



*Bratislava Regional Centre
Oslo Governance Centre*

Accountability and Voice for Service Delivery at the Local Level

A background paper for the UNDP regional training event
Developing Capacities for Accountability and Voice

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Contents

List of Acronyms	1
1 Introduction	2
2 Accountability and voice	2
2.1 Why accountability and voice matter.....	2
2.2 Key A&V concepts	3
3 A framework for engaging in A&V in service delivery	5
4 Strengthening accountability and voice in practice.....	7
4.1 Creating preconditions for accountability and voice	9
4.1.1 Access to and dissemination of information.....	9
4.2 Mechanisms for enhancing service provider accountability to the state	10
4.2.1 Public expenditure tracking.....	10
4.2.2 Organisational performance management	10
4.3 Mechanisms for enhancing the accountability of service providers to	11
clients	11
4.3.1 Service oversight and management committees.....	11
4.3.2 Feedback mechanisms: citizen report cards.....	11
4.4 Mechanisms for enhancing state accountability to citizens	12
4.4.1 Participatory budgeting	12
4.4.2 Public oversight mechanisms.....	13
5 Developing Capacities for A&V.....	14
5.1 Capacity development at the Enabling environment for A&V	15
5.2 Capacity development of Organisations for A&V	15
5.3 Capacity development of Individuals for A&V	16
6 Case study: Democratising Ukraine.....	17
7 Challenges and entry points for A&V.....	20
7.1 Challenges	21
7.2 Entry points	22
References	24

List of Acronyms

A&V	Accountability and Voice
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CRC	Citizen Report Card
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVU	Committee of Voters of Ukraine
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DU	Democratising Ukraine
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
NGO	Non-Government Agency
NHRI	National Human Rights Organisation
PETS	Public Expenditure Tracking Survey
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTC	Parent Teacher Council
UCIPR	Ukrainian Centre for Independent Political Research
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

1 Introduction

Making service providers and public agencies more accountable and responsive to citizens can promote democratic governance, inclusive growth and human development. This paper explores some of the latest thinking on accountability and voice (A&V) and examines some of the ways in which A&V mechanisms can be employed at a local level to improve service delivery. Specifically, it addresses the following central question:

How can one increase the responsiveness of local government authorities and service providers to the concerns of the poor and how can poor people and their advocates (e.g. CSO and NGOS) hold them accountable to the commitment to reduce poverty?

The paper has been developed as background reading for participants at the UNDP training on *Developing Capacities for Accountability and Voice for the Europe and CIS region*. The target audience is therefore UNDP staff based in the region's Country Offices. The focus of the paper, as well as that of the training itself, is practical; it is linked to specific strategies for strengthening UNDP's work in capacity development for enhancing accountability and voice.

The paper first provides an overview of the key A&V concepts and a framework for enhancing accountability and promoting voice in local service delivery (sections 2 and 3). In section 4, the paper explores what can be done in practice to strengthen accountability and voice. Specific mechanisms for strengthening A&V in policy making, planning, budgeting and the front-line delivery of services are explored and illustrated with case studies from European and CIS countries. In the fifth section, the paper examines which specific capacities need to be developed to enhance accountability and voice in practice. The paper then explores an accountability and voice programme in Ukraine in some depth to illustrate the ways in which a range of A&V mechanisms have been flexibly applied in practice to strengthen accountability and citizen voice in service delivery. The final section of the paper highlights some of the key challenges and entry points for strengthening accountability and voice in the Europe and CIS region.

2 Accountability and voice

What is meant by accountability and voice? Why does capacity development for A&V matter for achieving broader development outcomes such as enhanced human development, poverty reduction, and democratic governance, particularly in Europe and the CIS region?

2.1 Why accountability and voice matter

In parts of the Europe and CIS region, the level of responsiveness of governments and service providers to the rights and needs of poor people is low. Poor people

are often excluded from participation in the design and oversight of the policies and programmes that affect their lives.

All countries in this region share a common history of top-down authoritarian governance. Under communism, the state and state enterprises played the primary role in service provision. Services were delivered in a centralised, top-down fashion, with little scope for citizens input or influence. Space for independent citizen mobilisation and expression of voice was deeply constrained.

In the past two decades, however, these countries have undergone profound governance transformations. Most have become progressively more democratic and have made the transition to free market economies. Twelve have become members of the European Union. However, two formidable governance challenges remain across the region. The first is the **weak political will** and interest in further reform, reflecting inadequate efforts to promote inclusive citizenship and to empower the poor. The second challenge is the **insufficient national and sub-national government capacity** to implement reforms, deliver public services, and to be responsive and accountable to the needs of citizens for the management of public resources. Across the region, the inability to adequately address these challenges has resulted in weak legal and policy frameworks, high rates of corruption, lack of strategic approaches to decentralization, limited access to justice and growing threats to human rights.

Efforts to improve the accountability of government and service providers and to amplify the voice of citizens can play a significant role in addressing these two regional governance challenges.

Strengthening **accountability and voice in service delivery also fundamentally matters for poverty reduction and human development** in the Europe and CIS region. Powerlessness—including the inability of individuals to express their views or to have them heard—is integral to poverty and marginality. As a result, responsive governments and service providers and enhanced citizen voice can contribute directly to empowerment and poverty reduction (O'Neil, Foresti et al. 2007). From a human rights perspective, improved accountability and voice reinforces the ability of rights holders to claim their rights. Equally, it increases the likelihood that duty bearers meet their obligations.

A&V can also contribute indirectly to poverty reduction. More accountable systems of governance and service provision tend to be more efficient and effective. If services are demand driven—they are shaped by local needs, preferences and priorities—they are more likely to meet the needs of clients and citizens.

2.2 Key A&V concepts

From a human rights perspective, **accountability** is best understood as the character of the relationship between two sets of actors: rights holders and duty bearers. An accountable relationship is one in which duty bearers (leaders, government departments, administrators and service providers) are obliged to

account for and take responsibility for their actions. While rights holders (citizens or clients) are able to hold these duty bearers to account.

Accountability therefore **requires both answerability and enforceability**. To be accountable, politicians, civil servants and service providers must be answerable for their actions; they must explain or justify what they do and why they do it. It must also be possible to **sanction or reward decision makers** for their performance (enforcement).

Voice is the capacity to express views and priorities, and to demand their rights and entitlements. Voice can be exercised through the participation of citizens and clients in decision-making process, service delivery or policy implementation processes. It can also be exercised through lobbying, protests or complaints.

In a democratic governance context, an accountable relationship is one in which voice is met by responsiveness. Citizens must not only have voice, the state and service providers must be receptive to their views and be willing and able to modify their actions accordingly. Amplifying citizen or client voice can often stimulate greater accountability. However, voice is not sufficient, in and of itself, to ensure accountability. Without responsive and capable governments and service providers, voice can go unheard or have limited impact on decision-making or service provision.

Accountability can be vertical, horizontal or both. It can also be upward, downward or outward. Box 1 defines these different forms of accountability. Horizontal *and* vertical accountability are central to creating an accountable government, responsive services and an empowered citizenry. **The focus of this paper however, is on social or hybrid accountability**, which relies on civic engagement to build state and service provider accountability.

Box 1 Aspects of accountability

Accountability can be horizontal, vertical or a hybrid of the two.

Horizontal accountability is embodied in the checks and balances internal to a state. It is carried out by state institutions and agencies, which are designed to oversee and sanction other state institutions. These institutions might include the judiciary, parliament, anti-corruption and human rights commissions, and ombudsmen.

Vertical accountability is embodied in mechanisms used by citizens and other non-state actors to hold their representatives to account. Elections are the most obvious form of vertical accountability. Other forms include direct civic engagement, lobbying and mass mobilisation.

Social or hybrid accountability relies on civic engagement to build accountability. Social accountability mechanisms enable citizens, civil society organisations and communities to hold government officials and service providers accountable. Examples of social accountability mechanisms include: participatory planning and budgeting, public expenditure tracking, citizen monitoring of service delivery, lobbying and advocacy campaigns.

Accountability can be upward, downward or outward.

Administrators or service providers who are **upwardly** accountable are answerable to higher-level authorities (e.g. local administrators who are answerable to line ministries).

Downward accountability, on the other hand, entails accountability of higher level authorities to lower levels of authority, including the accountability of elected officials and

administrators to citizens. Often the chain of accountability is upward, not downward with officials answerable only to their higher ups, not to those they are supposed to serve.

Outward accountability occurs when domestic actors including governments are answerable to external donors or development actors. In some contexts (e.g. Kosovo) there appears to be a strong drive toward external rather than internal accountability.

(Sources: World Bank 2008; (Goetz and Gaventa 2001); (O'Neil, Foresti et al. 2007); DFID 2008)

3 A framework for engaging in A&V in service delivery

The accountability relationships between government, service providers and citizens are complex. The 2004 World Development Report, *Making Services Work for the Poor*, provides an insightful framework for exploring this complexity. It also provides a way to assess A&V mechanisms and the types of capacity development that are appropriate for enhancing accountability and voice in different contexts.

The framework highlights three key sets of actors in the delivery of services:

1. **Citizens/clients:** individuals and households are simultaneously citizens and clients of services (e.g. healthcare, education, electricity).
2. **Politicians/policymakers:** Politicians are elected or unelected officials who regulate, legislate and tax, while policy makers implement and enforce these 'rules of the game'.
3. **Providers** can include public line ministries, departments, agencies or bureaus; autonomous public enterprises; non-profits (e.g. religious schools); or for-profit organisations (e.g. bus companies, private hospitals). Frontline providers are those who come into direct contact with clients (e.g. teachers, doctors, police, engineers).

'In an *ideal* situation, these actors are **linked in relationships of power and accountability**' (The World Bank 2003).

- Politicians regulate, legislate and tax while the policymakers (civil servants) implement the rules. Both politicians and policymakers are subject to horizontal accountability (judicial review, parliamentary scrutiny etc.). Policymakers have **compacts** with organisational providers; they set and enforce the rules of the game for the provision of services. Organizations **manage** frontline providers who ensure that goods and services are delivered.
- Citizens exercise **voice** vis-à-vis politicians through a '**long route of accountability**'. They use elections, lobbying, information campaigns and other forms of social accountability to monitor and sanction elected leaders. Citizens do so individually or through organised groups, coalitions and civil society (e.g. NGOs, labour unions, business associations).
- Finally, clients exercise **client power** with frontline providers through a '**short route of accountability**'. In this situation, providers are held to account for

their actions by their clients (the individuals and communities) to whom they are supposed to provide a service. Client power is most obvious in situations where individuals can 'exit'—they can choose a different service provider. In practice, however, there is often little choice available. In these circumstances, clients must look to voice mechanisms to influence providers including community monitoring and user groups.

These A&V relationships are illustrated in figure 1.

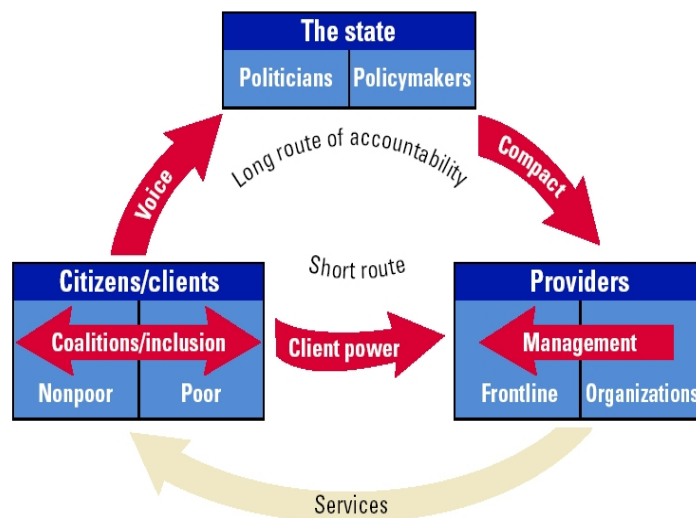
The fairness, efficiency and effectiveness of **service delivery is enhanced when both the long and short route of accountability are employed**; when politicians and policymakers are accountable to citizens *and* service providers are accountable to both clients and policy makers.

In much of the Europe and CIS region, however, **both types of accountability relationships are often weak or unbalanced**. Clients, especially poorer ones, often have little power over their service providers. Poorer people often face higher

transaction costs in exercising their voice, even when direct channels are created to facilitate feedback to service providers. They are often unable to access enough information to monitor the performance of providers and have little ability to sanction them for misdeeds or underperformance. The long route of accountability is also often fraught. Elections are an imperfect and infrequent method for sanctioning politicians over specific issues or shortcomings. Citizen voice is often constrained; people often lack fundamental information about policies, budgets and performance and their ability to organise may be restricted. Moreover, in parts of the Europe and CIS region, there are significant numbers of refugees, internally displaced people and socially excluded groups such as Roma, for whom the basic rights of citizenship may be denied.

Even if citizens are articulate and organised, politicians and policymakers may not be responsive to these demands. In many contexts, political relations are shaped more by **clientelism** than by issues-based politics or *de jure* political structures and processes. In clientelist systems, politicians use budget allocations and their regulatory authority to reward supporters and sanction detractors. For instance, in a clientelist political system a minister might channel more resources and services to municipalities run by their political allies than to municipalities run by the opposition. In this context, formal accountability mechanisms may exist,

Fig. 1 Key power relationships in service delivery
(source: World Bank 2003)



but are often captured or sidelined and politicians and policymakers are only accountable to elites or special interests.

There are circumstances where the accountability relationship between the state and service providers is also weak. The state often lacks the capacity and information to oversee and enforce its compact with service providers. In many cases, policy makers have not established standards for service provision. They also often lack fundamental information about the performance of service providers with which to adequately manage them or the capacity to sanction underperformance.

In the face of these constraints, social accountability offers considerable scope improving the responsiveness and accountability of service providers. Social accountability mechanisms acknowledge constraints on the agency of individuals, especially the most disadvantaged. By focusing on collective action, social accountability is premised on action by groups with shared needs and interests, which may render responsiveness by public officials more likely. Furthermore, social accountability mechanisms also work in the period between elections, enabling groups to monitor services and make demands vis-à-vis providers on an ongoing basis (Joshi 2008).

As will be highlighted in the next two sections, a key challenge for UNDP is to find ways to develop the capacities to strengthen these routes to accountability in different and often difficult governance environments.

4 Strengthening accountability and voice in practice

In recent years, UNDP and other development partners have increasingly invested in programmes and projects to amplify voice and strengthen social accountability in service delivery. From UNDP's perspective, the accountability agenda is central to the Human Rights Based Approach to programming. Support to capacity development of duty bearers and rights holders (including the civil society organisations that represent them) strengthens accountability and voice mechanisms; it empowers citizens to claim their rights and capacitates public officials to meet their obligations.

There is a growing number of 'A&V mechanisms'. To understand which of these accountability and voice mechanisms are appropriate for a specific context it is important to ask:

- **Accountability for what?** What is the purpose of enhancing accountability? (e.g. to improve the responsiveness of service providers? To ensure that policy makers include the needs of poorer citizens in their policies, plans or budgets?).
- **Accountability of whom?** Who are you trying to hold to account (politicians, policy makers, service providers)? and
- **Accountability to whom?** Who is holding decision makers and providers to account (citizens, clients, politicians, policy makers).

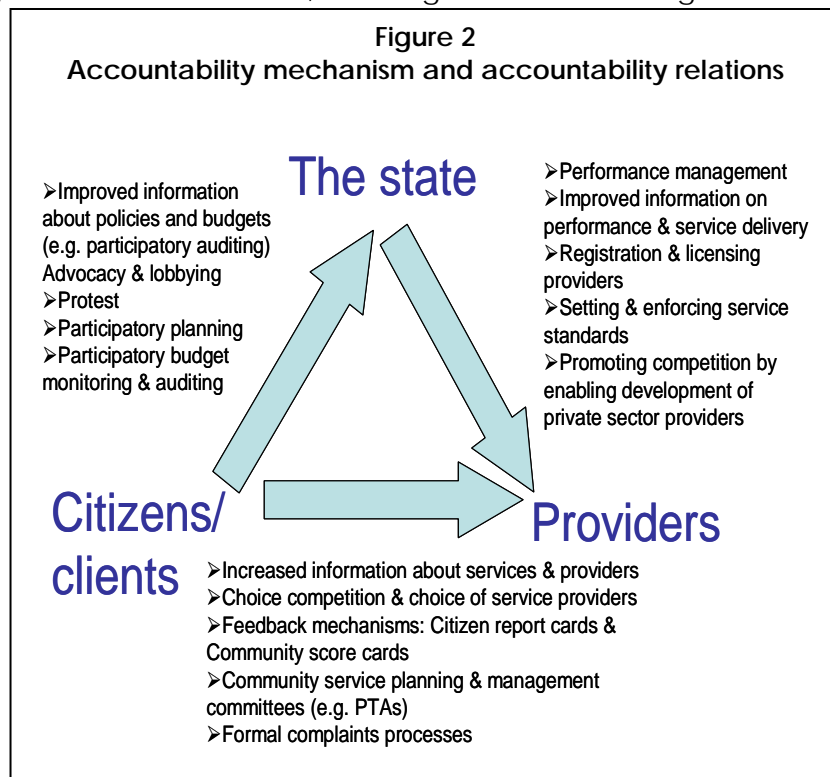
The framework presented in section 3 above helps us to begin to address these questions. It identifies three sets of relationships that matter for improving accountability for service provision: the relationships between the state and service providers, between citizens and the state and between clients and service providers.

As figure 2 illustrates, different actors can draw on different tools and mechanisms to strengthen the accountability of other actors in this framework. Citizens, for instance, might improve the accountability of service providers by accessing more and better quality information about the quality of services. They might utilise feedback mechanisms such as citizen report cards (section 4.3.2 below) to comment on the performance of service providers. Citizens can also create user groups and community planning and management committees such as parent teachers associations (section 4.3.1 below) to engage directly in the planning and monitoring of services.

Higher level state administrators can use a range of mechanisms to improve the accountability of providers including: performance management systems, setting and enforcing standards of services, ensuring better monitoring and evaluation of

frontline service organisations, and promoting competition between service providers (where appropriate).

Some of these mechanisms for strengthening accountability and voice for local service delivery are outlined in the next section below. Each mechanism is briefly described and most are illustrated by a relevant example.¹



¹ For a broader range of tools and more details on those covered here see UNDP 2008c; World Bank 2002 and 2003; Goetz, A. M. and J. Gaventa (2001). Bringing citizen voice and client focus into service delivery. Brighton, IDS.

4.1 Creating preconditions for accountability and voice

4.1.1 Access to and dissemination of information

Information can be empowering. Access to information about individual and organisational performance can enhance the ability of citizens to hold service providers and politicians to account. Timely access to information can strengthen the voice of citizens and non-government actors in planning and budgeting processes as well as the monitoring of service delivery.

Legislative measures (e.g. Freedom of Information Acts), can strengthen the enabling environment for A&V by reinforcing the rights of citizens to access to information and the duties of government to provide it (see Box 2). The effectiveness of these reforms, however, depends on their implementation. For these rights to be claimed, civil servants must be made aware of their obligations and must have well-organized information management system and procedures. Effective redress machinery such as an ombudsman must also be in place for citizens to stake claims on information (see 4.4.2).

On the demand side, civic education, information campaigns and other awareness raising activities can improve citizens' awareness and knowledge of their rights and entitlements. Building public awareness of the right to information can enhance citizens' willingness and ability to take advantage of opportunities and make claims on services providers.

Free, independent and professionalised print, electronic and broadcast media can play a key role in disseminating information, raising awareness and giving voice to those who might not otherwise have an outlet.

The effectiveness of different methods for disseminating information is context dependent. In some settings conventional approaches such as media campaigns and billboards may be effective. In other contexts more direct and social methods of communication including road shows and working through customary leaders and social networks may be more effective. For instance, messages about human rights or access to services to much of the Roma community may be more effectively disseminated through Bulgaria's Roma 'king' than through conventional media.

Box 2: Freedom of Information Act, Romania

Following a civil society campaign, the Romanian government with the agreement passed the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in 2001. Under the FOIA, all public agencies are required to set up public relations/information offices and to provide program budgets, policy decisions, internal regulations, and procurement and contracting records to citizens and the media. The FOIA requires a 24-hour turnover of information requested by the media and a 30-day turnover for citizen requests. Denial of requests can be appealed through the bureaucratic hierarchy or through the Administrative Court.

In practice, the FOIA has been well publicised and government capacity has grown to implement its provisions. A 2006 survey of 500 public institutions found that almost all county seats in Romania have a civil servant responsible for implementing the law and responding to public requests for information. Since 2002, the number of request for information has grown dramatically. However, the ability and willingness of officials to respond to request varies as does the quality of the response received. (Romanian Academic Society 2006)

4.2 Mechanisms for enhancing service provider accountability to the state

4.2.1 Public expenditure tracking

Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS) help to track budget flows from higher to lower tiers of government to determine whether the funds actually reach service providers (e.g. schools or clinics) (The World Bank 2003). In conjunction with participatory budgeting process (below 4.4.1), PETS can improve the quality, appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness of service provision. PETS boost accountability by identifying bottlenecks and leakages in the public financial management systems at different levels. They can highlight abuses of public funds and capture of public services. They also provide information that can be used by government at all levels to improve performance of service providers. If the results are well-publicised, PETS can also provide interested groups with a concrete platform to exercise 'voice' to call for improvements local level services.

4.2.2 Organisational performance management

As highlighted above, the relationship between policy makers and service providers should ideally be a compact in which policy makers are able to oversee the delivery of services at a distance. Performance management is a strategy through which this compact can be strengthened and accountability enhanced. Sometimes referred to as 'governing for results', performance management is 'a system of regularly measuring the results (outcomes) of public sector programs, organizations, or individuals, and using this information to increase efficiency in service delivery' (Hatry, Mark et al. 2007).

Performance management requires that results are made explicit and measureable. It also entails a focus on outcomes (actual results) not outputs (the quantity of the services provided or the activities carried out). To govern for results, policy makers and administrators need the information with which to evaluate, reward and sanction service providers. A range of performance measurement tools including the mechanisms outlined here (e.g PETS and citizen report cards) can help provide this information.

If carried through, performance management can help local governments set priorities and oversee the provision of more flexible and appropriate services. It can also improve channels of upward and downward accountability, as both administrators and clients have greater access to information about the performance of service providers.

Box 3: Challenges faced in performance measurement and management in the Balkans

Performance measurement and management programmes have been developed in Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Albania. A survey of these efforts, highlights both the promise of what performance management might deliver, but also the significant challenges it has faced in practice. The survey highlights a range of challenges impeding more effective performance management including: enforcement and widespread corruption, lack of awareness of the

processes and potential benefits of performance measurement, the politicisation of the civil service, and lack of adequate financing (Sevic 2003).

In 2005 a new Civil Service Law was adopted in Serbia. This law and the 2006 bylaw on Performance Assessment introduced performance management systems into the Serbian civil service and explicitly linked promotions and financial bonuses to on the job performance. The effectiveness of these reforms, however, is difficult to measure since the first promotions based on performance assessment will not be made until 2010.

4.3 Mechanisms for enhancing the accountability of service providers to clients

4.3.1 Service oversight and management committees

Individual recommendations or complaints, even in the wealthiest countries, are less likely to be heard than those that are voiced collectively. When citizens are able to voice their concerns and channel their recommendations collectively to service providers and to local government, they create a stronger basis for holding service providers to account. Local-level service committees such as parent-teacher associations (PTAs), health facility committees and water management boards provide collective fora for greater participation, voice and oversight over service providers.

Box 4: Parent-Teacher Councils and Parent-Teacher Associations in Kosovo

In Kosovo, Parent Teacher Councils (PTC) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) have been set up with the assistance of UNICEF to promote the active involvement of communities in the planning and management of education in the local area, and to link local people to municipal and national level policy making fora.

PTCs operate at the school level and are composed of both teachers and parents. They are responsible for the development of the school's strategic plans, identifying community demand for education, and selecting priority areas of school improvements. PTAs are made up of representatives of PTC as well as municipal authorities and NGOs, and operate at the municipal level. PTAs represent the views of local level PTCs to municipal and regional level policy making fora.

PTCs and PTAs contribute to parental interest and engagement in the education system and a greater awareness of the importance of the involvement of parents in school by children. They have also raised awareness of local problems at the municipal level, and helped to initiate specific projects to address them. As a result, drop-out rates of girls have been reduced across all pilot communities. (Smulders 2004)

4.3.2 Feedback mechanisms: citizen report cards

A range of mechanisms have been developed in recent years to provide improved citizen/client feedback to service providers. These mechanisms include complaints procedures, client exit surveys and citizen report cards.

Citizen report cards are a simple tool for providing feedback on the quality and performance of service provision. Through report cards, citizens/clients are asked to assess their experience with public services: How accessible are services? What is the quality of services? Is there corruption (e.g. bribery) in service provision? Are there other grievances? These surveys can then be used to assess the performance of individual service providers and to compare service

provision across providers, municipalities or regions. Report cards also generate benchmarks for tracking progress in service delivery. By aggregating citizen perceptions, report cards convert individual perspectives and issues into collective ones. Citizen report cards provide evidence with which:

- Citizens/clients and advocacy groups can negotiate improved access to and better quality services and hold service providers to account;
- Progressive politicians and administrators can improve policies and regulations for service provision; and
- Administrators can pursue organisational reforms to improve service delivery.

Box 5 highlights experience of using citizen report cards in Ukraine.

Box 5: Citizen report cards, Ukraine

In Ukraine, Citizen Report Cards (CRC) were used to solicit feedback on the quality, accessibility and efficiency of public services, and to measure change in the quality of services over time. Two urban communities were chosen to pilot CRC. Under the supervision of a local NGO, surveys were conducted among households, the business community and public officials to identify the key problems associated with major services, and to identify the public's priority service needs. The information gathered was widely distributed through the local media, public discussions, and NGOs, putting pressure on local leaders to respond to specific criticism and open channels for greater participation.

The flow of information generated by CRC has resulted in unprecedented actions by municipal authorities and by citizen groups working for improved public services. For example, municipal officials have set up task groups to develop concrete solutions to the most critical problems identified by survey respondents. The surveys also mobilized residents to pressure the local government to create 'service centres' as one-stop shops where people can pay for all of their municipal services.

4.4 Mechanisms for enhancing state accountability to citizens

4.4.1 Participatory budgeting

In many countries, budget processes have historically been opaque and have seldom entailed participation of non-governmental actors. Increasingly, however, participatory budgeting has provided a way for civil society actors to become more involved in efforts to influence public spending (deRenzio and Krafchik 2007).

Participatory budgeting creates a channel for citizens to voice their priorities and monitor public spending. Through participatory budgeting processes, key stakeholders (including the poor and vulnerable, women, organised civil society, the private sector and parliament) 'debate, analyse, prioritise and monitor decisions about public expenditure' (The World Bank 2002). As a result, participatory budgeting can help to make the budget process more inclusive and equitable. It can also improve the transparency and accountability of decision making processes and reduce the scope for corruption and clientelistic practices. Participatory budgeting can also potentially improve service delivery by linking local needs to budget and planning processes.

Participatory budgeting can contribute to budget formation and expenditure monitoring and tracking:

- **Budget formation:** Modes of participation can vary. Citizen groups can participate more directly in the budget process by presenting their priorities and spending needs at budget forums and municipal assemblies; formulating alternative 'citizen budgets'; or review a proposed budget against the government's stated priorities and objectives.
- **Expenditure monitoring and tracking:** Citizen groups and civil society organisations can perform a key monitoring role by tracking whether spending is consistent with budget allocations. Along with tools like public expenditure tracking surveys, citizens can assess the flow of funds from higher levels of government to front line service providers and ensure that policy priorities are reflected through budget allocation and expenditure.

From its origins in Brazil, participatory budgeting has spread globally and is now applied in countries as diverse as Canada, Ireland and South Africa.

Box 6: Performance budgeting in Armenia

Although not exactly participatory budgeting, the Armenia experience of performance budgeting illustrates how citizen engagement in local budgeting processes has been improved in the Europe and CIS region.

A performance budget is a financial plan providing a statement of the municipality mission, goals, and objectives and a regular assessment of their performance as a part of the budgeting process. In Armenia, Performance Budgeting has been introduced to promote accountability in local level public financial management, by offering a simple and clear mechanism by which the productiveness of public resources can be assessed. By making explicit the linkages between activities and funds, citizens are better able to understand budget documents, interpret processes and thereby actively hold government to account.

Implementation of PB has resulted in increased citizen participation in the process of budget planning and oversight of budget execution. All pilot communities have seen significant increases in both the number of public hearings being held, and the numbers of people attending and actively participating. Local budgets have become better targeted and the allocation of funding is better aligned to local priorities. (Tumanyan, D. et al. 2006 and Tumanyan, D. 2005)

4.4.2 Public oversight mechanisms

In recent years, a range of new watchdog institutions have been established in most countries of the Europe and CIS region. These institutions include ombudsman and human rights and anti-corruption commissions. They are designed to provide another avenue (in addition to the judiciary and parliament) through which citizens can oversee the actions of public officials. In some cases (e.g. Hungary, Romania and Poland) the constitution requires that these offices be created. These institutions tend to be legally protected and accountable to parliaments, but independent of other branches of government.

An **ombudsman** provides a check on government actions by investigating complaints and making recommendations. Ombudsmen investigate corruption as well as incidents of maladministration and incompetence. In Europe and the CIS, ombudsman tend to have a human rights focus; they investigate and act on human rights violations. In many cases, these institutions engage with civil society

in human rights awareness raising activities. While ombudsman and other human rights institutions are making a difference, they face significant challenges in fully achieving their mandate as Box 7 below highlights. UNDP is providing significant capacity development support to ombudsman throughout the region.

Box 7: Challenges facing National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)

UNDP's Bratislava Regional Centre recently commissioned a review of National Human Rights Institutions (including ombudsman) in the CIS region (Carver and Korotaev 2007). While there have been some achievements to date, the review identifies a range of significant challenges NHRIs have faced in achieving their mandate. These challenges include:

- *The status of the NHRI:* NHRIs are a new and unusual kind of institution – they belong neither to the executive nor to the judicial branch. In many countries, the public and even the staff of the NHRIs are confused as to how to define the status of the institution. NHRIs have to define and publicly promote their status as a statutory but non-executive and non-judicial body with the sole task of defending human rights.
- *The role of the NHRI:* The population often sees the NHRI as a substitute for old complaints-taking bodies, such as the Communist Party committee complaints department. As a result, NHRIs receive a huge volume of complaints not only about violations of human rights, but also – and sometimes mainly – about violations of all possible laws, rights and interests. Widespread corruption and a poorly functioning judicial system only aggravate this situation.
- *The authority and place of the NHRI in the hierarchy of state bodies:* As a new institution without executive authorities or judicial powers, the NHRI is usually at the bottom of the pecking order of state and government bodies.
- *The resources available:* As a rule, NHRIs in this region suffer from an acute shortage of resources; governments usually do not put needs of the NHRI at the top of their spending list.
- *'Institutional memory':* Experience in several countries of the region shows that NHRIs face big problems related to staff turnover and, especially, regular change of the head of the institution. As a new institution without developed tradition and system of transferring knowledge and experience, the NHRI is in danger of becoming dependent – perhaps fatally so – upon the drive and impact of the current ombudsman and becomes unable to function effectively with a different leadership.

5 Developing Capacities for A&V

This section explores *'the how'* of capacity development; which specific capacities need to be developed in the context of A&V mechanisms and how these capacities can be developed at the enabling environment, organisational and individual levels.

The mechanisms explored above provide a menu of approaches that UNDP can use to support accountability and voice. **Employing a capacity development approach** allows us to think practically about **which of these mechanisms are appropriate** for different contexts. It helps us to **prioritise and sequence** interventions and assess which different mechanisms can be used in consort with one another. A capacity development approach also helps us to assess which **specific capabilities** need to be developed to design specific A&V mechanisms and to ensure their sustainable impact.

Development partners 'cannot work directly on accountability and voice' (O'Neil, Foresti et al. 2007). Instead they can enhance accountability and voice indirectly by strengthening the overall **enabling environment** and helping to develop the **capacity of organizations and individuals** to express and respond to citizens/clients' voices. It is only by working at all three of these levels that sustainable improvements to accountability and voice can be achieved.

As a way of illustrating how capacity might be developed at each of these levels, Box 8 outlines potential capacity development interventions for improving the effectiveness and sustainability of an ombudsman.

5.1 Capacity development at the Enabling environment for A&V

Without the appropriate preconditions (enabling environment) A&V mechanisms will have limited scope for success. The enabling environment is the broad system of formal and informal '**rules of the game**' that affect the interaction between citizens, organisations, the state and service providers. The enabling environment encompasses the **formal** legal, regulatory and policy frameworks and the structures of government. It also includes **informal** elements such as social norms and power relations. These informal 'rules of the game' not only affect the ability of some individuals and groups to exercise voice but they also shape the responsiveness of service providers and government officials.

Efforts to enhance the enabling environment for accountability and voice tend to focus on **improving the formal 'rules of the game'**. In practice, this entails everything from support to drafting new civil society legislation to easing CSO registration processes, advocating legal reforms for freedom of information, and supporting the creation of state watchdog organisations (e.g. ombudsman and anti-corruption commissions). In addition, UNDP and other development partners have often been strong advocates for decentralisation processes with the aim of bringing the state and key decision making processes closer to citizens.

Reforms to formal rules can and do make a difference. They can improve access to information, remove legal barriers to collective action, and create space for citizen engagement in key decision making processes. However, underlying **informal socio-political institutions can limit improvements to accountability and voice**. New laws or regulations may be passed, for instance, but if gate keepers have no political will or capacity to implement them, then they will make little difference in practice. Decision making may be legally decentralised, but may be subject to capture by local elites or control by politicians and power brokers at the centre. Identifying leaders who are reform-minded, and public officials who have an interest in promoting accountability and voice, is therefore key to the successful implementation of capacity development strategies.

5.2 Capacity development of Organisations for A&V

Organisations are groups of individuals legally bound together for a common purpose. These include government ministries, departments and regulatory bodies; service providers (e.g. schools, hospitals); civil society and community

organisations (e.g. trade unions, advocacy organisations); and businesses and business associations.

Working on A&V capacity at the organisational level can entail support to both the supply side of service delivery (the systems and processes of public bodies), and the demand side (e.g. capacity of civil society groups). Capacity development of supply side government bodies might include improving the ability to generate, analyse and disseminate information; establish internal checks and balances including performance management systems; and strengthen technical and fiscal management systems.

Enhancing the capacity of non-state organisations might include strengthening the ability of these groups to conduct research and analysis, advocacy, and networking and coalition building. It also might include support to improve the internal governance, participation and transparency of these organisations.

5.3 Capacity development of Individuals for A&V

Individual actors include those on the supply side: front line service providers (e.g. nurses, teachers), administrators, civil servants and elected politicians (e.g. parliamentarians, local councillors). Individual actors are those seeking to exercise voice on the demand side. These include not only citizens generally but specific categories of citizens, particularly from poor and marginalised groups. The leaders, advocates and administrators of demand side organisations are also key individual actors.

Box 8: Capacity Development in practice: supporting ombudsman

How can capacity gaps be addressed at the enabling environment, organisational and individual level? Below is a summary of the sorts of capacity development that might contribute to the effectiveness and sustainability of the office of ombudsman. The focus of support would vary depending on the findings of the capacity assessment.

Enabling environment

- Support to government in establishing an ombudsman's office, based on internationally agreed principles and standards (Paris Principles) and best practices and lessons learned globally.
- Support to the development of legislative and policy frameworks including human rights and anti-corruption legislation.
- Efforts to strengthen linked institutions including the judiciary and parliament as well as human rights and anti-corruption civil society organizations.

Organizational level

- Support to developing effective organizational management systems within the ombudsman's office.
- Support to developing capacities for effective engagement with the public and other government bodies (e.g. adequate staffing, regional offices, human rights hotlines).
- Developing public awareness of these institutions and the recourse mechanisms available through them (e.g. developing and supporting communication strategies, conducting anti-corruption or human rights campaigns, creating links with media and advocacy CSOs).
- Support to gaining sustainable access to adequate resources through government and outside channels.
- Support to building institutional memory (e.g. systems of knowledge transfer, developing incentives to retain staff).

Individual level

- Support individuals' technical capacity in areas such as human rights law through formal training and ongoing professional development).
- Support to functional (managerial) capacities (e.g. advocacy skills, data analysis, monitoring and evaluation) through training and ongoing professional development.
- Sharing experience and practice through mentoring, networks etc.

Working on capacity at the individual level entails enhancing the capacity of citizens/clients to exercise their voice. This might take place through increasing awareness of issues, rights and avenues of civic engagement as well empowerment—the ability to turn this awareness into action. It also entails enhancing the individual capacity of service providers, administrators and elected officials to be receptive to other stakeholders, to manage reform processes and to carry out consultative and inclusive planning processes. As was highlighted above individual capacity development can take place through a range of mechanisms including information campaigns, civic education, leadership, management and technical training.

In the section that follows we explore a case study of a donor supported A&V initiative in Ukraine. The case illustrates how a development partner supported intervention has acted as a catalyst for sustainable improvements to accountability and voice in local-level service delivery. It also demonstrates the way in which a range of A&V mechanisms have been flexibly applied in practice to develop capacity at the individual, organisational and enabling environment levels.

6 Case study: Democratising Ukraine

Between 2002-2007, the UK Department for International Development provided support to the British Council and two Ukrainian NGOs (the Committee of Voters of Ukraine [CVU] and the Ukrainian Centre for Independent Political Research [UCIPR]) to implement the Democratising Ukraine project. The purpose of the project was to **strengthen democratic voice** in two selected regions (Lviv and Donetsk) **by increasing the capacity of local communities and civil society organisations** to help poor and vulnerable people influence policy and the delivery of services. The project ran in five communities in each of the two regions.²

The approach was simple. To participate, **CSOs were required to work in coalitions**. The coalition was expected to work in partnership with local government and the private sector. There were no pre-determined outputs expected from the coalitions. Instead, the coalitions themselves had to reach agreement on their priority activities and how they were going to organise themselves. To initiate this process, the British Council, CVU and UCIPR provided training, mentoring, on-site technical support and a small amount of funding to the coalitions. Implementing partners also helped the coalitions agree on prioritised action plans and to trouble-shoot challenges during implementation. They also encouraged coalition members to share ideas and skills.

The **priorities** pursued by the coalitions and the **mechanisms used were diverse**. In many cases, coalitions identified gaps in service provision for vulnerable groups and began to provide these services. Engaging in service delivery helped the partner NGOs establish credibility with both citizens and local government. It

² This case study is drawn from C. Hughes (2006), *Democratising Ukraine Programme of Small Projects: A Review*, unpublished, UK Department for International Development.

also helped coalition partners gain a direct understanding of citizen and client needs so that these could be represented to government.

For example, the coalition in Torez initiated a **mobile social protection office**, which provided consultations on social and legal issues in disadvantaged parts of the city. Initially, local government contributed staff time to the operations of the mobile unit. Later, when the impact of the unit had been demonstrated, the local government agreed to make a budget allocation to cover the unit's transportation costs. A statement of co-operation between the local government and the coalition was also agreed. The experience of the Torez mobile social protection unit has also **influenced national policy**. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy recommended that similar units be developed in other parts of the country as part of efforts to improve the effectiveness of housing subsidies.

Many coalitions have placed an emphasis on **influencing local government policies and budgets**. They have used **public hearings** as a means of debating local government draft programmes, views from which have been submitted to local government for consideration. In Chervonograd, for example, the coalition held six public hearings. Initially officials tended to ignore the hearings. With time, they came to recognise their value and they are now active participants. One public hearing focused on the City budget. As a result, the budget is now publicly available on the City Administration's website. This positive experience has led to a **Town Charter** being agreed with the City, which ensures the public's right to be consulted as part of the City's decision-making processes.

Other coalitions have chosen to conduct **advocacy campaigns** around a specific issue as the means to influence local government. The coalition in Brody, for instance, drafted a Programme of Social Support and Rehabilitation for Disabled Children and Youth and advocated for the local authorities to adopt it. To win support from the council, the coalition held public hearings and sent reports from those hearings, information about legislation and draft resolutions to all local councillors. The City eventually adopted the Programme and awarded approximately \$2,000 from the City budget for its implementation.

A review of the Democratising Ukraine project (Hughes, 2006), found that the **project has made significant progress in achieving its purpose, in giving citizens' greater voice and promoting increased local government accountability**. The review identifies a number of changes at the individual, organisational and enabling environment levels, which were considered critical to the success of the initiative. At the **individual level**, individuals participating in the project at community level experienced considerable **gains in personal confidence** (Box 9).

Box 9: Gaining confidence

Chervonograd Coalition: 'At the start of the project, some parents couldn't believe that they could do it, especially without pay. Doing made them believe.'

Yenakieve City Deputy Mayor: [Through the DU project] '...the young people participating have changed. [The project has given them]...the confidence that they can change something.'

Artyomivsk Coalition: [through the Planning for Real technique] '...People started to believe that their opinion can be taken into account; they started not only to express but also reason their opinions; not only to speak but also act.'

The project worked to **create a 'no-blame culture'**, which encouraged stakeholders to have a go, even when they were not confident of success. It also allowed them to admit to mistakes when they occurred, get the help they needed to address difficulties and learn from their experiences. In some cases, the gains in public confidence have been so dramatic, that citizens have decided to stand for local election. A total of 48 people reported being inspired by the DU programme to stand for local election.

Box 10: Mobilising Others

As part of their initiative 'Giving a Compass to the Authorities', the Drohobych Coalition was making a street collection of the public's opinions on what priority actions the local authority needed to take to improve the community. The first day a woman approached. She saw the comments box and told the volunteer that the whole idea was weird. On the second day, the same woman approached again and, upon seeing that the box was half full, she congratulated the volunteer. On the third day, the woman approached again. This time the box was full. Upon seeing this, she not only contributed her own comments but also went and bought sandwiches for the volunteers! Sometime afterwards, the woman met the volunteer concerned and in response to some of her friend's suggestions the local authorities had created more kindergarten places and had provided some park benches. She suggested that the Compass should be used regularly to communicate citizen's views to the local authorities!

In addition, the coalition volunteers have acted as role models and have helped inspire others to mobilize (Box 10) and engage with their community and local government.

At an **organisational level**, the condition that participating CSOs form a coalition was critical to the success of the Democratising Ukraine programme. Although challenging for the CSOs concerned, this way of working has helped break down the isolation between CSOs and promoted connections and commonalities. Coalition working is also eroding the competition which exists between CSOs, promoted the pooling of human and financial resources and the creation of **mutually supportive networks** (Box 11).

An emphasis on developing **robust governance systems for the management of coalitions** has given coalition members confidence that they can influence the direction of the group's activities. This has enabled partners to work through differences of opinion to reach common understandings. It has also brought about a **transparency** in CSO decision-making processes. The coalitions therefore set an example of the type of decision-making and openness many participating CSOs call for from local government.

At an **enabling environment** level, a number of changes were identified as a result of the Democratising Ukraine programme. The positive impact made by the coalitions to local community development, their co-operative way of working, as well as their transparency of their operations all served to improve the **reputation** of CSOs among local government and the general public. This has facilitated working relations with local authorities and given coalitions greater influence over local government policies and practices (see box 12).

Box 11: The Benefits of Working as a Coalition

Artyomivsk Coalition: [initially, we] 'doubted that our work and problems would be of interest to other organisations... now that we have joined [the coalition], we understand that this is not the case... I only regret that we did not join earlier.'

Sokal Coalition: 'Working as a team brings more results than working as an individual NGO.'

Positive experiences of working together have enabled the **institutionalisation of public participation in local government policy and planning**. Town Charters and Compact agreements have been implemented in all focal communities. There have enshrined public involvement in policy and service delivery and set out the relationship and scope for interaction between local government and local civil society. This development indicates that local authorities recognise the need for increased accountability to citizens and that some of the approaches piloted by coalitions can help them achieve this.

Box 12: Enhanced Reputation for CSOs

Brody Coalition: "The authorities used to ignore NGO work and events, but today the authorities "are on the move" and actively co-operate."

Yenakieve City Deputy Mayor: "Other NGO initiatives were projects for the sake of projects, just to get money. With the coalition, I have seen completely different objectives."

Brody Coalition: "Nowadays "people listen to us, seek our advice and recommend us to the others."

The improved reputation of civil society and the commitment of local governments and local elites to work with CSOs also led to the establishment of **Community Foundations** in later stages of the Democratising Ukraine programme. Community Foundations pool local government and private sector resources and provide grants to community actors for local projects. Community Foundations have helped to secure the long-term sustainability of A & V mechanisms. In the words of one member of the Drohobych Coalition: '[the project has been] a journey from being a resource centre to seeing the community as a resource.'

Box 13: Existing enabling environment shapes the scope for changes to A&V

Piloting the Democratising Ukraine model in Lviv and Donetsk regions provided an insightful comparison. Lviv region lies in the west of Ukraine, and was once part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The region is oriented towards Europe and a certain liberalism can be found in its socio-political institutions. In contrast, Donetsk region lies in the east of Ukraine and is part of the country's industrial heartland. With its longer history as part of the Soviet Union, the prevailing institutions clearly hark back to this time. In this context, opportunities for coalitions to move from addressing social problems in the community to actively influencing local government policy have been much more constrained. In comparison to Lviv region, results in this area have been more modest, clearly indicating how local context shapes opportunities for citizen voice and state accountability.

7 Challenges and entry points for A&V

This paper has explored how voice and accountability for local service delivery in the Europe and CIS region can be strengthened in theory and in practice. It has provided a broad overview of key concepts of accountability and voice, highlighted the importance of A&V in democratic governance, and demonstrated the centrality of A&V in a human rights based approach to development.

The framework presented in Section Three provides a way of exploring the key actors and relationships entailed in delivering accountability in service provision. It also provides a means of assessing which A&V mechanisms might be appropriate in specific contexts.

Using descriptions and case studies of A&V specific mechanisms, the paper has explored **what development partners can do in practice** to support

accountability and amplify voice for service provision. The case studies not only highlight the successes, they also illustrate the significant challenges remaining before substantive and sustainable accountability can be achieved in many contexts.

The paper also has explored **the 'how' of A&V – the systemic and holistic capacity development** approach that leads to the establishment of sustained and functional A&V mechanisms and ultimately to improved quality of public services. This approach links the three levels where country's capacity resides (the enabling environment, organisational and individual levels) and emphasises the importance of national ownership and leadership.

This concluding section explores the broad challenges faced in building capacity for accountability and voice in the Europe and CIS region. It also explores potential entry points for promoting A&V. During the workshop, we will have time to explore these and the other A&V challenges we face in the context of our own work. We will also have time to explore the specific entry points and strategies for addressing capacity needs through our programmes.

7.1 Challenges

The **enabling environment** of many European and the CIS countries entails a range of significant and persistent challenges to accountability and voice. These contextual factors shape the entry points for strengthening A&V. They also shape the effectiveness and sustainability of specific A&V mechanisms in practice.

Most countries in the region are still transitioning to full democratic systems of governance and the legacy of top-down rule continues to influence the character of the state and state-society relations. As a result, some of the formal institutions of government remain relatively weak. Public officials, for instance, often continue to see themselves as governors, not service providers while the judiciary often lacks the capacity to check executive authority and to hold public officials to account.

Most European and CIS countries have passed legislation and have created institutions aimed at bolstering accountability (e.g. laws protecting civil society and the freedom of information, the creation of ombudsman and anti-corruption commissions). However, as the case studies presented in this report highlight, the implementation of these reforms remains an ongoing challenge.

At the **organisational** and **individual levels**, lack of capacity continues to hamper accountability and voice. **Government bodies** and **personnel** (e.g. ministries, departments and local administrators) often lack the capacities to deliver on their mandates and to be responsive and accountable to one another or to citizens. Horizontal and downward accountability in such cases is hampered by capacity gaps. These include **functional capacities**—the accountancy, M&E, and managerial capacities necessary for the formation, implementation and review of policies and programmes. Gaps may also include **technical capacities** in areas such as human rights, elections or legal empowerment.

As this paper has shown, **civil society** in many CIS and European countries remains weak, fragmented and under capacitated. CSOs face many of the same functional and technical capacity gaps as government. In addition, most civil society organisations in the region have a relatively short history. Many are also dependent on outside (donor) funding—a weakness that has been illustrated by the recent funding crises faced by some Bulgarian and Romanian NGOs following EU accession and the subsequent decline of donor assistance.

7.2 Entry points

A capacity development approach to A&V can contribute significantly to addressing these challenges by identifying capacity gaps and working to fill them. As highlighted throughout this report, specific A&V mechanisms and strategies for enhancing technical and functional capacities have the potential to generate significant change in the governance of CIS and European countries.

However, a **capacity development approach will have only limited impact on accountability and voice if it is applied in an overly technocratic manner**. As the UNDP Capacity Development Practice Note highlights: 'Addressing capacity needs, by strengthening skills, processes and systems, will not hold the promise of sustainable results if it does not take into account the inherently political and complex realities of the environment' (UNDP 2008: 3). In practice, this means that UNPD and its partners need to base their capacity development strategies not just on the strengths and weaknesses of the formal institutions of the state and civil society (rules, regulations, procedures and individual capacities). They also need to base these strategies on the ways in which the informal 'rules of the game' shape both state-society relations and the incentives politicians, administrators and service providers face.

A technically sound, but politically astute capacity development strategy for accountability and voice is therefore one that:

- Is **Opportunistic and responsive**: it looks for windows of opportunity and is responsive to changes on the ground including changes in leadership and emerging issues around which coalitions of change can be supported.
- **Builds political support for capacity development in A&V** in the longer term by providing the sorts of capacities and 'quick wins' that governments want in the short term.
- **Bridges accountability and voice**: As a trusted and multilateral partner of both governments and civil society, UNDP has a comparative advantage in working across the divide that often separates the supply and demand side of accountability. It is well positioned to help create space for collaborative government-civil society work on specific issues (e.g. the delivery of services) that can open up space for greater accountability in the long run.
- **Builds on existing impetus for change**: In much of Europe and the CIS for instance, the prospect of membership in the European Union is the most significant driver towards governance reform. Building on this momentum and

helping prospective member countries achieve the Copenhagen Criteria, provides a significant opening for building capacity for accountability and voice.

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