

### 3. Empowerment through local citizenship

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*Poor people live their daily lives at the local level where they engage with the state, public services, markets and the political system. Their empowerment requires participation and accountability in local governance and decision making through effective and inclusive local citizenship. Supporting inclusion requires an understanding of existing power relationships and the practical obstacles to participation faced by poor people. Public sector decentralisation is an important opportunity for empowerment through increased accountability for public expenditure allocations and local delivery of pro-poor policies. Capacity development, for both communities and citizens, must promote leadership and facilitation, communication, advocacy and political skills. Widely available, transparent and substantive information is a critical but easily achievable first step in capacity development. All development aid modalities can support local empowerment and donors should co-ordinate to identify and maximise opportunities for empowerment at the local level.*

### Key messages

- ***Empowerment only happens locally:*** Poor people live their lives at the local level, this is where they engage on a daily basis with the state, public services, markets and the political system. Their empowerment requires participation and accountability in local governance and decision-making – effective and inclusive local citizenship.
- ***Inclusion of poor people is critical for success and requires specific action:*** This means understanding and addressing the existing power relationships and the practical livelihood obstacles, such as costs and lost labour that combine to exclude poor people from participatory decision-making processes.
- ***Public sector decentralisation is a key opportunity for empowerment:*** Local government fiscal processes can be redesigned so that poor people have a voice in more transparent planning and budgeting processes. Resource allocation can be linked to the proper functioning of statutory local government consultative and accountability processes and the local delivery of national pro-poor policies.
- ***Strengthen capacity on both the demand and supply side of accountability:*** Capacity development must promote leadership and facilitation, communication, advocacy and political skills among communities and citizens. Building the public sector’s ability to respond and deliver accountability is critical but actions here must be accompanied by strong incentives. Widely available, transparent and substantive information is a critical but easily achievable first step in capacity development.
- ***Development happens locally and all development aid can support local empowerment:*** All aid modalities and donor funded development result in investments, services or change processes at local level. Donors should co-ordinate to identify and maximise opportunities for empowerment through their different aid modalities and instruments to promote the systematic empowerment of those living in poverty.

## Introduction

This Good Practice Note aims to provide guidance on how to achieve the “empowerment of people in poverty through effective and inclusive citizenship at the local level”. It maps out how more inclusive local politics can help people who live in poverty overcome the obstacles that keep them poor. In the broadest sense of the word, local politics:

- involves the power relationships that influence local resource management and affect people’s lives and livelihoods; and
- relates to groups within the community, the community as a whole and the local government.

This paper addresses the linked challenges for donors of:

1. understanding the dynamics of non-inclusive citizenship at the local level; and
2. fostering processes that redress these dynamics.

with the objective of supporting poor people to gain meaningful access (*i.e.* access leading to change) to *local social* networks and organisations (self-help organisations, customary institutions, economic interest groups etc.) and to *local political* decision-making processes (*e.g.* local government planning and budgeting processes, land allocation, natural resource management).

*Why is this important?*

**Empowerment:** happens when people, individually or collectively, conceive of, define and pursue better lives for themselves. From a Pro-Poor Growth perspective, poor women and men need to change existing power relations and gain and exert influence over the political, economic and social processes that determine and, all too often, constrain their livelihood opportunities.

Powerlessness is a critically important aspect of poverty; the opposite of powerlessness, *empowerment*, is both a goal in itself and a means for people to overcome the obstacles that prevent them from moving out of poverty.

**Pro-poor growth** is economic growth occurring at a pace and with a pattern such that this enhances the ability of poor people to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from growth.

Empowerment is both a condition for, and a result of, pro-poor growth. This Good Practice Note highlights how donors can support pro-poor growth through fostering empowerment processes at local level.

Empowerment through effective citizenship *at local level* is important for pro-poor growth and poverty reduction. It is at the local level that people living in poverty engage on a day-to-day basis in relationships with other local actors, and are confronted most directly with the power differentials that inhibit their ascent out of poverty.

The local level is where development policy becomes reality through implementation. Poor people face obstacles such as limited access to basic social services and economic opportunities. Social and political empowerment at local level can be a means to overcome these obstacles.

Established social practices, local hierarchies and traditional power differentials frequently dis-empower those living in poverty. Development interventions become more effective when they involve pro-poor changes in the intensely political local economic governance (*e.g.* management of collective assets such as land; decision-making over access to fertilizer, or market stall space) and in local development priorities (*e.g.* the construction of one satellite school in a remote, poorer part of the community instead of expanding the main school in the central, richer area).

Empowerment at the local level can be a stepping stone toward empowerment at a higher level. When people become confident in their ability to change *local* policies or overcome *local* obstacles, they may subsequently feel empowered to tackle challenges at a wider, possibly regional or national, level. Empowerment in the management of basic services can lead to engagement in more political processes. For instance, water supply management through the formation of a female-led water user committee can enhance women's status more generally in the community.

## Effective and inclusive citizenship

A citizen is someone with rights, aspirations and responsibilities in relation to other social and economic actors and to the state. Empowerment through local citizenship of people in poverty is about changing who has *decision-making power* and who has a *voice* at the *local level*. *Effective and inclusive local citizenship* means that all people can *participate* in local decision making processes and hold others to *account*. In ideal situations, *individual citizens* should be able to participate. Experience shows that marginalised people gain much from organising themselves into groups in order to use their collective bargaining power to greater effect.

### *Ingredients*

#### Participation

For pro-poor growth policies to emerge, poor people need to be informed and empowered to participate in a policy-making process that is accountable to them. They need to have the tools and opportunities to participate in, and *influence*, the decisions that are made at local level, and which impact on their daily lives. Promoting the participation of marginalised groups involves changing existing *power* relations, both the visible and the invisible ones. Participating in local government budget discussions is not enough if the existing powers are drafting the budget proposals and setting the agenda for the debate.

#### Accountability

Participation is only effective when the institutions of the state respond. Consultation without due recognition of power and politics will lead to *voice without influence*. The critical challenge is for citizens, particularly the excluded and marginalised, to be able to influence policies and institutions, and for these in turn to become more accountable to them, and act in their best interest. It is not only government institutions that need to be accountable to the poor. *Local politics* also involves a multiplicity of local entities (e.g. rural producers' organisations, market stall owners, wholesale buyers and sellers, semi-state enterprises) operating at the interface between state, market and society in an environment characterised by blurred boundaries between the sectors and unclear lines of responsibility.

#### Inclusiveness

Effective participation and accountability mechanisms require the direct involvement of poor and marginalised people. Many factors drive poverty and exclusion. Gender inequality, religion, membership of social or ethnic groups, regions in which they live as well as their material wellbeing all affect people's access, status and influence in *local politics*. Facing exclusion and discrimination, people living in poverty may be too alienated or oppressed to seize new opportunities to act. Women (or men) may not be willing to participate, or work alongside the opposite sex. Designing in *inclusiveness* in empowerment strategies is crucial and may require different interventions to accommodate all marginalised groups.

### *Challenges*

The *local level* is sometimes seen as a level at which voice/participation and accountability are easier to "get right". Yet there are complex challenges to *effective and inclusive local citizenship* that donors need to be aware of. For donors, an analysis of the

factors that drive inequality and poverty is important to provide the basis for designing and adapting strategies to the relevant local context.

### *Fluid boundaries and informal mechanisms*

The boundaries between state, society and market are particularly fluid at the local level. For example, in an Ethiopian sub-district 10% of the population sit on the elected local council making it perhaps more a community organisation than government. On the other hand the sub-district leader is elected by the community but is directly accountable to the district administrator. In this case it is difficult to say where the boundary between *community* and *local government* lies. Providing support to an entity that appears *community-based* but is in fact government-controlled, can further entrench patterns of informal relationships and loyalties that may be keeping poor people in poverty.

The involvement of local administrations in licensing and regulating agricultural markets (e.g. nominating designated commodity buyers) and the influence of public expenditure programmes (e.g. purchases of school furniture or the supply or sale of agricultural inputs and products) blur the distinction between state and market and can give rise to diverse and contradictory interests and influences.

### *Power within the community*

The power relationships at play in communities are rarely beneficial to people in poverty. Changing the status quo requires finding ways of avoiding various forms of local *elite capture*. In many rural contexts, *community participation* translates in reality into participation of older, land-owning and better-off men; and traditional *dispute resolution* mechanisms favour men over women and older people over younger. Local patterns of power that may keep people in poverty are particularly difficult to challenge as many are deeply embedded in the local history and norms – thus strongly internalised and almost invisible. It takes great sensitivity to tackle these traditional hierarchies in a way that becomes acceptable to all members of a community.

Nevertheless, when an acceptable solution is negotiated, it can have a long-lasting positive effect. Support from customary elites may be crucial in legitimising local pro-poor mobilisation processes, and their support makes the new status quo sustainable (e.g. the Ngorongoro pastoralist land movement was strongly backed by customary mutual restocking committees).

Even in a very small community “the poor” are not a homogeneous group. They confront multiple and varied drivers and manifestations of deprivation and exclusion. There is a need to recognise the diversity of their concerns and interests and of their highly individualised strategies of alliance and resistance. This, in turn, requires striking a balance, at times promoting approaches in which different groups of people in poverty develop alliances to act collectively in larger numbers; at other times highlighting the necessity of different actions for different groups.

### *The representation of marginalised groups at local level*

How poor people are represented within the community, at the local government level and at higher levels is critical to the extent that they *can actively participate in local decision-making processes*. Special measures such as quotas on local elected bodies or in community groups can lead to greater representation of marginalised groups. Before such

a measure is suggested, issues of correct targeting and the acceptability of the person(s) for whom a quota is created need to be considered. The reservation of seats for Dalits in India (in effect for decades) or the many cases of quotas for political representation of women in local political bodies are examples of successful targeting. Better developed and more inclusive political parties, denser civil society, higher literacy and education levels, reforms of the electoral system, and support to broad-based cross-party caucuses have all been proven to have a positive effect on a quota system for the representation of the marginalised (UNIFEM, 2008).

Targeted approaches, focusing organisation and mobilisation efforts on groups that have a shared profile and strong common interests, can be very effective and may be necessary to foster empowerment of certain vulnerable groups. The Self-Employed Women Association (SEWA) in India managed to obtain far-reaching empowering policy changes by targeting the poor women working in the informal sector and helping them to form their own organisations (Box 3.3).

### *Decentralisation doesn't always increase accountability*

In decentralised countries, the *nature* of the relationship between central and local authorities is critical. Successful decentralisation requires a strong but enabling centre, genuinely committed to devolving both decision making powers and commensurate resources. Donors can contribute by supporting the institution of a clear decentralisation framework, which grants sufficient autonomy to local authorities; provides resources that match their mandates; instils effective upward and downward accountability, as well as ensuring technical support from central and regional government levels.

The *political* nature of the link between the central government and local government also matters enormously. Where local and national elites collude, decentralisation is unlikely to be pro-poor and empowering. Donors can play a role in supporting the empowerment of poor citizens to fight nepotism, and to claim their right to participate in decentralised local decision making. Under the right circumstances, for example where electoral reform and democratisation is making progress, a situation can be created in which more political capital is to be gained from acting to the *benefit* of poor people than from colluding or embezzling – a *positive politicisation* of poverty reduction.

## **Good practice for donors**

Donors cannot empower citizens; they can only encourage the conditions under which more effective citizenship can develop (Eyben and Ladbury, 2006). The obstacles faced by people in poverty to act as effective citizens at the local level are multiple and multi-faceted. Many arise from the challenges identified in the previous section, challenges which are *potential* entry points for donor support, such as:

- supporting participation and accountability at local level;
- ensuring the inclusion of people in poverty;
- supporting decentralised local government to empower citizens;
- building capacity for greater empowerment; and
- making the broader environment more enabling.



Donors can promote empowerment through local citizenship by supporting capacity development; by facilitating changes in attitudes and relationships between the disempowered, powerful local actors and state bodies; and identifying and seizing opportunities to pilot innovative empowerment approaches and supporting their institutionalisation when successful. Donors can also work on the broad legal and policy framework that supports empowerment, letting processes be driven by local stakeholders. In addition, donors have a specific role to play in emphasising inclusiveness at the national level and helping to find ways of reaching out to the most vulnerable.

### ***Supporting participation and accountability at local level***

Supporting participation and accountability at local level involves fostering a diversity of approaches and encouraging critical reflection and learning. The multiplicity of local contexts, and the opportunities or threats that may arise, mean that ongoing innovation is critical to success throughout programme implementation. To remain relevant, successful participation and accountability approaches must evolve along with the context that they help to change.

The most successful participation and accountability interventions are gradual, long-term, and flexible in design. A winning intervention can be one that seizes an opportunity as it presents itself – having access to small “pots of money” to act within a matter of days can therefore be critical. For example, when the Government of Pakistan in 2000 decided to have quotas for women to be elected to local governments, DFID was able to immediately deploy support to a national network of NGOs that encouraged women to do so. This made a significant difference to the number of women who were elected (Payne and Neville, 2006).

### ***Working simultaneously on several fronts***

Supporting citizen participation *and* state accountability mechanisms simultaneously – “working both sides of the equation” – through a combination of approaches (*e.g.* formal political channels *and* informal ones) can be doubly effective. The role of donors as political actors has been extensively debated (Moore, 2001; Mosse, 2004; Menocal Rocha and Sharma, 2008; GSDRC, 2009). Supporting the empowerment of people who live in poverty can, at times, be politically sensitive. The “working on both sides of the equation” approach avoids donors being seen as undermining government structures through parallel/independent support to civil society.

It therefore makes particular sense for donors to support the strengthening of local government accountability procedures and at the same time support other actors to take advantage of these. This also allows donors to actively support the development of closer understanding and complementary working relations between local government and CSOs/NGOs where this is feasible (*e.g.* in the PBS in Ethiopia, see Box 3.1). illustrates ways of building such synergistic support.

However, at times it is simply not feasible to build constructive relationships with all stakeholders. For instance, donors supporting the Jharkhand Save the Forest movement in India have found it impossible so far to “accommodate” the state Forest Department, which refuses to envisage change.<sup>1</sup> In these cases it is important to start with a narrower partnership, but remain alert and open to opportunities to expand to a more inclusive approach, if political or administrative changes allow it.

### Box 3.1. Promoting participation and accountability on several fronts simultaneously

- In Ethiopia a group of donors support decentralised service delivery through funding merged with the government’s block grant transfers to districts (decentralised budget support). In addition, they support participation and accountability at local level through twin components: there is support to strengthen local government systems’ financial transparency and accountability (*e.g.* lay person’s budget templates, other more conventional public financial management measures), while a “social accountability” component aims to strengthen the capacity of citizens’ and local CSOs to engage in public budgeting processes and hold local governments to account for basic services. This is all rolled into one “Protecting Basic Services” programme but different donors support different mixes of components.
- In Brazil, the multi-donor Gender and Race programme provided support to the National Women’s Bureau to strengthen *gender and social exclusion disaggregated data collection and analysis*; and supported the Ministry of Agrarian Reform to develop systems using this data to better target initiatives (*e.g.* the provision of identity cards to poor black women). In parallel, support was provided for NGOs to train local governments on gender budgeting and for CSOs to raise women’s awareness of these initiatives at community level

*Source:* Payne, L. and S. Neville (2006), “Aid Instruments, Social Exclusion and Gender”, background paper for DFID’s internal guidance on Aid Instruments, Social Development Direct, March.

#### *Working with the right local partners*

Donors need to strike a balance between working “with the grain”, with local and other actors as they are and recognising that some degree of commitment to “progressive change” is required from potential partners. Sometimes committed partners are already on the ground – as in the case of the lawyers’ association which advised the Hyolmo community in Nepal in its opposition to the construction of a dam on their land.<sup>2</sup> In other instances this is not the case, and donors have to choose partners carefully to ensure inclusive representation of all marginalised groups by partner CSOs/NGOs. At the local level, it may make sense to build on existing institutions and organisations, as in the case of the customary mutual restocking committees in Ngorongoro, which played a critical role in legitimising the community-based organisations (CBOs) formed to address the land use rights issues. At the same time, donors need to be careful not to undermine these structures by diverting them from the role and functions that conferred them their legitimacy in the first place.

When donors step in they have to be willing to support “grassroots-shaped agendas” rather than their own, as donors have done in their support of the Indian Slum Dwellers Federation (Box 3.2). Trust must be mutual and donors must behave as trustworthy partners, notably in terms of continuity and predictability of their support.

Donors can play a part in improving the effectiveness of local NGO/CSOs by supporting the development of regulatory instruments aimed at strengthening their accountability, such as the CSO Minimum Agenda, Quality Assurance Certification Mechanism and toolkit for civil society accountability<sup>3</sup> in Uganda. This practice, and similar efforts which are made through worldwide NGO initiatives,<sup>4</sup> should be encouraged where possible.

Donors may prefer not to provide direct support to local level organisations and instead use funding intermediaries, in many cases international NGOs that in turn support local partners. Appropriate management approaches are critical to the success of these



mechanisms. Micro-management undermines flexibility and adherence to donor-driven strategies may weaken the accountability of partner NGOs to their members or target groups. Management systems that allow for multi-annual partnership-based framework programmes, in which partner NGOs have significant flexibility, seem particularly well suited to the type of activities that can foster the empowerment of people living in poverty. DFID’s Partnership Programme Agreements and Irish Aid’s Multi-Annual Programme Scheme are two examples of such arrangements.

### Box 3.2. The Indian Slum Dwellers Federation (SDI)

SDI is an international alliance with national networks of slum dwellers in 33 countries. The majority of its members are poor urban households who squat on vacant land in order to access urban jobs. SDI believes that land, housing and basic infrastructure (water and sanitation, refuse clearance, and electricity) are vital to promoting pro-poor growth. SDI is focused on the local needs of slum dwellers, and aims to advance the common agenda of creating “pro-poor” cities that integrate rather than marginalise the interests of slum dwellers. SDI feels that slum/shack communities and their federations produce solutions in “diametrically opposite way to how professionals do. Financing, communicating and scaling up these solutions requires acceptance that their ways of working are effective. Donors need to appreciate the time it takes for groups of people in poverty to mobilise. They must not treat community participation as a short-term strategy to attain external goals”. SDI has successfully created alliances in 28 countries in the global south, and receives support from a variety of NGOs and donor agencies. The organisation guards its independence fiercely and ensures that the slum dwellers who are at the centre of their organisation lead all policies and interventions.

*Source:* Various stories, among them [www.impactalliance.org/ev\\_en.php?ID=49485\\_201&ID2=DO\\_TOPIC](http://www.impactalliance.org/ev_en.php?ID=49485_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC).

### ***Supporting social accountability***

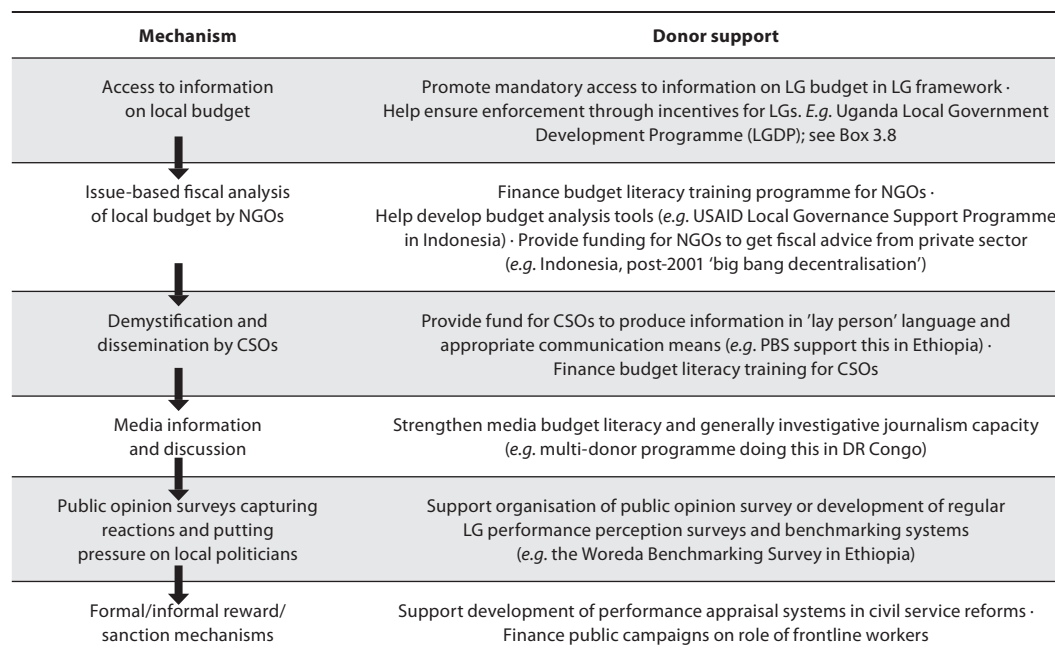
The development and use of practical social accountability mechanisms is an essential element for programmes that promote the empowerment of poor people in the citizen-state relationship

Social accountability can be defined as an approach towards building accountability that relies on civic engagement, where ordinary citizens and/or civil society organisations participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability. Mechanisms of social accountability can be initiated and supported by the state, citizens or both, but very often they are demand-driven and operate from the bottom up (Malena, Forster and Singh, 2004; Arroyo and Sirker, 2005; GIZ,<sup>5</sup> 2009). A wide range of social accountability tools exists and many are well suited for the local level (Figure 3.1).

Social accountability tools can have different aims: public agenda-setting, policy-making and planning, budgeting and reviewing public expenditure and delivery and oversight of public services. Tools include: citizen-centred advocacy & information, citizen-based participatory monitoring and evaluation, citizen-based social audits, anti-corruption bodies, complaint and appeal bodies, Citizen Report Cards, Community Score Cards, Ombudsman, participatory policy making, participatory planning and budgeting, public expenditure tracking, budget conferences, user committees, oversight committees and citizens advisory boards, participatory local governance assessments, etc.

In addition to piloting, building capacities and ensuring inclusiveness, donors can facilitate the development of social accountability *processes* which link several tools, as demonstrated in Figure 3.1. Donors can support social accountability mechanisms by promoting their links with local government systems, for example, by ensuring that Citizen Report Cards get discussed by district councils, or by linking funding increases to enhanced school performance or improved staff attitude in health centres. An example of how a simple link led to effective social accountability is found in Uganda, with the performance-based system of the Local Government Development Programme (LGDP), see Box 3.8.

Figure 3.1. **Social accountability process through linking several mechanisms**



Complementarity is important to prevent social accountability mechanisms from undermining mandated local government accountability processes. Social accountability approaches can be used to make the conventional statutory participation and accountability processes of local governments more effective and empowering for citizens and their representatives. For instance, the results of mandatory local government audits can be translated into lay person's language and made available.

Finally, donors can help to make social accountability inclusive in several ways. They can prioritise support to social accountability mechanisms focusing particularly on issues of importance to people living in poverty. For instance, involving beneficiaries in systematically tracking the delivery of cash and food transfers, such as those delivered under the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia, would help reduce delays in delivery, increase their predictability and make the programme more transparent to its target group, thereby strengthening the potential empowering effect of the programme.

### ***Making the local budget accountable to citizens***

Opening up local governments' fiscal processes to local citizens can lead to real changes in resource allocations, as in the well-known example of Porto Alegre in Brazil (Box 3.3). In successful cases citizens' participation can lead to greater empowerment of people living poverty, which in turn can lead to further pro-poor development.

### Box 3.3. Porto Alegre, Brazil

Porto Alegre is the first and best-known example of what has since become a wide range of participatory budgeting processes. In 1988 “progressive” social groups and the recently elected “left-of-centre” government came together to develop the Porto Alegre participatory budgeting process. The system, now institutionalised, has been maintained throughout changes in government.

Important features of the Porto Alegre model include:

- grassroots democracy through citizens’ general assemblies (one (wo)man, one vote) determining priorities for the use of the municipal budget;
- social justice through an allocation formula aimed at helping lagging areas to catch up;
- citizen control through a Council of Participatory Budget (elected by the general assembly) meeting regularly, co-planning with the administration and involved in the allocation of public contracts; and
- cadre of (initially) party activists bringing technical capacity to citizens’ analysis and scrutiny, and linking up with marginalised groups that otherwise might not feel confident enough to engage in the process (later on institutionalised in a cadre of facilitators independent from the municipality).

This system, in which citizens are given the power to jointly decide about the budget, is quite rarely applied elsewhere. In the case of Porto Alegre it created a strong sense of solidarity: “when you find yourself deciding together with others, you begin to think about the welfare of the entire community... You increase your sense of solidarity”. The allocation formula and the focus of the cadre of facilitators on the marginalised groups, which underlined and strengthened the importance of the social justice objectives, are also not always replicated in other systems. Together, these features contributed to make Porto Alegre participatory budgeting pro-poor and supporting the empowerment of people living in poverty in the municipality, something that other processes don’t always succeed in doing. Note that there are other factors that were very important too, such as a mindset and commitment to support pro-poor change more generally on the side of the government, the ruling party, and broader society.

*Source:* Adapted from Logolink 2004, *Resources, Citizen Engagements and Democratic Local Governance (ReCitE): A Topic Guide – Workshop Documents Series*, Prepared for the International Workshop on Resources, Citizen Engagements and Democratic Local Governance, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 5-9 Dec, 2004 ([www2.ids.ac.uk/logolink/resources/Recite\\_topicguide.htm](http://www2.ids.ac.uk/logolink/resources/Recite_topicguide.htm)).

Donors can contribute to making local budgets more accountable by supporting the inclusion of participatory budgeting in local government officials’ job descriptions, and by advocating changes to the law that embed greater openness of the budget in legal and administrative systems. It is important to promote processes that pay attention to the full budget cycle, including resource mobilisation (local taxation systems) and budget execution in order to give citizens an understanding of all funds their local government office receives and spends on their behalf.

Donors can help to make the *open budget process* understood by all stakeholders, by, for example, supporting the development and dissemination of procedures and guidelines in simple, accessible language. Donors can nurture a broad basis of participatory budgeting expertise by supporting experience sharing, providing budget training to community groups, or encouraging the formation of networks of experienced facilitators.

Greater inclusivity of local government budget processes can be achieved by complementing *participatory budgeting* with other initiatives, such as the development of *specific*

*budgeting tools* (e.g. gender, children, social inclusion budgeting). Such tools explicitly identify how much of the total budget is spent on resources that benefit a specific marginalised group, and can focus attention on budget inequalities that can otherwise be overlooked.<sup>6</sup> The example below (Box 3.4) shows how local level analysis can feed into higher level political processes which in turn can amplify local voices.

#### Box 3.4. The local budget in rural Gujarat, India

In the Indian state of Gujarat, the grassroots organisation Disha studied the government's financial allocation to the tribal and non-tribal regions *vis-à-vis* irrigation, agriculture, industry, energy and social sectors such as health, education, nutrition, etc. The budget study revealed gross injustices in allocation of financial resources to the tribal areas. To disseminate the findings, Disha prepared short notes sent to government ministers and bureaucrats, the press, academic institutions and voluntary agencies. These raised interest and were extensively used in the state parliament. Disha was asked to conduct training for MPs, and as a result, MPs sought to get more involved in budget analysis.

*Source:* Logolink (2004), "Resources, Citizen Engagements and Democratic Local Governance (ReCitE): A Topic Guide", *Workshop Documents Series*, prepared for the International Workshop on Resources, Citizen Engagements and Democratic Local Governance, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 5-9 December, 2004, [www.logolink.org](http://www.logolink.org).

#### *Working on legal frameworks for participation and accountability*

The legal basis for participation and accountability matters. The right national and/or local level legislation can open up a space in which marginalised groups can demand greater participation. For instance, in the Philippines the 1991 Local Government Code mandates local development councils with responsibilities in health and education. In Bolivia the 1994 Popular Participation Law legitimises the participation of customary/indigenous community organisations in local planning, and institutes citizens' oversight committees which can appeal to have the municipal budget frozen in case they discover significant discrepancies between the budget and expenditures. Of course laws alone do not guarantee the inclusive participation of marginalised groups. In the case of the Philippines, local elites have infiltrated some of the local development councils making them more accountable to their demands than to others. In Bolivia the citizens' oversight committees have become similarly dominated over time barring less powerful groups from calling local government to account. Laws are nevertheless a good starting point; and supporting marginalised groups to demand their share of accountability that is provided for by law is a fairly straightforward way to try and improve pro-poor development.

Laws do not always come first. Some legislation emerges from procedures established in pilot projects that later are institutionalised as laws. In other cases changes in existing legislation can make initially insignificant laws into progressive laws instruments. In Uganda, for instance, multi-stakeholder beach management units and lake management organisations, in which women and occupational groups are represented besides local government officials, were piloted in a donor-supported programme around Lake George. This joint management system was subsequently enshrined in the law in the 2004 National Fishery Policy and Fisheries Bill, which expands the system to all lakes of the country and mandates these structures to co-manage all lake resources.<sup>7</sup>

At times it is through *precedent-setting* that social movements get the boundaries of the existing legal framework to expand. In India the Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA), which first registered as a workers’ union, paved the way for women who were self-employed in the informal sector to register in trade unions, something hitherto unthinkable (Box 3.5).

#### Box 3.5. The Self-Employed Women Association (SEWA) in India

SEWA was set up in India, in 1971, as a labour union in which members pay a fee for joining. Its first success came in 1972, as it won the right of self-employed workers to register in trade unions, which had previously been only for workers in direct employment. Today, SEWA is complemented by about 100 sister cooperative organisations and programmes, and has many local branches, with a total membership of 1.2 million.

Self-employed women’s right to organise themselves in trade unions has proven pivotal for the thousands of home-based working women who have worked, together with SEWA, to demand their rights as citizens. SEWA provides legal and paralegal assistance, and lobbies on behalf of self-employed women. SEWA has been successful in recent years in obtaining registration and ID cards, life and disability insurance, maternity benefits, pensions and health insurance. SEWA has also managed to obtain important policy changes. In the 1990s it was able to lobby government to approve a law covering garment workers, which entitled them to a minimum wage. In 2004, thanks to SEWA’s lobbying, the Indian government approved a policy for protecting street vendors, and in 2008 it approved legislation on social security for informal workers.

Source: “Stories of Empowerment” at [www.oecd.org/dac/poverty/empowerment](http://www.oecd.org/dac/poverty/empowerment).

In yet other cases the legal framework may be restrictive rather than enabling – as for instance with the Charities and Societies Proclamation recently enacted in Ethiopia. However, this sobering case shows that donors can have a supportive role even in such circumstances, helping the relevant parties to adapt to the legal framework, whilst continuing to negotiate around it. This is explained in Box 3.6.

#### Box 3.6. Donor post-CSO law strategy in Ethiopia

In the context of historically strained relations between the Government of Ethiopia and civil society, aggravated after the 2005 elections, the government issued the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSP) in 2009. The law has been internationally analysed as severely restricting almost all participation and accountability activities, including at the local level. Heavy criminal sanctions are foreseen in case of non-compliance.

Following the adoption of the CSP, donors adopted a joint post-law strategy, setting up an Adaptation Facility and a CSP Implementation Monitoring Facility. The Adaptation Facility is aimed to support CSOs to adapt to the CSP and strengthen their capacity in the changed environment. The objective of the CSP monitoring facility is to provide a robust evidence base on how the CSP application is affecting the activities of civil society organisation, while the longer-term objective is to influence the implementation framework. Work is ongoing on these two fronts, and “acknowledged” by the Government of Ethiopia.



### *Promoting the inclusion of people in poverty*

Many evaluations and reviews highlight the achievement of inclusiveness as the most important and most difficult challenge that an empowerment programme must address. In many instances the first challenge for people living in poverty is to be visible, both as individuals and groups, and to gain access to local social and political processes as legitimate stakeholders. As we have already seen, self-initiated grassroots participation initiatives are not automatically inclusive. Even where processes are open the practical constraints and opportunity costs of participation make it more difficult for poor people to participate than for the better off. This makes it important for donors to be “power aware” and to target the obstacles to participation of the most marginalised and the least empowered.

### *Being power aware*

Donors themselves need to be power aware, and, where possible foster power awareness. Facilitating the development and use of local power diagnostics can strengthen the inclusiveness of empowerment initiatives at the local level (IFAD, 2008; 2009; Laberge, 2008; OECD, 2007; UNDP, 2008, 2009; World Bank, 2007). Box 3.7 presents an example of a power analysis tool that can be used in a wide variety of contexts. The challenge is to bring together the results of assessments, studies and research carried out over years, and combine them with available assessment tools and guidelines to inform donors’ and the government’s knowledge basis on exclusion issues. The Nepal Gender and Social Exclusion Audit (GSEA) (World Bank and DfID, 2006), is an example of good practice in this respect (Box 3.5).

#### **Box 3.7. Using the powercube analysis tool in the DR Congo**

The International Development Studies Centre at Sussex University hosts the “Powercube – understanding power for social change” website. It contains resources that facilitate power analyses using the powercube methodology ([www.powercube.net](http://www.powercube.net)). A facilitator who visited Kinshasa to gather information on the ways that civil society organisations promote local democratic accountability in the Democratic Republic of Congo found the method useful. “Focusing on the power dynamics of state/citizen relations encouraged participants to talk about the actual way in which citizens attempt to call the state to account, rather than ways in which accountability ‘should’ work. This differs from the more usual ‘civic education’ approach, which tends to present a list of institutions that ‘should’ exist in a democratic state in order for citizens to be able to call the state to account. Such an idealised approach can promote a sense of powerlessness and frustration in a country such as the DR Congo where it is not clear when (or even if) such institutions will ever be effectively in operation. In such a situation using a power lens to examine the forms of power within current citizen/state relationships appears to lead naturally to ideas for strategies that civil society organisations can carry out in order to promote increased democratic accountability.”

*Source: [www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/Congo\\_casestudy.pdf](http://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/Congo_casestudy.pdf) and [www.powercube.net](http://www.powercube.net).*

When a local power diagnosis has been completed, this knowledge of local power and exclusion dynamics needs to be used effectively. In Nepal the GSEA findings have formed a strong evidence basis for donor country strategies (e.g. WB, DFID and Norway). The findings are also used in the design of a national programme, mainstreaming social inclusion initiatives at the local level (Box 3.9). Using one’s knowledge of local power may require that problems are tackled at more than one level at the same time, and flexibility to adjust support may be needed when new knowledge suggests this, as shown in the example in Box 3.8.



### Box 3.8. Adjusting focus to ensure greater inclusiveness

The municipality of Herent in Flanders has been providing support to the municipality of Coban in Guatemala as part of a broader programme between local government associations. Some years after inception, it became clear to officials in Herent (many of whom had lived in Coban and were familiar with the prevailing exclusion patterns), that Coban municipality was reluctant to fully implement the 2002 Law on Indigenous People's Self-governance. As a result the two Quechua microregions of Coban (already historically, culturally and geographically marginalised), were unable to influence municipal investment priorities, in spite of their striking levels of poverty. The municipality of Herent decided to expand its reach and work at the level of the microregions. They financed a local NGO to provide technical and administrative support to the microregions and help them to lobby for greater influence at municipal level. To further empower the microregions the NGO is contracted by the microregions themselves. At the same time the municipality of Herent continues working at the level of the municipality of Coban to influence processes towards greater inclusiveness from the two levels simultaneously.

*Source:* United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) (2009), *UCLG Position Paper on Aid Effectiveness and Local Government: Understanding the link between governance and development*, Pending approval by the UCLG World Council, 1 Nov 2009, [www.cities-localgovernments.org/upload/doc\\_publications/9243688416\\_%28EN%29\\_uclgpositionpaperen.pdf](http://www.cities-localgovernments.org/upload/doc_publications/9243688416_%28EN%29_uclgpositionpaperen.pdf) H.

### *Removing obstacles to participation*

Donors must understand that people who live in poverty may not be keen to get involved in local activism unless it becomes explicitly clear that participation can reap real benefits to improve their livelihoods. Participation in local government or politics is rarely a first priority for people living in poverty. The direct and indirect costs of travelling to meetings and the inability to take time out from routine income-generating activities means that poor people are often precluded from taking part. This Good Practice Note includes various examples of local or political activism by and for poor people whose livelihoods were threatened. At times the initial involvement to save one's livelihood can lead to further local activism and greater empowerment.

Becoming engaged at a local level is not always a risk-free undertaking for members of a local community. When the issue at stake involves acting against the interest of powerful local actors one should remember that the safety of those who question a status quo can be put at risk. Pedro Alcantara de Souza, the head of a union of landless farmers, and American nun Dorothy Stang were among twenty local activists murdered in the Amazon region of Brazil. Both were involved in the struggle for the land rights of poor farmers.<sup>8</sup> Donors and others who support a particular grassroots cause need to be aware of such risks and tread carefully.

### *Supporting decentralised local government to empower citizens*

Donors can assist local government to make decentralisation work for empowerment. Local governments can become development and empowerment actors. Strengthened local government systems such as fiscal decentralisation and mandatory participation and accountability processes can encourage active citizenship.

### *Strengthening the fiscal decentralisation process of local government*

Donors working jointly with the relevant government agencies can play a role in helping to develop a transparent, coherent and equitable fiscal decentralisation framework. When responsibility for service delivery is devolved to local governments, which cannot access adequate discretionary resources, either by revenue raising or through transfers from central government, the resulting competition for services and other public expenditure benefits in local level decision-making tends to penalise less powerful groups.

The tendency in national budgeting for more resources to go where services are already established than to where they are lacking – a district with more schools and health posts will receive a larger budget than one with less, irrespective of population – maintains inequity in public resource allocation across districts. It also makes the competition for resources in less well-served local government areas more intense.

Joint analysis of how the “national cake” is divided across local authorities and developing instruments to redress imbalances, such as resource allocation formulae or equalisation grants, can provide additional resources to underserved areas allowing local governments to be more attentive to inclusion.

Where donors provide resources directly to local governments for public expenditure programmes, they should ensure that the local authority includes these resources in the budgets and reports it submits to the national budgetary authority. In many countries donors can provide funding to the local level through national budget systems (e.g. the Protection of Basic Services programme in Ethiopia or the Local Government Development Programmes in Uganda and Tanzania).

Local level decision-making must be balanced against the need to maintain standards in service delivery and deliver on national policy priorities and objectives. This means that funding to the local level will inevitably be earmarked to some extent and not entirely allocable at the discretion of the local authority. In decentralisation processes the devolution of fiscal decision making should be incremental and linked to local government capacity to translate national policy into local programmes that respond accountably to local priorities and needs. As this capacity develops and as local government accountability to citizens is established, conditional grants from donors and from the exchequer should be replaced by more flexible funding.

### *Strengthening the accountability processes of local governments*

Strengthening the statutory local government processes that provide accountability and allow for the participation of marginalised groups is an important entry point for donors. The existence of local governments’ systems to implement accountability procedures and the administrative capacity to successfully operate them is critical to responding to demands for accountability and for the empowerment of citizens. Accountability instruments can be made even more effective if there are strong in-built incentives, particularly in the allocation of resources, for local governments to adhere to the systems, and if they are accompanied by simultaneous interventions that work on the demand side of accountability (Box 3.9).

Fiscal decentralisation means that information on what local government offices spend locally can be available at local level, in a way that centralised systems do not allow. Donors should make sure that this potential for local accountability is fully realised by supporting the development of the appropriate publication and dissemination tools that give citizens information on local budgets.<sup>9</sup>

### Box 3.9. Progressively strengthening local government accountability systems in Uganda\*

Under the Public Financial Management (PFM) reform process donors have supported the development of a system for districts to prepare programme-based budgets and annual work plans, which explicitly link the local government budgets to the policy priorities of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan.

In parallel, donors support the Local Government Development Programme (LGDP). This provides discretionary resources through the LGDP investment grant. In addition, local governments are provided with an incentive to adhere to the new accountability mechanisms because the level of the grant received by the local council is linked to the performance of the local government. Local governments are assessed on a yearly basis against performance benchmarks such as: capacities critical for sound local governance; greater participation of counsellors, lower level local government staff and citizens; better information on local government plans and budgets; and threshold spending levels on pro-poor priorities in the local government budget.

The Local government capacity development component helps local governments address the aspects in which they under-perform (underperformance means receiving less funding). Support is provided through *i*) a capacity building grant for demand-driven training activities implemented by the local governments based on a capacity needs assessments, and via *ii*) complementary training activities implemented by the central level.

The programme supports the development of standardised training modules. It has also introduced a system of certification of private sector providers recognised as capable to provide capacity-building services of the required standard. Local governments procure their services with the capacity-building grant from the LGDP. This market-led approach has stimulated both demand and supply for capacity development at local level, and incentivised the development of a sustainable capacity-development system.

Donors have also assisted the growing network of national NGOs in monitoring local government budgets and their implementation; citizen's participation has increased, because it is in everybody's interest to receive the maximum grant for local development. The Uganda Local Governments Association, also supported by donors, has regularly played an important role in advocating for its members to adhere to standards of transparency, and the national level annual multi-stakeholder budget conferences also discusses this topic at length every year.

\* This box draws on a series of documentation and the author's familiarity with the LGDP. Further detail on the capacity development approach can be found in Nelson (2007).

*Source:* Nelson, M. (2007), "A market-based approach to capacity development: How Uganda's Local Governments are breaking new ground", *Capacity Development Briefs*, No. 22, June, World Bank Institute, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTCDRC/Resources/CDBrief22.pdf>.

Participatory planning can be a successful way of giving citizens, who were previously unheard, a chance to influence what local budgets are spent on. Approaches that engage citizens at village and sub-district level have proven most successful. The planning approaches and procedures need to be well thought out and regulated if village level plans are not to be dominated by the preferences of the most powerful individuals.

However, village-level plans are often ignored by district-level authorities because of financial constraints or the perception that plans made at higher level are more important. Earmarking funds for spending at sub-local government level can help – in Uganda it is mandatory for districts to channel funds to counties, so that they can develop and implement participatory rural development plans.

### *Strengthening elected local councils*

Donors should be aware of the mandate and potential of elected local councils to demand accountability, represent citizens and target their support for citizen empowerment in an integrated manner at the whole local government system, including the elected representatives. Effective elected local councils (and standing committees that might be especially mandated to address social exclusion issues) can hold local government to account and serve as a mouth piece for disempowered groups. Taking a holistic approach, training all relevant local government and local council officials, can reinforce the accountability and inclusiveness of local government (Box 3.10). There may also be scope for providing training on accountability of the elected local council towards their constituents. Donors may be able to promote council-focused initiatives through northern local governments or associations, similar to what has been a growing trend for national Parliaments (UCLG, 2009).

#### **Box 3.10. USAID's Local Governance Support Programme in Indonesia**

The Local Governance Support Programme of USAID in Indonesia contains a component focusing specifically on strengthening local councils in all their functions (budgeting, legislative, oversight of public services, outreach/citizens' representation). Hands-on support included technical skill training (*e.g.* budget analysis, legal drafting) using concrete examples from ongoing local processes; coaching in real-life events such as budget hearings; organisational development (developing a system of annual legislative work plans); and handbooks on legal drafting and budget analysis accessible online.

*Source:* Research Triangle Institute International (RTI) (2009), *Indonesia – Local Governance Support Program: Final Report*, December 2009, for review by USAID, prepared by RTI International, [www.lgsp.or.id](http://www.lgsp.or.id).

### *Supporting local governments to focus on poverty, exclusion and empowerment*

Donors can foster a two-way alignment between local and national pro-poor priorities, insisting that national processes are informed by listening to local actors, including local governments, and assisting local governments to develop and implement poverty alleviation and empowerment plans that tailor national strategies to local contexts. To facilitate this, donors can promote the setting up of formal consultation mechanisms between themselves, local and national governments. This is done by the European Commission (EC) Cotonou Agreement for African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, which spells out that local governments should be formally involved in EC funded programming. Donors can support local government associations to contribute to national policy-making and planning processes. This happens in Sri Lanka, where the Federation of Municipalities of Canada has helped to establish (and continues to support) an all-inclusive Federation of Local Governments, a key actor in the local government sector reform (UCLG, 2009).

Providing training on the use of inclusion budgeting tools can help to make local government budgets more inclusive. Using a so-called inclusion lens; analysing each item of expenditure and mapping who may benefit from it, challenges the popular belief that all spending on public services at a local level is equitable and pro-poor. Certain types of interventions are by nature more inclusive than others: ensuring that community health posts have anti-malaria pills is more inclusive than putting more beds in the district hospital, and the former is likely to be a priority for poor people at the village level, while

the latter may for status reasons be favoured at the district level. Donors need to be mindful of this, and using the inclusion lens at donor-office level can be useful when weighing up which intervention to support.

To ensure that funding reaches empowerment and social inclusion initiatives below and beyond local government levels, donors can promote and contribute to a system that channels funds to village-level government bodies, non-state actors and community groups. There are many different ways that donors can do this; through direct support for each group, by setting up a NGO/CSO basket fund, or by channelling funds via local government offices. The story of the Puno-Cusco *Corredor* in Peru (Box 3.11) highlights this approach.<sup>10</sup>

### Box 3.11. IFAD and the Puno-Cusco Corredor

Through the Puno-Cusco *Corredor* programme, IFAD has piloted a mechanism to channel public and donor fund to municipalities, and through them to community-level groups and individuals, to finance investment and local development projects. The lynchpin of the mechanism is a public competition named *concurso*, through which individuals and communities can present their proposals for public scrutiny. Local community members also sit on local resource allocation committees that adjudicate among proposals, alongside representatives of local government. By 2008, 25 municipalities had adopted this system for managing part of their budgets in the project area, four of them without project resources. This initiative has been made possible by the existence of a favourable legislation and policy environment, notably decentralisation policies and legislation enabling transfer of public resources directly to community organisations.

Source: “Stories of Empowerment” at [www.oecd.org/dac/poverty/empowerment](http://www.oecd.org/dac/poverty/empowerment).

The Ugandan LGRP example (Box 3.8) demonstrates a different approach to promoting inclusivity by seeking to mainstream initiatives that address social exclusion at local level within the local government systems as part of a comprehensive reform of local governance. The case provides a good example of donor coordination across a range of different starting points which have “joined hands” in a programme-based approach working at community, local government and national levels simultaneously. The Nepalese Local Governance and Community Development Programme (Box 3.12) is another example of how donors can work with government at national and local level to promote greater accountability and more inclusive service provision.

### ***Strengthening capacity***

Strengthening capacity at all levels to implement more inclusive participation and accountability processes is probably the most important contribution donors can make to the empowerment of citizens. When new participation and accountability systems are introduced, they will only be successfully adhered to if stakeholders at all levels understand them and feel confident to use them. This means that capacity requirements will arise for community groups or whole communities, CSOs and NGOs, government structures at different levels, and sometimes even the private sector (as capacity development service providers in the case of the LGDP in Uganda).



### Box 3.12. Using power analysis in joint programming for social inclusion and empowerment in Nepal

In 2006, the Government of Nepal together with a group of donor agencies completed a detailed Gender and Social Exclusion Audit (GSEA). The audit revealed that in spite of decades of political “opening up” and rising social mobility in the country, deep social exclusion mechanisms had prevailed and had led to massive disparities in empowerment and development outcomes. The audit brought together and inter-linked the results of a large number of studies – both “mainstream” (e.g. National Living Standards Survey, census) and specially commissioned (e.g. a specific empowerment/social inclusion survey). It included the development of a conceptual “empowerment and social inclusion” framework which is now used across government and donor agencies in Nepal.

The GSEA findings have informed the new Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP). One of the LGCDP components is a social inclusion/empowerment programme which, in contrast with community-driven development practice in Nepal to this day, local governments will be fully accountable for implementing. Under this component there will be a special block grant to fund locally developed programmes targeting vulnerable groups and individuals.

The LGCDP will help to strengthen local government capacity to address social exclusion in several ways, e.g. mapping existing empowerment initiatives, participatory definition of empowerment principles and development of local social inclusion databases to provide the evidence for targeting social inclusion activities. “Minimum conditions” in terms of performance on social inclusion must be met by local governments to access general investment funding. A cadre of “social mobilisers” will be recruited to engage with the poorest. The LGCDP has used evidence from the GSEA to develop a specific “mobilisation” approach, that reaches out to excluded groups, and a system for targeting specified categories of socially excluded groups and individuals.

LGCDP will build an “inclusion lens” across national level government planning, budgeting and monitoring. It will analyse all mainstream sector programmes to identify inclusion barriers and develop, plan and budget measures to overcome them. It will be used to clarify accountability for implementation of inclusion measures, and develop inclusion outcome indicators and integrate them in sector monitoring and evaluation systems. The inclusion lens will also be used to develop a knowledge base to inform policy debate on social inclusion at local level in Nepal.

*Source:* Chhaya J., et al. (2009), *Citizen Mobilisation in Nepal: Building on Nepal’s Tradition of Social Mobilisation to make Local Governance more Inclusive and Accountable*, supported by World Bank, DFID and SDC, [www.gsdr.org/docs/open/VA1.pdf](http://www.gsdr.org/docs/open/VA1.pdf) and Department for International Development (DFID) and World Bank (2006), *Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal*. <http://go.worldbank.org/ICCLVX2WD0>.

### *Capacity building at all levels*

Donors should ensure that capacity is developed at all levels and is co-ordinated, that lessons learnt and increased effectiveness at one level inform and are supported by good practice at other levels. Donors can work at three levels; at the micro level where project stakeholders, community activists, CSO and NGO staff will need training on how best to take advantage of newly introduced accountability mechanisms – possibly training on local budget analysis, or organisational skills. At the government level staff will need to learn how to comply with new accountability processes, and in particular at local government level, staff will need to learn how to prepare local budget publications, participatory planning techniques, etc., with a view to mainstreaming these. At the national level, donors



can support the development of a broad knowledge basis with regard to power and social exclusion dynamics, and help to build indigenous capacity to carry out power diagnostic, formulate appropriate responses and carry out monitoring and evaluations.

In Nepal, the Gender and Social Exclusion Audit (Box 3.12) expanded the country's knowledge on how certain groups were marginalised. The knowledge was used to strengthen government, local governments' and other actors' capacities to address social exclusion issues. The knowledge also informed the LGCDP, which addresses inclusion problems from two angles; local government systems are made more inclusive, and social mobilisers are used to develop micro-level capacities which encouraged more participation by members of previously excluded groups.

Donors can be influential in fostering a policy-making approach which takes findings from locally relevant, contextual, qualitative research on board. Donors can sensitise government agencies of the value of such research by using research to inform their own programmes, by helping research institutions to disseminate the research findings, and in facilitating discussions between research institutions and government officials. Donors are often invaluable to autonomous research institutions because they may be the only source of impartial grants, long term funding for research projects, and investment in information management systems. One example is that of AusAid long-term funding to the Social Monitoring and Early Response Unit (SMERU) Research Institute in Indonesia (from 1998 to this day). The institute's research has often been influential at highest level in government and in the donor community.<sup>11</sup>

Developing the capacities required to design and deliver capacity development programmes that are locally relevant and context-specific is essential given the long-term nature of the process. Donors should support the development of the capabilities of the non-government, academic and private sectors to respond to the national capacity development needs – both public and non-state. This has been successfully done in cases like the LGDP in Uganda, where local governments can call on private training providers, which have been accredited after having been through a process building their capacities to deliver the required training. Or, donors provide support to the Poverty Action Network in Ethiopia (PANE), an umbrella organisation for local NGOs, to build PANE's capacity in budget analysis so that in turn PANE can build that of its members. In Indonesia donors have supported NGOs and other institutions like universities to develop the capacity to deliver training for local governments.

### *Capacity building in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*

Lack of information is often the very first obstacle on the road to empowerment for many people in poverty. New technology has made access to information easier for those who are literate, computer literate and have access to an internet enabled phone/computer and a power source. Improving access to information at local level is therefore no longer just a case of financing literacy programmes, it often means upfront investment in 21<sup>st</sup> century technology, information and communication systems. There is a wide range of means: promoting computer literacy, strengthening local media to use web-based tools, developing local libraries/internet access points, or setting up information centres.

Donors should also support the development of the information management and analytical capacity of local governments; that is, the capacity to obtain, compile and analyse highly disaggregated and complex information and using it to inform local policies. The option of by-passing local governments because of their limited capacity to handle data is not sustainable over the long term.

The emphasis should be on user-friendly technology and basic administrative systems to locally document, publish, file and archive the outcomes of budget and accountability processes, for transparency and learning. Once local government staff can manage operational tools and systems, it should be fairly simple to master further programmes that can process and print (or post on a website) local budget information for the general public.

### *Alternative capacity development approaches*

Donors should support training in communities on leadership and facilitation skills (participatory techniques, conflict prevention and management); communication and advocacy skills; general political skills; capacity of forging alliances and presenting issues and evidence, of contributing to discussions and influencing others; and for local councillors, on connecting with and responding to their constituency. While new technologies can add much to participation and accountability tools, capacity development initiative should focus on enhancing the human, social and political capital of local actors rather than being driven by technical specifications and procedural requirements. Learning from excluded and disempowered citizens is more about relational capacities than technical ones.

In addition, donors can embrace capacity development approaches that are not classroom-based. Peer learning, networking and other experience-sharing modalities have been found to be very effective in their empowerment outcomes. Learning Routes study tours in Peru bring together community leaders, local policymakers, smallholder farmers, producers and micro-entrepreneurs, who, in mixed groups, visit rural development projects elsewhere to learn about their challenges and successes.<sup>12</sup> The “Champions of Participation” workshop is organised by and for local governments from northern and southern countries to learn from each other about participatory budgeting approaches (Logolink, 2004).

Another example is that of Action Aid in Malawi which trained people from local communities in filming and interviewing techniques so that they could make their own videos with minimum outside interference. This was a success on several counts: it facilitated communication between communities and local governments; it enabled the communities to listen to less vocal voices about difficult issues, and it helped communities to understand each others’ issues and form alliances. The communities jointly presented their videos, together with their local governments, to higher government levels.<sup>13</sup>

Many donor-supported programmes use incentives-based approaches to capacity building by linking capacity development to investment funding at community or local government level (IFAD, UNCDF). This approach has been successfully linked with the more demand-driven approach to capacity development design in local government in Uganda’s LGDP. There is scope for these kinds of linkages to be replicated more systematically, as it has shown that demand-driven learning has the potential to be more empowering and sustainable in the long term.

Donors should avoid using excessively capacity-demanding systems. Keeping systems and procedures as simple as possible is key, because training local governments, communities and people to use overly complex systems is unrealistic, unsustainable, not cost-effective and can promote the exclusion of marginalised groups, such as in Cambodia (Box 3.13). Keeping systems simple also minimises the tension between professionalisation and accountability to peers, which arises when delegates with the requisite system skills are selected to represent people in poverty.

### Box 3.13. Cambodia’s commune and district plans

In Cambodia, a review of the commune systems found that the donor-supported decentralisation process had resulted in an overly complex (20-step) process of annually integrating commune and district plans and was strongly undermining the empowerment potential of the commune-level participatory planning approach. At the same time donors supported the Ministry of Education to implement a system of direct grants to village primary schools for which a simplified planning and accounting system was agreed with the Ministry of Finance. This resulted in strong school committee and parental engagement and successful implementation of the grants system at school level.

*Source:* Adapted from unpublished study report.

#### *Internal donor capacity*

Donor agencies need to be politically informed, and able to understand and relate to the diverse local contexts of the country in which they work. When embarking on interventions that aim to support the empowerment of people living in poverty, the internal staffing and capacity development of donor agencies may need to be assessed first. There are various ways in which local knowledge can be enhanced; Irish Aid usually recruits national advisors with this kind of local knowledge. In Ethiopia the World Bank recruited a social anthropologist with research credentials, to build their “in-house” understanding of local social and political issues. Sida is piloting an approach in its sector work (*e.g.* in health and education in Bangladesh) in which reality checks are carried out: consultants go out on field trips and report back, bringing the perspective of poor people to the table, with a view to influencing policies and informing the implementation of the sector programmes.

There are a number of development agencies that are encouraging their staff to undertake “immersions” as part of their own professional capacity development, with objectives ranging from better evidence-based policy-making to experiential learning, or developing a sense of solidarity with people living in poverty. There is scope for donors to consider using immersions more systematically, possibly as part of staff induction. This would help ensure that donors remain connected to the realities of rural poverty which has become both more difficult and more important as they become increasingly engaged in “upstream” aid modalities like budget support and in managing national level dialogue and inter-donor relationships (Irvine *et al.*, 2004).<sup>14</sup>

There is scope for donor agencies to coordinate in area of donor capacity development. For example, in Ethiopia the World Bank invited distinguished scholars who knew the country well to retreats and debates, in preparation for their country strategy. There would be much to gain in pooling such type of capacity development among dono

### **Implications and entry points for donors**

Donors can contribute to the empowerment of people in poverty in a variety of ways: some donors work predominantly at local level, or through NGOs; some prefer budget and sector-wide support; while others work at all levels, through a mix of modalities. Several examples in this paper have shown that supporting a mix of modalities can reinforce the impact on the empowerment of people in poverty. Donors can support a mix of modalities

themselves (resources and manpower allowing), or support a “mix of modalities model” within a joint donor programme. Figure 3.2 provides a matrix identifying in summary form potential entry points for the good practices discussed in the preceding section across a range of aid modalities. This provides some practical suggestions on ways in which the recommendations in this paper can be applied by donors through the aid modalities they are already using.

Donors supporting decentralisation or working at community level can help identify grassroots constraints that need to be addressed at national level – which budget support donors can help do. Similarly donors working at the national level can inform local level colleagues of opportunities for greater empowerment arising from changes in national systems. There should be a significant effort among donors, and in joint government-donor groups, involved in national and sector level policy and strategic planning to ensure that opportunities for empowerment of poor people are identified and availed of and, most importantly, that systemic and cross-government initiatives such as decentralisation, public sector reform, good governance and anti-corruption programmes contribute to effective and inclusive citizenship at the local level.

Donors should support the mapping of all empowerment, voice, participation and accountability initiatives and opportunities at the various levels. Identifying and sharing country-specific good practice and lessons-learned, can lead to the development of common participation and accountability principles that can be applied at local level across programmes and aid modalities.

Donors can encourage debate and the creation of knowledge on empowerment at local level (this in itself can be empowering), adding alternative perspectives and using information tools to encourage systematic cross-learning and strengthen operational coordination at country, local government and community level. Donors should favour assessments and diagnostic studies that are undertaken jointly at local level involving government, donors and communities

The empowerment of people living in poverty is important. Empowerment matters, not only as a goal in its own right, but as a way of being for all those who seek to improve their lives, and as a step in a change process. Empowerment is relevant for the success of every development intervention. Empowerment can be furthered through all types of interventions, and it is hoped that over time, donors and other development stakeholders will look for empowerment opportunities in all activities.

Empowerment processes are highly political, can have adverse effects, can be dangerous, can be corrupted or can simply fail. None of that should prevent donors from engaging in processes that aim to bring about empowerment. It is important to always bear in mind that if successful, empowerment processes can also be life changing, and the beginning of wider process that can lift people out of poverty (Good Practice Note 9. Monitoring and evaluating empowerment processes).

Table 3.2. Good practice entry points / Aid modalities matrix

Modalities:	Budget support	Sector support (SWAPs, SBS, basket funds)	Decentralisation support programmes	Projects (including community driven development)	Technical assistance, capacity development, research
<p>Good practice entry points:</p> <p>Support participation and accountability at local level: Work on several fronts; support social accountability; open up "local budget"; strengthen legal participation and accountability framework</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help develop participatory planning/budgeting approaches and "inclusion-focused" policy-making, planning, budgeting and M&amp;E tools (e.g. gender budgeting) notably under PFM/civil service reforms</li> <li>Help interface social accountability processes with government (national and local) processes</li> <li>Orient macro assessments (e.g. Drivers of Change type of studies) to also analyse local power issues</li> <li>Help develop national participation and accountability framework (e.g. law access to info, media and NGO laws; support to Ombudsman; reform of electoral and party systems)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support inclusive sector participation and accountability systems (e.g. school committees, water user groups)</li> <li>Help develop sector-specific "inclusion" tools: sector social exclusion audit; targeted actions (e.g. affirmative action for vulnerable/excluded groups in education); social inclusion indicators in performance framework; specific "inclusive budget" analysis/planning tools (e.g. consideration of and budgeting for schooling children from marginalised groups in local government budgets)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involve non-local government actors at local level to engage in local participation and accountability processes</li> <li>Promote/help develop an "empowering" legal framework for local government (LG)</li> <li>Pilot multi-stakeholders local management of participation and accountability systems;</li> <li>Help open up local fiscal processes (i.e. local budget)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create links between grassroots and local government initiatives to promote participation and accountability</li> <li>Pilot multi-stakeholders local management of participation and accountability systems;</li> <li>Support mainstreaming of such systems</li> <li>Help open up local fiscal processes (i.e. local budget; pilot channelling funds to local non-government actors)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop innovative local participation and accountability systems and processes (experience-sharing, peer learning &amp; networking, strengthen operational implementation)</li> <li>Document and disseminate country-specific lessons learned about local participation and accountability issues</li> </ul>
<p>Ensure inclusion of poor people: Be power aware; use power knowledge; remove livelihoods related obstacles</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help develop local government systems for analysis of (and local response to) social exclusion by using assessment tools, disaggregated information management, "inclusion" budgeting, local targeted programmes etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot/support targeted actions to reach out to marginalised groups</li> <li>Support networking, linking local and higher level actors to promote inclusion agendas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Joint) support to locally-grounded research of social inclusion at institutions, formal and informal structures processes, local power dynamics. Support dissemination of findings to inform donor. (local) government and non-government actions</li> </ul>
<p>Make decentralisation empowering: Strengthen fiscal decentralisation; strengthen mandatory local government participation and accountability processes; strengthen inclusiveness at local government level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure decentralisation systems (and political obstacles that may hinder successful implementation) is understood across donor community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote integration of sector and local participation and accountability mechanisms (e.g. integrate user groups, minimum standards, participatory budgeting into local government systems)</li> <li>Help integrate sector targeted actions in LG systems</li> <li>Ensure sector funding flows respect or strengthen fiscal decentralisation coherence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update decentralisation systems and political analysis; disseminate findings across donor community</li> <li>Strengthen fiscal decentralisation (equity, efficiency, coherence, transparency)</li> <li>Help develop "empowering" LG frameworks (participatory systems, systems to channel public funds to non-state actors, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involve LGs; Use grassroots initiatives to transform relationships between LGs and other local actors</li> <li>Ensure funding flows respect or strengthen fiscal decentralisation systems wherever possible</li> <li>Provide LG disaggregated information on donor project funding flows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote locally-grounded research responding to LG-specific issues</li> <li>Develop local tertiary institutions' research capacity</li> </ul>



Table 3.2. Good practice entry points / Aid modalities matrix (continued)

Modalities:	Budget support	Sector support (SWAFs, SBS, basket funds)	Decentralisation support programmes	Projects (including community driven development)	Technical assistance, capacity development, research
<p>Good practice entry points:</p> <p>Strengthen capacity: Provide capacity development (CD) to all levels to reinforce effects of new knowledge across board</p> <p>Promote national-local dialogue by providing appropriate knowledge to all stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government system level: Promote policy-making attentive to locally grounded research, making space for contextual and qualitative information</li> <li>Promote use of incentives for capacity development in government systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invest in Information Education Communication (IEC) to enrich people's knowledge of sector processes &amp; entitlements</li> <li>Support development of operational management tools for sector-specific participation and accountability processes (manuals, guidelines, templates, filing systems)</li> <li>Use incentives and mixed supply- and demand-driven CD approaches</li> <li>Keep systems and procedures simple</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen local Councils' knowledge of decentralisation</li> <li>Invest in IEC to enrich people's knowledge of their rights and LG basics</li> <li>Help develop LG capacity to address social exclusion</li> <li>Use incentives and mixed supply- and demand-driven CD approaches</li> <li>Keep systems and procedures simple</li> <li>Develop administrative and organisational LG capacity, and "soft skills"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project level: Ensure CD addresses "soft skills"</li> <li>Invest in IEC and non-traditional CD and IEC means (e.g. video-making, peer learning, experience-sharing etc.)</li> <li>Invest in internal organisational capacity of local partners</li> <li>Build local "power diagnostic"</li> <li>Keep systems and procedures simple</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Country level: Support autonomous research on fine-grained local dynamics, facilitate dissemination of research findings on websites, publications, policy briefs etc.</li> <li>Link research findings to Budget support/overall dialogue with government</li> </ul>
<p>Make broad environment enabling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include empowerment, social exclusion issues in high level dialogue with government, when discussing policy conditionality, TA/CD, decentralisation, etc. to ensure mainstreaming of empowerment processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include empowerment, social exclusion issues in sector-specific dialogue to ensure mainstreaming of empowerment processes</li> <li>Link "macro" level exclusion, participation and accountability issues to inform national policy-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlight empowerment obstacles (e.g. nature of political link between central and local elites) in decentralisation dialogue</li> <li>Support national/local policy alignment (formal consultation/coordination mechanisms, support to LG Associations etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring local empowerment issues to the table at national level and inform national policy making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring local empowerment issues to the table at national level and ensure these issues and inform national policy making</li> </ul>



## Notes

1. The Jharkhand Save the Forest movement. See “Stories of Empowerment” at [www.oecd.org/dac/poverty/empowerment](http://www.oecd.org/dac/poverty/empowerment).
2. See the story of empowerment of the Hyolmo people on [www.oecd.org/dac/poverty](http://www.oecd.org/dac/poverty).
3. As of 2009 the One World Foundation had identified 309 national, regional and international self-regulatory initiatives by NGOs (see [www.ichrp.org/en/forum](http://www.ichrp.org/en/forum)).
4. See for example: [www.cso-effectiveness.org](http://www.cso-effectiveness.org).
5. Formerly GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit).
6. An example of this approach is Gender Budgeting: Practical Implementation/Handbook extracted from *Gender budgeting: practical implementation – Handbook, produced by* for the Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs, Council of Europe, April 2009): [www.coe.int/T/E/Human\\_Rights/Equality/PDF\\_CDEG%202008%2015\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/Equality/PDF_CDEG%202008%2015_en.pdf).
7. Prato B. (2009), unpublished paper prepared for the IFAD Rural Poverty Report 2010.
8. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8600353.stm>.
9. Examples of this are available in the IDASA Local Government Budget Guide, 2001, at [www.idasa.org.za/index.asp?page=home.asp](http://www.idasa.org.za/index.asp?page=home.asp)), and in the *lay person's budget tools* used in the Protection of Basic Services (PBS) in Ethiopia, guides for which can be found at [www.mofed.gov.et/](http://www.mofed.gov.et/).
10. See “Fostering *empoderamiento* in the Peruvian Sierra – the Experience of the Puno-Cusco Corredor Project” in “Stories of Empowerment” at [www.oecd.org/dac/poverty/empowerment](http://www.oecd.org/dac/poverty/empowerment).
11. See [www.smeru.or.id/](http://www.smeru.or.id/).
12. See “Learning Routes in San Basilio de Palenque” in “Stories of Empowerment” at [www.oecd.org/dac/poverty/empowerment](http://www.oecd.org/dac/poverty/empowerment).
13. ActionAid (undated), *Participation: A promise unfulfilled?*, [www.actionaid.org/assets/pdf/CD%20booklet\\_a\\_w.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/assets/pdf/CD%20booklet_a_w.pdf).
14. Also see [www.planotes.org/pla\\_backissues/57.html](http://www.planotes.org/pla_backissues/57.html).

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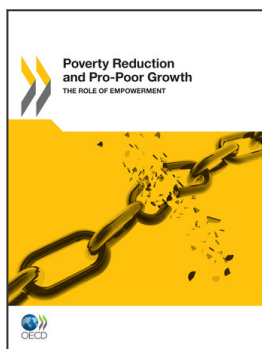
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**From:**  
**Poverty Reduction and Pro-Poor Growth**  
The Role of Empowerment

**Access the complete publication at:**  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264168350-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

Dom, Catherine (2012), "Empowerment through local citizenship", in OECD, *Poverty Reduction and Pro-Poor Growth: The Role of Empowerment*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264168350-7-en>

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