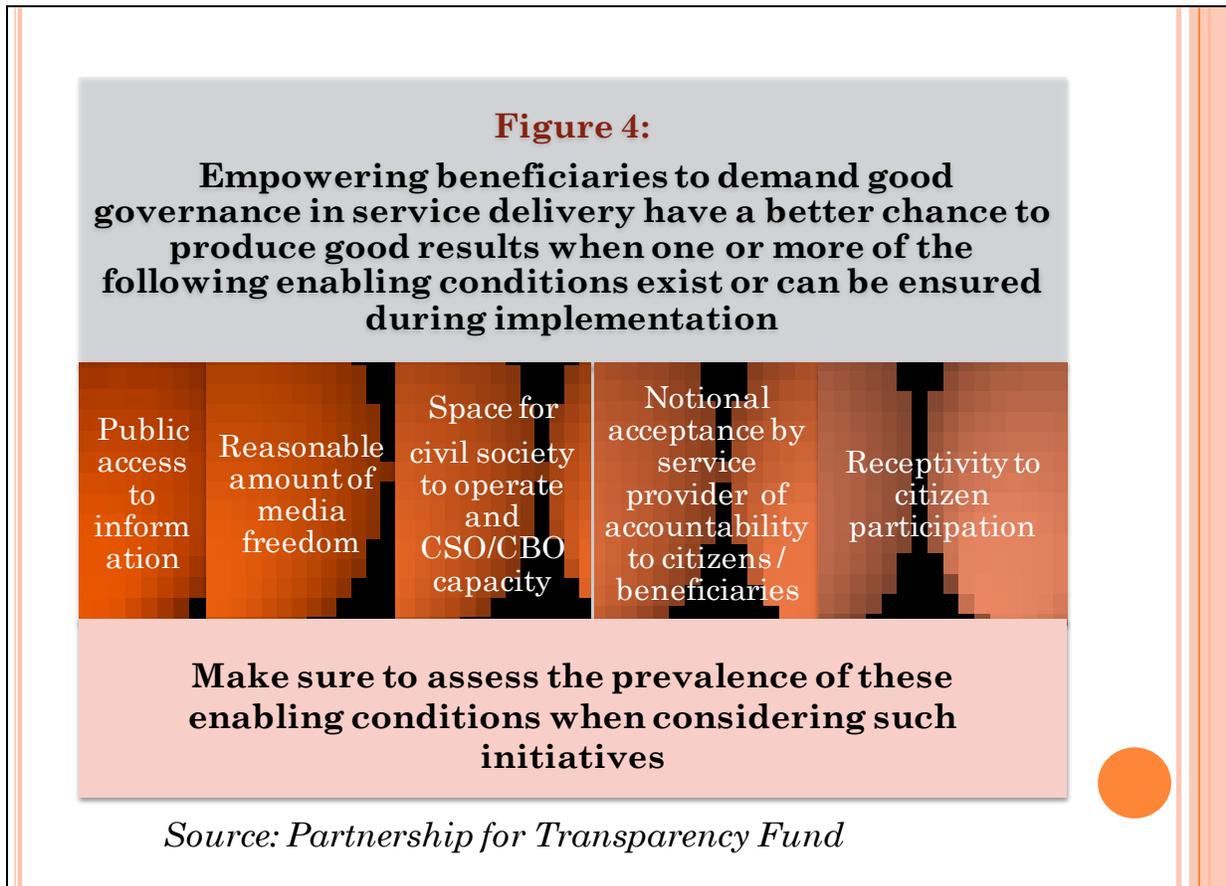
Impact is expressed as the actual quality and accessibility of services. Key indicators of impact are as follows: Increased state or institutional responsiveness

1. Lowering of corruption
2. Building new democratic space for citizen engagement
3. Empowering local voices
4. Better budget utilization and better delivery of services

We can conclude that the research studies on citizen engagement, as well as PTF experience, document a preponderance of evidence that under certain conditions civil society-led transparency and accountability initiatives improve both the effectiveness and impact of service delivery. Let us look at what these conditions are.

12. Conditions under which DFGG Measures Work

What are the conditions under which the DFGG measures work? Over a decade of PTF experience with 200 projects in over 40 countries leads us to conclude that citizen empowerment and engagement leads to lower corruption and increased service delivery responsiveness when one or more of the five enabling conditions shown in Figure 4 are present:



13. References

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 - How, when and where to use DFGG tools
 - Using Citizen Charters
 - Grievance Redress Mechanisms
 - Community Score Cards
 - Citizen Service Centers