GPSA Knowledge Platform - What works for social accountability? Findings from DFID’s Macro Evaluation

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Macro evaluation materials:

Policy Brief What works for social accountability? Findings from DFID’s Macro Evaluation
Reader-friendly blog on what works for social accountability? Findings from DFID’s Macro Evaluation

About DFID’s macro evaluations

Questions:

pat scheid: would be helpful if you could talk more about how SA led to improved services and the types of improvements you looked at. what chain of events or types of demands were most likely to lead to change? also, have you looked at whether the types of changes put in place are those that are more likely to lead to changes in health and education outcomes over the long term? interested to know which programs were most effective in getting the most important service changes, those more likely to affect outcomes in the longer term, done.

This is a difficult one to answer in brief! Best to read the Policy Brief and then dive into the two volumes of the macro evaluation report for more detail.

pat scheid: oops! wondering whether you have findings about what types of information or combinations of information are most important in getting people’s attention and govt/service provider response

When developing the evaluation methodology, we did not particularly distinguish between different types of information. However, analyses of different hypotheses concluded that information about entitlements plays an important role in mobilising both citizens and service providers.

Under hypotheses 3 and 4, we found that awareness-raising about the entitlements and rights of marginalised groups contributed to achieving improved services for such groups. Similarly, Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) of 20 projects for hypothesis 6 showed that improving citizens’ knowledge of their entitlements is necessary to achieve increased formal citizen engagement with service providers. This was for example the case in the RGCF/COPE programme in Bangladesh, which expanded entitlement sets at the policy level and then used those to mobilise citizens to claim their entitlements and hold service providers and local officials to account. Rights and entitlements of Dalits and women are cases in point.
rachel dixon: Hi there, Rachel from United Purpose. I was wondering whether the evaluation was able to show whether any DFID guidelines/principles/goals had an impact on the impact/success of the projects? Ie was there any comparison to other donors or approaches?

No, the macro evaluation focused on drawing out learning from DFID’s empowerment and accountability portfolio only.

SueSadler: Was there any evidence that social accountability processes were perceived as confrontational? or alternatively, collaborative/mutual? If so did this influence perceived efficacy?

As part of the evaluation, we differentiated between what we called formal and informal citizen engagement. We defined formal citizen engagement as a more collaborative form of engagement which occurs in invited forums that are officially established. Informal citizen engagement was understood as uninvited and taking place outside of officially established forums, often with a more confrontational character.

The evaluation results did not provide a strong indication that one type of engagement is more effective than the other. This is partially due to weak evidence. Informal citizen engagement is often not directly supported by DFID programmes, occurs spontaneously, and doesn’t get captured well in reports, limiting our ability to draw robust conclusions on the relative effectiveness of such forms of social accountability. Overall, depending on the hypothesis tested, we found evidence of effectiveness of both informal and formal citizen engagement.

Under hypotheses 2a and 2b of the evaluation report, we found that there was a key role for formal citizen engagement in improving local service delivery. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) of 41 projects concluded that formal citizen engagement tends to be more effective than informal citizen engagement in achieving improved service delivery. However, in some cases we also identified a complementary role for informal citizen engagement in contributing to these improvements. This was particularly the case in the PATHS 2 project in Nigeria, where we found clear evidence that the two approaches were mutually reinforcing each other.

Under hypothesis 5, QCA of 19 cases showed that in the context of a weak social contract, greater local-level responsiveness is best achieved via informal citizen action and media oversight. However, there was also some illustrative evidence that in some weak social contract contexts, formal citizen engagement can be more important than informal citizen engagement. This was the case in Rwanda, where the controlled civil society space made it more effective to focus on formal, mandated, citizen engagement, most successfully through implementing a community scorecard and related dialogue meetings between citizens and local government or service providers.
Suchi Pande: Please, can you reflect more on the challenges related to quality of DFID's data-- is it the case that DFID’s data is incomplete, vague, and what steps is DFID taking to improve their own data collection and management?

There were two main challenges we faced using DFID’s project data for the macro evaluation. Firstly, we were using data in ways it was never foreseen to be used and therefore had not been collected with this purpose in mind. Our sources of data included DFID business cases (used to approve projects internally), project reports, which report progress against logframe targets amongst other things, and DFID annual review and project completion reports, again reporting against the logframe. All of these documents tend to be process oriented, and less focused on digging into causality. Secondly, the quality of evaluations – where they exist – varied considerably and they didn’t always provide the kind of rigour of insight around causality one might hope for. DFID is aware of some of the challenges associated with ensuring quality evaluations and has services to quality assure some of them. As for DFID’s routine monitoring services, we did feedback on some of the challenges and gaps, but do not have any information on how DFID has responded.

Rachel Gondo: 1. could you share insights on the specific role monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems played in identifying these SA lessons...what do/did they look like?

The macro evaluation findings are based on project data drawn from DFID’s management information system. As such, the evaluation draws on project monitoring and learning systems, as well as DFID corporate learning systems which might initiate a project or programme evaluation. The main insight from an extensive review of the data available is that there is limited attention to causality when describing changes which a project has contributed to. This is not surprising for routine monitoring systems but should be covered in most evaluations. See response to the above question for further details.

Sokchan Phoeurn: I am Sokchan from Cambodia, I want to know more about sustainability of social accountability in the sub-national government?

This was an interesting case study of the Kenya Accountable Devolution Programme (2012-15). This programme integrated SAcc into constitutionally-mandated devolution in Kenya. For more information I would direct you to Case Study 3 in Vol 2 of the Macro Evaluation report.

Sokchan Phoeurn: You talking about integration of social accountability into sub-national democratic development, the question is can government manage both supply-side and demand-side? it's possible?

The Kenya Accountable Devolution Programme (2012-15) is also relevant here.
Janet Oropeza: Can you give an example of how social media was used effectively?

Please see Case study 3 (Kenya Accountable Devolution Programme) and Case Study 6 (Foundation for Civil Society Project, Tanzania) in Volume 2 of the Macro evaluation report.

judith: Thanks for sharing. Question How was social media used in Kenya? In what ways was the supply side supported for better results?

Please see Case study 3 on the Kenya Accountable Devolution Programme

pat sched: on question of taking SA to scale - does this study feature any case studies on where that was done well? that would be helpful to have/share with the field. Elizabeth Moses: Do you have any examples of specific projects that were successful in scaling their work? Were there any common drivers and factors?

The Bangladesh Rights and Governance Challenge Fund is the best example of this, combining work on enabling policy environment with locally embedded support to civil society entitlement claiming. It’s Case Study 1 in Volume 2 of the Macro Evaluation report.

Tyler Farrow: Any insights on the capacity of marginalized citizens to engage in social accountability initiatives?

See above case study 1 Bangladesh RGCF: Support to rights awareness and collective action amongst landless and dalit communities combined with social awareness campaigns provide highly effective.

Edward DeMarco: I'm cross-sector democracy and governance advisor for USAID in Zambia... where decentralization/devolution is a major policy aim. Did you find any examples of strong integration of SA in context of decentr/devo of services to local authorities?

See above case study 3, the Kenya Accountable Devolution Programme.

TR lansner: Many thanks! I would be glad to hear any more on the media and communications aspects, particularly the social media impact in the Kenya case cited...

See above case study 3, the Kenya Accountable Devolution Programme.