

FOSTERING IMPACTFUL CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

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Research on citizens as drivers of change and recent reports from the World Bank can inform its citizen engagement mandate. This *Governance Note* seeks to contribute to improving the World Bank's entry points for citizen engagement by operationalizing findings on social organizations from the *World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law (WDR 2017)* and *Citizens as Drivers of Change: How Citizens Use Human Rights to Mobilize, Effectively Engage with the State and Promote Transparency and Accountability*. To accomplish this, taken from the second report are three real-world examples of citizens' initiatives to increase transparency and accountability in public service delivery. The note also consists of a brief outline of what the Bank is doing to promote citizen engagement, a summary of key lessons on what makes external support from international actors effective, and suggestions for next steps the Bank can take to best support citizen engagement in its operations.¹

HOW HAS THE WORLD BANK PROMOTED CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT?

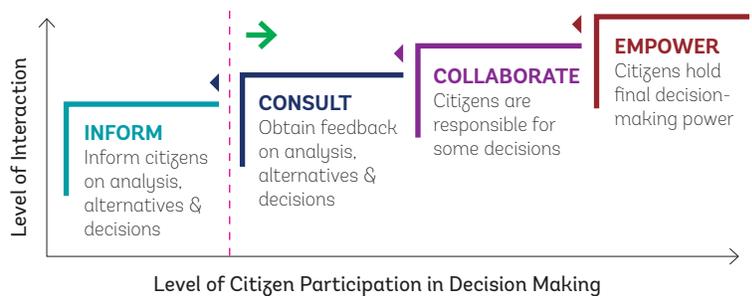
Promoting citizen engagement is a long-standing practice at the World Bank. Its 2014 citizen engagement mandate builds on more than two decades' worth of practical experience and research demonstrating the importance of engaging and empowering beneficiaries, driving development from the bottom up, and strengthening social accountability.² Many Bank teams are familiar with citizen engagement tools. Extensive consultations are conducted, for example, and grievance redressal mechanisms are implemented in the context of safeguards. Participatory planning is a central element of community-driven development, and beneficiary and third-party monitoring has been an important element of the "Demand for Good Governance" agenda.

Added to this, evidence-based research is emerging that shows development outcomes improve when citizens participate. The mandate to mainstream citizen engagement spans sectors and countries, is meant to be woven in throughout the project cycle, applies not only to lending instruments but also to Country Partnership Frameworks (CPFs) and other analytical work that informs Bank engagement, and is designed to have positive spillover effects on country practices. The rationale behind

this broad-based, holistic approach to citizen engagement is in part its link to improving governance. As outlined in WDR 2017, effective governance is key to achieving development goals, and citizen engagement can help strengthen both.

As guidance for teams, in 2014 the Bank developed a strategic framework for mainstreaming citizen engagement in its operations (World Bank Group 2014). It outlines a basic rationale for mainstreaming citizen engagement to improve development outcomes, especially related to service delivery. The framework sets forth six principles: (i) focus on results; (ii) promote engagement through the operational cycle; (iii) strengthen country systems; (iv) be context specific; (v) make improvements that are gradual, iterative, and scalable; and (vi) partner with collaborators. Conceptualizing citizen engagement by the "intensity" of the level of interactions with citizens is a helpful exercise when planning practical applications (figure 1).³

Figure 1. Intensity of Citizen Engagement



Source: Adapted from World Bank (2014).

Practitioners of impactful citizen engagement would also do well to consider WDR 2017, which lays out a framework for improving governance effectiveness. At its heart, WDR 2017 asks how change happens. How do we move from governance systems that are marked by power asymmetries — and therefore often plagued by clientelism, capture, and exclusion — to governance that truly serves the public interest? WDR 2017 shows how power asymmetries between societal actors can undermine the functional effectiveness of policies by preventing commitment, coordination, and cooperation. An understanding of power — the ability of groups and individuals to make others act in

¹The terms "citizen engagement" and "citizen participation" are used interchangeably. The term "citizen" is used in a general sense to indicate a person with rights. See World Bank (2017b, v) for full definitions.

²For a summary of World Bank practice and research related to citizen engagement, see World Bank (2017b) and Lateef (2016).

³The strategic framework identifies a useful list of entrance points for citizen engagement (World Bank 2014, 22).

their interest and bring about specific outcomes — and power asymmetries is essential for understanding whether policies are designed and implemented to support development outcomes. Negative manifestations of power asymmetries include capture, clientelism, and exclusion.

Three levers of change can shift power dynamics in a positive direction: changing incentives to pursue particular goals; changing the underlying preferences and beliefs of relevant actors; and increasing contestability — that is, who participates in the policy arena. Utilizing these levers often requires support from multiple sets of actors, including elites, citizens, and international actors. Acting individually, citizens may not be as effective as when they organize to influence the outcomes of policy negotiations. Power is at the heart of citizen engagement initiatives. The WDR 2017 framework helps elaborate how citizens can shift power asymmetries through collective action and social organization, informing the World Bank's efforts to mainstream citizen engagement in its operations.

While WDR 2017 explains how citizens can affect outcomes in the policy arena through social organization, it does not explore how they can accomplish this; nor does it provide in-depth analysis of the strategies employed by social organizations to effect change. The analysis in *Citizens as Drivers of Change* builds on these gaps, drawing on literature on transparency and social accountability, viewed through a human rights lens (figure 2). Citizen engagement is a powerful tool through which people can realize their social and economic rights, such as for health care or education, by exercising their civil and political rights. This understanding can then be used to underpin the context-specific interventions prioritized by the World Bank's citizen engagement mandate.

Figure 2. A Framework for Analysis: WDR 2017 and a Human Rights Lens



Source: Adapted from World Bank (2017b, vi).

What is important is that the levers outlined by WDR 2017, and seen in the context of human rights, can, and often do, involve more than one set of actors. Governments, citizens, and international actors — including the World Bank — have parts to play in driving change. Looking ahead, it is important to consider the timing and other specifics of the World Bank's actions.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT: LESSONS FROM THREE CASE STUDIES

Key takeaways are found from three collective citizens' initiatives to drive social change. *Citizens as Drivers of Change* analyzes the three cases and outlines entry points for mainstreaming these findings into international development practice, including the World Bank's operations. The case studies involve:

- Community-based monitoring of schools in Afghanistan
- Civil society monitoring of sovereign wealth fund resources allocated to education in Paraguay, with the goal of improving marginalized schools' infrastructure
- Collective efforts to promote transparency and integrity among doctors and hospitals in Serbia

All three cases focus on fostering anti-corruption, transparency, accountability, and the citizen-state interface in order to improve the quality and delivery of essential public services.

Key Messages and Takeaways

Detailed analysis of the three case studies reveals several significant lessons that may be considered and applied in other contexts:

- **Collective action can shift power asymmetries.** In all three cases, the underlying functional challenges that spurred citizen action were driven by power asymmetries: exclusion, capture, and clientelism. Citizen-driven collective action helped shift these power asymmetries and gave citizens a seat at the table through the sheer power of numbers. Change was brought about most effectively by strategically combining institutional with extra-institutional engagement.
- **Human rights can serve as focal points for collective action.** Specifically, citizens can choose to exercise their civil and political rights to help realize their social and economic rights. The experience of being denied rights, such as the right to health care or the right to education, combined with awareness of those rights can serve as motivation for collective action. Social organizations can help citizens understand that the denial of those rights does not need to be accepted but can be contested through strategies such as collectively pushing for change. Exercising certain rights, such as freedom of association or the right to information, helped citizens in all three cases realize other rights, such as for health care and education.
- **Collective responsibility, as well as ongoing learning, can be promoted through technology.** All three cases highlight the importance of citizens' agency and voice. The use of technology, where appropriate, helps amplify this voice and makes collective initiatives accessible to all.

- **Effective engagement strategies combine collaboration, coalition building, and contestation.** In all three cases, citizens were particularly effective in achieving change when they combined creating pressure on elites on the one hand with selectively collaborating with them on the other. This could, for example, involve monitoring and exposing irregularities and then working together with elites on how to address them. Elites are not monolithic, and organizations can often identify interlocutors, from the local to the national level, with whom to build bridges and collectively work toward change.

LESSONS FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

These case studies offer key lessons for international actors.

- **Context matters, yet a supportive context is not a prerequisite for effective citizen engagement.** The cases show that even in fragile contexts and highly corrupt environments, social organizations can be effective. Indeed, it may be especially in these environments that collaboration with grassroots movements is essential for international actors to gain legitimacy and build trust in partnering with the state. International support for citizen engagement is therefore highly relevant in the most difficult contexts.
- **Build on existing structures and focus on grassroots solutions.** “Induced” participation was unlikely to generate commitment and cooperation from volunteers in the cases analyzed. Effective, collective action rests on a sense of collective ownership, responsibility, and identity, which are more likely to be found where participation is organic. Grassroots actions are most effective at generating context-specific, home-grown solutions.
- **Create spaces to convene and deliberate.** International actors have an important role to play in supporting social organizations financially, but they may be most effective at creating spaces for social groups to convene, both through peer-to-peer exchanges (horizontal) as well as with elite actors (vertical). International actors can facilitate coalition building among champions for change across society by providing spaces and means for them to convene and encouraging collaboration.
- **Focus on process, not “best practice.”** Rather than replicating a technique, method, tool, or social accountability intervention, international actors should support assistance that scales up processes rather than interventions and solutions.
- **Support flexible arrangements and incremental outcomes.** Effective citizen engagement cannot be achieved in one-off interventions, but rather contributes to development through nonlinear processes over time. International actors can best support citizen engagement by increasing project horizons or

supporting consecutive initiatives that build on one another. They can, furthermore, provide seed funding for new initiatives to test out new approaches and learn from them.

- **Build a shared sense of identity.** It is important for international actors to engage citizens in planning and decision making, and work with volunteers to build a shared sense of identity among them around the cause they are addressing, providing opportunities for growth and learning.

Box 1. Example of Expanding Contestability throughout the Country Engagement Cycle

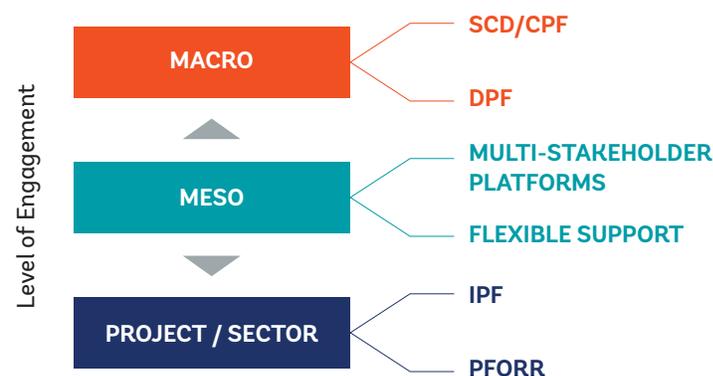
Based on the analysis of the barriers to citizen participation as part of the preparation of the Mali Country Partnership Framework, several activities are taking place to mainstream citizen engagement and strengthen participation, accountability, and transparency. Currently, in select communities of Mali and Niger, mapping of social intermediaries and provision of capacity building on civil engagement approaches and mechanisms are happening. In addition, a community monitoring mechanism using information and communication technology is being implemented in select projects.

Sources: Author’s interview with task team leader; World Bank Country Partnership Framework for the Republic of Mali, 2015.

NEXT STEPS: ENTRY POINTS AND INSTRUMENTS TO EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

These lessons for international actors can strengthen citizen engagement in World Bank operations. Practical entry points for accomplishing this goal may be organized by level: macro, meso, and project or sector (figure 3).

Figure 3. World Bank’s Corporate Instruments to Support Citizen Engagement



Note: CPF = Country Partnership Framework; DPF = development policy financing; IPF = investment project financing; PFORR = Program-for-Results; SCD = Systematic Country Diagnostics.

At the macro level, supporting broad reforms that seek to increase transparency and contestability also nurture an enabling environment for citizens' participation. Citizens' voices can be amplified by improving the macro environment. In this regard, international actors such as the World Bank may use their comparative advantage. World Bank instruments, such as development policy financing (DPF), may be used to support structural reforms as well as improve transparency and contestability to make headway with the enabling environment. Systematic political economy analysis, including assessments of a country's specific arrangements for citizen participation and the potential influence of citizen coalitions, can be used to inform citizen engagement mechanisms in the design of DPFs.

Box 2. Example of Strengthening Incentives for Collaboration through Multi-Stakeholder Platforms

A Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA) grant in Bangladesh implemented by a lead civil society organization, known as Social Engagement for Budgetary Accountability (SEBA), and its partners has successfully institutionalized a participatory local budget process mandated by law. Using formal and informal participatory mechanisms, networks were established with national and local government institutions, civil society organizations, and the media to push for participatory and transparent budget processes. Effectively expanded is who participates in the policy arena. The mechanisms involved include social audits and poverty mapping as well as efforts to inform local communities, including marginalized groups, of their entitlements and budget allocations.

Sources: Interview with task team leader; SEBA project description on the GPSA website at <https://www.thegpsa.org/project/social-engagement-budgetary-accountability-seba>.

At the macro level, international actors can increase contestability by facilitating spaces for citizens to convene and deliberate. As the World Bank identifies external barriers to citizens' participation and collective action in analytical work, doors are opened to design actions that expand citizens' participation in World Bank interventions. Systematic Country Diagnostics (SCDs) offer an opportunity to identify ways to strengthen participation and domestic accountability mechanisms. Multi-stakeholder dialogues on policy design standards are important. These may include government consultations with civil society members as part of the SCD consultation process and during the CPF. Contestability and deliberation can be expanded by specifying actions in the CPF, based on the SCD analysis, to strengthen dialogue and collaboration. Such efforts might also influence government systems.

At the meso level, enhancing institutional ability to use "power with" instead of "power over" includes efforts to support platforms for multi-stakeholder dialogue, coalition building, and inclusive strategies. The World Bank has a large toolbox of instruments that can be used to interface with a diverse set of stakeholders, including relatively less formalized groups such as citizen-centric movements, possibly through intermediaries. People will hold those organizations accountable which they find legitimate, and "power with" approaches should strive to include a broad set of legitimate actors. When the World Bank uses tools with an aim of increasing "power with" operations, it has the potential to create platforms for fruitful dialogue and to change the incentives and possibly the preferences of previously isolated elites. Tools include multi-stakeholder platforms for contentious policy reform, national open government plans, and macro reforms that increase contestability in the policy arena. As more actors enter, a more contestable policy arena is associated with more legitimacy and cooperation (World Bank 2017a, 13).

At the meso level, flexible support arrangements that boost citizen participation may be supported by international actors in various ways. While funding can be important to citizen participation, it can also be contentious when supplied by external actors. In some cases, flexible funding is useful, but what is needed even more is providing access to elites, possibly in the context of spaces for deliberation or through intermediaries. Other types of effective external support might involve scaling up activities that have shown results, or creating platforms for new approaches and continued learning. Of funding types, long-term funding that is flexible and can be adjusted to changing situations is best for increasing the potential impact of the intervention. Multi-stakeholder coalitions can offer long-term pathways for elites and citizens to come together.

At the project level, organic processes are more effective than one-size-fits-all best practices. Sustainable, citizen-supported development outcomes depend on participation mechanisms. When task teams listen to organizations or loose coalitions of citizens working on the ground, to learn what has worked for them, they can use this information to integrate relevant and proven mechanisms in project designs. The World Bank's citizen engagement mandate is being implemented on a project level. Relevant tools include Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA) grants to local community-based organizations and long-term engagement with platforms, movements, or other looser citizen coalitions.

At the project level, transparency alone will not trigger change, but ensuring that operation designs enable action on the information provided is necessary for impactful citizen engagement. Task team leaders and teams can integrate different levels of citizen engagement in their operations. The so-called identification stages of investment project financing

or Program-for-Results can include project-level analysis of elite capture within relevant institutions — and relevant stakeholders to counter this — to be followed by the inclusion of results-based accountability strategies to increase contestability in project design. Citizen engagement mechanisms that go beyond enabling individual feedback to supporting collective action increase the likelihood of these processes being impactful.

CONCLUSION

To strengthen their influence in the policy arena, citizens need to utilize multiple mechanisms designed to solve collective action problems. International actors can support this process. Combining different methods strategically maximizes the chances of promoting change. The World Bank does not have the mandate to work with or fund all types of citizen participation strategies, nor is this always desirable. But the Bank does have a comparative advantage in supporting the expansion of the enabling environment for citizen participation, for example, through macro reforms that increase contestability. It is well placed to create inclusive spaces for deliberation for a broad set of stakeholders, including elites, focused on long-term thematic or sectoral engagements. Based on an analysis of the political economy and different stakeholders' roles, the Bank can take steps to address both the supply and demand side of accountability, for example, through grants to strengthen GPSA accountability in parallel with World Bank operations that strengthen the state's capacity to deliver.

Box 3. Increasing Contestability in Project Design

Since 2013, community and participatory monitoring and evaluation activities, as well as grievance redressal mechanisms, have been automatically integrated into social protection and governance projects in Madagascar, with the goal of better addressing beneficiaries' needs while promoting transparency and accountability. A public sector support project attempts to go further by systematically integrating civil society organizations (CSOs) in the monitoring of the project, with a focus on performance and indicators related to disbursement. The information provided by CSOs will then inform the triggers for subsequent disbursement. Such an approach, replicable in any project with a similar structure, aims to both provide "teeth" to the civil society actors engaged in the process and strengthen information on project outcomes.

Sources: Interview with task team leader; World Bank (2017c).

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