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# Making Services Work for Poor People: From Knowledge to Practice

Proceedings of the panel and working group discussions

**inVent**

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## Preface

The report "In Larger Freedom" (2005) discusses the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Goals. In this context, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan states a shared vision of development that reflects a consensus of all Member States of the United Nations on key challenges and priorities for the future. As a conclusion, the member states of the UN agree that national development strategies should be set up in order to create a common ground for concerted action for public investment and policies.

The provision of access to and quality of social services such as education, health, and water is an ongoing debate which took momentum since the World Bank published the World Development Report 2004 (WDR 2004). The key message of the WDR 2004 is that services can reach poor people only if accountability of policymakers and providers is strengthened, incentives to providers to supply better services are increased, and poor people are empowered to demand quality services. Successful services for poor people emerge from institutional relationships in which key players in service delivery are accountable to each other.

A first conference on the WDR 2004 on improving service delivery to the poor took place in October 2003 in Bonn, Germany. In May 2005, InWEnt, GTZ, the World Bank and the World Bank Institute embarked on a second international conference "Making Services Work for Poor People: From Knowledge to Practice", again in Bonn, Germany. The central theme was the degree of implementation of the WDR recommendations.

Presentations on the situation in various African and Asian countries showed that in most countries progress in accountability is visible. However, linkages between policy makers, service providers and clients have to be redefined. In order to overcome the lack of institutional and implementing capacities on the recipient side, donors should accompany development processes by offering budget

support, advisory functions, technical cooperation, and capacity building activities.

Referring to the decentralization processes in many African countries, one major challenge is to ensure that additional funds from "new" mechanisms like budget financing actually lead to a more successful delivery of health and education services. Ensuring enhanced capacity of decision makers in the Ministries of Finance and the Social Sectors to steer funds efficiently constitutes a key prerequisite.

Donor-driven approaches were seen critically by the recipient countries. As donors are often actively involved in countries' health and education programs, their support should be effectively aligned behind the countries' own processes and development strategies, supporting and strengthening the national planning capacities.

Yet another lesson learned is that information and knowledge are keys to successful delivery of social services. Therefore, donors should promote political and expert dialogue among the various actors, also using new information technologies.

The conference itself served as a communication and exchange tool. It set a good example of professional international networking and exchange of information. It is hoped that the sharing of critical analysis and the recommendations will contribute to better accountability relationships between policymakers, service providers and clients. The lively interest in the conference, expressed by a broad range of organizations and the positive feedback from participants from Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe leave us with an optimistic view on future action to be taken.

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# 1 Introduction

Services can work for poor people, but too often they fail. They can be made to work for poor people by empowering them and strengthening the incentives to service providers to serve the poor people. These were the key messages of the World Development Report 2004 (WDR 04), titled "Making Services Work for Poor People".

The WDR 04 laid out a consistent range of approaches on how the service delivery to poor people can be improved. On 11-13 May 2005, one year after the publication of the WDR 04, a group of international experts from donor and development agencies, developing country governments and NGOs, gathered in Bonn to discuss these approaches. The objective of the conference was to identify implementation

bottlenecks in the delivery of services to poor people and to match these with policy recommendations based on "good practices". To focus the discussion, all experts came from the health or education sectors.

The conference combined expert panel presentations with focus group discussions and was structured according to the three accountability relationships outlined in the WDR 04 as shown in the figure below.

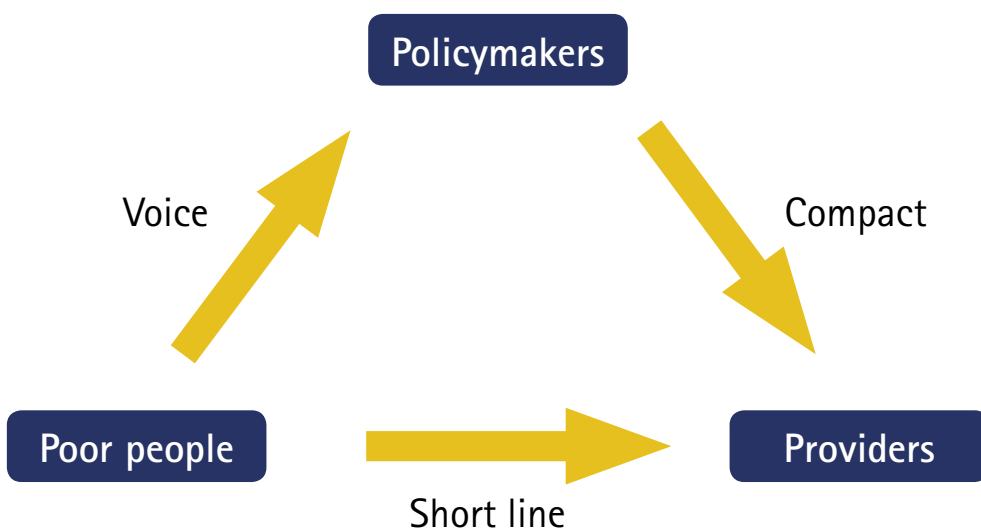


Figure 1.1 The accountability triangle of the WDR 04

This summary report is structured accordingly. Chapter 2 shortly discusses each line of accountability based on the first plenary session of experts involved in the implementation of the framework. The conference split into three working groups, each focusing on one line of accountability and concentrating on health and education. The working groups identified about four implementation bottlenecks and matched each of these with a policy recommendation. Chapter 3 summarizes these for the accountability relationship between clients and service providers ("Short line"), chapter 4 for the relationship between clients and policy makers ("Voice"), and chapter 5 for the relationship between policy makers and service providers ("Compact"). In the final part of the conference, policy makers were asked to reflect on outcomes of the working groups; their views are summarized in chapter 6.

## 2 From Knowledge to Practice? Voices from Experience

### Report of the First Panel Round

The main task of this panel was to stimulate the subsequent discussion of the working groups with the focus on the experts' field perspective, in comparison to a more political outlook of the second panel. Panel members presented various case studies related to their professional work and commented on related bottlenecks, opportunities, lessons learned, and the relevance of issues raised



by the framework of accountability proposed by the WDR 04.

For the documentation of this panel round the original order of contributions was changed to a coherent structure with the focus on the main conference question: What are the conclusions to be drawn, when relating practical experience with the proposed accountability framework? After a short overview of the case studies, the chapter then concentrates on the significance of those experiences for the three accountability relationships proposed by the WDR 04: "short line", "voice" and "compact".

### Case studies discussed

The following case studies served as basis for the discussion among panel members and the forum:

- Ministry of National Education, Indonesia (Focus: corruption prevention)
- Panchayat Raj, India (Focus: service provision based on village autonomy)
- Civil Society Coalition for Basic Education, Malawi (Focus: NGO involvement in education strategy planning and implementation)
- Aga Khan Foundation (Focus: coordination and management of NGO activities in Asia and Africa)



### Experiences related to the "short line" relationship

Panelists stated that experiences on promoting and maximizing local capacity to shorten the client-provider route are mixed. The Aga Khan Foundation experienced quite different results for African compared to Asian regions. It was found that inaccessibility to social services due to geographical isolation, as well as political and social exclusion of certain groups naturally hampered the consumer-provider relationship. It was also found that a more systematic approach was needed to decentralization instead of inefficient pilots.

### Experiences related to the "voice" relationship

Here the discussion centered on issues of how the interests of the poor can be brought to the attention of policy makers and politicians. It was agreed that in many cases this relationship involves huge distances often resulting in a lack of public scrutiny, which normally is regarded as a good mechanism for combating corruption. One way of limiting this distance is working in close cooperation with NGOs (acting as "voices for the poor"), working directly with the clients and providing for regular monitoring. But it was also observed that donor funded NGOs are accountable to the financing agencies and governments outside the triangle of accountability. This often leads to a very long distance between clients and policy makers.

### Experiences related to the "compact" relationship

The relationship between policy makers and service providers brought up two central topics during the discussion: the need for a separation of policy makers and service providers (greater autonomy and clear responsibilities given to local bodies) as well as the importance of monitoring and evaluation. There was the example of an Indonesian project in which corruption could not be curbed by this approach, whereas an example of India was said to have produced good results (training local students to become teachers). Concerning the second topic, there was a general consensus that monitoring and evaluation is imperative to success and should be left to independent bodies.

## 3 "Short line" Relationship

### Report of the Working Group

The short line approach, according to the WDR 04, identifies the direct and simplified relationships between clients (people, communities) and providers (schools, health centers, etc). Given the difficulties in strengthening the long route of accountability, the WDR 04 states that improving the short route – the client-provider relationship – deserves more attention. There is no question that this relationship is broken for hundreds of millions of poor people.

## Implementation bottlenecks

The most important implementation bottlenecks, in strengthening the client-provider short line relationship, as identified by the working groups, are summarized below.

- **Lack of decentralization**

The participants of the working groups came to the conclusion that there is often unwillingness on the side of the central governments of the aid recipient countries to shift the power to the communities / clients. In addition, the inequality between rural and urban areas in receiving services is striking; particularly this was noted in India. Thus, one of the problems seems to be how to reach people in rural areas.

- **Bad quality / lack of local adoption of services**

The following questions were raised during the workshop discussion: Why does the existing governmental system produce unsatisfactory results, both in quality and quantity? Why are the services not adapted to the needs of communities? The suggested answer to these questions is that service providers do not know their clients. The report on India in the workshop focusing on education identified that costs and bad timing of service provision are the major barriers to successful service provision. In the educational sector, teachers' low salaries lead to a lack of motivation and responsibility to provide high-quality education, frequent omission of lessons, search for private teaching work and taking up of multiple posts in several schools or universities.

- **Lack of sufficient and reliable funding for community empowerment**

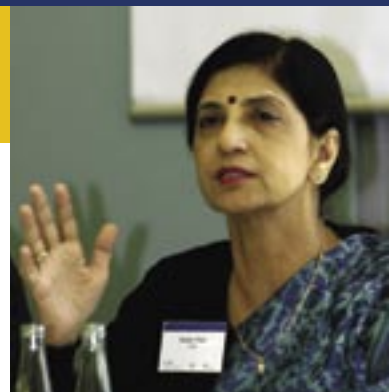
In the context of developing countries it is very unlikely that clients play an effective role in voicing their concerns about strengthening service delivery. The process of community empowerment is cumbersome and time consuming with slow impact. The projects and initiatives that work on empowering the community are usually short term with limited funding sources. The lack of long term financial and technical sustainability thus sometimes results in a discontinuity of very good initiatives.

- **Low managerial capacity for participation and co-production**

Low managerial capacity on the part of community leaders is one of the bottlenecks that hinders the accountability process in the client-provider relationship. Even if some efforts to empower the community are being made, by raising their awareness about their rights, sometimes the limited or very low managerial capacities make it difficult for the clients to enter into effective partnership and co-production in an efficient delivery system.

- **Lack of political will and driving force to strengthen client power**

In many parts of the world, mostly in South Asian countries like India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, the providers and policy makers work under the same umbrella. The Ministries of Health and Education that make policies also run the major public services in health and education. The dual





nature of institutions thus makes it difficult for any reform process to take place, especially since often the institutions are not open for criticism. The people who are responsible for policy making and provision of services at the same time have less motivation and political will to strengthen the client power for effective service delivery.

- **Difficulty to provide knowledge on available services, costs and rights**

One of the reasons behind low client power to improve service delivery is a lack of information on available services, costs and awareness about their own rights. In many cases it is difficult to provide knowledge to the clients. In parts of India women cannot get the benefits of many of the health facilities supporting reproductive health due to a lack of information about the availability and cost of the services. An informed community can exert pressure for improved service delivery systems, as occurred in Ethiopia, where the government was forced to revise certain health facilities at the demand of people who were well aware of their rights and power.

- **Capturing and controlling the resources, knowledge and decision making by the least poor**

The social setup prevailing in most of the developing countries creates competition for access to resources. The poor, often being powerless and submissive, are frequently exploited by the least poor, who capture and control the

resources, knowledge and decision-making process. The least poor have better access to donors and outsiders and in this way sideline the poor and get hold of resources. Financing agencies, on the other hand, have less access to the poor because of language barriers and less information about the social systems.

### **Policy options and recommendations**

In order to strengthen client power, the following measures and policy recommendations were suggested:

- **Decentralized funding with policy orientation towards client power and community empowerment combined with better quality of services**

The funds would reach the service providers better if funding was decentralized. Thus, the resources should be transferred to strengthen organizations at the local level, and international financing organizations should directly finance local initiatives and empower local people and provinces in order to assure sustainability. Participants recommended linking the funding initiatives with the policy orientation toward client power and community empowerment (e.g. a specific percentage of overall funding in order to allow for up-scaling). Community empowerment is the effective way of improving this power. The lack of interest of providers to improve client power can only be tackled if there is policy influence towards enhancing client power. One of the initial steps could be to fix a specific percentage of funding towards this task. Government funding could be monitored by cross-regional evaluations and comparisons as well as by social audit (public posting). To improve the quality of the service, it was

suggested that the rights approach could be powerful in increasing clients' awareness of their rights, their consciousness, empowerment and accountability. Better results can also be achieved by building a system of attitudes and expectations of accountable service provision, enhancing competition between providers and enforcing competencies of communities to monitor service delivery.

- **Capacity development in communities**

The gaps that result due to a lack of capacity (technical knowledge, management expertise, organizational and legal issues / rights) on the part of communities can be improved if there is more focus on capacity building of the community organizations. This will certainly help in increasing client power for better service delivery. One practical way of enhancing the capacity is to look into measures that could strengthen the representation of community committees to enable them to play their role effectively.

- **"Marketing approach" (analysis of demand, participatory design, appropriate delivery of services)**

According to the marketing approach, listening to the clients is not enough. Instead, it is necessary to analyze the real and specific demands from diverse clients, as well as involve the beneficiaries in the planning by using participatory methods to determine the demands for services to better understand the local culture.

- **Outcome-based funding**

It is important that funding be based on performance quality and result indicators. Budget support should therefore rely on a holistic

approach and monitoring. In the education sector the volume of funding should follow the rigid criteria of incentive funds based e.g. on the number of girls or disadvantaged learners attending the school.

Implementing the suggested policy recommendations will allow client power to be strengthened in the following ways: 1) Increase choice and competition, 2) increase demand and purchasing power, 3) provide information and knowledge, 4) promote participation in design and monitoring, 5) enhance co-production and 6) strengthen complaints systems.

## 4 "Voice" Relationship

### Report of the Working Group

The first leg of the accountability triangle - the "voice" relationship - is the relationship between policy makers and citizens. In the working group, participants included donors as well as policy makers and, thus, the discussion also revolved around donor accountability. In general, this leg of accountability focuses on how poor people could better voice their concerns to the policy makers and how policy makers could better hear the poor people's requests.





### Implementation bottlenecks

In terms of the accountability triangle citizens are regarded as the clients of health and education services. However, the providers of these services usually do not enter into a direct agreement with citizens but instead receive their mandate through policy makers. It is therefore important that the citizens' voices be sufficiently heard by policy makers (politicians or bureaucrats) and that they receive adequate consideration in the decision-making process. However, a number of factors can hamper this relationship:

- **Democratic participation**

A number of ambiguities arise when trying to define concepts of poor citizens and democratic participation by the poor. Because of different cultural traditions and political systems, it is not always sure whether the right people have been reached and heard. In addition some modes of participation can in reality destabilize democratic principles and thus do not necessarily guarantee equality. In cases where civil society organizations (CSO) act in the name of the poor without having a political mandate, a "participatory" democracy could in fact undermine a "representative" democracy since it is replacing legitimate political processes. The result would at best be a passive participation.

Democratic participation and decentralization are often considered to go hand in hand, putting power closer to people and being an important middle way, a first step in the "long route" of accountability. However, the workshop participants identified some problems with decentralization. First, it takes a long time to carry out a decentralization process. These processes, which aim at democratization of the country, are also often slow and not necessarily well structured. Second, if an elitist style of governance exists in the country, it is often transferred to the local level, and in the end, the governance can be less democratic than under a centralized system. Third, there can be leakages in the participatory processes, leaving parts of the targeted population abandoned.

The discussion also touched upon the concept and challenges of participatory budget monitoring, a public forum through which citizens/clients influence and control priority setting, policy making, resource allocations and access to public goods and services. Participatory budgeting was criticized for being only superficially democratic and often remaining unclear about the role of budget councilors (who ultimately make the policy decisions) and the mechanisms by which they are monitored.

- **Inclusion of the poor in planning processes**

Participants criticized that the typical planning processes of sector based reform programs, bilateral programs and national educational or health strategies do not sufficiently include the voice of the poor. This is contradictory to the inclusiveness envisaged and described by the World Development Report 2004.

- **Lack of information**

The workshop participants came to the conclusion that appropriate information is a prerequisite for responsible participation. However, often the poor are not given a possibility to express themselves due to a lack of the right kind of information. Therefore, there is an increased need for advocacy for informing the poor about their rights. It should also be kept in mind that the poor are not a homogeneous group, raising issues such as the appropriate choice of language and the way in which information should be presented in order to be fully understood.

It was also mentioned that in many cases the media do not have sufficient scope and reach. In addition, they are often not independent or self-sufficient and thus are not able to publish information adequately. Press freedom and transparent government structures are thus a precondition for objective and reliable information.

- **The problematic role of donors**

The discussion focused also on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and their formulation process. The following questions were raised: should the PRSPs be scrutinized in the national parliament, were the citizens able to participate in the formulation process and what should be the role of donors in the process?

In Tanzania, the poor were included in the formulation through advocacy campaigns that aimed to mobilize them, and after this the document was discussed in the parliament. The national health and education committees were also involved in the process. In Bangladesh, on the other hand, donor documents are normally

considered as secrets and, therefore, are not discussed in public. The donors tend to have an important role in the PRSP process and nowadays much of the policy relevant thinking is done in donor agencies instead of at the national level.

The participants also came to the conclusion that donors are in fact held accountable in their own separate triangle of accountability. This can result in a conflict of interests between their obligations towards their own national governments and the governments of the partner countries they are advising.

### **Policy options and recommendations**

Given the existing challenges with regard to the voice relationship between citizens and policy makers, participants suggested a number of recommendations:

- **Education is the key to enhancing the voice relationship**

Literacy and knowledge are the keys to self-empowerment. The language of instruction and teaching civic and life skills can make a crucial difference in learners' sense of self-esteem and motivation. The citizens must be able to obtain enough education and knowledge to support their self empowerment. A number of issues are important in this regard: the academic curriculum should be delivered in the local language and adult education should receive a strong priority.

Positive experiences have also been made with catalyzing solidarity among clients and it was considered essential that donors should





support coalitions that benefit the poor. Parents' associations can have a very positive effect in this regard and should be extended to reach beyond mere educational purposes. The role of community services in which teachers and students help educate the poor was also discussed. Furthermore it was considered essential that the role of poor people and clients is highlighted in the planning process of educational projects and that appropriate indicators need to be developed to monitor this.

- **Role of clarity of donors and development partners**

Donors and local institutions need to insist on clarity and transparency about roles and functions at all levels, in all relationships. This includes monitoring mechanisms and is crucial for building trust. In this regard it was suggested that all transactions between donors and governments should be discussed in parliament and made public. It is also imperative that donors should accurately understand the political, social and cultural aspects of the countries in which they work. Donor support must be predictable.

- **Media, information and language**

There is an increased need for advocacy for informing the poor about their rights. A human rights approach including the right to health,

nutrition and information would help to empower the poor. The Peoples' Health Charter and the World Health Assembly offer a basis for strengthening "voice". Codes of conduct for civil servants and client charters need enforcement and they should be made public. With regard to gender, advocacy for sexual and reproductive health would greatly assist in the empowerment of women. Information should be relevant and comprehensible for poor people in local languages (language should be linguistically as well as rhetorically comprehensible). Finally, the freedom of the news media and radio is a prerequisite to share information with and about the poor.

- **Participation**

Individuals need to be enabled to express their voices; they need the life skills to stand up and speak. Only then will it be possible to have a real democratic participation. Donors should therefore ask themselves whether they are really talking with and including the poor when they are planning their activities and policies.

During the discussion it was also noted that the strengthening of pre-payment schemes can be an effective way to increase buy-in, participation and access by the poor to health services.

Despite the aforementioned challenges with regard to decentralization, some positive points were also identified. When decision makers are closer to the citizens, citizens are able to follow their actions better than when they are in the capital city. It is also more likely that citizens scrutinize the decision makers more easily when they are from the same region. This again emphasizes the role of monitoring and evaluation which could significantly help to make the accountability leg shorter.

## 5 “Compact” Relationship

### Report of the Working Group

The relationship between policy makers/politicians and the service providers in the third leg of the accountability triangle is termed as ‘compact’. The compact relationship includes the monitoring of outcomes, selection of providers, regulation of providers and public ethos.

### Implementation bottlenecks

- **Lack of capacity**

A lack of qualified professionals at various levels is regarded as a major obstacle to providing services. Managerial capabilities, knowledge of contract negotiations and evaluation of private providers are regarded as an important determinant of overall service outcome. To shift responsibilities by focusing on the poor creates new assignments at different levels of governmental organization. One important aspect here is the funding of recurrent costs, which is often either overlooked or avoided by donors.

- **Misalignment of incentives**

Difficulties to employ qualified teachers in remote or rural areas in Malawi, Namibia, Guinea and other developing countries were raised throughout the entire discussion. Clearly, teachers have many incentives to stay in the urban areas and policy makers have failed to make rural employment attractive. Moreover, high teacher absenteeism is another problem.



- **Lack of monitoring and evaluation**

The policy maker and the service provider can often not easily be distinguished. Therefore the effectiveness of monitoring is questionable. This again highlights the importance of an appropriate decentralization approach by ensuring autonomy at a local level while at the same time assigning clear responsibilities and tasks. Monitoring and evaluation are essential in the compact relationship because the terms of the transaction cannot be fully qualified in contracts, yet monitoring and evaluation are insufficiently done and information about the performance of providers is often unavailable.

- **Lack of role clarity**

Often countries are also experiencing a lack of clear and defined roles among different government sectors or even between government and donor initiatives. This may result in a situation of competition among those actors instead of a coordinated and comprehensive approach.



- **Limited human resources**

Qualified workers often do not want to work in the areas where the poor people live. The problem is not only that doctors and teachers themselves are recruited from the urban middle class, but also that the curriculum in many countries educates them to become urban middle class professionals. Additional pressure comes from migration of educated health workers to foreign countries with better salary (i.e. the international "brain drain").

- **Too many vertical and donor-driven approaches**

Donors are often actively involved in a country's health and education programs. By this, donors often have a strong say on policies and implementation, and frequently their say is stronger than their financial contribution. This situation might influence negatively on the national democratic institutions and impede policy implementation.

## Policy options and recommendations

- **Incentive to build capacity**

To solve the 'capacity bottleneck' it is important not only to establish services but also to understand and align the various incentives of stakeholders in order to achieve a better matching of incentives. Decentralization should go together with an expansion of the capacity building. One suggested solution is to increase the internal capacity of the governmental bodies to make it efficient. To do so, donors would need to crop up their financing of recurrent costs.

Another suggestion is to make more use of private contractors, which implies that service provisions are contracted out and tasks / responsibilities are delegated outside of the governmental body.

- **Better coordination of efforts**

It is highly recommended to have a better coordination of various efforts. Possible means to achieve this goal include cross sector coordination as well as a high level of budget financing and monitoring support. In doing so, donors need to have greater trust in providers and policy makers. It is also important to align donor support more effectively. Considering the country's own processes and donors initiatives should help to strengthen the national planning capacity rather than undermine it.

- **Better human resources policies**

Considering the country's own processes, donor initiatives should help to strengthen the national planning capacity rather than undermine it. Forcing the professionals to live in rural areas can stimulate high absentee rates. Sometimes young female professionals face a lot of problems in

finding accommodation in rural areas. Pro-poor funding might be required in such cases. For instance, in South Africa, schools in poor areas receive more funding and more teachers than other areas. Better payment, local recruitment, shifting training schools outside of the capital might be a solution if economies of scale are not adversely affected, or the quality of education does not deteriorate.

- **Knowledge on what does (not) work, and why**

To generate this information, monitoring and evaluation systems need to be strengthened. This includes both the existing national and independent system. Civil society can play an important role in monitoring and evaluation.

## 6 The Way Ahead: Making Accountability Work

### Report of the Second Panel Round

Delivering health and education services to poor people is an integral part of poverty reduction strategies. The delivery of these services is, however, constrained by the previously identified bottlenecks. The second panel round discussed in a more general and practical way strategies for making accountability work.

- **Lack of institutional and implementing capacity**

The main challenge is the lack of institutional and implementing capacity at the recipient side. To overcome this challenge, all actors involved must play their specific roles. For example, donors should focus on advisory functions, technical cooperation, and budget support, while realizing that one size does not fit all. Where capacity in recipient countries is breaking down, donors need to support the systems and thereafter uphold the capacity by minimizing the consequences of both market and government failures. In the education service provision, the clients should take a proactive role, come forward and make it a social struggle. It is in their interest to be served well; they know best what they need and how services should be delivered. They are close to the reality of life; this applies not only to education and health care, but also to water, irrigation, infrastructure, etc. This concerns a process of becoming aware of how systems operate, what the rights and duties are, and how service delivery can be enforced. NGOs and churches can help to build confidence among people to demand better services. This can be a long and difficult process; it requires a change of mindsets: from being victims, excluded and marginalized people, to self-confident, demanding, participating citizens.

The other side of the medal is the role of the service providers in this process. They need to change their behavior as well, not only because they are forced to do so, but also because they understand their responsibility for service delivery





that responds to the needs of the people. They have to listen better, to gear their services to specific requirements and circumstances. They should adjust their behavior to that of 'public servant' rather than that of someone who does a favor for poor people. It is a matter of attitude and professionalism. Policy makers should be more involved, from implementation to monitoring of service provision by the providers. Donors should elaborate common platforms regarding the prescription of poverty related issues. As donors play a vital role in reaching the poor, they should make the accountability process more efficient.

- **Empower local governments**

More trust should be put into locally elected people. Stakeholders should engage in a dialogue with the policy makers on issues of governance, including the system of service delivery. They could give financial support for initiatives that can bring change in those systems, e.g. through capacity building support, rather than funding service delivery itself. The focus should be on creating an environment for better service delivery, which is actually a matter of institutional change.

- **Final remarks**

Hence, it is important to consider the three accountability routes in a holistic and complementary way. Long and short routes feed each other. The accountability framework can also help to identify key bottlenecks in the processes such as: deficient CSO, weak participation, lack of stronger involvement of parliaments, poor inter-sectoral linkages, technical inputs that are too technocratic and fragmented. In this regard, certain approaches, such as the human rights approach and decentralization, can be useful instruments to help develop awareness among both the poor and the duty bearers, strengthen the accountability relationships by bringing local decision making closer to the citizens' scrutiny and contribute to the development of a legal framework and processes to enforce rights. The unfinished historical evolution of decentralization in developed countries, over several centuries, should encourage the adoption of a long-term perspective. Moreover, transparency and information sharing can be vital to strengthen the accountability process.

There are certain hopeful signs in these respects; e.g. countries having more ownership of the PRSP process, harmonization, alignment and more coherence in the accountability process. Increasing accountability between various actors has certainly contributed to these trends. So, the accountability triangle is expanding; a chain of accountability relations is developing, hopefully reinforcing the relations between the actors of the triangle and contributing to better service delivery to the poor.

## List of participants

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