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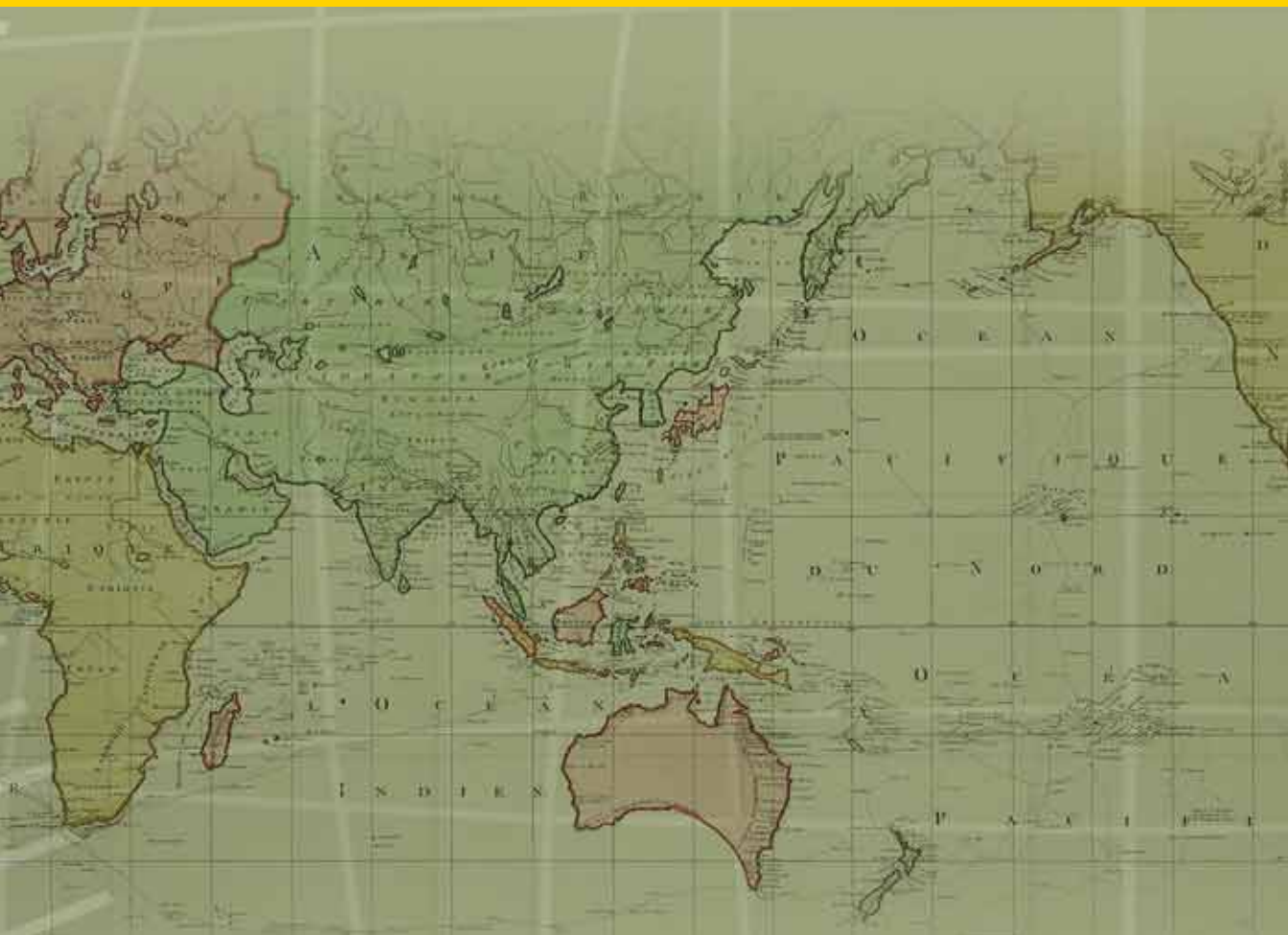

National Accountability Strategies for Developing Countries

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National Accountability Strategies for Developing Countries:

Observations on Theory and Experience

F. Stevens Redburn and **Terry F. Buss**

The National Planning Department (NPD), Office of the President, Republic of Colombia, contacted the Academy seeking technical assistance in crafting a national accountability strategy for Colombia under President Uribe. The Academy worked with NPD on the strategy which is being tested in Colombia as 2005.[1] This paper is a review of the issues prepared for NPD.[2]

Introduction

> Citizen participation processes "…encourage stakeholders, especially the poor, to influence and share control over priority setting, policy making, resource allocations and access to public goods and services."
>
> World Bank Participation & Civic Engagement Group[3]

Governments around the world are considering or implementing initiatives to become more accountable to citizens for performance. This paper offers a conceptual framework for such a process, gathering and assessing relevant international experience.

The United States and numerous other nations, have established a new system to measure and report to the public on its progress in achieving major national goals. The United States public participation processes also provide citizens with ability to influence governmental decisions through advisory boards and voting initiatives and non-profit activist initiatives. While these may not all be appropriate to every country, understanding that citizen input will only be as useful to the central government as it is viewed by citizens as a useful enterprise to spend their time on, is. The independent validation and wide dissemination of information on social outcomes that government seeks to influence would be one step toward increased accountability for performance. New participatory processes, giving citizens a chance to discuss and provide meaningful and useful feedback to government on these reports, would form a complementary second step toward increased performance accountability. Enhanced government accountability for performance strengthens the democratic process. A process for doing so will complement other institutions of democratic governance by better

informing citizen participants and elected leaders about the informed preferences of a cross-section of citizens.

Accountability initiatives are part of a recent wave of innovative activity intended to enhance democratic processes by providing new ways for citizens to interact with their governments and with each other. This activity is apparent worldwide. It is occurring in countries with long-established democratic traditions, and in many others where democracy's roots are shallower.[4] In some instances, national government is the leader and organizer, while in others the process is less centralized, driven by local and regional governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and even the private sector. In the last several years, advances in information and communication technology (ICT) have begun to support and spur such institutional innovation by lowering the cost of acquiring information relevant to citizens and by creating new means of communication among citizens and between citizens and government.

The effort to develop new participatory processes appears driven in part by concern that the gap between citizens and governing elites is too wide. Established institutions do not engage participation of many because they do not feel that their voices will be heard and because they lack necessary knowledge of or interest in the political process.

If carefully designed and properly implemented, a new participatory process may enable citizens to obtain information about public policies and their results more easily, use this information to inform their views and choices, and communicate those views and choices to public officials individually and collectively in a way that is productive, specific and positive.

There appears to be a natural progression in the development and implementation of a national process of social accountability. The first stage of implementation would ordinarily be development and promulgation of an array of indicators by national government, providing standardized indictors of progress in achieving important national goals and measures of the contribution of specific public policies and programs to that progress. This is a natural first step because it provides the public with better information about government's performance. It sets the stage for an informed and enriched exchange of views between the public and citizens about public policies and their effects. Organization of such an exchange would typically be the second stage in the implementation of a social accountability process. At this stage, citizens are offered new opportunities to express their views on public policies that affect them. Building on this experience, governments may want to consider further institutional innovations that provide citizens with new forums in which they can develop and

exchange views with each other and with public officials. Such opportunities for constructive engagement may enhance performance of other democratic institutions as discussed below.

Better information about public preferences may enable governments to make better decisions in the public interest. If so, it will increase effectiveness of those governments, and, by doing so, increase their legitimacy in the eyes of citizens.

This paper is divided into two sections. The first section outlines a conceptual framework for the development of an accountability initiative, including standards against which to test the potential benefits and likely successes. The second section highlights and briefly assesses some of the more relevant recent international experiences in this area.

I. Conceptual Framework and Standards for Success

Our purpose here is to design and implement an effective means of holding a national government more directly accountable to its citizens for results. A successful initiative would expand the political space for constructive popular social engagement critical for "deepening democracy and building democratic government."[5]

Success depends in part on a country's ability to adapt a general model for goal-based performance accountability to the Nation's unique situation and institutions. The general model offered here will assist the Government in evaluating the practicality and likely success of alternative components of an accountability process most suited to current circumstances.

Desired Outcomes

To the extent that the strategy succeeds, it will increase national government's accountability for results and assist in improving its performance, measured by future results and perceived by its citizens. This improvement will increase government's legitimacy in the eyes of the public. These three outcomes – *increased accountability, better performance,* and *greater legitimacy* – will be mutually reinforcing.

Democratic processes, broadly speaking, are likeliest to support these mutually reinforcing outcomes. Democracy is a relative term. It can be broadened to include more people in the processes of government and representation. It can be deepened by giving people more frequent and meaningful opportunities to express their views and to develop a consensus on how to address problems of mutual interest.[6] Deeper,

broader democracy enhances competence of citizens so that they are more effective in holding government accountable.

Instrumental or intermediate outcomes include *credibility* of the process in the eyes of participants and observers and *complementarity* rather than competition or conflict with other constitutional processes for representing citizens' views. Credibility depends greatly on whether the process is seen as *fair*, and as *useful* in political terms, that is, in shaping the positions of public officials and elected representatives and in others ways indirectly influencing public policies. Complementarity depends greatly on whether the process promotes *civility* and *increased participation* through established political institutions and channels of representation, especially by those traditionally underrepresented or excluded for various reasons. The *transparency* and openness of the participatory process and its *success in promoting constructive dialogue* and *consensus* will contribute to both credibility and complementarity.

We may abstract from this logic model a few suggested standards by which the success of any proposed accountability strategy should be measured as more or less likely to contribute to the desired outcomes.

Requisites for Success

The proposed process to increase government accountability for results will be effective to the extent that it is:

1. **Representative and inclusive:** Representativeness is an ideal state, never perfectly realized. Nevertheless, processes must draw in to the greatest extent possible those who have been generally excluded, disenfranchised, alienated, or not previously engaged for lack of opportunity.

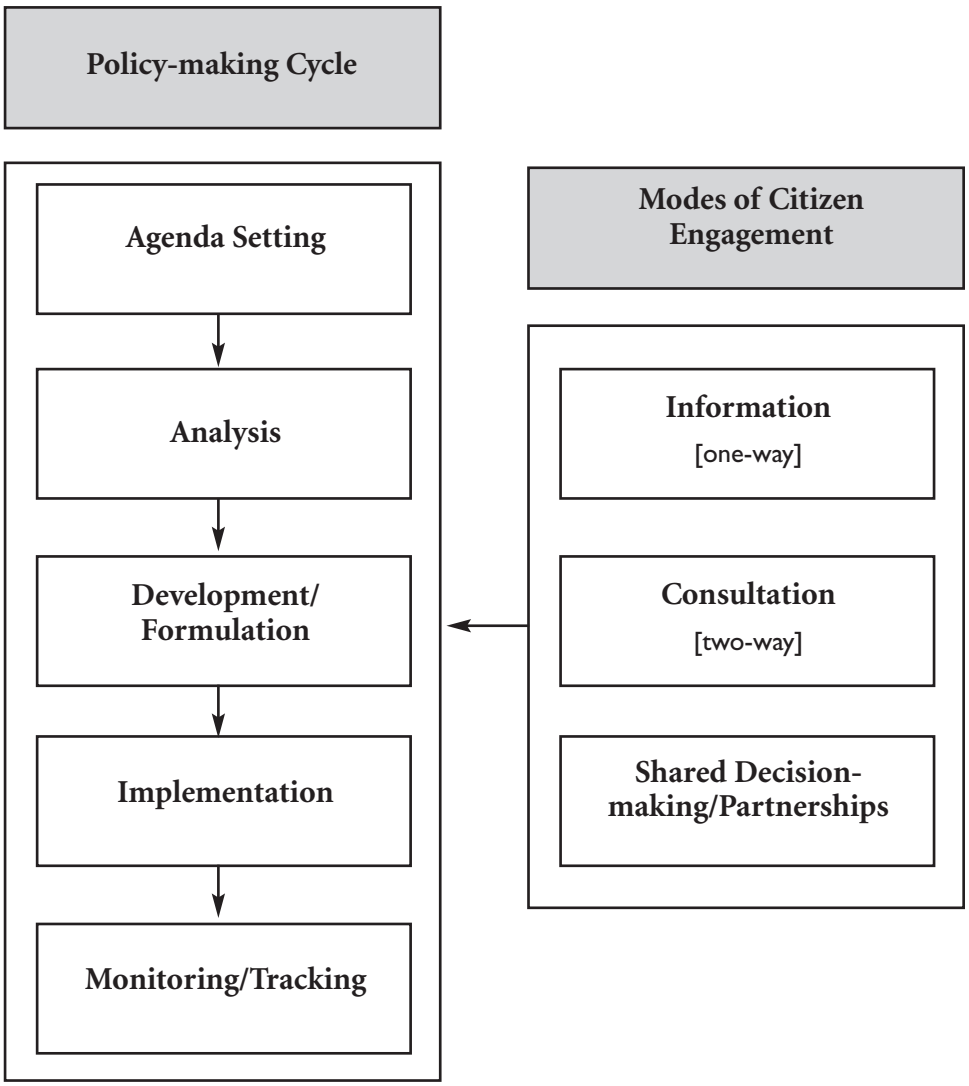
2. **Rewarding to participants:** To achieve representativeness and to be sustained over time, participatory processes must balance personal costs against personal benefits and must be specific enough informationally to be relevant. Costs of participating (in time, effort, stress) must be held to a minimum and the rewards (both intrinsic to the process and extrinsic in the form of influence on future policies) must be sufficient so that participation is seen as worthwhile. Those processes that over time are found to be rewarding by a diverse range of participants will remain representative.

3. **Constructive in managing differences:** The process needs to be structured in such a way that conflict is used positively to achieve consensus. Under some circumstances, inappropriately designed or executed efforts to increase citizen

participation will increase conflict and alienation rather than reduce them. Constructive processes have a problem-solving focus. They require prior agreement of all participants on the rules of engagement, such as those promoting dialogue and respect for diverse positions and interests. People must act within the process as autonomous thinkers not representatives of groups or interests. Norms and habits of democratic behavior must be respected and reinforced.

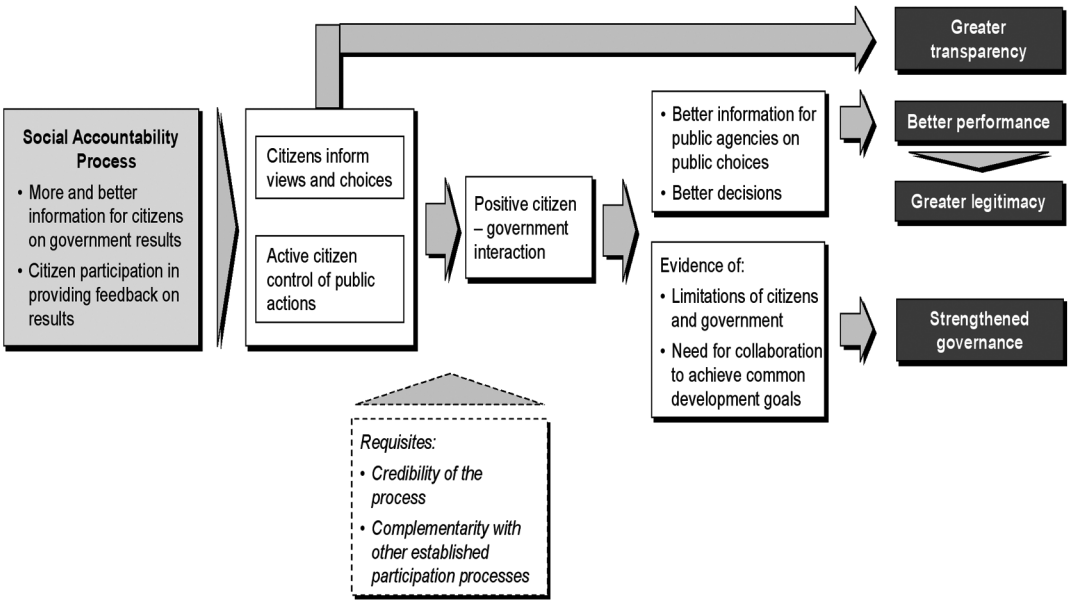
Effectiveness of the process must be demonstrated using widely-agreed-upon, credible, process-oriented indicators, quantifiable and widely disseminated. These indicators likely must be customized to capture key aspects of the process once operational.[7] A flow-chart of the participation process is presented in Figure 1 and a framework for evaluating the process is provided in Appendix A.

Figure 1: Policy-Making Cycle & Modes of Citizen Engagement



Putting these requisites together, a successful process will establish a repeating, iterative pattern of constructive transactions between citizens and their government in this case, a continuing, deepening dialogue about performance.

Figure 2: The Social Accountability Process



Staged Implementation of an Accountability Process

The development and implementation of a new process of social accountability may follow a natural progression. Likelihood of success can be increased by first getting key decision-makers to agree to desired outcomes and then building a framework of measurement and reporting on government performance, followed by the institution of new opportunities for citizen expression of preferences that makes use of these reports on performance, and finally by institution of new forums within which representative groups of citizens exchange and develop their views, seek consensus, and engage in a rich continuing dialogue with public officials about ways to achieve important public goals.

Stage One: performance measurement and reporting. The basis for an effective system of accountability is the development and dissemination of a full set of valid, statistically reliable, and independently validated measures of the outcomes of public

programs and spending. Such a performance indicator system would enable leaders, government ministries and agencies, program managers, and any citizen to judge the extent to which progress is being made in achieving important social and policy objectives. It begins with key agreements on what the process should be by key decision makers. It also should enable them to better assess the contribution that individual government programs or particular social strategies make to their achievement.

- **Dissemination:** A key element of the process is dissemination of valid, relevant, reliable information about the results of public programs. Citizens must be given the opportunity to understand the goals of government spending and activity and its results. A guiding standard here is transparency, ability of citizens to see what government is accomplishing. A second standard here is universal access to information. Barriers to information are many and are especially likely to deny information to those with less education and access to informational media. Government has an affirmative responsibility, therefore, to ensure that information is not merely published but is widely available and readily interpreted.

Typically, performance measurement will begin with a limited number of measures related to certain key national objectives and will be elaborated over time. Ideally, the system of measurement will include not only broader outcome measures but more specific measures, including measures that ministries and program managers can use to demonstrate their programs' contributions to broader outcomes. A valid and useful performance measurement system will reveal that some public programs are less effective than others and that some are ineffective and a waste of resources. Leadership must be prepared to use this information to guide resource allocation through the annual budget process, to guide reforms to make public programs more effective, and to manage their people and programs. Ultimately, to validate such a system and obtain its full value, leaders and public managers must be held accountable for results.

Stage Two: feedback and accountability. The contribution of a system of performance measurement to strengthened democratic accountability becomes more apparent at a second stage when citizens are afforded opportunities to use information as a basis for providing feedback to public officials on performance on key activities and outcomes. This stage typically provides for limited dialogue, as in the form of public hearings where citizens can express their individual views and others can speak for the interests and formal positions of larger organized groups. Government has a responsibility to ensure that such forums are open to those holding all views and are conducted in an atmosphere that protects rights of free expression and encourages people of all backgrounds to participate.

- **Monitoring and feedback:** The new element of the process at this stage is citizen participation in the review and assessment of government's performance. Citizens are afforded the opportunity and incentive to develop and express their views about policies and their results. A guiding standard here is *efficacy*, that is, participants must believe at the end that their participation matters. Another guiding standard here is *representativeness*, the extent to which those participating constitute a broad cross-section of interests and statuses.

At this stage, opportunities that participation can offer are necessarily still limited. Given the desire to increase citizens' feelings of efficacy and to get more people engaged in constructive dialogue, there is the risk of promising them more than the process can deliver. One requisite for success of any citizen participation process is setting realistic and clear expectations for all participants. It is tempting to promise that participants' views will make a difference. However, if people enter the process with unrealistic expectations, they can become disillusioned at some point, undermining the goals of the effort. One way to avoid unrealistic expectations at this stage is to provide those invited to participate with specific questions they will be asked to answer and explain clearly what will and will not be done with the responses.[8] Another way is to identify short term, small changes based upon their feedback to occur and be measured for effectiveness.

Stage Three: enhanced democratic dialogue. At a third stage in the development of a national social accountability process, conditions are created for a rich, continuing dialogue between citizens and public officials centered on ways to increase rate of progress in achieving important shared social objectives. At this stage, forums are provided in which citizens can interact in more sophisticated ways with any information and expertise they need or want in order to better understand the effects of public policies and to develop alternatives to present programs. Small celebrations of success on feedback that has occurred and successes that have been measured are also possible. They also are encouraged to interact with those of different interests and backgrounds to find areas of agreement that will lead to mutually beneficial outcomes. This can be the basis for a creative process of policy innovation that drives the nation forward, both by shaping potential alternatives to current policies and by giving citizens' more meaningful and rewarding opportunities to participate constructively in the democratic political process. Desired characteristics and expected results of participation at this stage are discussed below in the section entitled, "Core Elements of an Accountability Process."

Whatever accountability process is put in place should complement and reinforce other means of democratic political expression. It will do so to the extent that it fosters a

richer ongoing conversation among a representative cross-section of citizens, and between citizens and public officials, about public policies and their effects. Because political participation has costs and benefits to the individual, sustaining their engagement will be a continuing challenge:

- **Costs of participation:** Costs of participation in the accountability process will increase with amount of time committed, such material barriers as physical distance, acquiring information and understanding, and emotional stress. These costs often are higher for those without political experience, and with diminished resources and limited education. Ensuring continued representativeness process requires special attention to increasing access and lowering barriers for those for whom participation is more personally costly.

- **Benefits of participation:** Benefits of participation in the accountability process include intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Intrinsic rewards include interest, enjoyment, and a sense that engagement is meaningful and important. Extrinsic rewards include feelings of efficacy and making a difference in one's own life and the lives of others. Both can be enhanced through small, inexpensive celebrations of success for those participating. Design of a process that will continue to reward participants of diverse cultural backgrounds and different educational and social statuses will be a great challenge to those responsible for the accountability process.

Because many citizens have not had extensive opportunities for participation —perhaps with the exception of voting—or will have had misgivings about participating in public venues—especially public hearings—it will be necessary for the government to invest in capacity building programs to help citizens fulfill their potential as partners in an accountability process and to overcome fears that participation might be used against them.

Citizens also must be persuaded that their participation will be meaningful. Initially, this may be accomplished by setting realistic tasks for participants, for example, to develop recommendations to the government on small, short-term changes that can be measured for success and then celebrated as well as on additional indicators of social progress to be included in the measurement system or on strategies to improve social performance as currently measured. Typically, following one or more rounds of the participatory process, a summary of discussions (including the comments of individual participants) and recommendations (including minority or dissenting views) will be published or broadcast, so that both participants and others can see that the discussion has been recorded and disseminated. In the longer term, of course, the meaning that

citizens take from the process will depend on whether they perceive their efforts to have made a difference in decisions taken by the government and ultimately a difference in their own lives.

Core Elements of an Accountability Process

Based on working models of processes drawn from different contexts and judged relatively successful, some core elements of a fully developed and successful national social accountability process are:

1. **Democratic rules of engagement:** Rules should be clearly stated and accepted. They should promote dialogue and fair consideration of alternative proposals and perspectives. They should not be intimidating to participants with less experience and expertise. They should be designed to move participants toward a recorded consensus but permit recording of dissenting views, as well.

2. **An information-rich environment:** Participants must have ready access to disinterested expertise, relevant data, and applicable models or theory. In a given location, participants should have access to as much relevant data as possible, whether posted in visual or graphic form or retrievable through electronic means or phone conference calls with experts. In such a data-rich working environment, all participants should be encouraged to question, develop and test (with evidence and against others' ideas) various policy alternatives, and to change their provisional understanding of problems and solutions as they gain understanding. Participants of varying levels of education and experience with intellectual problem-solving and dialogue should be encouraged to develop and express a realistic understanding of complex problems. In short, the process should function as a policy laboratory for the participants, in which their ideas and opinions develop through interaction with data, expertise, and each other.

3. **Identification of resource constraints:** Preferences are necessarily constrained by limited resources. Thus the "budgeting" framework within which participants are asked to reach decisions or make recommendations regarding possible problem solutions should require participants to recognize that even good investments are made at the near-term expense of other uses of limited resources.

4. **Neutral recording and dissemination of views:** Participants should be given opportunities at various stages of the process to record their views, specifically on the government's performance and ways to improve it. In general, all views should

receive equal weight. Means of registering views should promote dialogue and consensus-building. Regardless of whether consensus develops, minority and dissenting views should be recorded and publicized at all stages.

These elements must be combined in a way that participants of varied backgrounds and status continue to find worthy of their investment of personal time and effort. There is no single best design for such a process. However, a variety of designs, tested and proven in various settings, may be relevant.

Information and communications technology may be especially helpful in lowering information costs for all participants, providing instantaneous access to data and expertise, supporting a fast-paced and engaging interaction by facilitating recording of views, and enabling participants of lower status, lesser social skills, or with unpopular views to express themselves more freely through impersonal means than they could through direct conversation.[9] Although cost and technical barriers to the use of ITC may limit its use in many locations, these barriers are dropping quickly; in a district of central India where most of the population lives in poverty, for example, information kiosks have been established in 20 rural villages linked to the internet and each other by low cost connections, allowing villagers to conduct many transactions, including retrieving records, viewing information on government performance, and filing complaints.

Organization of Responsibilities for the Process

Implementation of a performance accountability process will require decisions about how to organize and share responsibility for specific components of the process itself and for results of the process. The relative roles of national government, other levels of government, non-governmental organization, community-based or grassroots organizations, and other associations should play to their respective strengths and reinforce their existing roles in the democratic process. Non-governmental organizations, for instance, may be delegated responsibility for conducting the participatory process to ensure it is perceived as independent and fair. Established civic organizations and voluntary associations may provide venues and help recruit participants. However, in each locale, participation should be inclusive rather than exclusive and broadly representative of the community. Participants should not be chosen as formal representatives of particular interests, but as unattached individuals encouraged to register their personal views. They must however, be willing to agree to participate positively toward effective improvements.

Delegating to independent nongovernmental organizations responsibility for operation of the participatory process may enhance its legitimacy and augment the central government's expertise. Using existing civil society organizations, (e.g., LACs) may give the resulting process greater structural strength and stability, thereby reinforcing established democratic processes. An independent, outside evaluation of the process' results would enhance learning and improvement and help validate the outcomes in the eyes of citizens.

Incentives for Public Agencies

As noted above, the first stage in the development of an enhanced social accountability process is development and promulgation of measures of government's performance in relation to major national social objectives. Effective performance and accountability systems therefore require cooperation of public agencies and the bureaucracy in a system of national performance measurement and reporting. In the United States, for example, the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993 provides a statutory basis for continuous annual reporting by all Federal agencies of the results of their programs and spending. These required annual performance reports are developed under the general supervision of the Office of Management and Budget in the Executive Office of the President, which reviews measures and their reporting. Measures are subject to widespread review and external verification of their validity. For example, the Congress's Government Accountability Office (GAO)—formerly the General Accounting Office—monitors the process and publicly critiques it. Over the last decade, the number of measures has been elaborated and the system of measurement and reporting has been refined.

What incentives or penalties are necessary to engage support from the civil service and policy-makers in agencies, departments, and programs at all levels of government in the development of a national system of government performance measurement? The Chief Executive may mandate that agencies develop and promulgate appropriate measures, and may enforce this mandate by various means.

It is likely that some ministries will take the lead initially in developing meaningful measures by which they and their managers can be held accountable for results. Their leadership can be rewarded and thereby serve as a beacon for other ministries to follow. Public managers who develop and use performance information to increase their programs' effectiveness and to hold themselves accountable to leaders and the public for results may be rewarded in the following ways: incentive pay, national recognition awards, or promotion for individuals. A powerful lever for change is the

allocation of scarce budgetary resources. Agencies that promote accountability may receive priority for additional funding in the annual budget process when available. Those unable to demonstrate that their programs are effective may either receive reduced funding or face other sanctions, including program elimination.

Annual performance reviews and evaluations for individual managers should include citizen participation goals and objectives. In deciding whether to reduce the size and weight of bureaucracy, programs and civil servants who do not meet national mandates for measurement and reporting of performance may be subject to reduction in their ranks. At later stages in the development of the social accountability process, public officials should anticipate that their ratings and tenure will depend increasingly on demonstrating that their programs are effective in advancing democratically established social goals.

II. Relevant International Experiences

Increasing social accountability is part of a worldwide exploration of and movement toward procedural innovations. This is occurring simultaneously in both developed and developing countries.

Certain reforms may be relevant models for developing countries to emulate or adapt to its current circumstances. Some of these are not necessarily core elements of a participatory process of a fully-developed performance accountability, but may be reinforcing and supportive.[10] (See Appendix B.)

Initiatives contributing to a system of enhanced social accountability fall into three categories: (1) providing **information** to assess government performance (transparency); (2) **consulting** with citizens in the development or design of programs, policies or budgets (planning & development), and/or tracking progress and monitoring performance, compliance and corruption (accountability); and (3) **partnering** or sharing responsibility with citizens. Those in the first category are most relevant to the first stage in the development of a national accountability system, as presented in the first section of this paper. Those in the second and third categories are relevant at the second and third stages.

First Stage Efforts

In the first stage, policy-makers may want to review models from Malaysia, the Philippines, the United States, and other governments that have invested in systems of performance measurement. Often these are used in a budgetary context. In some

cases, the system of measurement is organized using a structure of strategic objectives that are developed in a planning process through which important stakeholders and/or representative groups of citizens have participated. The use of Internet technology to support dissemination of performance information is illustrated by India's rural Internet kiosks in Gyandoot.

Philippine's Community-Based Poverty Indicators & Monitoring System

The Philippine experience in combining citizen report cards and community based strategies has been widely acknowledged as a model citizen participation approach [http://members.surfshop.net.ph/~code-ngo/]. Some 3,000 NGOs formed an association (CODE-NGO) to monitor progress in reducing poverty in select provinces in the nation. Using a performance indicator database developed and maintained by the National Statistics Office and National Economic and Development Authority, CODE-NGO compares agency goals and objectives against their performance on 33 selected indicators. Indicator data are matched against citizen satisfaction surveys and other assessments. CODE-NGO then publishes an assessment of agency performance that is presented to Congress and distributed widely to the public.

Before CODE-NGO, local officials refused to make performance-based data available; while in other cases some local officials had no data themselves. Because the data are nationally produced for provinces, local officials now can be held accountable. The shortcomings of the model are that (1) individual citizens are not widely involved in the initiative, they must rely upon NGO activists, (2) capacity to produce and analyze performance data is limited, so government must create and sustain it, and (3) because the government did not initiate the model, there is still a great deal of resistance among local officials to its use. The ultimate success of the model will depend on the willingness of the people and NGOs to continue to produce the information necessary to hold public officials accountable.

The U.S. Performance Accountability Initiative

As noted above, in 1993, Congress enacted GPRA, imposing performance based management upon all federal agencies. All federal agencies prepare detailed five year strategic plans and follow-on annual performance plans having detailed goals and objectives, accompanied by performance measures against which they are held accountable. Agencies post their plans and accomplishments on Websites easily accessible to the public. The GAO, an agency of Congress, independently monitors and assesses federal agency performance. In 2002, the Bush Administration launched the

President's Management Agenda (PMA) which includes an extensive review of individual programs in each agency conducted by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in the Executive Office of the President using a management tool, the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART)[www.omb.gov] comprised of about 30 questions addressing various aspects of program design, management, and results. Ratings of programs based on the PART are used to help inform budget decisions about agency programs. Both the results of this analysis and the detailed answers and evidence used in the rating process are posted on OMB's website, along with the instructions for answering each question. This transparency enables any interested person or group to judge for themselves how programs are performing and whether they agree with the ratings or not.

A highlight of the U.S. system is that agencies should have clearly defined missions, visions, goals and objectives for which they are held accountable. If they do not achieve sufficient results, then they may at some point risk loss of funding or other sanctions. Program measurement is widely available to citizens and organizations who might want to monitor agency performance. The system has numerous "checks and balances" so that information produced and reported is accurate, credible, and subject to extensive independent review. A limitation of the system is that it is Web-based for the most part. Only those who are computer literate with Internet access can easily obtain performance information and assessments. There are few formal opportunities for individual citizen input at the national level, except through interest and advocacy groups, NGOs and CSOs who monitor agency and program activity at the national level. At the local level, though, extensive opportunities to participate exist, including hearings, surveys, conferences, working groups, and Internet, but this applies only to programs for that local area.

Gyandoot, India Rural Internet Kiosks

Gyandoot, India, a region where 60% of the population lives below the official poverty line is experimenting with information kiosks as a way to promote citizen involvement in public affairs in rural, underserved areas.[11] For a small fee, citizens can access information some government performance-related information from kiosks operated by young entrepreneurs who the government would like to see become gainfully employed. Kiosks can also be used not only to access public records and make transactions with public agencies, but also to file complaints and grievances.

The system has been successful in demonstrating that poor regions with little Internet access can enjoy the advantages ICT has to offer. But the Gyandoot experience suggests that much needs to be done to "wire" these regions. Kiosks are sometimes unreliable, and government

officials are sometimes unresponsive. Yet local government has invested its own funds in the project and private sector companies are beginning to explore partnering opportunities.

Second & Third Stage Efforts

At the second and third stages of its efforts, policy-makers may want to consider models of more complete accountability processes, such as those realized in Ireland and Brazil, for participatory budgeting.

Brazil's Participatory Budget Process

Perhaps the best known participatory budget model is the Porto Alegre, Brazil, initiative.[12] Citizens in each of the city's 15 regions meet in two rounds of plenary sessions annually on a variety of budget issues. These meetings are used to gather citizen input on issues and to mobilize communities to elect delegates to Fora where budgeting issues will be deliberated. City government has no involvement in this part of the process. At Fora meetings, community budget requests are scored and ranked and deliberated. Representatives from the Fora are elected in turn to serve on the Council of Participatory Budgeting, a decision-making body. City finances, procedures, and processes, along with the current fiscal and expected fiscal prospects for the city are shared with the Council. In the end, using a combination of objective measures and subjective preferences, the Council makes budget allocations to the regions.

Some 80 additional cities in Brazil are implementing the Porto Alegre model. The model promotes accountability, equity and re-distribution, along with legitimacy. As with many representative systems, as the initiative matures, individual citizen participants are giving way to participation by organized groups. Some observers fear the radicalization of the process. Although the municipal legislature can reject the budget proposed by the Council and submitted by the Mayor, it finds it difficult to do so. As such, some budget allocations may not be in the best interest of the community.

Ireland's Macroeconomic Policymaking & Reform

In 1987, Ireland launched a social partnership initiative to guide and reform macroeconomic policy-making. By some accounts, this process was instrumental in turning around a moribund Irish economy, the poor man of Europe. This is how they did it.[13] The National Economic & Social Council (NESC)—comprised of government representatives, unions, businesses, business organizations, farmers, community-based organizations and volunteer groups, a cross section of Irish society—is convened. The

Ministry of Finance presents central economic forecasts, along with background papers, summarizing issues, context and concerns to NESC. NESC members—including government policy makers—deliberate, negotiate, compromise, and build consensus. NESC produces a negotiated review of the Ministry's forecast, including balancing the budget, making capital expenditures, levying taxes, and implementing programs. The review serves as a guide for policymakers in executing macroeconomic and fiscal policy at the national level.

Although the model is representative of the diversity of the nation, an apparent weakness is that it does not offer individual citizens direct access to decision-makers, depending instead on organizational representatives acting in their stead.

Evaluations

Unfortunately, few of these initiatives have been formally evaluated for their effectiveness in promoting transparency, accountability, and performance. It is unclear what critical factors must be taken into account in designing and implementing initiatives. Most of the case studies of best practices are descriptive and sometimes used for promotional purposes. This should not deter policymakers from continuing to experiment with different citizen participation processes. Indeed, this is the only way to see what works. What should not be lost in looking at a catalog of innovative approaches is that there now appears to be widespread global agreement that new modes of citizen participation are desirable complements to constitutionally based or traditional democratic institutions and ought to be explored and extended.

An appendix below outlines the major evaluation issues and questions that should guide both internal assessment and external evaluations of the effects of a system of social accountability. It includes figures illustrating the general relationships between the established democratic political process and specialized citizen participation processes organized around information on performance and progress in achieving social objectives.

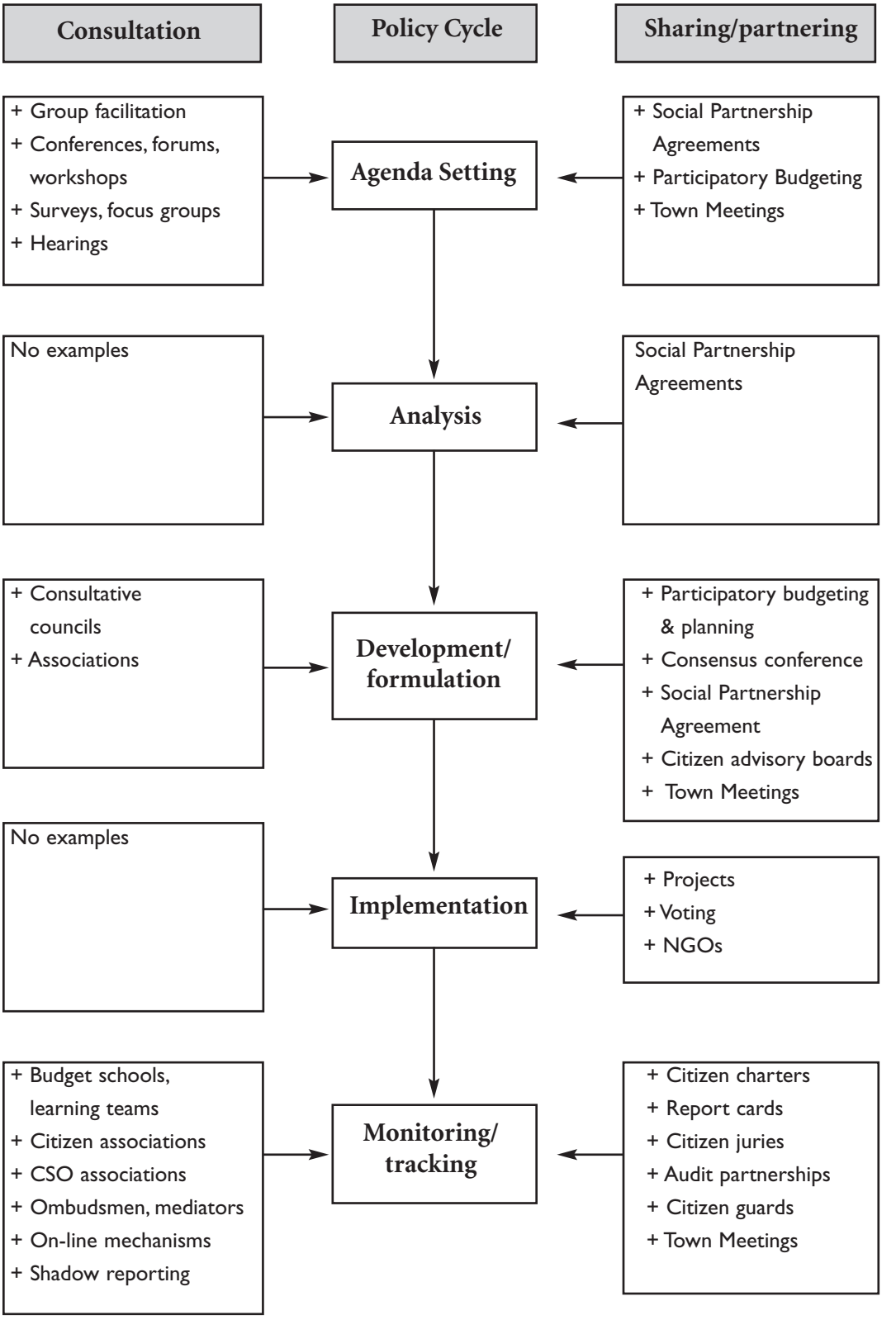
Appendix A: Consultative Process Evaluation Framework

Evaluation Issue	How to address the issue
1. Was the consultation process conducted in line with best practice?	* Ask stakeholders if they are satisfied with the process. * Assess whether adequate resources are in place to conduct the consultation. * Check whether process followed best practice guidelines. * Assess whether the choice of an online tool was appropriate for the consultation.
2. Were the consultation objectives and what was expected of the citizens made clear?	* Ask stakeholders if they understand what is being asked. * Assess whether the participants' contributions are appropriate.
3. Did the consultation reach the target audience?	* Assess public awareness of the consultation before and afterward. * Identify who and where potential participants are, in terms of demographics and geographic characteristics.
4. Was the information provided appropriate, relevant, sufficient and contextual?	* Assess how easily the participants can access the information. * Assess whether the participants contributions were informed by it. * Assess whether understanding of the issues raised increased in complexity and sophistication. * Assess whether information was presented in context of resource constraints, especially budgetary. * Assess whether information was sufficient to inform the process.

5. Were the contributions informed and appropriate?	* Assess to what extent the contributions address the consultation issue. * Assess how easily the participants could access and learn from contributions from others. * Classify contributions according to whether they provide information, ask questions, or make suggestions.
6. Was feedback provided both during and after the consultation?	* Assess whether questions are answered by government during consultation. * Assess the extent to which the government feedback relates to the contributions. * Assess whether proceedings and documents reflect what was actually stated. * Assess whether language in written documents is neutral and unbiased.
7. Was there an impact on policy content?	* Determine to what extent a change of policy is possible given the stage in the decision-making that the consultation occurred. * Assess to what extent contributions are reflected in the revised or newly formulated policy.
8. Were democratic rules of engagement clearly stated and adhered throughout the process?	* Monitor compliance at initial presentation and implementation.

Source: Adapted from: "Engaging Citizens Online for Better Policy-making," Policy Brief, OECD Observer, March 2003, www.oecd.org/publications/Pol_brief.

Appendix B: Modes of Citizen Engagement & Linkage Points to Policy-Making Cycle



Notes

[1] The authors would like to thank Joaquin Moreno of NPD was also instrumental in the preparation of this paper.

[2] Please address comments to Terry Buss at tbuss@napwash.org.

[3] www.worldbank.org/participation/

[4] The best sources of information are found at websites: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, www.oecd.org/topic/0,2686,en_2649_37405_1_1_1_1_37405,00.html; UN Development Program, www.undp.org/governance/index.htm; World Bank, www.worldbank.org/participation/; Inter-American Development Bank, www.iadb.org/exr/topics/civsoc.htm.

[5] *Human Development Report 2002, Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World*, United Nations Development Programme, 2002, p. 82, http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2002/en/pdf/complete.pdf

[6] See Barber, 1984; Mansbridge, 1980; Redburn and Buss, 2003

[7] The World Bank's "Governance and Public Sector Reform" division has numerous relevant indicators and accompanying data available at www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/indicators.htm. A literature on this issue is found in Katherine Pasteur & Jutta Blauert, Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation in Latin America (University of Sussex, Institute of Development Studies, May 2000).

[8] There are few examples of initiatives that obligate public officials to implement courses of action proposed or produced through citizen participation process. Villa El Salvador, Peru permits citizens to vote—"up or down"—certain municipal plans proposed for the city (Urban Management Program, UNDP, www.pgualc.org). Some American cities provide grant monies to citizen groups to spend as they see fit.

[9] The opportunities offered by such technology are just now emerging (For an overview of many recent applications to democratic governance, see Riley and Riley June 2003).

[10] An excellent review of many of these strategies is found at Action Learning Program on Participatory Processes for Poverty Reduction Strategies, Social Development Department, World Bank, www.worldbank.org/participation/

[11] www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/egov/gyandootcs.htm

[12] www.worlbank.org/participation/web/webfiles/cepemcase1.htm

[13] www.worldbank.org/participation/web/webfiles/ireland.htm

Academy Fellows & Staff

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