

DIIS REPORT

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Social Accountability Mechanisms and
Access to Public Service Delivery in
Rural Africa

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Abbreviations

ASDP	Agricultural Sector Development Program
BiH	Bosnia & Herzegovina
CBO	Community Based Organizations
CCHP	Comprehensive Council Health Plan
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CHF	Community Health Funds
CHMT	Council Health Management Team
CHSB	Council Health Service Boards
DALDO	District Agricultural Officer
DANIDA	Danish International Development Assistance
DFF	District Farmer Fora
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DMO	District Medical Officer
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
HFC	Health Facility Committees
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus infection / Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
HR	Human Rights
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
ICHRP	International Council on Human Rights Policy
IED Afrique	Innovations Environnement Développement Afrique
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
LG	Local Government
LGA	Local Government Administration
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoH	Ministry of Health
MP	Member of Parliament
MUHURI	Muslims for Human Rights
MVIWATA	Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory and Development Services
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NHIF	National Hospital Insurance Fund
O&OD	Opportunities and Obstacles to Development
RBA	Rights-Based Approach

RECODEF	Regroupement Communautaire pour le Développement de Fissel
RMAP	Rights-based Municipal Development Programme
SCFF	Sub-County Farmer Fora
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agencies
UNDP	United National Development Program
WBI	World Bank Institute
WDR	World Development Report
WFF	Ward Farmer Fora
WIDER	World Institute of Development Economics Research

Executive summary

This study rationale is to fill a knowledge gap about the performance of social accountability initiatives in rural Africa South of Sahara supported by foreign aid in the context of decentralization. Based on a review of available literature the study focuses on the experience of social accountability initiatives, namely public expenditure tracking surveys (PETS), participatory budgeting, community-based monitoring, participatory planning and priority setting and demand drive service provision. The study seeks to review social accountability not just as a technical tool within the context of decentralization and broader political engagement. Social accountability focuses on the demand-side of good governance by aiming to strengthen the voices of citizens to demand greater accountability and responsiveness directly from public officials and service providers. As such, social accountability can be broadly defined as citizen-led action to demand accountability for providers. Social accountability can be understood as institutional arrangements that aim to ‘facilitate the participation of ordinary citizens in the public policy process’.

Social accountability is widely seen as part of the ongoing process of democratization and as a reaction to the ‘governance gap’, for example, the continued inadequate governance of service provision in rural Africa. Social accountability measures are sought in order to increase the cost-effectiveness of investments in public services. By supporting social accountability initiatives at the local level, international donor agencies hope that civil society and citizen groups can hold the state accountable for using the budget as planned and preventing financial leakage. Many social accountability mechanisms have become an integral component of the ‘second-generation reforms’ that were introduced to improve institutional arrangements (getting institutions right) following the implementation of structural adjustment policies in the mid-1990s. The focus is commonly on good governance through the institutionalization of participatory approaches with the aim of attaining development objectives. In addition, the rise in social accountability initiatives is also associated with a more radical agenda that focuses on ‘autonomous’ spaces of participatory governance through support for citizens’ struggles and social movements linked to rights-based approaches that conceptualize states as ‘duty bearers’ responsible for fulfilling their obligations to citizens.

The DIIS report identifies three types of output that can be expected from supporting social accountability: improving public service provision, increasing

the legitimacy of the state, and local participation in democratic governance. A recent DAC report concludes that there remains a lack of evidence regarding the existence of a causal relationship between democracy and development. A review of the literature reveals that, although there are several positive findings, so far there is not enough evidence to support the claim that participatory governance causes improvements in government performance. The DIIS report argues that there is a need for research-based impact evaluations linking efforts to support social accountability interventions with improved access and improved quality of services for the poor.

On the basis of a review of available evidence, the DIIS report concludes that:

- Social accountability mechanisms that involve the devolution of real power over budget utilization to local citizens' groups is often implemented with the support of international development partners and often resisted by local politicians. The Uganda case of deepening democracy illustrates that it is possible to turn around such hostility and create synergies by including politicians as observers in citizens' institutions and allowing success to be shared with or attributed to politicians.
- Based on the Uganda case the DIIS report concludes that giving service users direct control over how to spend the budget is a very effective, perhaps the most effective, mechanism for improving social accountability available today.
- Social accountability mechanisms are seriously under-institutionalized and would be more effective if they were anchored in subdistrict-level institutions consisting of representatives of service users.
- Working within existing institutions has for long been regarded as a practice of good governance within decentralization programs. However, deepening democratization with a view to enhancing both quality and access to services requires legitimate organizations that are dedicated to specific users, which seldom exist. Therefore new institutions that can co-produce services are required if social accountability is to be successfully institutionalized.
- A gap continues to exist between the intention to institutionalize participation and the reality of the exclusion of poorer and marginalized citizens. This can be attributed to failures to implement or sustain policy gains, resistance to transfers of resources and capacities to lower levels of governments, elite capture, and reprisals against those who challenge the status quo. Middle-ground rights-based approaches insist on accountability, transparency, participation and non-discrimination. Moreover, the DIIS report shows that social inclusion

can also be achieved by means of the social dynamics within user organizations linked to social accountability mechanisms.

- The experience of many development programs indicates that according rights without obligations may undermine the effectiveness of service provision. Some services, in particular those that are highly discretionary, require co-production to ensure quality. If services are offered to all citizens without requiring them to contribute or engage as organised users, co-production will not take place, and the quality of services may decline.
- New intermediary political spaces, created by local associations and social movements that are involved in democratic mediation, emerge as a source of change and are viewed as having democratic potential. Based on a review of experiences, the DIIS report concludes that, although there are many challenges, invited political space can enhance access to and the quality of service. However, this requires well-planned interventions and political support within local government. The DIIS report disagrees with those who dismiss the notion of invited political space.
- Many technical social accountability initiatives ignore the political context and power politics in which they take place. Middle-ground rights-based approaches may add value to programs supporting technical approaches to social accountability in terms of their increased focus on political transformation and power relations. NGOs that support rights-based approaches make calls for an enhanced focus on training for the transformation of local government institutions so that they can deliver services, as well as for the sustained devolution of resources and powers, which together provide an important enabling environment for the local realization of rights and participation in development and governance.
- Few African countries have agreed to or indeed have the capacity to promote, protect and fulfil social, economic, cultural, political and civic rights. From a practical development point of view, one can seriously question the extent to which a legalistic HRBA is achievable in a context in Africa in which enabling policies regarding rights, devolution and participation are absent. The experience of SIDA's support in Kenya shows that interactions between LG approaches and middle-ground rights-based approaches can be mutually beneficial for both the realization of rights and the strengthening of local democratic government in terms of enhancing broad-based social accountability and of enabling tangible development benefits based on local demands.

I. Introduction

Social accountability is about ‘the effectiveness with which the governed can exercise influence over the governors’ (Hyden, 1992:14). Social accountability is concerned with the responsibility and responsiveness exercised by state authorities during the period in between political elections, as well as the ability of citizens to make claims and hold those who exercise power to account for their actions. Enhancing social accountability thus requires a focus on changing the relationship between citizen and state by establishing a social contract in which the state/government and citizens hold each other to account and engage in dialogue.

Social accountability has been supported by development agencies and NGOs over the past decade under headings such as “citizen participation”, “demand driven”, “voice”, “transparency”, “good governance” and “rights based approaches”. The definition of social accountability is contested and depend on whether emphasis is on technical mechanisms that allows citizens to hold the state accountable or on changing the political engagement and power relations.

An example of the first emphasis is Malena and McNeil (World Bank 2010:1) who defines social accountability as “the broad range of actions and mechanisms beyond voting that citizens can use to hold the state account, as well as actions on the part of government, civil society, media and other societal actors that promote or facilitate these efforts”. Such mechanisms are understood to include demand driven initiatives supported by the state, civil society, citizens or a combination of the three. The rationale for social accountability associated with this emphasis is to increase development effectiveness (World Bank 2004). An example of the second emphasis is Claasen and Alpín-Lardiés (2010:3) who see social accountability as “about how citizens demand and enforce accountability from those in power”. This definition is largely concerned with citizen-led forms of accountability and claimed political space in between elections. The development outcomes associated with this literature are quality of governance and empowerment (McGee and Gaventa 2010). Section 2.1 of this report discusses the concept of social accountability in the context of rural Africa, which is the focus of this study.

This report presents the main findings of a desk study on experiences with support for social accountability in Sub-Saharan African. The study was undertaken by

the Danish Institute for International Studies, with funding from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

1.1 Why is support for social accountability viewed as important?

Support for social accountability mechanisms in rural Sub-Saharan Africa has increased over the past decade, in particular over the past five years (World Bank 2012). Social accountability mechanisms are today being implemented all over the African continent and are becoming firmly anchored in government policies and donor and NGO strategies. This study has identified five sets of drivers behind this increased support for social accountability.

First, the increased support for social accountability can be seen as a reaction to the ‘governance gap’, for example, the continued inadequate governance of service provision in rural Africa. A key argument for promoting social accountability mechanisms is that these can increase the cost-effectiveness of investments in public services, as involving citizens is likely to result in improved planning and priorities, better monitoring of activities, and checks on how the budget is spend. It is thought that this will result in better access and quality of public services for all.

Secondly, support for social accountability can be seen as part of the ongoing process of democratization that started with the introduction of multiparty elections in the early 1990s, followed by decentralization reforms and periodic elections of local government councillors. Responsibility for public service provision in a number of sectors (including health, education, agriculture and roads) was devolved to local government in the late 1990s.

However, this has not resulted in citizens becoming closer to the state as many had hoped. Since the early 2000s many countries have undertaken a process of deepening democracy, with users of services being given influence over governance at the unit of service provision (so-called ‘invited political space’).

Thirdly, much of the funding for social accountability initiatives has come from the World Bank and other development partners. This may reflect the changes in the post-Paris Declaration international aid architecture, including reduced funding of projects and increasingly coordinated multi-donor support for central government’s implementation of policies. With this shift, international donor agencies

lost some of their direct control and accountability over investments. However, the concern over corruption has remained as strong as ever. By supporting social accountability initiatives at the local level, international donor agencies hope that civil society and citizen groups can hold the state accountable for using the budget as planned and prevent financial leakage.

Fourthly, many parties, particularly international NGOs and groups of academics (i.e. IDS in Sussex), have become increasingly vocal in their criticism of the good governance agenda. They argue for a more radical agenda where the focus should be on 'autonomous' spaces of participatory governance through support for citizens' struggles and social movements. This is linked to support for human rights-based approaches (HRBA) that takes their points of departure in the internationally recognized framework of political, social, economic and civic rights, which are translated into shared standards for the state's obligations and citizen's claims to rights. A HRBA perspective, it is held, heightens the emphasis on accountability relations between states and individuals by conceptualizing states as 'duty-bearers' responsible for fulfilling their obligations towards their citizens. It is a relative new phenomenon in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) that people are starting to demand services as rights rather than privileges, especially in rural areas. While the vast majority of HRBA projects are based in national capitals, in light of decentralization policies there is a tendency among some development agencies to use an HRBA framework to support activities at the local government level (Friis-Hansen and Kyed 2009).

1.2 Study aim and rationale

This study was undertaken as part of the ReCom (<http://www1.wider.unu.edu/content/about>) which aim is to research and communicate what works and what can be achieved through development assistance. The rationale for this study is to fill a knowledge gap about the performance of social accountability in rural Africa South of Sahara supported by foreign aid. In specific, the study aims to generate evidence-based conclusions regarding experiences in supporting social accountability mechanisms, with a focus on rural Africa in the context of decentralization. The review includes five overall categories of social accountability mechanisms, namely:

- Public expenditure tracking systems (PETS) (Björkman and Svensson, 2009, Reinikka and Svensson, 2005).
- Participatory budgeting (Gueye, Guèye, 2010)

- Community-based monitoring (report cards, score cards and social audits)
- Priority-setting in health service delivery (based on a Tanzanian case study).
- Demand-driven provision of agricultural advisory services (based on a Ugandan case study)

The study will focus primarily on efforts to strengthen social accountability relations between public service providers and users in rural areas and will complement other ReCom studies on decentralization and public service provision in urban Africa (Tripp, 2012; Stren, 2012). The study will focus in particular on how such support for accountability mechanisms has affected the rural poor's access to and quality of public services (substantive dimension), as well as their level of inclusion in decision-making processes (procedural dimension). Furthermore, it will outline some of the key issues and experiences to be considered in development policy and cooperation. Finally, based on experiences in supporting local governance and social accountability mechanisms, this study aims to present and discuss some of the dilemmas involved in implementing projects based on human rights-based approaches (HRBA), particularly in the context of rural Africa. The study seeks to review social accountability not just as a technical tool within the context of decentralization and broader political engagement.

1.3 Methodology

Within the given timeframe of the study (August-December 2012), this analysis of social accountability will draw upon findings from the general governance literature to illuminate broader trends and approaches. Support for social accountability has been addressed in a number of previous studies. Most of the literature reviewed here only focuses on specific aspects of social accountability, often as part of a wider analysis. Much of the literature is theoretical in nature, and wellgrounded empirical studies of social accountability are still rare. Two recent World Bank publications (2010, 2012) seek to provide an overview of support for technical approaches to social accountability. This review differs from these in providing a more critical analysis and in seeking to place social accountability in a wider context of politics and governance.

This desk study will also draw on experience from two case studies: Danida support for district health services in Tanzania, and a case study from Soroti District in Uganda of joint government/multi-donor support for agricultural advisory services (NAADS).

The selected case studies are therefore mostly concentrated on East Africa, where experiences with social accountability mechanisms are by far the most rigorously documented. However, examples from other regions in Africa, different types of service delivery (Pritchett and Woolcock, 2004) and efforts to strengthen accountability relationships are drawn on in order to broaden the scope of the report. This diversity enables us to illuminate questions of the appropriateness of supporting social accountability relationships in different geographical and institutional contexts. In particular, experience in strengthening social accountability is highly relevant for service delivery in weak institutional and fragile contexts, but unfortunately goes beyond the limited scope of this report.

More specifically, the study will review experiences and lessons learnt from past interventions (policies, institutions, programs and projects) and will be guided by four key questions:

- What is the aim in increasing the social accountability of local government institutions?
- What is at the aim of increasing citizens' participation?
- What is at the aim of improving citizens' access to public service provision?
- What are challenges to such interventions, and what is the potential for scaling up?

When examining these questions, the study will first examine the overall theoretical and strategic approaches of the interventions studied, which can provide a basis for recommendations for how and to what extent social accountability should be linked to other elements of decentralization interventions (e.g. broader governance efforts). Secondly, the study will analyse the different governance mechanisms and frameworks that contribute to social accountability and improved access to public service delivery.

The section on human rights-based approaches (HRBA) and social accountability draws extensively on a report entitled 'Participation, Decentralization and Human Rights: A Review of Approaches for Strengthening Voice and Accountability in Local Governance' (Esbern Friis-Hansen and Kyed, 2009).

1.4 Outline of the Research Report

Section two discusses the concept of accountability in general and the differences between horizontal, vertical and social accountability. The section goes on to discuss the context on which the study focuses, namely decentralization and public sector

service delivery in rural Africa. Thereafter the section traces the theoretical trends in the current understanding of social accountability. Section three identifies five types of social accountability mechanism, namely: PETS; participatory budgeting; community-based monitoring; participatory planning and priority setting; and demand-driven service provision. This section characterizes each of these forms of social accountability, reviews experiences in Africa and discusses challenges to their implementation. The first three sub-sections are based on a general review of the literature, while the last two seek to draw on available reports for two case studies: health in Tanzania and agricultural development in Uganda. The fourth section discusses the social accountability aspects of HRBA in the context of decentralized service delivery. The final section draws general and specific lessons from supporting social accountability initiatives and discusses the key findings. The report ends with a list of the references that have been consulted and an annex outlining a comprehensive list of PETS carried out in Africa that we identified during the study.

2. Social accountability in the context of the decentralization of public service delivery

2.1 Conceptualizing social accountability

2.1.1 What is accountability?

Over the past decade, the idea that accountability, local governance and democracy in Africa are mutually reinforcing has become a new orthodoxy in both development assistance (World Bank, 2003) and the scholarly literature. There are many overlaps and synergies between these two perspectives, since they share a common point of departure in addressing the governance failures of the post-colonial state in Africa. Much of the literature also shares both human rights values (transparency, accountability, participation) and neoliberal western norms (democracy, anti-corruption, poverty reduction, effective service delivery). Since the literature discusses several types of accountability, this section will define and delimit social accountability in relation to other types of accountability.

Accountability refers to a relationship between two parties in which one is accountable to the other. Such a relationship may either be lacking in accountability or be highly accountable. Furthermore, it is a relationship between two key actors: the targets of accountability are the parties that are obliged to account for their actions and to face sanctions, that is, the duty bearers (institutions of public authority and public officials), while the seekers of accountability are those parties entitled to explanations or to impose punishments as rights-holders (citizens). Different academic traditions (i.e. economists, sociologists, human rights advocates) each use their own concepts to describe the accountability relationship. Agents that are held accountable are characterized as supply-side (economists), accountees (sociologists) or duty-bearers (human rights advocates), while agents asking for answers and enforcing sanctions are characterized as demand-side (economists), accounters (sociologist) or rights-holders (human rights advocates) (O'Neil et al., 2007). These concepts share the notion that accountability relationships are brokered by agents with fixed roles acting within formal accountability mechanisms. However, within this definition we need to distinguish between *de jure* accountability: who one is accountable to according to the law (e.g. states as accountable to citizens), and *de facto* accountability: who one is accountable to due to relationships of power or the practical power to impose a sanction (e.g. state as accountable to donors). Finally, accountability also involves a dimension of power in terms of the capacity to require someone to engage in giving

reasons to justify their behaviour and the capacity to impose a penalty for poor performance (Goetz and Jenkins, 2005): that is, it is a means of restraining power (Joshi and Houtzager, 2012:147).

2.1.2 *Horizontal and vertical accountability*

Political theory distinguishes between vertical and horizontal dimensions of political accountability. Traditional political and bureaucratic forms of accountability – also referred to as horizontal, state-side, supply-side or institutional – refer to checks and balances and institutional oversight, for example, the principle that local or district-level government institutions are answerable to higher-level political institutions such as a central ministry or regulatory body (Smith 2007)¹. However, horizontal channels of accountability through the legislature or public institutions (e.g. ombudsmen) have failed to oversee the work of the providers (Joshi, 2008). Furthermore, developing countries are often more accountable to donors than their own citizens, and developing country governments are often more engaged in increasing their external legitimacy and support from donors (in order to ensure resources) than in actually improving performance. This, according to Andrews et al. (2012), is one of the major reasons for the low rate of success of various policy reforms in Africa, resulting the so-called ‘capability traps’.

In contrast to horizontal accountability, vertical or demand side political accountability is concerned with the power relations between the state and its citizens and refers to the accountability of state to non-state actors in which citizens and their associations play a direct role in holding the powerful to account. It is the means whereby ordinary citizens, the media and civil-society actors attempt to enforce standards of performance by public officials and service providers. In this definition, periodic free and fair elections are the classic form of vertical accountability (Goetz and Jenkins, 2005). Most political theory refers to political accountability, which is viewed as key a component of a democratic system. Political accountability is when elected leaders are answerable to the public for their actions and decisions, thus providing checks and balances over the power of elected leaders. Elections are, however, limited to a certain number of actors, and are not able to ensure access to services for the poor. Vertical accountability mechanisms also include more conventional accountability mechanisms such as public auditing, ombudsmen, the judiciary and the media.

¹ Horizontal political accountability is not the same as *administrative accountability*, which refers to the internal rules, norms and mechanisms through which lower-level civil servants are accountable to their superiors.

2.1.3 *Social accountability*

The timing of the surge in support for social accountability initiatives in Africa around the turn of this century was no accident. The implementation of structural adjustment programs, which started in the 1980s and was completed in the mid-1990s, had seriously undermined the accountability of African states to their citizens (Friis-Hansen eds. 2000) and led to popular protests and criticism. Some of the arguments for supporting social accountability emerged from a growing unease over the adequacy of political accountability as manifested in multiparty elections and the rule of law inscribed in national constitutions. However, accountability has grown in importance in Africa as a conditionality of development assistance and as a policy actively promoted by the World Bank, DFID and other aid organizations as part of public-sector reforms over the past decade. As a reaction to the insufficiency of both horizontal and vertical forms of accountability, a range of mechanisms and approaches has emerged through which citizens can hold states to account in ways other than elections and bureaucratic procedures (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, 2006, Joshi, 2008) (see Figure 1).

Social accountability mechanisms are supposed to complement state-driven horizontal accountability mechanisms that often fail to improve quality and access to service delivery. Social accountability focuses on the demand-side of good governance in aiming to strengthen the voice of citizens to demand greater accountability and responsiveness directly from public officials and service providers. As such, social accountability can be broadly defined as citizen-led action to demand accountability from providers (Joshi and Houtzager, 2012:146).

Using social accountability mechanisms citizens may engage with powerful actors in either state institutions or the private sector contracted by the state, across an array of platforms that are social rather than political, institutional or bureaucratic. As such they aim to go beyond the formal democratic institutions of elections, the recall of representatives or internal government audits, though they may serve to trigger these political and institutional mechanisms (Claasen et al., 2010, McNeil and Malena, 2010, Houtzager et al., 2008). Social accountability is thus vertical accountability defined as a broad range of actions, beyond voting, that citizens can use to hold the state accountable. Social accountability mechanisms are participatory governance mechanisms defined as institutional arrangements that aim to 'facilitate the participation of ordinary citizens in the public policy process' (Andersson and van Laerhoven, 2007: 1090). They involve citizens in decision-making in the distribution of public funds between communities and the design of public policies, as well

as the monitoring and evaluation of government spending. Although thematically related, social accountability mechanisms differ from community-based development schemes in which community members participate in the planning, implementation and monitoring of particular development projects within their community (Speer, 2012: 2379). Instead, participatory governance mechanisms are now being implemented in a large number of developing countries and have become anchored in most donors' and NGOs' development strategies. In contrast to community-based development, they focus more on the interaction and relationship between citizens or representatives of communities and/or civil-society organizations on the one hand and local government officials and service providers on the other.

2.2 Social accountability in the context of decentralization and public-sector reforms

Having conceptualized the social accountability relationship, we now turn to contextualize how social accountability is to be conceived within the decentralization and local government framework. The decentralization literature in itself is rather extensive and well accounted for. Since decentralization focuses more on how responsibilities and public resources should be distributed between different levels of government, we will limit the section to deal with the particular aspects focusing on the question of how citizens should be involved in decision-making by public officials between elections (Speer, 2012).

Local government is a set of formal institutions established to deliver a range of specified services to relatively small geographical jurisdictions that typically take the form of an elected council representing an urban municipality or rural district, supported by a professional staff responsible for day-to-day management (World Bank, 2003). There are considerable variations in the institutionalization of local government structures in terms of age, coverage and capacity across African countries.

Decentralization has featured as an important aspect of public-sector reforms in many LDCs over the last twenty years. Decentralization reform has received considerable support from the World Bank, UNCDF and many bilateral donors, including Danida. The emphasis on decentralization is the consequence of debates suggesting that ineffective public service delivery in many developing countries is largely attributable to governance failures arising from a lack of strong accountability to citizens. Failures in centrally governed and provided public services had created a strong consensus among governments and international aid agencies on the need

for institutional reform and the devolution of governance. Much of the support for social accountability can be seen as part of the broader 'good governance' agenda launched by the Bretton Woods institutions in the aftermath of the 1980 structural adjustment programs' concern with 'rolling back the state'. In Africa support for democratic decentralization is linked to neo-liberal thinking, partly written within the World Bank, which sought institutional solutions to challenges of government service provision, including leakage and elite capture.

Support for decentralization is thought to enhance political accountability and the responsiveness of local government politicians and executive staff towards citizens (users of services), thereby enhancing the legitimacy of local government. It is accordingly promoted in the general policy literature on good governance of public service (Pritchett and Woolcock, 2004, World Bank, 2003). Decentralization is thought to enhance political accountability in that the citizen can in principle vote politicians who fail to deliver services out of office. However, experience has shown that the accountability of local government administrations is largely oriented upwards and has rarely attained the kind of (social) accountability, responsibility and responsiveness that was envisaged as the outcome of decentralization reform (Shah, 2006).

Top-down mechanisms focusing on formal structures (horizontal accountability – see definition above) within development governments were not successful in preventing the misuse of public financial resources by public agencies. As McGee and Gaventa point out (2011: 7), 'the traditional ways of delivering political and bureaucratic accountability, such as intra- government controls or elections, are increasingly found to be limited in scope'. After the state-centric mode of service delivery was discredited from the late 1980s onwards, reforms became part of larger processes of decentralization, transferring public services to more localized service delivery. These reforms anticipated physical proximity, better information and yardstick competition, resulting from the decentralization of governance, and leading to better accountability and allocation efficiency (Pritchett and Woolcock, 2004).

Reforms associated with social accountability in Africa are sometimes called 'second-generation' reforms, as they were introduced as a follow-up to improve institutional arrangements (getting institutions right) following the implementation of structural adjustment policies in the mid-1990s. The idea was to focus on governance and institutions as a key to reaching development objectives and achieving poverty reduction. In this optic, the good governance agenda assumed that increased transparency of the use of public resources in particular would hinder the misuse of

funds and leakages. As Joshi and Houtzager (2012) argue, 'Strengthening public accountability is emerging as a key strategy for improving public services and making progress towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals'.

The involvement of ordinary citizens directly in making policy decisions over the use of public funds for service provision is different from, and moves beyond, community-based or project participation, which are often more instrumental (and less political) and focus more on the planning, implementation and evaluation of particular local development projects. Social accountability can be understood as institutional arrangements that aim to 'facilitate the participation of ordinary citizens in the public policy process' (Andersson and van Laerhoven, 2007:1090). Today, social accountability mechanisms, in one form or another, have become an integral component of decentralization and sector-policy reforms in many African countries.

A key motive for international aid agencies supporting social accountability in the context of local government, which has grown in importance over the past decade, is a need to improve on the performance of existing government accountability mechanisms to justify continued investments. Such investments in social accountability have by and large been driven by international aid agencies, while national governments (and civil society) have been central in the implementation process. During the past two decades, international aid agencies have increasingly supported social accountability aimed at enhancing citizens' participation in planning, monitoring and evaluation. The perceived need among international aid agencies for building strong social accountability mechanisms at the (local) level of service provision in between elections has grown, as aid is increasingly being provided as central budget support rather than through projects. In relation to public service delivery, social accountability is a way for policy planners to engage citizens in making sure that they receive access to basic public services. This is based on the idea that information about what one has the right to will empower people to demand the services they are entitled to.

The distinction between measures introduced by the public sector to improve accountability (i.e. public accountability) and civil society-led activities to influence local government programs (social accountability) is becoming increasingly blurred. What is important when groups of local citizens or civil-society organizations are invited to participate in social accountability relationships is the extent to which the agendas are pre-determined or circumscribed in ways that principally serve to legitimize prior goals, or whether they offer civil society real opportunities to become involved in key policy questions.

Social accountability is closely related to a human rights-based approach to development, anticipating that all citizens have the right to obtain justifications and explanations of the use of public resources and the performance of public officials. The obligation on government officials to be accountable to citizens derives from notions of citizen's and rights and rights to information, which are often enshrined in constitutions, and the broader set of human rights. In theory, social accountability offers mechanisms to monitor and protect these rights by, for instance, disseminating information about entitlements or soliciting citizen feedback about public-sector performance. The concept of social accountability underlines the right of citizens to expect and ensure that government acts in the best interests of the people. This is of particular relevance to bilateral donors (e.g. Denmark, Finland and EU), which are increasingly focusing on (human) rights-based approaches ((H)RBA) in development programs, based on the assumption that increasing citizens' demands and building up the capacities of governments are effective means of reaching development objectives.

2.3 Theoretical trends in understanding social accountability

2.3.1 Overview

According to McGee and Gaventa (2010) and Joshi (2008), one can broadly distinguish between the technical and political approaches to social accountability. From the academic literature, we can identify a third hybrid understanding of social accountability.

First, inspired by new public management theory (NPM) (McGee and Gaventa, 2011), one strand of literature, particularly represented by the World Bank (McNeil and Malena, 2010, Ringold et al., 2012), approaches social accountability as a technical issue focusing on local government performance in providing aid efficiency and directly measurable development outcomes in terms of public service delivery, that is, the *substantive dimension* of performance (Bratton, 2012). This technical approach to social accountability focuses on a particular set of mechanisms and activities and asks whether the involvement of citizens has led to reduced leakages of public expenditures and more effective service delivery (McNeil and Malena, 2010).

Secondly, criticizing the NPM approach, another body of literature originating from a 'deepening democracy' ideology stresses that social accountability processes are deeply infused with power and contestation and are often deeply embedded in local politics (Goetz and Jenkins, 2005, McNeil and Malena, 2010, Goetz, 2003, Goetz and Jenkins,

2001, Cornwall, 2009, Cornwall, 2002, Cornwall, 2000, Cornwall, 2007, Cornwall, 2004, Cornwall and Gaventa, 2000, Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi, 2004). From this perspective of the 'politics of accountability', the criterion of success is related to the *procedural dimension* of performance (Bratton, 2012), which refers to *how* citizens are involved in policy decisions and which aims to achieve equity through participation (Piper and von Lieres, 2011) and by changing often culturally and socially embedded power relationships in favour of the poor and the marginalized (Goetz and Jenkins, 2005).

Finally, a third, more ethnographic body of literature makes it explicit that public service delivery (PSD) in rural Africa is characterized by a diverse number of actors involved in such delivery and that such providers often transgress the boundaries between state, non-state and the private public (Körling, 2010, Joshi and Moore, 2004, Mitlin, 2008). Against this background, and to avoid rigid standardized approaches to public service delivery, this body of literature suggests that it can be useful to look at the interplay between different actors as institutional co-production in order to understand the strengths and weaknesses of organizational arrangements of public service delivery in rural Africa (Joshi and Moore, 2004) while proposing a pragmatic and context-specific approach to the governance structures involved in public service delivery.

2.3.2 *Technical approach to social accountability*

The first approach discussed above focuses on aid efficiency and development-specific outcomes as represented by the World Bank. The World Bank's social development department has particularly promoted this approach in order to improve governance, increase development effectiveness, and enhance citizens' empowerment.² The 2001 world development report entitled 'Attacking poverty' (World Bank, 2001), and in particular the influential 2004 World Development Report, *Making service work for the poor people* (World Bank, 2003), have shaped the idea that citizens can contribute to improving the quality of public service delivery by holding policy makers and service providers accountable through closer interaction between providers and the citizens using these services. The central argument is that accountability relationships between key stakeholders in service delivery – citizens, policy makers and service providers – are not transparent, formalized or effective. Therefore, a whole range of problems occur in service delivery, including inadequate spending on basic public services, the

² For an overview of the World Bank's thoughts on social accountability and local governance, see <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/0,,contentMDK:22392474~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:244363,00.html>

skewing of service provision towards the rich, inadequate coverage for the poor, a lack of resources, corruption, staff absenteeism and the poor quality of services. Since the WDR 2004, the need for strengthening accountability relationships between policy makers, service providers and citizens has been at the top of the poverty reduction agenda and represents one of the three conceptual pillars in the World Bank's Social Development Strategy (Malena et al., 2004).

Ideally, if citizens participate in either planning and budgeting or in oversight and advocacy, they are thought to be more likely to be heard and to be able to influence government policies and service delivery, leading to better quality services (Mwakagenda, 2011: 3). In the literature on social accountability, there are descriptions of a number of strategies that citizens have used to address accountability in terms of various participatory and citizen-feedback surveys, as well as various attempts to ensure citizen representation by creating local-level service-specific institutions (World Bank, 2009).

Lately, this framework of social accountability has often been translated into a number of particular mechanisms and activities that can be applied in order to achieve accountability. Within this framework, the extent to which a certain mechanism does or does not work is often interpreted as a question of design or implementation concerns. The World Bank Resource Book (2007), for instance, states very clearly what conditions need to be in place for social accountability to work. On the supply side, these include the right institutional framework, adequate and transparent information, the right capacity and the right attitudes on the part of local government officials. On the demand side, they include capable and well-functioning CSOs, the low cost and high gains of participation, and awareness of citizens' rights. The problem is, however, that in many contexts these conditions are never fulfilled. This says less about who becomes involved or about why collective actors demand social accountability under some conditions and not others.

Often these issues are dealt with in sentences reminding us that context, culture and geography are important. But what does that actually mean? And how is it dealt with in a development programme to such an extent that it engages with the local politics of development that is at the heart of the question of accountability? Although unequal power relations are mentioned as challenges, this approach does not question the premises of a technical approach that is suitable in sometimes volatile contexts where states are not always the only provider of public services and where one cannot assume a straight forward distinction between state and non-state actors. One

challenge for this study is that most of the experience in supporting social accountability mechanisms is based on a rather technical approach, and often it is the donors supporting these initiatives that also write the documentation and evaluations of the support. Thus, the review of the experiences mainly reflects this approach, as it is by far the best documented.

2.3.3 Deepening democracy

The second approach (see box 1) of deepening democracy argues that technical approaches ignore the political process involved in changing power relations. This strand of academic literature not only focuses on the technical and managerial aspects but pays attention to the political aspects of public service provision as well. In a recent article, Joshi and Houtzager (2012) argue that, as a key strategy to improve public services and achieve the MDGs, social accountability has tended to focus on social accountability as mechanism, a view which tends to depoliticize the processes through which the poor make claims. Instead they propose to conceptualize social accountability as an embedded part of the on-going political engagement of social actors, with the state addressing how access to services is achieved and distributed. However, the politics of accountability is much more difficult to measure. Democratic decentralization as a concept is used in the literature to signify the devolution of political power to lower levels of the state (Crook, 2003, Crook and Manor, 1998, Manor, 1999). This literature discusses the experience with citizens' involvement in making policy decisions between elections. This literature is linked with the 'deepening' democracy reforms associated with the new wave of decentralization reforms in Africa since the mid 1990s. During this period many government and international development partners have increasingly supported participatory governance arrangements for service provision at and below the local government level. Many sectors, including health, education, water supply, infrastructure and agricultural advisory services, have supported the organization of service users in governance of service provision.

However, to what extent deepening decentralization has succeeded in enhancing the political space for marginalized people is questionable. The external support of accountability initiatives by international aid agencies has been criticized for reducing the understanding of accountability to an apolitical and technical process. An influential development research institute, the participatory citizenship and accountability group in IDS in Sussex, was highly critical of the notion that accountability can be stimulated from outside support by creating an invited political space through the establishment of transparent institutional procedures and laws (Gaventa 2006a). The IDS group argues that social accountability is highly political in nature and closely

linked to the struggles of the poor for power and the distribution of resources and rights. The IDS researchers have therefore focused their studies on cases where citizens (often supported by global civil society) have obtained social accountability by claiming an 'autonomous' political space (Gaventa and Barrett, 2010). This literature, which is often associated with international NGOs, rejects participatory governance in its current form and seeks alternatives in the form of transformative participation and rights-based approaches. An IDS Working Paper sums up this position: 'To be meaningful, participatory processes must engage with and change power relationships' (Gaventa, 2006b: 4).

This literature criticizes democratic governance as it is supported by international aid agencies and national governments, where citizens are invited to engage in local government planning processes under institutional settings where they have no rights and limited potential for any real negotiation of power. Creating a political space for inviting communities to engage with local government will not in itself change existing power relations and may instead reproduce them (Cornwall, 2002).

Based on data collected by the Afrobarometer in 20 African countries between 2008 and 2009,³ (Bratton, 2012) examines local government performance from the point of view of the citizens in order to explain what causes these citizens' perceptions of local government's responsiveness. According to his findings, citizens regard local government councils as weak institutions with limited functions. In other words, they have a 'realistic understanding of the limited scope of local government, but they find fault with both the process of local decision-making and the substance of development outcomes' (Bratton, 2012: 516). In particular, people seem to be dissatisfied with their lack of inclusion in local government's decision-making processes. Thus particular attention needs to be paid to the *procedural dimensions* of local government performance (e.g. platforms for participation, public meetings with local government officials, face-to-face contact, direct interaction and organised collective action, in addition to the substance of public service provision).

In theory, service provision is a public good and is supposed to benefit the community as a whole. However, reality often provides a different picture (Mauxion, 2008). As such, inequality and marginalization, although mentioned as obstacles by the World

³ Bratton's material is based on 27,713 interviews in countries including Benin, Burkina Faso, Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe (see also Claasen, M., Alpín-Lardiés, C. & Ayer, V. 2010. Social Accountability in Africa: Practitioners' Experiences and Lessons. Idasa, ANSA-Africa).

Bank, are socially embedded processes which cannot be dealt with solely by adding more resources and capacity building, as is often suggested (Mauxion, 2008). Real shifts of power in society require politically embedded social change. As Cleaver (2012) points out, much of the literature on participation finds that 'actual participation at community level is often limited and the equal exercise of voice cannot be assumed'. The distribution of access to services addresses the question of who benefits from a particular service in the processes of inclusion and exclusion in service provision.

2.3.4 Hybrid social accountability

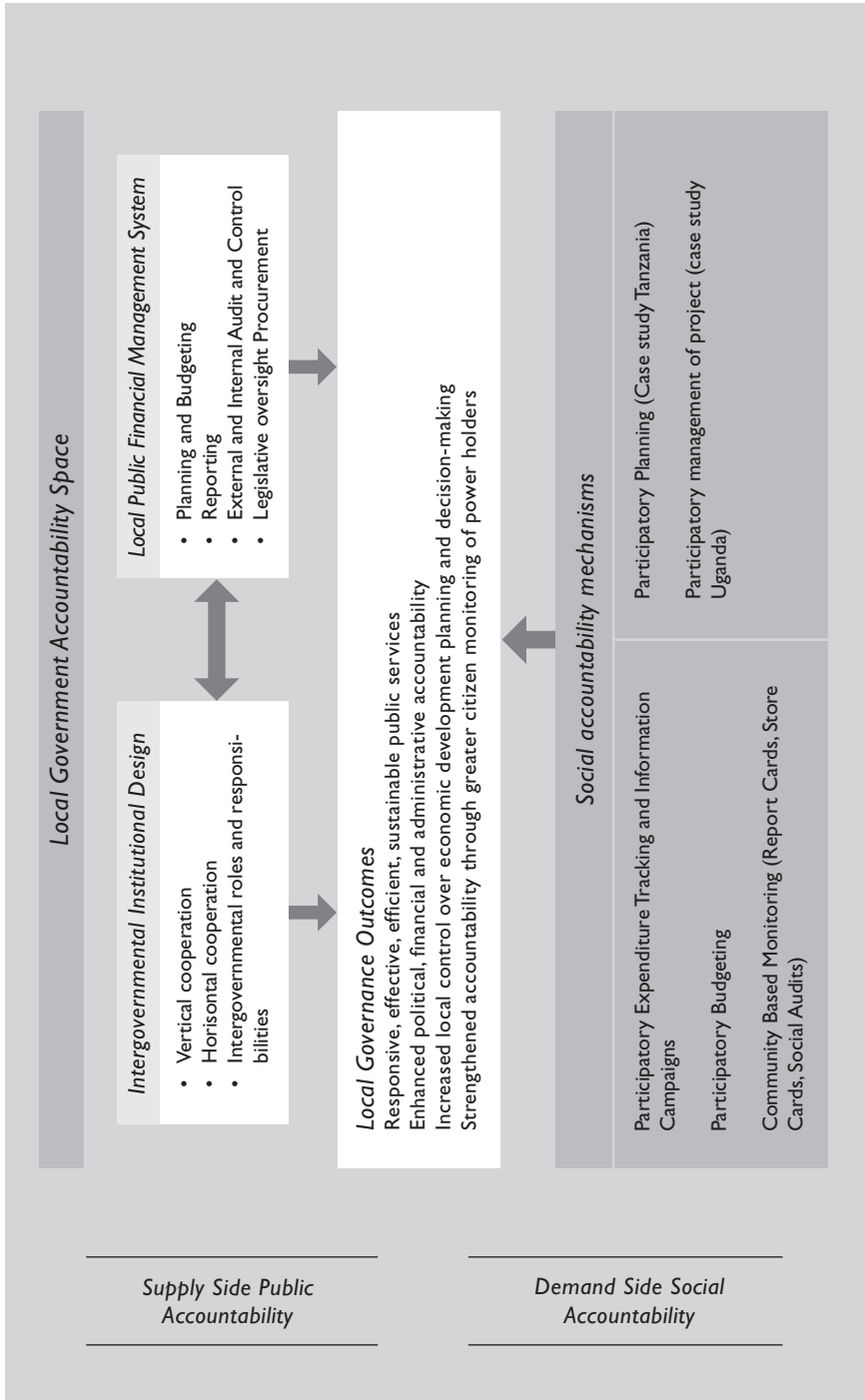
A third understanding of social accountability (see box) that can be found in literature on public service delivery points particularly to the 'hybrid' characteristic of service providers in Africa (public, private, state and non-state). This has an impact in policy planning in identifying relevant stakeholders. Actors providing public services are manifold and include community committees, traditional chiefs, local associations, the municipality, emerging local leaders, NGOs and development agencies. Finding out who to address is not always straightforward, and providers may sometimes be in competition with one another. Public service provision can easily become a local arena for the negotiation of public authority and legitimacy (Blundo and Le Meur, 2009, Lund, 2006). In such contexts, access to service provision is premised on the ability to navigate the markets for public service provision made up by this plurality of providers and official versus unofficial costs and transactions (e.g. health and education in Niger: Körling, 2011). Despite the uncertainty of public service provision, public service delivery does take place in every governance situation, but often in different ways than donors have designed (Körling, 2011). This is also called co-production, a reference to how a specific public good or service is provided by several institutions or groups of actors.

This strand of literature is particularly relevant for policy aimed at enhancing accountability in public service delivery in fragile contexts where the state is fragmented and unable to guarantee rights to services. In such a situation a more pragmatic approach to service delivery through hybrid actors that can operate in the name of the state may contribute to state-building from below.

2.4 Framework of analysis

Figure 1, *Local Government Accountability Structures* (elaborated from World Bank 2009), suggests a feasible way in which social accountability mechanisms may be understood within a local government accountability framework.

Figure 1. Local Governance Framework



3. Review of experiences with support for social accountability initiatives

3.1 Overview

This section reviews some of the experiences of trying out social accountability mechanisms in Africa and their effects on improving access to public service delivery. Since systematically aggregated data evaluating the impact of social accountability are still lacking, and most evidence stems from scattered reviews of pilot studies or small-scale NGO experiences, the review is based on and reflects the character of the available anecdotal data. Often the pilot study's experiences are described by the donors and organisations engaged in the initiatives themselves, and sometimes adequate contextual framing of the reviews is absent. Finally, in practice it can be difficult to isolate one social accountability mechanism from another because the process in which they are implemented often includes more than one social accountability mechanism working at the same time. For example, participatory budgeting also involves information campaigns and social audits.

The following sections review the five main social accountability initiatives supported in Africa:

- Public expenditure tracking surveys (PETS) and information campaigns
- Participatory budgeting
- Community-based monitoring of public services (Citizen Report Cards, Community Score Cards and Social Audits)
- Participatory planning and priority setting: case study of the Tanzanian health sector
- Demand-driven service provision: case study of agricultural advisory services in Uganda

First, however, we discuss how social accountability in general is seen improve access to and the quality of public services.

3.2 Relations between social accountability initiatives and development outcomes

During the last ten years, there has been increased investment in social accountability mechanisms by international aid agencies acting in support of development

programmes. Broadly speaking, three types of output are expected from supporting social accountability: (i) improving public service provision (towards reaching the MDGs); (ii) increased state legitimacy; and (iii) local participation in democratic governance (more process-oriented). In practice, however, support for strengthening social accountability often goes beyond this distinction, as the mechanisms are often aimed at improving all three elements (i, ii, iii; see also Figure 1, where local governance outcomes includes all three elements). While reviewing the support for social accountability mechanisms in the following section, we will seek to identify which of the approaches it falls under.

Since the early 2000s, the number of publications attempting to conceptualize, describe and assess social accountability has increased (Ackerman, 2005b, Joshi and Houtzager, 2012, Malena et al., 2004, Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, 2006, O'Neil et al., 2007). Other scholars have attempted to take stock of social accountability initiatives in various regions (Sirker and Cosick, 2007, McNeil and Mumvuma, 2006, Claasen et al., 2010, Arroyo and Sirker, 2005). More recently a limited number of attempts have been made to assess the different initiatives that overlap with social accountability⁴ initiatives on various outcomes, including that of public service delivery (O'Neil et al., 2007, Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008, McGee and Gaventa, 2010, Gaventa and Barrett, 2010).

In larger global studies generally, it has been difficult to establish a clear relationship between decentralization and expected service delivery and governance outcomes (Manor, 2003, Bratton, 2012, Speer, 2012). In addition to the low level of discretion available to local governments, social accountability mechanisms to make the latter socially accountable to citizens have been largely lacking in many countries in favour of public accountability instruments that promote upward accountability towards higher levels of government.

More recently, IDS published a study of how citizen actions have brought about 'significant policy change at the national level and helped to build responsive and accountable states' in nine countries (Gaventa, 2008). In addition to overall governance benefits, Gaventa reports that social accountability has been aimed at improving public services, enhancing the implementation of (government or donor- financed) development projects and, as a result, enhancing development impacts. The thinking

⁴ Such overlaps include 'voice and accountability', 'citizen action', transparency and accountability' and 'citizens engagement'.

is that improving the quality and quantity of information that is fed into government/donor decision-making generates better awareness of citizens' needs, particularly those of traditionally disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

Despite these optimistic expectations about the strengthening of social accountability, questions regarding their developmental benefits remain to be answered. A recent review of the social accountability strategies of seven DAC donors, for example, concludes that, although there is a general consensus among donors that such approaches contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development, there remains a lack of evidence regarding the existence of a causal relationship between democracy and development. The report calls on donors to give a higher priority to monitoring and evaluation and emphasizes the importance of generating evidence about the effectiveness of donor activities in this area (O'Neil et al., 2007).

According to a review by Speer in *World Development* (2012), "the findings of the literature on the public policy benefits of participatory governance mechanisms are mixed. Though there are several positive findings, so far there is not enough evidence to support the claim that participatory governance causes improvements in government performance" (Speer, 2012: 2380).

In general it has proved difficult to establish a clear relationship between social accountability, expected participation, service delivery and governance outcomes (Manor, 2003, Ribot, 2007). The literature on social accountability consists mainly of scattered country-based pilot studies. Over the past decade a wide range of social accountability mechanisms have been tried, such as participatory budgeting, budget analysis, participatory monitoring of public expenditure and citizens' evaluations of public services in several countries, for example, Brazil (Porto Allegro perhaps being the most prominent), India and other countries in Asia and South America. However, in Africa, although various initiatives and activities have been undertaken, these experiences have been far less documented in a systematic manner. The most comprehensive attempt until now is a review by the World Bank (2010). While these studies are mainly positive, more substantial impact evaluations convincingly linking efforts supporting social accountability interventions with improved access and quality of services for the poor and positive development outcomes are lacking (Agarwal et al., 2009). Against this background, the present review aims to discuss the experiences from this somewhat scattered evidence base, in order to highlight those aspects that will be relevant and useful in future Danish development cooperation programming.

3.3 Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS) and information campaigns

3.3.1 What are PETS?

Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS) have been developed to improve governance and reduce corruption in public service delivery. They constitute a quantitative survey of the supply side of public services. They therefore differ from the other mechanisms presented in this report, which mainly focus on demand side mechanisms (Fig. 1) but they are included in this review, as the provision of exact data from the government in this case is a precondition for carrying out an qualified information campaign (demand side). As Ackerman states (2005a), social accountability is a pro-active process in which public officials give information about and justify their plans of action and their behaviour and are sanctioned accordingly. The review of the PETS also tells us something about the level of effort it will require from both governments and citizens to strengthen social accountability mechanisms. The focus of the review is on the accountability relationship between the service user and their national and local governments: the general anti-corruption literature will not be included in the review.

PETS have been widely recognized as one of the few mechanisms that can have a positive impact on reducing corruption in public service delivery in poor countries with weak systems of governance (Sundet, 2004). High rates of leakage of public expenditure have severe consequences for public service delivery performance. Therefore, PETS have been developed to improve governance by assessing performance and measuring corruption in public service delivery through the production of micro-level data in weak institutional contexts where accounting, monitoring and reporting procedures are often absent (Gauthier, 2006). At the decentralized level, NGOs in particular are engaged in social accountability by doing PETS in local government authorities (LGA).

By providing exact information about how many of the resources allocated to public service provision actually reach the users, PETS provide important input for informing citizens about their rights and entitlements to public services. Furthermore, the testimony of citizens regarding the services they have actually received constitutes an important source of information in the surveys when compared with more ordinary revision reports.

3.3.2 What are Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys?

A Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) is a quantitative survey of the supply side of public services that tracks the flow of public funds and material resources

from the central government level, through the administrative hierarchy, and out to the frontline service providers. The aim is to improve the quality of service delivery at the local level, and the key question that a PETS sets out to answer is: Do public funds and material resources end up where they are supposed to? If they don't, the survey may go further and ask: Why are those funds being diverted? Such surveys are typically implemented at the sector level, usually in health or education. Further information can be found at <http://www.u4.no/themes/pets/main.cfm> (Source: (Sundet, 2007))

Through the extensive mapping of public funds and materials disbursed by government or donors and channelled from central to local service providers via regional and local governments, PETS 'follow the money' and compare budgetary allocations with actual spending in order to identify leakages (Kozila and Tolmie, 2010). If well conducted, PETS will show how much of the funds intended for service providers actually reach the intended beneficiaries, and at which level the leakages occur. They are also effective tools in disclosing the unequal distribution or disbursement of allocated funds. Tracking surveys may serve at least three purposes: diagnostic, analytical and impact evaluation of a specific government program or reform (Sundet, 2007: 2). PETS may help policymakers and civil society organizations to decide how to act when there are discrepancies between disbursements and actual expenditures (McNeil and Mumvuma, 2006).

In terms of strengthening accountability mechanisms, PETS should not stand alone. Initiatives on the ground show that it is not the PETS in themselves that can

Box 1. Experience with PETS in Uganda

Interestingly, reaching the intended beneficiaries had little to do with conventional audit and supervision mechanisms, but [relied] on the schools' opportunity to voice their claims for the funds. Traditionally, it has been left to the government and a country's legal institutions to devise and enforce public accountability. The Uganda findings question this one-sided approach. As the government's role services have expanded considerably during the last decades, it has become apparent that conventional mechanisms, such as audit and legislative reviews, may not be enough. Collusion, organizational deficiencies, abuse, and lack of responsiveness to citizens' needs cannot easily be detected and rectified even with the best of supervision. When the institutions are weak, as is common in many developing countries, the government's potential role as auditor and supervisor is even more constrained. (Reinikka and Svensson, 2002)

strengthen accountability relationships. Rather, PETS should be seen as part of a more comprehensive effort to simplify and communicate a complex and opaque system of financial management. The results from using PETS depend upon the political and economic context, the quality of the public dissemination and awareness-raising campaigns, and capacity-building, enabling local service users to follow the money (Reinikka and Svensson, 2005). More often than not, concerted efforts are required to ensure that citizens become aware of their rights and of how to claim them. Finally, though PETS 'can be valuable accountability mechanisms, they are neither simple nor inexpensive to implement' (Ringold et al., 2012: 45).

For donors, PETS can be a useful mechanism as they may be built into the conditions for development programming. Until now they have mostly been carried out in the social sectors of education and health, but other sectors could benefit from the lessons learnt.

In this section, we first provide an overview of some general positive experiences with using PETS in Africa based on the available literature. On the basis of the most informed experiences, we then turn to discuss in greater detail one of the most cited success stories from the education sector in Uganda in order to understand why using PETS in a newspaper campaign is claimed to have had an impact on the reduction of corruption in the sector. After contrasting the Uganda case with similar PETS experiences in Tanzania, in the final section we identify some of the main elements to be taken into account in integrating PETS and information campaigns into development cooperation.

3.3.3 Review of general experiences with PETS

The PETS were first developed and carried out in Uganda in the mid-1990s due to a considerable increase in spending in the education sector, stagnant enrolment in primary schools, and a wish to understand the mismatch between public expenditure and development outcomes. The initial Uganda PETS in 1996 estimated that 87% of non-wage capitation grants (per student) did not reach the schools they were intended for (see case study below). Since then, PETS have been implemented in about forty developing countries, most of them African, and sometimes initiated by governments and donors and sometimes by civil society groups. One example is the Transparency and Accountability Programme (TAP), a program of the Results for Development Institute, a private non-profit organization based in Washington, DC which since 2006 has supported PETS in eighteen countries in Africa.⁵ Often

⁵ <http://tap.resultsfordevelopment.org>

CSO and/or donor-driven pilot PETS have encouraged governments to carry out nation-wide surveys.

Based on the review of experiences, several findings have emerged saying that PETS carried out in Africa have successfully tracked delays, bottlenecks, irregularities and undisbursed allocations of public resources (see annex). Studies point to positive results from PETS, often because civil society takes up their findings in advocacy campaigns (Gauthier, 2006).

Despite the overall positive findings from using PETS in Africa that may be valuable in themselves, many of the studies cited (in the table) do not say much about how the information from the PETS has been disseminated (i.e. the demand side of the social accountability relationship) or about how governments have responded and acted on the findings. In order to understand this in greater depth, case studies from Uganda and Tanzania, among the first countries to conduct and make use of PETS in their public sector reforms, allow us to say more about the positive impact, conditions for success and challenges, as well as how to take the lessons learnt into consideration in development planning aiming at enhancing social accountability.

3.3.4 PETS in Uganda

In Uganda in the 1990s, before PETS were carried out, the management of primary schools was chaotic: the number of schools had doubled since the decade before, and parent-teacher associations managed many of them. At this time, parents provided more than half of the primary school budget, while the rest was paid partly by the Ministry of Education (teachers' salaries) and partly by the Ministry of Local Government (school supplies, based on students enrolled and therefore the name 'capitation grant'). The capitation grant was paid as a block grant bundling together 24 separate grants into a single sum that was then transferred directly to a district government. This grant, although it was supposed to be passed on to the primary schools, did not require the funds to be accounted for, but the system was chaotic, and record-keeping and accounting were inadequate (Hubbard, 2007).

In Uganda in 1996, the World Bank carried out a PET survey of 250 randomly selected schools in nineteen districts around the country looking at school records for the last five years. The survey discovered that most of the capitation money disbursed by the central government had disappeared (or had been appropriated by politicians and local government officials) before reaching the schools. Consequently, primary schools in Uganda received only approximately thirteen per cent of the grants allo-

cated to them for non-wage expenditure. Furthermore, the PETS revealed significant inequalities in the distribution of the funds. Schools in the poorest communities did the worst, obtaining significantly smaller shares of the entitlements allocated to them by the central government.

In response to the enormous leakage of funds found in the first PET survey, the Ugandan government initiated an information campaign under which national newspapers, including their local language editions, began publishing the monthly transfer of capitation grants to districts. In 1997, the effort was extended by asking schools to publish all funds received in a public place (Reinikka and Svensson, 2005).

The use of PETS in Uganda in the mid-1990s has often been cited as a success story that has inspired donors across the African continent to replicate the model of combining PETS and information campaigns. In a series of studies, Reinikka and Svensson (2005) show how the public education sector created a public information campaign to reduce the diversion of public funds by providing parents and schools with information to monitor local officials' handling of a large school grant program. This series of studies, despite the failings we shall return to, is one of the most specific and adequately documented available studies of the impacts of social accountability efforts and shows how PETS can be used to increase accountability in the allocation of public funds.

In 1999, the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports commissioned a review that found that on average schools were now receiving 90% of their capitation entitlements. These 'dramatic improvements' were praised in the World Bank's 2000-01 Development Report (World Bank, 2001) and attributed to the increased access to and flow of information.

In 2002, to test the hypothesis that improved access to public information was a tool able to reduce diversion of funds and corruption, Reinikka and Svensson repeated a PET survey by revisiting the schools from the 1996 survey and collecting financial information based on the 2001 school year.⁶ The study showed a remarkable improvement in head-teachers' knowledge about the grant program, which had increased the percentage of the money reaching the schools. Comparing schools with and without access to newspapers, it was revealed that schools situated

⁶ Furthermore, in the new survey, the authors collected additional data on schools' access to newspapers, distance from the nearest newspaper outlet and head-teacher's knowledge.

closer to newspaper outlets managed to claim a significantly larger part of their grant after the newspaper campaign had been initiated, and that head-teachers in these schools knew more about the rules governing the grant program and the timing of the release of funding by the central government. However, the study did not examine the impact of the campaign on parents' awareness or involvement or whether the newspaper campaign had been effective in increasing local school's ability to demand resources from central governments (Ringold et al., 2012). Based on this analysis, Reinikka and Svensson conclude that information 'is a powerful deterrent to the diversion of grant funds at a local level' (Reinikka and Svensson, 2005: xx).

The development outcomes associated with support for PETS in Uganda can be summarized as follows:

- Due to the PETS' tracking and public information campaign, the share of funds reaching schools increased from 20% in 1995 to 80% in 2001.
- Primary school enrolment and student learning outcomes in Uganda rose from 3.6 million students to 6.9 million (Norton and Elson, 2002, Reinikka and Svensson, 2005, Brodjonegoro, 2005).
- The improvements were much greater for schools that were close to newspaper outlets.
- Björkman (2006) confirmed these effects using district-level data, showing that districts which were more exposed to the newspaper campaign not only obtained a greater share of the budget allocated to them, they also had substantially greater improvements in student test scores.

Given these positive impacts on reduced corruption and development outcomes, we might be easily persuaded by Reineikka and Svensson's hypothesis regarding the spread of information. However, there may be more than one interpretation of the root causes of the Ugandan success.

One of the major critiques of the Reineikka and Svensson series of studies is that they do not adequately take into account the role of the political and economic contexts in explaining Uganda's success in fighting corruption by the use of information. Although Reinikka and Svensson never claimed that information was the only factor in explaining the decrease in leakage, several important contextual factors are not explained in their studies. Arguing that they focus too narrowly on the question of access to information, Hubbard (2007) claims that we need to understand the

Ugandan case in the context of the concurrent reforms in the fiscal and education systems in the country.

First, in the mid-1990s Uganda was undergoing a major constitutional reform in order to decentralize power from central government to the district authorities. This involved changes in the way schools were funded and in how central funds were allocated to districts. In order to keep track of district officials, conditional grants were introduced instead of the existing block grant, which did not require accountability of its distribution. Thus in 2001, the methods of paying a grant changed, which, according to Hubbard (2007) put pressure on local governments to deliver services (p. 6).

Secondly, the education reform was also a major political issue in this period. The introduction of universal primary education (UPE) played a prominent role in President Museveni's 1996 election campaign. In 1997, Museveni abolished parents' contributions to the school budget, which changed the financial system of the schools and doubled the number of pupils enrolled.

Thirdly, the capitation fund quadrupled its nominal value from 1995 till 2001. In order to compensate the schools for the loss of parents' contributions, the school supply capitation grant was rebranded as a UPE capitation grant while doubling its nominal value per student. The grant was further doubled in 2001. To put things into perspective, Hubbard asks whether the fact that the school grant increased about four times in value could mean that the level of corruption was the same in monetary terms because it was just taking smaller piece of a larger pie. In this optic the level of corruption did not fall so dramatically from 1995 to 2001.

Finally, in addition, and perhaps to respond to Hubbard's thoughts on the size of the corruption, the increase in student enrolment extended the capacity of the education system. the World Bank and other donors consequently provided budgetary support and technical assistance to the UPE program, funding which was subject to conditions in terms of monitoring systems of accountability (World Bank), the publication of salaries and finances (USAID) and the requirement for local schools to post enrolments. The Ugandan government paid careful attention to meeting these requirements, to the overall satisfaction of the donors (Hubbard, 2007: 7).

To sum up, the public expenditure tracking surveys and the successful information campaigns carried out in the education sector in Uganda have become a well-publicized model. When combined with public information campaigns, PETS can

contribute to reducing leakages and diversions of funds and thereby improve service delivery (Reinikka and Svensson, 2005). However, although, as just noted, the Uganda case study does provide good evidence that information plays a significant role in the political economy of corruption, we should not overestimate the result. Hubbard (2007) argues that, while information disclosure was important, the change was driven by several factors and not simply the provision of public information. With these remarks in mind, and in order to assess further the usefulness of PETS coupled with an information campaign as an accountability tool, we now turn to Tanzania's experience.

3.3.5 PETS in Tanzania

After the success of the Ugandan experience, PET surveys have gained increased popularity in other African countries. Tanzania was one of the first countries to adopt the methodology after Uganda and completed surveys in 1999 and 2001, with a pilot study of primary schools in 2003 that was later extended as a national survey. Seeing that Tanzania became so advanced in the conduct of public expenditure tracking surveys, one might have expected a similar impact to that in Uganda. The surveys conducted in Tanzania have had a positive impact, which is evidenced by the routine practice of advertising transfers from the central treasury to local councils in the media. Nevertheless, reviewing the Tanzanian PETS of 1999, 2001 and 2003, Sundet (2004) argues that the impact of the Tanzanian surveys did not succeed in the same way as in Uganda.

In 2002 the Tanzanian government started a Primary Education Development Project (PEDP) funded mainly by the World Bank. The project borrowed the model for developing the education sector from Uganda. Each school was to receive a grant of 10,000 shilling per pupil per year, and the schools are supposed to receive 100 per cent of the grants, making the project a good case for a PETS tracking whether the allocated resources actually reached the schools. A PETS 'Primary School Pilot' was delivered to the World Bank in June 2003 (Björkman and Madestam, 2003), which showed a leakage of 5% of the grant disbursement. At a later stage, it was shown that the pilot PETS only took into account the disbursement from the ministries of finance, education and local government, and what the survey found to be a minor leakage turned out to be a major leakage. After this 'successful pilot survey', the government decided to run a nation-wide PET survey on the PEDS and commissioned the national research organization REPOA to carry out the survey. The new survey carried out by REPOA showed that approximately 40% of the capitation fund had not been accounted for. Following this, the Ministry of Finance made huge objections to REPOA. But although REPOA made some clarifications, the key findings

remained the same. And REPOA has received no response to the PETS, which has never been acknowledged officially. However, the Tanzanian education and civic rights organization HakiElimu – ‘Education rights’ in Swahili – published the PETS, which created wide public debate and was strongly contested by the government. However, according to Sundet (2004), due to the reviews, Haki Elimu was almost banned by the government, which was only prevented by great diplomatic pressure. Despite the disputes, the PETS of 2004 revealed important information. It showed that headmasters and school committees knew little about their rights in terms of the size of grants they were entitled to receive.

Comparing Uganda and Tanzania shows that PETS do not constitute a silver bullet for development. Unlike Uganda, however, the first two PETS in Tanzania did not stimulate or inform a sustained debate on issues pertaining to transparency and accountability in service delivery at the local level. Furthermore, the Tanzania PETS did not form part of larger programmes to improve transparency and empower users to demand their rights (Sundet, 2004), and no national dialogue occurred in Tanzania. Taking Hubbard’s critique of the information hypothesis into account, maybe the lack of information was not the only missing link in Tanzania’s PETS experience.

In addition to the overall question of whether the information campaign itself reduced corruption in the education sector in Uganda, thus suggesting that transparency should be sufficient in itself, there are a number of challenges to the model combining PETS and access to information:

- Governments may be hesitant to give CSO and grassroots parties access to information about budget and financing.
- PETS are challenging for CSOs to implement and require extensive training, attention to detail, technical expertise and specific skills in collecting and analysing data.
- There are suggestive reports that the efficacy of the information campaign has declined over time due to varying public interest in the information being posted.
- The information campaigns are most successful in communities where people are literate.
- There is still some elite capture of funds, particularly when head-masters are well-positioned.
- Information in itself cannot overcome a lack of dialogue over policy.
- The selection of which resources to track often implies a trade-off between wide

coverage and feasibility. For instance, in Uganda and Zambia PETS were restricted to areas where reliable data were available.

3.4 Participatory budgeting

3.4.1 *What is participatory budgeting?*

In many countries around the world, usually national, urban municipality and local government budgets and plans are designed by expert teams and bureaucrats behind closed doors with little chance for ordinary citizens or community members to provide input or influence decision-making processes. Consequently, government budgets and plans do not always reflect social priorities and may ignore the needs of different social groups, particularly the marginalized, such as women, young people and the poor. Participatory budgeting is an entry point and mechanisms through which citizens have attempted to influence local government decision-making processes. There is evidence from various pilot studies at the local level that the social accountability mechanism of participatory budgeting in particular has contributed to making budgets and plans more responsive to citizen preferences and better adapted to their needs (Malena, 2009). Furthermore, participatory budgeting has improve

Box 2. Experience with participatory budgeting in Brazil

Participatory budgeting originated and gained political momentum in Porto Alegre in Brazil at the beginning of 1989, when a number of innovative reform programs were launched to overcome severe inequalities in lack of access to public services such as water, sanitation, health-care facilities and schools.

As a result of the participatory budgetary process, tax revenues increased by nearly 50% (de SOUSA SANTOS, 1998, McNeil and Mumvuma, 2006). Furthermore, between 1989 and 1996, the number of households with access to water and sanitation services in Porto Alegre increased significantly. Since then Porto Alegre has become a model for participatory budgeting across Latin America, Europe and Africa (Cagatay et al., 2000, de SOUSA SANTOS, 1998, McNeil and Mumvuma, 2006), inspiring a host of studies (Schneider and Goldfrank, 2002), many of them documenting the positive development impact of these processes (Wampler, 2010; see also Speer, 2012).

However, the Porto Alegre experience grew out of a particular historical and political process, and the model cannot automatically be exported to a rural African context, where institutional mechanisms and structures are different and conditions generally are not the same (Speer, 2012: 2382).

citizens' knowledge of and interest in key public decision-making, thus creating increased opportunities for involvement and influence over the allocation and use of local government resources and follow-up (Malena, 2009: 7). With regard to national budgets, social accountability approaches have served both to influence budgetary allocations (bringing them more in line with public priorities) and to enhance the transparency and accountability of budget processes.

Participatory budgeting is a process through which citizens participate directly in the different phases of budgetary formulation and decision-making and the monitoring of budgetary execution. According to McGee and Gaventa (2010), of all the types of social accountability mechanism, those related to budgetary processes are the most developed. This is among other things due to the impact of the democracy and good governance agenda, the emergence of the large number of independent budget groups in developing countries,⁷ the recognition that state budgets reflect government policy preferences at a time when the management of public expenditure has become an increasingly important aspect of development policy, and the preference for general budgetary support on the part of many foreign aid donors, who are thus taking a great interest in transparency to ensure that the funding they put into general government budgets is spent appropriately. Furthermore, the experience from Latin America and Asia – where in, for example, Brazil (see box above) and Indonesia, participatory budgeting is guaranteed in the constitution – has contributed to the development of the concept. The attention to budget transparency and accountability work has led to a wide array of citizen and state-led initiatives relating to various phases in the budgetary process – from revenue, to planning and execution to audits and ex-post oversights. More localized or bottom-up approaches focus more on how public funds are prioritized and used, and less on the revenue-producing side of the equation, as, for instance, described in the growing literature on natural resource revenue and transparency (e.g. EITI: Kolstad and Wiig, 2009).

3.4.2 *Review of experiences with participatory budgeting*

On the more optimistic part of the scale, scholars regard participatory budgeting as having a potential democratic and developmental outcome in terms of greater participation in local democracy, improved public service delivery and the re-direction of resources to the poor.

⁷ Large global networks such as the International Budget Partnership and the Revenue Watch Institute work to build capacity and develop new approaches. The best known is the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiatives (EITI) (for more information, see McGee, R. & Gaventa, J. 2010. Review of Impact and Effectiveness of Transparency and Accountability Initiatives: Synthesis Report: Executive Summary, Institute of Development Studies.

- Through their engagement in participatory budgeting activities, citizens in Ilala, an urban municipality in Tanzania, increased their understanding of the use of the limited resources available to the municipality and became less critical of local government officials (Kihongo and Lubuva, 2010). Tax-based revenues totalled 53% over the three year period (World Bank, 2007, McNeil and Malena, 2010, McNeil and Mumvuma, 2006). The participatory planning and budgeting increased the equity of services due to targeted spending on pro-poor services and enhanced information and access for the poor. However, the most vulnerable, the young, elderly and disabled, did not feel included in the process, and their participation in the decentralization process remains unclear.
- In Malawi, the presentation of budgetary information and documents in a manner that ordinary people can understand (by the Malawi Economic Justice Network) has resulted in increasing public demand for training on budget issues and on economic matters in general (McNeil and Mumvuma, 2006).
- In Ghana, thanks to the ongoing work of groups like the Center for Budget Alternatives, more people are becoming informed about the budget and are spending time in studying it (McNeil and Mumvuma, 2006).
- Intervention by HIPC Watch in Ghana has resulted in policy shifts and budgetary adjustments for disadvantaged districts in the upper west region of Ghana (McNeil and Mumvuma, 2006).
- In the rural district of Mutoko in Zimbabwe, where citizens protested regularly against the local government, the introduction of participatory budgeting processes reportedly resulted in 'a new relationship and mode of mutual understanding and interaction between citizens, CSOs and the municipal council' by creating opportunities for dialogue and negotiation between citizens and government (Malena, 2009, Mumvuma, 2009).

Despite these positive results, scepticism in the academic literature remains. Benefits do not automatically accrue from participatory budget initiatives, and some newer studies argue that making participatory governance arrangements effective is a challenging exercise, with so far positive but limited evidence on their impact (Speer, 2012). In their study of the bottom-up planning and allocation of rural services in Uganda, Porter and Onyach-Olaa (1999) conclude that participation is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for improving the quality of service delivery or making it pro-poor (Blair, 2000). Participation is also needed at later stages of public service delivery, and local government officials should be held accountable for poor service provision. In South Africa, Heller (2001) found that planning processes serve mainly as instruments for the exercise of political and bureaucratic control. Thus, although

people are consulted and listened to, that does not change decision-making. To strengthen this point, Francis and James (2003) found that, in their study on the implementation of Uganda's law on decentralization and participatory governance, the planning structures in the villages were not participatory and remained clientilistic. There was little financial autonomy at the local level, and although the allocation of resources to the villages had been planned with the villagers, decisions made in the planning process did not reflect villagers' needs. Furthermore, the official system did not supply enough information to villagers to hold officials accountable. Interventions and capacity-building by NGOs can strengthen the capacity of civil society to engage in contestations. These general experiences from rural Africa are not conclusive. In order to understand the processes involved, we are turning to the case of Senegal to illustrate the conditions needed for a relatively successful outcome to the participatory budgeting process, and the major challenges and factors that must be strengthened if this process is to be adopted on a larger scale, for example, in national development programming. Another critique of participatory budgeting emphasizes the fact that the CBOs engaging on behalf of citizens often lack a popular mandate and may not be legitimate in the eyes of parts of the population.

3.4.3 *Participatory budgeting in Senegal*

This section takes as its point of departure the case of participatory budgeting in a rural municipality in Senegal. It was included in the World Bank report in 2010 to show when participatory budgeting *does* work. Without being too optimistic in providing silver bullets, the micro-level project illustrates the link between participatory budgeting and local participation in the decentralization process in terms of enhanced social accountability relationships between rural citizens and government officials and increased payments of taxes, thus enabling the municipality to generate more revenues to be used for development improvements. Furthermore, the example highlights the conditions for success, as well as the challenges to be solved if the lessons learnt are to feed into general policy tools.

Participatory budgeting was used as a tool to promote inclusive and transparent mechanisms of local governance in a rural municipality of Fissel, one of the first rural municipalities in Senegal to be decentralized in 1972. Due to weak citizen participation – and despite decentralization and capacity-building programs on the part of the local administration and local government officials – a participatory budgeting process was initiated to identify factors promoting or inhibiting citizen participation and to improve the performance decentralization in the rural municipality (Guèye, 2010).

The participatory budget process was led by the international NGO, IED Afrique (former the Sahel programme of the IIED), which helped the local community group for self-development, RECODEF, to develop a pilot research program on the monitoring and reinforcement of citizen participation in local development. Three representative forums were developed at the village, delegate and community levels. In the community forum, the budget was formulated during meetings between village delegates and elected local government officials. Investment proposals were made and a monitoring committee of seven members chosen. Finally, meetings were held during which budget proposals were presented and, on the basis of the estimated resources available, actions to be taken were decided. An important aspect of the Fissel success story was the creation of feedback forums to assess alignments with priorities, budget implementation and results. Finally the formation of a citizen committee to ensure that the budget review meetings were held, dissemination of information to local people using adequate tools, the collection of feedback and the submission of local people's requests to the rural council was a major innovation of the program.

The development outcomes associated with support for participatory budgeting in Senegal can be summarized as follows:

- Increased the understanding of local citizens, particularly among woman and the young, of local decision-making and increasing their influence on the allocation of local resources. In general, although budgets are limited and cannot fund all the proposals made during the process, people trust the results of the process.
- The strengthening of local communities' capacity contributed to the education of local facilitators, thus enabling them to become resource persons for other organizations in Fissel.
- Increased local participation in the decentralization process made people more willing to pay their taxes, due to enhanced control over and mechanisms for monitoring the use of their resources.
- The reputations of the rural councils were improved, which resulted in increased public support for local government authorities.
- Improved relationships between rural councils and grassroots organizations in other programs related to the delivery of services (e.g. health, education and natural resource management).
- Higher prioritization of women's needs.
- Due to various national regional exchange programs, three other municipalities adopted participatory budgeting processes in 2009.

Although the case study from Senegal indicates the positive impact of the participatory budget process on local tax payments, based on generalized data from Africa, Bratton argues against expectations that taxation leads to representation (yet) or that tax compliance should be related to political responsiveness, representation and accountability: that is, the number of taxes or fees paid does not influence people's perceptions of their local governments as responsive. Nonetheless the lack of a conventional fiscal contract still constitutes a major obstacle to political accountability (Bratton, 2012: 525), particularly in rural areas. In general people lack information about the fiscal foundations of local administration (one third, when asked about tax collection or budgetary management, say they do not know. Urban residents are better informed). "The challenge for building effective local governments depends in good part on promoting legal forms of payment for services (fees and taxes) in place of illicit payments (like bribes)" (Bratton, 2012: 525).

3.5 Community-based monitoring

3.5.1 What is community-based monitoring?

Community-based monitoring of public service delivery consists of a set of tools (report cards, scorecards and social audits) to create a dialogue between citizens, local government officials and service providers. The logic behind the mechanisms is that a lack of relevant information on the status of service delivery and community entitlements, coupled with a failure to agree on what can reasonably be expected of service providers, constrains people in holding service providers accountable (Björkman and Svensson, 2009: 739). These mechanisms, which have been widely promoted by the World Bank Human Development portfolio, replicate the private-sector practice of collecting and acting on consumer data, and applies the practice to public goods and services in a public consultative process. As such, much of the community-based monitoring of public service delivery mechanisms is intended to stimulate effective performance, which is at the core of the so-called 'new public management', which argues that governments need to turn to results-based rather than rule-based evaluations. Furthermore, the idea is that civil society and local communities can play an important role in evaluating the performance and quality of public services in terms of community supervision of health-care clinics, school councils etc. (Ackerman, 2005a).

One of the main objectives is to ensure that the priorities of the poorest and most vulnerable groups are taken into account in planning and implementing service delivery. As such, the methods in used in the mechanisms in terms of engaging local communities resemble those of participatory budgeting. However, as discussed in

the introduction, many studies have shown (Ackerman, 2005a) that the inclusion of the poorest remains one of the major challenges to citizen-based participation.

An overview of social accountability initiatives in Africa made by the World Bank Institute found that participatory monitoring activities have been instrumental in influencing plans and budgets and in making the planning process more inclusive, responsive, results-oriented and people-centred (McNeil and Mumvuma, 2006). Furthermore, Gaventa (2008) cites a number of cases where citizen action has brought about concrete improvements in the design and implementation of national policies. This section reviews three similar feedback mechanisms: citizen report cards, community scorecards and social audits.

3.5.2 Citizen Report Cards

The report card method is a survey that directly aims to obtain feedback from users of public services by asking citizens to rate the providers (or provision) of public services, such as water authorities, primary schools or municipal councils. It then compiles the data from service users' perceptions, collected during a random sample survey, into publicly released concise reports called report cards.

Citizen report cards were pioneered in Bangalore, India, in 1994 (repeated in 1999 and 2003) due to the deficient service provision in the city. The report card tool was developed to give service providers systematic feedback from users of public services and consequently put pressure on public officials to deal with complaints.

Citizen report cards can be effective in situations where respondents are asked to rate a wide range of providers and permit relative rankings to be made, which have proved to be an effective way of providing incentives for improvement (Sundet, 2004).

In general, report cards can:

- Generate citizen feedback on the degree of satisfaction by various public service agencies;
- Catalyse citizens to adopt proactive stances by demanding more accountability, accessibility and responsiveness from service providers;
- Serve as a diagnostic tool for service providers, external consultants and analysts or researchers to facilitate effective prognosis and therapy; and
- Encourage public agencies to adopt and promote citizen-friendly practices, design performance standards and facilitate transparency in operations.

The World Bank has supported the mechanism in Albania, Peru and the Philippines, and the method has been taken up by municipal authorities in Ukraine and various cities in India (Ackerman, 2005a). In Africa, the report card mechanism has been supported by the World Bank in Uganda (see Björkman and Svensson, 2009) as a means of evaluating user satisfaction of public services.

3.5.3 *Community score cards*

Community score cards are a community-level tool for exacting local-level accountability that links service providers to the community and facilitates assessments of services in order to negotiate improvements. It is gaining in usage, with the World Bank being a key proponent.⁸

Scorecards are more similar to traditional PRAs than report cards, as they use facilitated discussions in focus groups to encourage qualitative assessments of projects, processes or service provision. They often begin with collective discussions of service delivery problems and move to the participatory development of action plans, followed up by the assessment of results by using score cards. They can provide localized feedback

Box 3. Using Citizen Report Cards in the Health Sector in Uganda

In some of the more rigorous impact studies conducted for the World Bank, Björkman and Svensson (2009) found clear evidence that community-based monitoring increased both the quality and quantity of primary health-care provision and resulted in significantly improved health outcomes. Based on fifty communities in nine districts in Uganda, the authors found that, one year into a community-based monitoring program of health services, treatment practices, as expressed in households' perception responses and in more quantitative indicators (immunization of children, waiting times, examination procedures), improved significantly: 54 per cent of the households reported that the quality of services had improved in the first year of the project, while 53 per cent stated that the quality of services in their area had become worse or not improved. Similar differences were apparent in household perceptions about changes in staff politeness during the first year of the project, the availability of medical staff, attention given to the patient by the staff when visiting the project dispensary, and whether the patient felt he/she could speak freely when being examined. The study also found significant weight gains of infants and a markedly lower number of deaths among children under five in those areas where community monitoring was conducted. Studies of this type are needed: (i) to establish clear evidence of the positive value and impacts of social accountability approaches; and (ii) to help identify key factors of success and better understanding of how impacts can be achieved and enhanced.

⁸ Eight programmes within the World Bank portfolio are experimenting with scorecards in health sectors to improve social accountability.

<i>Report Card</i>	<i>Score Card</i>
• Unit – Household/individual	• Unit – Community
• More for macro-level	• Meant for local level
• Main output is demand side	• Emphasis on immediate feedback and accountability, less on actual data
• Implementation time longer (3-6 months)	• Implementation time short (3-6 weeks)
• Feedback later, through media	• Immediate feedback
• Information collected through questionnaires	• Information collected through focus-group discussions

that can aid immediate action to rectify identified problems, but they do not provide data that can be aggregated on a wider scale of the kind that the citizens' report cards do. The Participation and Civic Engagement Group of the World Bank's Social Development Department has provided the diagram above to distinguish between citizens' report cards and community score cards:⁹

As is evident from the box above, the community score-card methodology is mostly useful as a feedback mechanism within a project setting, not least because it depends on skilled facilitators. It is less useful as part of a wider campaign due to the fact that it does not produce aggregate, comparable statistics, making it much less useable for wider publicity campaigns or to mobilize demands for accountability.

3.5.4 Social audits

This is another methodology, in which citizens engage in collecting evidence-based information that is used to expose or deter the corruption or mismanagement of public funds. Related to the PETS, often they emerge when local activists suspect that development funds are being diverted or misused. Essentially, a 'social audit' consists of an open and participatory review of official reports of works and expenditure. Ideally, such audits come about as a collaborative effort between the government and local communities, whereby the government takes advantage of local knowledge to verify that the contents of official reports fit the realities on the ground. At other times,

⁹ World bank. *Community Score Card Process: A Short Note on the General Methodology for Implementation [Online]*. Available: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPCENG/1143333-1116505690049/20509286/comscorecardsnote.pdf>. <http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/attackingpoverty/even>

however, such audits can be more combative, in that the organisation conducting the audit has to use its own resources to locate the official reports presented. Often, systemic efforts to carry out social auditing start with the latter and later evolve into the former as the government sees the utility of the approach or yields to public demand to support it. Three general lessons may be derived from ‘best practice’ here.

- The generation of data, whether on finances or user satisfaction, is an essential component in ensuring accountability in the delivery of services;
- For such data to be useful, it needs to be in the public domain and to be presented in a way that is understandable to the users of services; and
- Partnerships between government and civil society or user groups can significantly enhance the capacity of government to perform its oversight function.

3.5.5 Social audits in Kenya: the Open Budget Initiative

In Kenya since 2005, the CSO Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) has sought to monitor expenditures made under the country’s Constituency Development Fund (CDF). This fund provides resources to every Member of Parliament of about a million dollars a year to support development projects in his or her constituency. The fund has also been seen as an effective way of delivering development aid in terms of reaching more marginalized communities. However, the fund is also claimed to be plagued by corruption, fraud, nepotism and problems in monitoring. In general, the fund does not have an accountable regulatory framework governing the allocation of its resources. MUHURI has worked to bridge the accountability gap by conducting social audits evaluating the use of resources. However, in order to conduct a meaningful social audit and meaningful public monitoring, access to detailed records of the use of the fund is necessary (Open Budget Index, 2008, Malena, 2009).

In 2007, after two years struggling to obtain access to information by arguing that the audit would help boost his public image before the upcoming election, MUHURI convinced one Member of Parliament to disclose his accounts. MUHURI obtained a set of CDF records for fourteen projects. An audit was held with 1,500 attendees, including residents, local CDF officials and the media. Although the audit revealed many problems with the CDF projects, the fact that the MP did open his books and agreed to participate in the public hearing helped him gain the support he needed to get re-elected in an election when the majority of sitting MPs lost their seats. The MP and his staff acknowledged that probably close to half the votes he received resulted from the social audit and public hearing process he had agreed to. The MP subsequently signed a petition demanding that greater accountability and transparency

measures be incorporated into the CDF Act and calling for a comprehensive Freedom of Information law, which he had previously opposed. However, afterwards in other constituencies MPs were less willing to subject their records to an audit. In this case, access to information relied upon the one MP's willingness to open his accounts. At a broader level, MUHURI's initial problems reflect the absence of a freedom of information law in Kenya requiring all government officials to share information with the public. Making access to information a legal obligation may create an enabling institutional framework that permits the involvement of the public in monitoring the use of public funds to be scaled up (Open Budget Index, 2008, Malena, 2009).

3.6 Participatory planning and priority-setting: the Tanzanian health sector

3.6.1 Introduction to the Tanzanian health sector

In response to the weakening of the health-care system in the 1980s, the Tanzanian government adopted a health sector reform in the early 1990s through the Ministry of Health (MoH), and supported by major development partners. The aim of the reform was to improve efficiency, equity and resource mobilization through leadership, accountability and partnerships at all levels in the health system. The reforms applied to the decentralization of health services, as well as to financial reforms and public-private partnership reforms encouraging the private sector to complement public health services (MoH, 1994). Furthermore, significant efforts over the years have gone into setting up decentralized planning and funding modalities that ensure local-level participation in planning and service delivery and thereby increase social accountability. Steps have been taken by the government to strengthen district health boards and committees, thus making them more representative (Malena et al., 2004). This approach has been implemented within the decentralized administrative and political framework accelerated by reforms to local government since 2000 (Boex 2008).

‘The community must be involved in taking care of its own health. Participation of the community decision-making must therefore go beyond the council health service boards. The community should be involved in planning, implementation and evaluation of all health programs from village to national levels. The community will be responsible for the safety of medicine, medical supplies and equipment in providing security to their facilities.’

National health policy, Government of Tanzania, Ministry of Health 2002.

In a decentralized health system, local government officials are supposed to be primarily accountable to the local council and the local communities for delivering local health services. This presumes that adequate social accountability mechanisms are in place for local councillors, community-based organizations and local residents to monitor local health finances. It is often argued that local political institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa are inadequate to provide such accountability (for instance, Olowu, 2003).

In Tanzania, despite various attempts to establish institutional arrangements for participation on boards and committees at the local level, community participation in planning and priority-setting is still limited (Boex 2008; Maluka et al., 2010, Tidemand et al., 2008).

The number of people with access to health services has gone up, but the numbers are unreliable. The quality of the services is still inadequate. Often drugs are not available, medicines go out of stock, there are not enough skilled staff and resources are being de facto privatized. Although every village has a dispensary to support access, many of them are half-finished, unstaffed 'ghosts buildings' that require improvements for which there are no budgets. Finally the provision of access to health services is unequally distributed (reflecting an urban bias) and scattered across districts. (Tidemand et al., 2008)

This section explores the institutional mechanisms that have been put in place to ensure this accountability and the extent to which the implementation of local-level institutions has actually increased citizens' participation and influence on health-sector planning and priority-setting, including the lower level of governments' ability to manage resources according to local people's needs and priorities. It then discusses some of the challenges to social accountability in rural Tanzania. Finally the section gives recommendations on how to institutionalize social accountability mechanisms in the health sector.

3.6.2 Institutional mechanisms for social accountability in health services

The health sector has introduced a number of local mechanisms to ensure more accountability in the spending of local health resources.

First, there has been progress in decentralizing the planning, budgeting and management of health services to council levels, although important levels of central control remains. Since 2000, and coinciding with the local government reform,

the most important initiative to strengthen local health service planning, budgeting, implementation and reporting has been the introduction and support of the Comprehensive Council Health Plan (CCHP). The Comprehensive Council Health Plan creates the basis for decentralized management and the council basket funding mechanism (Tidemand et al., 2008). The CCHP is prepared annually by each council showing all the funds that have been allocated to health. However, there are still some donors that are not putting their budgets into the CCHP, making the budgets non-transparent.

Secondly, the health system at the district level has been decentralized to local authorities to increase their mandate in health-service provision. Health units, including district hospitals, provide services under the supervision of the Council Health Service Boards (CHSB) and Health Facility Committees (HFC). Voluntary agencies, faith-based organizations, private-sector and parastatal organizations provide services through contractual arrangements with the district. It is the duty of the councils to ensure that health facilities and services are of acceptable quality in all districts.

The most important institutional structures in strengthening accountability consist of:

- Council Health Management Teams (CHMT) headed by the district medical officer (DMO), with clinical staff (often housed in hospitals) trained in planning and budgeting according to the CCHP guidelines. This technical team prepares the plan and submits it to the council health service boards (CHSB).
- CHSBs are, at least formally, the most powerful players in health at the council level. According to the 2001 bylaw for CHSBs, they are supposed ensure appropriate and affordable health-care services, submit health plans and budgets to the council, and oversee implementation according to the priorities set in the Comprehensive Council Health Plan (CCHP). CHSBs identify priorities, plan activities and set the contribution rate (i.e. the user fee) (see further below). They usually consist of four ex-office council staff, including the DMO, four elected community members, and representatives of faith-based organizations and the private sector.
- Council hospital governing committees oversee and support hospital management teams. During the 2007 joint evaluations this body was not functioning in any of the six districts visited. Consequently the council and

hospital management team operated with limited external governance and supervision, and institutional mechanisms to oversee them were largely absent.

- Primary Health Facilities Committees are intended to ensure the quality of essential health care in Tanzania through active community participation in identifying problem areas, planning, implementation, and the M&E of health-care services. The committees meet regularly to discuss annual plans and budgets, problems and ways to solve them, as well as community complaints, and as such they constitute the most direct form of community participation. They have an important role in voicing the priorities of the community, in monitoring the proper operation of local health-care facilities, and in implementing and overseeing the rehabilitation of such facilities.

Overall, the existence of these institutional bodies has created a sense of participation at the local level (Ministry of Finance, Dar es Salaam, 2007). According to Boex (2008), although the degree of involvement of civil society in such local committees varies from district to district, all councils except very new ones have boards (Boex 2008). The overall experience of participatory mechanisms is seen as positive in Tanzania. However, although the formal structures are in place, the actual influence of local communities on the planning process remains limited.

Box 4. Sources of Funding for Council Health Services

In Tanzania, 40% of health-service delivery is non-profit and 50% is public.

Budgets stem from:

- Donor basket and international bilateral/multilateral aid (including Danida)
- Budgetary allocation funds (block grants)
- Government capital development funds
- Centrally funded health programs
- Funds from councils' own sources
- Externally funded health development projects
- Out-of-pocket payments and health insurance: cost-sharing and user fees
- Community health funds (CHF) and the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF)
- Private-sector investment and services

3.6.3 *Challenges to social accountability*

Despite these initiatives in terms of increasing local-level participation in the health sector, it is uncertain to what extent decentralization has actually enhanced local participation in health-service planning, budgeting and management. According to Tidemand et al. (2008), there is limited participation in planning and very little community involvement in Comprehensive Council Health Plans. Maluka et al. (2011) show that local influence over priority-setting is very limited, that voices from the regional and district levels are often not heard, and that participatory planning at the village level is not reflected at higher levels of authority. This limited influence was due to a lack of credible information and weak systematic and formal processes of decision-making (Bryant, 2000). Inadequately developed social sectors, weak institutions and marked social inequalities make the implementation of systematic priority-setting difficult (Klein and Williams, 2000; Kipiriri and Martin, 2007).

‘There is direct influence from the top on the decisions made at the district level... For instance, you might have set programmes according to the guidelines but sometimes heads of some projects like HIV/AIDS from the regional level may come and say “I want this section to have super allocation of funds”... NGOs which are contributing funds also want to know how much has been allocated for their priority area, and others can say the same... we have various pressures from outside.’

Interview with members of the CHMT, (Maluka et al., 2010: 15)

‘Priority setting usually occurred in the context of budget cycles and the process was driven by historical allocation. Stakeholders’ involvement in the process was minimal. Decisions (but not the reasoning behind them) were publicized through circulars and notice boards, but there were no formal mechanisms in place to ensure that this information reached the public. There were neither formal mechanisms for challenging decisions nor an adequate enforcement mechanism to ensure that decisions were made in a fair and equitable manner’. (Maluka et al., 2010: 1)

A series of reviews of the health sector in Tanzania confirms the weak community representation in planning due to the following reasons.

First, there is a lack of credible information. This lack of information and of budget transparency is often due to a lack of periodic evaluations of key components in the

health strategy. In general, there is a lack of communication between different levels of government. There are also inadequate and inaccurate data from the local level, as well as a lack of planning for evaluating health service performance. In terms of budgetary transparency, partners outside CCHP are skewing accountability, imposing a coordination problem between donors and making budgets less transparent.

Another problem is unequal power structures. When it comes to getting the voice of the community heard in the local council, community priorities are often in competition with other stakeholders' priorities, for example, from the private sector, NGOs or religious institutions. Often personal relationships with local government officials (politicians) affect decision-making and approval of the plans (interview), and politicians struggle to use the local government capacity development grant.

Secondly, institutional mechanisms often do not function well and thus do not ensure accountability. The functioning of the CHSB depends to a large extent on the willingness and capacity of the district medical officers and to what extent they, and not the chair as is supposed to be the case, includes the CHSB members in key management decisions. If the CHSBs are to be given a voice, it should be represented by the chair in council meetings and only supported by the DMO with regard to technical issues. According to Boex 2008, the CHSBs meet infrequently and have little or no budget at their disposal and are not able to fulfil their responsibilities. Consequently, plans, budgets and progress reports are hardly ever approved by the CHSBs, and often higher-level authorities accept the documents prepared by the DMO without consulting them.

There is also a low level of discretion. Despite the emphasis on decentralized service delivery in the health sector, an intergovernmental analysis of health expenditures carried out by Boex (2008) reveals that health-service delivery in Tanzania is not as decentralized as it could be. Overall, around forty per cent of health-sector funding is provided to the local government level. Furthermore, the funding system is highly fragmented, which results in extremely limited discretion at the local government level. In addition to creating administrative duplication by requiring local officials to deal with multiple funding streams, the fragmentation of the local health finance system has an extremely negative impact on local government discretion when it comes to local health expenditures, as most resource streams are earmarked or tied to a specific purpose. While the DMO is able to prepare a CCHP to respond to the health needs and priorities of the local communities, he (or she) is significantly

constrained in shifting resources between such priorities by the fragmented nature of the financing system. Such fragmentation of decentralized health finances makes it difficult for local officials in Tanzania to achieve the efficiency benefits that are commonly associated with decentralization.

3.6.4 Danish support to the Tanzanian health sector

Denmark has supported the health sector in Tanzania for decades. The fourth phase of Danish support to the Tanzanian health sector in 2009-2014 comprises a budget of DKK 910 million in support to the health sector in mainland, the health sector in Zanzibar and the multi-sectoral response to HIV/AIDS. Danida has a substantial focus on strengthening the Ministry of Health through the health basket fund set up in 1999 as a joint donor financing mechanism (there are ten partner donors contributing to the fund). The fund includes a central health basket fund for the Ministry of Health's recurrent expenditure, and a district health basket fund for local government expenditure through district grants that can be spent by district councils. Eighty per cent of the health budget (DKK 416.5 million) is allocated to the basket fund, of which 50-60% is allocated to districts.¹⁰ Ten per cent of the district funds are earmarked for finance community-based health activities. Furthermore, a resource-allocation formula is used to ensure the equitable distribution of basket funds to the districts.¹¹

At the central level, the basket fund is used as both an upward and downward accountability mechanism, as well as providing an opportunity to improve access to health in Tanzania. Five advisors in the Ministry of Health constitute an element of transparency for Danida and provide assistance to the Ministry, thus ensuring a better flow of accountability towards the donors. The Technical Committee of the Sector Wide Approach (TC-SWAP) and technical working groups aim to influence dialogue through policy forums by trying to advocate accountability, transparency and equity, as well as influencing budget execution, flows of medicines, and reporting and analysis of performance at the local level.

Aiming to increase the capacity of local councillors and district authorities to hold their superiors accountable in terms of ensuring effective budget and resource allocation, Danida develops and monitors the Comprehensive Council Health Plan in

¹⁰ In addition there are health block grants.

¹¹ The formula contains four criteria for weighing the allocation: population size (70%), district size (10%), under-five mortality rates (burden of disease) (10%) and poverty (10%).

order to ensure that budgets and plans are implemented appropriately so that they benefit the local population (Ministry of Finance - Dar es Salaam, 2007; Boex, 2008; Danish Embassy in Dar es Salaam, 2012).

3.7 Deepening democracy: agricultural advisory services in Uganda

3.7.1 *Social accountability principles in agricultural advisory services reform*

Democratic decentralization aims to open up political spaces for direct participation by citizens in the demand-driven governance of selected areas of decentralized service provision (World Bank, 2005). This refers to interventions that maximize access for and participation by the poor by strengthening the accountability relationships between policy-makers, providers and service-users. Users of services are given a voice in the governance of these services through their use of community structures (e.g. school management committees, health-users' management committees, farmer forums, water-user committees, etc.). Funding for such activities is usually provided by central government with support from development partners, and the activities themselves are implemented under the auspices of local government.

The social accountability elements in the NAADS reform in Uganda is based on 'support for forums for participatory planning and decision making over public service provision' (Blair, 2000; also Friis-Hansen, 2004a, Commins, 2007, Ackerman, 2005b). This model takes as its point of departure sector reform, and its institutional arrangements are principally concerned with effectively shifting power from the central ministry to the lowest appropriate level so as to optimize farmers' influence and control over advisory services. The Neuchatel Group, an informal group of staff responsible for advisory services within international aid agencies, and an associated group of European academics and consultants played a central role in designing and promoting this model (Government of Uganda, 2000, World Bank, 2003, Friis-Hansen, 2004a, Hagmann et al., 1999, Neuchatel Group, 1999). A key feature of this model is to devolve control over use of the budget for agricultural advisory services from the Ministry of Agriculture to representative subdistrict-level farmers' forums. While advisory services programs are implemented under the auspices of local government, it is ultimately the direct users of services rather than the elected political leaders who control what and by whom the budget should be used. This model implies a strong emphasis on enhancing the capacity of independent service-user fora.

Box 5. Outline of the key reform principles of Demand Driven Advisory Services.

Decentralisation. Following dissatisfaction with the centralised and standardised Training and Visit extension system, decentralisation and pluralism have been identified as preconditions for making extension accountable to smallholders at the field level. Extension reform has been linked to decentralization reform, shifting governance of the unit of management from the Ministry of Agriculture to the district.

New roles and responsibilities. The central principle of demand-driven advisory services is to ensure that farmers are invited to influence the identification of needs, the prioritization of activities and the choice of service provider. The reforms support capacity development among local government staff and agricultural service providers to instil a change of attitude towards beneficiaries (Friis-Hansen, 2004a, Anderson, 2007, Christoplos, 2010, Friis-Hansen, 2004b). The reforms aim to change the roles and responsibilities of farmers and both public- and private-sector actors in advisory systems and to ensure that these roles are clear and transparent.

Social accountability. The reforms aim at shifting the balance of power from local government and service providers to farmers. Reforms support the establishment of clear and transparent mechanisms that allow farmers to articulate informed demands, choose service providers, monitor services delivered, and hold service providers accountable when necessary.

Strengthening farmers' institutions. Effective demand is related to power. A central objective of demand-driven advisory service reform is to empower farmers by encouraging them to organize themselves in sustainable groups and use such groups as units of learning and for the expression of informed demands. Farmer organisations are seen to have the potential to articulate demand on behalf of their members and to put pressure on extension agencies and the political system. Farmer organisations may even provide or contract services directly (Christoplos, 2010). However, in SSA, few if any countries have farmer organizations with a strong membership base among poor farmers and the capacity to articulate farmers' needs and to take on the function of representing farmers without technical and political hindrance. Most reforms in SSA therefore support mechanisms for farmer group formation that are catalytic and that stimulate further organization among farmers. These farmer groups are institutionalised at sub-district or district level and invited to act within predefined invited political spaces.

Choice of service provider. The demand-driven advisory services reforms argue for a plurality of service providers and for breaking the monopoly of the public sector in service provision. It is argued that voice and accountability will only emerge if there is a choice of service providers. Public management reforms that followed the completion of structural adjustment of the economy in the mid-1990s in most African countries assumed a reduced role for government, which should shift from an implementing to a facilitating role, leaving more room to the market and private companies.

The following section draws on a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of NAADS in Soroti District in 2001-2012 that is documented in a monograph (Friis-Hansen and Aben, forthcoming). The experience of NAADS in Soroti District is

an example of the successful institutionalization of social accountability mechanisms as part of the reform of agricultural extension.

3.7.2 Institutionalizing social accountability at sub-district level

The process of changing the accountability relationship between local government service providers and citizens is neither easy nor straightforward. Changing accountability relationships means that actors have to engage in new roles and responsibilities, that new institutions are created, and that both local government staff and citizens learn new skills and capacities. Implementation of the new directives from the National NAADS Secretariat in 2001, reflecting the NAADS parliament act, meant a fundamental shift in power in rural areas. From a situation of publicly employed extension workers conveying technical messages to farmers, the latter were now expected to articulate needs collectively, set budgetary priorities, select who and how services are to be provided and inputs procured, and undertake participatory monitoring to ensure quality of services and to prevent leakage. Not only were farmers given new roles and responsibilities, but public extension employees were no longer to provide services, but were to facilitate the involvement of private service providers and to act as 'honest brokers' in the tendering process and in ensuring technical back-up for the new farmers' institutions.

In Soroti District one can distinguish three different phases in which the social accountability relationship was changed, each with its own drivers and dynamics. The first phase was supporting farmers' institutional development. Local NGOs were contracted by NAADS to organise in strong viable groups and in Farmer Fora at the sub-county level. Unlike in most parts of the country, NAADS in Soroti District had already broken with the conventional Training and Visit extension system in 1995 and had experienced alternative approaches, including Farmer Led Extension and Farmer Field School. These lessons from extension reforms provided a strong foundation for farmers' institutions based on farmers' participation. This allowed NAADS to build on the past strengths of existing farmers' groups and organisations and to integrate local concerns in farmers' institutional development, making NAADS guidelines functional. Farmers' groups were established gradually, but grew to cover around 50% of rural families in 2007. These groups provided the basis for receiving services and were the grassroots units for organizing Farmer Fora (SCFF) at sub-county level. The SCFF gradually grew into a strong viable network of farmers' groups. Many of the elected leaders of the SCFF had previous experience from Farmer Field School groups.

The second phase was assisting these new and relative fragile institutions to develop the necessary capacity to undertake their assigned tasks effectively within the rules set out by NAADS secretariat. This involved facilitating and mentoring farmers' institutions through a series of back-up services to build confidence and infuse power into the new farmer governance institutions at the sub-county and district levels within their invited political spaces. To ensure that this space was maintained, it was essential to create an enabling environment through review and feedback sessions in which farmers were strongly engaged, while the NAADS staff took a back seat. Another important factor at this stage was to use strong, district-based NGOs as external facilitators of the empowerment process, thereby creating a free and fair environment for the new institutions to learn, practice and use their newly acquired space without fear or favour.

During the third phase, NAADS farmers' institutions became strong and confident and started to challenge the rules, claiming additional political space. This change in agency went in parallel with increased economic progress as the farmers' groups started reaping the benefits of their enterprises. As a result, higher level farmers' organisations emerged around commercial commodity (e.g. citrus, milk-processing, sweet potato production, apiculture, sorghum production on contract for Nile Breweries, etc.). These act as new platforms that allow (accumulating) farmers to engage with local governance issues and politics. Through the participatory monitoring systems carried out by SCFF, farmers began to query the viability of technical decisions made by local government staff and to use local monitoring results to demand accountability from private service providers.

SCFF also claimed political space by challenging NAADS procedures outside their mandate, beginning to query the performance of some of the less efficient sub-systems of the program, including contract management and delivery of the advisory service systems. Through their committees, they were able to recruit and vet payments to service providers, thereby gaining more direct control over finances. They also participated in the verification of goods delivered for technological development to ensure that the services given to farmers corresponded to the plans they had designed.

3.7.3 Relation between political and social accountability

This radical reform was implemented by side-lining the Ministry of Agriculture in Kampala and its production departments at the district level. Also many councillors were hostile to NAADS, as they had little influence over priority-setting and did not benefit personally from the project. To add to the animosity, the NAADS budgets

controlled by SCFF were typically larger than the total budget of the sub-county (LC3) government. In many parts of Uganda at both at national and district levels, this led to destructive conflicts between the new NAADS farmers' institutions and politicians and conventional technical staff.

NAADS in Soroti not only managed to avoid such conflicts, but created synergies between the two forms of accountability. At the initiative of the district NAADS coordinator, the SCFF executive committee agreed to include the local politicians (sub-county councillors) and sub-county NAADS coordinators as non-voting members. This enhanced the credibility of the SCFF in the eyes of local politicians and increased acceptance of its decisions by local government staff. Meanwhile the local politician could claim to be part of the successful agricultural development process, which increased his chances of being re-elected to office. The early inclusion of political leaders in promoting NAADS in Soroti has not only provided opportunities for politicians to provide social accountability to their constituents, but also offered platforms for farmers' leaders to engage in local politics and win elective political posts at the district and sub-county levels. This has led to the emergence of a very different new type of politician, who are elected to local councils and whose constituencies are intimately linked to their backgrounds as farmers' leaders and who have a profound understanding of farmers' institutions and support the effective implementation of the program. In this way, local opposition politicians have become agents rather than critics of agricultural development in their constituencies.

SCFF assists farmers in articulating their demands in a collective way. Some of these demands may go beyond what is possible through the NAADS program, while others may be facilitated through the program. In either way, local politicians have a keen interest in being seen to respond positively to these demands, as their behaviour will influence whether they get re-elected.

The effectiveness of NAADS in Soroti in achieving synergies with related programs, as well as its accountability to the district council, have committed all stakeholders – technical, political and administrative – to collective responsibility for social accountability. In addition, informal synergies have been created innovatively with other aid agencies and NGOs to boost interventions on the ground to the mutual benefits of both parties.

3.7.4 Challenges to demand-driven service provision

While radical devolutions of power to sub-district institutions representing users of services can be highly effective, as is shown in the case of NAADS in Soroti District,

implementation is neither easy nor straight-forward. Successful implementation requires the sorts of social skills and capacities that are rare among local government officials and elected leaders in Uganda, and many things can go wrong.

In a democratic decentralization reform, such as NAADS in Uganda, it is crucial that Farmer Fora and farmers' groups have the capacity to engage in participatory planning and decision-making over public service provision. While this has been the case in Soroti District, it has not always worked so well in many other districts. A recent PhD thesis (Bukonya, 2010), based on fieldwork carried out in Mukono District, western Uganda, shows that, when limited and inadequate support are given to the institutional development of farmers, the impact is mixed and social accountability relationships remain weak.

Changes in the attitudes of local government staff are a prerequisite for engaging in equal partnerships with local communities (Gaventa, 2006a). Successful participatory planning and service provision will often require significant changes in the management principles of local government and capacity enhancement in the form of 'training for transformation' (Friis- Hansen, 2004a). Another challenge is to ensure that, when it is institutionalized within LG processes, community participation does not result in mere consultation and/or the simple legitimization of program decisions taken by politicians and technocrats. This could undermine significant transformations of power relations and empowerment, as well as potentially decreasing the political space for citizens' own initiatives and their capacity to challenge power structures.

Participation can become 'politicized', with citizen forums being used to bolster the power of the ruling party, rather than providing an open space for critical dialogue and citizens' influence. Another potential challenge relates to issues of equity in terms of participation and distribution.

Yet another challenge is how to ensure social inclusion in the Citizen Fora. Participation is often dominated by resourceful citizens, and strengthening local participatory institutions without losing the focus on equity is a continuous challenge. The increased influence of local groups may be achieved at the price of limiting the political space for weaker citizens.

4. Social accountability and human rights-based approaches

4.1 Review of human rights-based approaches¹²

Enhancing social accountability requires a focus on changing the relationship between citizen and state by establishing a social contractual relationship where the state or government and citizens hold each other to account and engage in dialogue. It is therefore relevant to review human rights-based approaches (HRBA) that seek to change the perceptions of both citizens and state officials, arguing that they are infused with rights and obligations. This requires that programs and policies simultaneously work on both the demand and supply side or with rights-holders and duty-bearers, instead of as separate interventions.

A review of the HRBA literature reveals a wide range of understandings and practices involving this approach. What is common to the various HRBAs is that they take their point of departure in the internationally recognized framework of human rights (political, social, economic and civic), which are translated into shared standards for the state's obligations and the citizen's rights claims. It is also argued that HRBAs with its focus on equal rights for all human beings place an emphasis on broader political transformations (ensuring that all enjoy rights), rather than on a more limited focus on development benefits. Finally, HRBAs claim to focus on both duty-bearers and rights-holders.

Friis-Hansen and Kyed (2009) identify three types of HRBA:

- A *legalistic or top-down approach*, insisting on abstract individual rights (universalism) and a focus on national institutions and duty-bearers;
- An *empowerment or bottom-up approach* that emphasizes the community level, promotes locally articulated demands as context-specific 'rights' (particularism) and focuses on rights-holders;
- A *middle-ground approach* that mediates between the legalistic and empowerment approaches by focusing on a gradual realization of human rights (HR) with a point of departure in HR principles rather than abstract legal standards. The latter is also characterized by a simultaneous focus on strengthening rights-holders and duty-bearers at the local as well as the national level. The term

¹² This section draws upon previous work done for the World Bank and published in Friis-Hansen, E. & Kyed, H. M. 2009, Participation, Decentralisation and Human Rights: A Review of Approaches for Strengthening Voice and Accountability in Local Governance. Washington D.C.: World Bank.

‘middle-ground HRBA’ (first defined by Friis- Hansen and Kyed, 2009) captures a range of recently emerging contributions by researchers as well as INGOs and donors to improve existing rights-based approaches that either tend to be too legalistic and top-down or too disassociated from wider national processes of change by focusing solely at the local community level. Theoretically, the middle-ground approach presents an attempt to mediate universalism and particularism, as well as individualism and communalism.

The legalistic and empowerment approaches are dominant in most HRBA interventions. They have both tended to overlook local governments as important duty-bearers, whether by focusing only on the community level or by focusing on national institutions alone. HRBA interventions have tended to be implemented separately from development activities, for example, separately from sectoral programs and decentralization support programs.

The legalistic HRBA, with its focus on national institutions and legislation, seldom includes genuine participation by citizens. Rights are very abstract and are not understood or translated into local contexts. Furthermore, the legalistic approach places little emphasis on group mobilization as a way of challenging dominant power structures. The empowerment HRBA, on the other hand, focuses on the articulation of rights as expressed by local communities themselves. This approach combines a rights vocabulary with community mobilization and participatory tools to enable local communities to place demands on state institutions. However, it often fails to link these activities to national policy changes and does not focus on building the capacity of local governments as duty-bearers for the delivery of rights. The legalistic and empowerment HRBAs share a focus on particular rights or issues, rather than on wider transformative processes.

Interventions that use a middle-ground HRBA are few and poorly documented. While donor organizations such as DFID, SIDA and UNDP have mentioned this approach in their development discourses, thus mediating between the empowerment and legalist HRBAs, it has seldom been carried through in program implementation. Nevertheless, the few existing cases suggest that this middle-ground rights-based approach is well designed to add value to and be integrated with democratic decentralization and community participatory intervention models. The middle-ground HRBA promotes four HR principles: participation, accountability, non-discrimination and transparency, rather than fixed legal rights. It seeks to foster linkages between local and national institutions, as well as between state, government, civil society, citizens and other stakeholders horizontally. This is done through the creation of

shared spaces of dialogue and collaboration and multi-stakeholder training in rights and obligations. Support for community empowerment goes hand in hand with the capacity-building of duty-bearers to deliver rights and services. The middle-ground HRBA seeks to insert HR principles gradually into processes and outcomes by being context-sensitive and by being based on careful analyses of political power structures, institutions, available resources and values (Friis-Hansen and Kyed, 2009).

4.2 Can HBRAs enhance social accountability in decentralized service delivery?

Proponents of integrating HR and decentralization overall argue that a rights perspective can help local government institutions perform in a more participatory, accountable and equitable manner. This is because HR standards and principles provide useful tools for assessments and also ask questions that reveal information about policies, groups of people and practices that would otherwise remain invisible (see, for example, (McNeil and Mumvuma, 2006, Crawford, 2005, Joy, 2003, Santos, 2001)). This is based on five interrelated arguments.

First, local-government service-delivery can become more socially accountable when services are conceptualized in terms of citizens' rights rather than as charity or welfare because this underscores active citizen participation in accessing rights and in obliging local government to deliver services based on citizens' active claims. As such, services are seen as entitlements that citizens need to insist on obtaining from their local governments. This relates to the understanding of rights as implying responsibilities, in this case those of local government institutions to fulfil their obligations to deliver the services they are responsible for (Joy, 2003).

Secondly, it is argued that an HRBA that encompasses the HR principles of accountability, transparency, participation and non-discrimination can add value to the decentralized governance of service delivery because it focuses on the process and quality of the latter. In other words, the HR principles set standards for how services are provided, rather than merely being confined to the delivery itself in technical terms or to the quantity of services delivered (Guèye and Mbaye, 2004:48). One of the few examples from Africa is the Malawi Services Charter Program, which is supported by Danish Institute for Human Rights (Government of Malawi 2009).

This implies more expanded assessment tools and indicators that, for example, determine not only whether service delivery and related expenditure have increased with

decentralization (such as the number of schools, pupils and territorial outreach), but also whether there has been citizen participation in defining priorities, services have been distributed evenly, the content of service has been adapted to local contexts and needs, information on education budgets, plans and personnel has been made publicly available, and mechanisms of accountability are effective and within the reach of the entire population (Guèye and Mbaye, 2004: 51-2). Such mechanisms are widely used in World Bank-supported Social Guarantees programs in Latin America.

Similarly, an HRBA places the emphasis on the qualitative measurements of participation, which means not only asking whether citizen participation in planning, budgeting and implementation has increased, but also how people participate and which people in the local arena participate (is it, for example, mainly the local elites, or do the poor and marginalized also participate?) (Guèye and Mbaye, 2004: 76). Focusing on these aspects of participation, it is argued, can help move decentralization and local government programs away from the tendency for participation to become a purely technical means to involve people in development planning consultations to focusing on the political dimensions of participation, that is, on participation as empowerment (Abalos König, 2002: 32). This point can be related to the focus of HRBAs on political transformation.

Thirdly, and related to the second point, it is argued that HRBAs can enhance equity because they have a more explicit focus on non-discrimination as based on unequal power relations than most decentralization programs do. This requires local government to pay specific attention to the inclusion of poor and excluded groups in participatory decision-making. The principle of non-discrimination can also encourage local government to ensure equity in service provisions and resource allocations (Joy, 2003: 19). Overall, integrating an HRBA into decentralization programs can include a shift from concerns principally with the majority, as underpinned by the representative democracy model, to a specific focus on access by particularly vulnerable groups to funds, benefits and participation. According to proponents of HRBAs, a focus on non-discrimination can help mitigate the tendency of some decentralization processes to bolster the power of local elites or particular ethnic or religious groups, rather than ensuring the broad-based empowerment of all citizens (Lundberg, 2004, Crawford, 2005).

Fourthly, HRBA's emphasis on the interdependence of human rights (social, economic, cultural, political and civic) can make decentralization programs more holistically focused and committed to establishing multi-sectoral interventions. Although in

many places local government institutions now have the responsibility for a wide range of services, there has been a long-term tendency for different service sectors to be de-linked, as well as for social/economic and civil/political rights work to be separated. An HRBA views the delivery of health, education and other basic services as essential for meaningful political participation, as well as seeing participation in setting service priorities as significant for improvements in the equitable distribution and quality of services (Joy, 2003: 3).

4.3 Experience with support for social accountability within an HRBA framework

There are practically no decentralization programs that explicitly employ rights-based approaches (Crawford, 2005: 2). Similarly, human rights organizations are only slowly beginning to explore ways in which the devolution of power to locally elected governments can improve rights promotion and realization (Crawford, 2005). An inspection of different local government programs centring on decentralization provided by Guèye and Mbaye (2004) also shows a focus on human rights principles such as accountability, participation, transparency and non-discrimination or equity. However, these programs do not use the language of rights or refer explicitly to international human rights standards (Guèye and Mbaye, 2004: 103). The examples that exist of synergies between RBA and decentralization are mainly to be found among those NGOs that integrate RBA within community participatory projects and link this to strengthening the capacity and accountability of local government officials. Where linkages are made between local government and rights-based approaches, it is usually in the form of sub-components of donor-supported decentralization programs that are sub-contracted to INGOs or local NGOs under the label of ‘civil society support’.

There are a number of reasons for the lack of explicit linkages between decentralization and HRBA. One relates to a longstanding professional separation: whereas human rights organizations have been dominated by legal professionals and have tended to work at the international, national or community levels, people working with decentralization have been dominated by public administration professionals, who focus on the managerial and technical aspects of governance. The latter group has been highly sceptical of what HRBAs can add to local government, seeing rights as leading to potential conflicts between local government officials and citizens. Conversely, human rights organizations have commonly ignored local governments, due to an emphasis on human rights being attached to

central state obligations and the idea that a strong central government authority (the primary protector of human rights) is needed to curb the abuses of citizens by local power-holders (Guèye and Mbaye, 2004: 23). This has conflicted with local government professionals' view of the central state as a main obstacle to local-level democratization (Santos, 2001: 8).

Despite these historical differences, changes to HRBAs (such as the middle-ground approach and the community empowerment HRBAs) in the direction of more bottom-up and less legalistic methodologies have led to a number of organizations and scholars stressing the advantages of creating synergies between decentralization programs and HRBAs.

In practice, the explicit use of a human rights framework for local governance and the integration of HR criteria for assessing local government performance are very rare. Actual attempts to translate local government services into judiciable rights are confined to a few cases, and it is very rare for local governments to be taken to court for not fulfilling social and economic rights (one exception is South Africa, where, for example, the municipality of Grootboom was taken to court for not fulfilling the right to housing; (Guèye and Mbaye, 2004: 68). One reason for this is that some countries have not made social and economic rights judiciable, but the most common reason is that people are not aware that they can demand justice vis-à-vis local government and/or that the justice system lacks the capacity to judge such cases (Guèye and Mbaye, 2004). These awareness and capacity problems do not apply to South Africa, for example, which might explain why there are examples of S&E rights cases being taken to court there.

Based on experiences from Ghana, observers like Crawford (2005) warn against the dangers of using an HRBA in local government programs as a tool to translate local government services into rights in those countries where local government institutions still lack the capacity, full authority and resources to deliver quality services to the whole population, and where legal institutions are weak.

This would place too much of a burden on local government institutions and could lead to potentially critical results: (i) services will be of poor quality (for example, too many pupils in schools compared to the staff and facilities they have available); (ii) when services as rights are not realized fully due to a lack of capacity, rights fatigue among the rural poor may arise and/or create conflicts between local government authorities and citizens; and (iii) translating services into rights may make little sense

if local and national justice systems are not compelled or do not have the capacity to adjudicate social and economic rights.

For example, Crawford (2005) points out that in rural Ghana a lack of local government resources to deliver services meant that many local communities did not see the local government as the duty-bearer to which to turn with rights claims, but remained relatively detached from local government, instead preferring community-based self-help groups as a way of realizing their needs.

A way to avoid these potentially negative consequences of integrating the more legalist focus of HRBAs into local government programs is to maintain a focus on a gradual, but progressive realization of social and economic rights in accordance with the state's available resources and the devolution of these to local government institutions (Guèye and Mbaye, 2004: 37-8). Viewing local government services as rights can help hold local government accountable and feel responsible for working towards the realization of such rights, but this must be seen as a long-term process and be combined with adequate capacity-building and resource-allocation (Guèye and Mbaye, 2004). Another option is to scale down the legalist emphasis on services as rights and instead focus on integrating the HR principles of accountability, participation, non-discrimination and transparency into local government programs and to combine this with gradual training in and use of human rights.

A positive example on such a non-legalistic and more pragmatic and practical HRBA is the programs of SIDA-Kenya. These programs show how decentralization can add value to HRBAs and vice versa. The SIDA-Kenya program focuses on specific sectors rather than on local government development overall. With regard to social accountability, the SIDA-Kenya HRBA programs include support for mechanisms for monitoring public expenditure, for involving local councils, civil society and media in budget tracking, and for access to justice for marginalized groups and women.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Overall conclusions about support for social accountability

The suggestion that citizens can contribute to strengthening governance and to access to and the quality of service delivery in human development sectors through their voices and client power is an appealing one. There is, however, a pressing need to better understand the various factors that influence the success or failure of social accountability initiatives. Evidence shows that, in addition to important potential benefits, such approaches also face critical risks and challenges, including the absence of an enabling environment (e.g. lack of democratic space, disabling legal and policy frameworks, an adverse political climate), a lack of government capacity (or willingness) to respond, a weak civil society, and the dangers of elite capture and the exclusion of marginalized groups.

Available reviews of social accountability initiatives point to the crucial importance of promoting and supporting an enabling environment by strengthening civil society and ensuring that weak and marginalized groups are explicitly targeted and empowered. The studies reviewed show that successful cases are characterized by high levels of ability and motivation among public officials and citizens, conditions that are not easily found in development contexts (Malena, 2009). Most social accountability initiatives in Africa are pilot projects. As such, there is a need to shed light upon how efforts to decentralize public service provision have improved access to and the quality of public service delivery for citizens, in particular the poorest and most marginalized, and to what extent efforts to support civil society organisations (e.g. local associations, customary institutions and/or social movements) have increased citizens' abilities to claim and influence the public space (i.e. participation). In order to achieve lasting impacts over time, there is a need for more solid empirical studies to gain a deeper understanding of how challenges such as these influence the impacts of social accountability initiatives and how and under what circumstances those challenges can be overcome. This includes questions about how social accountability works in practice, given the complicated relationships among citizens, policy-makers, program managers and service providers. An accountability relationship is not altered through a single technical intervention, such as an information campaign or scorecard exercise.

As Körling argues (2010), the presence of multiple non-state actors in public service provision does not necessarily challenge the state as such, but it may contribute to the

making of the state from below. On this note, it is crucial for the success of efforts to support social accountability that the relevant actors are identified in terms of who is accountable to whom, and for what purposes? This may seem a rather straightforward question, but in reality it is far more complicated. Within the context of local government, it cannot be taken for granted that service delivery providers only function within formal state structures or that they are the ultimate guarantors of citizens' rights to service, as often assumed in a human rights-based legalistic approach (Körling, 2010). This calls for a more flexible approach identifying, in a given context, who are actually the legitimate providers, who people actually address and how (access to) as a base line reflecting citizens' preferences and needs on the ground.

5.2 Lessons learned about specific social accountability mechanisms

5.2.1 PETS

For donors PETS can be a useful mechanism, and they may be built into the conditions for development programming. Until now they have mostly been carried out in the social sectors of education and health, but other sectors could benefit from the lessons learnt.

- PETS can be used to build legitimacy for governments if adequate information is made public and measures taken to act on leakages and irregularities.
- The specific political context should be taken into consideration when planning an information campaign.
- Since donor modalities are important for accountability, more could be done to build social accountability mechanisms into the way aid is provided, so that service users become aware of the entitlements (fiscal system).
- In Tanzania, the process of informing communities was done poorly and the improvements were limited, which highlights the role of information campaigns, as well as the government's willingness to disseminate information.
- The surveys may fail to have an impact if they are not communicated, often through creative communication methods to reach local populations.
- To avoid resistance by government, development partners need to assess their own incentives for involvement, as the survey may jeopardize their relations with government, and they need to understand institutional and political factors and ensure they are adequately addressed.

Many studies attribute falls in the leakage rate to the Ugandan government's disclosure policy. Although this creates a good case study, it also runs the risk of raising expectations regarding the benefits of transparency policies. Clearly information is important, but current evidence should not lead us to expect that a similarly impressive reduction in rates of corruption will necessarily occur elsewhere if this policy is implemented. According to Hubbard (2007: 8), Reinekka and Svensson tend to overemphasize the importance of the information campaign, ignoring how the effect of decreases in corruption may be linked to these broader educational and fiscal reforms. The political will to reform and the commitment to meet international conditions in the fiscal system in terms of introducing increased control in the way grants were paid might have been just as important as the information campaign.

5.2.2 Participatory budgeting

Despite the positive development outcomes associated with participatory budgeting processes, major challenges remain. First, experience shows that the process is costly and will be less effective when only inadequate funding is available to local governments. There is a need to set aside funding for the participatory budget process in the municipal budget, and the central public authorities need to earmark support funds for municipalities that have adopted participatory budgeting, in order to encourage more local authorities to adopt the process (World Bank 2010).

At the national level, the main obstacle in institutionalizing the participatory budgeting process proved to be the highly political nature of the mechanisms and procedures for designating councillors, which depend more on political parties' decisions than on local people's choices. Accountability relationships are often directed upwards, from rural councillors to their parties, rather than downwards to their constituents. Furthermore, after elections, new power structures may not be willing to build on previous councils' achievements. The role of civil society is important in counterbalancing political pressure.

At the local level, the low education levels of some councillors has limited their capacity to disseminate information in their villages, which is a key aspect of the process. High illiteracy rates among local populations and the lack of adequate information tools inhibit participation. Citizens' limited knowledge about their rights and responsibilities also slow down the participatory process. The process of participatory budgeting is therefore time-consuming due to the capacity-building needs of various participants. Relying on voluntary facilitators hampers the sustainability of the process, though this could be overcome by setting aside funding

for facilitators. In general, facilitators often have extensive family responsibilities, constraining their regular participation.

There are many examples of resistance from the local elite to the involvement of ordinary citizens in participatory budgeting. Persistent power struggles have prevented women and vulnerable groups from being represented in strategic positions in the community. This point has been further elaborated by Arcand and Fafchamps (2012), who found that participatory development projects often shifted resource allocations towards the local elite, and 'At its worst, this could generate a process by which external resources directed at strengthening associations of the disadvantaged end up weakening such associations or reducing the representation of the disadvantaged in these associations' (Arcand and Fafchamps: 113). There were also greater levels of exclusion of some ethnic groups, such as those associated with livestock herding. Inclusive representation is a long-term challenge.

The key contextual factors that contribute to the success of participatory budgeting include:

- A stable multiparty political system and well-implemented decentralization reforms. For example, since independence Senegal has been governed by elected officials under local government reforms formulated in 1972. One reason for the relative success of participatory budgeting in Fissel District is that it was one of the first pilot municipalities to be decentralized in 1972 and that the district has many years of experience in community development, making local government officials open and willing to initiate participatory processes.
- Well-structured, dynamic, strong, capable and legitimate civil-society organizations are necessary to carry out the process, as are long-term partnerships with NGOs and the community organizations to reinforce capacity, methods and ownership.

5.2.3 Community-based monitoring

Increasing the discretionary powers of local government officials needs to be accompanied by budget transparency, oversight and suspensions in case of mismanagement. Citizen monitoring can ensure the rational use of public resources (from government or donor sources), provide feedback on problems or shortcomings in service delivery and propose collective solutions for addressing such issues. The discretionary power of local government could be strengthened through more flexible funding that enable local-level health-care providers to prioritize budgets according to community needs.

Community-based monitoring has been criticized by, among other, Jenkins and Goetz (1999) for reflecting a naïve view of politics and bureaucracy. They argue that report cards can only provide a means of accountability if politicians and bureaucrats are unaware of service- delivery problems in the first place, which is rarely the case. Most politicians are well aware of the state of affairs in poor areas. In response to this critique, Ackerman (2005b) states that assessing public service performance using community-based monitoring cannot stand on its own as a social accountability approach to improving access to and the quality of services. Ackerman argues that community-based monitoring needs to be complemented with measures to sanction local government officials and public service providers who do not perform according to expected standards.

5.2.4 Participatory planning and priority setting

A critical component of successful decentralization is to put in place monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure that local government officials deliver local services in an efficient manner and in accordance with the needs and priorities of the local community.

Since 2000, the Tanzanian health sector has been decentralized in order to enhance local participation and social accountability in health service delivery. Through, among other things, the decentralized planning, budgeting and management of health services, the aim was to ensure participatory planning of services in order to increase accountability and meet local peoples' need for access to health services.

The establishment of the Comprehensive Council Health Plan and various institutional bodies overseeing the delivery of services was supposed to ensure local-level accountability. However, despite these decentralized initiatives the participation of local communities in health planning is minimal, and it remains difficult for local communities to influence priority-setting in the health sector. The challenges to participation and hence social accountability at the local level were mainly due to the lack of adequate information, malfunctioning institutions with inadequately formalized decision-making procedures, social inequalities and the low level of discretion permitted to local government.

In order to overcome these challenges, social accountability mechanisms need to be strengthened, institutionalized and linked to existing governance structures and service delivery. Mechanisms to ensure community representation and influence over decision-making are crucial. NGOs could support the process of

capacity-building both staff and community members in drawing up budgets and planning activities.

5.2.5 Demand-driven service provision

A process of deepening decentralization has taken place over the past decade in Africa through the establishment and institutionalization of service user groups from the lowest level of service provision to the district level. However, the extent to which power has been devolved from the local government level to service users varies greatly between countries and between sectors. The benefits of demand-driven service provision can be many, including better access to and quality of services, as users are involved in setting priorities and are able to hold service providers to account. Demand-driven service provision also holds the potential to enhance cost effectiveness, as when service users are given influence over the use of budgets, they tend to be more cost-conscious than civil servants. Finally, demand-driven service provision has the potential to reduce or eliminate financial leakage and corruption.

As discussed in Section 3.5.4, the NAADS program in Soroti dramatically changed the social accountability relationship between local government staff, private service providers and farmers. The experience of Soroti District show that such changes in social accountability require that empowerment be taken serious and that considerable investments are used on human resource development and support for sub-district level institutions that represent the users of services. In the case of NAADS in Soroti, farmer-only institutional development became a success because Soroti was one the first districts in NAADS ('soft' investments were reduced for districts joining later), because it could build on the capacity development already achieved by Farmer Field Schools, and because in Soroti NAADS was able to attach a number of other project resources that could further strengthen farmers' institutions.

However, projects that support demand-driven service provision provide inadequate training for the transformation of local government staff. This was also the case for NAADS, where local government staff were expected to assume a new role, without training for their transformation and without changing the institutional culture of local government. In the case of Soroti, changes in the role of local government staff from being implementers to facilitators of agricultural advisory services were successful because they could build on the experience of the Dutch-funded Farmer First program in the late 1990s that provided incentives to extension workers to change their attitudes towards farmers. Experience with Farmer Field School also shifted the social accountability relationship between technical staff and farmers, as the role of

the extension worker shifted being a teacher to a facilitator and the promotion of more authentic problem-based learning experiences among farmers in collaborative group settings (Taylor, Duveskog and Friis-Hansen 2013).

Experience from NAADS in Soroti District confirms that service users' direct control over budgetary spending is a very effective, perhaps the most effective, mechanism for improving social accountability. A framework of invited political space, as the case of the demand-driven advisory service in Uganda, does not imply that users acquire full control over the budget, but rather that the budget can only be spent when the chairman of the sub-county Farmer Forum has agreed to a given expenditure.

The devolution of control over the budget for service provision in NAADS to the institutions controlled by the users (farmers) at the sub-district level is a radical reform that provides very large potential benefits to all stakeholders. This has shown to be the most effective mechanism for social accountability of all approaches we have reviewed. It potentially allows all stakeholders to engage in and benefit from the program. Such devolution also places a high level of responsibility and demand on service users' representatives, who need to have adequate capacity and commitment to govern effectively in the interests and to the benefit of all. While many districts failed to meet these requirements, our case study from Soroti showed that it is possible. The following summarises the key lessons for this success.

Support for farmers' institutional development builds on already existing local experiences and institutional capacity by contracting committed local NGOs as independent external facilitators for the process of farmers' institutional development. Continuous institutional learning within NAADS at the district level about how best to support institutional development works. Using adequate time and resources to build strong farmers' institutions capable of articulating informed Demands was also important.

Farmers' institutions were allowed to take responsibility gradually by providing sufficient technical back-up from local government staff and preventing Farmer Fora from acting outside the guidelines. Local government staff had benefitted from an earlier Farmer Led Extension project (1996-1999) that focused on training for transformation of extension staff.

Technology enterprise selection by sub-county Farmer Fora was done in dialogue with NAADS district technical staff. While Farmer Fora have control over the funds for advisory services and input procurement, NAADS district technical staff made

sure that only enterprises with high production and market potential were chosen. This dialogue ensured that funds were spent in a way that increased production and income among farmers.

Inviting politicians and local government technical staff who were not part of NAADS to participate in Farmer Fora and other farmers' institutions has avoided unnecessary conflicts and created synergies between electoral accountability and accountability between elections.

5.3 Discussion

5.3.1 Political or social accountability?

Political accountability (accountability through periodic free and fair elections) and social accountability (that can be understood as in-between election accountability) and complement each other. Social accountability is partly supported in realization that political accountability in Africa has not had the development effect many had hoped for. Public-sector reform in Africa since the turn of the century has increasingly opened up political spaces for the direct participation of citizens, either in the monitoring of development activities, such as score cards or PETS, or in sector-specific policy reforms that decentralize the governance of service provision.

Reforms that include devolution of real power over budget utilization to local citizen groups are often implemented with support from international development partners but resisted by local politicians. However, the case of NAADS in Soroti District (Section 3.7) illustrates that it is possible to turn around such hostility. The SCFF is an elective institution that draws its powers from the mandate given to it by all registered farmers' groups in the sub-county. In this way, the sub-county local government views them as the people's representatives who must be supported and respected. The forum has been given the power to allocate resources for all reform activities, award contracts and bring to book service providers that do not meet the terms of their contracts. Doing this in collaboration with the sub-county local government has helped to strengthen both SCFF and the LC3 government.

5.3.2 Technical mechanisms or institutionalization at sub-district level?

In general, most social accountability mechanisms are seriously under-institutionalized. However, the institutionalizing of voice is crucial for ensuring that local-level priorities influence decisions. Technical social accountability mechanisms such as

facilitation of social audits and dialogue between community, civil society organizations and local government officials would be more effective if they were anchored in sub-district level institutions.

5.3.3 Social inclusion

A gap continues to exist between the intention to institutionalize participation and the reality of exclusion of poorer and marginalized citizens (Lavigne Delville, 1999, Nijenhuis, 2003, Ringold et al., 2012). This gap has been explained by negative outcomes relating to state behaviour, such as failures to implement or sustain policy gains, resistance to transfer resources and capacities to lower levels of governments, elite capture and reprisals against those who challenge the status quo (Boone, 2003, EU, 2012).

A greater focus on equity in access to services and involvement is arguably a key value added synergy by linking HRBA with local government/social accountability programs. This synergy may strengthen poverty reduction and inclusive participation within a decentralization framework through HRBAs' consistent focus of equity, non-discrimination and inclusion of marginalized groups. Such an insistence may on the other hand be at odds with effective service provision. Experience from many development programs, however, indicate that rights without obligations may undermine effectiveness of service provision.

In the demand driven agricultural advisory services program (2001-2007), discussed in section 3.5, only farmers who organise in groups and co-finance 5% of the cost of services can benefit. In 2007-2010 the President of Uganda offered universal access of agricultural advisory services, abolished the demand that farmers should be organised in groups, and removed their requirement for co-finance. What in principle seems more equitable (and in line with HRBA principles) has in practice seriously worsened the social equality of the NAADS program, as it is undermined the programs principles and institutions of participatory governance.

5.3.4 Invited or claimed political space

New intermediary political spaces, created by local associations and social movements who are involved with democratic mediation emerge as a source of change and are viewed to have democratic potential (Piper and von Lieres, 2011). In the case-study of agricultural advisory service reform in Soroti district, Uganda, it was show that participation in invited political space greatly enhanced the availability quality of service received by small scale farmers (Speer, 2012, Friis-Hansen, 2004a). These

positive outcomes can in part be explained by significantly more finance available for services by government and international development agencies. The advisory services reform has also supported a number of district and sub-district institutions that have increased farmers' service availability.

However, SCFF is a NAADS-program-created institution and its operations are embedded in its design and structure. It is therefore vulnerable to external administrative or political shocks. As discussed in section 5.3.3 above, such a shock happened in 2007, when the President of Uganda terminated the original NAADS program and continued it in a form that removed the invitation for political space from Farmer Fora and replaced it with more politically controlled farmer institutions. The rationale behind these change were associated with national politics and using NAADS as a platform for re-election (Therkildsen and Kjær 2011). The fall-out of the temporary return to neo-patrimonial rule for the strength of farmer institutions has been highly negative. A 2013 review team from World Bank assess the current ability of farmer institutions play their intended role in NAADS as highly dissatisfactory and the change in recent years as negative.

5.3.5 Political context of social accountability?

The World Bank has supported social accountability initiatives, but its review of them (World Bank 2010) ignores the political context and power politics in which community-based monitoring takes place. One can argue that government openness and willingness are necessary preconditions for social accountability mechanisms to succeed. In a human rights approach terminology it can be argued that it is not enough to inform people about their rights and entitlements. If institutional authority does not back these rights, they cannot be effectively realized. There is a need to work with duty-bearers at the same time.

HRBA may add value to programs supporting technical approaches to social accountability in terms of an increased focus on political transformation and power relations. NGOs who take on an HRBA have experience with advocacy concerning policy and reform changes at the national level and across sectors, and they can also add value to local government programs and community participation projects by drawing attention to a more holistic and wider political transformative approach to local governance. NGOs that support HRBA make calls for an enhanced focus on the capacity-building of LG institutions to deliver services and for the sustained devolution of resources and powers, which together provide an important enabling environment for the realization of local rights and

participation in development and governance. Participatory methodologies are employed to strengthen the linkages between demand- and supply-side activities, and to enhance active citizen engagement in governance. HRBA focus on the need for capacity-building among local government duty-bearers to ensure that they are accountable and can deliver.

5.4 Synergies and links between HRBA and social accountability initiatives

There are serious challenges posed by national policy environments and legal institutions in promoting HRBA. African countries lack enabling policies, and few have agreed to promote, protect and fulfil social, economic, cultural, political and civic rights. Most African countries lack the political will to fulfil these international obligations and have inadequate capacity to enforce them. It is therefore important to question the extent to which a legalistic HRBA is achievable in a context where enabling policies regarding rights, devolution and participation are absent. Moreover, a lack of legal institutions and capacity, as is often the case Africa, is likely to have significant negative consequences for the effectiveness of translating services into judicial rights.

Challenges are posed by different *national policy environments and legal institutions*. Again it is relevant to distinguish between

- a lack of enabling policies, such as whether countries have agreed to promote, protect and fulfil social, economic, cultural, political and civic rights, including whether S&E rights are judiciable, and whether participation has official status as a right, the degree of devolution and policies supporting citizen participation etc.;
- enabling policies, but a lack of political will to fulfil obligations; and
- enabling policies, but inadequate capacity to enforce them (such as financial and human resources at both the national and local government levels).

These different scenarios will most likely require different efforts, and it is important to ask to what extent an integrated local governance model is achievable if there is a widespread absence of enabling policies regarding rights, devolution and participation. Moreover, a lack of legal institutions or in the capacity of legal institutions, as often occurs in low-income countries, is likely to have consequences for the effectiveness with which services can be translated into judicial rights.

The empirical experience of linking local government to HRBA is currently very limited. The case study from Kenya shows that interaction between LG approaches and HRBA has led to genuine synergies. These empirical experiences show that interaction provides mutual benefits for both rights realization and the strengthening of local democratic governments in terms of enhancing broad-based social accountability, as well as in enabling tangible development benefits (services as well as community projects) based on local demands. Many community participation projects have been implemented in parallel with local government, and experience shows that synergy effects occur when community institutions are recognized and supported by local government administration and political structures through the creation of a social accountability relationship. Local government links to participation also enhance the sustainability of project-financed community development activities and often result in more socially inclusive programs. Finally the study indicates that linking local government service provision to participation reinforces the empowering of local citizens by providing them with tangible goods and services.

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Annex I. Overview of PETS in Africa

<i>Country</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Sectors</i>	<i>Intervention</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Further readings</i>
Uganda	1996, 1999 and 2000 2002, 2006	Health and education Education	Central government attempted to remedy the situation by publishing monthly inter-governmental transfers of public funds in the main newspapers and on the radio, and required schools to post information on the inflow of funds	Flow of funds improved dramatically from 13% of intended capitation grants reaching schools in 1991-95 to over 80% in 1999 and 2000. Delays in transfers are still considerable	Reinekka and Svensson 1998, 2001, 2005, 2007 2009 Björkmann 2006 Hubbard 2007
Tanzania	1999, 2001 2003, 2006	Health and education	Treasury initiated dissemination of itemized local government budget to members of Parliament and regular publication of budget allocation to various levels of government in newspapers	Leakage on non-wage education expenditures was 41%	Gauthier 2006 Sundet 2007
Ghana	2000 2003	Health and education District Assembly Common Fund (DACF)	Participatory expenditure tracking survey by a coalition of CSOs	Leakage on non-wage expenditures was 50% Bottlenecks, irregularities and unequal distributions of disbursements	Gauthier 2006 King et al. 2003, McNeil and Mumvuma 2006 Abbey et al. 2010
Rwanda	2000 2004	Health education agriculture and water			
Sierra Leone	2000 2001	Education health and other sectors			

(Annex I. continued)

Country	Year	Sectors	Intervention	Effect	Further readings
Zambia	2001	Education		Discrepancies and deficits in disbursements and expenditures	Gauthier 2006
Mozambique	2002	Health			
Nigeria	2002	Health			
Senegal	2002	Health			
Cameroon	2003	Health and education			
Madagascar	2003	Education			
	2005	Health			
Malawi	2004	Education		CSOs pressure on the government to make budget allocations aimed at children with special needs	Ramkumar 2008
Namibia	2003	Health and education			
Chad	2004	Health		1% of non-wage expenditures to regional administrations were estimated to arrive at the health facility level	Gauthier 2007
Kenya	2004 2008	Education	Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR) undertook a PET survey to assess the demand for this scheme in eight districts close to Nairobi	Significant delays in funding, poor targeting, and record keeping. Following this survey the Ministry of Education requested a national survey completed in 2010	Ringold et al. 2012

