DEMANDING GOOD GOVERNANCE
SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY INITIATIVES FROM SEVEN SELECTED COUNTRIES
Accountability is the cornerstone of good governance. Unless public officials can be held to account, critical benefits associated with good governance—such as social justice, poverty reduction, and development—remain elusive.

“Social accountability” refers to the wide range of citizen and civil society organization (CSO) actions to hold the state to account, as well as actions on the part of government, media, and other societal actors that promote or facilitate these efforts. Across the globe, citizens are increasingly active in challenging their governments, citing lack of transparency, responsiveness, and accountability as important problems, especially in relation to disadvantaged social groups (Commonwealth Foundation 1999, Narayan and others 2000). In many countries, CSOs no longer rely on top-down measures to improve governance but instead are demanding good governance by participating in public decision making and resource allocation, monitoring government performance, and ensuring accountability in the use of public resources.

The impacts of nonresponsive and unaccountable governance are perhaps most harshly felt by people in Africa, where corruption and governance failures are broadly acknowledged as major obstacles to achieving critical poverty reduction and human development goals. Lack of public accountability not only results in corruption and the waste of precious development resources but also seriously compromises the quality and effectiveness of public policy making, planning, and the provision of services to meet basic needs. Lack of accountability denies citizens their inherent right
to influence decisions that directly affect their lives and to hold state officials accountable for the public resources with which they are entrusted.

Over the past decade, a wide range of social accountability practices—such as participatory budgeting, independent budget analysis, participatory monitoring of public expenditures, and citizen evaluation of public services—have been developed and tested in countries such as Brazil, India, the Philippines, and South Africa. In less developed Sub-Saharan African countries, civil society and government actors are also actively creating and experimenting with social accountability approaches (and tools), but these experiences, their outcomes, and lessons have received less attention and been less documented, studied, and shared. This volume aims to help fill this gap by describing and analyzing a selection of social accountability initiatives from seven Sub-Saharan countries: Benin, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.

PURPOSE AND TARGET AUDIENCES

This volume is written primarily by and for social accountability practitioners. Case study chapters are authored by civil society and government practitioners who describe their firsthand experiences in designing, promoting, and applying social accountability strategies in the African context. The authors share the growing conviction that enhanced social accountability is fundamental to achieving good governance and development in Africa. These practical experiences demonstrate that social accountability approaches have the potential to bring important benefits to African citizens and governments, but that such approaches also face significant challenges and require a demanding mix of technical expertise, outreach, and sustained commitment to overcome obstacles. The book seeks answers to the following questions:

- What kind of social accountability initiatives are being pursued in Sub-Saharan Africa?
- What are these accountability initiatives achieving?
- What obstacles do these initiatives face?
- What factors are critical to the initiatives’ success?
- What can be done to promote social accountability in Africa?

We hope that social accountability practitioners in Africa and elsewhere will glean operationally relevant lessons from the case studies highlighted
here. The descriptions and analyses of these seven initiatives can also serve as a source of information (and inspiration) for government and civil society representatives who lack firsthand experience with social accountability approaches but are interested in exploring such possibilities. Finally, the analysis of obstacles, factors of success, lessons learned, and recommendations may interest the research community and those donors and development partners who seek to promote and support enhanced social accountability and demand for good governance in Africa.

METHODOLOGY

Most of the case studies in this volume were identified in the context of two multicountry social accountability stocktaking exercises commissioned by the World Bank Institute; they were carried out in Anglophone countries by the Municipal Development Partnership for Eastern and Southern Africa (McNeil and Mumvuma 2006) and in Francophone countries by Innovations Environnement Développement Afrique (IED Afrique).1 We chose the initiatives presented here from a much larger sample of close to 60 social accountability experiences, selecting the seven cases based on the results and lessons they offer as well as to represent a variety of approaches, strategies, and objectives. To enhance opportunities for comparative learning, the initiatives also represent a range of political, social, cultural, and organizational contexts. See table 1.A.1 in the annex to this chapter for a summary matrix of some key country indicators with regard to each case study.

OVERVIEW

This book focuses on the accountability of public power holders—political leaders, public officials, and civil servants—to ordinary citizens. The remainder of this introductory chapter sets the stage by clarifying what social accountability means, what it looks like in practice, and why it is crucially important in the African context. Each of the following seven chapters describes and analyzes one social accountability experience.

Chapters 2 and 3 describe efforts to introduce participatory planning and budgeting processes at the local level. Bara Guèye describes the experience of the rural commune of Fissel in Senegal. John Lubuva and
Renatus Kihongo recount the experience of the Ilala Municipal Council in Tanzania.

**In Chapter 4**, Charles Abbey, Vitus A. Azeem, and Cuthbert Baba Kuupiel describe CSOs’ efforts in Ghana to monitor the transfer of resources from the central government to district councils through participatory expenditure tracking and to influence the national budget through independent budget analysis.

**In Chapter 5**, Dalitso Kingsley Kubalasa and Limbani Bartholomew Elia Nsapato describe the strategies of the Malawi Economic Justice Network to promote social accountability and economic justice through budget analysis and demystification, public education and mobilization, participatory monitoring, advocacy, and media activities.

**In Chapter 6**, Bob Libert Muchabaiwa describes another example of applied budget work, this time targeted at making the Zimbabwe national budget more responsive to the needs of women and children.

**In Chapter 7**, Dauda S. Garuba and John G. Ikubaje discuss the highly challenging and pathbreaking efforts of CSOs, working with government and private sector actors, to enhance government revenue transparency through two parallel initiatives: the government-led Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) and the civil society-led Publish What You Pay (PWYP) campaign.

**In Chapter 8**, Cyrille Chabi Eteka and Anne Floquet convey the experience of Social Watch Benin, in which a network of more than 150 CSOs seeks to monitor government implementation of its Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

**Chapter 9** summarizes the key findings and conclusions of the seven case studies, beginning with an analysis of the most important factors that enable societies to create an environment for social accountability. The chapter goes on to discuss key challenges, factors of success, lessons learned, and conclusions about enhancing social accountability in Africa.

**DEFINITION OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

In the social context, accountability is often defined as the obligation of public power holders to account for or take responsibility for their actions. Accountability exists when power holders must explain and justify their actions or face sanctions.
The accountability of state actors is a consequence of the implicit social compact between citizens and their delegated representatives and agents in a democracy. The social compact, in turn, derives from notions of human and citizen rights, as enshrined in the General Assembly of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights2 and in many national constitutions. A fundamental principle of democracy is that citizens have both the right and the responsibility to demand accountability and to ensure that government acts in the best interests of the people. Public actors can and should be held accountable for both their conduct and performance. In other words, citizens have the right to ensure that public actors (a) obey the law and not abuse their powers, and (b) serve the public interest in an efficient, effective, and fair manner.

In an institutional environment for good governance, certain conditions underpin the ability of governments to be accountable (supply-side conditions) and the ability of citizens and civil society to hold governments accountable (demand-side conditions). Supply-side and demand-side mechanisms of accountability are complementary and mutually reinforcing. All states have some form of internal mechanisms to promote or ensure accountability of public servants, including

- Political mechanisms, such as constitutional constraints, separation of powers, the legislature, and legislative investigative commissions
- Fiscal mechanisms, such as auditing, financial management, and procurement regulations
- Administrative mechanisms, such as reporting systems, norms of public sector probity, public service codes of conduct, rules and procedures regarding transparency, and public oversight
- Legal mechanisms, such as corruption control agencies, ombudsmen, and an independent judiciary (Goetz and Gaventa 2001)

While such internal or supply-side mechanisms of accountability are necessary for good governance, experience has shown that they are not sufficient. States are rarely effective at holding themselves accountable. To achieve accountability, citizens must also demand it. Unless CSOs and other external actors can demand government transparency, responsiveness, and accountability, current governance failures are unlikely to be resolved.

In democracies, elections are the principal means by which citizens can hold the state to account. Elections, however, have frequently proven to be a weak and blunt instrument with which to hold government accountable.
Even if citizens were fully and accurately informed of the views and actions of every political candidate (which is far from the case), elections still allow citizens to select from only a limited number of individuals or political parties. They do not offer citizens the opportunity to express their preferences on specific issues, to contribute in a meaningful way to public decision making, or to hold public actors accountable for specific decisions or behaviors (World Bank 2004).

Social accountability is about affirming and making operational the direct accountability relationships between citizens and the state. In practical terms, accountability refers to (a) the broad range of actions and mechanisms (beyond voting) that citizens can use to hold the state to account, such as access to and ability to monitor public budgets, participation in budget formation, and citizen report cards on service delivery; and (b) actions on the part of government, civil society, media, and other societal actors that promote or facilitate these efforts.

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY STRATEGIES AND METHODS

In practice, social accountability encompasses an array of approaches, strategies, and methods that may

- Be initiated by a wide range of actors (citizens, CSOs, communities, government agencies, parliamentarians, media, and others)
- Occur at different levels (from the community level to the national and international levels)
- Use diverse strategies (for example, research, monitoring, civic education, media coverage, advocacy, and coalition building)
- Employ different forms of formal and informal sanctions (for example, judicial enforcement of freedom of information laws and public exposés in the media)
- Vary by the extent to which they are institutionalized and collaborative

Traditionally, citizen or civil society-led efforts to hold government accountable have included public demonstrations, protests, advocacy, and lobbying. In recent years, the expanded use of participatory data collection and analytical tools, combined with enhanced space and opportunity for citizen and civil society engagement with the state, has led to a new generation of social accountability practices that emphasize a solid evidence base and direct dialogue and negotiation with government counterparts.
These social accountability practices include, for example, participatory public policy making, participatory budgeting, public expenditure tracking, and citizen monitoring and evaluation of public services.

The opportunities for social accountability exist in all aspects of governance. Among the wide range of mechanisms to build social accountability, those that directly involve ordinary citizens in the allocation, disbursement, monitoring, and evaluation of public resources have proved effective because these are the resource flows that translate public policy into action.

Table 1.1 summarizes how the case studies in this book illustrate promotion of social accountability at both the national and local levels as well as at various stages throughout the public policy and budget cycles: policy making and planning; revenue reporting, auditing, and analysis; budget formulation, advocacy, and analysis; expenditure reporting and tracking; and service delivery evaluation. Interesting to note is the lack of on-the-ground experience in measuring the impact of social accountability approaches on revenue generation—an area that needs further study.

**Social Accountability and Public Revenues**

In most countries around the world, citizens know little about how much money their government has at its disposal, where that money comes from, and how it is managed and accounted for. Public revenue transparency is particularly weak in Sub-Saharan Africa where, due to corruption, there is significant misuse of public resources. Robert Rotberg of Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government estimates that in Nigeria, for example, 30 of the 36 state governors are corrupt, which in turn feeds corruption among local officials (Rotberg 2007).

That a relatively large proportion of government revenues in Sub-Saharan Africa come from international aid and the export of primary resources (rather than tax revenues) further diminishes a sense of accountability to citizens for public revenues. In 2007, for example, total inflows of combined Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment into Africa reached $91 billion (Boko and McNeil 2010).

Enhancing social accountability with regard to public revenues is therefore both essential and highly challenging in the African context. The NEITI and PWYP campaign in Nigeria are important and path-breaking examples of multistakeholder efforts to improve transparency
## Table 1.1 Social Accountability Practices in the Seven Case Studies

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and accountability in Africa’s most populous country and in the highly lucrative and problematic extractive industries sector. Other examples include revenue analysis efforts in Ghana by the Centre for Budget Advocacy, which aims to help ordinary citizens understand the tax system in the country and its implications.

Social Accountability and Public Budgets

Citizen involvement in preparing and analyzing public budgets is another important category of social accountability practices. Participatory budget formulation is most common at the local level (as in the case studies from Senegal and Tanzania) but can also be found at higher levels to varying degrees—for example, in the Ghana Ministry of Finance’s public consultations or the Zimbabwe government’s welcoming of oral and written submissions before budget formulations. More common examples of budget-related social accountability practices at the national level include independent civil society efforts to demystify the technical content of the budget and undertake public education campaigns to

- Improve budget literacy (in Benin, Ghana, Malawi, and Zimbabwe)
- Analyze the impact and implications of budget allocations overall (in Ghana) or for specific social groups such as women and children (in Zimbabwe)
- Advocate for public influence on national budget decisions (in Ghana, Malawi, Zimbabwe) and budgeting processes (in Ghana)

As these case studies demonstrate, independent applied budget work, in which CSOs combine specialized analysis with popular education and mobilization techniques, is an important and growing phenomenon in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Social Accountability and Public Expenditures

The formulation of public budgets is one thing, but whether and how public resources are actually used (according to budget provisions) is another. Another important aim of social accountability is to enable citizens to hold government accountable for how public monies are managed, transferred, and used.

A growing number of local governments (as the Senegal and Tanzania case studies show) publicly announce, post, or disseminate information
about public expenditures. Public expenditure tracking exercises—initiated either by government (as in the education expenditure tracking surveys in Malawi, discussed in box 1.1) or by civil society (as in the monitoring of public transfers to the District Assembly Common Fund in Ghana)—are examples of expenditure-related social accountability practices that can be applied at the national level to monitor the flow of financial (or physical) resources and identify leakages or bottlenecks in the system.

These approaches often involve the comparison of information from disbursement records of central ministries, accounts of line agencies or decentralized government structures, and independent enquiries (using tools such as social audits, for example). Public sector entities or CSOs subsequently disseminate the information through books, the news media, and public meetings. If these approaches uncover mismanagement or misuse of funds, then calls for corrective measures and sanctions may also be made in the public arena to create popular pressure and momentum for action.

Box 1.1 Civil Society Organization Conducts Education Expenditure Tracking Surveys in Malawi

The Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (CSCQBE), created in 2000, consists of 67 civil society groups in Malawi, including nongovernmental organizations, community organizations, teachers’ unions, religious organizations, and district networks. In response to suspicions of government corruption and mismanagement in the education sector, CSCQBE aims to prevent such corruption by closely monitoring government budgets and spending. It also seeks to enhance public understanding of education and budget policies and the need for accountability.

Through its network, CSCQBE has established 13 district networks to decentralize the monitoring of education budgets, and it provides these networks with technical assistance. Using Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS), the organization tracks the flow of resources through various levels of government to the end users to identify leakages.

CSCQBE has used PETS three times between 2002 and 2007, gathering information from teachers, students, and public sector agencies and employees in the education sector around the country. It holds public meetings to unveil findings to ministry officials, parliamentarians, development partners, and the media during the annual parliamentary budget deliberation. It then holds district meetings during which district assembly officials, district education officials, nongovernmental organizations, and school officials can discuss the results and, if necessary, formulate action plans.

Source: Ramkumar 2008.
Social Accountability and Public Service Delivery

Another social accountability category seeks accountability with regard to the relevance, accessibility, and quality of public goods and services. Typically, these practices involve citizen participation in the monitoring and evaluation of service delivery, often according to indicators that citizens have selected.

At the national level, methods such as public hearings or public opinion polls (for example, Service Delivery Satisfaction Surveys in Malawi) solicit citizen feedback that can be disseminated and presented to government officials to promote accountability and lobby for change (for example, see box 1.2). At the local level, both service providers and CSOs use a variety of participatory tools to help citizens monitor, evaluate, and seek accountability for effective public service delivery. Community scorecards in Malawi, for example, allow both service providers and users to independently evaluate public services and then come together at interface meetings to share their findings, discuss problems,

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**Box 1.2 Citizen Report Card “Roadshows” in Kenya**

In Kenya, the Public Affairs Foundation and the Water and Sanitation Program-Africa used creative methods to strengthen consumers’ voice in the water and sanitation sector, aiming to better understand issues that affect the poor and, ultimately, to improve service delivery.

To build awareness of the Citizen Report Card (CRC) as a social accountability tool, the team employed an innovative approach of “Report Card Roadshows,” a five-day event involving both individual consultations with stakeholders and multistakeholder workshops. The Roadshow events created better awareness and understanding of the CRC concept and methodology while also creating the space for public dialogue and deliberation on the merits of the tool and its contextual fit.

A broad alliance of diverse partners involved in providing water supply and sanitation services had participated in public dialogues before the launch of the CRC. A slogan was even created in Kiswahili that means “Water and sanitation? Come all, let’s discuss and agree,” which was used on all promotional materials. The implementing agencies worked closely with the media to cover the process and to disseminate findings. CRC findings were discussed on television, radio, and in print media. As a result, senior policy makers made public commitments to address the problems identified.

and seek solutions. In Tanzania, the Ilala Municipal Council uses citizen surveys, elected service management boards, and local-level monitoring committees to enhance the quality and accountability of public services.

Early experience has shown that each of these methods has the potential to produce significant operational results (for example, improved performance and introduction of corrective measures) as well as process outcomes (for example, institutional, behavioral, and relational changes).

WHY SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IS IMPORTANT IN AFRICA

Progress in governance, development, and citizen empowerment is crucial to societies and citizens around the world. Africa, however, is arguably the region where governance failures, underdevelopment, and disempowerment are most pronounced, where the need for enhanced social accountability is most pressing, and where the potential benefits of social accountability are greatest. Exacerbating these needs is the move toward more decentralized governance, which has yielded few clear signs that public service delivery and local economic development have been enhanced. Consequently, social accountability may be a crucial missing component of many decentralization programs.

Experience shows that social accountability practices, such as those described in this book can make important contributions toward improved governance, enhanced development, and citizen empowerment (figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 Key Benefits of Social Accountability

- Social accountability
  - Improved governance
  - Enhanced development
  - Citizen empowerment

Source: Authors.
Improved Governance

Governance, broadly defined, is the means by which the state acquires and exercises authority to provide for citizens. The outputs of governance processes and systems, at their most basic, are at the core of what affects citizens on a daily basis—roads being built and repaired, health services being delivered properly, and public school teachers getting the supplies they need. Although governance systems vary greatly, they all tend to have three parts: how governments make things happen, how institutions hold government accountable through checks and balances, and how citizens are actively engaged in the governance process. The objectives of social accountability summarized below, if achieved, can improve these crucial elements of good governance and lead to improved development outcomes.

Strengthened democracy. Although most African countries have made a formal transition to democracy (through regular multiparty elections), these incipient democratic structures are often weak or dysfunctional. Many African countries, sometimes referred to as “hybrid regimes,” combine formal democratic systems with authoritarian features and are characterized by highly concentrated political power, flawed election processes, and inconsistent application of the rule of law.

Even those emerging democracies that have freed themselves from authoritarian rule often suffer from weak democratic institutions, lack of transparency, traditions of top-down political control and decision making, and shallow citizen participation. As the case studies show, social accountability practices can make an important contribution to overcoming these democratic deficits. By enhancing the capacity and opportunities of ordinary citizens (not just elite groups) to have information and knowledge about public affairs, voice their needs, monitor government actions, engage public actors, and demand accountability, the social accountability approaches presented in this book have been made operational and deepened democracy.

Enhanced accountability. Unfortunately, many African regimes are currently characterized by extremely weak accountability. The democratic deficits described above, combined with capacity and resource constraints, often limit the effectiveness of conventional internal mechanisms of accountability. For example, political and legal mechanisms of
accountability are frequently compromised by executive dominance over the legislative and judicial branches of government and independent control agencies (such as anticorruption commissions or ombudsmen) and often lack genuine powers of sanction. Fiscal and administrative accountability mechanisms often suffer from weak management and auditing systems, low compliance with established rules and procedures, and human and financial capacity constraints.

Under such circumstances, social accountability approaches can improve accountability, both by complementing conventional practices (for example, through citizen-led audit or expenditure tracking exercises, as in Malawi and Ghana) and by reinforcing existing mechanisms (for example, when CSOs collaborate with parliamentarians to enhance their capacities of representation, analysis, and oversight, as in Malawi and Zimbabwe).

**Reduced corruption.** Corruption at all levels of government plagues many African nations. Despite governments’ stated commitment to fight corruption and implement transparency and anticorruption initiatives, important problems persist: abuse of powers, patronage, mismanagement, and embezzlement of public resources. Almost all of the case studies presented in this book cite government corruption or mismanagement as driving forces behind their initiatives.

Social accountability approaches are potentially powerful tools against public sector corruption. They can serve both to detect and to prevent corruption—for example, by enhancing public transparency and oversight (as in the NEITI and PWYP campaign in Nigeria) and by exposing leakages (as through the education expenditure tracking surveys in Malawi).

A common challenge faced by social accountability initiatives is the failure to prosecute wrongdoers once evidence of corruption has been revealed. Here, the public nature of social accountability initiatives is extremely important, in that these initiatives can both create informal sanctions (in the form of public shaming) and increase the chances of applying formal sanctions (through public pressure and sustained public monitoring).

**Greater government legitimacy and credibility.** Many governments around the world currently suffer a lack of legitimacy. Citizens cite a lack of responsiveness on the part of government, corruption, and weak accountability as the main sources of their disillusionment. Conversely,
citizens’ trust in government grows when they feel they have a say in government decisions and an eye on government activities, and when government listens and responds to their concerns. Social accountability mechanisms, therefore, play an important potential role in enhancing government credibility and legitimacy. As the Senegal and Tanzania case studies show, enhanced accountability and legitimacy can translate into greater popularity and increased public support for both government actors and programs, including tax increases.

**Improved citizen-state relations.** Some government officials perceive citizen or civil society demands for accountability as threatening. Indeed, most social accountability approaches must overcome some initial resistance or reluctance and will frequently involve some level of critical or contentious engagement. It is striking, therefore, that social accountability approaches frequently result in stronger and more positive and productive relationships between citizens and the state.

Almost all the case studies in this volume cite improved relations and greater mutual trust and appreciation between citizens, or CSOs, and government counterparts as a result of social accountability intervention. In many cases, the fact that social accountability approaches open up channels of communication and put citizens and CSOs in direct contact with state actors (sometimes for the first time) is enough to help overcome initial mutual distrust, lack of information, and misunderstanding. In Tanzania, for example, citizens immediately became less critical and more understanding of local government officials when they were accurately informed about the limited resources available to the municipality and how those resources were used.

New and emerging social accountability practices significantly enhance citizens’ ability to move beyond mere protest or opposition and toward engagement with bureaucrats and politicians in a more informed, organized, constructive, and systematic manner, thus building more productive relations and increasing the chances of effecting positive change. In several case study countries—including Benin, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe—civil society representatives report having earned greater recognition and respect from state actors as a result of their social accountability activities. In fact, in Zimbabwe, despite significant tensions between government and CSOs, the government (parliament and relevant ministries) has come to welcome and even rely on CSOs’ analyses of policy and budgetary impacts on women and children.
**Political stability and peace.** Finally, enhanced social accountability can ultimately contribute to political stability and peace. The risk of political instability clearly increases when citizens distrust government, perceive government as corrupt or unresponsive, or cannot get the basic services they need. Actions such as public protests and popular uprisings result when channels for more constructive dialogue and negotiation are lacking. Social accountability mechanisms create opportunities for informed, constructive dialogue and negotiation between citizens and government and the identification of mutually agreed-upon solutions, thus contributing to better and more stable government over time. Government stability is a critically important, long-term benefit of enhanced social accountability, especially in those African states emerging from or threatened by civil conflict or unrest.

**Enhanced Development**

In addition to important governance benefits, social accountability mechanisms have led to concrete improvements in government policies, programs, services, and development. By enhancing citizens’ information and voice, introducing incentives for downward accountability, and creating mechanisms for participatory monitoring and citizen-state dialogue and negotiation, social accountability mechanisms can contribute to better policy, program design, more development resources, more equitable and efficient public spending, and greater and more sustainable development outcomes.

**Better-designed policies, budgets, and plans.** In many countries in Africa and around the world, government policies, budgets, and plans have traditionally been designed away from public view. Bureaucrats and teams of experts have led these processes and provided little opportunity for input from ordinary citizens or community members. Therefore, government policies, budgets, and plans can fail to reflect societal priorities and local context or overlook the needs of various societal groups, especially traditionally marginalized groups such as women, youth, and people with disabilities.

Some of the case studies in this book (Senegal and Tanzania, for example) demonstrate how citizen participation can contribute to better-designed, more effective policies, budgets, and plans that are more responsive to citizen preferences and better adapted to their needs.
Participatory processes of policy making, budget formulation, and planning also enhance citizen knowledge of and interest in these key public decisions, increasing the opportunities for subsequent engagement and monitoring and improving the chances of compliance and uptake.

**Increased resources.** Enhanced social accountability can also lead to increased government resources for development, both from international donors (who increasingly request or require enhanced accountability mechanisms) and from tax-paying citizens. In both Senegal and Tanzania, for example, local government officials saw the payment of municipal taxes significantly increase once citizens understood how these resources were being used and were confident that they could hold local authorities accountable. In Tanzania, the municipality of Ilala also saw private sector contributions increase after it introduced participatory and social accountability-oriented processes.

**More equitable public spending and services.** Because of problems of elitism, patronage, and social and political exclusion, citizens who are in greatest need (relatively poorer and less powerful groups) have often benefited the least from public spending and services. The *2004 World Development Report: Making Services Work for Poor People*, argues that much of the solution to these inequities lies in strengthening relationships of accountability between policy makers, service providers, and citizens (World Bank 2003). This is exactly what social accountability approaches seek to do.

A key benefit of many social accountability initiatives, including several of the examples cited in this book, is to increase equity in public spending and services. Virtually all the case studies in this book emphasize equity issues, with the enhanced well-being of disadvantaged and disempowered groups as the initiatives’ core objective. Applied budget work in Zimbabwe, for example, has led to increased budgets for programs and services that directly benefit women and children. In Ilala, Tanzania, participatory planning and budgeting has improved equity of services through more targeted spending on services for the poor and enhanced information and access for the poor.

**Greater efficiency, less waste.** An important obstacle to development in Africa has been the inefficient or wasteful use of limited development
resources. The important role that social accountability practices can play in fighting corruption and checking leakages of public funds has already been discussed. Another important advantage of social accountability approaches is their potential to promote more efficient and effective public spending and service delivery.

In Ghana, for example, participatory expenditure tracking helped to identify bottlenecks in the system and analyze the reasons for serious and costly delays in the transfer of funds to local government authorities. In Ilala, Tanzania, local government officials say that community-led procurement has ensured greater monetary value in working with local contractors. Locally elected management committees and community monitoring teams have also led to more efficient public spending and less waste. In countries such as Malawi, citizen and community evaluations of public services (through user satisfaction surveys and community scorecards, for example) have provided feedback on problems and shortcomings and proposed collective solutions for enhanced service delivery.

**Better development results.** Social accountability approaches have shown strong potential to contribute to greater and more sustainable development. Among the examples highlighted in this book (which are, for the most part, more recent and modest in scope than initiatives in countries like Brazil), only a few initiatives can claim to have achieved concrete improvements in citizens’ well-being and quality of life. The Ilala Municipal Council in Tanzania, however, reports a significant increase in the number of municipal-level development projects and employment opportunities as a direct result of its participatory planning and budgeting strategies. Other case studies report more intermediate-level results for now—including improved development processes and enhanced institutional capacities—and predict that sustained effort will bring more medium- to long-term development impacts.

**Citizen Empowerment**

People everywhere want to be treated fairly and have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. Many citizens across Africa, especially those from disadvantaged groups, have felt incapable of engaging public actors, unable to influence public decisions or demand fair treatment, and powerless to improve their own lives. Social accountability approaches are
based upon empowering ordinary citizens—in particular, disadvantaged citizens with the least voice and influence—to know and exercise their rights, obtain information and knowledge, make their voices heard, negotiate change, and hold public power holders to account. These aspects of empowerment and the promotion of citizen rights are a final and crucially important potential benefit of social accountability approaches.

**Greater awareness of citizen rights.** A crucial component of empowerment is raising awareness of citizen and human rights among citizens (rights claimers) and public power holders (duty bearers). In most African countries, the law protects basic human and citizen rights such as freedom of information, expression, association, and assembly.

Many citizens, however, remain unaware of their rights and, all too frequently, these rights are violated despite legal guarantees. Social accountability is based on notions of citizen rights, and the starting point of many social accountability initiatives is to raise awareness of these rights and advocate for their protection both in law and in practice. Almost all of the examples in this book adopt a rights-based approach to advocacy and development, and many of them cite greater rights awareness as an important outcome of their social accountability initiative. Citizens who know their rights and their corresponding responsibilities are more likely and better placed to engage with public actors and to demand accountability and good governance. Democracy requires active and empowered citizenship, and rights awareness is an important first step.

**More information.** Information is power. Citizens have frequently lacked the information they need to demand good governance and social accountability. The ability to generate and gain access to relevant information—and thereby to build a credible evidence base for holding public officials to account—is critical to social accountability. For example, the NEITI and PWYP campaigns in Nigeria focus on making essential information about transfers of funds from oil companies to the government available to the public. Initiatives in Ghana and Malawi help ordinary citizens become better informed about the content of the national budget by simplifying and publicly disseminating essential budget information.
In fact, every social accountability initiative described in this book includes efforts to promote transparency and enhance public access to essential information about government resources, policies, commitments, laws and regulations, budgets, programs, actions, and results. Enhancing the quantity and quality of information in the public arena, and building the capacity of citizens to digest and use that information, constitute a core element of citizen empowerment and social accountability. While there has been some progress in legislating access to information on the continent, much work still needs to be done.3

**Stronger citizen voice.** Citizens have the right to speak up and be heard. Strengthening the citizen voice is another key element of empowerment and a central feature of most social accountability initiatives. The case studies presented in this book use a variety of strategies both to help citizens speak up and to help ensure that government actors listen and respond to these voices.

Almost all of the case studies include capacity-building activities that aim to give ordinary citizens—especially those with the weakest political voice such as women, children, and other traditionally marginalized groups—the confidence and capacity to voice their views, questions, concerns, and needs. Other important strategies include creating spaces for public debate and dialogue (as in the organization of public debates in Malawi); consolidating citizen voices (for example, through the formation of broad-based coalitions in Benin and opinion leader strategies in Nigeria); and amplifying citizen voices (for instance, through community radio in Senegal and CSO-media partnerships in Malawi).

A principal challenge, and important potential benefit, of social accountability initiatives is to help ensure that the voices of the poor and other marginal groups are not drowned out or dominated by more powerful interests.

**Enhanced agency and opportunity.** The degree to which a person or group is empowered is influenced by agency (the capacity to make purposeful choice) and opportunity structure (the institutional context in which choice is made) (Alsop and Heinsohn 2005). By providing critical information, building citizen capacity, and strengthening citizen voice, social accountability initiatives clearly contribute to increased agency.
An important characteristic of social accountability approaches is that they also aim to improve opportunity structures—for example, by

- Creating or expanding opportunities and mechanisms for citizen-state engagement, such as public budget consultations in Ghana, public debates in Malawi, and the development of an evaluation tool for service delivery in Colombia (see box 1.3)
- Clarifying and mutually agreeing to the terms of that engagement, such as through meaningful CSO involvement in PRS formulation processes in Benin
- Negotiating new institutional forms that allow citizens a more meaningful and influential role in governance processes, such as elected management committees and community monitoring teams in Tanzania

**Box 1.3 Bogotá Cómo Vamos: Citizen Evaluation of Public Services in Colombia**

Bogotá Cómo Vamos was created in 1997 to monitor political campaign promises and their impact on the quality of life in the city. A citizen-based social accountability initiative, Bogotá Cómo Vamos works closely with government, the private sector, and the media.

The evaluation tool that this initiative developed is based on a set of key indicators of outcomes, technical standards, and public perception. Information submitted by the district offices every six months informs the technical portion, whereas an annual opinion survey of 1,500 citizens of Bogotá informs the public perception portion. Results are presented in public forums, with the mass media playing a central role in the dissemination and deliberation of evaluation findings.

The project’s most significant contribution to ensuring accountability is the development of performance indicators that provide benchmarks for citizens to use as a basis for demanding accountability from city officials. It effectively improved the quality of reporting and shifted the focus from inputs and activities to impacts and outcomes.

Bogotá Cómo Vamos has demonstrated its effectiveness as a forum for public debate where strategic issues affecting the city can be examined and deliberated by broad segments of society. By raising the citizen voice and strengthening the accountability relationships between citizens and government officials, it hopes to further stimulate public debate, influence policy dialogue, and improve development outcomes for the people of Bogotá.

*Source: Sánchez 2003.*
Social accountability approaches, therefore, empower citizens through both enhanced agency and opportunity. Of particular importance is the potential of social accountability initiatives to empower those social groups that are systematically underrepresented in formal political institutions (such as women, youth, and poor people). Numerous social accountability tools—including women- and children-friendly budgeting processes in Zimbabwe and participatory monitoring and evaluation in Benin—are specifically designed to address issues of inequality and to ensure that less powerful societal groups also have the agency and opportunity to express and act upon their choices and to demand accountability.

CONCLUSION

This introductory chapter has sought to clarify the concept of social accountability and explain why enhanced social accountability is crucially important for Africa. It has also introduced some of the key characteristics and achievements of the social accountability initiatives highlighted in this book.

In the following chapters, readers are invited to gain a more in-depth understanding of how courageous and committed practitioners from both civil society and government are working to enhance social accountability in their own community, sector, or country. The case studies, based on hands-on experience, describe and analyze the challenges that African social accountability practitioners face and the strategies they use to overcome challenges and constraints. The case studies also describe how social accountability initiatives are helping to achieve critical governance, development, and empowerment goals from the national to the local level and are making a difference in the daily lives of communities and individuals.

Readers are welcome to review all of the case studies—each of which offers unique findings and lessons—or to focus on select case studies based on specific country or sector interest. Table 1.A.1 summarizes the key characteristics of each case study to guide readers in their choices.
## ANNEX

### Table 1.A.1 Case Study Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Organizations involved</th>
<th>Social accountability tools</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>Social Watch Benin</td>
<td>• Participatory formulation of PRS (Poverty Reduction Strategy)</td>
<td>• Raising resources</td>
<td>• Enhanced CSO capacity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Independent monitoring of PRS and MDG (Millennium Development Goal) implementation</td>
<td>• Mobilizing grassroots organizations</td>
<td>• Increased support for community action</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Independent monitoring of communal development plans</td>
<td>• Ensuring credibility and accountability within civil society</td>
<td>• Improved relations with the media</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Increasing inclusiveness</td>
<td>• Had informal impact on budget allocations</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Improved civil society credibility</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Impact on formulation and monitoring of development policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>African Development Programme</td>
<td>• Public revenue and taxation analysis</td>
<td>• Mobilizing grassroots organizations</td>
<td>• Increased citizen interest in use of public funds and independent budget analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrated Social Development Centre</td>
<td>• Independent budget analysis</td>
<td>• Raising resources</td>
<td>• Increased government willingness to consult with and involve civil society in budget policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friends of the Nation</td>
<td>• Analysis of national budgeting process</td>
<td>• Ensuring credibility and accountability within civil society</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muslim Relief Association of Ghana</td>
<td>• Budget literacy and capacity building</td>
<td>• Institutionalization</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Organizations involved</th>
<th>Social accountability tools</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>Malawi Economic Justice Network</td>
<td>• Policy advocacy</td>
<td>• Building capacities and skills for social accountability</td>
<td>• Enhanced status of civil society and increased government willingness to engage with civil society</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Independent budget analysis</td>
<td>• Raising resources</td>
<td>• Scaling up of CSO budget monitoring</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Budget literacy and capacity building</td>
<td>• Mobilizing grassroots organizations</td>
<td>• Increased public interest in, access to, and awareness of public budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Budget advocacy</td>
<td>• Ensuring credibility and accountability within civil society</td>
<td>• Enhanced local capacity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Participatory expenditure tracking surveys</td>
<td>• Building trust</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Citizen evaluation of public services</td>
<td>• Establishing effective interface mechanisms</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Community scorecards</td>
<td>• Increasing inclusiveness</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Achievements</td>
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</table>
| Nigeria | NEITI (Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative) | • Public revenue reporting  
• Building capacities and skills for social accountability  
• Mobilizing grassroots organizations  
• Signing of enabling legislation for EITI |
| Nigeria | PWYP (Publish What You Pay) Nigeria | • Raising awareness of need for, and improved transparency and accountability in, extractive industries sector  
• Institutionalized NEITI |
| Senegal | IED Afrique | • Participatory rural communal planning  
• Raising resources  
• Improved understanding among traditionally excluded groups about local planning processes  
• Increased community capacity |
| Senegal | RECODEF (Fissel Community Group for Self-Development) | • Participatory tax collection  
• Participatory communal budgeting  
• Building capacities and skills for social accountability  
• Reducing low education and widespread illiteracy  
• Decreasing the high turnover of facilitators  
• Institutionalization: lack of political will, lack of citizen knowledge of rights and responsibilities  
• Raised the priority given women’s needs in budget allocation  
• Improved relationship between rural council and grassroots organizations  
• Scaling up of practice beginning across Senegal (organized forum for 30 rural communities) |

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<th>Country</th>
<th>Organizations involved</th>
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<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tanzania</strong></td>
<td>Ilala Municipal Council</td>
<td>• Participatory urban planning&lt;br&gt;• Participatory tax collection&lt;br&gt;• Participatory municipal budgeting&lt;br&gt;• Participatory monitoring and evaluation of local service delivery</td>
<td>• Urban setting challenges degree of participation&lt;br&gt;• Raising resources&lt;br&gt;• Building capacities and skills for social accountability&lt;br&gt;• Political conflict&lt;br&gt;• Increasing inclusiveness</td>
<td>• Increased budget effectiveness&lt;br&gt;• Increased community involvement in projects&lt;br&gt;• Enhanced sustainability of local development projects&lt;br&gt;• Increased community capacity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Institute of Regional Development Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Zimbabwe</strong></td>
<td>National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
<td>• Independent budget analysis&lt;br&gt;• Budget literacy and capacity building&lt;br&gt;• Assessment of budget impact on women and children&lt;br&gt;• Budget advocacy</td>
<td>• Building capacities and skills for social accountability&lt;br&gt;• Ensuring credibility and accountability within civil society&lt;br&gt;• Overcoming problems of patronage and partisanship&lt;br&gt;• Building trust&lt;br&gt;• Increasing inclusiveness&lt;br&gt;• Establishing effective interface mechanisms</td>
<td>• Increased transparency and accountability regarding budgeting processes and information&lt;br&gt;• Decentralized and democratized budget debates&lt;br&gt;• Increased budget allocations for women and children’s issues&lt;br&gt;• Enhanced local capacity: parliament, civil society, and citizens&lt;br&gt;• Made positive policy changes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Zimbabwe Women’s Resource Centre and Network</td>
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*Source: Authors.*
NOTES

1. The case study from Tanzania was prepared for another WBI-commissioned research project on participatory budgeting, and the Nigeria case study was identified directly by the research team and prepared specifically for this book.


3. Five Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries—the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, and South Africa—have the right to information expressly guaranteed within their constitutional frameworks. Nine other SADC countries have protected this right only within the context of the broader right of freedom of expression, which normally includes the right to “seek, receive, and impart information.” Those nine countries are Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. In addition, Zambia has an Access to Information Bill at an advanced stage (Mukelani 2009).

REFERENCES


