# *Mapping Context for Social Accountability*

**A RESOURCE PAPER**

S O C I A L   D E V E L O P M E N T   D E P A R T M E N T

# *Mapping Context for Social Accountability*

## A RESOURCE PAPER

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Cover: Two Frelimo (ruling party) workers outside the party offices in Marracuene, Mozambique, 2002. Photo credit: Eric Miller, World Bank.

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# Abbreviations

AcT         Accountability in Tanzania Program

ANC         African National Congress

CPI(M)      Communist Party of India (Marxist)

BATF        Bangalore Agenda Task Force

CPIA        Country Policy and Institutional Assessments (World Bank)

CPRC        Chronic Poverty Research Centre

CS          civil society

CSO         civil society organizations

DFID        Department for International Development, United Kingdom

EITI        Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative

INGO        international nongovernmental organization

LGP         Local Governance Program

MKSS        Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan

MNC         multinational corporations

MP          Member of Parliament

MST         Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra

NGO         nongovernmental organization

NK          Nijera Kori

PB          participatory budgeting

PDS         Public Distribution System

PE          Political Economy

PEA         Political Economy Analysis

PETS        Public Expenditure Tracking Survey

PS          political society

REFLECT     Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques

SAcc        Demand-side governance/social accountability

| | |
|---|---|
| SPS | Samaj Pragiti Sahyog |
| TAC | Treatment Action Campaign |
| ToC | Theory of Change |
| USAID | U.S. Agency for International Development |
| VEC | Village Education Committees |

# Executive Summary

Demand-side governance and social accountability approaches (hereafter referred to as "SAcc") have steadily gained prominence as a perceived means for achieving and improving a range of development outcomes. Today, most—if not all—development agencies invest in the promotion of various forms of SAcc under the guise of "citizen participation," "citizen demand," "voice," "transparency and accountability," or, more broadly, "good governance." While the concept of SAcc remains contested, it can broadly be understood as a range of actions and strategies, beyond voting, that societal actors—namely citizens—employ to hold the state to account.

## Knowledge Gaps and Report Objectives

This resource paper focuses on the issue of SAcc and context, arising out of a growing recognition that context is critical in shaping, making, and breaking SAcc interventions. It seeks to respond to the increasing realization that:

- there are significant challenges associated with transplanting a successful SAcc model from one context to another, and a "tools-based" approach to SAcc risks obscuring the underlying social and political processes that really explain why a given model is, or is not, effective;
- there has been a tendency to be overly optimistic about the potential of "demand-side" governance approaches to solve difficult and context-specific development problems; and,
- various cases of donor-supported SAcc (with exceptions) do not appear to be adequately grounded in the growing evidence of how SAcc has actually played out on the ground.

*There has been a tendency to be overly optimistic about the potential of "demand-side" governance approaches to solve difficult and context-specific development problems.*

More specifically, the paper seeks to fill in some critical gaps in our knowledge and practice. Two main gaps are apparent: first, in spite of the growing recognition that context matters for SAcc, the precise understanding of what aspects of the context matter and how they matter—beyond generalities—remains somewhat limited; and second, there are very few systematic attempts to help practitioners tailor SAcc to contextual variation.

As such, the four main objectives of this paper are:

(1) to outline the main contextual factors that appear to be critical to SAcc;
(2) to examine how SAcc interventions interact with the context to bring about change in order to provide a preliminary, context-sensitive Theory of Change (ToC);

*Various social accountability initiatives do not appear to be strongly informed by the evidence from the ground.*

(3) to explore the operational implications that arise from objectives (1) and (2); and,

(4) to offer a flexible analytical framework to guide practitioners wanting to undertake context analysis prior to engaging in demand-side activities.

The paper, in sum, offers a first step to begin filling some important gaps. It examines how context influences SAcc and how SAcc, in turn, can influence its context, and it explores the practical implications of these findings. The knowledge derived from applying this paper's approach should, it is hoped, increase the likelihood of SAcc effectiveness and reduce the risks of failed implementation.

## Methodology

The paper attempted to achieve these objectives by:

(1) summarizing and building on a recently-conducted global review of the evidence-base,

(2) drawing on relevant conceptual literature to deepen understanding of SAcc and context,

(3) reviewing case-study material to extract indications of what types of SAcc approaches might work best when faced with different contextual realities, and

(4) holding consultations with experts and practitioners to test and modify the ideas being developed.

## Caveats and Challenges

There are, however, a number of challenges associated with addressing these issues. First, the evidence-base on context and SAcc is limited, albeit growing. Second, it is difficult to disentangle the "context" from the "intervention" and attribute causality, and it is not possible to exhaustively consider the enormous range of potential contextual variations that one might face on an everyday basis. Third, a better understanding of the context rarely reveals a "magic bullet" solution; it often reveals a degree of complexity and contradiction, leaving open multiple options for action.

In spite of such challenges, there is arguably enough experience to begin taking a more systematic and structured approach to context. As such, this paper acknowledges the preliminary and exploratory nature of this work, while grounding itself in the best-available evidence and relevant concepts. Instead of attempting to provide prescriptions or ready-made solutions, the paper offers an initial tool to guide thinking, analysis, and programming. This work is, in fact, a background input to an ongoing stream of the work at the World Bank, so it is hoped that this report's ideas are tested and modified in the future.

## Report Layout

The report is separated into five chapters and an annex. Chapter 1 introduces the topic and the rationale for undertaking work in this area. Chapter 2 outlines some of the key contextual variables that emerge as critical in shaping the form and effectiveness of SAcc. This provides a broad framework for understanding the important contextual constraints and opportunities.

Chapter 3 outlines some of the key ways in which SAcc has influenced the context to produce positive change. When this is considered in conjunction with chapter 2, the paper is able to propose a tentative context-sensitive ToC for SAcc. This is an important exercise because we know that SAcc is not only shaped by the context, it may also shape the context.

Chapter 4 then explores and unpacks the practical implications of the approach. It offers two tools for SAcc practitioners to begin exploring ways to tailor to their contexts in a more structured manner.

*There are major challenges in taking on this topic … the evidence-base is limited, albeit growing, and it is difficult to disentangle the "context" from the "intervention."*

Finally, the annex, based on the paper's overall framework, provides a set of guiding questions for undertaking a context analysis prior to supporting SAcc operations.

## A Note on How to Use the Report

The intended audience ranges from practitioners to policymakers, academics, and the interested public. Depending on your perspective and interests, some of the chapters may be more or less relevant. For instance, a practitioner may spend more time examining the practical implications outlined in chapter 4. However, it is advised that you first read the entire report as all chapters are interconnected. For further reading, refer to the accompanying background publications (Bukenya et al. 2012; Bukenya and King 2012) as well as other publications cited in the report.

## The Main Messages

While few simple or straightforward conclusions can be reached at this stage, a set of main messages has emerged and are briefly summarized here.

### The Findings
The major contextual variables that have been found to shape the form and effectiveness of SAcc are summarized in table 1. For analytical purposes, these variables can be divided into six domains and corresponding subdimensions, with the recognition that the domains inevitably overlap and interact. The characteristics of such domains may be more or less enabling of SAcc and, in reality, most contexts probably sit somewhere along a spectrum from *enabling* to *disabling*.

## Table 1. Summary of the Key Contextual Domains and Subdimensions that Influence Social Accountability

| Six Contextual Domains | Key Domain Subdimensions |
|---|---|
| 1. Civil Society | • Technical and organizational capacity<br>• Capacity to build alliances across society<br>• Capacity to build alliances/networks with the state<br>• Authority, legitimacy, and credibility of civil society with citizens and state actors<br>• Willingness of civil society to challenge accountability status quo<br>• Capacity of citizens to engage in SAcc<br>• Willingness of citizens to engage in SAcc |
| 2. Political Society | • Willingness of political/elected elites to respond to and foster SAcc<br>• Willingness of state bureaucrats to respond to and foster SAcc<br>• State and political elite capacity to respond to SAcc<br>• Democratization and the civil society enabling environment<br>• The nature of the rule of law<br>• The capacity and willingness of political parties to support SAcc |
| 3. Inter-Elite Relations | • The developmental nature of the political settlement<br>• The inclusiveness of the political settlement<br>• The organizational and political capabilities of the political settlement<br>• Elite ideas/norms of accountability underpinning the political settlement |
| 4. State-Society Relations | • The character and form of the social contract<br>• History of state–citizen bargaining (long- and short-term)<br>• State-society accountability and bridging mechanisms (formal and informal)<br>• The nature and depth of state-society pro-accountability networks |
| 5. Intra-Society Relations | • Inequality<br>• Social exclusion and fragmentation |
| 6. Global Dimensions | • Donor-state relations<br>• International power-holder accountability<br>• International political and economic drivers |

However, there appears to be no straightforward, linear relationship between the context and the opportunities for SAcc. SAcc can also shape the context within which it emerges, and the SAcc design factors that have contributed to positive change include the following:

- Demand-driven accountability change has often been—at least in part—underpinned by a political process.
- SAcc interventions seem to have greater prospects for success in places where the lead implementing actors are seen as locally authoritative, legitimate, and credible by the actors involved.
- SAcc is more likely to be effective when it promotes change in both "supply" and "demand."
- It is the quality and strength of pro-accountability networks across state and society that often account for success rather than the characteristics of individual actors.

- The use of high-quality and relevant information appears to be a key ingredient, and the media may play a role in this regard. However, information alone is unlikely to bring about change—action and sanctions are needed.
- A SAcc initiative tends to have more traction in places where the problems and issues it focuses on are perceived as highly important and significant by the actors involved.
- SAcc processes appear more likely to bring about sustainable reform when they support "organic" domestic pressures for change.
- SAcc appears more likely to be effective when it builds on locally legitimate formal and/or informal accountability mechanisms.
- SAcc interventions that take a multipronged approach, working on answerability and enforcement aspects, have been found to be more effective.
- The conditions for effective SAcc tend to take a long time to emerge, which suggests that SAcc interventions would be wise to take a longer time horizon.

## The Practical Implications

Taken as a whole, the findings suggest that there is a case to refocus—even radically rethink in some areas—the way in which SAcc has often been understood and operationalized. In sum, the four main aspects of this rethink are:

*The findings suggest that there is a case to rethink the way in which social accountability is often operationalized.*

(1) putting formal and informal political and power relations at the forefront of understanding and operationalizing SAcc rather than focusing on technical aspects or more formal institutional blueprints;
(2) focusing on inter-elite and state-society relations, coalitions, and bargaining rather than for instance, focusing on individual actors, civil society alone, or state-citizen dichotomies;
(3) putting inequality and exclusion issues at the center of SAcc design to ensure that its pro-poor promise is met rather than treating such issues with sometimes limited attention or in an ad hoc manner; and,
(4) Exploring and expanding opportunities for "best-fit" or "hybrid" SAcc approaches in given contexts rather than attempting to transplant or force-fit best practice models.

The paper explores this rethink and proposes a tentative ToC as a step forward.

The report also attempts to distill some of the main practical and operational implications of this work. These implications are outlined in some depth in chapter 4 and they resonate with the more recent, broader experience on governance and development. While there are few simple or "quick fix" remedies, the main interrelated messages are described below.

**Context shapes the form and effectiveness of SAcc, but often in unpredictable and complex ways.** Some contexts are more enabling of SAcc and the context will influence—although not necessarily determine—the form SAcc is likely to take and how likely it is to achieve its objectives. As such, we can take steps to tailor demand-side activities to context, as outlined in chapter 4. Yet there are no clear "recipes-for-success" as SAcc shapes—and is shaped by—the context in often complex and unpredictable ways. For example, there does not appear to be a linear relationship between broad levels of democracy and the potential effectiveness of SAcc.

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*Experience suggests that accountability failures, and solutions thereto, are often rooted in formal and informal political and power dynamics.*

What seems to be more important are the actual forms of politics and power in a specific context that present constraints and opportunities, and this leads to the next message.

**Think "politically" in designing and implementing SAcc.** Experience suggests that accountability failures and solutions thereto are very often rooted in formal and informal political and power dynamics. The tendency to view SAcc as a technical exercise can obscure its role as part of a political context, and the failure to adapt to political incentives has contributed to underperforming schemes. This means that: (1) it is crucial to fully understand the state of the polity and political settlement before designing and rolling out SAcc; and (2) one needs to explore politically savvy best-fit approaches to SAcc based on the political room for maneuver in a given context rather than attempting to implement formal institutional blueprints.

**Build synergies between social and political forms of accountability.** In addition to the previous message, while many agencies have tended to separate social and political accountability, it seems that both are intimately interrelated. The paper suggests, for example, to: (1) explore ways to work with and link SAcc to pro-reform political actors and movements; (2) devise SAcc in a way that more systematically attempts to shift political incentives rather than just applying pressure on bureaucrats; or (3) seek to mesh social and political forms of accountability, as in voter education programs.

*Political society actors are often critical in determining whether demand-side pressures achieve their aims.*

**Work across the supply and demand divide to facilitate effective collective action on accountability issues.** Aid agencies tend to view SAcc through the prism of civil society and "demand." Yet experience suggests that demand by itself is often an insufficient driver for sustained change. The state and political society actors are equally or even more important than civil society in determining whether or not SAcc pressures achieve their intended outcomes, especially because such "top-down" or "supply-side" pressures often hold the power to enforce needed sanctions. More fundamentally, the supply and demand divide has proven somewhat unhelpful, a point reinforced by the subsequent message. Therefore, among other things, there is a need to only increase citizen demand alongside parallel efforts to build the state's effectiveness in interacting with citizens and addressing their growing expectations, as part of a process of solving collective action problems.

**Build linkages and networks between pro-accountability state and society actors.** The "state" and "citizenry" are not homogenous, as is sometimes implied in SAcc initiatives. There are often forces within each that are more or less pro-reform. In practice, this means a number of things, including: (1) invest more heavily in strategic network-building approaches to link pro-reform elements of state and society and to build alliances between the poor and non-poor in society, instead of focusing on individual actors; (2) shift some of the focus away from just building the technical and organizational capacity of actors toward building their *sociopolitical* capa-

*Top-down pressures often hold the power to enforce needed sanctions.*

bilities, such as coalition-building, political literacy, and advocacy (especially given the importance of such skills in improving accountability outcomes); (3) resource civil society more strategically to "do no harm" because civil society is not homogenous and can struggle to overcome entrenched accountability

challenges, and donor funding of such associations may not achieve the desired results; and, (4) make concerted efforts to identify and support state-society reform champions and to creatively work with, or around, reform antagonists.

**Build on what is already there; embed SAcc in "organic" pressures for pro-accountability change and in the broader social contract.** SAcc appears to be most effective when it builds on existing formal and/or informal accountability practices, "working with the grain" of the local institutional fabric. The practical implications of this message are not straightforward, but they include: (1) actively seeking out and supporting—or at least not undermining—existing pressures for improved accountability, however incremental the potential returns might be; (2) recognizing that cultures and standards of accountability differ across contexts and exploring ways that existing practices (even patron-client relations) might provide opportunities for building "good enough" forms of accountability in the short term; (3) exploring how to build positive synergies between formal and informal institutions—informal institutions are pervasive in many developing countries and cannot be wished away; and, (4) understanding the context-specific "social contract" (which is often the basis for accountability claim-making), and supporting SAcc through a policy to "do no harm." Overall, this resonates with calls to move from operationalizing SAcc as a discrete intervention to one that is part of a process of social and political institutionalization. Discrete, donor-dependent SAcc interventions may bring about localized changes, but there are questions about their sustainability over the long term.

*Social accountability initiatives appear most effective when they build, however incrementally, on existing formal and informal accountability practices.*

**Take a multipronged approach to accountability reform to increase the likelihood of success.** Experience suggests that effective accountability measures work simultaneously on different issues and at different levels. This implies, for example, the need to: (1) embed SAcc principles in all stages of the policy cycle; (2) pursue the necessary *harder* sanction dimension of accountability (for example, enforcement and action) as well as the more commonly pursued *softer* answerability dimension of accountability (for example, information and transparency); and (3) recognize that information alone is rarely sufficient to improve accountability outcomes—the information must match the capacity and incentives of actors to act to bring about change.

*The poorest and most excluded can struggle to participate in, and benefit from, social accountability initiatives.*

**Address issues of poverty, inequality, and exclusion more systematically in SAcc programming.** The poorest and most excluded can struggle to participate in, and benefit from, social accountability initiatives. However, the extent to which agencies systematically address the needs and realities of the poor and marginalized in SAcc programming is mixed. The paper suggests the need for a more systematic treatment of issues of inequality and social exclusion in SAcc that, albeit difficult, may include: (1) focusing on building the poor's capabilities in and through interventions (for example, by building in literacy or livelihood components to SAcc interventions); (2) focusing on how to secure the rights and effective representation of the poorest and most marginalized in political and social accountability processes; and, (3) building in strong inequality-mitigating measures in SAcc initiatives (for example, weighting).

*Many accountability failures are—at least in part—shaped by global drivers and actors.*

**Address the global dimensions of accountability failures—think and act beyond the local and national level.** Many accountability failures are—at least in part—shaped by global drivers and actors. Aid agencies are uniquely positioned to address some of these global drivers, not least by being much more cognizant of their role in supporting or undermining long-term accountability. Options for practical action, like all suggestions outlined in this report, will differ on a case-by-case basis, but might include: (1) greater adoption and integration of aid effectiveness principles; (2) strengthened international action to improve financial regulation or curb illicit trading to address international enablers of corruption; or (3) supporting efforts to ensure the accountability of powerful international actors, beyond the state, such as multinational corporations.

**Take longer time horizons and adopt an adaptable learning-by-doing approach.** Changing the conditions for effective SAcc tends to take time, and experience points toward the importance of adopting an adaptable "learning-by-doing" approach. This is especially because accountability interventions can, over time, shape the context in complex and sometimes unintended ways.

This amounts to an ambitious agenda and one that it is unlikely to be addressed by individual actors working alone. There is, however, much experience to suggest that it is an agenda worth tackling.

# 1. Introduction

Demand-side governance and social accountability (hereafter referred to as "SAcc") approaches have steadily gained prominence as a means of achieving and improving a range of development outcomes (Holland et al. 2009; Ringold et al. 2011). Today, most, if not all, development agencies invest in promoting various forms of SAcc under the guise of "citizen participation," "demand," "voice," "transparency," "good governance," and so on. This paper focuses squarely on the issue of context and SAcc.

## What is Social Accountability?

SAcc is a contested concept, with no universally agreed definition of the range of actions that fall within its remit (see Joshi and Houtzager 2012). It is not this paper's purpose to enter into this debate but instead to take a relatively broad view. SAcc can be understood as an approach for improving public accountability that relies on the actions of citizens and non-state actors. One definition is:

> "… the broad range of actions and mechanisms beyond voting that citizens can use to hold the state to account, as well as actions on the part of government, civil society, media and other societal actors that promote or facilitate these efforts." (Malena and McNeil 2010:1)

SAcc can be further disaggregated. Table 1.1 offers a stylistic breakdown of SAcc's different elements in terms of *focal area*, *operational tool, policy/institutional aspects, mode of engagement,* and *outcome focus*. This is not an attempt to design a typology in this area, as has been attempted elsewhere (Joshi 2010; Ringold et al. 2011). While SAcc can be disaggregated, it has numerous common elements, and this paper focuses primarily on the overall, aggregate practice.

*The extent to which one can transplant a successful model from one context to another is now a matter of much debate.*

## Why Context?

This paper arises out of a growing recognition that context is critical in shaping, making, and breaking SAcc interventions. This ties in with a broader recognition in the international development community that "context matters" (Grindle 2007; Levy 2011). Indeed, there is a range of cases in which SAcc has been relatively successful in its objectives, and there are many others where it has been a relative failure, with results that are not positive for the for the poor or for development more broadly (Dervarajan et al. 2011; Gaventa and Barrett 2010). The success or failure of such initiatives is shaped by both the way in which SAcc is implemented and by the context of its implementation.

Moreover, various observers have critiqued mainstream SAcc practices for not engaging more closely with *on the ground* experience and evidence that tells us, more realistically, what SAcc

## Table 1.1. Disaggregating Social Accountability

| Focal Area | Operational Tool | Policy/Institutional Aspects | Mode of Engagement | Outcome Focus |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Transparency:* The collection, analysis, dissemination, and monitoring of information related to government policies and programs.<br><br>*Accountability (more collaborative):* Action that seeks improved accountability through more collaborative and incremental approaches.<br><br>*Accountability (more contentious):* Action that, to differing degrees, more directly challenges the accountability system and political status quo.<br><br>*Participation:* In policy-making or implementation as a means of oversight. | *Transparency*<br>• Information campaigns<br>• Open budget initiatives<br>• Citizen charters<br><br>*Accountability (more collaborative)*<br>• Community scorecards<br>• Expenditure tracking<br>• Formal grievance-redress mechanisms<br><br>*Accountability (more contentious)*<br>• Advocacy campaigns<br>• Investigative journalism<br>• Public interest lawsuits<br>• Demonstration and protest<br><br>*Participation*<br>• Participatory budgeting<br>• Participatory planning | • *Policy reforms* (e.g., to promote citizen participation)<br>• *Legal reforms* (e.g., introduction of access to information legislation)<br>• *Capacity/ Institutional Strengthening*<br>• *Public Financial Management Reforms*<br>• *Public Service Delivery Systems Reforms* (e.g., e-government) | • *Instrumental* (e.g., service efficiency) or *transformational* (e.g., challenge power relationships)<br>• *Collaborative* (e.g., joint problem-solving) or *confrontational* (e.g., advocacy or protest)<br>• *Project-focused* or *institutionalization*<br>• *Formal track* (e.g., legal procedures) or *informal track* (e.g., networks)<br>• *Choice* (new public management) or *rights/empowerment* (democratization)<br>• *Short route* (citizen-service provider) or *long route* (citizen-state)<br>• *Individualized routes* (e.g., citizen scorecards) or *collective action routes* (e.g., NGO mobilization) | • Improved service delivery<br>• Improved state responsiveness<br>• Better budget utilization<br>• Lowering corruption<br>• Building democratic spaces<br>• Citizenship formation<br>• Empowerment/ rights claiming<br>• Social cohesion<br>• Improved state-society relationships<br>• Answerability<br>• Sanctions |

*Source:* Adapted from Joshi and Houtzager 2012; Agarwal and Van Wicklin 2011; Bukenya et al. 2012; and Tembo 2012.

might, or might not, be able to achieve in different contexts. There has, they argue, been a tendency to "oversell" or be "overly optimistic" about the potential of demand-side governance approaches to solve context-specific development problems (Booth 2011; Brett 2003; Bukenya et al. 2012; Hickey and Mohan 2005). There are, of course, exceptions, even if the general point tends to hold. Equally, the extent to which one can transplant a successful *model* from one context to another is now a matter of much debate (Joshi and Houtzager 2012), with one observer noting that:

*"Some of the sharpest minds in development policy agree that the universal best practice approach to governance for development is bankrupt. There are no institutional templates that are valid everywhere and for all stages in a country's development." (Booth 2011: 1)*

*Efforts to go beyond a "best-practice" mindset and toward a more "best-fit" approach in development practice are arguably impartial and incomplete.*

By the same token, efforts to go beyond a "best-practice" mindset and toward a more "best-fit" approach in development practice are arguably impartial and incomplete—both conceptually and operationally—with calls to strike a balance between researchers' focus on complexity and practitioners' desire for concrete guidance (see Booth and Golooba-Mutebi 2012).

## Knowledge Gaps

More specifically, this paper arises out of some critical gaps in knowledge and practice. First, in spite of the growing recognition that context matters for SAcc, the precise understanding of what aspects of the context matter and how they matter—beyond generalities—remains somewhat limited. Second, the quite widespread "tools-based" approach to demand-side governance can encourage the transfer of best-practice methodologies across contexts. Also, a focus on a SAcc "tool," while perhaps part of the story, risks obscuring the underlying social and political processes that really explain why a given initiative is or is not effective (as table 1.2. stylistically suggests). By "tools-based" approach, the paper is referring to the focus on specific operational steps, inputs, and methodologies as part of somewhat discrete interventions—such as citizen scorecards, participatory budgeting, and so on. This focus has led, with exceptions, to a mushrooming of more generic, albeit useful, operational guidance on applying different SAcc tools. (Agarwal and Wicklin 2011; Joshi and Houtzager 2012). Third, the current understanding of how to tailor SAcc design to context are limited because there have been very few systematic, wide-ranging attempts to help practitioners negotiate contextual realities (Bukenya et al. 2012: 45–46; McGee and Gaventa 2011).[1]

*There are now multiple operational tools for implementation, but a limited knowledge base upon which to make strategic decisions in different contexts.*

## Table 1.2. Stylized Differences in Emphasis between Social Accountability Tools and Context-Sensitivity

| SAcc Tools Tend to Emphasize … | A focus on context tends to emphasize … |
|---|---|
| Self-contained tool | Multiple endogenous and exogenous drivers of change |
| Linearity (steps or stages) | Nonlinearity (complexity and unintended consequences) |
| Technical aspects | Political and power aspects |
| *Best-practice* roadmap | *Best-fit* adaptation |
| Donor-driven | Organic processes |
| Largely formal mechanisms of accountability | Informal mechanisms are critical, alongside formal mechanisms |

*Source:* Author.

In short, there are now multiple tools for implementing SAcc but a limited knowledge base from which to make strategic decisions about SAcc in different contexts. Therefore, there have been increasing calls from practitioners for assistance in designing context-specific SAcc within the World Bank and beyond.

## Objectives of the Paper

This resource paper focuses on the issue of context and SAcc and offers a preliminary framework for better understanding, mapping, and responding to context in the design and implementation of SAcc. The central objectives of this paper—building on a recently-completed review of the current evidence (Bukenya et al. 2012)—are:

- to outline the main contextual factors that appear to be critical to SAcc;
- to examine how SAcc interventions interact with the context to bring about change in order to provide a preliminary context-sensitive ToC;
- to explore the operational implications that arise from objectives (1) and (2); and,
- to offer a flexible analytical framework, derived from the above objectives, to guide practitioners wanting to undertake context analysis prior to engaging in demand-side activities.

The knowledge derived from applying this paper's approach should, it is hoped, increase the likelihood of SAcc effectiveness and reduce the risks of failed implementation.

## Challenges and Caveats

There are, however, a number of significant challenges in addressing these issues. First, the evidence-base on context and SAcc is extremely limited, as outlined in detail elsewhere (Bukenya et al. 2012; McGee and Gaventa 2011). There is a paucity of strong, comparative analyses that control for the effects of contextual variables in SAcc interventions. Second, there is the real challenge of disentangling the "context" from the "intervention" and attributing causality.[2] As McGee and Gaventa note:

> "… all transparency and accountability initiatives unfold within complex, non-linear, contextually-specific social and political processes and it is these complex contexts and processes that they seek to change." (McGee and Gaventa 2011: 27)

Third, the paper does not—and cannot—attempt to cover the infinite contextual variations that might be found. Moreover, a better understanding of context rarely reveals any "magic bullet" solutions but often reveals complexity and contradictions, leaving open multiple options for action (DFID 2009).

*Contextual knowledge rarely reveals a "magic bullet" solution; it often reveals a degree of complexity and contradiction, leaving open multiple options for action.*

In spite of such challenges, there is arguably enough experience to begin taking a more systematic and structured approach. As McGee and Gaventa (2011: 35) put it: "Despite the unevenness and limits of the evidence base, a review across the sectors begins to point to some common factors that shape the

impact of transparency and accountability initiatives." As such, this paper acknowledges the preliminary and exploratory nature of this work, while grounding itself in the best-available evidence and relevant concepts. Instead of attempting to provide prescriptions or ready-made solutions (if indeed such solutions exist), the paper offers an initial tool to guide thinking, analysis, and programming about context and SAcc. In many instances, the paper offers working hypotheses. Practitioners may then build on and adapt this work to explore specific contexts. This work is, in fact, a background input to an ongoing stream of work at the World Bank, so it is hoped that the ideas presented here will be built on, tested and modified in the future both inside and outside of the World Bank.

## Methodology

In brief, the methodology for developing this paper has a number of elements:

- First, the paper draws heavily from, and builds on, a recently-undertaken desk-based review of available "evidence" on SAcc and context. This review included a comprehensive annotated bibliography (Bukenya and King 2012) and an analytical synthesis paper (Bukenya et al. 2012). This report builds on this work by attempting to summarize the findings for practitioners, by designing a context analytical tool and by distilling and unpacking the operational implications. The paper also draws on existing work that has attempted—to varying degrees—to address this paper's topic (Citizenship DRC 2011; Tembo 2012).
- Second, a review of relevant concepts and theories relating to SAcc and governance was undertaken, especially to inform chapter 3. The most appropriate concepts, based on the existing evidence, are then proposed as a way to guide the development of theories of change of demand-side governance.
- Third, a further review of case study material was undertaken, particularly for chapter 4, in an attempt to scour the literature for indications of what types of approaches might work more or less effectively in different contexts.
- Fourth, the author drew on a range of existing political and social analysis and guidance (for example, DFID 2009; Parks and Cole 2010) and program design and planning approaches (Harris, Kooy, and Jones 2011; Tembo 2012) in order to design the analytical tool in the annex. This tool is not intended to replicate existing detailed guidance on conducting social and political analysis, so the paper flags areas for further reading where relevant.
- Fifth, an earlier version of the analytical tool was partly piloted with a World Bank team in support of some analytical work in the rural water supply sector in Tanzania. Some of the early lessons from this experience have been integrated in this version of the paper. Furthermore, a number of consultations have been undertaken with various World Bank staff and external advisers throughout the development of the piece.

## Report Layout

The report is separated into five chapters and an annex. This chapter has introduced the topic and the rationale for undertaking work in this area. Chapter 2 outlines some of the key contextual variables that emerge as critical in shaping the form and effectiveness of SAcc. This provides a broad framework for understanding the important contextual constraints and opportunities.

Chapter 3 outlines some of the key ways in which SAcc has influenced the context to produce positive change. When this is considered in conjunction with chapter 2, the paper is able to propose a tentative context-sensitive ToC for SAcc. This is an important exercise because we know that SAcc is not only shaped by the context, it may also shape the context to differing degrees.

Chapter 4 then explores and unpacks the practical implications of the approach. It offers two tools for SAcc practitioners to draw on to begin exploring the operational implications of their contextual analyses in a more structured manner. Chapter 5 briefly concludes the discussion.

Finally, the annex, based on the paper's overall framework, provides a set of guiding questions for undertaking a context analysis prior to supporting SAcc operations.

# 2. Toward the Major Contextual Factors: Six Domains

This chapter addresses the question: "How does context shape the form and effectiveness of SAcc?" Based on the current evidence base, it briefly outlines the major contextual variables and their subdimensions. This provides the foundations of a framework for addressing the contextual constraints and opportunities surrounding SAcc. The chapter provides brief examples in boxes to illustrate some of the points, although the bulk of the examples can be found in chapter 4 or in other background material (McGee and Gaventa 2011; Bukenya et al. 2012).

For analytical purposes, the contextual variables can be separated into distinct domains with the understanding that the domains inevitably overlap and interlock. The six domains, described in turn, are: (1) civil society (CS), (2) political society (PS), (3) inter-elite relations, (4) state-society relations, (5) intra-society relations, and (6) global dimensions. Each domain is described in turn and the treatment of these complex concepts is purposefully brief.

## Civil Society

The character and extensiveness of CS is important in shaping the form and effectiveness of SAcc. CS is commonly understood as the arena outside of the family, the state, and the market, where people associate to advance common interests—where citizens become aware of and may raise issues to get the attention of public authorities.

The precise characteristics of CS that matter most for SAcc are not entirely clear from the existing literature. However, it is possible to discern some important elements. One critical, overarching characteristic is the extent to which civil society organizations (CSOs) are capable of exerting influence over often-contested and politicized decision making. More specifically, the following interrelated characteristics have been found to be particularly important.

First, the technical and organizational capacity of CSOs, including their capacity to manage and use information for different constituencies, is often cited as critical across a number of cases. Box 2.1, for instance, illustrates how limited CSO capacity can reduce the effectiveness of a SAcc initiative.

Second, the capacity of CSOs to mobilize people and build alliances across society influences the effectiveness of SAcc. This is closely related to the degree to which CS is fragmented or unified around a SAcc goal, and it highlights the key role of broad-based alliances across classes and social categories—often between the "poor" and "non-poor" (CPRC 2008). Notably, the presence, depth, and nature of pro-accountability and anti-accountability societal forces and networks emerge as central factors in mediating the form and effectiveness of SAcc—a point returned to in the section about state-society relations (page 17). "Networks" can be broadly understood as linkages between interdependent actors who interact to produce outcomes.[3]

## Box 2.1. Health Center Committees in Zambia:
## The Challenge of Low Civil Society Technical Capacity

In Zambia, the setting up of multistakeholder health center committees had positive outcomes for awareness raising of public health issues but did not directly increase the allocation of resources toward poor and vulnerable groups, nor did it significantly improve health service responsiveness or health worker behavior toward local communities. One reason for this was the committee members' low level of knowledge and understanding of health issues, as well as their limited capacity to demand change. This lessened their ability to exert an influence over decision-making processes and outcomes.

*Source:* Ngulube et al. 2004.

Third, the capacity of CSOs to build constructive networks and alliances with pro-reform actors within the state is a critical—perhaps the most critical—variable in explaining the success of SAcc in many cases. A key issue is the nature of the political capabilities of CS, which includes their political literacy and their mobilization, networking, coalition-building and negotiation skills in their interaction with actors from PS. In fact, the body of evidence tends to suggest that CS demand alone rarely explains change and that it might only be a weak driver of change in a number of cases, as discussed throughout the report.

*The capacity of civil society organizations to build constructive networks and alliances with pro-reform actors within the state is a critical—perhaps the most critical—variable in explaining the success of social accountability in many cases.*

Fourth, the authority, credibility, and legitimacy of CSOs have also been found to be important factors. SAcc initiatives have tended to be more successful when the lead CSOs are perceived as credible and legitimate by both the citizenry and state actors that are being mobilized. Also, CSOs that are able to draw on popular support and be accountable to their own constituents, as opposed to being upwardly accountable to donors, seem to be more effective in achieving SAcc goals. This type of CS is not limited to professional NGOs—they include other sources of popular agency, including trade unions, social movements, and religious organizations (Banks and Hulme 2012; Hickey and Bracking 2005).

Fifth, the willingness of CSOs to challenge existing accountability relations is also important. A CSO's willingness will be shaped by a variety of factors, including its incentives, interests, past experiences with SAcc, and relationships with powerful actors. The literature suggests that: (1) CS is not homogenous in terms of its willingness to challenge the accountability status quo and to be a force for change; (2) CS is rarely a panacea for challenging entrenched accountability problems, and there are cases in which strengthening CSOs have undermined more legitimate forms of accountability or bolstered existing power structures; and (3) CS is embedded in the political context, and can find it difficult to distance itself from this politics (Booth 2012; Banks and Hulme 2012). As Dervarajan et al. (2011: 4) note:

*Civil society is rarely a panacea for challenging entrenched accountability problems, for various reasons.*

## Box 2.2. Capacity, Willingness, and Political Credibility: Nijera Kori in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the mobilization and demand work of a local NGO—Nijera Kori (NK)—has contributed to a number of positive changes. These changes have been driven in part by NK's capacity and willingness to pursue sustained efforts to bargain with the state and demand accountability, while at the same having the capacity to mobilize societal groups and enhance their political literacy and standing.

Results observed in 2003 include an overall increase in wages in areas where NK groups have engaged in successful collective bargaining, a reduction of illicit payments to health officials and other forms of public sector corruption, more regular attendance by teachers when NK members join committees, and the construction of new schools. More recently, by taking steps to combine social and political accountability, NK has improved the political standing of its members vis-à-vis the state, mostly because NK members were found to be more likely than nonmembers to know their constitutional rights, to vote, to campaign in local and national elections, to interact with locally-elected representatives and government officials, and to be elected to informal village committees. From this perspective, it seems that NK members have managed to achieve enhanced citizenship status and appear to be transferring skills from social accountability initiatives into the political arena.

*Sources:* Kabeer 2003; Kabeer et al. 2009.

*"In political economy environments characterized by high degrees of clientelism and rent-seeking ... an unqualified faith in civil society as a force for good is more likely to be misplaced. The evidence base on the organization of civil society suggests that historic institutions of poverty and inequality or of ethnic identity can inhibit collective action in the broader public interest."*

Box 2.2 illustrates the way a number of the above-mentioned CS characteristics contributed to some positive results in Bangladesh.

A sixth element involves the capacity of individual citizens to engage in SAcc, which is notably influenced by their income, education, and, more broadly, their political capabilities. A wide body of evidence illustrates that many SAcc and broader participatory initiatives have struggled to benefit the poor and, in particular, the poorest (Bukenya et al. 2012). Poorer individuals tend to lack the assets, time, and skills to effectively engage; they may have limited political awareness and literacy. For example, they may have limited awareness of certain entitlements or limited citizenship status; they may lack networking and negotiation skills; or they may be dependent on personal relationships for access to critical goods and services (Agarwal and Van Wicklin 2011). A discussion of the challenges faced by poor and excluded groups in SAcc is returned to in the section below on intra-society relations.

A final important characteristic in this domain is the willingness of citizens to pursue SAcc goals and challenge the state. The drivers of such willingness are not entirely clear, but are understood to be related to the previous experiences of citizens with state-citizen bargaining; their

perception of the "significance" of the accountability issue in question; their calculations of risk and their incentives to potentially jeopardize their means of survival by challenging existing relationships, particularly when they are dependent on patron-client relationships; and the prevailing culture of legitimacy and accountability that may or may not encourage challenging the status quo. Note, however, that while it is useful to separate capacity and willingness for analytical purposes, the literature suggests that citizens often need to display a high degree of both in order to ensure the success of SAcc.

## Political Society

PS is a second contextual domain that has emerged as important. It is broadly understood as the arena within which people perceive and encounter the state on an everyday basis and that creates and maintains different patterns of political rule. It is the "place where public demands get tackled by specific political institutions" (Hyden et al. 2003a: 18). It is constituted by a loose community of recognized elected politicians, political parties, local political brokers, councillors, and public servants, and it forms a set of institutions, actors, and cultural norms that provide the links between the government and the public.

*The nature of the state and the actors in political society that govern and interact with state institutions are as important as—if not more so than—civil society in explaining the form and effectiveness of demand-side initiatives.*

What we currently know suggests that the nature of the state and the actors and dynamics in PS that govern and interact with state institutions are as important—if often not more so—than CS in explaining the form and effectiveness of SAcc. But what subdimensions of this arena are seen to be of critical importance for SAcc? Much will, of course, depend on context, but some key issues have emerged from the review.

First, the willingness of political elites to promote and/or respond to SAcc is critical. Where there is a strong will, SAcc has tended to be more effective. Political elites and public sector officials—or "reform champions"—have been found to play an important role in delivering on SAcc demands, pushing for accountability reforms, and even stimulating societal actors to make demands on government. On the other hand, when the will is weak or if there is opposition to SAcc goals, SAcc can be thwarted by countervailing measures taken by political actors. The origins of political will are complex and diverse. It is therefore critically important for SAcc practitioners to understand the level and drivers of political will in a given context and act accordingly; one way to do so is to understand the nature of the political settlement, outlined in the following section.

Second, the willingness of government bureaucrats to promote and respond to SAcc pressures is also important, particularly because bureaucrats can frustrate or champion initiatives. However, the evidence base tends to emphasize the critical role played by influential elected officials over bureaucrats, namely because they can be more susceptible to popular pressure and are in a position to shape the behavior of public officials and service providers through sanctions and other forms of supply-led accountability (Bukenya et al. 2012). However, the extent to which

> ## Box 2.3. Willing Civil Servants and Enhanced Accountability: Citizen Report Cards in Bangalore, India
>
> Analysis of the Bangalore service delivery report card process in India suggests that the support and commitment of the chief minister of Karnataka state was an important contributing factor to its effectiveness. Acting on the findings of the second report card in 1997, the minister directed the creation of the Bangalore Agenda Task Force (BATF)—a public-private partnership involving several nonofficial and eminent citizens along with the heads of all service providers—to respond to the findings and improve services and infrastructure in Bangalore. Paul (2011) notes that this action was critical because, in contrast to the more limited or fragmented single-agency responses, this move ensured more systemic responses across agencies. This marked a relatively novel moment, as a chief minister in India had launched an initiative to improve services for a large city in response to citizen feedback.
>
> *Source:* Paul 2011.

bureaucrats may be more or less important in shaping SAcc outcomes will depend on the context, as box 2.3 on report cards in Bangalore suggests.

A third subdimension is the level of state "capacity." The level of capacity is seen as important for SAcc outcomes in a variety of ways, including the following: (1) participatory SAcc approaches have tended to be more effective when supported by strong top-down state capacity and responsiveness; (2) the effectiveness of SAcc depends in part on the level of state capacity to actually respond to demands (in terms of its organizational, technical, and political competencies); and (3) the presence of functioning state institutions are often, but not always, key conditions for accountability reforms to be effective (see, for example, Mansuri and Rao 2013).

However, the evidence does not suggest that there is no role whatsoever for SAcc in low-capacity environments; SAcc might just take on a more modest form of citizenship formation, trust building, or local associational development (Gaventa and Barrett 2010). As with the concept of "will," unpacking the drivers of limited capacity will be central in finding ways to address the challenges, as described more thoroughly in the next section about political settlements.

*The broad level of democratization seems to tell only part of the story.*

A fourth dimension, which relates to the broader state institutional framework, is the level of democratization and the related CS "enabling environment" of political and civil freedoms. However, the way in which the level of democratization influences the emergence and effectiveness of SAcc is not entirely clear; the evidence is mixed and patchy. On the one hand, the level of democracy is important in key ways such as: (1) highly democratized contexts tend to permit the widest range of SAcc approaches to emerge; (2) more democratic contexts tend to have a stronger SAcc enabling environment, which includes higher levels of institutionalized tolerance of dissents and debate to accommodate citizen engagement, a range of political and civil freedoms, and effective involvement of the media; and (3) more democratic systems tend to have a wider range of accountability mechanisms and intra-state checks-and-balances that may be "triggered" by SAcc as well as offering the opportunity to gain more traction around accountability issues through such means as elections (Citizenship DRC 2011). As McGee and Gaventa (2011: 21) note: "In

> **Box 2.4. Limited Political Will and Weak State Institutions: Tenant's Movement in Mombasa, Kenya**
>
> In Mombasa, Kenya, limited state capacity, limited political will, and the weakness of formal state institutions undermined the tenant movement's proposal for a tenancy purchase scheme. The proposals received support from the Director of Housing in the Ministry, but the city mayor opposed them and threatened to use his influence to have the director fired if the proposals were put into practice. While the mayor had no formal powers to dismiss the director, one analyst argues that the formal chain of command of public service is not followed and "it is not uncommon for mayors and councillors to use their influence to get civil servants dismissed or transferred to less attractive postings" (Nyamu-Musembi 2006: 137). This example supports a broader set of cases that find that the nature, functioning, and capacity of state institutions play a key role in shaping the effectiveness of forms of social action.
>
> *Sources:* Nyamu-Musembi 2006; Gaventa and McGee 2010; Moore and Putzel 1999.

a regime lacking the essential freedoms of association, voice or media, citizen-led TAIs [transparency and accountability initiatives] do not have the same prospects for success as in societies where these conditions exist."

On the other hand, the literature suggests that the broad level of democratization only tells part of the story. As one metareview notes, "our findings begin to question the idea that positive outcomes of [civic] engagement are linked linearly to the level of democratisation in a given setting" (Gaventa and Barrett 2010: 53). For example: (1) the presence of formal democratic institutions and frameworks reveals only part of the picture in many contexts as it is informal institutions and the underlying political settlement that explains what happens and why (Crook and Booth 2011); (2) different forms of social contract or developmental accountability can emerge within weakly democratic or semi-authoritarian regimes—as in the case of primary education in Uganda (Stasavage 2005); and (3) direct, participatory forms of democracy may be less relevant in explaining why SAcc processes achieve their objectives than other variables, such as the role of political representation and political parties, as outlined below (Brautigam 2004; Bukenya et al. 2012).

A related fifth dimension is the nature of the rule of law, which relates to the way legal mechanisms function are enforced. The presence of certain legal accountability mechanisms and the extent to which they are legitimate and enforceable in a given context will shape the form and prospects of different types of SAcc. For example, legitimate constitutional provisions can provide a basis for making and justifying SAcc claims or SAcc can play a key role in triggering existing accountability mechanisms within the state. Some of these dimensions were evident in the case of the tenant's movement in Mombasa, Kenya (box 2.4).

Finally, the capacity and willingness of political parties to link with and take up SAcc claims appears to be an important variable in particular cases (especially based on the wider literature available on governance and development). For example, in areas where community management committees were effective, such as in India's Midnapore District, Corbridge et al. (2005)

found that it was in large part due to the commitment of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) to mobilize the poor.

## Inter-Elite Relations

The third, related domain can be broadly defined as "inter-elite relations." It focuses on the horizontal power relations between the political and economic elites that, to differing degrees, access and control state structures. The capacity and will of political elites, as noted above, is a key contextual variable in shaping the prospects for SAcc. However, in order to design SAcc actions accordingly, one would need to further unpack the underlying elite relationships and incentives that underpin this "will" (Mcloughlin and Batley 2012). One potentially promising way to do this is by applying the lens of the "political settlement."

### What is a Political Settlement?

The political settlement that underpins a state can take multiple forms. It can be broadly defined as:

> *"… the balance or distribution of power between contending social groups and social classes, on which any state is based. Looking at the political settlement focuses attention on intra-elite contention and bargaining (political versus economic elites; landed and non-landed elites, regional elites, rural and urban, religious and secular….)" (Di John and Putzel 2009: 4)[4]*

Settlements may be durable but they are rarely static and can be seen as "rolling agreements, at national or sub-national level, among powerful actors that are constantly subject to renegotiation and contestation" (Parks and Cole 2010: 5–6).[5] (See annex 2 for examples of changes in political settlements.) A distinction can also be made between primary and secondary political settlements. A "primary" settlement refers to the configuration of power at the central state level; the "secondary" settlement refers to potential struggles for local control in subnational regions and/or to the different settlements that might form around particular goods and services, such as taxation, welfare, water, and food (Parks and Cole 2010). By way of illustration, table 2.1 stylistically outlines two types of settlements—*open access* and *limited access*—and briefly explains how it shapes incentives for action.

*The "political settlement" is increasingly recognized as highly influential in shaping development outcomes.*

### How Do Political Settlements Matter for SAcc?

The nature of political settlements is increasingly found to be influential in explaining development outcomes, but the settlement lens has not yet been applied to SAcc, even if some preliminary insights are suggested here. In a broad sense, the settlement is likely to shape the incentives for ruling coalitions to act on accountability issues and respond to SAcc claims. As Bukenya et al. (2012: 47) put it:

## Table 2.1. Two Types of Political Settlement and the Incentive Structure:
##              Open Versus Limited Access Orders

| Marker | "Open Access" Order—Impersonal Politics | "Limited Access" Order—Personalistic Politics |
|---|---|---|
| Rights and entitlements | Citizens can reasonably expect their rights and entitlements to be delivered by government. It is the obligation of government to deliver them and, typically, to do so impersonally with equal regard for all. If a government fails to deliver them, there is social insurance that guarantees some form of social protection to citizens. | Constitution/laws may establish rights, but citizens usually need to have the proper "connections" to enjoy them. The demand is often on individual politicians to deliver, not on an impersonal bureaucracy. There is little or no social insurance, so citizens rely on family, social networks, individual politicians, and so on. Connections rather than rights are what matters. |
| Contract enforcement | Contract enforcement is routine and carried out through legal and formal means if there is a dispute. There is rule of law that makes contract enforcement a legal and formal process. | Contracts can be better enforced through informal means, such as covert bargaining, use of informal authorities, or even the use of credible threats and violence. |
| Role of politicians (e.g., MPs) | Responsibilities are standardized and prescribed in formal rules. Limits on the power of the MPs are also prescribed and known to most. Boundaries between public and private domains are clearer. | Aside from formal responsibilities, they need to "open doors" for constituents so they get services and benefits. Some MPs develop into private providers of services to constituents; they are able to sustain this by using their influence or by "creating rents." |
| Political competition | Losers live to fight another day. Elections are mainly the mechanism for political competitions. Losers of the open competition begin to contemplate new ways of combining interests and political support. Failing to innovate increases risk of remaining out of power. | Losers are suppressed; the winner takes all. Political competition manifests itself—not just in elections, but also in economic activities, social interaction, and everyday violence. Losers tend to lie low and be in defensive mode because any political activity undertaken by them can be seen as a threat by the winners. |
| Political parties | Parties are mostly differentiated by programs and ideology. Party switching is rarer. The most successful parties are made up of a wide range of interest groups. Thus, parties tend to be big—made up of component groups that often compromise on policy and moderate their demands so they can be united and stronger. | Parties are differentiated by the individuals leading them. Programs and ideology are not very important. What matters is the capacity to win the competition. Compromises within the coalition are not about policy, but mostly about how to cut up the pie of political positions and economic rents. |
| Elections | Election rules are mostly fair. There is a great number and dense set of impersonal organizations—trade unions, industry and professional organizations, faith-based organizations, NGOs, and so on—that represent a range of interests and mobilize widely-dispersed constituencies for elections. Electoral competition can be intense and bitter, but elections are largely violence-free. | Election rules are not fair. Restrictions are imposed to make it difficult for the opposition to organize, field candidates, or use the press. Organizations that mobilize interests for elections are fewer in number and density. Many of those that exist choose to remain "neutral" of party politics and may not have the capability to mobilize widely-dispersed constituencies. Charismatic, individual leaders are often more effective in mobilizing voters. Electoral competition can be deadly. |
| Corruption | Corruption and widespread rent creation destabilizes the incumbent coalition and serves to mobilize a great many groups against it. Corruption charges typically destroy reputations. | Corruption and rent-creation consolidates incumbents. Winners in political competition typically regard victory as "our turn" to enjoy rent-seeking. Corruption charges do not necessarily destroy reputations. |
| Civil society | In an "open access" democracy, there are a number of impersonal organizations that have the capability to hold public officials to account. | The state's use of privilege and rents to secure political order necessitates limited access that typically prevents a civil society from being capable of policing government. |

*Source:* Gutierrez 2011; North et al. 2009.

*"... the commitment of elites [to SAcc] ... will be strongly shaped by the terms of the political settlement and the incentives that this places before them to act in favour of certain interests over others."*

Such incentives structure, but do not necessarily determine, elite behavior (Unsworth and Moore 2010).

More specifically, the dimensions of the settlement that seem most relevant to SAcc prospects—based on the evidence discussed above and below—are the extent to which the settlement is developmental and capable, and the nature of the *ideas* of accountability that bind a given settlement together. Each aspect is briefly discussed in turn.

First, SAcc (in the context of this paper) aims to advance certain development goals. As such, the developmental character of the settlement—i.e., the extent to which its legitimacy is based on furthering broader-based development along with some level of redistribution and social development—is important. Indeed, settlements based on high levels of elite predation and patronage may provide very limited space for viable SAcc. As one review notes:

> *"If politicians, and especially leaders, do not have the incentives to deliver on development, putting extra pressure on bureaucratic state agencies is likely to have limited, or local effects. When the political leadership has some commitment to development, civil society may have a role to play in how internal state mechanisms work." (Devarajan et al. 2011: 34)*

Box 2.5, for example, briefly outlines how the nature of the political settlement in Rwanda has arguably shaped the form of nascent SAcc processes.

Relatedly, the extent to which the settlement is inclusive may shape the constraints and opportunities for SAcc. Settlements manifest themselves in, "the structure of property rights and entitlements, which give some social actors more distributional advantages than others, and in the regulatory structure of the state" (Di John and Putzel 2009: 4).[6] As such, the way in which entitlements are distributed and certain groups are included/excluded in a given context would shape SAcc dynamics. For example, the distribution of rights is important because such rights tend to form the basis of accountability claims (as noted further below). Also, SAcc is likely to take different forms depending on whether certain groups are included or not—for example, SAcc activities may range from attempts to have the rights of excluded groups recognized to asserting already-recognized rights, as briefly outlined in chapter 4.

A second dimension of the settlement that is relevant to SAcc is its capacity to manage the social and political changes underpinning development and the demands that SAcc might place upon it. This relates to organizational and technical capacity but also to political capacities. "Political" capacity refers to the capability of the state to maintain enough political stability for

**If politicians, and especially leaders, do not have the incentives to deliver on development, putting extra pressure on bureaucratic state agencies is likely to have limited, or local effects.**

## Box 2.5. Rwanda: A Neo-Patrimonial Developmental Settlement? Emerging Forms of Social Accountability

A broadly neo-patrimonial development settlement has arguably characterized Rwanda in the past decade or more. It is "neo-patrimonial" in the sense that systems of patrimonialism underpin a relatively centrally-controlled political economy. However, it is also arguably developmental, by virtue of the efforts by the ruling political class to centralize rents and to take a long-term developmental planning horizon alongside the state's efforts—to differing degrees—to reduce poverty and achieve certain social development goals—for instance, the government has shown a strong commitment to improving maternal health.

Within this context, SAcc programs have emerged—namely through the Public Policy Information, Monitoring, and Advocacy (PPIMA) Program, funded by DFID and led by Norwegian People's Aid and other partners. Among other things, this has involved the rollout of service delivery citizen report cards and budget-literacy initiatives, including a citizens' guide to the budget. While it is too early to document the results of this program, the settlement has shaped SAcc's emergence and implementation in two main ways. First, the fact that ruling elites appear to have incentives to deliver on development has arguably given SAcc—and civil society participation—some traction. Specifically, SAcc has arguably gained some traction when it has been framed—albeit instrumentally and narrowly—in terms of furthering the elite's development vision and improving service delivery efficiencies at the local level. Second, given the somewhat "closed" nature of the political system, the SAcc initiatives have proceeded relatively slowly and with caution, and have invested heavily in building trust and dialogue between citizens and the state to improve services and to possibly make incremental changes to state-citizen relationships. In contrast, in more open political settlements, SAcc may be able to take on a more radical form of demand and overt social and political dissent.

*Sources:* Booth and Golooba-Mutebi 2011; PPIMA 2010; O'Meally 2010 (Fieldnotes).

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*The state's "political capacity" refers to its capabilities to maintain enough political stability for social transformation to take place and to maintain synergistic and legitimate relations with different social actors.*

social transformation to take place (Khan 2010: 52) and to maintain synergistic and legitimate relations with different social actors (vom Hau 2012).[7] The level of capacity may shape the form of and opportunities for SAcc in various ways. For example, SAcc demands may be more easily accommodated by an adaptable and capable political settlement. On the other hand, where the settlement is weak or fragile, SAcc—if at all appropriate—may take a more modest, incremental form that links state-formation with civic engagement, often at the local level (see box 2.6). Similarly, in moments of political instability or transition, demands for accountability may find windows of opportunity (see chapter 4 for some examples of this).

Finally, the ideas, values, and ideologies of the ruling elite—the "ideological glue" of a settlement—may be important in shaping elite thinking and action on accountability issues. Settlements, as noted above, tend to be bound together by a set of norms and ideas of what are, or are not, legitimate forms of governance. A growing body of literature notes how elite ideas around public service and development—as well as norms and narratives of legitimacy and accountability—can shape their action and receptiveness to SAcc claims (Reis and Moore 2005; Harris et al. 2011).

## Box 2.6. A Fragile Political Settlement, Legitimacy, and Local Civic Engagement in Iraq and Beyond

In the context of a fragile political settlement in Iraq, some civic engagement activities have focused on incremental steps to build the perceived legitimacy of local government bodies. For example, a Local Governance Program (LGP) has, among other things, provided technical assistance and capacity-building to promote trust in and perceived legitimacy of the local councils. Following the initial cessation of hostilities in Iraq, the LGP supported the creation of local councils and, subsequently, provided technical assistance and training to the councils alongside tools to help them interact with citizens. While the local councils were initially designed to interface with the U.S. military, they grew beyond that role to: (1) conduct service needs assessments; (2) participate in joint planning with local department staff; or (3) voice citizens' concerns and seek to hold local officials accountable.

One evaluation of LGP argued that the capacity building was effective in various ways because: (1) the program prioritized building the legitimacy of the local councils with constituents; (2) the participatory processes helped improve council representation and reduce elite capture; and (3) because the formation of the councils increased the networks of people who were willing to trust each other. However, the evaluation warns (as do other evaluations in fragile contexts) that such local gains may be reversed in situations where conflict is ongoing, where the legacy of oppressive state-society relations is strong, and where the decentralization process faces opposition from the central government.

More broadly, Gaventa and Barrett's (2010) review of multiple cases points to the potential role of gradual and incremental steps to build civic engagement and accountability in fragile settings through repeated state-citizen interactions. Their review of multiple cases suggests that we need to recognize, "the role which local associations and other citizen activities can play [in fragile settings] in the strengthening of cultures of citizenship, which in turn can contribute to building responsive states."

*Sources:* Boeckman 2012; Brinkerhoff and Mayfield 2005; Gaventa and Barrett 2010; World Bank 2011.

## State-Society Relations

A fourth domain focuses on the arena of "state-society relations." Of course, this domain is related to the political settlement, although it focuses on state-citizen rather than inter-elite relations. Four main aspects of these relations emerge as significant.

First, the nature of the state-citizen "social contract" in a given context can influence the form and effectiveness of SAcc. The term broadly refers to the mutual expectations of the entitlements, roles, and responsibilities between the state and citizens.[8] The nature of a given contract is, however, likely to differ across contexts and even across sectors and goods (Hickey 2011).[9] Even in fragile or "collapsed" states, there may be loose forms of a contract between different actors—probably at the local level—even if it does not resemble the Western state-centric social contract. The nature of the social contract can shape SAcc in two main ways: (1) it can set the parameters for SAcc activities because in order to be able to make accountability claims of the state, "there must be an implicit assumption about the roles and responsibilities of the state, as well as the rights and entitlements of citizens" (Newell and Wheeler 2006: 29);

*The context-specific form of the social contract is key: to make accountability claims there must be an implicit assumption about the role of the state and the entitlements of the citizens.*

and (2) it helps explain the willingness of citizens to engage in SAcc—experience suggests that citizens are more likely to take part in SAcc if they already believe the state is responsible for delivering a particular good or service (Bukenya et al. 2012). Box 2.7 offers some brief examples.

Second, a related dimension is the history of state-citizen bargaining. The history of state-citizen relations in state formation and service provision matters. SAcc initiatives tend to be more effective in countries with a strong history of civic engagement (as the example in box 2.8 suggests). This does not mean that all CS action is path dependent, but that a history of CS activism can support the creation of, "a repertoire of activism, replete with skills, networks and tactics, on which these later campaigns could build" (McGee and Gaventa 2010: 13; also, Goodin and Tilly 2006; Joshi and Houtzager 2012; Shankland 2010). Moreover, the extent to which the experience of citizen engagement has been positive or negative shapes the willingness of citizens to engage in current SAcc initiatives, particularly because engaging in SAcc may divert the resources of actors from other activities—so there are trade-offs.

A third dimension within this domain relates to the character of formal and informal state-society accountability and bridging mechanisms. This covers multiple mechanisms ranging from the media and legal redress mechanisms to participatory spaces and customary institutions (see Agarwal and Van Wicklin 2011). The extent to which such mechanisms are authoritative, legitimate, and effective has been found to shape the prospects for SAcc effectiveness. Equally, in spite of the relatively limited evidence base, it seems that *informal* accountability institutions—and their interaction with formal mechanisms—are important in shaping SAcc outcomes.[10] In many developing-country contexts, informal rules are prevalent and "... often involve patrimonial structures of exchange, which rely on different logics of accountability and appeal to different

## Box 2.7. The Social Contract and Social Accountability: Three Examples

In Malawi, citizen scorecard initiatives were found to be more effective in localities where social contracts were strong—that is, where there was widespread agreement on the state's role in service delivery. In these types of localities, the process was able to nurture "collaborative spaces" that brought communities, service providers, local authorities, and others together to collectively solve service delivery problems, with each type of actor contributing to improvements according to their endowments.

In Brazil, the effectiveness of the participatory budgeting initiative in Porto Alegre was partly attributed to the fact that the opening of budgets and citizen participation formed part of the social contract between the Workers' Party and civil society. This "contract" was negotiated before the former was elected into office.

In Uganda, it has been argued that the perception of the state-citizen "contract" around education is strong; for example, households value education for its critical role in poverty reduction and development. Arguably, this contributed to citizen mobilization around a newspaper campaign aimed at fighting corruption to improve schooling.

*Sources:* Wild and Harris 2012: 22; Goldfrank 2006; Reinikka and Svensson 2011.

> ### Box 2.8. A Strong History of Grassroots Mobilization: The Treatment Action Campaign in South Africa
>
> The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in South Africa successfully pushed the African National Congress (ANC) government to put in place HIV/AIDS policies like the universal provision of antiretroviral treatment through the public health system. TAC's mobilization occurred in the aftermath of a successful antiapartheid movement. It has been argued that one of the contributing factors to TAC's effectiveness was that its founders drew on and employed the same techniques developed in the fight against apartheid.
>
> *Source:* Campbell et al. 2010; Friedman 2010.

narratives of legitimacy [compared to the more democratic, formal SAcc models]" (Harris et al. 2011: 5). Also, in contexts where formal accountability mechanisms are weak, SAcc activities may play a role in improving services by, for example, leveraging informal networks or through symbolic acts or protest (Unsworth and Moore 2010).

Finally, the form and effectiveness of SAcc is shaped by the depth and character of networks between state and society actors. As noted above, a key variable in explaining the effectiveness of SAcc interventions is the existence of pro-reform state-society networks. Such networks do not, however, form overnight—they form over time through interaction and rounds of bargaining, and they can be reshaped, coopted, or changed by numerous internal and external drivers (for example, Fox 2007; Sorensen and Torfing 2005). These points are all further discussed in the following chapters.

## Intra-Society Relations

The penultimate domain is called "intra-society relations." This can be understood as the field of power relationships that shapes social interactions and popular agency within society. It is particularly relevant in understanding some of the barriers that prevent people from participating effectively in, and deriving the benefits from, SAcc. At the risk of simplification, a key subdimension (alongside citizen's individual capacities, outlined above) is the nature of socioeconomic inequality and exclusion.

*Levels of inequality and social exclusion have been found to play an important role in shaping social accountability outcomes.*

Levels of inequality and social exclusion have been found to play an important role in shaping SAcc outcomes. As one metareview of context and SAcc finds:

> *"The contextual factor that emerged most frequently as shaping the success or failure of participatory approaches to securing accountability concerned inequalities amongst citizens as would-be participants." (Bukenya et al. 2012: 40)*

Better-off citizens generally—although not always—tend to benefit more from SAcc processes, and socially excluded groups can be marginalized in such activities (as box 2.9 illustrates). For example, there is relatively strong evidence to suggest that transparency-based initiatives tend

to be utilized more successfully by better-off and less-excluded citizens; other evidence points to the fact that in fractionalized societies, participatory initiatives tend to reproduce existing inequalities (Bukenya et al. 2012). Even strong proponents of participatory approaches to accountability (for example, McGee and Gaventa 2011) stress the need for a greater focus on ensuring the relevance of SAcc to poor and vulnerable groups.

However, the impact of inequality on SAcc is arguably ambiguous. On one hand, in cases like Brazil, India, and South Africa, it is the perception of inequalities that stimulated aggrieved citizens to call on the state to do something. On the other hand, some studies note that the degree of fractionalization along religious, ethnic, and class lines, among others, can negatively affect the capacity of citizens for collective action (Bukenya et al. 2012). Therefore, what might be of key importance is the popular perception of the fairness and legitimacy of inequality levels along with perceptions of whether it is the state's responsibility to rectify such inequalities (see also, Marc et al. 2012); this would, however, require further research.

## Box 2.9. Inequality, Exclusion and Social Accountability: Various Examples

Levels of inequality and exclusion can shape the constraints around SAcc in various ways. In some cases, efforts for citizen voice and participation have been found to reproduce existing inequalities in spite of efforts at mitigation.

Various cases in India, for instance, suggest that attempts to promote women's participation and representation in village panchayat committees has had limited effects. Mohanty (2007: 85), reporting on women's representation in watershed subcommittees, writes that, "It is all too obvious that women are recruited to watershed committees to meet procedural requirements. It seems ironic to talk about 'choice,' since most women members are not even aware that they have membership in the committee." Similarly, Corbridge et al. (2005:148–149) find that the attempts to set up participatory SAcc structures in and through Village Education Committees (VECs) has benefitted those wealthier and more capable groups. They put it that, "to expect Musahar children—boys as well as girls—to go to school in Bihar, or, still more optimistically, to expect their parents to take part in VECs, is to miss the very obvious point that these families lack even the most basic assets: land, of course, but also a sense of self-worth and the prospect of secure and properly paid employment" (Corbridge et al. 2005: 149).

In another example from the Niger Delta, citizen groups have attempted to hold public and private sector actors to account for the lack of investment in infrastructure and economic development in the region, as well as the environmental degradation as the result of natural resource exploration. However, many of these mobilizations have been divided by ethnicity, limiting the opportunities for a more cohesive and broad-based understanding of citizenship and rights and exacerbating preexisting inter-ethnic disputes over rents and resources (Osaghae 2010).

This is not to say that SAcc approaches are uniform and cannot employ different strategies to address and mitigate inequality (see chapter 4). However, exclusion issues can be deeply ingrained and difficult to overcome without significant attention over time. As one respondent in a study on citizenship in the *favelas* (urban slums) of Rio de Janeiro put it, "dignity is everything for a citizen—and we have no dignity. We are treated like cattle in the clinics, on the buses and in the shops. Only in rich neighbourhoods are people treated with dignity" (Wheeler 2005: 109). Gaventa and Barrett (2010: 46), thus conclude that: "Where certain groups have been historically excluded, or in regions with low levels of social cohesion, the promotion of measures for citizen engagement must take into careful consideration the histories of local population groups and the best strategies for promoting genuinely inclusive participatory processes."

## Global Dimensions

A final domain can be broadly termed "global dimensions." This refers to the way in which global actors and processes can support or undermine accountability for development and SAcc. There is limited evidence of the specific impact of global dimensions on SAcc, perhaps partly due to the limitations of the remit of impact evaluations, but there is much to suggest that such dimensions do shape state-citizen accountability relations. The ways in which these dimensions might shape the constraints and opportunities for SAcc will vary across time and place, but some key issues are worth flagging here.

*Global actors and processes can support or undermine accountability for development; this in turn shapes the prospects for effective demand-side activities.*

First, donor accountability and donor-state relations, especially in highly aid-dependent countries, can be important in a variety of ways, such as: (1) aid conditions may create or limit space for national deliberation and accountability over appropriate policies and measures; (2) donor agencies, when taking too much responsibility for service provision, may undermine the emergence of a social contract; (3) aid flows may provide (dis)incentives for political elites to be more responsive to local citizens and for tax bargaining; and (4) direct aid flows to CS could undermine their independence, effectiveness, and downward accountability (for example, Booth 2012; O'Neil et al. 2007, 2011; Banks and Hulme 2012).

Second, the accountability of other international power-holders beyond the state is increasingly pertinent. For example, multinational corporations (MNCs) or international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) have been found to shape domestic accountability in more or less positive ways, especially when the state is unwilling or unable to regulate these actors' activities. There are various instances where MNCs have violated poor people's perceived rights leading to forms of SAcc that target the corporation, rather than just the state (for example, Newell and Garvey 2004; Bebbington et al. 2008). Another example of these international dimensions of accountability dynamics can be found in box 2.10 and also in chapter 4.

Third, there are, more broadly, a range of international economic and political processes that are understood to shape domestic accountability. This includes, but is of course not limited to: (1) the level of a country's global economic integration, as more extreme forms of globalization can undermine accountability by limiting the state's capacity to democratically debate and determine social and economic policy (Rodrik 2011; Scott 2012); (2) international trade and financial

### Box 2.10. Global-Local Accountability Networks: Fishery Example

In the fisheries, there are cases in which foreign companies have bribed officials to grant them fishing rights over and above preagreed sustainable limits, thus impacting sustainability and the livelihoods of others. In the face of this accountability challenge, "trumping networks" can form through which fishing companies—seeking to protect both their continued access to the resource and its sustainability—build alliances with local communities, environmental activists, and retailers committed to sustainable trade in order to expose and reverse policies that threaten overfishing.

*Source:* Levy 2011.

flows (such as trade in illicit goods or money laundering), which can shape the incentives of political and economic elites to pursue anti-development practices; or (3) international standards, such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) or international human rights norms, which can exert pressure on certain states and open spaces for greater accountability, and so on (see Unsworth and Moore 2010; Ringold et al. 2011).

## Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined some of the key contextual domains and subdimensions that influence the form and effectiveness of SAcc. These variables are summarized in table 2.2.

**Table 2.2. Summary of the Key Contextual Domains and Subdimensions that Influence Social Accountability**

| Six Contextual Domains | Key Domain Subdimensions |
|---|---|
| 1. Civil Society | • Technical and organizational capacity<br>• Capacity to build alliances across society<br>• Capacity to build alliances/networks with the state<br>• Authority, legitimacy, and credibility of civil society with citizens and state actors<br>• Willingness of civil society to challenge accountability status quo<br>• Capacity and capability of citizens to engage in SAcc<br>• Willingness of citizens to engage in SAcc |
| 2. Political Society | • Willingness of political/elected elites to respond to and foster SAcc<br>• Willingness of state bureaucrats to respond to and foster SAcc<br>• State and political elite capacity to respond to SAcc<br>• Democratization and the civil society enabling environment<br>• The nature of the rule of law<br>• The capacity and willingness of political parties to support SAcc |
| 3. Inter-Elite Relations | • The developmental nature of the political settlement<br>• The inclusiveness of the settlement<br>• The organizational and political capabilities of the settlement<br>• Elite ideas/norms of accountability underpinning the settlement |
| 4. State-Society Relations | • The character and form of the social contract<br>• History of state–citizen bargaining (long- and short-term)<br>• State-society accountability and bridging mechanisms (formal and informal)<br>• The nature and depth of state-society pro-accountability networks |
| 5. Intra-Society Relations | • Inequality<br>• Social exclusion and fragmentation |
| 6. Global Dimensions | • Donor-state relations<br>• International power-holder accountability<br>• International political and economic drivers |

# 3. Toward a Context-Sensitive Understanding of Social Accountability Change

The paper has, to this point, outlined some of the major contextual factors that appear critical in explaining the form and effectiveness of SAcc. However, this is only one part of the picture. SAcc interventions can also shape their context. This chapter thus turns to the question: "How might SAcc interact with and influence the context in order to bring about change?" In order to take action, we need an understanding of how SAcc-driven change happens. Indeed, it is increasingly recognized that a basic prerequisite for planning is to articulate a Theory of Change (ToC) which can,

> *"... identify the salient features of the context of intervention, the precondi-tions for success, the possible pathways for success and the assumptions underpinning the strategy." (AcT 2010)*

Thus, the chapter first summarizes some key lessons about how SAcc design factors contribute to positive change. Based on this "evidence" and chapter 2, a relevant ToC is proposed. Two points should, however, be highlighted at the outset. First, the chapter outlines the broad contours and concepts of an appropriate ToC; the purpose is not to provide guidance on how a ToC should be developed in a given program or context, as is pro-vided elsewhere (for example, Johnsøn, 2012; Tembo, 2012). Second, as noted in the introduction, we still have a limited understanding of how accountability initiatives interact with context to produce outcomes, so this ToC is tentative and should be tested in the future. Moreover, a ToC cannot offer a singular roadmap toward change and is necessarily partial and simplified, even if it can help sharpen strategic thinking and action (McGee and Gaventa 2011).

*An intervention is shaped by, but can also shape, the context … to take effective action we also need to sharpen our understanding of how social accountability interventions might contribute to positive change.*

## Design Factors and Change

This section briefly summarizes some of the current evidence about how SAcc contributes to change (Bukenya et al. 2012). The boxes offer illustrations of selected points, as do the discus-sions that follow in chapter 4:

- SAcc change processes tend to be complex and nonlinear and can bring about unintended consequences. As McGee and Gaventa (2011: 27) note, "... all transparency and accountability initiatives unfold within complex, nonlinear, contextually-specific social and political processes and it is these complex contexts and processes that they seek to change." There may also be multiple potential pathways to "success" in one given context (Tembo 2012).[11]
- SAcc elements are often just one of many drivers of change and accountability change is often—at least in part—underpinned by a broader political process. As Newell and Wheeler (2006: 3) note, accountability reforms are often political as they tend to: "challenge powerful

## Box 3.1. State-Society Alliances, Political Dynamics, and Accountability: The Philippines

The experience of land reform in the Philippines from 1992 to 1998 shows how an alliance between civil society organizations and state reformers resulted in changing accountability dynamics and positive gains for poor people on a contentious issue. Briefly, this is what happened.

By the early 1980s, the peasants' protest movement had succeeded in putting agrarian reform on the national agenda. After much debate, a compromise land reform bill was eventually passed, which became the basis for the accelerated period of land redistribution during the Ramos presidency (1992–98). Shifting political alignments and a divided elite meant that Ramos needed to bolster his weak electoral mandate by recruiting civil society activists into important positions in the bureaucracy.

Peasant movements took advantage of these political openings to create a critical alliance with the state reformers to increase pressure for accelerated land distribution and the flow of benefits to marginalized groups. The peasant movements developed a groundbreaking approach called the "bibingka" strategy ("Bibingka" is a rice cake cooked from below and above). It came to signify the mutually reinforcing interaction between militant mobilizations of peasant movements "from below" and reformist initiatives "from above" by state bureaucrats (this reflects the "sandwich strategy" outlined later in this report). Cooption of the reform movement by reform antagonists was avoided because there was a critical mass of reformers within government and because the peasant movement was able to retain its independence and back its demands with broader social mobilization.

*Source:* Borras Jr. and Franco 2008.

interests that benefit from lack of transparency, low levels of institutional responsiveness, and poor protection of citizens' rights."

- SAcc interventions appear more likely to bring about positive change when the lead implementing actors from civil society (CS) and/or political society (PS) are seen as locally authoritative, legitimate, and credible by the actors involved. By the same token, SAcc participatory initiatives tend to be more effective when they are deemed to be credible and authoritative by citizens—i.e., when the decision-making outcomes of these processes are seen as both valid and enforceable.

*Accountability reforms are often political: they tend to challenge powerful interests that benefit from low levels of responsiveness or poor delivery of citizens' entitlements.*

- SAcc is more likely to be effective when it promotes change in both spheres of "supply" and "demand." As noted above, demand-focused SAcc alone has tended to have limited effectiveness. Supply-side changes are often required alongside demand-side pressures to bring about sustained change, especially as it is often with the political masters and powerful state bureaucrats that the power "required to ensure that accountability interventions achieve both enforcement and sanctions resides" (Bukenya et al. 2012: 53), as noted previously. SAcc can be especially effective as a complement that triggers in-state accountability mechanisms. But it is not a given that SAcc will be the most appropriate driver of accountability change in any given context; this should be decided on a case-by-case basis. For example, in order to improve service delivery in some contexts, it may be more appropriate to strengthen public authorities or actors in PS rather than necessarily resourcing demand-led initiatives (see Booth 2012).

- It is the quality and strength of pro-accountability networks across state and society rather than the characteristics of individual actors that often account for success. The interests and incentives of PS and CS actors are not homogenous; there are differences within and across them with regard to their propensity to drive pro-accountability change. The forging of strategic alliances between like-minded actors from CS and PS emerges as critical for change. Box 3.1 illustrates this and other important ingredients contributing to pro-poor change and heightened accountability on land issues in the Philippines.

*Social accountability processes appear more likely to bring about sustainable reform when they support "organic," domestic pressures for change.*

- Many cases of SAcc have been more effective when founded on high-quality and relevant information that is sufficiently disseminated to the appropriate constituents. In this regard, the media offers a key route through which information around government activities can be disseminated, although this depends on the independence and integrity of the media. However, information and answerability alone are unlikely to bring about change—sanctions and enforceability are needed. The information should be salient to solving the accountability problem and must meet existing citizen demands for information and respond to their incentives and capacities for action, thus inspiring behavioral change, as box 3.2 suggests (Dervarajan et al. 2011; Fung et al. 2007). As McGee and Gaventa (2011: 9) warn, "Transparency is a necessary but insufficient condition for accountability ... transparency initiatives which 'mobilise the power of shame' have no purchase on the shameless."

- A SAcc initiative tends to have more traction and impact when the issue in question is perceived to be "significant" by the actors who are mobilizing around it. This is also illustrated above in the discussion on the social contract.

- Related to this, SAcc processes appear to be more likely to bring about sustainable change when they support existing "organic" domestic initiatives and pressures for change. Discrete SAcc tools may bring about localized changes but there are questions about their sustainability and potential to be scaled up. As Bukenya et al. (2012) note, SAcc may be

*Information and answerability alone are unlikely to bring about change—sanctions and enforceability are needed.*

particularly powerful when it, "moves from being introduced as part of the intervention to being institutionalised within/as part of the political context." This, as Joshi and Houtzager (2012) outline, means thinking less in terms of the tools or widgets that are the particular steps and inputs of a given SAcc initiative and more in terms of the watchdog nature of SAcc actors that relates to their organic social and political capabilities to oversee public authorities. Moreover, SAcc is arguably more likely to be effective when it builds on and complements locally legitimate formal and/or informal accountability mechanisms (Mansuri and Rao 2013).

## Box 3.2. Information and "Painting" the Picture: Participatory Budgeting in Brazil

Among other things, the success of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, is attributed to the tailored and appropriate information dissemination meant to inspire mobilization and enable people to take informed action. For example, even in the remotest of the city's suburbs—such as the impoverished Brazilian fishing village of Icapuí—the mayor painted monthly budget figures (both revenues and expenditures) on the side of his house.

*Source:* Goldfrank 2006.

- SAcc interventions that take a multilevel and multipronged approach have been found to be more effective. These are approaches that work simultaneously on transparency, accountability and participation; that work at different levels, from global to local; and, that are embedded in different stages of the policy cycle (Fox 2004, 2007; Gaventa 2009). Box 3.3 describes a movement that combines multiple strategies to achieve its objectives. As Fox (2007: 354) notes, "… transparency, accountability and participation reforms need each other, they can be mutually enforcing—but such synergy remains exceedingly rare."

*The changes in social and political conditions needed to increase accountability tend to take time.*

- SAcc interventions that adopt a longer time horizon may have greater chances of success, namely because the changes in social and political conditions to increase accountability tend to take time (even if this is not well documented perhaps because of the often shorter-term impact evaluation timescales).

## Building Blocks for a Theory of Social Accountability Change

Based on the findings illustrated so far, there is arguably a case to refocus—even radically rethink in some areas—the way in which SAcc has often been understood and operationalized. It can be inferred that the main elements of this rethink involve the integration of at least four principles, which are briefly outlined below. The next section attempts to tie this all together.

First, there is a good case to put political and power relations at the forefront of understanding

*The findings point to the critical importance of power and political relationships in shaping social accountability processes and outcomes.*

and operationalizing SAcc. The findings point to the critical importance of power and political relationships in shaping SAcc processes and outcomes. This challenges the tendency, with exceptions, to promote SAcc as a *technical* process in and through formal institutional frameworks. Related to this, the evidence suggests a rethink of how CS is commonly perceived. CS has often been seen as an autonomous arena that is by and large a force for the good—this has been termed the "associational school" (Howell and Pearce 2001; Whaites 1996). The evidence, however, suggests that: (1) CS can be shot through with power relations and CS actors may have incentives to maintain, as well as challenge, accountability failures; and, (2) CSOs can find it very difficult to find room to maneuver for their projects vis-à-vis the broader politics of patronage and exclusion (Benequista 2010; Evans 2010; Houtzager et al. 2005). This resonates with "neo-Gramscian"[12] understandings of CS, which see it as embedded in, and not autonomous from, political and power relations (Cox and Sinclair 1996; O'Meally 2009).

## Box 3.3. A Multipronged Approach to Accountability: Rural Landless Movement in Brazil

The rural landless people's movement—the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST)—in Brazil, sought to hold the government to account for its constitutional responsibility on land issues. It was effective arguably because it used a range of mutually-reinforcing strategies to create "demand," including the judicial process, formal and informal interaction with state actors, grassroots mobilization, the media, and protests. MST organized more than 230,000 land occupations, won 15 million acres for land reform, created 1,500 agricultural communities, and settled more than 250,000 families.

*Source:* Campbell et al. 2010.

Second, inter-elite and state-society relations, coalitions and bargaining warrant much greater attention. A good deal of attention has been focused on individual actors from the state and CS, such as through building the organizational capacity of CSOs. However, what also seems to be particularly important are the relations and interactions between the different actors; and the incentives that flow from these relations. The findings urge us to go beyond the *supply/demand, principal/agent,* and *state/citizen* dichotomies and instead understand the more progressive and regressive coalitions that cut across the state and citizen divide. Related to this, in Booth's (2012a: 11) view, *"Governance challenges are not fundamentally about one set of people getting another set of people to behave better. They are about both sets of people finding ways of being able to act collectively in their own best interests."* He cautions against, on the one hand, supply side principal-agent approaches that tend to assume there is political commitment to reform and the problem is mainly about compliance and information asymmetry down the chain of command; and against, on the other hand, the demand-side principal-agent logic which treats citizens, voters or service users as (homogenous) principals seeking to get compliance from politicians and civil servants (Booth 2012).

Third, there is a need to sharpen and deepen the focus on inequality and exclusion dynamics. As outlined in the previous chapter, poverty, inequality, and exclusionary dynamics shape the extent to which many citizens can engage effectively in and/or benefit from SAcc claim-making. This implies the need to put "inequality-mitigating" measures at the center of all SAcc thinking and implementation, rather than sometimes addressing these issues in a piecemeal or ad hoc manner.

Fourth, a greater emphasis is needed on how to work with the grain and support best-fit SAcc interventions. Given the findings, the paper supports calls to go beyond a best-practice mindset and to pay greater attention to existing contextual relations and identify best-fit or "good enough" solutions (Levy 2011; Grindle 2007).[13] This means focusing more on what exists and can be built on and less to gap filling to address what is judged to be missing when a country is compared with an OECD country or development success case (Unsworth 2003; Warrener 2004; Unsworth and Moore 2010). What may result from this shift have been recently termed "practical hybrids"—that is, where modern bureaucratic and formal standards combine with, or adapt to, locally-accepted cultures and practices (see Booth 2012a and chapter 4).[14]

## Tying it All Together

What springs from these findings are arguably diverse threads with which to start weaving an alternative, context-sensitive ToC for accountability change. While this is no easy task, the weight of the findings suggests that a relevant ToC could be rooted in a broad political sociology approach. These concepts are briefly outlined here.

A political sociology or "polity" approach understands politics to be mutually constituted by state-society relations (Houtzager 2003).[15] This can be distinguished from the more principal-agent model that can imply a state-citizen dichotomy or from the notion that there are separate (and largely distinct) interest groups, as in interest-group economistic understandings of politics.

*"Governance challenges are not fundamentally about one set of people getting another set of people to behave better. They are about both sets of people finding ways of being able to act collectively in their own best interests."*
*– D. Booth*

*What springs from these findings are diverse threads with which to start weaving a more appropriate theory of accountability change.*

In this view, accountability relations can be largely understood to change through mutually reinforcing interactions between state and nonstate institutions. As Fox (2004) notes, public institutions that attempt to move in more pro-poor directions without the backing of informal or societal authority will achieve limited results, and attempts to drive change by societal actors alone may often be thwarted by public authority-holders. He notes that:

> "Pro-empowerment institutional reforms are driven by mutually reinforcing cross-sectoral coalitions between state and society, grounded in mutually perceived shared interests." (Fox 2004: 84)

Fox describes this through the metaphor of a "sandwich strategy."

In the short term, such coalitions might be incrementally built up through interaction, negotiation, and institutional innovation across societal actors and between state and society actors, building social and political capital (Joshi 2010). As such, pro-change actors might interact strategically with actors opposed to change in order to bring about incremental shifts and to improve the bargaining power of pro-reform actors.

In the longer term, effectiveness hinges largely on the extent to which pro-reform state-society coalitions can change the balance of power at the relevant level:

**"… the reform process depends on changing the balance of power between pro-reform actors embedded in both state and society and anti-reform actors, who are also embedded in state and society." – J. Fox**

> "… the reform process depends on changing the balance of power between pro-reform actors embedded in both state and society and anti-reform actors, who are also embedded in state and society. While the anti-reform forces in state and society are very likely to constitute a de facto coalition closely linked through informal ties, pro-reform forces do not necessarily coordinate their efforts … This process of cross-sectoral coalition-building requires its own set of investment strategies, which involve both social and political capital." (Fox 2004: 70)

This chimes with neo-Gramscian concepts that understand the polity to be composed of coalitions (referred to as "blocs") of actors and groups from political, economic, and civil society. The ruling—or "hegemonic"—coalition revolves around the dominant political and economic classes who maintain their power through alliances and settlements, and through a blend of consensus and coercion. In this view, change is understood as being driven by the formation of counter-hegemonic blocs—class-based and/or identity-based coalitions—that could reshape, challenge, or unseat the dominant coalition (Murphy 2005; O'Meally 2009).

The prospects for building effective pro-reform movements would be shaped by the strategies the movements' employ and also by the nature and dynamics in the contextual domains outlined in chapter 2. This is not to say, however, that powerful actors from the state—such as political elites—or from society—such as social movements—might not act relatively independently to drive change, but experience tends to suggest that such actors rarely succeed in isolation and over the long term. By way of illustration, box 3.4, drawing on cases of rural mobilization in Mexico, illustrates an example of this type of sandwich strategy approach.

## Box 3.4. The "'Sandwich Strategy'" and Rural Development in Mexico

As with the case of the Philippines land reform movement (box 3.1 on page 24) and various other cases, the case of rural development policy and practice in Mexico illustrates the importance of pro-reform actors and networks from both state and society in driving change and improving accountability. A number of programs, mainly in the region of Oaxaca, involved institutionalized opportunities for Mexican indigenous peoples' organizations to share power with the public sector. The programs included the Community Food Councils, the Regional Development Funds and the Municipal Development Funds.

For example, one significant rural consumer program focused on remote, low-income areas, creating thousands of community-managed local stores that were supplied by the retail distribution branch of the government food company called DICONSA. The program attempted to use community participation and oversight to encourage public accountability of the food distribution company. It did so by building rural consumers' opportunities and capacities by creating regional civil society councils. In many regions, these councils were the first autonomous and representative CSOs to be tolerated by the government. Within a few years, approximately a third of the councils had achieved some degree of autonomous oversight capacity. As another example, inspired by the DICONSA food council experience, the National Indigenous Institute (INI) also created regional economic development councils where elected representatives of indigenous producer organizations jointly evaluated grassroots funding proposals and co-signed checks together with INI outreach officials.

Based on a synthesis of the findings, Fox concludes that the effectiveness of the initiatives relied on the capacity and willingness of both state and society actors and on an effective interface between the two. He concludes that:

- Reforms require changes in three distinct arenas: within the state itself, within society, and at the state-society interface, which involves both formal and informal power relations.
- The reform process depends on changing the balance of power between pro-reform actors and anti-reform actors. Building pro-reform coalitions requires its own set of investment strategies, involving the building of both social and political capital. Pro-accountability policymakers could play a critical role in investing their political capital to give potential civil society counterparts clear signals, tangible incentives to engage, and some protection from backlash.

*Source:* Fox, 2004.

From this TOC's perspective, attempts to heighten accountability can challenge the existing political coalition or settlement. At the risk of simplification, such challenges might lead to three broad outcomes: (1) coercion—a backlash from the powerful coalition; (2) cooptation—some appeasement and accommodation from the powerful coalition to ensure consensus and diffuse the challenge; or (3) change—the ruling coalition changes significantly and one can begin to talk about a new political settlement (Murphy 2005; Parks and Cole 2010).

### Articulating a Theory of Change

Even if one is convinced by this reasoning, this approach does not lend itself to a singular or straightforward ToC. Nonetheless, it is a useful exercise to propose a preliminary, "meta" ToC that might underpin SAcc and change. It might go something like this:

> "If pro-accountability and pro-poor networks in society are adequately resourced and build coalitions with pro-accountability networks in political society through rounds of state-society bargaining and interaction; and

*If these coalitions are able to: (1) negotiate changes with anti-change actors; (2) generate sufficient countervailing power to change governing elite incentives; and/or (3) activate legitimate accountability mechanisms …*

*… then, this might result in: (1) coercion—a backlash from existing power-holders; (2) coop-tation and collaboration—incremental improvements in accountability relations and developmental gains within the existing political settlement; and/or, (3) change—more fundamental change leading to the formation of a new political settlement or social contract."*

Three points should, however, be underscored about this ToC. First, it is hypothesized that the dynamics outlined in this ToC would shape most SAcc processes whether they are focused at the national level—through the primary political settlement—or at the local or sectoral level around the secondary political settlement. Second, it is recognized that a single discrete SAcc operation, by itself, is unlikely to engender such change, even if one single intervention may con-tribute incrementally to certain aspects of the change process. Third, and finally, given that much depends on contextual variation and that there are often multiple levers for change, this ToC should be adapted to your particular programming context. As noted above, this is a preliminary ToC that should be tested and refined going forward.

## Chapter Summary

The chapter has explored how a SAcc intervention might shape its context in order to produce outcomes. In so doing, it has outlined some key ingredients of "demand-driven" change and proposed a ToC. The main ingredients outlined were:

- SAcc change processes tend to be complex, nonlinear, and embedded in broader political processes;
- SAcc interventions seem to have greater prospects for success when the lead implementing actors are seen as locally authoritative, legitimate, and credible by the actors involved;
- SAcc is more likely to be effective where it promotes change that cuts across supply and demand;
- It is the quality and strength of pro-accountability networks across state and society that often account for success, rather than the characteristics of individual actors;
- The use of high-quality and relevant information appears to be a key ingredient, but infor-mation alone is unlikely to bring about change—action and sanctions are usually needed;
- A SAcc initiative tends to have more traction when it is perceived to be significant by involved actors, which links back to the discussion on the social contract in chapter 2;
- SAcc processes appear to be more likely to bring about sustainable change when they sup-port organic domestic initiatives and pressures for change;
- SAcc is more likely to be effective when it builds on locally-legitimate formal and/or infor-mal accountability mechanisms;
- SAcc interventions that take a multipronged approach have been found to be more effec-tive; and
- SAcc interventions may take a long time to produce results.

The paper then proposed a broad ToC that prompts a rethink of the way SAcc is often understood. At the very least, the ToC suggests that much greater and concerted attention should be paid to certain issues. By way of a summary, see table 3.1. The table is *stylistic* and each column is not mutually exclusive: there is, most likely, a spectrum and many agencies might find themselves somewhere in the in the middle of the spectrum or combining different elements of each column.

Finally, figure 3.1 summarizes the main dimensions of a contextualized understanding of SAcc. It highlights the five contextual domains that are interconnected and embedded in a broader sixth domain—the global dimensions. It shows how a SAcc intervention shapes and is shaped by the context, and it emphasizes the critical role of pro- and anti-accountability forces and networks in driving or hindering change.

## Figure 3.1. Toward a Context-Sensitive Understanding of Social Accountability and Change



*Source:* Author.

## Table 3.1. Mainstream Approaches and the Value-Added of the Paper's Proposed Approach

| More Mainstream Approaches to SAcc Have Tended to Emphasize … | The Approach in this Paper Suggests the Need to Pay More Attention to … |
|---|---|
| **The Role of Context** | |
| Apply "models" across different contexts and focus more heavily on best practice | Use contextual realities as a starting point and facilitate local problem solving around best fit |
| Western/OECD-derived ideas of accountability may be the starting point | Local narratives of accountability as the starting point |
| Inducing SAcc from the outside (sometimes sets up new/parallel SAcc mechanisms) | Building on organic SAcc (focuses on triggering/building on what is already there) |
| **How Change Happens** | |
| More linear understanding of change | Complex/less linear understanding |
| Shorter-term project lifetimes | Long-term processes |
| Fixed log-frames—stages and steps | Learning-by-doing—modification and adaptation |
| **The Approach** | |
| Focus more on technical aspects | More emphasis on political/power aspects |
| Social/political accountability largely separate | Social and political accountability intertwined |
| Self-contained operational tools | Broader social/political capabilities of actors and multiple drivers of change |
| Pressure on bureaucrats/service providers (the "short route") | Also need greater pressure on the "political masters" (the "long route") |
| **Where to Focus** | |
| Demand (with differing attention to supply issues) | Supply/demand synergies (collapse supply/demand dichotomy) |
| Individual actors/spheres | Linkages/networks between actors |
| State-citizen dichotomy | State-society mutually constituted |
| "State" or "Citizens" often treated as homogenous | State and society is heterogeneous— contain both progressive and regressive elements |
| **The Role of Civil Society and the Poor** | |
| Stronger belief in CS as force for good | CS role can be mixed; need to be selective in supporting CS |
| More optimistic regarding agency of the poor (focus more on direct participation of the poor) | More circumspect about the agency of the poor (focus more on representation of the poor) |
| Variable focus on poverty and inequality | Inequality and exclusion need to be central |
| **How to Further Accountability** | |
| Formal institutional frameworks | Formal/informal dynamics |
| Information and answerability | Answerability plus sanctions |
| Local/micro-level | Local plus macro and global dimensions |

*Source:* Author.

# 4. Toward Practical Implications

This chapter now takes some first steps to explore the practical implications of the findings and approach outlined in the previous chapters. In order to do so, the chapter first distills the main implications that have emerged from the discussion. The following sections then provide two tools for drilling down into some of the operational implications:

(1) Tool 1 unpacks the central, cross-cutting operational implications of the paper. It provides preliminary examples and guidance for practitioners in these areas.
(2) Tool 2 provides some guidance on how SAcc might be tailored to contextual variations through an *If … Then* framework.

The chapter, in short, attempts to navigate the tricky balance between the complexity of contextual variation and the pressures to provide specific, practical guidance. Annex 1 also offers a tool for conducting a context analysis. These tools should be used together to help in thinking through and designing accountability interventions.

As outlined in the introduction, there are notable challenges in undertaking this task. First, there are very few systematic attempts to understand and respond to contextual realities in planning and implementing SAcc (not least because of the limited evidence base). The preliminary nature of this chapter should, as such, be underscored. Second, there are few unambiguous roadmaps for success—the whole point of taking context seriously is that it is necessary to work through an iterative approach that is based, in large part, on dynamic contextual realities. Third, the universe of contextual possibilities is vast. As such, the chapter does not attempt to cover all contextual variation but rather outlines some relatively well-documented scenarios and appropriate responses. The suggestions put forward here should ideally be explored and tested in a long-term *learning-by-doing* approach.

*There are no roadmaps for success—the whole point of taking context seriously is that you need to take an iterative approach based, in large part, on dynamic contextual realities.*

## Summary of Practical Implications

By way of summarizing the preceding discussion, the main practical implications are outlined under each contextual domain.

### Domain 1: Civil Society

There is a need to move beyond the supply/demand dichotomy. Civil society (CS) and demand-side pressures alone rarely achieve sustained change. As one review describes it: "In most cases, civil society activism without reforms on the other side of the equation (i.e., supply) will fail to yield sustained results" (Bukenya et al. 2012: 45). We should also more critically reflect on the role of CS in accountability change dynamics and should adopt a more nuanced understanding of CS than the one that has often dominated. CS tends to be heterogeneous and is not always a pro-accountability force for change, which implies the need to promote CS selectively and strategically.

*Civil society technical capacity is only one part of the picture; more attention should be given to the political capacities of civil society, such as networking and coalition-building across society and with state actors.*

Practitioners may need to put greater emphasis on political capacities when seeking to facilitate SAcc. The findings imply that CS organizational and technical capacity is only one part of the picture; and more attention might be given to supporting the political capacities of CS around networking and coalition-building across the state-society divide. As Menocal and Sharma (2008: xiv), argue, there is a need to

*"Pay considerably more attention to the lack of substantial political capacity of both state and non-state actors, i.e. the capacity to forge alliances, use evidence and build a case, contribute to the decision-making and policy-making process and influence others to make change happen."*

Careful attention should be given to *doing no harm* and not undermining the most authoritative and legitimate forms of CS in a context. This might mean working with more than just formal NGOs and identifying other sources of legitimate popular agency in a context such as social movements, trade unions, grassroots associations and so on. However, there are risks associated with external actors supporting CS that should be mitigated, as outlined in the report.

### Domain 2: Political Society

Real change in accountability systems is, to a significant degree, underpinned by political dynamics. As one paper notes: "… change for the better in accountability systems … is, first and foremost, a political challenge, while technical challenges are only a secondary concern" (Sundet 2008: 8). This means that one needs to understand the political economy of the "demand-side" before promoting such interventions.

The nature of the state invariably shapes the form and effectiveness of SAcc. Different forms of state will enable different forms of SAcc. As one review puts it:

*"… what the state does, how it is organised, and how public policy is designed and implemented all have a bearing on the ability of poor people or those working for them to mobilise and make demands on elected officials and government agencies." (Unsworth and Moore 2010: 37)*

SAcc tends to be more successful where supported by a strong and responsive state, but there is still a potential role for certain forms of SAcc in low-capacity or fragile contexts. A critical takeaway is that support for voice-based approaches "may prove problematic … without a parallel effort to build the effectiveness and capacity of state institutions to address growing demands and expectations" (Menocal and Sharma 2008: ix).

*We need to fully understand the political economy of the "demand side" before taking action.*

Actors in PS are equally—if not more—critical in making or breaking SAcc interventions, even if practitioners have tended to view SAcc through the prism of CS. The capacity and willingness of political elites are often critical factors for success. This points to the importance of finding ways to work with and link SAcc to pro-reform political elites, to explore

the ways that SAcc can shift political incentives, and to seek to mesh social and political forms of accountability. As one report warns: "Countless well-intentioned [SAcc] schemes fail because the political incentives are all aligned against success" (Devarajan et al. 2011). This supports the broader recognition in development policy of the central role of political elites in explaining development outcomes, as further noted below (DFID 2010; Leftwich 2011).

The capacity and willingness of bureaucrats to champion SAcc is also important. But applying pressure on bureaucrats and service providers—the so-called "short route" to accountability—should be pursued selectively or at least in tandem with a political strategy. In some cases, demands are placed on already under-resourced local bureaucrats who are unable to adequately respond; in other cases, pressure applied on the bureaucracy is limited in its effectiveness when the bureaucratic machinery is embedded in a broader politics of patronage. In this way, SAcc should also consciously seek to influence bureaucrats' political masters.

*The broad level of democratization and the formal enabling environment may be less important than the actual forms of politics, power, and incentives in a specific context.*

What we currently know suggests that there is not a linear relationship between levels of democracy and the potential effectiveness of SAcc—contrary to what has often been thought. The broad level of democratization and the formal enabling environment may be less important than the actual forms of politics, power, and incentives in a specific context. Experience also puts into question whether the direct participation of the poor in SAcc is as important as the role of representation through social and political intermediaries (such as through political parties), not least of all because of the often limited agency of the poor to directly influence SAcc processes.

The independence and enforceability of the law and intra-state accountability mechanisms are important. Certain SAcc cases have been effective when they draw on or trigger existing and legitimate legal accountability mechanisms within the state. Efforts to promote an enabling environment for CS may be helpful, but is rarely sufficient, and forms of SAcc may arise in contexts where no such enabling environment exists (for example, when CS movements are incubated in closed polities). Notably, "informal" accountability institutions may be equally, if not more, important in explaining outcomes, depending on the context.

## Domain 3: Inter-Elite Relations

Given that the capacity and willingness of political elites matter for SAcc, it is important to unpack the underlying drivers of such political will if we are to respond accordingly. One way to do this is to examine the fabric of inter-elite relations and related incentives—the so-called political settlement. This could help identify existing political reform parameters and targeted ways of influencing this will in more pro-development directions.

*Political settlements are not easily influenced by outsiders, but there seems to be little choice other than to take these settlements seriously.*

There are, however, few easy operational recommendations for this.[16] Political settlements are not easily manufactured from the outside (Di John and Putzel 2009; Hickey 2011). But there seems to be little choice except to take these issues seriously. In addition to helping us unpack political

*The form of social contract can shape the nature of "demand" in a context—practitioners are not in an easy position to influence social contracts, and donor funding can risk undermining their formation.*

will, the settlements approach can: (1) help us see SAcc processes as part of a broader political context; (2) take us beyond formal governance *blueprint* thinking and help explain why very similar sets of formal institutions—like rules governing accountability—can have divergent outcomes in different contexts; and (3) reveal contending interests within the state, potentially helping us to identify pro-accountability state actors (see DiJohn and Putzel 2009; Levy 2011). As one report sums it up:

*"Powerful local and national elites … are always in a position, and by definition have the power, to flout, co-opt, thwart or even reverse good governance reforms and development-enhancing institutional change … In many circumstances, reforms can succeed only if allowed or tolerated by powerful elites who cannot be dislodged or pushed out … So there seems to be no choice but to negotiate a bargain with, or present an arrangement to, such elites …." (Guttierez 2011: 1)*

### Domain 4: State-Society Relations

The relations between powerful elites can shape SAcc, but these relations are also intertwined with state-society accountability relations and alliances. It is important to understand the short and longer-term history of state-citizen bargaining in a given context to better understand the opportunities and constraints for SAcc. The findings suggest that we should understand, "… social accountability actions as one part of a broader and longer process of engagement between collective actors and the state" (Joshi and Houtzager 2011: 155).

Related to this, the form of social contract—understandings of state-citizen roles and entitlements—can shape the emergence and effectiveness of "demand." The form of contract differs across contexts, but SAcc could be thought of as a process of constructing, rearticulating, challenging, and/or making claims about a contract. As Newell and Wheeler (2006: 29) argue, "in order to be able to make accountability claims, there must be an implicit assumption about the roles and responsibilities of the state, as well as the rights and entitlements of citizens."

*Informal institutions of accountability are prevalent and often decisive in many developing countries—but rather than see them as governance problems they may need to be part of the solution.*

There are, however, operational challenges. As with the political settlement, practitioners are not in an easy position to influence social contracts, and donor funding may undermine rather than facilitate the formation of a more developmental contract (CPRC 2008). SAcc practitioners should, therefore, adopt a policy of *doing no harm.* Among other things, this means: (1) having a strong understanding of the sociopolitical contractual dynamics around certain goods and services, and supporting, rather than seeking to replace or regulate, domestically-driven initiatives; and, (2) taking cues from local narratives of accountability and legitimacy rather than seeking to apply externally-conceived ideas (Booth 2012; Bukenya et al. 2012; Hickey 2011).[17]

A final and related implication is that the informal state-society accountability institutions need to be taken more seriously. The evidence on SAcc, as well as the broader governance literature, increasingly point to the role of informal institutions in explaining outcomes. Again, this is not easy to operationalize, but it suggests that, for example, more attention should be paid to the possibility that informal mechanisms such as patron-client relations or forms of neopatrimonialism could offer opportunities for *good enough* forms of accountability in certain contexts. As Unsworth and Moore (2010: i) suggest:

*The evidence base suggests the need for a much greater focus on and systematic treatment of poverty, inequality, and exclusion issues in social accountability design and implementation.*

> "*Informal institutions and personalised relationships are usually seen as governance problems. However ... they can also be part of the solution. Donors have had limited success in trying to improve the investment climate, reform public services and fight corruption in poor countries by strengthening formal, rules-based institutions. They need to ... pay much more attention to the informal institutions, relationships and interests that underpin formal arrangements.*"

## Domain 5: Intra-Society Relations

Differences, as we know, exist within society. The evidence base suggests the need for a much greater focus on and systematic treatment of poverty, inequality, and exclusion issues in SAcc design and implementation. The poorest and most excluded tend to lack the capacity and willingness to engage in SACC and can benefit least from such dynamics.

Practitioners also need to approach SAcc with a grounded and more realistic understanding of the agency of the poor to take part in and effect change through their "demand." Experience points to several obstacles, including social status, confidence, time, and a lack of ablebodiedness, which lead people to caution against, "advancing a heady but ultimately unconvincing notion of participatory citizenship based on over-optimistic notions of agency" (Cleaver 2005: 271, also Booth 2011).

## Domain 6: Global Dimensions

The regional and global drivers and actors that shape accountability processes and outcomes need attention in SAcc design and implementation. SAcc—and accountability more broadly—can often be shaped in both positive and negative ways by international drivers, including donors and MNCs. Such actors should see themselves as intimately shaping the opportunities and constraints for more accountable development governance.

## Unpacking the Cross-Cutting Implications: Tool 1

Based on a further synthesis of the above implications, the report now outlines nine cross-cutting opera-tional recommendations. These recommendations are overlapping and mutually reinforcing. In order to provide cues and ideas for action, it provides some preliminary guidance, examples, and further reading under each recommendation. The following tables are derived from a reading of a range of relevant literature, including both cases of "success," cases of "failure," and cases that lie somewhere in between. It does not attempt to be exhaustive, but instead selects some key illustrations to flesh out the message.

### Message 1: Think politically in designing and implementing SAcc

**What does that mean?**
- A failure to understand the *politics* around accountability issues can result in suboptimal programs.
- Accountability change is not just about technical reform but often involves transforming power relations.
- The formal institutional framework is often only one part of the accountability picture in many contexts.

**Some ideas on what to do**
- Analyze the politics underlying the identified accountability failures before designing SAcc.
- Time and sequence SAcc interventions in line with political dynam-ics—political transition can provide windows of opportunity.
- Work through political, and not just civil, society. For example, some political parties can be key allies in SAcc-type initiatives.
- Develop a SAcc strategy based on the political "room for maneuver" in a given context rather than attempting to force-fit an institutional blueprint. This may involve some of the following: (1) choosing changes that do not confront powerful incumbents and hooking initiatives on political regime objectives; (2) crowding in pro-reform stakeholders and facilitating pro-reform collective action; (3) working with politi-cal actors with aligned incentives; and, (4) attempting best-practice reforms only if politically feasible.

**Possible operational activities**
- Strengthening pro-accountability political institutions—for example, parliaments or political parties.
- Dialogue/information-sharing campaigns to address collective action problems and/or influence incentive calculations.
- Strategies to compensate losers and appease antagonists in reform processes.

**Selected examples**
- *Being Politically Savvy? Road-building in Uganda:* DFID Uganda under-took a political economy analysis to inform its design of support to a national roads program. A key study finding was that while institutional reforms have created opportunities for improved public investment in Uganda's roads, important political economy obstacles remained,

such as the operation of longstanding patronage networks involving public and private sector actors who are opposed to change. The main implication was that a large planned package of donor technical and financial assistance alone would be unlikely to deliver significant improvements. So a program was proposed to focus on shifting incen-tives over the medium term—for example, activities to build alliances between pro-reform actors within the government, roads agency, and private sector and to develop mechanisms to foster greater account-ability to the parliament.
- *Exploit Political Windows of Opportunity:* In Rajasthan, India, Mazdoor Kisan Sangathan Samiti (MKSS) exploited the state-level election campaign of 1999 to ensure that the right to information became a campaign issue, and later managed to hold the newly-elected congress to account for its manifesto promise to pass right-to-information legislation.
- *Political Timing Works Both Ways:* The findings from Public Expen-diture Tracking Surveys (PETS) on primary education in Tanzania were not enthusiastically received by state officials, despite their highly-regarded methodology. Although the exercise found a huge leakage in the region—40 percent of the total allocated funds—the findings came in the run up to the 2005 elections. Some observers note that this provided political disincentives for the incumbent government to publicly tackle powerful vested interests that could have upset the ruling parties political fortunes.

**Some words of caution**
- Few—if any—magic bullet solutions exist, but political strategizing can complement a more technical approach to SAcc.
- External agencies have limited legitimacy in influencing political dynamics, even if they do so inadvertently; adopt a "do no harm" policy.
- Political dynamics can play themselves out in complex and sometimes unpredictable ways.

**Further reading**
- Booth and Golooba-Mutebi 2009; DFID 2009; Fritz et al. 2009; Levy 2010; Sundet 2008.

## Message 2: Build synergies between social and political forms of accountability

**What does that mean?**

- Social and political accountability processes rarely operate in entirely separate spaces and often cross-fertilize—seek ways to maximize the complementarities.

**Some ideas on what to do**

- Devise SAcc activities in a way that is linked with political processes. For instance, assess the incentives for the political masters to actually deliver services to the poor and devise SAcc strategies for influencing such incentives, rather than solely applying pressure on bureaucrats. (See also Message 1.)
- Promote SAcc as an instrument to reshape power relations and not just as an instrument to increase service delivery efficiencies.
- Ensure SAcc does not undermine legitimate sociopolitical forms of representation. For instance, SAcc interventions, like direct participation in budgeting or new complaints procedures, may set up parallel structures or undermine existing institutional channels for redress.

**Possible operational activities**

- Voter education or political literacy programs
- Citizenship and rights-based approaches
- Training for MPs and local counselors

**Selected examples**

- *Bridging Social and Political Aspects:* REFLECT (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques) is one approach that works on participation as a way to transform political relations. The idea is to merge techniques of participatory rural appraisal with more political elements. It engages participants in discussions of their socioeconomic and political problems using visual graphics. "Keywords" emerge from these discussions, which then form the basis for: literacy development; the discussion for literacy development; the discussion of participant's roles and responsibilities as part of a broader political community; and ways to assert their rights. In some cases, REFLECT's impact has been positive, with transformations taking place in community-state relations. A key aspect of its approach is that it pursues participation as part of wider social and political change and aims at securing citizenship rights, particularly for the marginalized.

- *Participatory Budgeting, Meshing Social and Political Institutions:* In Brazil, the success of participatory budgeting was rooted in part in it being embedded in an existing political channel for accountability; namely the Worker's Party. The party's support for democratic decentralization was rooted in its close association with autonomous movements at the grassroots. During its first decade of existence, it sought to maintain ties to a multitude of grassroots social movements and developed decentralized internal structures. The PB process evolved as the institutional design and the redistributive criteria were fine-tuned through iterative negotiations led by the Worker's Party. More broadly, a review of participatory budgeting in Brazil, Ireland, Chile, Mauritius, and Costa Rica in 2004 notes that democracy or even popular participation per se was less significant in achieving government responsiveness to pro-poor concerns than the role of well institutionalized, programmatic political parties.

**Some words of caution**

- Political risks, as outlined in the previous message, apply."
- There are no simple ways to link political and social forms of accountability and ensure that they are complementary.

**Further reading**

- Baiocchi et al. 2012; Brautigam 2004; Cleaver 2005; Heller 2001.

## Message 3: Work across the supply/demand divide to facilitate effective collective action on accountability issues

**What does that mean?**

- Demand alone is often insufficient to drive sustained accountability change. PS actors are equally (if not more) important.
- CS pressures often matter most when they empower the state's own checks-and-balances, especially as top-down state (or "supply-side") institutions often hold the power to enforce needed sanctions.
- Think less in terms of separate supply/demand or principal/agent and instead seek to work on the interface between state and society actors in taking collective action.

**Some ideas on what to do**

- Only support citizen voice in the context of parallel efforts to build the effectiveness of state institutions to interact with and accommodate these expectations.
- Identify social and political forces for pro-accountability change and encourage linkages between the two.
- Facilitate collective action and problem-solving around locally-defined issues (see Message 5).

**Possible operational activities**

- Capacity-building programs to enable state institutions to foster and/or respond to SAcc.
- Institutional strengthening of intra-state mechanisms of accountability (for example, parliamentary oversight or anti-corruption commissions) while simultaneously strengthening societal capacity to understand and trigger these mechanisms.
- Information-sharing and network-building activities across relevant actors.
- Measures to trigger accountability mechanisms, such as public interest lawsuits, advocacy campaigns, or awareness-raising.

**Selected examples**

- *Continuous State-Society Interface:* One ingredient of the effectiveness of the Samaj Pragati Sahyog (SPS) NGO in Madhya Pradesh, was its continuous interface with key actors in PS, such as government officials and political representatives. The SPS began small, focusing on just one village. It built or improved wells on individual plots of land in order to build direct relationships with the local population before moving into more politicized activities. The eight founding members of SPS were high caste, highly educated, and left-leaning elites, which both enabled and encouraged their critical interactions with high-ranking bureaucrats and officials in the district.
- *Demand and Supply Combines for Reform:* An examination of land reform in the Philippines from 1992 to 1998 shows how an alliance between CSOs and state reformers resulted in positive and significant gains for poor people on a contentious issue. Change was made possible because of mobilization by autonomous rural organizations, independent initiatives by state reformers, and by the sophisticated interaction between both groups of actors.

**Some words of caution**

- Virtuous state-society relations are not easy to manufacture but may be more feasible when rooted in locally-defined problems and practices (see Message 5).

**Further reading**

- Ackerman 2004; Booth 2012; Borras Jr. and Franco 2008; Chhotray 2008; CPRC 2008; Devarajan et al. 2011; Goldfrank 2006; Hickey and Mohan 2008.

## Message 4: Build the linkages and networks between pro-accountability state and society actors

**What does that mean?**

- Building on Message 3, the linkages and networks between state and society actors—and the networks across societal actors—can be critical in driving pro-accountability change. These are arguably more critical than the characteristics of individual actors.
- The *state* and *citizenry* are not homogenous. There are often more and less pro-accountability forces within both.
- Pro-reform state-society linkages may give citizens access to decision makers and/or build countervailing power to promote change.

**Some ideas on what to do**

- Invest in strategic network-building activities (for example, identify state-society *champions* and support them; identify *antagonists* and creatively work with or around them; support broad-based, progressive coalitions among the poor and non-poor).[18]
- Shift some focus from the technical and organizational capacity of actors toward building their *sociopolitical capabilities,* such as networking, coalition-building, and political advocacy.
- Assess the character of the networks across society and with the state (for example, through network governance analysis), and not just the characteristics of CS.
- Resource CS strategically and cautiously—elements may be pro- or anti-accountability change.

**Possible operational activities**

- Network-strengthening activities focused on key *network functions*, such as: (1) community-building, (2) amplifying, (3) filtering, (4) learning and facilitating, (5) investing and providing, and (6) convening.
- Strengthen sustainable multistakeholder knowledge and information-sharing initiatives and platforms.
- Promote (political) capacity-building (for example, ability to network with MPs) or political literacy.
- Facilitate collaborative problem-solving between public and private stakeholders.

**Selected examples**

- *State-Society Alliance-Building—the Mama Misitu* campaign against illegal logging in Tanzania represents a potentially effective approach to SAcc. It has adopted politically-informed engagement at different levels of governance and with different stakeholders. Among other things, it has involved the development of strategic alliances between partner organizations with the purpose of cultivating personal trust and political pressure.
- *Enabling Local Problem-Solving:* In Malawi, service delivery outcomes seemed to be most promising in localities where the citizen scorecard project was able to bring together groups of public and private actors to nurture *collaborative spaces* and solve collective-action problems around shared interests.
- *State-Society Reformers and Backlash:* In exploring rural development programs in Mexico, Fox notes how pro-accountability linkages and networks across state and society were, over time, able to shift the reform parameters and progressively counteract backlashes from incumbent and anti-reform elites from state and society (see also chapter 3).
- *Using Personal Contacts to Shape Outcomes:* The Accountability in Tanzania program (AcT) notes how, through personal linkages (for example, to local politicians or leaders), CSOs can seek to engage the support of decision makers, possibly through pursuing a dialogue that demonstrates that the advocated change will generate popular support or that not acting risks incurring public dissatisfaction.
- *Some Civil Society Actors May Not be Strongly Pro-Poor:* In Kenya, the empowerment programs of some CSOs have scored poorly on their contributions to improving the quality and equality of representation of interests in local governance, in part because these organizations have taught the theory of citizen participation without offering any opportunities for action.

**Some words of caution**

- Strong networks take time to emerge and become embedded. Networks may be costly and unsustainable, especially when donor-driven—seek to do no harm.
- Powerful actors may capture such networks and adequate attention needs to be paid to anti-reformist forces.

**Further reading**

- AcT 2011; Citizenship DRC 2011; DFID 2009; Harris et al. 2011; Huppé and Creech 2001; Ramalingan et al. 2008; Wild and Harris 2012.

## Message 5: Build on what is already there—embed SAcc in organic pressures for pro-accountability change and in the broader social contract

**What does that mean?**

- SAcc appears to be more effective when it builds on existing formal and/or informal accountability practices.
- Informal institutions and forms of accountability (such as patrimonial structures of exchange or customary institutions) can be critical in many developing countries. Moreover, when formal accountability mechanisms are weak, more informal SAcc initiatives may be key to improving services.
- SAcc should be seen as shaping, and being shaped by, a locally-defined social contract. SAcc activities might seek to construct, rearticulate, challenge, or make claims around this contract.
- There are different narratives and ideas of accountability in different contexts; SAcc needs to understand and build on them.

**Some ideas on what to do**

- Conduct detailed accountability assessments (as per chapter 2). Identify and support (or at least do not undermine) existing pressures for improved accountability, however incremental they may be.
- Rather than seeking to implement and/or reform formal institutions, pay more attention to informal institutions, relationships, and interests that underpin the formal arrangements, and look for opportunities to strengthen accountability within them.
- Assess the form and strength of the social contract and tailor SAcc accordingly (for example, where the "contract" is strong regarding a particular good or service, donors might resource SAcc activities; where it is weak, a donor role may be somewhat more limited).
- Make use of local resources and draw legitimacy from existing views on what is important, borrowing institutional elements from local cultural repertoires to avoid the high costs of inventing initiatives from scratch.

**Possible operational activities**

- Facilitate practical hybrids, combining modern, bureaucratic, and innovative approaches with locally-accepted practices.
- Enhance informal measures that work such as through engaging customary leaders or tapping into popular sources of mobilization.
- Enable reform processes that are genuinely locally-initiated.
- Adopt rights-based approaches rooted in local conceptions of rights and responsibilities.

**Selected examples**

- *Borrowing from Local Cultural Repertoires:* In Uganda, a music band has being used to alert people of meetings and a puppet show is staged to communicate key messages. This is then worked into a formal meeting that local government officials attend to discuss citizen issues. In Nigeria, the use of forum theater provided a unique opportunity for villagers to express their grievances about divisions arising from traditional community hierarchies and wealth inequality in the public sphere.
- *The Role of Organic Social Movements:* Long-term, *organic* social movements can be crucial ingredients for effective SAcc. For example, a long period of activism by the MKSS, a landless laborers and small farmer solidarity movement, led to the passage of the right-to-information law in India and, consequently, to the institutionalization of a new form of SAcc—the social audit—that originated in organically-evolved public hearings.
- *The Challenge of Donor-Driven "Demand" When Local Cultures are Not Fully Understood:* In Niger, certain *committees* and other associational structures promoted by projects and development partners have ended up being dissolved or becoming inactive; the view among citizens is that it is the responsibility of local government to carry out such functions.
- *Finding Local Solutions When National Policies May Not Have Answers:* In Niger, a number of mayors have begun collecting a few additional centimes from all users of primary healthcare facilities to fund the fuel and staff costs associated with emergency evacuations of pregnant women; these collections are outside the national regimes of user charges and free care, but it enables a solution to an otherwise difficult problem.
- *Where Formal Accountability Mechanisms are Less Effective:* Experience in some areas of rural China demonstrate that citizens rely on informal solidarity groups, such as temples or lineage groups, rather than formal frameworks in order to exact accountability from otherwise unwilling public officials, because such face-to-face solidarity groups often impose reputational costs on the officials.

**Some words of caution**

- Donors can play a quite limited role in promoting the formation of "homegrown" social contracts or political settlements. External actors may sometimes do more harm than good—so adopt a policy to "do no harm."
- Informal mechanisms may be a double-edged sword: they may hold potential for developmental outcomes, but they may also embody regressive or exclusionary dynamics that are difficult to change.

**Reading**

- Bebbington et al. 2009; Booth 2012; Citizenship DRC 2011; CPRC 2008; Devarajan et al. 2011; Gaventa 2008; Tsai 2007; Unsworth and Moore 2010.

## Message 6: Take a multipronged approach to accountability reform to increase the likelihood of success

**What does that mean?**

- Different aspects of accountability—information, answerability, and sanctions—are most often needed together to drive change.
- Accountability challenges may often cut across multiple levels, actors, and sectors, pushing and pulling in different directions.
- Discrete SAcc interventions may bring about localized changes, but their long-run sustainability is questionable.

**Some ideas on what to do**

- Recognize that information alone is rarely sufficient to improve accountability outcomes; the information must match the capacity and incentives of societal actors to demand change and/or it must activate sanctions to change behavior.
- Give adequate attention to the harder sanction dimension of accountability (for example, enforcement) as well as the more commonly-pursued *softer* answerability dimension of accountability (for example, information and transparency).
- Embed SAcc principles in institutions, country systems, and all stages of the policy cycle—not just in projects or discrete operations.

**Possible operational activities**

- Policy, legal, and institutional reforms to integrate SAcc principles and mechanisms (where feasible).
- Partnership-building in order to address different dimensions of the accountability problem.
- Pursuit of multisectoral accountability initiatives.
- Information-sharing activities alongside activities to activate sanctions.

**Selected examples**

- *Work on Multiple Fronts:* An initiative that sought to help indigenous communities in Southern Veracruz manage watersheds and realize the right to water from municipal authorities worked on a variety of fronts to achieve its objectives. It included the development of an effective legal framework, mechanisms of technical/environmental monitoring, and a social audit. Paré and Robles (2006: 80) concluded that "building accountability ... between numerous actors with diverse and contradictory interests requires an ongoing process of negotiation and engagement through both formal and informal channels."
- *Working on Different Angles at the Same Time:* MKSS's work on social audits in India was more effective when it decided to campaign for the right-to-information legislation alongside amendments to the state's local government law (the Panchayati Raj Act) to create mandatory legal procedures for the investigation of corruption and to officially institutionalize the public-hearing audit method at the village-assembly level.

**Some words of caution**

- A virtuous synergy between transparency, accountability, and participation is difficult, but can be achieved (Fox 2007a: 354).
- One agency alone is unlikely to be able to fulfill all these goals, so multistakeholder action is often what is needed.

**Further reading**

- Citizenship DRC 2011; Gaventa 2008; Newell and Wheeler 2006.

## Message 7: Address issues of poverty, inequality, and exclusion systematically in SAcc programming

**What does that mean?**

- The poorest and most excluded often struggle to participate in, or benefit the least from, SAcc processes.
- The unique opportunities and often deep-seated constraints faced by the poor need great attention in SAcc.

**Some ideas on what to do**

- Assess relevant poverty/exclusion dynamics, and then build systematic mitigation strategies (where feasible) into the SAcc intervention.
- Focus on building the poor's capabilities in and through the intervention.
- Provide incentives to benefit and mobilize the poor over the long run.
- Focus more attention on securing the effective representation of the poor (for instance, through alliances with non-poor actors or political parties) rather than just the direct participation of the poor, especially given that the poor often have limited power and agency.

**Possible operational activities**

- Rights-based approaches that focus on the most marginalized (see also the REFLECT approach in Message 2).
- Build in inequality-mitigating mechanisms (for example, quotas or weighting systems).
- Build in capacity-building components for the marginalized.
- Link SAcc activities to direct economic/livelihood benefits for the poorest.

**Selected examples**

- *Disincentives for the Poorest to Engage in SAcc:* In Bangladesh, an examination of SAcc-type initiatives notes that "the absence of immediate economic gains may discourage the longer-term participation of the very poor, particularly if Nijera Kori (NK) group membership jeopardizes precarious survival strategies which depend on ... maintaining the patronage of powerful sections of village society" (Kabeer 2003: 37–38).
- *Inequality-Mitigation—Weighting:* Drawing on Porto Alegre experience, PB helped to limit the capture of state resources by wealthy interests through the weighting system that was used in determining budget priorities which essentially "tilt[ed] investments toward poorer neighbourhoods."
- *Struggles for Recognition:* In Pakistan the concerted efforts of women leaders in 30 districts have helped more than 105,000 marginalized women obtain identity cards for the first time, which is arguably a first step toward accessing other entitlements. The lack of official documentation is a major barrier for many women in Pakistan; without identification, they cannot vote, use a bank, buy property, claim their inheritance rights, or get a passport.

**Some words of caution**

- Enhancing the inclusion of marginalized groups is difficult and requires systematic attention.
- Making a political settlement more "inclusive" may take time as such settlements may comprise powerful groups who benefit from the status quo and who may resist greater inclusion. especially as political settlements can be more easily shaped by and adjusted to serve the interests of the ruling coalition.

**Further reading**

- Ackerman 2004; Corbridge et al. 2005; Hickey and Bracking 2005; Oxfam 2012; Sen 2001; Tembo 2012.

## Message 8: Address the global dimensions of accountability failures—think beyond the local and national level

**What does that mean?**

- Many accountability failures are, at least in part, shaped by global drivers and actors.
- Global agencies may be uniquely positioned to address some of these global drivers.

**Some ideas on what to do**

- Assess how global dimensions shape national and local accountability failures; support SAcc accordingly.
- Go beyond just the state to address accountability of other power holders (such as MNCs), especially in instances where the state is unwilling or unable to subject such power-holders to certain standards.
- Donor agencies should be more reflective about their roles in supporting, or undermining, state-citizen accountability relationships.

**Possible operational activities**

- Internal donor reform/aid effectiveness programs to heighten donor accountability
- Measures to pursue accountability of nonstate international actors (for example, corporate accountability initiatives).
- Initiatives to address global or *external* drivers of lack of accountability (such as, illicit trade flows or tax havens).

**Selected examples**

- *International Trade and Financial Flows Shape Accountability:* Accountability failures in the forestry sector in Tanzania were shaped by, among other things, the illegal transnational logging trade; or limitations in international financial regulations have enabled elites in fragile states to perpetuate the status quo, thus limiting their incentives to be more accountable to the citizenry.
- *MNCs and Accountability:* There are various cases—for example in India—where MNC actions have had negative social and environmental impacts and, as a result, community-based action has been taken to seek redress against corporate actors.
- *Forms of Globalization Can Undermine National Democratic Accountability:* Some argue that more *extreme forms* of globalization are undermining accountability by limiting the state's autonomy to democratically debate and determine policy; or trade liberalization processes can, in cases, undermine state capacity to tax and generate revenue, which is a key ingredient of state effectiveness.
- *Donor Funding Can Have Unintended Consequences:* Various cases suggest that aid flows can support or undermine the emergence of legitimate associations (see also Tool 2 below). For instance, in Benin, the presence of development donor funds has arguable contributed to the marginalization of preexisting forms of associational activities, with donor-promoted cotton farming cooperatives displacing viable local producer groups.

**Some words of caution**

- International drivers are often complex and multifaceted; but should not be ignored.

**Further reading**

- Banks and Hulme 2012; Booth 2012; Evans 2010; Garvey and Newell 2004; Harris et al. 2011; Newell and Wheeler 2006; Rodrik 2011; Scott 2012; Unsworth and Moore 2010.

## Message 9: Take longer time horizons and adopt an adaptable "learning by-doing" approach

**What does that mean?**

- The conditions for effective SAcc may take a long time to emerge.
- SAcc interventions can shape the context over time in complex and unintended ways—so there is a need for constant adaptation.
- An incremental approach is especially important in lower-capacity or politically-unstable environments.

**Some ideas on what to do**

- Adopt a longer planning time horizon to ensure that early successes (such as budgetary allocations) are not scrapped at a later stage.
- Adopt a learning-by-doing approach.

**Possible operational activities**

- Action-research programs
- Adaptive piloting programs
- Flexible M&E and "outcome mapping" systems to ensure learning, documentation, and adaptation throughout.
- Adopt 15- to 20-year plans and build phased programs with realistic timeframes.

**Selected examples**

- *Try Different Approaches and Institutionalize the Winner:* The program, known as *Chukua Hatua* (Swahili for "take action") in Tanzania, funded by the Accountability in Tanzania program, uses an evolutionary model of change. It pilots a range of SAcc initiatives, observes their strengths, failures, and weaknesses, and then selects approaches to invest in and scale up. *Chukua Hatua*, according to one analyst (Green 2012) is more like "a venture capitalist backing ten start-up firms knowing that most will fail, but some will win big." This has been possible partly because of the grant-making agency's (DFID's) willingness to adopt an experimental approach.
- *Listen, Observe, and Adapt Accordingly:* The *Mwananchi* (Swahili for "ordinary citizen") program promotes forms of SAcc in six countries in sub-Saharan Africa. One of the early findings relates to the importance of listening closely to citizens, piloting initiatives, observing citizen behavior in action, and adapting accordingly. Experience has also shown how important it is to encourage local organizations and citizens to voice their narratives on governance and to try to understand such narratives in the context of citizens' cultural, social, and political norms. This often involves the use of symbols and other postures informed by culture that provide meaning. The program suggests that SAcc interventions should adapt to these realities and not just focus on verbal interactions between citizens and state actors.
- *SAcc Results May Take Time:* The Bangalore report card started in 1994, but it was not until 2003 that clear positive results began to emerge. Similarly, MKSS's right-to-information campaign, which started in the early 1990s, gained partial success in 2000 when the Indian state of Rajasthan (where the organization is based) passed a right-to-information law; it took another five years for the nationwide Right to Information Act to be passed.

**Some words of caution**

- It may require significant institutional change for development agencies to plan over the long term, especially given the pressures to provide quick results, aversion to risk, and the use of somewhat rigid logframes.

**Further reading**

- Aiyar 2010; Green 2012; Ramkumar 2008; Tembo 2012.

## Context-Specific Implications—Toward an *If … Then* Approach: Tool 2

Having outlined the cross-cutting operational implications, this tool now attempts to help practitioners think through and address contextual variation in SAcc initiatives. It does so through a preliminary *If … Then* framework. The following tables outline a range of contextual scenarios—by contextual domain and subdimensions as per the framework outlined in chapter 2—and offer some options for action with illustrative examples. At the risk of repetition, the "do no harm" principle runs throughout all these examples.

Given the limited evidence base, this should be seen as a first step that needs further testing and modification going forward. Before proceeding, please read box 4.1 on how to use this tool, and see annex 3 for a brief note on the methodology and challenges involved in developing developing the framework.

### Box 4.1. A Note on How to Use This *If … Then* Tool

- This tool should be used after a practitioner has gathered some knowledge about their context using the analytical guidance provided in the annex.
- A traffic light system is used to help see the *if* scenarios that are broadly enabling of SAcc (i.e., green) and those which are less enabling (i.e., red). Although, as noted in earlier chapters, most contexts probably sit somewhere along a spectrum from *fully enabling* to *fully disabling*.
- The examples and operational options are by no means intended to be exhaustive, but rather provide cues for further reading, exploration, and action within a given context. At the risk of repetition, this tool should be used in conjunction with the rest of this report and does not offer prescriptions for action, but instead provides avenues for exploration.
- Given the huge range of contextual possibilities and the limited evidence, it has only been possible to address some of the potential scenarios.
- The framework is not meant to imply that contextual variables should be treated in an atomized manner. The contextual domains overlap, interact and influence each other—so acting in just one domain, without addressing the other potential contextual constraints, is less likely to produce positive outcomes. However, after some experimentation, this approach has proven to be the most feasible at this stage. The evidence base offers limited granular insights on which SAcc activities are most appropriate based on combinations of all the contextual variables. It is also difficult to produce relevant country typologies, especially as in-country variation appears to be highly important. Existing literature does, however, offer stronger cues for action, based on subdimension characteristics (for example, where citizen capabilities are high or where state capacity is low).
- This framework could be used for planning and thinking through different design elements of one SAcc intervention/program. It does not suggest that acting on only one dimension of the context would be adequate to achieve improved accountability. Indeed, for the purpose of planning, practitioners regularly separate the world into "components." Thus, each subdimension could provide the backdrop for devising different components of a program.
- The selected examples are used as illustrations that can prompt further thinking and reading—they are not to be taken as examples of success, failure, or what to do in your context.

## Domain 1: Civil Society

| If … | … Implication … | … Then: What Actions Might Work? | Selected Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Technical and organizational capacity** | | | |
| CSOs have high technical and organizational capacity | They have the analytical and adaptive capacity for strategic planning, management, and resource mobilization | • CSOs may act as lead "info-mediaries" for gathering and disseminating information (e.g., about budgets)<br>• Strategically support CS to leverage capacity and promote more technically complex SAcc, if appropriate.<br>• Provide political capacity-building if low (see below). | • In South Africa, high-quality budget analysis and effective lobbying by CSOs achieved positive results. IDASA—an NGO—used budget analysis to monitor federal budget allocations and programs designed for children from low-income families and to highlight challenges regarding the delivery of services. This was done in active collaboration with other CSOs in a campaign that was spearheaded by the Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security. The campaign was successful in its objective of increasing the resources originally committed in the national budget for the Child Support Grant when it was first introduced in 1998 and raising the maximum eligibility age to fourteen years.[a] |
| CSOs do not have high technical and organizational capacity | They lack ability to manage complex information and may face problems of financial and organizational sustainability. | • Explore other routes to accountability (such as more top-down/supply-side options).<br>• Incrementally build on existing accountability institutions (e.g., customary practices).<br>• Explore SAcc options that require less technical capacity<br>• Build in strong capacity-building components to any SAcc activities. | • A number of open data initiatives (e.g., budget transparency) have had a limited impact on policy dialogue and outcomes. One reason for this is the lack of technical capacity and know-how among civil society actors to both interpret and act on the information provided.[b] |
| **Capacity to build alliances across society** | | | |
| Key/many CSOs have the capacity/incentives to build alliances across society and mobilize constituents | Credibility with constituents may be high. Their activities are likely to have "bite" in challenging prevailing accountability/power relationships. | • Do no harm—do not bypass/undermine such groups.<br>• Provide strategic support if required to solve pro-accountability collective action problems within/among CSOs (e.g., convening or information-sharing).<br>• Targeted "enabling environment" reforms may open opportunities for such groups to promote accountability change. | • In Brazil, the rural landless movement was able to increase government accountability for land reform through its broad-based mobilization of societal groups—it organized more than 230,000 land occupations, won 15 million acres for land reform, created 1,500 agricultural communities, and settled more than 250,000 families.[c] |
| CSOs do not have the capacity/incentives to build alliances across society and mobilize constituents | They may have limited legitimacy with grassroots constituents and/or lack alliance-building skills. Prospects for effective SAcc in the short-term may be more limited. | • In the short term, explore SAcc approaches requiring less collective action (e.g., scorecards and budget literacy).<br>• Explore other routes to accountability (such as more top-down/supply-side options).<br>• In the longer term, grassroots associations may provide building blocks, raise awareness on issues, and support CS information-sharing/alliance-building. | • In Tanzania, the absence of cooperation and high levels of competition among CSOs contributed to the failure of public expenditure tracking. This fragmentation, as in other cases, can be partly linked to the incentives in aid-dependent environments for CSOs to compete rather than cooperate with each other.[d]<br>• In Tanzania, a tool called "Tool for Organizational Self-Assessment" was developed to go beyond capacity building in an organizational/technical sense into the areas of partnership-working and constituency-building. NGOs self-assess their capabilities using this tool and come up with solutions for the same.[e] |

## Domain 1: Civil Society (continued)

| If … | … Implication … | … Then: What Actions Might Work? | Selected Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Capacity to build alliances/networks with the state** | | | |
| Key CSOs have the capacity to build alliances/networks with state actors | They can ably negotiate with the state. They may be able to influence decision making outcomes. If credible and authoritative with their constituents, the prospects for SAcc can be strong. | • Support forms of SAcc that seek to enforce sanctions (where more political clout on the part of the CSOs is required), possibly on more contentious issues.<br>• Strategically support pro-reform elements of such alliances (from the demand and supply-side).<br>• Help solve any existing collective action failures. | • In Nigeria, part of the effectiveness of the anti-Third Term campaign was CS's ability to build like-minded alliances across society and with state actors.[f]<br>• In São Paulo, CSO experience showed that it is often CSOs well connected to governments/political parties that give poor people a voice in policymaking, without sacrificing their ability to engage in contentious ways to press for government action.[g] |
| Key/many CSOs do not have the capacity to build alliances/networks with the state | Their leverage and access to key decision-makers is limited, and their influence potentially limited. | • In the short term, explore softer forms of SAcc that require less political clout but that might build linkages (e.g., information displays or report cards).<br>• Over the longer term, facilitate strategic network-building between pro-reform CSOs and state champions. | • In Bangalore, citizen report cards contributed to improvements in service delivery and it resulted, over the longer-term, in increased citizen activism and the enhancement of citizens' ability to interact with and influence state officials.<br>• In Delhi, local actors who were linked into broader national policy networks were more likely to engage in collective action because they are better able to use networks to support mobilization and monitoring activities.[h] |
| **Authority, legitimacy, and credibility of civil society with citizens and state actors** | | | |
| Certain forms of CS are considered credible, legitimate, and authoritative by poor citizens and/or the state | These CSOs are perhaps more likely to be successful vehicles for SAcc. | • Do not bypass or undermine such CSOs. Provide support if shown to be needed and sustainable.<br>• Explore more ambitious and scaled-up SAcc interventions that rely on the ability of CSOs to enlist prominent actors across the state and society (e.g., public interest lawsuits or citizen juries). | • In South Africa, TAC leaders were seen as respected citizens who had played an active part in the antiapartheid liberation movement and had a strong reputation as legitimate representatives of the marginalized. This contributed to the campaign's success in pushing the government to put in place universal HIV/AIDS policies.[i]<br>• The social audits in India gained legitimacy, partly from the ability of MKSS to enlist prominent social workers, politicians, judges, and civil servants to sit on citizen juries at its public hearings. When social audits were scaled-up in Andhra Pradesh, the committees included employees of MKSS in order to give them credibility.[j] |
| CS sphere is not considered credible and legitimate by both state and citizens | SAcc unlikely to be effective. Drivers of this illegitimacy may be manifold. | • Proceed with caution and consider if/how to engage CS actors.<br>• Seek to incrementally build credibility of CS, even if difficult.<br>• Small steps and gains in CS engagement could lead to a multiplier effect. | • Cash transfer programs for poor people (Renda Minima in Brazil and Oportunidades in Mexico) were designed deliberately to bypass those civil society intermediaries that were seen as corrupt and politicized. These programs demonstrate that collective action is not the only means of improving service delivery. However, cash transfers are not always appropriate. Moreover, over the longer term, it may be problematic to exclude collective actors who could provide oversight and advocacy.[k] |

*(continued)*

## Domain 1: Civil Society (continued)

| If … | … Implication … | … Then: What Actions Might Work? | Selected Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Willingness of civil society to challenge accountability status quo** | | | |
| Key CSOs are willing to seek heightened accountability | This willingness is a prerequisite for effective demand-driven SAcc. | • Explore a range of SAcc interventions through dialogue with CSOs. Both the softer answerability approaches and harder enforcement approaches could be explored.<br>• Support strategic actions that add value and do not compromise long-term CSO effectiveness.<br>• More contentious approaches may take root (e.g., advocacy campaigns, investigative journalism, and demonstrations). | • With regard to women's rights in Turkey and Morocco, the effectiveness of CSOs relied on their willingness to challenge and hold their own against powerful interests. Initially, the issues were divisive and often contentious rather than issues that allowed for more comfortable partnerships with government.[l] |
| Key CSOs are unwilling to seek heightened accountability | They lack the incentives, interest, and/or ideas to actively challenge existing accountability failures. | • Explore other routes to accountability (such as more top-down/supply-side options).<br>• Unpack the underlying drivers of such incentives. Seek to shift such incentives if the outcomes are likely to be positive and sustainable (e.g., dialogue, information-sharing, communication campaigns, and provision of direct incentives for CS participation). | • In Benin, a CS group organized a town hall meeting with political candidates for the first round of the 2006 presidential elections to discuss specific policy proposals, informed by empirical evidence. In the localities where CSOs were willing to promote this kind of heightened accountability and organize town hall meetings, voter turnout was higher and support for clientelist political platforms was lower.[m] |
| **Capacity and willingness of citizens to engage in SAcc** | | | |
| Capacity and willingness of citizens to engage in SAcc is relatively high | Relatively speaking, the target groups have enabling levels of capacity (e.g., skills, income, and education) as well as political capabilities. | • Explore a range of SAcc activities if the other contextual factors are conducive. | • Various open e-government initiatives or online aid-transparency campaigns have been more effective in settings where citizens are willing and able to access and use these tools and to take actions based on the information provided.[n] |
| Capacity and willingness of citizens to engage in SAcc is low | Target groups may have limited time, skills, and incentives to engage. | • Assess drivers of low capacity and willingness. Address poverty and capability issues (e.g., access to services and literacy)<br>• Resource pro-poor, sociopolitical intermediaries to advocate on their behalf and/or support them in asserting their rights<br>• In longer term, incorporate education/capacity-building into SAcc; provide poor with incentives to engage in SAcc (if sustainable). | • In Bangladesh, the absence of immediate economic gains discouraged the long-term participation of the very poor in the governance processes. The poorest were discouraged, especially when membership in Nijera Kori (NK)—the activist CSO—risked jeopardizing their precarious survival strategies, which depended on maintaining the patronage of powerful sections of village society.[o] |

## Domain 2: Political Society

| If … | … Implication … | … Then: What Actions Might Work? | Selected Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Willingness of political/elected elites to respond to and foster SAcc** | | | |
| Political will to promote and/or respond to SAcc is high | Powerful PS actors could genuinely seek to foster SAcc. This could enable a wide variety of SAcc activities to take root. | • Understand drivers of this political will, engage the relevant political actors/champions, and promote a dialogue about SAcc.<br>• Pursue (higher profile) SAcc approaches that generally need higher levels of government cooperation (e.g., third party oversight, public expenditure tracking, and multisectoral SAcc interventions). | • In Uganda, a public information campaign was launched that enabled the public to better monitor local officials' handling of the funds released through the Universal Primary Education program. This campaign was found to reduce "leakage" in the sector. The commitment of the Ugandan president to the success of the program is seen as one contributing factor to promoting these results.[p] |
| Political will to promote and/or respond to SAcc is low | Political society actors might not promote SAcc initiatives or might even take counter-veiling measures to thwart them. | • Proceed with caution, based on what is politically feasible.<br>• If appropriate, promote dialogue and SAcc that could reshape political incentives (e.g., engage political elites about the potential benefits of SAcc or raise societal awareness, which could shift political calculations). | • One case of PB in Buenos Aires fizzled out because it arose from neither a political reform initiative nor societal pressure; instead, it was implemented in desperation by a government lacking legitimacy.[q]<br>• Voter education campaigns to encourage voters not to sell their vote—led primarily by CSOs in Sao Tome and Principe, Mozambique, and Nigeria—have reshaped people's voting patterns and (arguably) influenced political incentives to a degree.[r] |
| **Willingness of state bureaucrats to respond to and foster SAcc** | | | |
| Willingness of government bureaucrats to promote and respond to SAcc pressures is high | Bureaucrats may have strong incentives to promote SAcc. This may allow for smoother execution of SAcc. | • Align SAcc accordingly with such incentives and work collaboratively with such actors.<br>• Promote SAcc approaches that might be more ambitious in scope and that require a bureaucratic commitment—especially if political incentives are aligned (e.g., PB or public expenditure tracking). | • In India, the work of an NGO called Samaj Pragiti Sahyog (SPS) in Madhya Pradesh greatly benefited from the support of a senior district official with the authority to impose sanctions on corrupt junior officials.[s]<br>• The tenant movement in Mombasa, Kenya, suggests that alliances with reformist bureaucrats may not be sufficient in contexts where there are influential politicians opposed to the changes.[t] |
| Willingness of government bureaucrats to promote and/or respond to SAcc pressures is low | Bureaucrats have limited individual and/or institutional incentives for promoting SAcc. | • Proceed cautiously. Focus on SAcc initiatives that could feasibly shift bureaucratic incentives and activate higher-level, in-state mechanisms for accountability.<br>• Dialogue with reform-minded political actors in order to impose necessary sanctions.<br>• Promote broader institutional reforms that include SAcc components (e.g., civil service reform programs that also incentivize greater citizen engagement) | • Reportedly, Andhra Pradesh social audits were working because of an early recognition that government functionaries would feel threatened by the process. As a result, there was a concerted effort to reach out to these officials in order to sensitize them and to communicate clearly that they were key members of the team.[u] |

## Domain 2: Political Society (continued)

| If … | … Implication … | … Then: What Actions Might Work? | Selected Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| **State (and political elite) capacity** | | | |
| State capacity is high | To a notable extent, the effectiveness of SAcc depends on the level of state capacity to respond to demands. | • Participatory and more complex or technical forms of SAcc could be pursued if state/citizen willingness for implementation is also high (e.g., participatory planning).<br>• While capacity may be high, the other contextual factors would need to be conducive (such as willingness of state actors to pursue SAcc). | • In Brazil, good performance through PB is noticed in municipal governments that control substantial revenues, allowing them to make investments in programs identified by citizens.[v] |
| State capacity is low | State institutions are weak and perform basic functions with limited effectiveness. | • Support strategies to incrementally build state capacity and functions. Be sure that any efforts to promote voice also simultaneously build state capacity to respond.<br>• Focus on SAcc approaches that enable collaborative problem solving between the state and citizenry, rather than on SAcc approaches that seek to "demand" accountability.<br>• In the long-term, promote formal and informal institutions that can undertake core governance functions. | • In Somaliland, measures have been taken to strengthen district-level government capacity to generate local revenue and collect taxes in the context of decentralization. This has incrementally contributed to the capacity and incentives for district governments to be accountable and responsive to citizens, and to the willingness of Somalilanders to engage constructively in the state-building process.[w] |
| **Democratization and the civil society enabling environment** | | | |
| The setting is democratic | There is a relatively high level of democratization with institutionalized tolerance of dissent and debate. | • Permits more wide-ranging, transformational forms of SAcc that rely on the existence of a range of political and civil freedoms.<br>• Explore power, incentives and political dynamics; and tailor SAcc thereto. High levels of democratization do not automatically imply positive outcomes of civic engagement. | • In Chile, an NGO-led campaign about child rights led to a new policy framework, contributing to a decrease in child poverty. This was facilitated in part by a new democratic government that welcomed civil society organizations as partners in a process of collaborative policy reform.[x]<br>• The TAC health campaign in South Africa was able to draw on the relatively effective media to promote its goals. When TAC started the civil disobedience campaign in 2003, it took out.[y] |
| Level of democratization is low | There is a relatively low level of democratization with limited institutionalized tolerance of dissent. | • Pursue more instrumental or individualized forms of SAcc that could gain traction with governing elite goals (e.g., to improve service delivery outcomes for political legitimacy)<br>• More informal "weapons of the weak" forms of SAcc may be most plausible in the short term. | • In Vietnam, through the 1960s and 1970s, peasants engaged in "everyday political"[z] forms of protest against the government agricultural collectivization policy. With limited democratic channels for redress, this typically involved low-profile acts or nonconformism that undermined and frustrated authorities.[aa] |

## Domain 2: Political Society (continued)

**The nature of the rule of law**

| If … | … Implication … | … Then: What Actions Might Work? | Selected Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| Formal legal framework is strong | There exists a functional court system that can be activated by SAcc. | • Draw on constitutional and legal provisions as a resource to further SAcc goals.<br>• Seek to extend legal rights to marginalized or excluded groups and/or build capacity for groups to claim rights. | • Movements like TAC and MST were successful, partly because of the existence of a judiciary that disposed of the cases brought to its attention.<br>• In Indian states where the formal legal framework is already strong, social audits are being introduced as a way of further institutionalizing protection by law.[bb] |
| Formal legal framework is weak | One might not be able to depend on formal legal mechanisms to provide a resource for strengthening SAcc claims. | • Over shorter term, seek ways to build on more informal institutions of accountability and link customary with more formal systems through hybrid institutions.<br>• Over the medium- and long-term, strengthen judicial independence; promote key pieces of legislation, such as the right to information; and strengthen the capacity of the judiciary (e.g., train judges and clerks or build capacity for court administration). | • In Sierra Leone, programs like "Justice for the Poor" have, among other things, sought to build on community-based paralegals and traditional justice systems from the bottom-up, while providing technical assistance on broader legal policy and institution-building.[cc] |

## Domain 3: Inter-Elite Relations

**The developmental nature of the political settlement**

| If … | … Implication … | … Then: What Actions Might Work? | Selected Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| The settlement is relatively developmental | To some degree, the legitimacy of the settlement hinges on furthering broad-based development. | • In dialogue with government, frame SAcc initiatives, if credible, as means to better achieve elite development goals.<br>• Promote the SAcc tools and approaches that have the potential to further the regime's identified development goals. | • In Rwanda, certain SAcc tools are gradually being deployed to achieve and improve service delivery goals. This is being pursued in line with the broadly neopatrimonial developmental settlement that characterizes the regime (see box 2.5 on page 16). |
| The settlement is weakly developmental | Elites may have no—or weak—incentives to deliver on development. Predation levels may be high. | • SAcc is unlikely to be a panacea. If feasible in the context, SAcc might incrementally shift political/bureaucratic incentives.<br>• Strengthen existing good enough forms of accountability where possible.<br>• SAcc initiatives should build in strong mechanisms to reduce elite capture (e.g., oversight elements, grievance redress mechanisms, or audits)<br>• SAcc initiatives may gain traction if elites wish to change perceptions of state legitimacy. | • An NGO called Parivartan used audit methods in Delhi to monitor the Public Distribution System (PDS)—a large food subsidy program intended for the poor. A report finds that the "depth of corruption exposed through the process led to improvements in the operation of PDS as well as institutionalization of a system of monthly 'opening of the books' for public scrutiny."[dd] |

*(continued)*

## Domain 3: Inter-Elite Relations (continued)

| If … | … Implication … | … Then: What Actions Might Work? | Selected Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| **The inclusiveness of the settlement** | | | |
| The settlement is relatively inclusive | Most elites and their constituents are represented in the settlement, and a wide range of groups can expect basic entitlements to be recognized by government. | • Establish whether forms of SAcc are appropriate for furthering defined goals.<br>• SAcc may be used as a vehicle for realizing rights that have not been delivered. (i.e., citizens may be aware of their entitlements but unaware of how to claim them). Tools that assume some inclusiveness include participatory planning and budgeting.<br>• SAcc may also be a vehicle for seeking to extend entitlement recognition to groups that are still excluded. | • In the context of a more inclusive settlement in the post-apartheid era in South Africa, the women's movement—particularly the Women's National Committee, made up of all party members and women's organizations—were vocal about women's representation in the settlement, resulting in various gains.[ee] |
| The settlement is relatively exclusive | A smaller range of groups may access public entitlements. Policy and laws may formally recognize entitlements, but citizens may need connections to enjoy them. | • SAcc may be somewhat on the margins.<br>• SAcc activities—through, for example, information-sharing—could help to increase support for excluded factions, or call into question the legitimacy of the state.<br>• SAcc could strengthen the voice of excluded groups and enhance their linkages with pro-change social and political forces. SAcc may need to enhance the informal networks and connections of the excluded groups.<br>• Support steps to build a more inclusive settlement (e.g., targeted measures like gender and children's budgeting). | • The political movement that led to the creation of Thailand's 1997 "People's Constitution" was largely a product of efforts by civil society organizations that were supported by the Bangkok middle class. It resulted in the emergence of a revised national political settlement characterized by greater inclusiveness, albeit of a relatively unstable nature.[ff]<br>• In Yemen, women do not have the same access to justice as men. The Yemeni Women's Union, with support from an INGO, is working to ensure that the legal system protects the rights of vulnerable women by raising awareness about legal rights, providing legal aid, and supporting female prisoners. This has had positive impacts on women's lives.[gg] |
| **The organizational and political capabilities of the settlement** | | | |
| The capabilities of the settlement are relatively strong | The settlement permits the maintenance of enough political stability to allow the muddling through of social transformation to take place. | • High capacity allows for a wide range of development and SAcc activities—including more complex and costly forms of SAcc—to be explored. Nonetheless, this is conditional on whether actors from political and civil society are willing and able to pursue such activities. | • In parts of Brazil, PB evolved iteratively and was modified over time, which led to more effective implementation. One factor that arguably contributed to this effective evolution was the nature of the political settlement. The relatively adaptable, legitimate, and well-institutionalized settlement—between political elites in the Workers Party, civil society elites and broader societal groups—enabled PB to be effectively renegotiated, modified, and broadly agreed upon over time.[hh] |

## Domain 3: Inter-Elite Relations (continued)

| If … | … Implication … | … Then: What Actions Might Work? | Selected Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| The capabilities of the settlement are weak | The settlement is relatively unstable, with weak governance capabilities to manage social transformation. Conflict may be prevalent. | • SAcc initiatives should proceed with caution—do no harm.<br>• Localized, incremental SAcc that builds on local and traditional associations and that fosters collaborative state and citizen formation may be appropriate.<br>• SAcc might be carefully timed to capitalize on transition and windows of opportunity (see also annex 2 on political settlements). Take gradual steps to (re)build inclusive-enough coalitions to enable some legitimacy, confidence, and progress. | • In the Somali region of Ogaden, local Guurti elders have been incorporated into the local government to help resolve local-level disputes and to link the government with communities. This approach was largely viewed as legitimate by the population because Guurti elders are seen as legitimate mediators and the "xeer" system of dispute resolution by compensation enjoys historical legitimacy. (see also box 2.6 on Iraq).[ii] |

## Domain 4: State-Society Relations

### The character and form of the social contract

| If … | … Implication … | … Then: What Actions Might Work? | Selected Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social contract(s) for specific goods or services is strong | There is a relatively strong shared understanding of a state-society contract for the delivery of particular goods. | • Adopt a do no harm approach—do not undermine state-citizen responsibilities.<br>• SAcc may be employed to fulfill shared contractual understandings.<br>• Facilitate collaborative SAcc initiatives that bring together diverse actors to problem-solve around recognized problems (e.g., community scorecards and participatory budgeting). | • In Malawi, in localities where the social contract was strong (i.e., there was widespread agreement on the state's role in service delivery), the scorecard project was able to nurture collaborative spaces to bring together communities, service providers, local authorities, and others to collectively solve service delivery problems. In such instances, improvements were realized.[jj] |
| Social contract(s) for specific goods or services is weak | There are weak contractual understandings of state-society roles and responsibilities, with many groups excluded from public provisioning. | • Calibrate SAcc accordingly; there is a case to be made for avoiding the promotion of SAcc where the contract is weak.<br>• In the short term, explore and strengthen informal or good enough forms of accountability.<br>• Involving citizens in the early stages of reform initiatives can result in incremental building of a state-citizen contract. | • In various countries, road funds have been created as a means to ensure that vehicle taxes and other earmarked revenues are used as intended. Road users are included, and the road funds have shown the potential to counterbalance corruption and contribute to building a sense of a social contract around the public good.[kk]<br>• In Mexico, the efforts of indigenous communities in Veracruz to win more accountable practices from state water management institutions required years of social organizing to confront patronage politics and to reshape the social contract at the village level.[ll] |

*(continued)*

## Domain 4: State-Society Relations

**History of state–citizen bargaining (long- and short-term)**

| If … | … Implication … | … Then: What Actions Might Work? | Selected Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| History of state-citizen bargaining is relatively strong and/or positive | Over time, state actors and citizens have developed capabilities for activism and interaction; the results of such trends have been relatively positive. | • Build on what is there whenever it can be demonstrated that external agencies can add value.<br>• A wide range of SAcc practices can be considered to resolve ongoing bottlenecks. | • MST's successes in Brazil can be partially understood within the wider context of Brazilian activism, especially the "liberation theology" preached by the Catholic Church's radical wing that encouraged activism among the poor.[mm]<br>• In South Africa, TAC's mobilization happened in the aftermath of the antiapartheid movement, with the founders of TAC using the same techniques developed in the fight against apartheid.[nn] |
| History of state-citizen bargaining is relatively weak and/or negative | There is a relatively poor history of state-citizen bargaining. Past instances of bargaining may have led to more negative outcomes, providing disincentives for citizens to mobilize. | • Do no harm—understand the nuances of the history by, among other things, encouraging citizens to provide narratives of it.<br>• Act small to facilitate positive state–citizen problem-solving. Adopt an incremental learning-by-doing approach.<br>• Seek to scale up where results have been achieved and incentives shifted. | • The experience of the Mwananchi program in the sub-Saharan has shown how important it is to encourage citizens to voice their narratives on governance and situate them within their cultural, social, and political norms of engagement. This enables more realistic SAcc support.[oo]<br>• In Burundi, incremental steps were taken to rebuild state-citizen trust. A first step was to establish credible forms of representation. In participating communes, elections were held for community development committees that aimed to cut across ethnic divides.[pp] |
| History of state-society relations marred with fragility or conflict | State-society and intra-society relationships may be conflict-ridden. Trust levels may be low. | • Do no harm—understand drivers of conflict and respond cautiously.<br>• In the short-term, support trust-building activities alongside the restoration of basic services.<br>• Slowly bring people into contact with each other and the state. SAcc should gradually build on legitimate local and traditional associations and foster gradual collaborative state and citizen formation.<br>• In the medium- to long-term, build state-society institutions and functions, reduce tension among people, and contribute to increased confidence and capacity for citizenship. | • In Colombia, the primary institutional challenges in the post-conflict period were to bring the state closer to communities and overcome distrust. As such, an initiative was undertaken whereby public funds are held by individual government ministries, but approvals for activities are made by multisectoral teams in field offices. This has contributed to trust-building across groups and at the local level.[qq]<br>• In Afghanistan, a community-driven development program was aimed at building state capacity in phases, first focusing on rebuilding infrastructure and services through the establishment of community development councils, then gradually phasing in the strengthening of local institutions and improvement of livelihoods. Reportedly, however, in some cases, these community development councils were not fully accountable to villagers, undermining the provision of public goods by customary village organizations.[rr] |

## Domain 4: State-Society Relations (continued)

| If … | … Implication … | … Then: What Actions Might Work? | Selected Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| **The nature and depth of state-society pro-accountability networks** | | | |
| Pro-reform networks between state and society are relatively strong | This may provide a stronger basis for effective SAcc activity. | • Strategically strengthen the specific functions of networks where needed (see also Message 4 on networks on p. 42–43). <br> • Engage in dialogue and information-sharing about dealing with anti-reform networks. | • Land reform in the Philippines shows how a strong alliance between CSOs and a critical mass of state reformers resulted in positive gains for poor people. <br> • In South Africa, pro-reform networks, particularly between the movement and senior state officials, was a key determinant of the effectiveness of TAC.[ss] |
| Pro-reform networks between state and society are relatively weak | This often represents a weaker basis for SAcc activity. | • Promote accountability interventions that can gradually facilitate state-society dialogue and interaction, and bring the state closer to the people (e.g., community scorecards and dialogue platforms). <br> • Third parties—such as credible NGOs or academics—may be able to broker and improve state-society linkages. | • In some parts of West Bengal (e.g., Debra-Midnapore), village committee meetings were effective in gradually bringing the state to the people in the sense that government officials, in an unprecedented move, began dialoguing with poor people in targeted Indian villages, slowly building up linkages. Researchers present evidence that suggests less powerful villagers have used these forums to make a case for "Project A" or "Project B."[tt] |

## Domain 5: Intra-Society Relations

| If … | … Implication … | … Then: What Actions Might Work? | Selected Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Inequality and social exclusion** | | | |
| Level of inequality and social exclusion is relatively low | This may provide a stronger basis for collective action, although this is not a given. SAcc benefits may be more evenly spread. | • Collective action forms of SAcc may be easier to initiate and sustain. Explore the range of possible initiatives. | • In Southern Veracruz, shared social norms underpinned by traditional principles of reciprocity and cooperation were an enabling factor in laying the foundations for a reframing of water management for the common good.[uu] <br> • A comparative analysis of PB in Bolivia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Peru suggests that it functioned more effectively in smaller, more homogeneous communities with strong traditional organizations.[vv] |
| Level of inequality and social fragmentation is high | SAcc benefits may accrue to better-off citizens and inequality may be reproduced in participatory interventions. | • Build in inequality-mitigating measures in SAcc (e.g., quotas, weighting, special investment and capacity-building for excluded groups, and minority language recognition). <br> • Support measures to make the voices of the marginalized heard (e.g., economic incentives for participation, use of virtual safer media, and anonymous comment forms). <br> • In the longer term, seek ways to build broader programs for social justice and broader-based alliances (e.g., antidiscrimination legislation coalition-building, institutionalization of programmatic political parties, and geographical voting spread requirements). | • In Morocco and Turkey, campaigns for women's rights changed legal provisions but also challenged broader social norms affecting women. In Morocco, some argue more broadly that the changes to the Family Code changed mindsets because religious law was no longer seen as entirely untouchable or closed for reinterpretation.[ww] <br> • In Uganda, certain CSOs invested in finding ways to address underlying inequality and power dynamics. In one case, it was recognized that people were not ready or able to come together on the same platform because of deeply-rooted cleavages. As such, they presented ideas through the virtual space of radio programs.[xx] |

*(continued)*

## Domain 6: Global Dimensions[yy]

| If … | … Implication … | … Then: What Actions Might Work? | Selected Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Donor-state relations** | | | |
| Donor-state relations support state-citizen accountability | Aid flows and practices do not necessarily undermine accountability. | • Pursue and deepen aid effectiveness principles and practice. Ensure continued alignment with domestic initiatives.<br>• Provide strategic support for learning and innovation.<br>• Lead by example—reform internal organizational accountability (e.g., transparency policies). | • Donors can help finance learning and experimental interventions (e.g., various donors support action-research and impact evaluations in order to boost learning and dialogue about local development solutions). |
| Donor-state relations undermine state-citizen accountability | Aid flows may provide disincentives for elite accountability to citizenry or could supplant state responsibilities. | • Adopt a conscious policy to do no harm and design explicit strategies to build-in exits from aid and debt.<br>• Avoid replacing or regulating national activities even if the gains may be more incremental. Work with the grain and facilitate local problem-solving.<br>• Be cautious in funding governments and civil society because of the perverse incentives it may create; keep funding at arms length (e.g., through organizations with some autonomy that answer to local stakeholders) and support the enabling environment. | • In Pakistan, one author notes that civic groups that receive funding from development assistance end up with fewer members because the funding can undermine trust in the civic group leader.[zz] More broadly, a number of case studies show how CSOs that are dependent on external donors have compromised on their grassroots orientation, innovativeness, and downward accountability to their constituents.[aaa]<br>• In Niger, one piece of research notes that the committees promoted by development partners tend to end up being dissolved or "falling asleep" when funding stops. Instead, it advocates that donors engage with local informal initiatives to help them become institutionalized, supporting local reformers from the bottom up.[bbb] |
| **International power-holder accountability and international political economic processes** | | | |
| Other international power-holders and processes are supportive of SAcc goals | MNCs, INGOs, or other actors may support—or at least not undermine—long-term accountability. | • Strengthen or build on practices already demonstrated to be positive.<br>• MNCs may play a role as vehicles for introducing more transparent systems of accountancy or effective modes of corporate governance.<br>• INGOs may aid local actors in demanding accountability by providing access to wider media and policy spaces, galvanizing wider global support for the cause. | • In South Africa, INGOs were able to lend support to community groups through information exchange and coalition-building in their attempts to seek redress. This was in the case against the UK-based Cape plc company, where the parent company was found to be liable for knowingly subjecting workers to hazardous working conditions in its asbestos mine in South Africa.[ccc]<br>• Various INGOs have fostered partnerships with international corporations in order to strengthen corporate governance and accountability for development results to the communities within which they have invested. The results of such partnerships would need to be examined on a case-by-case basis. |

## Domain 6: Global Dimensions (continued)

| If … | … Implication … | … Then: What Actions Might Work? | Selected Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| Other international power-holders and processes are not supportive of SAcc goals | International actors may undermine accountability or violate rights, especially when the state is unwilling or unable to regulate them | • Address SAcc as an issue and process that extends beyond just citizen and state actors.<br>• Prioritize international action that successes on, for instance, debt cancellation and fair trade (e.g., improve financial regulation and constrain criminal activity, which reduces opportunities for corruption).<br>• Promote corporate accountability (e.g., promote an adequate regulatory framework and institutionalize international best-practice standards). | • In Nigeria, multiple protests by local communities have been directed at oil companies (e.g., Shell) that they claim have violated their rights, and they have received limited redress through the government systems.[ddd]<br>• In India, there are various cases of corporate actors violating the perceived rights of local communities (e.g., in Vizag, Jharkand, and Chiplun), prompting citizens to use public hearings or people's development plans to call for redress and accountability.[eee]<br>• Various international strategies to address the roots of limited accountability have been set up with differing results, including the Kimberley process to prevent trading in conflict diamonds; the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI); and international action to control illegal logging. International campaigns have also registered enhances development accountability.[fff] |

a. Robinson 2006.
b. Davenport 2012.
c. Campbell et al. 2010.
d. Sunder 2008.
e. Aga Khan Foundation 2008.
f. Sundet 2008; Citizenship DRC 2011.
g. Houtzager et al. 2005; Evans 2001.
h. Joshi 2009; Bukenya et al. 2012.
i. Friedman 2010.
j. Aiyar and Samji 2009; Campbell et al. 2010; Friedman 2010; Goetz and Jenkins 2001.
k. Unsworth and Moore 2010.
l. Gaventa 2008.
m. Wantchekkon 2003.
n. Kabeer 2003; McGee 2010.
o. Kabeer 2003.
p. Stasavage 2005.
q. Peruzotti 2011.
r. Robinson 2006; Vicente and Wantchekon 2009; Collier and Vicente 2011; Banerjee et al. 2010.
s. Chhotray 2008.

t. Chhotray 2008; Nyamu-Musembi 2006.
u. Singh and Vutukuru 2010; Corbridge et al. 2005.
v. Goldfrank 2006.
w. Eubank 2010.
x. Gaventa 2008.
y. Campbell et al. 2010.
z. Everyday politics involves people embracing, complying with, adjusting, and contesting norms and rules regarding authority over, production of, or allocation of resources and doing so in quiet, mundane, and subtle expressions and acts that are rarely organised or direct.
aa. Scott 1985; Kerkvliet 2005.
bb. Campbell et al. 2010; Singh and Vutkuru 2010.
cc. Justice for the Poor website.
dd. Nyamu-Musembi 2006; Aiyar 2010, Joshi 2010; Levy 2011.
ee. Nazneen and Mahmud 2012.
ff. Parks and Cole 2010.
gg. Oxfam 2012.
hh. Schneider and Goldfrank 2002; Bukenya et al. 2012.
ii. Hagmann 2007; Ringold et al. 2011; Holland 2011.
jj. Wild and Harris 2012.
kk. Unsworth and Moore 2010; Citizenship DRC 2011; Levy 2011.
ll. Paré, L., and C. Robles 2006.

mm. Campbell et al. 2010.
nn. Friedman 2010; Campbell et al. 2010.
oo. Tembo 2012.
pp. Ringold et al. 2011.
qq. Ibid.
rr. World Bank 2011.
ss. Borras and Franco 2008; Bukenya et al. 2012.
tt. Corbridge et al. 2005.
uu. Paré and Robles 2006.
vv. Goldfrank 2006; Paré and Robles 2006.
ww. Gaventa and Barrett 2010.
xx. Tembo 2012.
yy. N.b. many of the recommendations from the previous domains are also relevant in this domain.
zz. Bano 2012.
aaa. Banks and Hulme 2012; Booth 2012.
bbb. de Sardan et al. 2010: 15.
ccc. Garvey and Newell 2004.
ddd. Human Rights Watch 1999.
eee. Newell and Wheeler 2006.
fff. Ibrahim and Hulme 2011.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter has offered two interrelated tools for beginning to think through the operational implications of a context-sensitive approach to SAcc: (1) a breakdown of the main cross-cutting operational implications of the paper with suggestions for operational activities based on experience; and (2) an exploration, in a structured way, of what to do in different contexts through a preliminary *If … Then* framework. While the chapter makes no claims at being prescriptive, it does attempt to provide a set of ideas and examples for practitioners to plan and think through context-specific SAcc in a more systematic and informed manner.

# 5. Conclusion

This paper has focused on the role of context in influencing the constraints and opportunities for SAcc, with the core objective to fill some critical gaps in knowledge and practice on this important, yet complex, topic. Despite the limited evidence, the paper has drawn on and synthesized the available documentation in order to take preliminary steps toward a more systematic and realistic treatment of of the issue. It has offered both ideas for action and potential hypotheses for further exploration.

In so doing, the paper has sought to address four main objectives: (1) to outline and deepen understanding of the contextual factors that shape the form and effectiveness of SAcc; (2) to outline what seems to be the most plausible context-sensitive theory of SAcc change to enable more strategic thinking and practice when supporting SAcc interventions; (3) based on (1) and (2), to explore some of the practical implications of this work; and (4) to provide some basic guidance on conducting context analysis prior to undertaking accountability initiatives (annex 1).

*This may be a difficult agenda, but there is much to suggest that it should be pursued.*

While few straightforward conclusions can be reached at this stage, the paper offers a set of main messages that are summarized in the executive summary and not repeated here. Ultimately, the central contention is that there is a good case to refocus—in some areas radically rethink—SAcc thinking and practice. In so doing, the paper adds to growing calls for a more context-sensitive and politically-attuned approach to SAcc that focuses on pro-accountability state-society synergies, bargaining, and networks, and that places issues of poverty and inequality at the very center of the frame. This may be a difficult and ambitious agenda, but there is much to suggest that it should be pursued.

# ANNEXES

# Annex 1. A Tool for Analyzing Contexts for Social Accountability

Based on the paper's broad framework and the current evidence base, this annex briefly provides some preliminary guiding questions for undertaking a context analysis prior to designing or supporting SAcc. The tool is separated into three phases: (1) the preanalysis phase, which describes how to use this tool and provides some brief tips on the key process requirements for designing and conducting the analysis; (2) the analysis phase, which provides a list of potential questions, prompts and "starting points" for undertaking the analysis; and, (3) the postanalysis phase, which provides questions and guidance on how to translate the findings into an operation or program.

## Preanalysis: Guidance on Using this Tool

It is worth highlighting a few points on how to use this tool before outlining the questions:

- This is not designed to be an exhaustive list of questions. It is designed to point the analysis toward some of the most critical contextual issues, as derived from chapters 2, 3, and 4 in the report. The report should be read before attempting to undertake the analysis shown below.
- The questions cannot cover all eventualities, and the reader is encouraged to adapt or drill down on certain questions as appropriate to their diverse needs. Such needs include: (1) the timeframe and resources available for the contextual analysis; or (2) the objectives and focal point of the operational issues in question (for example, if you want to focus on broader country issues and country strategies, on a specific sector, or on a specific operation). There are already a number of resources (cited below) providing guidance on applying social and political analysis; their good practice guidance principles apply and it is not the intention here to repeat them in any detail. You may wish to follow the citations for further reading.
- Alongside the questions, there are a few prompt examples of the types of issues to consider in answering them and some indications of places to start when looking for answers.[19] Note, however, that while the global datasets might be good starting points, they rarely provide sufficient information to make management decisions and their accuracy is often contested (Court et al. 2007). Indeed, many of the questions may be answered, to differing degrees, by using existing social and political analyses, even if answers to some of the questions require considerable analysis and judgment.
- When to stop looking for answers? There are, unfortunately, no fixed parameters for knowing that you have conducted a *good enough* analysis. At a minimum, one should have enough information to support a convincing ToC of how a proposed intervention is likely to achieve its pro-poor and pro-accountability outcomes in the given context. Persistent accountability issues tend to be complex and have multiple dimensions. For this

*There are, unfortunately, no fixed parameters for knowing that you have conducted a good enough analysis. At a minimum, one should have enough information to support a convincing ToC of how a proposed intervention is likely to achieve its pro-poor and pro-accountability outcomes in the given context.*

## Table A1.1. Checklist on the Process of Conducting the Analysis

| Process Area | Actions and Key Questions to Address |
|---|---|
| 1. Planning the analysis | To clarify:<br>• What is the primary objective of the analysis?<br>• What questions should be drilled down into?<br>• Who is the primary audience—internal or external?<br>• When and how will the findings feed into program design and policy dialogue?<br>• Is there sufficient internal buy-in to the importance of the analysis? Is there a clear owner or champion with responsibility for moving forward with the implications? |
| 2. Defining the methodology and needed skills | To define:<br>• Do you have the necessary mix of skills and expertise to undertake the work (e.g., political science, sociology, or development studies backgrounds; a strong understanding of demand-side governance and of the country and context in question)?<br>• Will it be conducted in-house or are specialist consultant skills required? Consider combining one international expert and one local expert.<br>• What kind of methodology will be employed (e.g., examination of existing country datasets, qualitative field analysis, expert and key informant interviews, or focus group interviews)?<br>• How will the questions be adapted and used? The questions could be used as a basis for designing a Terms of Reference, or practitioners who already have a well-rounded knowledge of the issues may use the questions as the basis for strategic thinking or "gap-filling." |
| 3. Involving other stakeholders | To decide:<br>• Where appropriate, how can the right partners and stakeholders be involved? |
| 4. Disseminating the work | To decide:<br>• Is there agreement as to how the work will be disseminated? |
| 5. Bridging analysis and follow-up action | To ensure:<br>• Is there an agreed-to process for follow-up once the analysis is complete? Has adequate time been dedicated to exploring the operational implications of the analysis?<br>• Have indicators been developed to assess the impact of the analysis on programs? What results are expected from the work? |

*Source:* Adapted from DFID 2009; Poole 2011.

reason, a good context analysis prior to investment should unpack any problems and their underlying drivers in order to identify strategic entry points. This may mean that you would adopt a so-called "problem-focused approach" (Fritz et al. 2011).

- Experience suggests that, in many ways, the process by which the analysis is conceived, carried out, and translated into operations is as important as the findings (DFID 2009; Fritz et al. 2011). Some of the key process issues to take into account are summarized in table A1.1.

## Analysis: The Guiding Questions

Below is a list of potential questions, prompts and "starting points" for undertaking the analysis and deepening understanding of the accountability dynamics in a given context. There are, first, some core overarching questions that would, at a minimum, need to be addressed before designing or supporting SAcc processes. The questions listed below the overarching questions are designed to enable a drilling down into the issue areas and contextual domains outlined in this report.[20]

### Overarching Questions
- What is the accountability problem you would like to address in your context?
- What are the underlying drivers of this problem, the drivers of change, and the opportunities for addressing it?
- What is the capacity and willingness of political elites to address the problem?
- What is the capacity and willingness of citizens and civil society to address the problem?
- What is the nature and strength of state-society networks that might challenge or perpetuate this problem?
- What is the change you would like to see, and how might "demand-side" interventions realistically contribute to this change?
- How can your organization support this change over the short and long term?

## The Full Question Set: Drilling Down into the Six Key Domains

### Domain 1. Civil Society

| Area | Question(s) | Prompt Examples | Places to Start |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Extensiveness** | What form does civil society (CS) take and how vibrant is it? | Types of CSOs; quantity of CSOs | • Barometer (number of CSOs )<br>• Bertelsmann Transformation Index (CS participation)<br>• Global Civil Society Index (organization membership)[a] |
| **Capacity (technical, social, and political)** | What is the level of technical and organizational capacity of CSOs? | Organizational performance; technical capacity; financial sustainability | • Global Civil Society Index (capacity; sustainability of CSOs) |
| | What is the capacity of CSOs to mobilize people and build alliances across society and with other CSOs? | Societal mobilization and coalition-building skills; well-functioning joint CSO platforms | • CIVICUS Civil Society Index (impact of activities pursued by CSOs)<br>• Global Civil Society Index (CSO impact) |
| | What are the political capabilities of CSOs (i.e., are there "strong" CSOs capable of exerting influence over politicized decision-making outcomes)? | Connections with and influence over political decision makers; political literacy; rights awareness | • Barometer (level of political efficacy)<br>• Bertelsmann Transformation Index (association and assembly rights) |
| **Willingness** | How willing are CSOs to act as pro-accountability forces on a specific and/or range of issues? | Incentives to challenge system; ideas about accountability; interest in resolving the problem | • CIVICUS Civil Society Index (values practiced and promoted in CS arena) |
| **Authority, legitimacy, and credibility (for citizens and the state)** | Which CSOs are seen as popular, authoritative, and legitimate representatives of citizens—namely, of "poor" citizens? | Grassroots associations; trade unions; social movements; NGOs; faith-based organizations; media bodies | • Political economy analysis (PEA)<br>• Civil society assessments |
| | Which CSOs are seen to be authoritative and legitimate by state actors, if any? | Grassroots associations; trade unions; social movements; service delivery NGOs | • DFID governance and conflict indicators (number of CSOs consulted on policy development by state; number of relevant CSOs stating they were consulted in PRSP)<br>• PEA; CS assessments |

*(continued)*

## Domain 1. Civil Society (continued)

| Area | Question(s) | Prompt Examples | Places to Start |
|---|---|---|---|
| **CS networks (pro-accountability versus anti-accountability)** | What is the nature and relative strength of pro-accountability networks across CS? | Well-organized networks; clear and shared goals; financial viability of the networks; relationship with anti-accountability political forces | • Civil society assessments<br>• Country social analyses<br>• Network analyses |
| | What is the nature and relative strength of anti-accountability networks across CS? | Well-organized networks; clear and shared goals; financial viability of the networks; relationship with anti-accountability political forces | • Civil society assessments<br>• PEA<br>• Network analyses |
| **Citizen capacity (human and political)** | What is the level of human capacity among the relevant citizenry? | Education; income; literacy; livelihood strategies | • World Development Indicators (literacy rate; life expectancy at birth)<br>• Edstats Database (access and quality of education; equity of education outcomes; preprimary, primary, secondary, and tertiary literacy rates)<br>• United Nations Human Development Index (gender empowerment and education index)<br>• Poverty and social impact analyses |
| | What level of political capabilities do the relevant citizenry have (i.e., by what means—if any—do marginalized groups influence political decisions)? | Connectedness and networks with CS and political society (PS); political literacy and rights awareness; political status and recognition as "citizens" | • Barometer (percentage of people that voiced opinion to public officials)<br>• Rights-based analyses[b] |
| **Citizen willingness** | How willing is the citizenry to act in undertaking social accountability initiatives? | Incentives; ideas of accountability; interests | • Gallup (percentage of people who voiced their opinion to public officials)<br>• Barometer (percentage of people who contacted a leader with a problem) |

*(continued)*

## Domain 2. Political Society

| Area | Question(s) | Prompt Examples | Places to Start |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Capacity of political elites and elected officials** | What is the level of political elite capacity to respond to and/or foster SAcc? | Technical competencies; ability to use bureaucracy to respond; connectedness to CS (see also Domain 3 for further unpacking of certain issues related to "political society") | • Political constraint index (measures political institutions)<br>• Global Integrity Index (government accountability)<br>• Bertelsmann Transformation Index (commitment to democratic institutions) |
| **Capacity of state (organizational and political)** | What is the level of organizational and technical state capacity to respond to and/or foster SAcc? How autonomous (i.e., rational/legal) or politicized is the bureaucracy? | Technical competencies; level and quality of implementation of legislation or policy; financial probity; facilitation and consultation skills | • Global Integrity Index (functioning of government)<br>• Economist Intelligence Unit (quality of bureaucracy)<br>• Worldwide Governance Indicators (government effectiveness)<br>• World Bank's Country Policy and Institutional Assessments (CPIA) |
| | What is the level of the "state's" political capacity to respond to and foster SAcc processes and claims? | Connectedness and openness to CS; ability to mediate competing social and political forces; ability to secure consensus across conflicting groups | • Stakeholder and power analysis<br>• Political settlement analysis (below) |
| **Willingness of political elites and elected officials** | What is the level of political elite willingness to respond to and/or foster SAcc? | Incentives; ideas on accountability; material interests | • USAID policy note (statements made by national leaders in newspapers; availability of funding for SAcc) |
| **Willingness of government bureaucrats** | What is the level of willingness among bureaucrats to respond to and/or foster SAcc? | Incentives (e.g., performance standards); ideas on accountability; material interests | • World Governance Indicators (policy consistency of bureaucrats; ability to deliver infrastructure) |
| **Capacity of political parties** | How programmatic are the parties? What is the capacity of political parties to foster SAcc? | Organizational and technical capacity; connectedness to CS; capacity to mobilize CS and SAcc claims | • DFID governance and conflict indicators (percentage of political parties with issue-based manifesto) |
| **Willingness of political parties** | What is the level of political party willingness to champion and support SAcc? | Incentives; ideas on accountability; material interests | • PEA |

*(continued)*

## Domain 2. Political Society (continued)

| Area | Question(s) | Prompt Examples | Places to Start |
|---|---|---|---|
| **PS networks (pro-accountability versus anti-accountability)** | What is the nature and strength of pro-accountability networks across PS? | Well-organized networks; clear and shared goals; financial viability of the networks; relationship with anti-accountability political forces | • Political analyses<br>• Network analyses |
| | What is nature and strength of anti-accountability networks across PS? | Well-organized networks; clear and shared goals; financial viability of the networks | • Political analyses<br>• Network analyses (see above) |

*Broader Institutional Frameworks across Political Society*

| Area | Question(s) | Prompt Examples | Places to Start |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Democratization** | What is the nature and extent of political debate and competition? | Elections; nature of the party system; democratic legal framework | • Economist Intelligence Unit (democracy index)<br>• Democracy score (nations in transit ratings) |
| **Accountability and CS enabling environment** | What are the characteristics and strengths of political and civil rights and laws (i.e., the SAcc "enabling environment")? Are these laws respected and enforced? | Civil and political rights; freedom of association and speech; right-to-information legislation; media freedoms; media integrity and effectiveness | • Economist Intelligence Unit (index of civil liberties)<br>• Reporters Without Borders (press freedom score)<br>• Freedom House (media independence; freedom of expression)<br>• Global Integrity Index (ability of citizens to form media entities; ability of media to report on corruption; credibility of media information)<br>• Political and civil rights ratings |
| **Rule of law and enforceability** | To what degree is the rule of law enforceable and insulated from political interference? | Independent judiciary; functioning legal framework; responsiveness to citizen demands | • Barometer (whether or not people treated equally under law; whether or not government ignores the law)<br>• Global Integrity Index (ability of citizens to access legislative process)<br>• World Governance Indicators (rule of law)<br>• CPIA |
| | What are the other formal intra-state mechanisms of accountability ("horizontal accountability") and how well do they function? | Executive power and restraint; parliamentary checks-and-balances; intra-state accountability agencies (ombudsmen and anti-corruption commissions) | • Freedom House (accountable government; environment to protect against corruption)<br>• Barometer (bribed often to get a document, permit, or basic service)<br>• Global Integrity Index (anti-corruption and rule of law; effectiveness of the national ombudsman; government accountability)<br>• Bribe Payers Index<br>• World Governance Indicators (control of corruption) |

*(continued)*

## Domain 3. Inter-Elite Relations

*These questions further unpack many of the underlying drivers of the characteristics in Domain 2.*

| Area | Question(s) | Prompt Examples | Places to Start |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Political settlement (overall, primary and secondary, developmental, capacity, inclusiveness, and implications)** | What is the overall nature of the primary political settlement? Which elites are represented and what is the basis for power sharing? | Social and political groups represented (landowners, urban elites, ethnicities, religious, secular, and so on); basis of the power- and benefit-sharing agreement— open, democratizing, and patrimonial | • Political settlement mapping[c] <br> • PEA/drivers of change analysis <br> • Elite bargaining analysis |
| | What is the current *secondary* political settlement about specific goods or services? | Agreements about certain goods and services (e.g., water or food); central-local dynamics; local settlements | • PEA <br> • Political settlement mapping |
| | To what degree is the settlement founded on broad-based development and/or more patronage-based, clientelist, and/or predatory lines? | Time horizons for using public resources; focus on broad-based goods or narrow political interests and "clients" (programmatic or clientelistic); level or focus on social development; tendency toward redistribution; levels of corruption | • Political settlement analysis <br> • PEA <br> • Historical and development analyses |
| | What is the level of political and governance capabilities underpinning the settlement? What is the level of stability and windows of opportunity for accountability actions? | Capacity to maintain political stability; legitimacy of the settlement; capacity to reach agreements across conflicting groups and discipline powerful actors; political drivers of under-capacity; capacity to forge and maintain relations with social actors included or excluded from settlement; levels of conflict | • Political stability index (level of threat posed to governments by social protest) <br> • PEA |

*(continued)*

## Domain 3. Inter-Elite Relations (continued)

| Area | Question(s) | Prompt Examples | Places to Start |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Political settlement (overall, primary and secondary, developmental, capacity, inclusiveness, and implications)** | How inclusive is the settlement and who is included or excluded? How are entitlements distributed, claimed, and enforced? | Distribution of rights, responsibilities, and entitlements across the settlement; impersonal or personalistic modes of securing rights; diversity of elite coalition; influence by nonelite groups; political space for dissent and debate; perceptions of settlement legitimacy | • Political settlement mapping<br>• PEA<br>• Historical and development analyses |
| | Overall, what does this analysis suggest about the political capacities and higher-level incentives to address SAcc claims broadly and/or in specific areas? | Level of incentives; likelihood of SAcc claims to receive a backlash, cooptation, and accommodation | • Drivers of change analysis<br>• Scenario analysis |

*(continued)*

## Domain 4. State-Society Relations

*These questions also help unpack the underlying drivers of the capacity/willingness of actors to engage in SAcc.*

| Area | Question(s) | Prompt Examples | Places to Start |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Social contract (overall, cultures and perceptions of accountability, and implications)** | What is the nature of the primary social contract? | How entitlements have been distributed over time and on what basis (formal legal provisions and more informal customary practices); the presence of popular pressure about certain public goods | • Barometer (people are treated equally under the law; whether or not government ignores the law)<br>• Sociological, contractual, and rights-based analyses<br>• Political and institutional analysis |
| | What is the *secondary* social contract about specific goods or services (if relevant)? | Taxation; food; water; social security | • Sociological and contractual analyses<br>• Political and institutional analyses |
| | What is considered legitimate and illegitimate use of public resources and authority by citizens and by state functionaries? | Based on family or local favors; strength of clientelist networks; local standards of transparency and accountability | • Anthropological analyses<br>• Political and institutional or legal analysis |
| | What issues are perceived by poor citizens to be "significant" enough to inspire action and involvement in SAcc? To what degree do they reflect or relate to the social contract? | Corruption; poor performance; absenteeism among public officials; delivery of certain services; justice system | • World Governance Indicators (control of corruption)<br>• Barometer (whether or not people are treated unequally under the law; whether or not government ignores the law) |
| **History of state-citizen bargaining (long-term, shorter-term, and implications)** | What has been the longer-term history of state-citizen bargaining? Is there a strong history of CS activism? | Degree to which citizens have been involved in state formation and policy; outcome of attempts to challenge state | • PEA<br>• DFID governance and conflict indicators (number of CSOs consulted about policy by state; number of relevant CSOs stating they were consulted in PRSP to a satisfying extent) |
| | What has been the recent experience with SAcc activities in the context? How positive or negative? What does this tell us about the likely incentives for citizens to reengage in SAcc? | Type of tools used; scale of the intervention; time horizon; impacts and lessons learned; government response; levels of trust in the state | • Impact evaluations<br>• Donor assessments |
| | How has this experience impacted the skills and tactics of CS activism and PS responses? | Strong skills and pool of experience to draw on; well-functioning networks; limited capabilities | • Historical political and social analysis<br>• Impact evaluations |

*(continued)*

## Domain 4. State-Society Relations (continued)

| Area | Question(s) | Prompt Examples | Places to Start |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Formal and informal state-society accountability mechanisms** | What are the existing formal and informal mechanisms of accountability (answerability and enforcement) for the provision of public goods? How effective and legitimate are they? | Elections; local councils; legal provisions; ombudsmen; patronage networks; customary institutions (chief structures); grievance-redress mechanisms | • Bertelsmann Transformation Index (Free and fair elections, anti-democratic actors)<br>• Country social analyses<br>• Accountability studies |
| | What are the existing formal and informal mechanisms for state-citizen interaction? | Participatory spaces; channels of state-citizen communication; monitoring mechanisms | • Barometer (citizen empowerment; whether or not citizens get news; whether they contact local leaders—alone or in groups—for personal problems or community problems) |
| | To what degree do the formal mechanisms explain outcomes? To what degree do informal accountability mechanisms explain outcomes? How do the formal and informal interact to produce outcomes? | Mechanisms that explain how things really work; how past accountability issues have been resolved and through what mechanisms | • Accountability studies<br>• PEA |
| **State-society networks (pro- and anti-accountability)** | What is the nature and depth of pro-accountability state-society networks? | Well-organized networks; clear and shared goals; financial viability of the networks | • Network analyses (as above)<br>• PEA<br>• Stakeholder analyses |
| | What is the nature and depth of anti-accountability state-society networks? | Well-organized networks; clear and shared goals; financial viability of the networks | • Network analyses<br>• PEA<br>• Stakeholder analyses |
| | Which intermediaries and networks are the most authoritative or legitimate in representing the interests of the poor and furthering SAcc? | Has popular support; has a project for social justice and poverty reduction; downward accountability to representatives | • Qualitative analyses<br>• PEA and stakeholder analyses |

*(continued)*

## Domain 5. Intra-Society Relations

| Area | Question(s) | Prompt Examples | Places to Start |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Overall** | What are the overall social and structural barriers that the citizenry face in acting as "agents of change" in and through SAcc? | Dependency on personal or patron-client relationships to access goods; poverty; limited skills and capabilities; limited recognition as citizens | • Poverty and social impact analyses<br>• Country social analyses |
| **Inequality (real and perceived)** | What is the level of inequality in general and/or in relation to a specific sector or issue? | Income disparities; unequal access to assets and services; unequal political representation | • World Income Inequality Database (cross-country and time-series data on changes in income inequality)<br>• Measuring Income Inequality Database (data from 1890–1996) |
| | What are the popular perceptions of inequality and fairness, and how does this shape people's propensity to undertake SAcc? | Inequality issues seen as an individual—not state—responsibility; perceptions that system is generally fair or unfair | • Barometer (role of government vis-à-vis citizens/who is the boss?)<br>• Economist Intelligence Unit (level of trust in public institutions)<br>• DFID governance and conflict indicators (citizens satisfied with parliamentary performance) |
| **Social exclusion and fragmentation** | To what degree are certain groups excluded or adversely incorporated based on their social status? To what degree is there social fragmentation? | Ethnicity; clan; religion; class; gender; ability | • Country social analyses<br>• Freedom House (gender equity; rights of ethnic, religious, and other groups)<br>• World Development Indicators<br>• UNDP Human Development Index (gender empowerment measure; seats in the parliament held by women) |
| **Conflict and cooperation** | What is the history and current level of societal conflict and state-society conflict/fragility? How does this impact social cohesion and potential collective action? | Emerging from conflict; in transition; pockets of fragility | • Failed states index (percentage of refugees; group grievance; delegitimization of state; security apparatuses; factionalized elites; external intervention)<br>• CPIA (countries with a score below 3.2 are viewed as fragile)<br>• Lower Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS)<br>• World Bank's postconflict indicators framework (quality of policy and institutional framework to support transition from conflict, to foster poverty reduction, and use development assistance)<br>• Bertelsmann Transformation Index |

*(continued)*

## Domain 6. Global Dimensions

| Area | Question(s) | Prompt Examples | Places to Start |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Global drivers and political/economic processes** | How do global drivers and dimensions influence political elite incentives and state-society accountability relations? | International transparency standards; level of global economic integration; international trade (licit or illicit); migration flows | • International PEA<br>• Economist Intelligence Unit (extent of foreign influence) |
| | Do donor agencies strengthen or undermine the forging of a state-citizen social contract and SAcc claims in the country and/or sector? | Donor-state relationships; aid modalities; level of aid-dependence | • Aid effectiveness analyses<br>• Internal accountability audits |
| | To what degree are other international actors held accountable for their impact in the context? | Role and power of MNCs; INGO accountability | • International PEA<br>• NGO analysis/literature<br>• Popular sources (e.g., newspapers) |

## Overall Conclusions

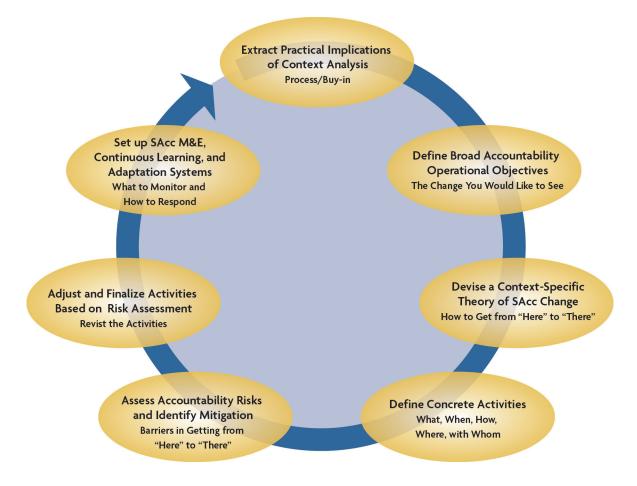| Area | Question(s) | Prompt Examples |
|---|---|---|
| **Drivers of the accountability failure** | Taken as a whole, what appear to be the principal drivers of the accountability problem? | Lack of salient information; lack of enforcement sanctions; collective action failures; political disincentives |
| **Priority areas** | Across the domains, which contextual issues appear to be the most pressing to address in order to improve accountability? Why? | Political capabilities of CS; inclusiveness of the political settlement; inequality levels |
| **Opportunities and constraints** | What are the major opportunities for and constraints to action? How might SAcc lead to "coercion," "cooptation" or "change" in the political settlement (see chapter 3)? | Scenarios; specific policy reform process opening up spaces; elections; change in government; rise of social movements |

*Source:* Author.
a. See, for example, Salamon and Sokolowski 2005.
b. See, for example, Sen 2001.

## Postanalysis: Operational Actions

Having undertaken the analysis, this section offers some brief guiding questions to help think through what to do next. The questions are broadly clustered around the project development cycle, summarized in figure A1.1. They can be adapted to the project cycle procedures and organizational objectives of different organizations. After conducting the analysis, it is particularly recommended to refer to chapter 4 of this report for further practical ideas on what to do.

## Figure A1.1. Main Steps in Designing Context-Specific Social Accountability Programs



Extract Practical Implications
of Context Analysis
Process/Buy-in

Set up SAcc M&E,
Continuous Learning, and
Adaptation Systems
What to Monitor and
How to Respond

Define Broad Accountability
Operational Objectives
The Change You Would Like to See

Adjust and Finalize Activities
Based on Risk Assessment
Revist the Activities

Devise a Context-Specific
Theory of SAcc Change
How to Get from "Here" to "There"

Assess Accountability Risks
and Identify Mitigation
Barriers in Getting from
"Here" to "There"

Define Concrete Activities
What, When, How,
Where, with Whom

| Process Step | Sub-area | Guiding Questions | Tips and Pointers |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Extract practical implications** | n/a | • What are the major operational implications of the analysis?<br>• What are the main drivers of the accountability challenges?<br>• What issues appear to be the most urgent? | • Ensure buy-in and involvement of operational teams and partners.<br>• Consider filling any strategic "gaps" in the analysis at this stage. |
| **Define objectives—the change you want to see** | n/a | • What change would you like to see based on the analysis?<br>• Can you identify changes for each of the six contextual domains? Are changes needed within each domain? Can progress be made within the existing contextual constraints?<br>• What objectives are feasible in the short, medium, and long term? | • Categorize key contextual factors by domain and their "tractability" (i.e., some factors are more likely to change over short- or long-term, such as information availability and state capacity). |
| **Devise a strategy/ ToC—how change will happen** | Basic ToC | • What is the basic ToC to achieve the objectives?<br>• Is it convincing given the analysis undertaken? If not, can it be modified? | • Draw on lessons in this report to help devise the ToC (see chapters 1–3)<br>• Draw on ToC from chapter 3 but adapt to your context and analysis.<br>• Play "devil's advocate" to make the ToC more robust. |
| | Strategy for *good enough* change | • What overall strategy could your organization adopt to begin achieving the change? For example, what strategy would be most appropriate for each domain? How can you act given the political economy context? How can you build on and not undermine *organic* pressures for change? What *best-fit*, *second-best*, or *good-enough* approaches are appropriate? | • Assess the "room for maneuver" and clarify which policy options and approaches may be politically feasible. Is it preferable to take an incremental approach, adapting to reform space, or a more transformational approach (expanding reform space)? |
| | Entry points and partnerships | • What are the potential entry points?<br>• What is your comparative advantage and which part of the change process can you best contribute to? How can you engage partners to contribute to different pieces of the change process? | • Explore links and leverage related to existing programs and interventions, timing, sequencing, and so on.<br>• Social and political changes are rarely driven by one organization acting alone. |
| | Internal alignment and change | • Are your organization's capacities adequate to promote the change?<br>• Is your organization likely to contribute to a more accountable longer-term state-society contract? How? Are you accountable for your actions? | • Assess relevant staff skills, identify project lead or champions, and assess internal willingness to take risks.<br>• Identify areas for internal reform to ensure accountability. |

*(continued)*

| Process Step | Sub-area | Guiding Questions | Tips and Pointers |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Define concrete activities– getting from this context ("here") to the change ("there")** | What | • What specific actions can be proposed to address the different dimensions of the accountability problems?<br>• How can you ensure that all the different conditions of accountability are put in place (answerability plus enforcement)? | • Select appropriate actions and approaches (refer back to chapter 4) |
| | Who | • With whom could you work to bring about change?<br>• Who are the game-changers? Who are the reform antagonists and champions? How influential are both and how will you work with them? | • Select partners broadly aligned with SAcc goals and devise ways to work with antagonists. |
| | When | • How will you sequence interventions most appropriately? | • Identify key reform processes or shifts in political equilibrium. |
| | How | • How will you implement the activities? | • Will they be based on existing programs or interventions, will they be a part of broader institutional reforms, will they be "standalone" approaches, and so on? |
| Identify risks and barriers— mitigation strategies | | • What are the likely risks, namely to the participants but also to the organization, partners, and so on? Who are likely "winners" and "losers," and what backlash might this entail?<br>• How will you respond to and/or mitigate these risks? | • Develop a risk, assumptions, and mitigation framework.<br>• Devise ways to negotiate a way around power relationships and the contention that accountability change can produce.<br>• Adjust activities in light of the risk assessment. |
| Set up M&E— learning systems | | • How can you set up ongoing learning and analysis— as well as experimentation—given the complexity of SAcc change? | • Contextual knowledge is not a one-time exercise; contexts change.<br>• Build in learning systems and flexibility. |

*Source:* Author.
*Note:* n/a = not applicable

# Annex 2. Thinking about Change in Political Settlements

Given the prominence of the "political settlements" concept to this paper, it is useful to reflect on how such settlements change. This can be seen as the *bigger picture* change, allowing a move beyond the view that SAcc is merely a discrete intervention to also considering it as part of a broader fabric of social and political change.

However, this is not a straightforward process. The study of political settlements in international development is relatively new; attempting to think about SAcc within this framework is even newer. As Dervarajan et al. (2011) note, *"… the big question remaining for such types of [SAcc] interventions is how to improve the incentives of higher-level leadership to pursue appropriate policy design and implementation."* Further, there are not yet easy ways to translate the political settlements approach into workable operational guidelines, and there remains a lack of clarity and consensus on which elements of political settlements are critical (for example, OECD-DAC 2008; Park and Coles 2010). Even more fundamentally, political settlements are not easily manufactured *from the outside,* and external agencies play a difficult, modest, and sometimes risky role in promoting more accountable political settlements (Di John and Putzel 2009; Hickey 2011).

## Political Settlements and Change

According to Parks and Cole (2010), political settlements are typically established, consolidated, and strengthened in the following ways:

- the most basic method is coercion, often by amassing the capacity to use or threaten to use physical force;
- cooptation of potential threats from powerful excluded elites;
- building and maintaining the legitimacy of state institutions established and shaped through the political settlement; and
- actions of the international community (for example, military interventions or provision of security and aid).

Change in the political settlement happens, "when there is a change in the common understanding of how power is to be organized and exercised" (DFID, cited in Cole). Change, as such, represents shifts, *"… in the accepted norms of political behavior, usually brought about by gradual changes in political dynamics or shifting interests of powerful actors"* (Parks and Cole 2010). Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) broadly point to change as being driven by an enlightened elite leadership willing to cede power and/or an elite leadership that eventually succumbs to pressures for social and political change; that is, opposition elites and social forces that—in essence—force their hand. The path to a more inclusive and developmental settlement is rarely linear: *"In most cases, countries that have reached stable, inclusive, developmental settlements*

*have been through periods of extreme instability, or highly exclusionary settlements."* More-over, settlements rarely change through a single event or a single factor; rather, they usually change because of a complex interaction of factors (for example, DLP Paper 2010).

As noted in chapter 3, SAcc pressures can be thought of as contributing to change processes that might lead to broad *coercion*, *cooptation*, and *change* in and around the political settlement. Drawing on work done by Parks and Cole (2010), table A2.1 outlines nine main drivers of change.

## Table A2.1. The Ways in which Political Settlements Change and the Role for Social Accountability

| Main Driver of Change | Description | Example | Possible Role(s) for SAcc |
|---|---|---|---|
| A powerful, excluded elite faction "opts in" to political settlement | When a powerful elite group that formerly sought to destabilize existing arrangements joins the political settlement, it may increase its durability. It could also make the settlement more inclusive if the excluded group represents a significant portion of the population that was previously excluded. | In Thailand, the building of the Thai Rak Thai political coalition during Thaksin Shinawatra's first term (2001–05) included new alliances with several small political parties and elite factions, primarily from outside of Bangkok. These alliances transformed Thai politics by consolidating political power in a single party after a decade of short-lived, unstable coalition governments. | SAcc may increase popular support for excluded factions and opposition parties. |
| A new alliance is formed between excluded groups and an elite faction | When an elite faction seeks an alliance with the leadership of a discontented minority and champions that minority's causes, it can generate pressure for adjustments in the political settlement. These alliances can be used by factions in the dominant coalition to strengthen positions in the current political settlement, or they can be used by excluded elites to press for inclusion in the settlement. In some cases, the impact may be greater inclusiveness and also greater instability—if other factions within the ruling coalition resist such change. In many cases, excluded elites will forge new alliances with the leadership of an emerging middle class, with an interest in broadening access to power and curtailing elite privileges. | The "People Power" movement in the Philippines in 1986 witnessed traditionally elite political families excluded from Ferdinand Marcos's authoritarian rule lead popular movements to challenge the political settlement established by Marcos. The critical turning point came in 1986 when key factions of the military joined forces with the popular movement led by Corazon Aquino. Initially, the settlement that emerged went through a period of significant instability, as elements of the old Marcos regime and some disenchanted military factions challenged the new political settlement through a series of attempted military coups. Under the subsequent administration of Fidel Ramos, the settlement stabilized considerably, allowing for steady improvements in economic growth and development. | SAcc might strengthen the voice of excluded groups and enhance linkages and organizations with excluded and pro-change elites. |

*(continued)*

**Table A2.1. The Ways in which Political Settlements Change and the Role for Social Accountability (cont.)**

| Main Driver of Change | Description | Example | Possible Role(s) for SAcc |
|---|---|---|---|
| **An influential new group emerges** | The emergence of a new elite faction or a well-organized, influential middle class has been an important factor in the evolution of political settlements in Asia. In many cases, the emergence of an independent, organized entrepreneurial class with access to resources has led to changes in key institutions and the emergence of new elite coalitions. | The rise of the private sector in India since the early 1990s has created new pressures on the traditional ruling elites to further relax state control of the Indian economy. In cases, this scenario can lead to improved development because the new elites have an interest in sustained economic growth and constraints on the power of traditional elites. | SAcc might contribute to checks-and-balances on the influential new groups. |
| **Nonelite groups mobilize around shared interests for reform** | There are occasions when nonelite groups can mobilize enough people to exert substantial pressure on elite coalitions to modify the political settlement. Occasionally, the leadership of these movements comes from the nonelite level, although it can be in alliance with elite groups. | Some political reforms in Indonesia after 1998 were made possible by the pressure generated by the mass mobilization of students and other nonelite groups. The political movement that led to the creation of Thailand's 1997 "People's Constitution" was primarily a product of civil society organizations supported by the Bangkok middle class, resulting in a revised national political settlement. | SAcc processes can contribute to the mobilization of "poor citizens" and nonelite groups. SAcc might also build on or contribute to existing movements for change. |
| **A state agency becomes powerful and independent of the settlement** | In many cases, the leadership of the military and powerful ministries are political actors themselves, becoming the dominant faction in a coalition reshaping the political settlement. A military coup is the most common example of this type of change in the political settlement. | In some cases, the resulting political settlement can drive a more rapid development process—as was the case in Thailand, Indonesia, Korea, and Taiwan in the 1970s and 1980s. In the post-Cold War era, imposed political settlements that emerged out of these circumstances were not usually sustainable over the long term. | Negligible, although SAcc may inadvertently strengthen/weaken certain parts of a "state." |
| **Changes in legitimacy of state or its leadership** | Public perceptions of the legitimacy of the state and its leadership have important implications for the resilience of a political settlement. As legitimacy erodes, potential opponents of the ruling coalition—especially excluded factions or factions within the ruling coalition—might see opportunities for changing the settlement. | Winning elections has become a widely-accepted source of legitimacy, although this depends on the country involved. In Indonesia, for example, since the 2004 election, the popular legitimacy of the Yudhoyono government helped to stabilize the political settlement. | SAcc activities may reshape public perceptions of state legitimacy contributing to change processes. |

*(continued)*

## Table A2.1. The Ways in which Political Settlements Change and the Role for Social Accountability (cont.)

| Main Driver of Change | Description | Example | Possible Role(s) for SAcc |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Changes in coercive capacity under the control of dominant elite coalition** | When the ruling coalition increases its coercive capacity and the threat to use that capacity becomes more credible, potential competitors might be forced to accede to changes in the settlement that favor the dominant elite faction. | Power-sharing agreements in Zimbabwe—and to some degree in Kenya—might be relevant examples. | Do "no harm" principles—SAcc activities may receive a coercive backlash; therefore, risks must be assessed. |
| **Alliance of excluded elites challenges current established ruling settlement** | When powerful excluded factions join forces to challenge the ruling coalition, it can lead to the collapse of the old settlement and the emergence of a new settlement. | One example is the 2006 agreement between the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the mainstream Nepali political parties to join forces in opposition to the narrow ruling coalition led by King Gyanendra and supported by the military. This agreement precipitated the end of the monarchy and the emergence of a new unstable, but still enduring, political settlement. | Be aware of the role of SAcc within such dynamics. SAcc may build linkages between excluded societal groups and excluded elites if they share a common interest in a progressive project. |
| **Outside force intervenes** | Often, when an outside power militarily intervenes against the ruling coalition, the current political settlement collapses. The external force may then strengthen the hand of one or more elite factions and broker a new settlement. | The 2001 military intervention by the United States and NATO allies in Afghanistan led to the collapse of the Taliban-led political settlement. However, the new political settlement that emerges from this type of event is often very unstable, especially when perceived to be a creation of the intervening power. | Explore ways that SAcc could contribute to conflict and postconflict reconstruction. |

*Source:* Adapted from Parks and Coles 2010.

# Annex 3. The Method for Developing Chapter 4's *If … Then* Framework

As outlined throughout this paper, the evidence does not lend itself to a strong understanding of what SAcc approaches should work in which contexts. So how did we go about building an *If … Then* framework? Some points are highlighted here.

## The Challenges

First, many SAcc interventions are undertaken without a contextual analysis as a baseline and without an impact evaluation controlling for contextual variation and comparisons across contexts. Further, few studies make clear their theories of change or sequencing through which outcomes are reached. As such, it is very difficult to make claims of causality or to know which contextual variable is decisive, especially because each contextual variable interacts with others and the intervention to produce outcomes.

Second, we sought to avoid the pitfall of drawing causal inferences from what are, in fact, correlations. For example, if a transparency intervention "X" worked well in South Africa and it was (retrospectively) deemed to have worked so well because of high political will, this does that mean that in contexts with high political will, transparency intervention "X" is likely to work—not least because a range of other endogenous and exogenous factors may be at play.

Third, some of the evidence is contradictory. For example, a high level of inequality has been shown to both facilitate and inhibit certain SAcc interventions in different contexts. It is, therefore, difficult to draw single causal lessons from these variables.

## Navigating Solutions

Nevertheless, it is possible—and arguably useful—to take some steps forward. Here are some details of how the challenges were navigated to generate the *If … Then* table:

- A number of cues for what might or might not work were taken from a rereading of a wide range of material that included, but was not limited to, relatively robust stock-takes of SAcc and the contextual factors that matter. These studies have, to differing degrees, already done some of the *legwork* of what works and what does not work in some contexts, and could at least provide hypotheses of what is more likely to work or not (see Tembo 2012; McGee and Gaventa 2011; Bukenya et al. 2011; Joshi and Houtzager 2012).

- It is also possible to employ some *reverse causality* in certain cases (i.e., it is often easier to think through what might not work and then work backward toward what is more likely to work). Many documented cases point toward failed or partially successful interventions that are judged to fail not because of their internal ineffectiveness, but because of their interaction with broader contextual factors. For example, "X" participatory intervention failed in Niger because the history of state-citizen bargaining and the prior experience of citizens with SAcc interventions was not conducive to making this intervention a success. One can then work backward and deduce that if presented with a context with similar conditions, one might benefit from eliminating X from their universe of options.
- Further, a degree of good judgment or *common sense* can be applied in certain cases. For example, if *information deficits* are identified in a given context as one barrier among others to enhanced accountability, then it is logical to explore measures to fill the deficit; if the capabilities of would-be participants are very low, then it makes sense to explore ways to build them in the intervention and/or calibrate expectations accordingly.
- The scenarios presented attempt to cover all domains of the framework offered in chapter 2. The scenarios that are outlined were selected on the basis of whether there was reasonably credible experience or evidence upon which to base suggestions for action. Moreover, an attempt was made to at least highlight one *enabling* and one *disabling* scenario under the same subdimension in order to give a broader—albeit far from exhaustive—range of food for thought.

# Notes

1. Notably, Tembo (2012) and Citizenship DRC (2011) have made attempts to address the issue of context and social accountability to different degrees. This paper has drawn on this work. However, this resource paper (and the background work) arguably goes further and deeper by attempting to more systematically explore the ways in which context influences SAcc.

2. As Gaventa and McGee (2011: 18) note, "… [we caution] against hastily drawn general conclusions from the existing evidence base, for a number of reasons … In some cases, the initiatives are very new, and accompanying impact studies are underway or just beginning, making it too early to detect or explain resulting impacts; many of the studies focus on only one initiative in one locality, precluding general conclusions, or permitting conclusions based only on limited anecdotal evidence; much literature focuses on the effectiveness of implementation of initiatives—on whether they were implemented as planned, not on their broader developmental or democratic outcomes."

3. Networks have been found to fulfil six main functions: (1) filtering—managing information and deciding what information is worth paying attention to; (2) amplifying—taking complex ideas and transferring them into a simple, broad-based one; (3) investing—providing members with the resources needed to carry out their activities; (4) convening—bringing together different individuals and groups; (5) community-building—promoting and sustaining shared values and ideas across the network; and (4) facilitating—enabling network members to carry out their activities more effectively and efficiently (for example, Porte and Yeo 2004; ODI 2010).

4. Indeed, *elites* are not independent from underlying societal dynamics because there is a social basis of institutional and political power that render these actors *elite* in the first place (Almond 1990: 24). As DiJohn and Putzel put it, looking at the settlement also draws attention to "contention and bargaining between elites and non-elites (either within groups or across them, as between classes), inter-group contention and bargaining (gender, regional, ethnic/linguistic, religious) and on contention and bargaining between those who occupy the state and society more widely" (Di John and Putzel 2009). As such, this domain should not be viewed in isolation from state-society and intra-society relations, (outlined below), even if it is worth separate attention.

5. Change in the settlement happens when there is a change in the common understanding of how power should be exercised and represents shifts, "… in the accepted norms of political behavior, usually brought about by gradual changes in political dynamics or shifting interests of powerful actors" (Parks and Cole 2010: 12).

6. A highly inclusive settlement is seen as one that includes most, if not all, political elites and their constituents and has a high level of legitimacy across a broad range of societal actors (Putzel 2007). To understand the inclusiveness of a given settlement, one would need to examine—on a case-by-case basis—the real distribution of entitlements across groups in the society. Assessing the extent to which a settlement is or is not sufficiently inclusive is often a matter of debate.

7. Moreover, low institutional capacity is often driven, to differing degrees, by political choices, drawing attention once again to the role of the political settlement (Desai 2011).

8. The social contract has typically referred to the element of state formation by which the state comes to act to protect people—through law and order, services, infrastructure, and so on—in return for their commitment to the state, including a willingness to finance it through taxation (for example, CPRC 2008). A social contract may constitute agreements between states and citizens which are forged during seminal political moments, or a *contract* may form incrementally over time (for example, protection from famine in India or other forms of social protection). One might break the contract down along the lines of a *primary* and *secondary* contract. The primary contract refers to the overarching state-citizen contract and the *secondary* contract might refer to local agreements on specific goods and sectors (Houtzager and Joshi 2008). As Houtzager and Joshi (2008) note, "… what is expected by citizens and what states are prepared to commit to delivering varies according to the particular goods and services under discussion, to their level of popular and political importance … and the history of state-society bargaining around them."

9. Some key elements for understanding the form of a *contract* in a given context include (1) how citizen entitlements to different resources have been distributed over time and on what basis; (2) formal and constitutional provisions around the delivery of certain goods; (3) informal and reciprocal agreements and expectations, including perceptions and narratives of the legitimacy of public authority and action around certain issues; (4) the presence or absence of popular pressure around certain public goods; and (5) the history of state-citizen bargaining (for example, Bukenya et al. 2012; Hickey

2011). Different forms of contract may emerge depending in part on the balance and interaction between democratic and more clientelist forms of politics. For example, forms of contract exist and can emerge in contexts characterized largely by patron-client politics, such as in Uganda (Bukenya et al. 2012).

10. A more formal institutional perspective views accountability as enshrined in the formal institutions of state sovereignty; a more informal perspective puts an emphasis on whether institutions are actually legitimized by and accountable to the social and political foundations of political and economic elites and society.

11. As Tembo (2012: v) notes: "These [state-citizen] relations are, in themselves, a complex web of formal and informal interactions that are difficult to disentangle and explain. This complexity increases even further when the multiple external relations, interests and influences in the specific state citizen relations targeted in CV&A [citizen voice and accountability] projects are taken into account. All these internal and external relations mean that CV&A project interventions produce and reproduce diverse outcomes which are not amenable to the linear models of ToCs."

12. The term "Neo-Gramscian" refers to a broad school of thought that has drawn on, and adapted, the writings of the Italian theorist and political leader Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci was a founding member and onetime leader of the Communist Party of Italy and was imprisoned by Benito Mussolini's regime.

13. As Booth (2011: 3) sums up: "An implication of best fit at the level of regime types is that external actors base their decisions and their policy dialogue on a thorough understanding of the prevailing institutional arrangements. They then lend their support to those aspects of the set-up that work well enough for development, rather than applying prefabricated norms and expectations. That may mean taking their cues from the country's citizens, and what they find acceptable … for example, that less-than-perfect standards of transparency and accountability are often considered acceptable so long as there is peace, development is visible and the distribution of benefits among the various segments of society is perceived as broadly fair …."

14. In this approach to *practical hybrids*, Booth (2012) elaborates that the provision of some types of public goods will be enhanced by institutions that are locally anchored, in two senses. First, they will be problem-solving, in a collective action sense, in the relevant context. Second, they will be hybrids that make some use of local cultural repertoires. Booth (2012: xi) also argues that, in the African context "the 'grain' of popular demand in contemporary Africa is not a desire for 'traditional' institutions, but rather for modern state structures that have been adapted to, or infused with, contemporary local values."

15. As outlined by Joshi (2008), the approach draws attention to four kinds of processes: (1) the processes of reforms of state institutions; (2) the impacts of state institutions on collective actors interested in specific policy arenas; (3) the *fit* between collective actors with specific goals and the points of access and leverage afforded by political institutions; and (4) the path dependence of policies and social action (Skocpol 1992: 41 cited in Joshi 2010: 15).

16. Despite the growing prominence of political settlements in emerging efforts to rethink aid policy, there is limited experience in operationalizing these concepts, and limited guidance is available (see Levy 2011).

17. There are also different forms of social contract theory, from more liberal-economistic contracts to more social democratic/rights-based contracts (Hickey 2011).

18. A DFID publication (2010: 64), for instance argues the following: "Look beyond a narrow concept of 'pro-poor' to support middle class political engagement. The urban middle classes play a particularly critical role in driving forward progressive and stabilising reforms. Too narrow a focus on 'the poor' tends to overlook the central role of the non-poor, non-elite groups that are really driving forward progressive long-term sustainable 'pro-poor' reforms. When organised, the middle classes—such as in professional associations of accountants, doctors or lawyers—combine organizational capacities and technical expertise to influence governments effectively to improve security, service delivery, and other development aims. They provide the bulk of the resources and capacities required to support a vibrant civil society (such as NGOs and social movements). It is usually broad based coalitions, not just 'the poor' or 'civil society,' which bring about change. On the other hand, professional bodies which are not closely linked to the grassroots may never achieve reforms that make concrete improvements to the lives of those directly affected."

19. To download country-level indicators on governance and the demand-side, see the section on 'actionable governance indicators' on 'demand for good governance' at the following site: https://www.agidata.org/Site/Reports.aspx.

20. To download country-level indicators on governance and the "demand-side," see the section on 'actionable governance indicators' at the following site: https://www.agidata.org/Site/Reports.aspx.

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