Public Sector Reform, Citizen Engagement, and Development Results in India

LESSONS AND FRONTIERS

A POLICY WORKING PAPER

Simon O’Meally, Aheli Chowdhury, and Varun Piplani
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<td>Bank</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>CREDA</td>
<td>Center for Rural Education and Development Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>DISHA</td>
<td>Developing Initiatives for Human and Social Interaction</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>information communications technology</td>
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<td>JNNURM</td>
<td>Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission</td>
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Executive Summary

The Backdrop

There is a global consensus that governance and some form of citizen engagement matter for making development more effective, equitable, and sustainable. Yet the devil lies in the details: there is limited agreement on what forms of governance matter most for achieving development results; and there are major gaps in our understanding of how and why different strategies of citizen engagement are successful. Drawing on evidence from India and internationally, this report seeks to move this debate forward.

India’s progress in development has been impressive, although it faces a number of challenges. Its progress, and ongoing challenges, are explained in part by governance dynamics. Moreover, India has been a pioneer in innovative approaches to public sector reform and citizen engagement, ranging from the right to information movement to the widespread implementation of social audits.

Knowledge Gaps and Report Objectives

There are at least three important knowledge gaps in the Indian context. First, the knowledge base is fragmented and patchy, particularly regarding the types of results that citizen engagement might help achieve. Second, our understanding of why certain citizen engagement approaches work and others do not remains partial. Finally, there is room for a deeper debate on the policy and practical lessons that have emerged from India’s rich experience.

This report begins addressing these knowledge gaps through a systematic review of available evidence. It analyses 68 well-documented cases of citizen engagement in India, focusing on a subset of citizen engagement initiatives that aim to increase public accountability for development results. In so doing, the report addresses three core questions:

1. What types of results did citizen engagement initiatives contribute to in India?

2. What factors affected whether or not citizen engagement initiatives in India had an impact and how?

3. What lessons can be learned from these findings?

Given the patchiness of the data, the report does not claim to provide comprehensive or conclusive findings. However, it does identify a range of important trends that could be the focus of further research and policy debate.
Main Findings

Citizen Engagement and Development Results

Citizen engagement in India has contributed to positive results in four main areas:

1. It has helped to strengthen people’s participation in public affairs and to foster a more informed and active citizenry;

2. It has improved public accountability, which has contributed to improvements in public financial management and service delivery;

3. It has helped foster more “inclusive” forms of governance by creating spaces, however constrained, for excluded groups to have a greater say in public decision making; and

4. In certain cases, it has served as a vehicle for enabling the replication and expansion of innovations in public sector accountability.

At the same time, a number of cases have had partial or (less often) negative results, namely by increasing citizens’ disillusionment or provoking backlash from powerful actors.

Explaining the Results: Drivers of Change

So what explains why some cases of citizen engagement worked while others did not? Interventions were more effective when they harnessed key drivers of change and/or mitigated obstacles to change. The identified main drivers are outlined below.

Information

Information provision is at the heart of most citizen engagement initiatives in India. Information contributed to improved results along three main pathways: (1) when the information provided to societal actors could be used to apply pressure on the government to take corrective action; (2) when relevant information was made available to state actors; and (3) when there were institutional channels, such as redressal mechanisms, enabling citizens to take action based on the information. That said, information provision alone was rarely enough to achieve results.

Political Society

Actors from political society—elected and bureaucratic officials—were critical to making or breaking citizen engagement initiatives. While the drivers of state action are complex, the cases suggest that state (in)action was shaped by four interrelated factors: (1) the incentives, ideas, and interests of bureaucratic officials in relation to the accountability problem in question; (2) the incentives, ideas, and interests of elected officials; (3) the level of state capacity to resolve service delivery problems, including hard capacities such as financial resources and soft capacities...
such as soft skills for effectively engaging with societal actors; and (4) informal political economy practices—such as patronage or identity politics—at the front line of service delivery.

**Enforcement Mechanisms**

The presence or absence of enforcement mechanisms—for follow-up and remedial action—had a major impact on whether a citizen engagement intervention achieved its desired results. Weak enforcement was frequently cited as a major obstacle to results. Enforcement was hampered by weak triggering of mechanisms during the intervention; limited top-down state incentives; and blurred lines of bureaucratic accountability.

**Local Grounding and Collaboration**

Citizen engagement initiatives that were locally grounded and collaborative tended to be more promising. These were initiatives that: (1) adapted to local context and leveraged local capacities and resources for problem-solving; (2) used multiple strategies to drive change in both state and society actors and both formal and informal accountability mechanisms; and (3) proactively facilitated the coming together of different stakeholders to discuss and resolve development problems.

**Inequality**

Different forms of inequality in the implementation context also affected the manifestation and the impact of citizen engagement. Inequalities in power and wealth among participating groups were sometimes reproduced in citizen engagement processes, which resulted in some capture of the benefits by narrower groups and the subversion of implementation processes. However, interventions with strong, built-in mechanisms to mitigate inequalities helped reduce some of these negative effects on implementation and outcomes.

**Replication**

Citizen engagement-driven results were also shaped by an intervention’s ability to sustain and replicate itself. Key drivers of replication include: (1) the ability of the intervention to demonstrate positive impacts and to solve public policy problems; (2) the ability of actors to institutionalize citizen engagement in the government machinery while ensuring its financial sustainability and some degree of bureaucratic independence; and (3) the effective use of technologies to achieve greater scale.

**Forward-Looking Implications and Frontiers**

So what are the broader implications of this research for thought and practice in the field of citizen engagement? There are no recipes for success, but chapter 4 relates the India-specific findings to broader global debates in order to identify some preliminary frontiers. Overall, the findings suggest that conventional approaches to citizen engagement need to be modified so that we: think differently, moving away from old, obsolete mental models; and act differently, translating some of the new thinking in this field into more concrete practical guidance. The points are very briefly summarized here.
Linking Citizen Engagement with Economic Development

The linkages between citizen engagement and development results still need to be better understood. There is a particularly pressing need to demonstrate the contribution of citizen engagement to human and economic development outcomes—an area where the evidence base is severely lacking in India and globally.

Opening the Black Box of the State

This review and the global evidence base underline the central role played by the state and political society. Yet there is still a big gap in our understanding of why the state responds to citizen mobilization as it does. This report suggests two possible steps forward. First, there is a good case to explore how “elite bargains”—informal processes of conflict, negotiation, and compromise between powerful elites—shape state action in the face of different types of citizen engagement. Second, there is a need to go beyond the “good governance” paradigm—which focuses on formal rules, idealized accountability, and technocratic fixes—and instead look at how citizen engagement might contribute to the governance characteristics of real-world developmental regimes.

In terms of practical steps, project teams could do the following:

- Diagnose the elite bargains related to the development problem(s), and then develop a citizen engagement strategy for aligning with, negotiating with, and/or bypassing powerful elites;

- Identify entry points where citizen engagement might contribute to some of the building blocks of developmental regimes. This may include helping to design and implement policies for economic transformation or strengthening pragmatic policy-making processes; and

- Support citizen demand only in conjunction with interventions to build the capacity of the state to respond.

Making Accountability Sandwiches out of Spaghetti

The meta-analysis confirms that demand-side (citizen/societal) pressures are most likely to have positive results when combined with supply-side (state/governmental) pressures. Yet mainstream approaches to citizen engagement still tend to give more attention to the demand side. There is a need to make further progress in operationalizing citizen engagement as part of a “sandwich strategy”—where pro-reform actors from state and society coalesce around a reform, shift the balance of power, and overcome backlash from antireformists. More specifically, we need to develop more sophisticated approaches to supporting pro-reform coalitions because: (1) many development problems are underpinned by a “spaghetti” of overlapping formal and informal accountability relationships, which in practice makes it difficult to isolate pro-reform tendencies; (2) donor funding to coalitions can create donor-dependency; and (3) the sandwich process often creates tensions and conflicts that need to be actively mitigated.
Some practical recommendations include:

- Help build pro-reform alliances by using citizen engagement as a vehicle for reducing barriers to collective action and for bringing state and societal actors together to solve collective action problems; and

- Anticipate the resistance and conflict that is likely to emerge when meaningful citizen engagement takes place, and build in mechanisms to proactively manage this.

**Getting Accountability to Bite**

Citizen engagement initiatives the world over struggle to translate (soft) citizen voice into (hard) development impacts. In fact, many initiatives give limited attention to enforcement issues or have unrealistic expectations of the ability of citizen demand to bring about change. Instead, understanding and triggering enforcement mechanisms needs to become a fundamental part of the DNA of citizen engagement practice.

As such, project teams could:

- Assess the underlying enforcement capacities and incentives (technical and political) related to the focal development problem and then design the intervention accordingly; and

- Ensure that every citizen engagement initiative has one component focused on strengthening the capacity and willingness of relevant enforcement mechanisms.

**Tackling Inequalities Head-on**

Inequalities need to be more systematically assessed, addressed, and tracked in citizen engagement initiatives. At least two areas should be given more attention. First, the term “citizens” needs to be carefully disaggregated as the citizenry is rarely a homogenous force for good, but rather can be divided along a number of lines, such as class, caste, or gender. Second, more attention could be given to addressing the underlying economic and structural drivers of inequality and weak participation. For example, evidence suggests that redistributive reforms, such as land or political organization reforms, are often needed to enable broad-based citizen engagement. Yet these reforms are rarely considered in the mainstream citizen engagement paradigm.

Practitioners could do the following:

- Assess inequality dynamics in the implementation context and tailor the engagement accordingly;

- Build in mechanisms and strategies to mitigate inequalities as an integral part of the intervention; and
Support policy dialogue and interventions to address the underlying drivers of inequality and nonparticipation, such as redistributive reforms and access to basic services.

**Being Problem-Driven**

This meta-review adds to the increasing global evidence that context matters for understanding how and why citizen engagement initiatives have the impacts they do. Yet more still needs to be known about which contextual factors matter most and how to tailor citizen engagement accordingly. A step forward would be to think of citizen engagement as an iterative process for solving problems over a longer time horizon. Why? First, citizen engagement tends to work best and is more sustainable when it can solve problems that matter to enough people. Second, due to the nonlinear nature of change, adaptation to context cannot be a one-time effort.

More practical steps include the following:

- Be more iterative and problem-driven by building in robust mechanisms for addressing locally defined problems and for responding to changes over time; and
- Make development assistance to citizen engagement initiatives more flexible and adaptive by incentivizing and rewarding experimentation and adaptation.

**Stepping Beyond Information**

Many citizen engagement initiatives continue to place a strong emphasis on information provision, but experience shows that: (1) there is a complex relationship between information and citizen action; and (2) information alone is rarely sufficient for achieving results. So how might we move the debate forward? First, we need to thoroughly understand locally specific norms before transplanting informational models across contexts. Second, we need to take a number of additional steps, such as strengthening redressal institutions, to ensure that information can be translated into impactful actions.

Recommended steps include:

- Make sure that information is actionable—that people can use it to make concrete changes—and that it is user-focused—that it directly responds to the user’s social norms, needs, and interests; and
- Undertake a range of additional activities to ensure that people are able to use the information to address the development problem in question.

This amounts to a challenging, ambitious, and forward-looking agenda for citizen engagement—and one that is important to take on if citizen engagement is to realize its promise of contributing to the fight against extreme poverty and the boosting of shared prosperity.
1. Introduction

The Backdrop: Development Results, Governance, and Citizen Engagement

A global consensus has emerged that governance matters for achieving development results, captured in one of the new global Sustainable Development Goals. But the devil lies in the details: there is much less agreement on how governance matters to development, what aspects matter most, and what—if anything—can be done to foster developmental forms of governance (Booth 2013; ESID 2014; Levy 2014).

According to many development agencies, one important driver of governance improvement is citizen engagement. Most, if not all, development agencies promote some form of citizen participation with the promise of making development more effective, equitable, and sustainable (O’Meally 2014; Ringold et al. 2012). The World Bank has recently set the ambitious target of, by 2018, integrating beneficiary feedback into every project that has clearly identifiable beneficiaries (World Bank 2015a). This commitment could prove transformational, especially because it has been set in the context of the World Bank’s enhanced focus on ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity.

However, ensuring that citizen engagement, also referred to as social accountability (see below), has positive development impacts is not a simple task. Gaps remain in our understanding of how and why different citizen engagement strategies are effective, although the evidence base is growing (Grandvoinnet et al. 2015). As Joshi sums up:

“Current social accountability practice has been racing ahead of clear evidence of impact. The paucity of studies of impact (although increasing rapidly), the fragmentation of the data points, the lack of comparative evidence, and the acute shortage of mixed method studies, have all contributed to a situation where there is a strong normative belief in citizen-led accountability without a clear understanding of the conditions under which it can have an impact” (Joshi 2014: 33).

Drawing on evidence from India and internationally, this report seeks to move this debate forward. It explores how and why citizen engagement contributes to certain results, and offers lessons for further thought and practice.
Public sector dynamics have shaped the depth and diversity of development results across the country.

India: An Important Case

India’s development progress has been impressive. Home to more than 1.2 billion people, India has achieved significant economic growth and a reduction in absolute poverty over the last decade. India met the first Millennium Development Goal by cutting the proportion of people living on less than US$1.25 a day in half. Shared prosperity, defined as the growth rate of the bottom 40 percent of the population, has also improved, with the gap between growth rates of the less well-off and average growth narrowing between 2005 and 2012 (Narayan and Murgai 2016).

However, the country continues to face development challenges. India is home to around one-third of the world’s poor: as of 2012, approximately 270 million people—which is 26 percent of the global poor—lived on less than US$1.90 per day, which is the current internationally recognized poverty line (Narayan and Murgai 2016). Further, most of the poor are concentrated in rural areas (Government of India 2014). Inequality indicators such as the Gini coefficient (0.34 in 2012) have recently been found to be on the rise, with widening disparities between urban and rural areas and between sections of the population. For example, some groups, such as the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and women, fare worse in terms of economic and human development indicators compared with the average. Moreover, there are human development challenges. In 2012, an estimated one-third of India’s children had a low birth-weight, 43 percent of children under five were underweight (double the rate of Sub-Saharan Africa and five times that of China), 48 percent were stunted, and 20 percent were wasted (World Bank 2012). Drèze and Sen (2013) therefore characterize India’s development as one of “contradictions.”

There is a growing consensus that governance dynamics explain, at least in part, India’s progress and challenges. Sen et al. (2014) have argued that, overall, weak governance institutions have hampered steady economic growth in India. Moreover, a wide body of evidence shows how governance and public sector institutions have shaped the depth and diversity of development results across the country (Dasra 2014; Drèze and Sen 2013; Mehta and Walton 2014; Paul and Sridhar 2015). For example, Kohli (2012), who sets out to explain the marked difference in poverty reduction progress between Indian states, finds that poverty rates declined the most in Kerala, West Bengal, and Tamil Nadu; and the least in Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. Kohli demonstrates that this variation cannot be explained by economic growth alone, noting that “for a unit of economic growth in various Indian states, poverty has come down much more rapidly in some states than in others” (Kohli 2012: 134). He and others find that this variation can be explained, to a fair degree, by institutional factors, including: (1) the nature of state–business relationships and elite competition; (2) the state’s ability to devise, sustain, and implement policies for growth, industry, and redistribution; (3) the quality of the state’s bureaucratic machinery; and (4) the degree to which political legitimacy is founded on a broad-based constituency as opposed to a narrower identity- or patronage-based political economy.

Similarly, a number of studies demonstrate how institutional factors are crucial to service delivery in India. For example, one extensive survey about the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) conducted in 10 states found that results are highly influenced
by state capacity and commitment, local power relations, the nature of political competition, and the degree of demand for work (Thapa 2014).

Against this backdrop, India has been an international pioneer of innovative approaches to public sector governance reform and citizen engagement, including the Right to Information Act, the implementation of social audits, and the emergence of citizen report cards (Posani and Aiyar 2009). Moreover, the country has an impressive development architecture, which includes an array of service delivery programs with sophisticated transparency, accountability, and participatory provisions. These Indian models are groundbreaking and have been replicated across the globe.

Knowledge Gaps and Report Objectives

There are, however, knowledge gaps in the Indian context, which this report aims to address:

- **The knowledge base is fragmented and patchy.** India presents a diverse tapestry of citizen engagement initiatives, but no recent reports seek to find common trends across the vast body of cases. This report seeks to synthesize this fragmented case material.

- **Understanding of why particular citizen engagement approaches have worked is limited.** Many existing accounts tell only part of the story or are focused on operational tools and narrow technical issues. This paper reassesses the evidence to better understand the underlying drivers of change.

- **Policy-relevant lessons need to be identified.** This paper seeks to spark a debate on policy directions by drawing out common policy lessons and relating the Indian findings to global conceptual and policy innovations in this field.

To this end, three core questions are addressed:

1. What types of results did citizen engagement initiatives contribute to in India?

2. What factors affected whether or not citizen engagement initiatives in India had an impact and how?

3. What lessons can be learned from these findings?

Analytical Framework

To help answer these questions, the study developed an analytical framework. The framework was developed iteratively—broad concepts were identified in advance but were adapted based on an analysis of the available evidence. This framework has four elements, which are briefly outlined here (see also figure 1.1).
1. Defining Citizen Engagement

This report uses the following broad definition of citizen engagement:

“... the two-way interaction between citizens and governments ... that gives citizens a stake in decision-making with the objective of improving the intermediate and final development outcomes of the intervention” (World Bank 2015a: 8).

One-way processes, such as the government making information available to the public or consulting people but not following up with them, do not constitute citizen engagement (World Bank 2015a).5

Citizen engagement can be understood as the two-way interaction between citizens and governments with the objective of improving development outcomes.

This report focuses on a subset of citizen engagement that aims to increase public and private accountability for development results, often referred to as social accountability. This subset is broadly understood as:

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

Global experience suggests that social accountability is important in furthering a range of development outcomes (Fox 2014).6
2. Clustering Initiatives by Type of Engagement

The study clusters citizen engagement cases in India by how citizens actually engage. Initiatives are grouped according to their focus on one of various processes of state–society interaction and accountability:

- **Watching.** These cases are primarily focused on increasing opportunities for state and societal actors to oversee or *watch* the state as it conducts public affairs, including audit-based approaches.

- **Bridging.** These cases involve efforts seeking to *bridge* the gap between social and political accountability mechanisms, including initiatives beyond elections that increase public scrutiny of elected and bureaucratic officials.

- **Facilitating.** These cases are heavily focused on *facilitating* opportunities for societal actors to interface with state actors in order to address specific service delivery issues. They involve *feedback* approaches, such as community score cards and citizen report cards.

The typology is based on our reading of the case material, and it attempts to pinpoint the dominant accountability processes by which citizens are engaged. It is recognized that, to a degree, this approach simplifies the universe of citizen engagement. Moreover, some cases of citizen engagement cut across the typology.7

3. Identifying Result Areas

Three broad outcome areas are identified to structure the exploration of results driven by citizen engagement. They draw on but are not limited to work by Gaventa and Barrett (2010):

- **Construction of citizenship and strengthening of practices of participation.** This relates to the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the active engagement of societal actors in matters of public life.8

- **Responsiveness and/or accountability of the state.** This refers to the state’s responsiveness to citizen needs and to state “accountability” measured in terms of: (1) answerability for its actions; and (2) enforcement of sanctions on state actors who act wrongfully.9

- **More inclusive forms of governance.** This involves processes through which typically excluded groups are better included in public affairs and public service delivery.10

Impacts under these outcome areas can be positive, negative, or neutral; and results are not necessarily limited to these areas (see chapters 3 and 4).
4. How Context Mediates Results

In order to explore how results were achieved, the framework recognizes that sociopolitical context plays an important role. The way in which citizen engagement unfolds and has impact is shaped by complex formal and informal dynamics that relate to the intervention and the context in which it unfolds (see appendix D; Grandvoinnet et al. 2015).

Methodology

The study methodology is qualitative and borrows from systematic meta-review methods. This approach seeks to identify patterns from prior findings across a range of cases. The following is a brief summary of the methodology. Refer to the appendixes for a more detailed explanation.

The cases were selected in a two-step process. The first step involved creating a long list of 164 cases from India. A “case” in this context can represent a study of either one intervention or multiple interventions. Based on a protocol for including and excluding case studies (appendix B), a sample of cases from the 1990s to present was collected using diverse word searches to scour multiple databases from academic, policy, and donor sources. Experts were also contacted to identify cases that had potentially been overlooked or that were not yet publicly available. The research team’s resulting list of 164 cases was compiled and classified by state, approach, and key outcome (see appendix E).

The next step was to create a short list of 68 cases, on which this report’s analysis largely focuses (appendix F). The two main criteria for inclusion on this list were: (1) the case documentation had a methodology that, to some degree, sought to evaluate the citizen engagement initiative; and (2) the case addressed one or more of the core research questions. To reduce bias in favor of or against any particular state, legislation, or approach, the research team endeavored to compile as diverse a set of cases as possible. Note that the cases that focus exclusively on the right to information or the right to public services were excluded from the short list because they concentrate on cross-cutting legislation rather than just citizen engagement. Cases that focus exclusively on social movements and protests are excluded due to the narrower policy and service delivery focus of this report. The short list forms the backbone of the report’s analysis, but cases from the long list are selectively mentioned to inform broader discussion points, especially in chapter 4.

An in-depth analysis of the short list was then undertaken to unearth patterns. The quality of the evidence for each case on the short list was categorized according to its methodology (appendix C). This review of the quality of the evidence allowed us to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of the claims associated with each case. The findings were triangulated, cross-checked, and revalidated against diverse sources to the greatest extent possible. The findings were further triangulated by key informant interviews.
Challenges and Caveats

Before reading on, two key methodological challenges should be noted. First, there are weaknesses in the available data. Many sources offer limited rigorous or comparative analysis, and in a number of cases, the attribution of impacts to the particular intervention was poorly demonstrated. Accordingly, this paper presents nuanced conclusions and avoids strong claims about the validity or generalizability of the findings.

Second, this study does not intend to provide an exhaustive or representative overview of citizen engagement in India. As noted, certain cases are excluded from the remit of this analysis. Moreover, the paper relies on relatively well-documented cases, which means that other potentially interesting but poorly documented initiatives are absent. Nevertheless, much can be learned from an analysis and reinterpretation of existing documentation.

Report Structure

This report is divided into three remaining chapters. Chapter 2 discusses the cases by approach: watching, bridging, and facilitating. Chapter 3 presents a synthesis of the findings across all the cases. Chapter 4 concludes with a summary of the main findings and attempts to extract the key implications for future thought and practice. Given the space limitations, the report’s discussion is as brief as possible.
2. Citizen Engagement in India: Watching, Bridging, and Facilitating

This chapter examines three overlapping approaches to engaging citizens. Initiatives are clustered by the core processes through which citizens engage in public accountability: (1) watching, (2) bridging, and (3) facilitating. Sixty-eight cases are covered (table 2.1), and the sample cuts across a range of policy issues and sectors (table 2.2). Each approach is discussed in turn. A brief background is provided, followed by an exploration of the factors that influenced implementation and the results achieved.

Watching

This section focuses on attempts to strengthen opportunities for state and societal actors to verify, oversee, and watch the state in its delivery of services. The efforts have largely centered on applying and expanding public sector auditing approaches. The cases are often referred to as social auditing because, in addition to standard auditing procedures, they require the proactive involvement of societal actors for information collection and verification (see box 2.1). Notably, in 2005, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was the first service delivery program to include social audits as law. Since then, social audit initiatives have mushroomed in India.

Factors Shaping Effectiveness

Three key factors emerged from the case material as critical to shaping the effectiveness of watching interventions: (1) the degree of access to necessary information, (2) the nature and responses of the state, and (3) the ability to use multiple strategies for information verification.
1. Access to Necessary Information

The degree of access to necessary information emerged as critically important. Poor access to relevant information impeded effective verification processes. This resulted in limited changes in behavior along at least three pathways: (1) a lack of citizen knowledge of entitlements was commonly cited as a reason for weak citizen participation; (2) a lack of high-quality information about schemes hampered the quality of the verification process; and (3) a lack of knowledge on the part of state and societal actors about how to implement a robust audit hindered effective implementation.13

Related to this, the enabling environment for information provision was found to be significant. A number of cases demonstrated how public information provisions, particularly the Right to Information (RTI) Act, helped actors improve the verification process. For example, the nongovernmental organization (NGO) ADHAR, which conducted social audits to monitor the implementation of the public distribution system and MGNREGA in rural Orissa, used the RTI Act to gain information about the status of the two schemes. Youth for Social Development, an NGO that focused on auditing rural infrastructure in Orissa, used the RTI Act to acquire information.
about tender and contract details for road work, filing more than 250 RTI applications. Similarly, the NGO Samarthan used the RTI Act and the Ministry of Rural Development Management Information System to obtain information on villages for the social audits of MGNREGA in rural Madhya Pradesh (Awasthi 2011).

Formal information provisions alone, however, are insufficient to guarantee timely or high-quality information. Some cases exposed the difficulties associated with ensuring that information provisions are implemented in a timely manner and that reliable, accurate information is provided. For example, there are a number of instances where people experienced delays in receiving a response to RTI applications or where the quality of the information provided was poor or incomplete (CUTS 2010).

2. Nature and Responses of the State

In-state legal provisions for social auditing were enablers of citizen engagement. The review suggests that making social audits a legal requirement, such as with MGNREGA, bolstered societal activism and gave greater legitimacy to societal voices in the process of delivering the program. For instance, Samarthan documents that the presence of the legal provision in MGNREGA motivated the use of social audits and enabled their implementation (Awasthi 2011). However, this meta-analysis finds, overall, that the presence of a legal provision by itself is insufficient to ensure an effective watching process.

State actors—political and bureaucratic actors at higher and lower tiers of government—were also crucial. To varying degrees, all cases reveal the important role that elected officials and bureaucrats play in making or breaking citizen engagement. One illustrative example is the case of social audits in Andhra Pradesh. Available evidence suggests that the ability of the state to adopt, institutionalize, and scale up social audits was driven and facilitated by state actors. The auditing initiative was driven and facilitated by the principal secretary—a high-ranking civil servant—with the support of the chief minister—the highest ranking elected political official in the state. There is limited evidence to explain the underlying incentives that drove and sustained this support, but the fact that the initiative contributed to the recently elected chief minister’s image as a “savior of the poor” may have been a key factor. The higher-level political backing created signals and incentives of the bureaucracy in favor of more active implementation. Dedicated bureaucrats also played critical roles in leading, designing, and rolling out the nitty-gritty details of implementation. A number of such bureaucrats were persuaded that social audits were important, which helped to institutionalize and extend them to include additional social assistance schemes.

On the other hand, some state actors hindered progress, especially with regard to follow-up and enforcement. Many cases in different states demonstrate that limited state support can hinder the achievement of citizen engagement results, as was the case for ADHAR’s monitoring of the public distribution system and MGNREGA in rural Orissa, the promotion of rural livelihoods under MGNREGA in Uttar Pradesh by the Center for Rural Education and Development Action.
(CREDA), and the verification of MGNREGA in rural Madhya Pradesh by Samarthan. Enforcement was another ongoing challenge for the social audits in Andhra Pradesh because of the limited capacity and incentives of state actors to resolve the problems that surfaced during the auditing process. Regular audits have been successful in registering positive outcomes, but enforcement of sanctions and remedial actions have been sporadic and sometimes limited (Afridi and Iversen 2014). Aiyar and Mehta (2013) similarly argue that while the social audit agency was able to establish greater answerability and achieve reductions in corruption, it was less effective in ensuring enforcement. However, existing evaluations of social audits in Andhra Pradesh require further substantiation and also need to examine the latest available data on auditing for the state. 16

Two caveats regarding enforcement are worth noting. First, limited enforcement cannot necessarily be attributed to the auditing process—the enforcement function often resides with other state institutions. Indeed, social audits can identify discrepancies, but the responsibility to rectify such discrepancies lies with other state agencies. Second, the case material offers a limited explanation of the underlying drivers of state capacity and willingness to be responsive to auditing (see chapters 3 and 4).  

3. Multiple Strategies for Information Verification

The capacity of interlocutors to use multipronged verification strategies also emerged as relevant. In a number of cases, the ability of actors to employ multiple strategies—to support behavior change among state and society actors and to strengthen formal and informal accountability mechanisms—shaped the interventions’ effectiveness. In this regard, successful strategies included a combination of: (1) holding awareness campaigns on schemes and audit processes and building state and society stakeholder capacity to conduct audits; (2) using convening techniques to ensure constructive meetings between various actors to discuss problems and grievances; (3) mobilizing and uniting verification pressure groups 17 to enable—and potentially sustain—collective action; and (4) sparking forms of confrontational collective action, such as protests (Awasthi 2011; ANSA SAR 2012b, c, f). The importance of using multiple strategies for accountability interventions is discussed further in chapter 3.

Exploring Results

Construction of Citizenship and Strengthening of Practices of Participation

A number of cases documented how the watching process can increase awareness, which, to varying degrees, contributes to increased citizen participation and demand. For instance, as a result of the audit process, Samarthan reported increased demand for jobs under MGNREGA in 10 villages (Awasthi 2011). Similarly, Sambandh, which fostered social watch groups to monitor MGNREGA implementation in Orissa, found that increased awareness on issues such as wage rates and equal pay contributed to a 60 percent rise in the demand for work by women (ANSA SAR 2012f). CREDA, which worked to improve rural livelihoods under MGNREGA in Uttar Pradesh, noted increased job demands and higher registration of job cards in target villages (ANSA SAR 2012f).
Moreover, the watching process contributed to people raising questions—documentation of CREDA in Uttar Pradesh, Youth for Social Development in Orissa, Samarthan in Madhya Pradesh, and ADHAR in Orissa suggest that the interventions contributed to an increase in RTI applications regarding public service delivery. Indeed, “questioning the state” can help affirm the rights of people as citizens (Corbridge et al. 2005).

The watching process appeared to strengthen people’s capacity for collective action. Evidence from the CREDA case suggests that the raised awareness and mobilization spilled over into other forms of collective action (ANSA SAR 2012b). In the Ahungi Kalan village in Uttar Pradesh, Rs 700,000 (approximately US$11,000) was due in wages for work completed two years prior. Documentation suggests that people decided to organize a protest in front of the Block Development Office as a result of their enhanced knowledge about entitlements following the social audits. The protest led the *sarpanch*—the local government body leader—to publicly apologize for the delay and to release a payment of Rs 500,000 (approximately US$7,800). Similarly, ADHAR claimed that it built social capital through the formation of village development action committees, noting that these committees have filed a number of RTI applications and regularly interacted with local authorities on various issues (ANSA SAR 2012e). In short, the cases underline how social capital was built, to some degree, as a result of the watching process. Whether or not such social capital has been sustained or contributed to transforming state–society relations over the medium term is not documented.

**Responsiveness and/or Accountability of the State**

A number of cases point to gains in public service delivery responsiveness and accountability. The social audits in Andhra Pradesh, for example, reduced leakage, recovered funds, and improved program implementation (Kidambi 2015). Samarthan documents that the social audits in Madhya Pradesh led to improved job card registration and job demand application registration with dated receipts, the cancellation of many ghost cards, and an increase in the number of workdays in the five target villages (Awasthi 2011). In Orissa, ADHAR reports that the district administration took steps to restore the mandated quota of food grain under the public distribution system in response to the complaints of the villagers regarding discrepancies between the allocated and distributed amount of grain.

The overall evidence suggests, however, that accountability gains are incomplete and ad hoc. First, aside from some exceptions, accountability gains are related to “softer” answerability rather than “harder” enforcement of sanctions and follow-up. The accountability gains also appear to have been reactive and isolated rather than systematic and institutionalized. Various cases point to isolated events, such as the transfer of a teacher or the fixing of the irregular distribution of food grains in some villages, rather than to a broader institutional change. None of this evidence negates the importance of these gains for development results. However, a number of cases do suggest that watching initiatives have been less successful in addressing accountability problems
in a systematic and systemic manner by involving higher-level bureaucrats or political elites. This point is returned to later in the report.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{More Inclusive Forms of Governance}

The evidence base on the effects of the watching process on the inclusion of marginalized groups is relatively weak. This makes it difficult to ascertain: (1) whether and how watching can empower marginalized groups; and (2) whether gains made by marginalized groups can be attributed to the auditing process or to other factors. Further research is needed, but certain points can be gleaned.

In a handful of cases, the watching process produced incremental gains for typically excluded groups. This tended to happen when the initiative specifically targeted excluded groups. ADHAR's intervention to monitor the public distribution system and MGNREGA in rural Orissa, for example, increased awareness among women, improving their access to employment and resulting in their demanding mandatory work site facilities, such as crèches and shelters (ANSA SAR 2012b; ANSA SAR 2012e).\textsuperscript{23} Some cases also suggest that the watching process incrementally improves the capabilities of excluded groups to question exclusionary dynamics. CREDA reported that in one Uttar Pradesh village, the \textit{panchayat}—the lower tier of local government—was dominated by upper-caste individuals, which weakened the voice of lower-caste and minority groups and undermined their access to services. The documentation suggests that the auditing process improved the mobilization and participation of such marginal groups, which in turn contributed to their increased demand for work and to their interacting on a more regular basis with local government leaders about discrimination and wage delays.\textsuperscript{24}

However, the cases also suggest that the watching process risks replicating existing inequalities. One key informant interview suggested that social audits face the risk of reproducing the marginalization of certain groups because powerful and wealthy members of a group are able to participate more actively in the process and can exclude or repress the voices of others.\textsuperscript{25} Indeed, in the absence of state mechanisms to address discrimination and backlash, these groups may experience the “fear factor” associated with challenging existing power structures (Mansuri and Rao 2013).

\textbf{Bridging}

A second cluster of citizen engagement cases focused on enhancing public accountability by attempting to \textit{bridge} the gap between social and political accountability mechanisms. In practice, this involves increasing societal engagement with existing mechanisms for political and bureaucratic accountability and introducing additional mechanisms for more regular scrutiny of elected and bureaucratic officials, beyond periodic elections. It has involved tracking of public expenditures, documenting the issues that local elected representatives address, and heightening transparency regarding the backgrounds of elected representatives (box 2.2). There are numerous initiatives of this type in India, but well documented cases of their drivers and impacts are scant. What evidence exists is briefly summarized in the following sections.
Factors Shaping Effectiveness

Across the sample, two main factors emerged as critical in shaping the effectiveness of bridging initiatives: (1) the presence of weak or blurred channels of public accountability, and (2) the capacity and incentives of state actors.

1. Weak or Blurred Channels of Accountability

Weak or blurred channels of accountability limited the effectiveness and impact of various initiatives. Several cases focused on providing information to societal actors with the aim of creating a more informed citizenry that would therefore be better able to hold state officials to account. For example, the Association for Democratic Reforms has promoted information campaigns to provide information on the credentials of candidates. Praja Foundation, an NGO in Mumbai, also has an online campaign called “Know Your Neta” (“Know Your Leader”), and Developing Initiatives for Human and Social Interaction (DISHA), an organization that works on budget tracking to improve local governance in Gujarat, has promoted transparency in the public budget-making process (Narayanan 2010; Malajovich and Robinson 2006). However, the findings suggest that the ability of citizens to translate such information into impacts has been hampered by weak and/or unclear public mechanisms for acting on the information. For example, the Praja case reveals that the channels available for constituents to raise concerns and provide feedback vary in quality, and in some localities are nonexistent (Narayanan 2010). Another key informant suggests that without deeper electoral reforms, efforts to arm citizens with information about candidates have limited impact.
These cases resonate with the broader literature on accountability in India, some of which points to the fact that accountability mechanisms can overlap or be fragmented, especially in the context of a complex federal structure (Desai 2009). Some studies note that these challenges may be more pronounced in lower-income, rural areas of the country, where informal practices and patronage-based politics can intermingle with or take precedence over formal rules (Aiyar and Mehta 2013; Ananthpur et al. 2014).

2. Capacity and Incentives of State Officials

The capacity of state officials was also found to shape bridging initiatives. The capacity of state officials—that is, their understanding of and ability to execute their duties—influenced the extent to which bridging works. For example, Praja noted that certain elected representatives do not fully understand their own roles and responsibilities or the functioning of the state mechanisms at their disposal, and they may lack the necessary financial and human resources for implementing the initiatives. This can limit the extent to which constituency pressures lead to desired changes (Praja Foundation 2014). This is why some organizations attempt to build capacity among state officials in conjunction with increasing citizen demand. DISHA, for instance, provides support to improve budget literacy among elected representatives through budget briefs and tailored workshops (Ramkumar 2008).

The issue of incentives to improve the performance of state actors has, however, been given scant treatment. Capacity and willingness are not the same. However, very few cases differentiate between the two, and very few cases examine the role incentives play in shaping performance and impacting bridging efforts. In some of the cases, the issue of the willingness of state actors to improve performance was only hinted at. The DISHA and Praja cases, for example, note that elected representatives proactively sought budget information and attended workshops. See chapter 4 for further discussion of these issues.

Exploring Results

Of the three approaches, the bridging cases present the weakest assessments of impact and results. The documentation is largely focused on describing activities and outputs, such as the number of workshops held, without an in-depth discussion regarding how the activities contribute to desired outcomes. However, some initial conclusions can be drawn, as presented below.

Construction of Citizenship and Strengthening of Practices of Participation

Bridging cases point to increased participation of societal and state actors, although this is not rigorously documented. With regard to societal actors, the cases all refer to increases in requests and demands by citizens in different forums. With regard to state actors, cases point to their strengthened participation in various areas of public life. DISHA, for example, working on budget tracking in Gujarat, documents the strengthened participation of elected representatives in two main ways: (1) an increased understanding among elected representatives of budget allocation and spending at the panchayat level; and (2) increased engagement of members of the local assembly in budget debates, which was further inferred from the increase in time...
representatives allocated to budget debates during assembly sessions (Malajovich and Robinson 2006). Praja reports similar trends resulting from their publishing of councilor report cards in Mumbai, noting that the effort improved attendance rates of councilors at meetings and increased the number of questions and issues raised by them on behalf of their wards by an average of 27 percent. These findings are particularly interesting because citizen engagement initiatives often measure increases in societal engagement without measuring state engagement, even though state actions can be pivotal in making or breaking citizen engagement. At the same time, little documentation exists as to how this increased participation led to improved public sector performance.

**Responsiveness and/or Accountability of the State**

Some gains have been made with regard to transparency and accountability. The cases contributed to the availability of information in the public domain, although the extent to which this led to increased accountability is not clearly measured. Evidence also demonstrates gains in state responsiveness and accountability. In the Praja case, for instance, the identification of the gaps between constituent complaints and the actions of elected representatives sparked local debates, heightening answerability. Moreover, Praja’s activities had spillover effects: the report card was used as a springboard to support the Mumbai Municipal Corporation in making improvements to its complaints-handling mechanisms (Praja Foundation 2014). Similarly, the Association for Democratic Reforms records some impacts, but attribution is not apparent. It notes, for example, that in certain years and states, the percentage of candidates with pending criminal cases decreased (ADR 2011). However, more recent evidence suggests that, in some cases, having a criminal background helps, rather than hurts, a candidate’s chances. This is thought to be because candidates with criminal backgrounds can bring funds, deliver votes, and the public even considers them to be effective strongmen (Vaishnav 2017).

**More Inclusive Forms of Governance**

Little evidence exists about how initiatives contribute to more inclusive governance. Based on the available documentation, it was not possible to draw conclusions regarding whether or not these types of initiatives enabled the improvement of the terms of inclusion for typically marginalized groups in public affairs. One potential exception is the DISHA case, which suggests that its work was able to improve budget tracking and allocation among tribal groups and Dalits. The impacts of these budgetary changes on actual spending, however, have not been adequately analyzed (Malajovich and Robinson 2006). A better understanding of how marginalized groups are affected by bridging initiatives is needed, not least because these groups tend to be less active in public affairs and have weaker capacities to activate accountability mechanisms in their favor.
Facilitating

This section examines a range of attempts to facilitate increased interaction between societal and state actors so that they could collectively identify and address service delivery problems. Some of these cases are presented as one-way citizen feedback or monitoring, but an analysis of the case material shows that their central thrust is to bring together different stakeholders from state and society to track and resolve service delivery issues. This has been put into practice through the use of three overlapping tools: (1) community score cards, (2) citizen report cards, and (3) community-based monitoring. Most of these initiatives work in and through the rubric of local governance structures (box 2.3).

Box 2.3. Facilitating: Snapshot

Three main operational modalities have been used to facilitate state–society interaction around local service delivery problems in India: (1) community score cards, (2) citizen report cards, and (3) community-based monitoring. These approaches overlap but are also distinct. Community score cards evaluate service delivery by developing performance parameters and then engaging with local users to obtain scores. Various mechanisms are promoted to bring stakeholders together to address identified issues; these are often referred to as interface meetings. Citizen report cards are similar to community score cards in that they seek to evaluate service delivery and bring stakeholders together to discuss identified issues. However, citizen report cards draw on survey models and often take information from random samples to generate statistically representative samples at a larger scale. Community-based monitoring is often deployed in a context of local governance structures, such as the Panchayati Raj Institutions in India, and through local committees set up as part of diverse development programs in India, such as the school management committees under the Right to Education Act, resulting in the creation of local bodies with a mandate to monitor and take action on delivery issues.

In Maharashtra, a community score card was conducted in the district of Satara that focused on assessing basic services provided through the panchayat (local/village government), particularly water and sanitation, education, and health. Panchayat officials rolled out the exercise with the deputy CEO of the district-level panchayat—the highest tier of the panchayat system. Resource teams were formed to facilitate the rollout. Interface meetings were held with officials, service providers, district-level authorities, and societal actors.

As another example, multiple village health and sanitation committees were established under NRHM. These committees are supposed to include representatives from the full range of local groups and to act as a link between state and societal actors at different levels by serving as the vehicle through which information, feedback, and convening flows. Committees were entrusted with a number of responsibilities, including generating awareness, monitoring malnutrition and health workers, and identifying and notifying higher levels of government about grievances.
Factors Shaping Effectiveness

Four main factors shaping effectiveness are identified across the sample relating to: (1) the degree of top-down state support, (2) the capacity of state and societal actors, (3) the ability of an intervention to leverage spaces for collective action, and (4) the localization of the intervention.

1. Top-Down State Support

The cases clearly demonstrate how the degree of state support can influence facilitation efforts. This support took different forms—political and bureaucratic—and emanated from different loci—from central or state government or from local power sources. One example is the case of citizen report cards in Delhi (Public Affairs Foundation 2014). The government of Delhi commissioned the Public Affairs Foundation to assess the quality of delivery and user satisfaction of public services, including water, food, education, health, and certificate issuance. High-level state actors were critical to initiate and foster bureaucratic buy-in to the process. The chief minister commissioned the work with the objective of improving services and increasing the accountability of public agencies. Moreover, the chief minister ordered actions to address the challenges identified by the citizen report card; commissioned follow-up work to track the implementation of remedial actions and reforms; and publicized the results of the citizen report card process during the next election cycle, suggesting that the process was aligned with her political incentives and interests.32 Indeed, political elites often make choices based on a calculation of political returns (Mcloughlin and Batley 2012). However, this case, and the other cases in our sample, does not provide a systematic analysis of the incentive structures that drove or hindered state support.

2. Capacity of State and Societal Actors

Capacity constraints among both state and societal actors shaped the implementation and effectiveness of initiatives. Capacity aspects that were regularly cited include: (1) basic human and financial resources needed for state providers to undertake their delivery functions; (2) ability to network with, gain the trust of, and convene local state and societal actors; (3) ability to enable meaningful problem solving, requiring strong facilitation, conflict resolution, adaptive management, and inclusion skills; and (4) ability to ensure frequent and repeated follow-up efforts and meetings among stakeholders.33 These aspects of capacity can sometimes be overlooked in citizen engagement initiatives.

Yet discussions of capacity in the case material were somewhat limited. The term capacity was poorly defined in some instances, and its underlying drivers were not explained. Similarly, the distinction between capacity and willingness was rarely made, as noted above. In addition, questions relating to capacity were sometimes treated narrowly. Some initiatives, for example,
chose a “best practice” model as a starting point, tried to build up local capacity to implement the model, and ended up falling short. This approach is not necessarily helpful: an alternative approach is to first identify local resources and capacities to address locally defined problems and then iteratively develop fit-for-purpose activities to solve them (Booth 2011).

3. Leveraging Spaces for Collective Action

The extent to which spaces for collective action could be leveraged was found to be important. Two key points emerge: (1) legally sanctioned platforms for multistakeholder interaction can lend legitimacy to the facilitation process but carry risks; and (2) implementation is more effective when actors can proactively use such platforms for collective problem-solving.  

The case material suggests that official, legally sanctioned platforms for state–society interaction can lend legitimacy to the facilitation process. The CfBT Education Trust, for instance, which focused on education delivery in Andhra Pradesh, suggests that the legal provision creating school management committees was an important anchor and vehicle for the facilitation process (Galab et al. 2013). The Centre for Health and Social Justice, which focused on health services in Orissa and Assam, strengthened accountability under the National Rural Health Mission by building on already existing bodies, such as the village health and sanitation committee (One World Foundation 2011a). More broadly, the cases suggest that an environment that allows the free flow of ideas and open debate helps facilitation processes work more effectively.

Evidence also suggests, however, that such platforms and spaces can be double-edged swords. The spaces can be leveraged for improving voice and meaningful collective action, but they can also be contested, subverted, or captured by powerful groups, as discussed in more detail later in this report (Galab et al., 2013).

Moreover, initiatives were more promising when they proactively and repeatedly facilitated collective problem-solving. For instance, using a community score card to improve service delivery in panchayats in Maharashtra, the initiative by Tata Institute of Social Sciences repeatedly facilitated the coming together of a range of relevant actors, including officials, functionaries, service providers, and members of society (Murty et al. 2007). This led to a number of outcomes, such as the resolution of persistent problems, the identification of innovative solutions to existing problems, and the leveraging of local capacities and resources to address identified issues. Similarly, the municipal corporation of the city of Pune in Maharashtra held a series of six public meetings (Jan Sabhas) with local residents in December 2014, during which officials collected 844 suggestions for the following year’s budget. Over 27 percent of the suggestions were immediately accepted, and most of those remaining were passed onto higher-level authorities for further review. This case reveals two interesting findings: (1) each time the public meeting was repeated, both citizens and officials alike found the process increasingly useful; and (2) many more people...
participated in the second year than in the first because of the progress that was made with the initiatives resulting from the first Jan Sabha (Nikhil 2015).

4. The Degree of Localization

Effectiveness was limited by the inability of some initiatives to address problems at a higher, systemic level. An illustrative example is the CfBT-supported community score cards, which focused on education delivery in Andhra Pradesh (Galab et al., 2013). The initiative was able to influence the quality of midday meals served, teacher and student attendance, and maintenance of toilet facilities in certain schools. However, it was unable to influence curriculum content, the design and rollout of nondiscrimination policies, budget shortages, or infrastructure deficits because these issues were often outside the local jurisdictions. Other cases demonstrate that local bodies, such as school management and village health and sanitation committees, have little if any power to sanction errant behavior, limiting their ability to address delivery problems.

The challenge of becoming overly localized in facilitation processes has arisen in other countries. Wild and Harris (2012) find that the community score card process in Malawi brought up issues such as staff incentives and performance, budget expenditures, and selection criteria for beneficiaries—all of which are controlled by the central government. There is, as such, often a need to ensure a complementary mix of local-level problem solving and top-down, systemic reform and enforcement, as noted later in this report.

Exploring the Results

Construction of Citizenship and Strengthening of Practices of Participation

The facilitation process raised awareness and strengthened practices of participation. Numerous cases cited increased awareness of entitlements among citizens as well as increased participation in deliberation processes regarding local service delivery. For example, the community score card exercises in Orissa resulted in a number of gains: (1) villagers became increasingly aware of their rights; (2) villagers were able to distinguish between different kinds of complaints and understand the ways in which each complaint is redressed; and (3) interaction increased between state and societal actors over delayed payments and problems related to the work site (ANSA SAR 2012e). In the case of the People’s Campaign in Kerala, which has devolved budgetary authority to the gram sabha (village council) level in Kerala since 1996, researchers found that the campaign substantially increased participation among rural citizens (Heller et al. 2007).38

Case material also points to an incremental shift from people being passive recipients of services to their becoming more active participants in the solving of delivery problems. One illustrative example relates to community score cards at the panchayat level in Maharashtra. During
interface meetings in the village of Indoli, a shift in dynamics occurred when, rather than merely blaming officials for inaction, as was common, community members came forward and acknowledged a share of the responsibility for the problem and promised that they themselves would also take action. They demanded that the local school send a proposal to the health department to set up health camps for students while at the same time agreeing to contribute to school resources by buying mats, desks, and benches and by building a water tank (Murty et al. 2007).

**Responsiveness and/or Accountability of the State**

There is evidence of positive impacts on the responsiveness and accountability of service delivery systems. The impact evaluation of community score cards on education in Andhra Pradesh (the CfBT case), for example, finds the following results: (1) a rise in teacher attendance from 50 to 90 percent, (2) an increase in student attendance from 20 to 60 percent, (3) an increase in the number of students achieving an A grade in school from 10 to 30 percent, (4) an upsurge in teachers using innovative teaching and learning methods from 20 to 80 percent, (5) an improvement in the quality of midday meals from 50 to 80 percent, and (6) an improvement in toilet facilities available in the school from 10 to 20 percent (Galab et al. 2013). Similarly, the Citizen Monitoring of Schools pilot project that was conducted in 10 states resulted in improved functioning of schools, increased teacher and student attendance, and improved infrastructure (Bhatty 2014). In addition, the creation of village health and sanitation committees in Karnataka resulted in an improved use of funds for cross-cutting purposes, such as health and sanitation, as well as greater financial transparency (Madon 2014).

For a variety of reasons, however, some cases reported relatively limited impacts. The community-based monitoring exercise under the National Rural Health Mission in Madhya Pradesh, for instance, revealed a limited impact due to a lack of support from higher levels of the accountability chain. Among the factors hindering impact, the case notes a lack of response on the part of the chief medical officer to written complaints from villagers (ANSA SAR 2012d). Some interventions also struggled to trigger higher-level or systemic changes (see prior discussion on localization), and some reported that interface meetings became contentious or that service providers refused to listen to villagers’ complaints. More research is needed to understand why similar facilitation initiatives can lead to productive problem solving in some cases and backlash or retrenchment in others.

**More Inclusive Forms of Governance**

Despite the limitations of the evidence base, a handful of facilitation cases demonstrated a contribution to more inclusive forms of governance. As with watching and bridging, the evidence for this domain is scant, but exceptions include interventions specifically targeted at typically marginalized groups. For instance, the CfBT education initiative in Andhra Pradesh directly supported vulnerable women and Dalit communities by engaging with and involving women’s self-help groups in the community score card process and school management committees. The
self-help groups are typically focused on microfinance, but the initiative put education on their agenda, involved the groups in rating education, raised women's awareness of education issues, and helped build the confidence of women—many of whom were illiterate. As a result of these efforts, women's awareness increased, they raised more issues in school management committees, and they gained a greater voice in the village panchayat regarding school-related matters. As one mother put it:

“... because of [this] project our awareness increased and we are able to know what is happening in the schools and what our children are doing in school. Otherwise we were so scared to enter the schools because we are uneducated and we did not know what to ask the teachers or how to approach the headmaster.” Mother of a student, Korrapadu, MPP School, cited in Galab et al. 2013: 25.

Another example is the People's Campaign in Kerala, which improved the inclusion of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and women. Heller et al. (2004), for example, found that within two years of implementation, the initiative resulted in strong participation among women and minorities. In fact, minorities were overrepresented in village councils (gram sabhas) in relation to their share of the population.

In most cases, however, limited attention to or documentation of exclusion dynamics is found. Some cases even appeared to inadvertently reproduce inequalities. Corbridge et al. (2005), for example, analyze the participation of parents in village education committees in Bihar. Village education committees are designed as vehicles to engage citizens in tracking and resolving education delivery problems. However, Corbridge et al. (2005: 148–149) find that:

“... to expect Musahar children [lower caste] ... and their parents to take part in village education committees is to miss the very obvious point that these families lack even the most basic asset: land, of course, but also a sense of self-worth.”

Ananthpur et al. (2014) identify the similar challenge of elite capture and marginalization of certain groups in local governance in Karnataka. This is not just a challenge peculiar to India: O'Meally’s (2014) review of global experience and case studies in Africa show that inequality and exclusionary dynamics tend to be reproduced in participatory initiatives—unless there is significant investment in mitigation mechanisms—and such inequalities can be very difficult to change within a short project timescale. This concern is discussed further in the following chapters.
3. Syntehsis

This chapter attempts to draw out common patterns that cut across all the cases, focusing on the paper’s two core questions:

1. What types of results did citizen engagement initiatives contribute to in India?

2. What factors affected whether or not citizen engagement initiatives in India had an impact and how?

As noted in the introduction, due to the patchy evidence base, definitive conclusions cannot be reached, but this chapter identifies the most common and compelling themes and highlights key hypotheses that warrant further research.

What Results?

Citizen engagement initiatives in India have contributed to a range of results that cut across a diverse range of geography, policy issues, and population groups. See table 3.1 and the following sections for a brief discussion of the four key results areas.

Result Area 1: Construction of Citizenship and Strengthening of Practices of Participation

There is ample evidence to suggest that citizen engagement has contributed to citizenship formation and the strengthening of practices of participation. The following aspects are documented:

- Improvements in citizen awareness and sense of empowerment;
- Improvements in rate of participation of citizens in public affairs;
- Strengthened capacity for collective action; and
- Increased democratic practices, such as demanding information from government.

Positive results were found across a range of initiatives. Numerous watching cases demonstrated increased citizen participation, increased interaction between state and societal actors, greater demand for work, and strengthened capacity for collective action. Examples include MGNREGA...
Some neutral and negative impacts on citizen participation were also found. In some cases, cutting across the three approaches, efforts to induce improved participation failed or fostered disillusionment among citizens. For example, the Centre for Civil Society’s initiative to conduct social audits of the Right to Education Act in Rajasthan reported underwhelming rates of participation, which was attributed to a lack of literacy or a limited interest in education among the local population (ANSA SAR 2012a).

It is worth noting that the results in this area appear to differ between approaches. The case analysis suggests that facilitating, followed by watching, were more effective in constructing
citizenship practices compared with bridging. Further research would be required to explain this, but potential hypotheses include: (I) facilitating was more promising because of its greater emphasis on public participation; and bridging approaches were less effective compared to watching and facilitating because citizens faced major challenges in taking action based on the information they received. (See chapter 2).

Result Area 2: Responsiveness and/or Accountability of the State

Citizen engagement initiatives have resulted in the strengthening of state responsiveness and accountability. Improvements in this area are found along the following interrelated dimensions:

- Increased accountability in terms of transparency and answerability;
- Improved public financial management in terms of reduced leakage and fund recovery; and
- Improved delivery of public goods and services.

The vast majority of cases illustrate an increase in the availability of information in the public domain, which also contributed to heightened answerability among power-holders. Numerous cases document how information was publicly disclosed for the first time, and many others demonstrate how that information was used as a springboard to question elected and bureaucratic officials.

Some cases demonstrated improved accountability in public financial management. For example, social auditing in Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh made records more transparent and fostered improved verification processes, resulting in leakages being revealed and diverted money being recovered; and the posting of public distribution system-related information on public buildings in Andhra Pradesh made it more difficult for shop owners to skim rations or manipulate prices (Narayanan 2011).

A number of citizen engagement initiatives contributed to the improved delivery of basic service and antipoverty programs. Some compelling examples of this include score cards led by the CfBT Education Trust in Andhra Pradesh, which contributed to improvements in outcomes such as student exam results and teacher attendance; citizen monitoring of schools in ten states, which led to improvements in teacher attendance, quality of teaching, and infrastructure; and a citizen report card initiative led by the Public Affairs Centre in Karnataka and a pilot community score card initiative in Maharashtra, both resulting in improved delivery (Bhatty 2014; Murty et al. 2007; Sekhar et al. 2008a; Galab et al. 2013).

There were, however, certain marginal or negative impacts on state responsiveness and accountability. Two main findings emerged. First, the initiatives often failed to improve or trigger the follow-up and enforcement mechanisms of accountability, as discussed in the next section (page 30). Second, certain cases showed how citizen engagement met with nonresponse from
powerful actors, and sometimes with backlash. These cases underlined the difficulty of transforming state–society relations with short-term interventions. For example, a community-based monitoring exercise under the National Rural Health Mission in Madhya Pradesh reported limited success because it failed to receive the expected response from the state (ANSA SAR 2012d).

Result Area 3: More Inclusive Forms of Governance

There is evidence, albeit weak, that citizen engagement initiatives helped foster more inclusive forms of governance, including:

- Increased awareness among traditionally marginalized groups of their specific rights and responsibilities;
- Improved access to jobs and entitlements among traditionally marginalized groups; and
- Incremental steps toward institutionalizing more inclusive governance practices.

A minority of the cases provided persuasive evidence of improvements in this area. Some of the more compelling examples are: CREDA helped visually and physically challenged people, widows, and the elderly gain employment under MGNREGA; the CfBT Education Trust in Andhra Pradesh improved the skills and capabilities of women; and the Poorest Area Civil Society (PACS) social audit initiative in Jharkhand resulted in Dalits and scheduled tribes having improved access to MGNREGA entitlements (ANSA SAR 2012b; Galab et al. 2013).

The case material shows how exclusionary practices can be reproduced in citizen engagement initiatives, especially if direct mitigation measures are not taken. Various cases underline how elite capture and discrimination were reproduced. For example, the Jan Sahas community score card initiative in Madhya Pradesh noted instances of elite capture and the challenge of Dalits effectively negotiating in the context of upper-caste power structures (ANSA SAR 2012d). See chapter 4 for more on this topic.

Result Area 4: Replication and Scale

The final results area relates to the replication and expansion of citizen engagement initiatives. Indeed, some observers claim that the replication, institutionalization, and expansion of citizen engagement initiatives are, in and of themselves, positive results. This study did not set out to assess these aspects, but two primary messages emerged from the patchy evidence:

- Significant replication of citizen engagement initiatives occurred in certain cases; and
- Replication was driven by multiple, mutually reinforcing factors.
There are some notable cases of replication and scaling, which took different forms.43 Key examples include the following:

- The practice of social audits emerged from grassroots activities in Rajasthan. They then became part of Indian law under MGNREGA44 and were rolled out at a large scale in states like Andhra Pradesh. During fiscal 2012–13, social audits in Andhra Pradesh were used to audit public funds to the tune of Rs 50 billion (approximately US$779 million). Social audits have been replicated across a number of other states, and the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has been designated the responsibility of being the independent auditor of MGNREGA across all states in India (CAG 2016).

- The Public Affairs Centre’s method of implementing citizen report cards has been replicated across a variety of government and nongovernmental initiatives in the country as well as internationally.

- At the district (substate) level, Samarthan developed a format for tracking MGNREGA fund flows in Madhya Pradesh, which the district administration adopted for broader use; and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences community score card scheme impressed the district administration of Satara (Maharashtra) enough to expand the initiative from 14 to 121 villages, with plans to eventually cover all of the villages in Satara district (Murty et al. 2007; Awasthi 2011).

On the other hand, a number of cases documented how certain citizen engagement initiatives fizzled out at the end of the funding period or were unable to expand beyond small, localized interventions.

The case material also offers preliminary insights into the drives of—and barriers to—replication. Further research is clearly needed, but table 3.2 offers a brief summary of what can be gleaned. In sum, replication seems to rely on a combination of factors rather than one clearly dominant driver, and much depends on context. This makes it difficult to identify dominant drivers and underlines the challenge of inducing replication in different contexts. For example, it is not easy to replicate the unique sociocultural context of the communitization of health services in Nagaland in other Indian states (Singh and Jha 2009). Additionally, replication alone may not be enough—while a pilot may be successful in achieving stated objectives, replication of a citizen-engagement initiative may not necessarily address the underlying, systemic causes of ongoing accountability failures (Fox 2016). That said, replication is certainly an important step in the right direction.

**In Sum: Promising and Mixed Results**

Overall, the results of citizen engagement across the sample are promising but mixed. Some initiatives achieved a range of objectives but are still grappling with the more difficult challenge of ensuring enforcement and follow-up; some achieved localized gains but were unable to have an impact at higher, systemic levels;45 and a few had positive impacts during the lifespan of the intervention but could not be sustained.46 It is not, however, surprising that a number of cases...
had partial or mixed results. Most—if not all—development interventions have mixed impacts that are rarely captured by simple descriptions of “success” or “failure” (Mosse 2005; Saito-Jensen and Paasgard 2014; Takeuchi et al. 2015).

What Drivers Explain the Results?

This section discusses the main factors that shaped if and how citizen engagement interventions achieved their desired results. Overall, findings suggest that interventions harnessing four main drivers of effectiveness achieved the most positive results:

- The role of information;
- The effects of political society;

Table 3.2. Explaining the Replication of Citizen Engagement Initiatives—Preliminary Drivers and Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Driver of Replication</th>
<th>Brief Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration effect</td>
<td>Certain citizen engagement initiatives were sustained and/or replicated in new locations when they had proven their ability to help solve public policy problems. One example is the citizen report cards in Bangalore, Karnataka.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental steps</td>
<td>Other cases underlined how scaling took place incrementally, building over time. For example, Kerala People’s Campaign started off as microexperiments and then started scaling up in 1996 (Heller et al. 2007; Mannathukkaren 2010). Similarly, it took considerable time, negotiations with various actors, and persistence to expand the Andhra Pradesh social audits geographically and to other programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State support</td>
<td>Political and bureaucratic actors have played key roles in facilitating—or hindering—replication, as was cited in many cases. Two key examples include people’s planning in Kerala and social audits in Andhra Pradesh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal support</td>
<td>In certain cases, scaling was reportedly easier if the state garnered broad-based support from societal actors. The support purportedly helped sustain momentum and enabled roll-out to multiple districts and outreach to the grassroots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate institutionalization</td>
<td>The way that citizen engagement was institutionalized appeared to impact its ability to replicate. Some cases suggested that replication was easier when the approach was institutionalized in the government machinery; when mechanisms were built in to ensure financial sustainability, such as a yearly allocation of a percentage of the budget for engagement; and when steps were taken to ensure that the institutional home of the citizen engagement initiative has some degree of independence from political and bureaucratic interference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and communication technology</td>
<td>Information and communication technology was found to enable replication. For example, the public distribution system in Chhattisgarh used technology to expand the delivery of goods (GKC 2011; Puri 2012). However, Indian experience suggests that there are trade-offs in the use of information and communication technology, partly due to the uneven usage of and access to technology among citizens (Prasad 2013).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Sowmya Kidambi interview.
b. This point has been offered as a way to explain institutionalization and replication in the social audits in the Andhra Pradesh case (Sowmya Kidambi interview).
The strength of enforcement; and

- The extent to which an initiative is locally grounded and collaborative.47

The Role of Information

Information provision remains a central objective for citizen engagement initiatives in India. It is a core activity in the vast majority of cases in our sample, and 20 percent of our cases focused almost exclusively on information provision. Three overlapping aspects of information emerged as particularly important: (1) availability of usable information to societal actors, (2) availability of relevant information to state actors, and (3) limitations of only providing information.

1. Availability of Usable Information for Societal Actors

Access to information shaped citizen engagement along a number of different pathways: (1) the degree of awareness of entitlements among societal actors shaped their degree of participation; (2) the degree to which relevant information was available regarding the service affected the robustness of the accountability process; and (3) the extent of awareness among societal (and state) actors about how to implement the citizen engagement initiative influenced implementation.48

Citizen access to information was shaped by the reach of the intervention’s information campaign and by the information enabling environment. Various cases show how the presence of legal provisions, particularly the Right to Information (RTI) Act, helped actors acquire information needed to take action.49 However, such provisions are insufficient by themselves—some cases experienced delays in receiving information or received poor-quality information.

The degree to which information was usable by targeted recipients was also found to be important. On the one hand, some initiatives focused on providing quite technical or “expert-driven” information, often via the Internet, such as the Aarogyam program in Uttar Pradesh and the public distribution coupon system in Gujarat (GKC 2012a; GKC 2012b).50 Broader public debate and uptake was arguably limited by the technical nature of this information, as well as by the limited channels for dissemination. On the other hand, initiatives that focused on providing information that responded to end-user information preferences and needs appeared to spark wider engagement (Awasthi 2011; Narayanan 2011).51

2. Availability of Relevant Information for State Actors

The extent to which state functionaries have access to information also played a key role. Specifically, citizen engagement initiatives were shaped by state actors’ knowledge of three areas: (1) state functions and responsibilities; (2) the workings of the relevant service delivery program; and (3) how to implement citizen engagement processes. For example, during the community score card initiative for village panchayats in Maharashtra, researchers found that local government functionaries and village committee members in charge of MGNREGA
implementation did not understand their responsibilities, limiting their ability to engage with or respond to constituents (Murty et al. 2007). Similarly, during the auditing initiatives in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, training was needed, not only for rural citizens but also for state officials. These are important findings: citizen engagement activities often focus on providing information to societal actors, but state actors’ information access also matters (see chapter 4).

3. Limitations of Only Providing Information

While information plays an important role, it is not always sufficient to ensure results. The ability of information to trigger behavior change and impact was hindered by two main factors: (1) a lack of functioning channels and mechanisms through which citizens could use information to ask for change and to increase accountability; and (2) limited ability to act on the new information among certain citizens due to social and economic constraints, including extreme poverty, illiteracy, and lack of social power.

The Effects of Political Society

Political society emerges as critical in helping or hindering citizen engagement. Indeed, it is the state that has the power to act—or not—in the face of citizen engagement. Four overlapping aspects of political society appeared to matter most: (1) bureaucratic drivers; (2) political drivers; (3) state capacity; and (4) local, informal politics.

Bureaucratic Drivers

Support from the public bureaucracy was often cited as a reason why a citizen engagement initiative achieved positive results. For example, support from the district collector helped improve the public distribution system in Andhra Pradesh; the district administration was critical in facilitating improvements in village panchayats in Maharashtra; and local government support helped achieve better education outcomes for the CfBT work in Andhra Pradesh (Narayanan 2011; Galab et al. 2013). Further examples of this have been detailed in chapter 2.

Conversely, a lack of bureaucratic support hindered various initiatives. For example: (1) challenges in implementing budget tracking in Gujarat were partly attributed to a limited response by the state government; and (2) in the community-based monitoring exercise under the National Rural Health Mission in Madhya Pradesh, a lack of support from higher levels of the bureaucratic delivery chain, including the chief medical officer, appeared to limit the intervention’s impact (ANSA SAR 2012d). These findings are supported by broader research: a study of the Indian Administrative Service found that the presence of effective bureaucrats is positively correlated with improved social and economic outcomes (Bertrand et al. 2015).
3. Synthesis

Political Drivers

In addition to bureaucratic backing, support from political leaders/elected representatives also mattered. The elected chief minister, for example, was cited as critical to initiating, implementing, and following up on initiatives in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Kerala, and Karnataka, among other states. Another example involves the multiple experiences of the Public Affairs Centre and Public Affairs Foundation, which consistently underlined how effectiveness was shaped by the degree of political and bureaucratic support and buy-in.

The cases also point to the complex relationship between political and bureaucratic support in the context of citizen engagement. In some cases, higher-level political support galvanized bureaucratic support or vice versa, creating a virtuous circle, such as in the case of social audits in Andhra Pradesh or participatory decentralization in Kerala. Other cases, however, show that the effectiveness of interventions can be impeded when political and bureaucratic actors pull in different directions (Besley et al. 2012) or when the objectives of lower-level functionaries and local elected officials may not be aligned with the objectives of higher-level officials (Ananthpur et al. 2014). However, the case analyses rarely unpack the incentive structures that explain the drivers of political and bureaucratic support (a point returned to in chapter 4).

Capacity and Willingness of the State

The case material highlights that state capacity shapes whether citizen engagement can achieve results. Interestingly, these capacities relate not only to “hard” financial capacity but also to “soft” capacities. The most frequently mentioned capacities revolve around: (1) basic human and financial resources available for state providers to undertake at least a portion of their delivery functions; and (2) state capacity to engage with citizen engagement processes, which includes the capacity to network with and convene relevant stakeholders to facilitate problem solving, to resolve conflicts, and to monitor and follow-up on issues. However, the case material does not explain the origins of this capacity and does not distinguish between capacity and willingness (see chapter 4).

Local, Informal Political Economy

The cases demonstrate how the form of local and informal power relations influence impacts. Local political economy dynamics, which often involve informal interactions between elected, bureaucratic, and societal actors, shaped citizen engagement outcomes in positive and negative ways. One stark example is the Decentralized Service Delivery in Panchayats project in Karnataka (Sekhar et al. 2008a), an initiative implemented in two village panchayats. The more clientelistic and exclusionary nature of one village’s local politics undermined the initiative’s effectiveness and impact, but the more progressive local politics of the other village were conducive to greater action for the common good, which led to service delivery improvements (Sekhar et al. 2008a). Indeed, the role of the local political economy surfaced in a variety of other cases, including Andhra Pradesh (Aiyar and Mehta 2013), Chhattisgarh (Sekhar et al. 2008b), and Karnataka (Ananthpur et al. 2014).
Strength of Enforcement

Related to state support, an often cited reason for limited results is lack of enforcement. Enforcement in this context relates to follow-up and remedial action to respond to accountability deficits and service delivery problems. The case material sheds light on two aspects of the enforcement issue: (1) it points to how a lack of enforcement is a key reason that results are limited; and (2) it hints at the specific drivers of weak enforcement.

Weak Enforcement Means Weak Development Results

Weak enforcement is widely found to limit the impact of citizen engagement initiatives. For example, assessments of the SMS Monitoring System program in Bihar and the Integrated Voice Response System for Mid-Day Meal Schemes in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar find that the initiatives improved transparency but did not register strong impacts on service delivery due to the limited repercussions for noncompliance by local officials and the limited channels available for redressing grievances (One World Foundation 2011b; Jagmag and Tucker 2014). Even in the relatively positive case of social audits in Andhra Pradesh, enforcement was a challenge. In cases of allegations of wrongdoing being brought against local officials, auditors had limited authority to trigger or enforce penalties, and some of the officials’ superiors did not take remedial action (Aiyar et al. 2009; Afridi and Iversen 2014). In sum, sanctions were often needed to resolve discrepancies uncovered by auditing initiatives; concrete follow-up actions were required to resolve problems that surfaced through facilitation efforts; and irregularities that were identified while tracking political accountability required broader policy reforms and enforcement.

Drivers of Weak Enforcement

The reasons for weak enforcement are poorly explained, but a number of points can be extracted. First, in various cases, weak enforcement was in part a design failure in that the intervention was not explicitly linked to enforcement mechanisms. Second, citizen engagement interventions had greater success in dealing with localized enforcement issues compared with higher-level enforcement. For instance, community score cards in the education sector (CfBT case) influenced the supply of midday meals and teacher and student attendance at the local level, but could not influence curriculum content, the design and roll-out of nondiscrimination policies, or budget shortages (Galab et al. 2013). Finally, a number of cases point to the systemic nature of weak enforcement. They point out that a lack of enforcement is often related to blurred lines of accountability in the service delivery chain or that it can be undermined by weak “top-down” pressures from higher levels of the polity or bureaucracy. Overall, the case material suggests that enforcement is difficult because it challenges vested interests. To paraphrase one key informant interview: enforcement will always be difficult and cannot be fixed in one day; it requires a long process of coalition-building, dialogue, and negotiation with different actors in order to change or reduce the power of vested interests.
The Ability to Be Locally Grounded and Collaborative

The cases suggest that the more locally grounded, iterative, and collaborative the intervention, the more effective it was in driving change. Three interrelated areas emerged as crucial: (1) the importance of adapting to local context; (2) the importance of the simultaneous use of different strategies for citizen engagement; and (3) the importance of proactively and repeatedly facilitating collaborative problem solving across the state–society divide.

First, the degree of adaptation to ground realities shaped citizen engagement results. In the case of auditing the public distribution system and MGNREGA in Orissa, a key driver of success was the fact that, at the outset, the initiative identified potential allies and detractors from the state and society and devised strategies to work with or around them (Awasthi 2011; ANSA SAR 2012e). The budget tracking case in Gujarat, on the other hand, implies that a lack of strategic alliance building with in-state actors detracted from the initiative’s ability to achieve some of its objectives (Malajovich and Robinson 2006). Furthermore, the degree to which local citizens had prior experience with citizen engagement appeared to matter. For instance, local community participation was hindered in the auditing of the education sector in Rajasthan because participants were new to this type of intervention and lacked the skills and capabilities to engage (ANSA SAR 2012a). As such, just getting marginalized people to speak up for the first time was mentioned as a major achievement in ADHAR’s Social Accountability through Citizen Action project in Odisha (ANSA SAR 2012e).

Second, the synergistic and simultaneous use of different citizen engagement strategies can be important. The ability to activate multiple strategies—to support behavior change among state and society actors and to strengthen formal and informal mechanisms—shaped the effectiveness of various interventions. For instance, some interventions productively combined: (1) holding awareness campaigns; (2) using convening techniques to ensure productive state–society interface meetings to discuss problems and grievances; (3) mobilizing and federating pressure groups to enable collective action; and (4) sparking forms of more confrontational collective action, such as protests (Awasthi 2011; Sekhar et al. 2008b; ANSA SAR 2012b; ANSA SAR 2012f).

Third, the interventions that proactively and repeatedly facilitated collective problem solving demonstrated more promising results. For instance, a facilitation intervention in Maharashtra repeatedly brought together a range of relevant actors, helping to resolve persistent problems, identify innovative solutions, and leverage local capacities to address identified issues (Nikhil 2015; also chapter 2). These findings are corroborated by some of the global literature in this field. Wild and Harris (2012) conducted a study of community score cards in Malawi and found that they work best when they facilitate collective problem-solving between a range of actors from state and society and when they are rooted in the local social contract.

Main Findings

The main findings are captured in Box 4.1. The analysis, moreover, points to four broader findings that could help or hinder citizen engagement in India in the future (see also appendix A):

- **Citizen engagement in India was originally civil society-led, but there has been a growth in government-initiated engagement and partnerships between the state and civil society.** Observers suggest that this could present benefits and risks. On the one hand, it provides space for greater state–society collaboration and scaling up. On the other hand, it risks co-opting citizen engagement into maintaining the status quo (Aiyar et al. 2009: 32).

- **Many citizen engagement initiatives in India are focused on activating and realizing the rights enshrined in existing legislation.** One enabler of the expansion of citizen engagement has been the growth of rights-based legislation, such as the RTI, MGNREGA, and more recently, the Right to Public Services Act (Aiyar 2013; Aiyar and Walton 2014). Going forward, opportunities for citizen engagement will be shaped by the evolution of this rights-based agenda at the central and state level (Aiyar and Walton 2014).

- **Citizen engagement initiatives often rely on local governance structures.** Citizen engagement initiatives have often been anchored to the decentralized government structures known as the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Yet there is an ongoing debate over the strengths and weaknesses of India’s decentralized system, the degree to which the government is committed to deep decentralization reforms, and the extent to which local elites can manipulate local governance structures to disproportionately benefit their particular constituencies (Sekhar et al. 2008a; Besley et al. 2012). In short, the future direction of decentralization in the country will shape the locus and opportunities for the next generation of citizen engagement in India.

- **The Right to Information (RTI) Act remains a key enabler for many citizen engagement initiatives.** Numerous cases focused on activating the RTI. The future of RTI in India will therefore likely influence the form of and opportunities for future engagement. Yet RTI faces challenges, including delays in processing RTI requests, cases pending for years in courts, and attacks on RTI users (Pande 2015).
Box 4.1. Summary of Main Findings

Citizen Engagement and Results

- Citizen engagement in India has contributed to positive results in at least four main areas:
  1. Strengthening practices of participation to foster a more informed and active citizenry;
  2. Enhancing accountability to improve public financial management and service delivery;
  3. Fostering more inclusive governance to enable excluded groups to have a greater say; and
  4. Enabling the replication and expansion of public sector innovations.

- In some cases, citizen engagement has had neutral, marginal, or negative results.

Explaining the Results: Drivers of Effectiveness

- Citizen engagement interventions were more effective when they harnessed key drivers of change and/or mitigated the negative impacts of barriers to change. Some of the main drivers are summarized below.

Information

- Information provision is at the heart of most citizen engagement initiatives in India.
- Information contributed to better results along three pathways:
  1. When usable information was accessible to societal actors,
  2. When relevant information was available to state actors, and
  3. When there were functioning channels to take action based on the information.
- Information on its own, however, was rarely enough to achieve results.

- Political Society

  - Political society was critical to making or breaking citizen engagement.
  - State action or inaction to respond to new citizen demands and to resolve accountability problems was driven by four overlapping aspects:
    1. Bureaucratic actors and their incentives, ideas, and interests with regard to the accountability problem in question;
    2. Elected representatives and their incentives, ideas, and interests with regard to the problem in question;
    3. State capacity in terms of: (1) basic human and financial resources to undertake state functions; and (2) soft skills, such as networking, convening, and problem solving.
    4. Informal practices and political economy dynamics at the front-line of delivery.
- The relationship between state support and results is complex: tensions can arise between elected representatives and bureaucrats or between higher and front-line levels of governance.

Enforcement

- In many cases, a lack of follow-up and enforcement explained limited results.
- The reasons for weak enforcement are poorly explained, but three messages emerged:
  1. Weak enforcement was, in part, a design failure because a number of citizen engagement interventions did not link their activities with enforcement mechanisms;
  2. Citizen engagement cases were more successful in dealing with local enforcement issues compared with higher-level issues;

(CONTINUED)
Doing Citizen Engagement Differently: Policy Lessons and Frontiers

Implications and Frontiers

This final section of the report attempts to unpack some of the forward-looking implications of this research for thought and practice in the field of citizen engagement. It also relates the main findings to the global evidence in order to identify some general implications.

The core implication is that, in line with calls for “Doing Development Differently” (BSC 2014), conventional approaches to citizen engagement need to be modified. This means we need to think differently by developing new concepts and shifting away from old mental models, and we need to act differently by translating this new thinking into practical guidance and reorienting the internal incentives of development agencies in the same direction. Specifically, the research identifies two overarching implications and six “frontier” areas for making greater progress.

Box 4.1. Summary of Main Findings (continued)

3. Weak enforcement was often driven by higher-level, systemic factors, such as weak top-down incentives or blurred lines of accountability.

Local Grounding and Collaboration
- Citizen engagement initiatives were more promising where they:
  1. adapted to local context, including the prior level of citizen engagement experience;
  2. used multipronged strategies to support behavior change among state and society actors and to strengthen formal and informal accountability mechanisms; and
  3. facilitated problem solving between local stakeholders, while leveraging local capacities and incentives.

Inequality and Exclusion
- Inequalities can be reproduced in citizen engagement processes and negatively impact on results: certain groups may capture benefits or subvert the intended implementation process.
- Interventions with strong mechanisms to mitigate inequalities helped reduce some of the negative effects of inequality on implementation and outcomes.

Replication
- Citizen engagement-driven results were shaped by an intervention’s ability to sustain and replicate itself.
- Key drivers of replication included: (1) the ability of the intervention to demonstrate positive impacts and solve public policy problems; (2) the ability of actors to institutionalize citizen engagement in the government machinery while ensuring its financial sustainability and some degree of bureaucratic independence; and (3) the effective use of technology to achieve greater scale while mitigating the risks of excluding certain groups.
Overarching Implications

1. Link Citizen Engagement with Economic Development Results

This report reinforces the view that the linkages between citizen engagement and development results need to be better understood. The evidence in India—and globally (Joshi 2014, Grandvoinnet et al. 2015) remains weak. More specifically, the analysis undertaken for this report showed how many state and civil society actors are not making systematic efforts to link citizen engagement initiatives to human and economic development results. In short, there is a particularly pressing need to demonstrate the contribution of citizen engagement to human and economic development outcomes—an area where the evidence base is severely lacking both in India and globally.62

2. Foster Strategic Rather than Tactical Engagement

The findings suggest that “strategic” citizen engagement approaches are more promising than “tactical” ones (box 4.2). But much still needs to be done to translate this strategic approach into everyday practice. The following discussion offers some ideas for moving the debate forward.

Six Frontiers for Thought and Practice

Six interrelated frontiers have been identified (figure 4.1).63 Each frontier is briefly discussed below, and preliminary ideas for further research, debate, and practice are proposed. For each frontier, we discuss the implications for theory and thought (“thinking differently”) and then attempt to translate this into practical implications (“acting differently”). There are no clear-cut or off-the-shelf “recipes for success,” not least because context matters so much (Grandvoinnet et al. 2015). But we can identify promising areas for further progress.

Box 4.2. Tactical Versus Strategic Citizen Engagement

Fox (2014) usefully distinguishes between two main approaches to citizen engagement and finds that strategic approaches hold more promise:

1. Tactical approaches are bounded interventions that: (i) focus largely on well-defined citizen engagement tools, (ii) are often limited to society-side and voice-related activities, (iii) emphasize information provision, and (iv) tend to be more localized in their scope.

2. Strategic approaches: (i) embody multiple and coordinated tactics; (ii) focus on enabling environments for collective action to reduce risks; (iii) coordinate citizen voice with government reforms for public sector responsiveness; (iv) be able to vertically scale up and horizontally work across groups, at least to some degree; and (v) involve iterative, contested, and uneven processes; and (vi) think of CE initiatives not as interventions, but as “campaigns,” creating more space for bottom-up collaboration and longer time-horizons (Fox 2016).
1. Opening the Black Box of the State

This review underlines the central role played by the state in making or breaking citizen engagement. This supports a growing mass of global evidence (Brinkerhoff and Wettenberg 2015; Rao and Mansuri 2013; World Bank 2016). Yet a large gap remains in our understanding of why the state responds as it does to citizen mobilization (McGee 2015; O’Meally 2014). Two ideas for moving forward are presented below.

Thinking Differently

From engaging citizens to bargaining with and among elites. An “elite bargains” approach may help us better understand both the state’s response to citizen engagement and the key actors that are likely to shape citizen engagement processes (box 4.3). This approach is increasingly used in development research, but it has yet to be systematically applied to the citizen engagement process.

Figure 4.1. The Next Generation of Citizen Engagement: Strategic Frontiers
engagement field. Elite bargains—or “political settlements”—can be defined as “the balance or distribution of power between contending social groups ... on which any state is based” (Di John and Putzel 2009: 4). Through this lens,

“... governance ... and the quality and pace of development are viewed as the outcome of struggles and ensuing arrangements among powerful elites. These struggles largely involve informal processes of conflict, negotiation, and compromise” (Parks and Cole 2010: 5).

In short, this means rethinking citizen engagement as a process of bargaining in two interrelated directions: (1) horizontal bargaining between powerful elites (who are themselves citizens!); and (2) vertical bargaining between elite and non-elite citizens.

From engaging citizens to building developmental regimes. Relatedly, the citizen engagement agenda could benefit from engaging with the latest thinking on developmental regimes (box 4.4). There are at least two good reasons to do this. First, it goes beyond the “good governance” paradigm, which is focused on formal rules, idealized transparency and accountability, and technocratic fixes and which has not served as a useful guide to understanding how development progress has actually happened (Booth 2015; Levy 2014).66 Nevertheless, this paradigm continues to frame mainstream citizen engagement approaches. Second, state capacity is critical to achieving results and responding to citizens (see chapter 3), but its origins are poorly addressed in citizen engagement initiatives. In short, a key step forward is to identify pathways where citizen engagement might contribute to building regimes that are developmental.

Box 4.3. Explaining Citizen Engagement “Puzzles”—Elite Bargains

An elite bargains approach could help solve some puzzles in the citizen engagement field in a number of ways:

- **It could explain underlying drivers of state action.** Such action is often the result of negotiation, compromise, and power-sharing arrangements between powerful elites and their constituents over the distribution of public resources.

- **It could unpack the reasons that a state’s response to citizen engagement is not uniform.** Cleavages within the state often exist at different levels as diverse elites vie for power. The elite bargains approach thus helps us understand that addressing development challenges and responding to citizen mobilization is a collective action problem for the state—not just for citizens.

- **It serves as an antidote to formalistic approaches toward accountability.** It requires us to explicitly unpack informal dynamics (e.g., of clientelism, patronage, and kinship) that underpin many development problems.

Source: Authors; also drawing on McGee (2015) and Parks and Cole (2010).
In light of the above, what are the potential starting points for opening the black box of the state? Some initial suggestions include:

- **Diagnose elite bargains related to the development problem(s) you would like citizen engagement to address.** This diagnostic may take the form of a one-hour conversation with experts, a one-day workshop, or a one-month report (Yanguas 2015).

- **Develop a citizen engagement strategy for aligning with, negotiating with and/or bypassing powerful elites in order to address the identified problem(s).** This strategy could draw on global experience in the field of “Thinking and Working Politically” (Whaites et al, 2015).

- **Identify entry points where citizen engagement might help build developmental regimes.** For example, how might citizen engagement initiatives support gains in agricultural productivity or improve industrial policy and extension? How might citizen engagement contribute to growth coalitions or improved implementation of redistribution programs?

- **Only support citizen demand in conjunction with efforts to build state capacity and incentives to respond.** For example, strengthen state accountability mechanisms—such as parliaments or ombudsman—while strengthening society’s capacity to trigger those mechanisms (Cornejo and Mendiburu 2015) Or ensure that projects supporting core state functions (e.g. regulation, taxation, and service delivery) include citizen engagement experts.

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**Box 4.4. Characteristics of Developmental Regimes**

More research is required, but a developmental regime’s key characteristics include:

- Supporting a productivity revolution in agriculture—often through land reform—and/or pursuing an industrial policy with a view toward building capabilities and acquiring new comparative advantages;

- Being capable of weaving productive networks for innovation and economic development (sometimes called economic growth coalitions) between different state, economic, and societal elites;

- Having a ruling elite who, at least in part: (1) make decisions that look beyond a short-term horizon, (2) are able to centralize rents, and (3) use state institutions for broader purposes than merely private gain;

- Policy processes that are: (1) problem-solving and (2) driven by pragmatic principles of outreach and expediency;

- Legitimacy partly derived from the improved living standards of its citizens, including the provision of redistributive measures and services.

*Source: Authors, drawing on Booth et al. (2015) and Hau et al. (2014).*
2. Making Sandwiches Out of Spaghetti

The meta-analysis also found that change is often driven by the interaction between state (supply-side) and societal (demand-side) forces. As global experience tells us, demand-side mechanisms are most likely to work when combined with supply-side pressures (Mcloughlin and Batley 2012; Grandvoinnet et al. 2015). Yet mainstream approaches to citizen engagement still tend to give more attention to societal actors.

Thinking Differently

Toward more sophisticated sandwich-making. The review reinforces calls to rethink citizen engagement in terms of a “sandwich” strategy, where pro-reform actors from the state and society coalesce around a reform, shift the balance of power, and overcome backlash from antireformists (Fox, 2014, 2016; also Citizenship DRC 2011). However, the role of development actors in supporting such coalitions is not straightforward. First, many development problems are underpinned by a “spaghetti” of overlapping and competing formal and informal accountability relationships, making it difficult in practice to isolate pro-reform tendencies (Kelsall et al. 2005; O’Meally et al., 2016; Tembo 2012). Second, donor support to coalitions risks creating donor dependency (Booth 2013). Third, the sandwich process often involves conflict. This calls for new and sophisticated approaches to support networks.

Acting Differently

Suggestions for making sandwiches out of spaghetti include:

- Help reduce barriers to pro-reform collective action and address collective action problems among pro-reform actors. Efforts might include bearing the transaction costs of bringing together various actors and supporting existing network functionality without creating donor-dependency (Booth 2013). Creating pro-reform coalitions often also involves vertical integration, or bringing together state and civil society allies across local, regional and national levels (Fox 2016).

- Anticipate conflict emerging from citizen engagement and build in mechanisms to manage it. Examples include building the capacity of conflict adjudication mechanisms to manage the process; strengthening enabling environments, such as access to information legislation, to reduce risks; and proactively seeking ways to reduce backlash from antireformers, such as by compensating losers or by negotiating and reaching compromises with opponents (Leftwich 2011).

3. Getting Accountability to Bite

Time and again, weak enforcement was found to be a major barrier to the achievement of results in India. The same is true for a number of other countries where citizen engagement initiatives often struggle to translate “soft” citizen voices into “hard” impacts with “teeth that bite” (Fox 2014; Gaventa and McGee 2011). Yet, as noted above, many citizen engagement interventions still fail to adequately address enforcement issues.
Thinking Differently

Put enforcement at the heart of citizen engagement debates. Understanding and triggering enforcement must become a fundamental part of the DNA of citizen engagement practice. For instance, many interventions focus on transparency, citizen mobilization, and monitoring without focusing on if, where, and how these activities might trigger higher-level remedial actions (see chapter 2). There are at least two steps that could be taken. First, we need to rethink citizen engagement as part of a systemic chain of enforcement. For instance, suppose that the development problem is the poor maintenance of water pipes. Before mobilizing citizens to apply pressure on providers, it is important to determine why the providers are not fulfilling their tasks, what the existing mechanisms of redress are, who has the real power to enforce sanctions within and outside the sector, and the underlying reasons for the current lack of enforcement. Armed with this information, an intervention could then focus on strengthening bottom-up pressures while simultaneously increasing enforcement capacity and willingness to address the problem. Second, enforcement should not be thought of as only a technical problem. Quite often, it is a political one. “Teeth” often reside in the informal practices of elite bargaining, patronage, and kinship, as well as in locally specific values of legitimacy and social justice (looping us back to the discussion on elite bargains above) (DFID 2015; North et al. 2011).

Acting Differently

Suggestions for getting accountability to bite include:

- Assess the delivery chain and enforcement mechanisms related to the development problem. Subsequently, design citizen engagement efforts to trigger those enforcement mechanisms at relevant points of the service delivery chain.

- Ensure that the citizen engagement intervention has a component focused on strengthening the capacity and willingness of the relevant enforcement mechanisms to respond. Examples include: strengthening redressal mechanisms in the relevant sector; providing capacity-building activities for enforcement agencies; and engaging higher-level officials from the outset with the power to activate sanctions.

4. Tackling Inequalities Head-on

Inequalities can easily be reproduced in citizen engagement initiatives because some people might be excluded or powerful actors might dominate participatory spaces (Mansuri and Rao 2013). Nevertheless, the majority of our cases—similar to many cases from other countries (O’Meally 2013)—did not systematically assess, address, or track inequalities.
**Thinking Differently**

**Better understand the role of inequality in citizen engagement.** There is a need to think more systematically about how inequalities impact citizen engagement implementation and results. At least two points are worth highlighting. First, practitioners need to carefully disaggregate the term citizens. Mainstream discourses still tend to represent “citizens” or “communities” as homogenous forces for good, even though experience suggests that the citizenry encompasses conflicting impulses and is often split along class, caste, ethnic, and other lines (Banks and Hulme 2012; Tembo 2012). Second, while inequalities are important, it does not mean that the powerful automatically capture citizen engagement initiatives. Such initiatives can enable more marginalized groups to incrementally shift the balance of power. As such, we need to know more about how participatory initiatives interact with existing inequalities to produce diverse outcomes (O’Meally 2014).

**Address the underlying reasons why citizens struggle to engage.** It is important to give more attention to the underlying economic and structural drivers of inequality and nonparticipation. Let us highlight a couple of examples. Given the weak capabilities among the poor—such as lack of assets or low social status—it is often necessary to secure their access to basic services and subsistence before expecting them to effectively participate in citizen engagement (Cleaver 2005). Moreover, redistributive reforms and political organization is often needed to create and sustain broader-based citizen engagement (Hickey and King 2016; Kossack 2012). For example, land reform helps explain why South Korea and Taiwan made more progress on governance and corruption issues than the Philippines did. As Halloran (2014) puts it: “successful land reform significantly reduced inequality, which in turn weakened clientelism and elite capture, setting the stage for improvements in control of corruption and governance (even under weakly or non-democratic regimes).” However, political organization or land reform are not the focal areas of many approaches to citizen engagement.

**Acting Differently**

Suggestions for tackling inequalities first include:

- **Assess inequality dynamics related to the context/development problem and tailor engagement accordingly.** Project teams could consider developing a theory of change of how inequalities will be addressed in the intervention.

- **Build in mechanisms and strategies to mitigate inequalities as part and parcel of the intervention.** Examples of such strategies include: (1) promoting targeted measures to improve marginal groups’ access to employment and services; (2) providing capacity building for excluded groups to engage (e.g., literacy training or paralegal extension); (3) strengthening the organization/representation of the poor and excluded in participatory spaces, such as by supporting pro-poor leadership and federations; and (4) leveraging existing state mechanisms for addressing inequalities, such as policy/legal provisions for inclusion (e.g., affirmative action mechanisms) and mechanisms to guard against elite capture (e.g., third-party monitoring).
Support policy dialogue and interventions to address the underlying drivers of inequality and nonparticipation. Examples include land reform, access to human development services, access to employment, redistributive programs—such as social protection, and inequality-reducing economic policies (Atkinson 2015; McCourtie 2014; Stiglitz 2015).\(^7\)

5. Being Problem-Driven

This meta-review adds to the increasing global evidence that “contextual conditions matter for understanding why [citizen engagement] interventions have the impacts they do” (Grandvoinnet et al. 2015: 9; also Bukenya et al, 2012). Knowledge in this area has grown (Grandvoinnet et al. 2015; O’Meally 2013). Yet much more still needs to be learned about which contextual factors matter most and how to tailor citizen engagement accordingly (Joshi 2014).

Thinking Differently

Engage citizens to solve collective action problems. One step forward would be to think of citizen engagement as an iterative process for solving problems. Why? First, a key determinant of whether citizen engagement works is the extent to which it can solve problems that matter to a sufficient number of people. Otherwise, the initiative tends to fail or fizzle out (chapter 3). Second, adaptation to context cannot be a one-time effort due to the nonlinear nature of change (Kleinfeld 2015). As such, elements of problem-driven iterative adaptation are relevant to citizen engagement efforts (box 4.5). But this approach also begs questions: How will adaptive capacities be built, especially in low-capacity environments? How can development actors ensure that they work effectively under such levels of uncertainty?

Box 4.5. Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation

The four main elements of a problem-driven iterative adaptation approach are:

1. A focus on solving problems that are locally nominated and defined rather than on transplanting preconceived ideas of how things should work;

2. An attempt to create an authorizing environment for decision making that encourages positive deviance and experimentation rather than designing projects that then require agents to implement them exactly as designed;

3. An embedding of this experimentation in tight feedback loops that facilitate learning rather than long lag times of ex-post evaluations; and

4. Active engagement by a broad set of agents to ensure that reforms are viable, legitimate, relevant, and supportable rather than a narrow set of external experts promoting a top-down diffusion of innovations.

Acting Differently
Suggestions for being problem driven include:

- **Assess the context and adapt accordingly.** Key steps may include: (1) use existing frameworks (Grandvoinnet et al. 2015) to assess contextual opportunities and constraints; (2) design solutions based on what exists rather than on best practices; (3) treat informal institutions as part of the solution rather than as just the problem; and (4) focus on the function of institution, not just the form (Levy 2014).

- **Be iterative and problem-driven by building in mechanisms for addressing local problems and responding to changes over time.** For example, ensure that design and monitoring is genuinely locally driven and enable regular learning and adaptation by establishing a real-time management information system (Valters 2015; Rao 2014).

- **Make development assistance more flexible and adaptive by incentivizing adaptive programs.** Potential steps include: (1) use aid instruments (such as results-based instruments) that encourage results but do not predefine how to get there, (2) incentivize funding that focuses on process and results—not just disbursement, (3) ensure continuity of locally experienced staff to ensure strong local knowledge and leveraging of local capacities, and (4) reward staff who learn and adapt their projects (Booth and Unsworth 2014).

6. Stepping Beyond Information

The review shows how citizen engagement initiatives continue to place a very strong emphasis on transparency and information provision. Yet it also shows that there is a complex relationship between information and citizen action and that information alone is rarely sufficient for achieving results (Khagram et al. 2013). So what are some of the implications of these findings?

Thinking Differently

**Better understand how citizens really think.** There is a need to revisit the way we think about and use information in citizen engagement. We still do not know enough about what types of information lead to behavior change in different contexts (Khemani 2014; also box 4.6). This is because:

“Individuals are not calculating automatons. Rather, people are malleable and emotional actors whose decision making is influenced by contextual cues, local social networks and social norms, and shared mental models” (World Bank 2015b: 3).

Moreover, the 2015 World Development Report notes that:

“... development professionals are not always good at predicting how poverty shapes mindsets ... It is important to check mental models of poverty against reality” (World Bank 2015b: 180).
Indeed, conventional approaches to citizen engagement often transplant informational models across countries and assume they will spark similar responses. Yet, such initiatives often fall short, not least because social norms differ according to context. In some localities, people are more interested in “getting things done” than perfect accountability; favoritism in public services can enjoy broad social legitimacy; or patronage can be a widely-supported norm rather than an aberration (DFID 2015). Different local realities inspire different types of policy responses (box 4.6).

Move beyond the information paradigm. The citizen engagement paradigm also needs to go firmly beyond its focus on information provision. First, information deficits are not always the binding constraints. For example, in the case of visible service delivery deficiencies, such as teacher absenteeism, the main challenge is not an absence of information but an absence of functioning channels for people to act on what they see and know (Khemani 2014). Second, poor people often need substantial support to effectively interpret and use available information to change their circumstances (Grandvoinnet et al. 2015).

Acting Differently
Suggestions for stepping beyond information include:

- **Investigate how local people really think about the development problem(s) in question, and tailor information provision accordingly.** Assess local norms and information preferences. Such norms will not likely be bypassed or transformed during an intervention. Information strategies may need to view such norms as part of the solution (e.g., leveraging male-dominated customary village councils or drawing on notions of reciprocity in patron–client relations to support incremental change).

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**Box 4.6. Rethinking Assumptions and Behavior Changes**

**Development professionals are not always good at predicting how poor people think.** For example, in a small randomized survey of World Bank staff, 42 percent thought that most people living in poverty in Nairobi (Kenya) would agree with the statement: “vaccines are risky because they can cause sterilization.” In reality, only 11 percent of people living in poverty did agree. Similarly, staff predicted that many more poor residents of Jakarta (Indonesia) and Lima (Peru) would express feelings of helplessness than actually did.

**Doing information provision differently—an example.** Conventional financial literacy programs in low-income countries have achieved limited effects. A different type of effort in South Africa involved embedding financial messages in a television soap opera about a financially reckless character. This was found to improve people’s financial choices. Viewers reported feeling emotionally engaged with the show. The intervention’s impact is attributed to the ways people think socially—i.e., they identify with and learn from others.

- **Make sure that information is actionable and user-focused.** Information should be: actionable—giving people information which they can use to make change; user-focused—directly responding to the user’s social norms, needs and interests; available through channels that people value and use; and “sandwiched”—addressing information gaps on both the state and society side.

- **Support a range of actions to ensure that information leads to behavior change and development impact.** Develop a theory of how information will contribute to bringing about the desired end result. A range of additional steps are likely to be required, such as tailoring support to marginalized groups (e.g., techniques for providing information to people who are illiterate) or strengthening institutional channels for acting on information (e.g., staffing grievance-redress units).  

**A Research Agenda**

Finally, these six frontiers give rise to a range of questions for future research:

- How does citizen engagement contribute to human and economic development?
- Why do some citizen engagement initiatives expand and sustain themselves while others do not? 
- How can we better understand state responses to citizen mobilization?
- How could forms of citizen engagement support the building of more developmental regimes?
- How can pro-reform “sandwiches” be built in the context of the complex “spaghetti” of accountability?
- How can citizen engagement better trigger enforcement mechanisms?
- How can inequality issues be dealt with in the citizen engagement paradigm?

To conclude, this amounts to a challenging, ambitious, and forward-looking agenda for citizen engagement in India and internationally. But it is important to take on this challenge if citizen engagement is to realize its promise of contributing to the fight against extreme poverty and the boosting of shared prosperity.
Appendices

Appendix A. Accountability in India: Long-list and Short-list Trends
Appendix B. Systematic Analysis Approach to Research
Appendix C. Examining the Quality of the “Evidence”
Appendix D. Design and Contextual Factors Influencing Initiative Outcomes
Appendix E. Long List of Citizen Engagement Cases
Appendix F. Short List of Citizen Engagement Cases
Appendix A
Accountability in India: Long-list and Short-list Trends

The following is a brief synopsis of an examination of the study’s long-list and short-list of cases. It is not exhaustive; it provides an overview of overall trends in three main areas: (1) geography, (2) outcomes and legislation, and (3) the shifting approach to operationalizing citizen engagement.

1. Geography

Figure A.1 shows the distribution of the long list of cases by the state where they were implemented. Figure A.2 shows the distribution of the short list of cases by state. Both demonstrate that citizen engagement initiatives are distributed throughout India. The most prominent states for citizen engagement initiatives are Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra, followed by Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, representing a variety of lower-income and more economically advanced states. Of the northeastern states, Assam has the most significant presence. National and multistate initiatives are prominent in both the long and short list of cases. A number of least-developed states have an active citizen engagement portfolio, even if the size and scale of such initiatives varies considerably. The states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala are underrepresented on the short list.

Figure A.1. Long List of Citizen Engagement Initiatives in India by State
2. Outcomes and Legislation

Analysis of the long and short list underlines how citizen engagement is linked to a range of Indian legislation and constitutional provisions. Laws such as the Right to Information (RTI) Act, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the Right to Education Act, and the Right to Public Services Act have been passed, asserting that the provision of certain basic services are rights to which all citizens are entitled. These laws have opened up spaces for citizen and state interaction. Figure A.3 shows the distribution of the long list of cases based on the legislation or constitutional right to which the citizen engagement case is anchored. Figure A.4 shows the same for the short list. As the figures demonstrate, a substantial majority of the initiatives in India are focused on RTI, decentralization legislation, MGNREGA, environmental legislation, and health care legislation. Together, these five categories comprise approximately 76 percent of the initiatives on the long list and 70 percent of those on the short list. Major legislation from the long list is well represented on the short list.79

3. Shifting Approach to Operationalizing Citizen Engagement

An important trend that we noticed is that government partnerships with societal actors and civil society organizations are much more common than in the past. Aiyar and Posani (2009) suggest that civil society is increasingly cooperating with the state to foster accountability rather than only acting as an outsider or third-party watchdog. Our evidence supports this conclusion. Eighty of the total 164 initiatives (almost 50 percent) that were analyzed included official support from the state, often including funding. At least another seven incorporated interaction with state officials as part of the initiative, often in the form of advocacy.
Figure A.3. Long List of Citizen Engagement Initiatives in India by Legislation or Constitutional Right

![Long List of Citizen Engagement Initiatives](image)

Figure A.4. Short List of Citizen Engagement Initiatives in India by Legislation or Constitutional Right

![Short List of Citizen Engagement Initiatives](image)
We also identified two different types of state–society cooperative partnerships in the data. The first is *official* partnerships between government and civil society, often involving state funding and official government–civil society cooperation from the outset, such as the social audit programs for which the government actively sought partnerships with civil society organizations to conduct and facilitate the audits in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and Sikkim, as examples.

The second type of partnership is informal. In these cases, government support was actively sought to ensure effective implementation of the initiative at the outset, but there was no official agreement or legal partnership involved. For instance, the social audit initiatives of MGN-REGA were based on a legislative provision in the law promoting state–civil society cooperation. As a result, a variety of civil society organizations have made use of the legal provision to audit the state, such as Samarthan in Madhya Pradesh and ADHAR in Odisha. In these cases, while government cooperation was not official or contracted, it was actively sought at the start and cited as a key reason for results and impact.
**Appendix B**  
**Systematic Analysis Approach to Research**

This report draws on methods associated with an approach known as systematic analysis, defined by Klassen et al. (1998) as “a review in which there is a comprehensive search for relevant studies on a specific topic, and those identified are then appraised and synthesized according to a predetermined explicit method” (see also Weed 2005). This method has been adopted across a range of studies in the field of citizen engagement, such as Gaventa and Barrett (2010) and Mansuri and Rao (2013).

This approach implies at least three steps (see chapter 1). First, it involves a search for relevant studies on the topic of interest, involving a large review across various sources, such as academic journals, databases, think tanks, among others. We defined what counts as a citizen engagement case for the purposes of this study and used this definition to search a variety of sources in order to create our long and short lists. An initiative was considered a case of citizen engagement if it satisfied the following criteria:

- It had a proponent for engagement and accountability, whether it was a state or non-state actor;
- There was a target for increased engagement/accountability—typically a state actor; and
- The proponents anchored their demands to something specific and identifiable (as opposed to promoting a diffuse set of demands), such as enacted legislation, an executive policy, or an explicit or implied right under the Indian constitution.

The second step involves an appraisal of the quality of evidence in each study in the sample. Studies that did not meet the predetermined level of quality or did not answer the core research questions were excluded. Appendix C provides descriptions of the various levels of quality of evidence found.

The final step of systematic analysis involves the synthesis of sample cases, which involved a desk-based analysis of the findings for each case. For each overall finding, we avoided relying on any single case. Instead, we aimed to triangulate the evidence when possible, using multiple sources and interviews.
Appendix C
Examining the Quality of the “Evidence”

The ostensible “gold standard” of high-quality evidence is impact evaluations, which typically include experimental methods such as randomized control trials or quasi-experimental methods such as instrumental or regression continuity designs. The goal of these methods is to attribute a causal effect to the citizen engagement intervention and estimate its size (White 2010). To this end, a comparison (or control) group is identified or constructed using experimental or quasi-experimental methods (White 2010).

Beyond experimental and quasi-experimental approaches, there are other methods for evaluating the impact of development interventions. The World Bank, for example, distinguishes between impact evaluation and monitoring, arguing that the main focus of impact evaluation is attribution or isolating the effects of a citizen engagement intervention from other potential factors that might affect an outcome (Khandkar et al. 2010). Monitoring tracks key indicators of progress over time (Ezemenari et al. 1999; Khandkar et al. 2010).

One aspect of our case analysis involved classifying types of research methods used to evaluate each citizen engagement. This enabled us to judge the quality of the evidence and calibrate our conclusions accordingly. Chapter 1 notes the limitations of the available evidence on citizen engagement in India.

This study did not consider it necessary to limit itself to impact evaluations. White (2010) acknowledges that good qualitative evidence should be brought to bear on assessments of interventions. Weed (2005) suggests that even less rigorous studies can provide insights that may be missing from experiment-based studies. As such, we designed a classification system:

Descriptive study
- A more descriptive account. Limited use of evidence to make claims about its impact.

Qualitative study
- Use of qualitative evidence to make some claims about impact, but shared evidence insufficient to qualify as thorough evaluation. Limited or no use of counterfactuals or comparison groups to attribute causal effects.

- Methods include descriptive statistics, archival research of newspapers and government reports, and interviews.

Impact evaluation study
- Following Khandkar et al. (2010), studies only classified as impact evaluations if they made direct claims attributing causal effect to the intervention.
Went beyond the use of qualitative evidence to make some claims, making use of a variety of methods to make more substantial assertions about causal impact.

Methods included the extensive use of qualitative and/or quantitative methods, such as surveys, to estimate the effects of the intervention.

Made causal claims and recognized failure and/or difficulty ascribing causality to the intervention.

**Randomized Control Trials**

White (2010) dubs these studies impact evaluations; they use experimental or quasi-experimental methods.

Not only do these studies attribute causal effects to an intervention, they use comparison/control groups to do so. They also estimate the size of the causal impact.

Figure C.1 offers a brief snapshot of the distribution of the short list of citizen engagement initiatives by the type of research methods used as the primary source of evidence. Clearly, the existing evidence base on citizen engagement has weaknesses, and there is an urgent need for better data collection, evaluation, and sharing of knowledge.

**Figure C.1. Short List Citizen Engagement Initiatives by Primary Research Method**

- **Descriptive:** 29%
- **Qualitative:** 44%
- **Impact evaluation:** 25%
- **RCTs:** 2%
Appendix D
Design and Contextual Factors Influencing Initiative Outcomes

As noted in chapter 1, the study approach recognizes that the intervention’s design and socio-political context shape the way citizen engagement plays itself out and whether it achieves its desired results. We informed our view of how context matters by drawing on but not limiting ourselves to the existing evidence base. For example, following are design and contextual factors that have been identified by O’Meally (2013):

Design Factors that Can Shape Citizen Engagement

- Political incentives are factored into design
  - Links citizen engagement with pro-reform political actors rather than just targeting the bureaucratic structure;
  - Attempts to create favorable political incentives toward the citizen engagement initiative; and
  - Attempts to anchor or build on already existing legislation, policies, programs, or government orders.

- Draws on high-quality information.

- Attempts to create networks between different sections of the society and state, such as building alliances between poor communities and pro-reform middle- and upper-classes.

- Minimizes conflict of interest among classes and different groups within civil society.

- Incorporates existing indigenous tools and approaches to build demand.

- Uses a multipronged approach, combining demands for tougher sanctions with softer answerability dimensions.

- Builds capacity of poor communities linked with the citizen engagement initiative.

- Focuses on securing rights of the most marginalized and socially excluded.

Contextual Factors that Can Shape Citizen Engagement

- Civil society
  - Technical and organizational capacity;
  - Capacity and depth of civil society;
  - Depth and reach of civil society linkages and informal/formal networks with the state;
  - Credibility and authority of civil society among citizens and state actors;
– Willingness to challenge the status quo with regard to accountability;
– Capacity of citizens to participate in citizen engagement; and
– Willingness of citizens to participate in citizen engagement.

■ Political society
– Willingness of political and elected representatives to respond to citizen engagement;
– Willingness of bureaucracy to respond to citizen engagement;
– Political environment and level of democratization;
– Nature of the rule of law; and
– Capacity and willingness of political parties to support citizen engagement.

■ Inter-elite relations
– Developmental approach and nature of state’s political and economic elites;
– Inclusiveness of state’s political system;
– Organizational capabilities of the state; and
– Ideas and norms of accountability prevailing in the states’ political system.

■ State–society relations
– Character and form of the social contract;
– History of short- and long-term state–citizen bargaining;
– Formal and informal state–society accountability and bridging mechanisms;

■ Intra-society relations
– Inequality in community at time of citizen engagement; and
– Nature of social exclusion and fragmentation.

■ Global Dimensions
– Donor–state relations; and
– International power-holder accountability.
### Appendix E
### Long List of Citizen Engagement Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unique Case Number</th>
<th>Name of Initiative</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>IDPMS PETS Study</td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Citizen Report Cards Bangalore</td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>1993; 1999–2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Samarthan MGNREGA Campaign</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>NCDHR Campaign 789</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Public Distribution Coupon System</td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Aarogyam</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Online Monitoring of Delhi Right to Delivery of Public Services</td>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>2011–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Jaankari</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Right to Information Central Monitoring Mechananism</td>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sarathi</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Telesamadhan</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>Undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Integrated Watershed Management Programme</td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Public Record of Operations and Finance (PROOF)</td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>E-Sanchar</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Gram Sabha, Mendha Village</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>1987–undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Integrated Water Sanitation Project, Gandhigram</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>2004–06; 2006–09</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Moorcha</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>1999–undated</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Aarogy Swaraj Project, Gadchiroli</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>1986–undated</td>
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<td>Participatory Intervention with Women’s Groups</td>
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<td>Computerization of the Public Distribution System Chhattisgarh</td>
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<td>Forest Management Project Andhra Pradesh</td>
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<td>Village Health and Sanitation Committees NRHM</td>
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## Appendix F
### Short List of Citizen Engagement Cases

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<td>Delhi</td>
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Notes

1. In aiming to achieve its objective for citizen engagement, the World Bank Group’s new Framework for Citizen Engagement commits to the following subobjectives: (1) scale up context-specific citizen engagement across the World Bank Group where such engagement can contribute to improved development outcomes, (2) improve the quality and outcomes of mandatory engagement mechanisms (consultations and grievance-redress mechanisms), (3) achieve 100 percent citizen engagement in projects that have clearly identifiable beneficiaries, and (4) improve the monitoring and results reporting on citizen engagement in World Bank operations (World Bank 2015: 7).

2. For instance, we still know relatively little about how different forms of beneficiary feedback actually lead to meaningful change in different settings (Groves 2015).

3. In India, these programs are often referred to as centrally sponsored schemes, including Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, National Rural Health Mission, Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, Indira Awas Yojana, National Rural Drinking Water Programme, Integrated Watershed Management Programme, Integrated Child Development Services, Public Distribution System, Sarva Shiksha Abhiya, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, and Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana.

4. A tools-based approach refers to an approach that characterizes citizen engagement in terms of different types of implementation modalities, operational steps, inputs, and methodologies (e.g., citizen score cards and grievance-redress mechanisms). These tools are useful guides to implementation, but they do not tell us enough about the underlying factors and drivers that explain why given tools did or did not work in different contexts (Joshi and Houtzager 2012).

5. Citizen engagement has various manifestations, including citizen consultations, citizen participation in decision making and monitoring, and citizen empowerment (Grandvoinnet et al. 2015).

6. The boundary between engagement in decision-making and accountability is quite blurred (Bukenya et al. 2012), but it is still possible to maintain the distinction.

7. As with any typology, this is imperfect. Hopefully, it can promote debate and be modified going forward.

8. Gaventa and Barrett (2010) argue that gaining knowledge and awareness leads to a greater sense of empowerment and agency of citizens. They link this with theories of citizenship and democracy and argue that that learning and gaining citizenship is not a legal process but requires development of citizens as actors capable of claiming rights and acting for themselves.

9. Gaventa and Barrett (2010) understand state responsiveness along three indicators: (1) instances of improving access of citizens to developmental resources, (2) actual achievement of citizen rights, and (3) improved state accountability mechanisms.

10. Gaventa and Barrett (2010) understand this area to be steps taken that foster greater inclusion of previously marginalized groups and/or that bring about a greater sense of social cohesion across groups.

11. As such, the shorter list includes: (1) a sample of the three citizen engagement approaches identified in the long list, (2) a range of different states and legislation, and (3) cases that cover a range of outcomes from successful to mixed to failed. Nevertheless, the short-list sample is not intended to be representative of the larger population of all citizen engagement initiatives in India since the 1990s.

12. This study focuses on drawing synthetic conclusions rather than drilling down into the particulars of every case. Also note that we do not attempt to put India in an international comparative perspective and compare and contrast the findings with other countries. This is in part due to time and resource limitations. Moreover,
there is such a great degree of endogenous variation in India (within and across states) that international comparisons on this research topic are, in our view, difficult to sustain.

13. These points were underlined in interviews with Yogesh Kumar and Yamini Aiyar.

14. Interview with Yogesh Kumar.

15. This paragraph is derived from the documentation and the interview with Sowmya Kidambi.

16. Interview with Sowmya Kidambi.

17. For example, ADHAR in Orissa formed village development action committees; CREDA formed village committees comprising women, self-help group members, and youth; and Sambandh formed social watch groups.

18. They report that in over 30 village panchayats, a total of 7,245 job cards were registered after the social audit intervention.

19. In another instance, the villagers filed a complaint to the district administration against a teacher in Sadbha village. The teacher was allegedly opening the village school for only two hours per day. After being reported, the teacher was replaced.

20. Samarthan also reports that their consistent advocacy efforts at highlighting the problems with access to the entitlements of MGNREGA led the CEO of the district of Sehore to reach out to every household in the district living below the poverty line with materials promoting awareness.

21. There are further examples of this. In Andhra Pradesh, the social audits for the public distribution system led to distribution issues among fair price shop dealers (who are in charge of selling food grain to the poor) being addressed. The distribution issues included a smaller supply of grain than mandated, people being charged more than prescribed prices, and irregularity of distribution. Sambandh’s work in Orissa also points to improved state behavior for schemes such as the public distribution system and the National Rural Health Mission.

22. During his interview, Yogesh Kumar suggested that most of the steps taken by the administration seek to solve local issues rather than to address more systemic problems, which in most cases would require the involvement and commitment of higher levels of bureaucracy.

23. CREDA also helped vulnerable groups gain employment through training and facilitation as part of the watching process: out of 35 physically challenged individuals who applied for jobs, 20 were employed; out of 24 visually challenged people, 8 were employed.

24. Interview with Rajpal.

25. According to Yogesh Kumar, social audits often have the potential to disturb power relations, which in many instances have caste and religious overtones. In many such cases, social audits reproduce the marginalization of communities and maintain the status quo by leaving the power dynamics unchallenged. According to Kumar, one of the main reasons why communities fail to challenge such dynamics is that they lack adequate support mechanisms from the state. An adequate state response could help in giving these communities the courage and dignity to question such practices.

26. Information on candidates from the National Election Watch, maintained by the Association for Democratic Reforms, can be found on www.myneta.info.

27. Initiatives supported by Praja Foundation, Association for Democratic Reforms, and Jaanagraha have all used different methods for collecting relevant information about elected representatives and communicating it to citizens. For instance, using the RTI Act and household surveys, Praja collects information on issues such as housing, health, crime, and education. This data is then consolidated and shared with citizens and elected representatives. Praja has used various modes of communication to reach out with this data, including active collaboration with the media, white papers, newsletters, and discussion forums. The Association for Democratic Reforms is primarily focused on the functioning of political parties. They have also used the information collected through surveys to conduct legal advocacy in the form of public interest litigation.

28. Interview with Jagdeep Chokker. He mentioned the need for improving the functioning of political parties in order to affect the performance of the electoral process in India. He noted that the lack of transparency in the funding of political parties, the lack of internal democracy, and the presence of the Anti-Defection Law
(which makes the legislators abide by the decisions of the party whip) affect the way legislators fulfill their constitutional duties.

29. The report card is a performance appraisal of all councilors. It tracks attendance in ward meetings, questions asked at the meeting, and monies spent in their respective constituencies (Praja Foundation 2013).

30. More recent government literature suggests that this mechanism has led to continued improvements in accountability, although this is not independently documented.

31. Disha claim to have influenced, to some extent, elected representatives and government machinery and thus improved budgetary spending intended for tribal groups (adivasis) and the Dalits. Disha also suggests that the initiative has contributed to greater responsiveness in budget allocation—namely, an increase in the allocations Disha has advocated, such as for the tribal subplan and education.

32. There are other instances in our sample as well. For instance, Poorest Area Civil Society work in Karnataka was made more effective by the support of the chief minister. However, a number of the community-based monitoring cases were hindered by the capture or undermining of the committees by local power-holders, such as in the case of community-based monitoring of the National Rural Health Mission in Barwani, Madhya Pradesh. There, the village level monitoring bodies were rendered ineffective due to a lack of response from district and block officials.

33. See, for instance, the experience of the Public Affairs Centre, which has many years of experience in supporting facilitation processes through citizen report cards and community score cards (Ramkumar 2008). This finding is corroborated by other studies (World Bank 2012). Also, a study conducted in selected rural areas of Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal found that a lack of capacity among both state officials and local stakeholders influenced the outcome. A lack of training among front-line and middle-ranking government officials influenced the way they dealt with citizens and the way the participatory provisions of legislation were translated into practice on the ground. These findings were also substantiated during an interview with Sita Sekhar, one of the founder members of the Public Affairs Centre, Bangalore. She pointed out that processes like citizen report cards require sufficient capacity among the actors conducting them as well as follow up with the government—without which the process is often rendered ineffective.

34. Keep in mind that the lack of comparative evidence across different cases makes such claims tentative.

35. This point was raised in an interview with Sita Sekhar.

36. The CfBT Education Trust in Andhra Pradesh used the space of the school management committee to collectivize women and marginalized communities, enabling them to participate in monitoring processes of the school; Centre for Civil Society used community score cards and community monitoring techniques to improve education delivery and found that mobilizing parents and initiating collectivization processes are more effective around established bodies like the school management committee (Galab et al. 2013). On the point about spaces being captured by powerful groups, the interview with Rajpal, who shared his experience of Poorest Area Civil Society working in several states in India, was illuminating. He pointed out that the various institutional spaces and bodies involved in the PACS initiative, which focuses on promoting minority and marginalized community participation in governance, are traditionally captured by the dominant and elite because they are also seats of power. It is therefore imperative for marginalized communities to participate in these spaces to break into these power dynamics. More information on the PACS initiative can be found at: http://www.pacsindia.org/partners/partners-in-jharkhand/eficor.

37. For example, the interface meetings helped in finding innovative solutions. To deal with complaints of teacher absenteeism, the village suggested that the powers of sanctioning leave to teachers should be given to the village education committees. In other instances, the local community came forward to contribute to resolve issues—for example, by providing mats for children in the school, cleaning the village premise themselves every month, and providing utensils for children in the school.

38. The Kerala’s People’s Campaign focuses heavily on devolution and decentralization, more than facilitation per se. However, we have included Kerala’s case in our analysis because: (1) it has a strong citizen-accountability
dimension through its promotion of active participation in the gram sabhas; (2) it is an extremely well document-
case; and (3) it speaks to our core research questions.

39. We also found a number of other cases that cannot all be cited here. For example, the impact of the com-
munity score card exercise conducted by ADHAR in Orissa indicates improvement in the delivery of entitle-
ments under the public distribution system. In Goelbhadi village of Bolangir District, Orissa, the community score card
revealed that people were given only 25 kilograms of rice when the entitlement was 35 kilograms. The villagers
raised this issue during the interface meeting with government officials. The discrepancy was subsequently cor-
rected. The documentation also states that the facilitation process helped to redress 80 percent of the problems
raised about MGNREGA (ANSA SAR 2012e).

40. ADHAR in Orissa reported conflicts during interface meetings. Meetings reportedly began with a spirit of
cooperation, but would often devolve into conflict between the villagers and the service providers. A similar
experience was reported by SAMBANDH, which was also working in rural Orissa monitoring the implementa-
tion of MGNREGA. It noted that the rising awareness among villagers caused the contractors and others with
vested interests to become aggressive. Villagers were threatened when they filed an RTI application demanding
information about services and entitlements. Further, during an interview, Yogesh Kumar, head of Samarthan in
Madhya Pradesh, pointed out that acts of monitoring are bound to disturb the established power dynamics of
an area, which can lead to backlash. It is therefore important to form relationships with local government officials
and other groups and to build community capacity to deal with adverse situations. He also mentioned that with
increasing awareness of rights and confidence within the community, instances of threats become more limited.

41. Dalit means oppressed in South Asia, and it is the political name of castes in the region that were considered
“untouchables” according to the Hindu Varna System. The Dalits were excluded from the four-fold varna sys-
tem, forming the fifth varna, known as the Panchama. Scheduled castes is the legal name for those formerly
considered untouchables, but the term Dalit also encompasses scheduled tribes and other historically disadvan-
taged communities traditionally excluded from society.

42. This problem has been cited by the global literature, dating back to the early 2000s (Cooke and Kothari 2001).

43. Fox (2016) explicitly differentiates between replication and scaling. While replication refers to the copying,
growth, or expansion of CE initiatives from one location or issue area to another, Fox (2016) defines scaling up
as vertical integration, or for civil society actors (and their allies) to collaborate across multiple levels—local,
subnational, and national—to get greater leverage over powerful institutions. Scaling up, therefore, involves
more than replication alone.

44. In 2005, when MGNREGA was first enacted, it charged the local gram sabha with conducting the social
audits (CAG 2016). However, in reality, the implementation of the order was not uniform. To make social audits
independent, uniform, and consistent across states, the government of India issued the MGNREGA Audit of
Scheme Rules in 2011.

45. The experience of ADHAR found that while the community score card conducted in rural Orissa did address
local problems and irregularities in MGNREGA and the public distribution system implementation, it proved
inadequate at addressing systemic issues, such as a delay in the payment of wages and in the distribution of grain,
eventually leading to disillusionment and a loss of faith in the process among community members.

46. The Samarthan MGNREGA campaign in Madhya Pradesh specifically mentions this as a challenge to their
initiative. They found that in certain gram panchayats (local village government structures), the end of the
watching initiative resulted in a return to the status quo: poor workers stopped filing for job applications; those
that did fill them out, did not receive job cards or work; and village leaders reverted to filing claims themselves,
holding back job cards, and siphoning off MGNREGA funds.

47. Note that this section does not aim to replicate comprehensive analyses of factors shaping citizen engage-
ment conducted elsewhere (Grandvoinnet et al. 2015). Such analyses are drawn on in chapter 4. The focus in this
section is on the major, common patterns that emerged from our case sample.

48. These points were also underlined by interviews with Yogesh Kumar and Yamini Aiyar.

49. For example, ADHAR, which promoted social audits to monitor implementation of the public distribu-
tion system and MGNREGA in rural Orissa—used the RTI Act to gain information about the status of the two
schemes. Similarly, the NGO Samarthan drew on both the RTI Act and the Ministry of Rural Development

Notes
Management Information System to acquire information on each village to conduct the social audit of MGN-REGA in rural Madhya Pradesh; and Youth for Social Development, which focused on auditing rural infrastructure in Orissa, used the RTI Act to acquire information about tender and contract details for roads, filing more than 250 RTI applications. However, certain cases point to the limitations in the information-enabling environment, which hampered the verification process. For example, a number of actors have experienced delays in receiving responses to their RTI applications, or the content and quality of the information provided was poor or patchy (e.g., CUTS International 2010).

50. Aarogyam was an ICT-based health service delivery system seeking to improve maternal and infant mortality in Uttar Pradesh. Under Aarogyam, the government maintained and updated a village-level database of pregnant women and women with children up to five years old. The women then regularly received voicemail or SMS reminders for pre- and postnatal care and immunization appointments. The alerts were also sent to local health care providers to update their records (GKC 2012a).

51. A range of cases, including the bridging initiatives, the school inspection process by JOSH in Delhi, and the Youth for Social Development in Orissa, register progress as a result of sharing user-friendly information with citizens (One World Foundation. 2011a; ANSA SAR 2012c).

52. Political society can be broadly understood as the arena within which people perceive and encounter the state on an everyday basis and that creates and maintains different patterns of political rule. It is a place where public demands get tackled by specific political institutions. It is constituted of a loose community of recognized elected politicians, political parties, local political brokers, councilors, and public servants, and it forms a set of institutions, actors, and cultural norms that provide the links between the government and the public.

53. Such outcomes include higher state gross domestic product per capita, greater financial support from the federal government, and larger expenditures on social and economic development.

54. For example, support from Chief Minister Raman Singh is cited as a crucial factor of the prompt implementation of the Gram Suraj Abhiyaan project in Chhattisgarh. The Public Affairs Centre in Bangalore also mentions support for improved outcomes of the citizen report card initiative from the chief minister as well as the entire state administration in Karnataka. Similarly, the Public Affairs Foundation reports from its experience of conducting citizen report cards to monitor public service delivery in Delhi that the chief minister took a personal interest in addressing the challenges and gaps that were revealed.

55. Sita Sekhar further reiterated this point. She mentioned that for a citizen report card to be effective, buy-in from both the political and bureaucratic systems is critical.

56. It can be argued that this was the case during the social audit conducted for MGNREGA in Andhra Pradesh. Similarly, anecdotal and interview evidence from Samarthan’s campaign in Madhya Pradesh revealed that implementation of MGNREGA had cases of corruption at multiple levels of government—from the village to the block to the district level.

57. Similar findings emerged in Samarthan’s MGNREGA work in Madhya Pradesh and a community score card initiative in Maharashtra (Murty et al. 2007; Awasthi 2011).

58. In this case, ADHAR’s reports suggest that almost 9,000 villagers expressed concerns and opinions during the course of the initiative, whereas they had previously been silent.

59. In the ADHAR case, the initiative used community score cards to create awareness about the entitlements of MGNREGA and the public distribution system, citizen report cards to identify issues in program implementation, and the RTI Act to acquire official information. The Jan Sahas initiative, which conducted monitoring implementation for the National Rural Health Mission and primary education in Madhya Pradesh, uses community score cards, social audits, budget tracking, and public hearings.

60. In December 2014, as part of one particularly interesting initiative, the municipal corporation of the city of Pune in Maharashtra held a series of public meetings with local residents. Over the course of six public meetings (Jan Sabhas), officials collected 844 suggestions for the next year’s budget. They immediately accepted over 27 percent of these suggestions and passed on most of the remaining ones to higher-level authorities for further review. The evidence from the case reveals two additional findings of interest: citizens and officials agreed that
the process became increasingly useful as it was repeated; and many more people participated the subsequent year due to the progress of the last round.

61. Pande (2015) notes that in the seven years of implementation of the RTI Act, there have been 50 cases of death among RTI users, 84 cases of assault, and 101 cases of harassment. More broadly, there have been steps proposed in the national legislature to reduce RTI's scope, particularly with regard to political parties and politicians (Misra 2011).

62. The relationship between citizen engagement and human and economic development outcomes is weakly evidenced in India and globally. There are promising exceptions, however, such as when citizen engagement in Maharashtra contributed to a reduction of malnourished children (Murty et al. 2007), and when citizen engagement in the education sector in Andhra Pradesh led to statistically significant improvements in outcomes, including student performance (Galab et al. 2013).

63. Note that we are not claiming that this is an exhaustive treatment of potential frontiers in this field. We are outlining the six main areas that emerge as important from our meta-review. The frontiers overlap, but are distinct enough to warrant separate attention.

64. Our analysis confirms that the “state” is rarely systematically unpacked in citizen engagement design, implementation, and evaluation. In fact, some of the cases in this study do not openly engage with the issue of the state at all. A number of other cases stop at the broad observation that it was “bureaucratic or political will” that shaped the intervention, without explaining the origins of such will.

65. An “elite bargains” approach can be seen as a subset of broader political economy analysis. Political economy approaches have gained prominence in the development arena, and have been used to help better understand the politics of state action. But they offer no silver bullet solution: theories of political economy vary, and such analyses rarely reveal simple solutions (Hulme and Yanguas 2014; Leftwich and Hudson 2014).

66. Although citizen engagement initiatives often aim to improve development outcomes, the underlying drivers of such outcomes are often weakly identified or targeted. The growing body of research on development regimes (cited in the main text) points us toward some of these drivers.

67. The “problem” may relate to a specific sector, project, or issue. Methods for mapping elites could start with work from the Asia Foundation (Parks and Cole 2010).

68. Such as buying-off antireformers, conducting information campaigns, or supporting the formation of new alliances.

69. In so doing, one would also need to take into account important lessons in public sector reform. These include: (1) the key role of elites in building/blocking state capacity, (2) the key role of informal institutions, (3) the important role of the legislature, and (4) the need to focus on implementation rather than just design (Bukenya and Yanguas 2013).

70. “Network functions” include: (1) community-building, (2) amplifying, (3) filtering, (4) learning and facilitating, (5) investing and providing, and (6) convening (Ramalingan et al. 2008). Another related approach is to understand citizen engagement as part of a wider sociopolitical ecosystem, as was done with the work on strategic action frames (Fligstein and McAdam 2011).

71. The term “teeth” is taken from Fox 2014, which refers to the ability of social accountability to ensure enforcement and follow-up.

72. There is growing evidence on the technical aspects of enforcement (Post and Agarwal 2011, box 4.4), but there is limited guidance on how citizen engagement can deal with informal, power-based barriers to enforcement. There are also interesting lessons from India. Efforts to improve the grievance-redress process in India has taken various forms, including citizen’s charters, the Right to Public Service Act, and various mechanisms of redress at the state or specific-service-delivery-program level. Citizen’s charters were introduced in 1997 by a number states with mixed results. The Right to Public Service Act comprises statutory laws guaranteeing time-bound delivery of services and includes penalties for noncompliant public servants. The evidence, albeit patchy, suggests that the following issues undermine redressal performance: (1) lack of administrative support and control, (2) unclear accountability channels and poorly defined norms of service delivery, (3) lack of capacity to deliver within the
mandated timeframe, (4) lack of transparency in practices affecting implementation, (5) lack of public awareness of the provisions, (6) lack of an independent and/or fully functioning appeals system, (7) the proliferation of multiple and overlapping grievance-redress systems, and (8) limited central oversight over state grievance-redress performance because public services fall within the purview of state legislatures. (Public Affairs Centre 2007; Robinson 2013; Mathur 2012; Robinson 2012; Swagata 2010; Sircar 2012).

73. Interview with Rajpal.

74. Rajpal also informed us of some of these ideas during an interview.

75. While these reports do not focus on developing countries, they provide insights into an “inequality-reducing” economic paradigm. For example, Stiglitz’s (2015) recent report notes how until now, the dominant economic and social policies have not worked in a number of countries. He makes the case for a new set of economic policies that rebalances power between economic actors, increases income growth, and stems rising inequality. These economic policies include but are not limited to: (1) fixing the financial sector to improve regulation and transparency and ending “too big to fail”; (2) incentivizing long-term business growth to reduce short-term focus/trading and encourage more productive long-term investment; (3) making markets competitive by encouraging innovation, ensuring trade agreements that also protect environment and labor, and having health care cost controls; (4) rebalancing taxation by raising the top rate, increasing taxes on capital gains, and taxing undesirable behavior (such as tax expenditures that foster inefficiency and inequality); (5) making full employment a goal and reinvigorating investment in infrastructure and manufacturing; (6) empowering workers by strengthening their right to bargain and providing stronger labor standards and minimum wages; (7) expanding access to labor markets through sick and family leave, child care, pay equity, and women’s access to reproductive health services; and (8) expanding economic security and opportunity by investing in early childhood development, making health care affordable, and expanding areas of social security.

76. At the same time, it is important to think through the challenges and trade-offs involved in adapting to context. Contrary to some arguments, both macro- and microcontextual factors need to be taken seriously. Joshi (2014) refers to a perhaps false dichotomy in analyses of context for social accountability: on the macro side, she points to an approach that identifies broader patterns of enabling and constraining factors; and on the micro side, she points to an approach that attempts to unpack the constituents of citizen engagement at the local level. In reality, the two are very much overlapping and shape each other. Focusing too much on the microlevel may lead to localized interventions that do not address the higher-level drivers of state action. Moreover, it may not be possible, in terms of time and cost, to conduct highly localized analysis in all project sites when dealing with a large-scale program. As such, there may be trade-offs between local customization on the one hand and working more quickly and at a larger scale on the other. For example, a World Bank project in Southern India is working with over 2,000 local bodies.

77. There may be legitimate reasons for an intervention solely supporting information disclosure. However, this should not necessarily be called an accountability initiative, and the theory of change underpinning the intervention should be made explicit.

78. The issue of scaling citizen engagement initiatives and what factors impede or promote scaling and replication, for example, warrants further investigation. An approach could be to focus on a sample of approximately 10 of the largest-scale initiatives in the world and examine key trends. We thank Jonathan Fox for this suggestion.

79. The one exception to this is the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). It is the only piece of legislation from the long list that is missing from the short list. This is because there is one case of JNNURM in the long list, and we were forced to exclude it from deeper analysis because of a lack of reliable data from the initiative.

80. The term “impact evaluation” is used more liberally in this report than is common in the literature, precisely because the literature advocates an ideal that is not yet prevalent in the study of citizen engagement or in the development literature generally.
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**List of Interviews**

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<td>National Program Manager, Poorest Area Civil Society Programme (PACS)</td>
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<td>Technical Advisor, Public Affairs Foundation (PAF)</td>
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