Social Accountability and Demand for Good Governance Case Study Series

90179

June 2014

Social Accountability Relationships Assessment Tool
A Tool to Rapidly Identify and Assess
Downward Accountability Relationships in Bank-financed Projects

Introduction

Enabling strong accountability relationships between government agencies and service providers—on the one hand—and citizens and service users—on the other—is critical to good governance and development. It is a large part of what is meant by "getting institutions right" and "getting incentives right." Citizens and service users need to know that government agencies and service providers are doing their jobs correctly. Having adequate downward accountability helps improve trust between governments and their constituents, but it is also critical for ensuring that project benefits reach intended beneficiaries. Social accountability can play a significant role in fostering this downward accountability.

Social accountability is an approach that relies on citizens directly or indirectly participating in demanding accountability from service providers and public officials.[1] It aims at strengthening the voice and capacity of citizens—especially poor people—to demand greater accountability and responsiveness from public officials and service providers. It creates spaces for citizens to interact with and provide feedback to government or project officials at various levels. It is often contrasted with, and also complements, formal supply-side measures that often focus on upward accountability, such as conducting audits or reporting to higher tiers of an administration.

Often, project task teams are unable to commission comprehensive social accountability assessments due to time and budget limitations. As a result, social accountability practitioners frequently need to conduct quick and inexpensive assessments by which they can identify, map, and analyze existing social accountability relationships in projects. The Social Accountability Relationships Assessment Tool (SARAT) provides a methodology that can help practitioners accomplish this. The note, "How, When, and Why to Use Demand-Side Governance Approaches in Projects" (World Bank 2011) presents a comprehensive five-step process[2] designed to help project teams determine the applicability of various social accountability mechanisms and incorporate them into projects. However, this process entails significant time, human resources, and money. SARAT complements the five-step process by expanding on the first step: "identify and prioritize DFGG[3] concerns and opportunities," leading to the creation of an implementable action plan.[4] Through SARAT, a social accountability practitioner on a project team can obtain relevant information in a single workshop that can last from one to three days, depending on the project context.

---

1. Some established social accountability tools and interventions that have been well documented include participatory budgeting, public expenditure tracking, social audits, citizen charters, and citizen report cards. There are more detailed "How-to Notes" describing some of these tools, which are downloadable from the Bank's website. A glossary of social accountability tools can be found in the How-to Note, "How, When, and Why to Use Demand-Side Governance Approaches in Projects" (World Bank 2011).

2. The five-step process is comprised of the following: Step 1: Identify and prioritize DFGG concerns and opportunities; Step 2: Assess the political, legal, and social context for DFGG activities; Step 3: Select DFGG activities to address concerns and opportunities given the context; Step 4: Decide on implementation modalities for DFGG activities; and Step 5: Decide on follow-up and institutionalization of DFGG activities.

3. The phrases "demand for good governance" (DFGG), "demand-side governance," and "social accountability" have been used interchangeably in this note.

4. The activities in the action plan can be sequenced, prioritized, and included in the Next Steps section of the Mission Aide Memoire to ensure that they are receive follow up.

The objective of this note is to provide a simple method a social accountability practitioner can use to rapidly analyze social accountability relationships in a project and identify areas that require further strengthening. Optimally, this would be done during the project preparation phase, so that the necessary strengthening can be done early during project implementation, before inadequate accountability relationships undermine the project. When done at an early stage, this type of assessment can help identify measures for enhancing accountability that are most appropriate for the project. SARAT can play a part in assessing the context for social accountability by evaluating existing social accountability relationships.[5] Finally, applying this tool during project preparation can help inform the project design, including results indicators. SARAT can be used during any stage of project implementation, as the need for it may arise,[6] but recommendations generated by applying SARAT during project implementation are usually less likely to be implemented because project management may not have the resources or inclination to introduce additional activities midway through a project unless the project is being restructured.

This note is intended for social accountability practitioners who are already familiar with the project context, the approach outlined in "How, When, and Why to Use Demand-Side Governance Approaches in Projects," and common social accountability measures.[7] The methodology is applicable to four main types of project activities: service provision, cash transfers, infrastructure construction, and capacity building. It helps to identify the most suitable entry points for enhancing project sustainability and impact by supporting social accountability. It explains a six-step process and provides guidance to task teams on how to rapidly map social accountability relationships in projects. An example from the World Bank-supported Palestinian NGO Project IV illustrates the SARAT methodology (annex 1).

A Tool for Identifying, Mapping, and Assessing Social Accountability Relationships

SARAT can be implemented during the course of one mission, in one or more multistakeholder workshops, with the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and a cross-section of relevant stakeholders, such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), facilitators, direct beneficiaries of programs being delivered by the PIU, ministry officials, and others. If tensions or significant power differences exist among stakeholders, which is often the case, it is usually better to conduct separate meetings or workshops for each stakeholder group to help them use SARAT and allow them to speak freely. Once the major stakeholder groups have done their assessments, then a workshop bringing all the stakeholders together, including the government and/or the service providers, can be organized, so that their assessments using SARAT can be compared and a joint action plan can be negotiated. The six SARAT steps are discussed below.[8]

Step 1: Identify all project activities that may have a direct impact on citizens, groups, or communities

Review each project subcomponent, creating a list of all the activities under each one that could directly affect citizens, community stakeholders, and beneficiaries. This helps to identify the specific stakeholder/beneficiary subgroups that will be most impacted by each project activity. In addition, identify all capacity-building or technical-assistance activities included in the project because these also impact specific subgroups.

Step 2: Identify project-affected stakeholders, including intermediaries

After project activities have been listed, identify all project stakeholders that implement, facilitate, use, benefit from, or will be impacted by them. Ideally, this should be done prior to convening the multistakeholder workshops to allow for genuine representation of stakeholder subgroups at the workshops.

In service-delivery projects, stakeholders include direct beneficiaries—such as service users—and intermediate facilitators—such as frontline service providers and

community groups. Cash transfer programs impact beneficiary groups, intermediary banking institutions, and other facilitators. In infrastructure projects, it is important to identify the communities that will be using the infrastructure or that are directly impacted by its construction.

Identifying intermediate facilitators that connect the project staff to project beneficiaries is equally important. These include consultants, facilitators, firms, or civil society groups that are hired by the project staff to work directly with project beneficiaries. In many cases, these intermediaries serve as the "eyes and ears" of the project staff by gathering baseline data and by organizing focus group discussions or consultations. Frontline project staff working in the field or in the PIU who are in contact with communities are also valuable entry points for introducing social accountability measures. Intermediate facilitators are often key to capacity building or technical assistance activities. It is critical to include groups that are indirectly impacted by a project but that can have an influence on its implementation, including civil society groups, service provider unions, and other groups.

Step 3: Map the flow of funds, goods, and services

Based on the list of project stakeholders, map the flow of funds, goods, and services for each project activity from its origin to the end user. This will help in the identification and prioritization of project activities to which the bulk of project resources are being channeled.

Service provision activities entail the delivery of key services, such as health and education, to beneficiaries through intermediary service-delivery organizations and other facilitators. The PIU distributes funds to these intermediary organizations. Cash transfer activities involve the transfer of funds to beneficiaries, typically through banking institutions. For example, in a conditional cash transfer program that provides scholarships for school-aged girls, funds often go either directly from the PIU to the families' bank accounts or through an intermediary to the parents. Infrastructure-creation activities funnel funds through contractors for construction, but also work through their field project staff monitoring progress on the ground. Finally, capacity-building activities rely on trainers or facilitators to build the skills of various stakeholders, such as project staff and government officials. Funds are channeled to these intermediaries. Trainees also get honoraria, stipends, and travel allowances. Capacity-building activities can either be self-standing or integrated into the other types of activities previously mentioned. This step is useful in assessing gaps in the accountability chain.

Step 4: Identify and assess existing downward accountability processes in the project

All accountability processes that are in place should be identified in this step. Questions that can assist in this step are: How do frontline service providers regularly communicate with service users and how do they integrate user feedback into their practices? In cash transfer programs, are project officials providing information about the programs and their entitlements to existing and potential stakeholders? In scholarship programs, do students have access to information on their entitlements under the program and the frequency and amount of transfers?

For all types of project activities, identify the means by which project officials communicate with and receive feedback or grievances from project stakeholders regarding the project (see figure 1 below). Such processes can include social audits, citizen report cards, and grievance redress mechanisms. Also consider other means by which the project not only gathers feedback from stakeholders but also engages them in a way that informs decision making and project implementation. Because social accountability measures engage in two-way dialogues, it is important to identify mechanisms in place for "reporting back" to stakeholders. Once these processes are identified, assess their

Figure 1. Mapping Downward Accountability
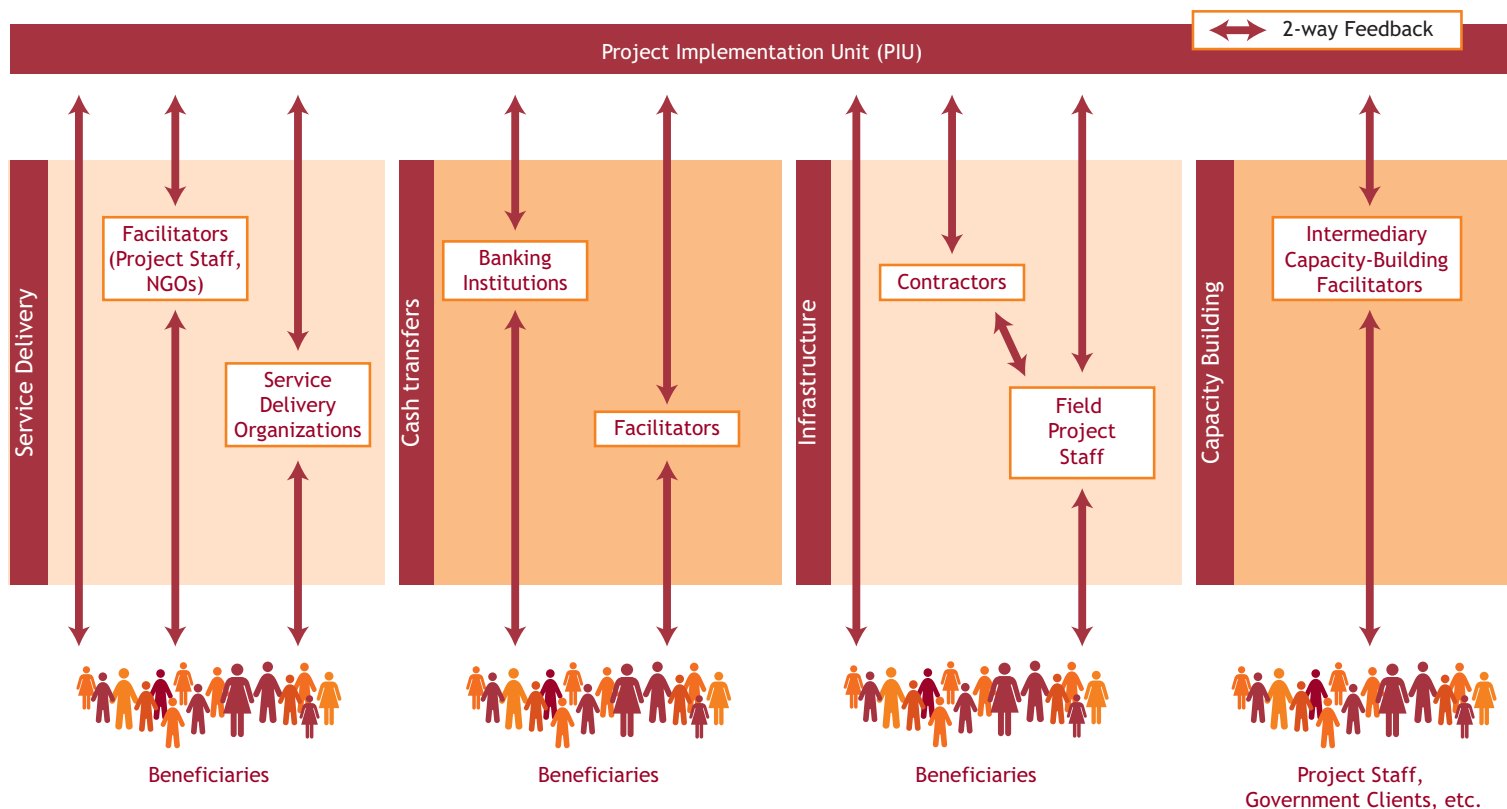
adequacy in contributing to downward accountability. Are the processes working? Are they adequate or not? Why? Do stakeholders inform decision making on an ongoing basis or is the process considered a one-off engagement with little follow-up? Assessments should be made based on how accountability mechanisms contribute to overall project objectives and reflect the influence that project stakeholders have on the way projects are implemented. See table 1 for a template to assess accountability relationships.

Step 5: Propose additional measures to enhance social accountability

Once existing downward accountability relationships are identified and assessed, focus on the weak links in the accountability framework. How can the processes that are considered "inadequate" be strengthened? For example, if the PIU is already making project information available to the public, is this the information that the user wants and needs? Is it reader-friendly? How can existing and potential beneficiaries access this information and can it be simplified and translated into languages more commonly used by

beneficiaries or citizens? In the case of budgets, can citizen budgets—simplified versions of complex public budgets that citizens can easily read and understand—be produced and disseminated? These measures are meant to address the gaps identified in the mapping in order to strengthen downward accountability relationships in the overall project. However, introducing a downward accountability process is not a magic bullet. In some situations, the strengthening of "adequate" or "weak" relationships may not be justified because it is too expensive or will not directly improve the project's impact.[9]

Step 6: Create and monitor an action plan

This final step involves creating an action plan to enhance accountability based on the measures in column 4 of table 1. This action plan is not a detailed plan whose design will require technical experts working over a period of weeks in order to develop. Instead, it is more like the action plan that

---

9. See "How, When, and Why to Use Demand-Side Governance Approaches in Projects," (World Bank 2011), pp. 9–13 for several factors to consider in choosing which tools and measures to include in a social accountability intervention.

Table 1. Assessing Accountability Relationships			
Accountability relationship	Existing social accountability measures	Adequacy of accountability measures (adequate/inadequate) and reasons	Suggested additional measures to enhance accountability, if any
Citizens-PIU			
Citizens-line ministry			
Project beneficiaries-PIU			
Project beneficiaries-consultants			
PIU-line ministry			
Citizens-NGOs			
Project beneficiaries-NGOs			

Source: World Bank.

is generated by the interface meeting in a community score-card, that is, a list of prioritized actions that are mutually agreed on by relevant stakeholders at a single workshop.[10] This action plan must include realistic activities to ensure that it is well implemented. PIUs are usually comprised of several departments, and activities proposed often require strong interdepartmental coordination. Buy-in is needed from all departments in the PIU, that are ideally represented at the workshop, to ensure that the activities are carried out. In addition, resources to carry out these activities—both financial and human—must be identified by the PIU. Once the implementation of the additional activities is underway, consistent monitoring, especially in the initial stages (e.g., by ensuring that senior project management evaluates the implementation plan at their regular review meetings) will allow for mid-course changes during implementation.

Challenges in Mapping Social Accountability

The six-step process could pose several challenges. Like other aspects of social accountability, SARAT is more of an art than a science; more political than technical. Therefore, flexibility and adaptability are often necessary to make it work. For example, it might not be possible to get all of the relevant stakeholder subgroups to meet with one another. Or, even if an adequate number do meet, less powerful stakeholders who are dependent on the project or on service providers, such as beneficiaries and service users, might not be candid about inadequate accountability relationships for fear of alienating the PIU. Clearly, facilitation is key to this

entire exercise. A neutral facilitator who knows the context, the project, the local language, and social accountability processes is crucial, but is not always easy to find.

PIUs may be reluctant to discuss weaknesses in their accountability relations, thinking it will create extra work, that it is not worth the effort or in their interest, or might even be threatening to them. A proactive approach is often needed to build interest and commitment for mapping social accountability. Therefore, the tool should be presented as a means to improve project outcomes rather than as a challenge to existing authorities. Identifying and working with PIU managers and staff who have had positive experiences with social accountability is critical to this process. Citizens, NGOs, and community-based organizations (CBO)s may also be skeptical, so they also may need encouragement to give social accountability mapping a chance. Sufficient time should therefore be allotted for dialogue and trust-building measures. Building relationships could be more important than any specific analysis or suggested measures for strengthening accountability relations. The workshop conducted for SARAT helps in this effort. Opting for a gradual incremental approach can pay off in the long run.

Finally, the tendency to select too many social accountability measures introduces the risk of spreading project resources thin. A programmatic and sequenced approach in which different social accountability activities are implemented as a project progresses is preferable. This lets project teams be selective and strategic, and allows them to focus their energies on the most cost-effective mechanisms in support of overall project objectives.

10. See "How, When, and Why to Use Demand-Side Governance Approaches in Projects," (World Bank 2011), pp. 13–17, for the detailed steps involved in designing a social accountability intervention.

Annex 1: Assessing Downward Accountability Relationships in the Palestinian NGO IV Project

Since 1997, the World Bank has supported a series of Palestinian NGO (PNGO) projects to enhance the capacity of Palestinian NGOs to deliver social services to poor, marginalized, and geographically isolated communities. The projects also contribute to establishing a sound and transparent management structure for donor grant funding, with institutionalized systems of project and financial management; and they help with the development of the NGO sector through improved governance, transparency, and accountability as well as cooperation and information sharing among Palestinian NGOs, the Palestinian Authority, and other organizations. The current and fourth Palestinian project (PNGO IV)[11] is a landmark project in that it

has integrated a series of innovative social accountability measures into its design, components, and activities. The NGO Development Center (NDC) — the PIU — became operational in 2006 through PNGO III with the mandate to channel grants to NGOs and CBOs[12] for service delivery and to provide technical assistance to develop their capacities. Hence, NDC under PNGO IV works with partner NGOs and CBOs to enhance the quality of their service delivery as well as their governance. Direct project beneficiaries include NGOs and CBOs that the NDC supports through grants and extensive capacity-building efforts. Palestinian citizens receiving services from NGOs and CBOs are indirect project beneficiaries.

The project has well-established upward accountability mechanisms to funding partners in place, such as annual reporting and financial management auditing, to ensure that project funds are efficiently managed. Moreover, since 2007, under PNGO III, NDC has successfully put into

---

11. PNGO IV project components: Component 1 is a grant facility for four categories of subgrants to NGOs. These subgrants (empowerment, mentoring, innovation, and emergency) target socially marginalized poor and/or vulnerable groups. Empowerment grants support experienced NGOs with a comparative advantage in a sector to improve their service delivery. These NGOs receive funds directly from NDC. Under the mentoring grants, larger NGOs provide such capacity building to smaller NGOs and CBOs. Funds flow directly from NDC to the mentors. To ensure quality service delivery, NDC provides capacity building in financial management, procurement, and project management throughout the entire subproject cycle. Component 2 develops the NGO sector as a whole to become more responsive, transparent, and accountable to Palestinian communities by setting standards, promoting knowledge-sharing and collaboration within the sector, and offering strategic policy research and planning. The specific subcomponents are: "Code of Conduct Implementation," "NGO Sector Coordination and Information Exchange," and "Policy and Research." Under this component, the project provides training to NGOs on various aspects of NGO good governance, including the implementation of the NGO Code of Conduct. Coaching and Technical Assistance (CTA) consul-

tants assist NDC in these activities. Thus, funds from NDC flow through these CTA consultants to beneficiaries. Component 3 aims to strengthen the capacity of the NDC — the implementing agency — for project management, monitoring and evaluation, and project auditing. PNGO IV (P117444) is jointly funded by the World Bank and Agence Française de Développement.

12. NGOs are formally registered institutions with the Ministry of Interior with paid staff and a set governance structure. CBOs, however, are typically volunteer-driven, smaller, more localized groups and are not always formally registered.

Figure 2. Key Institutions and Accountability Relationships in the PNGO IV Project
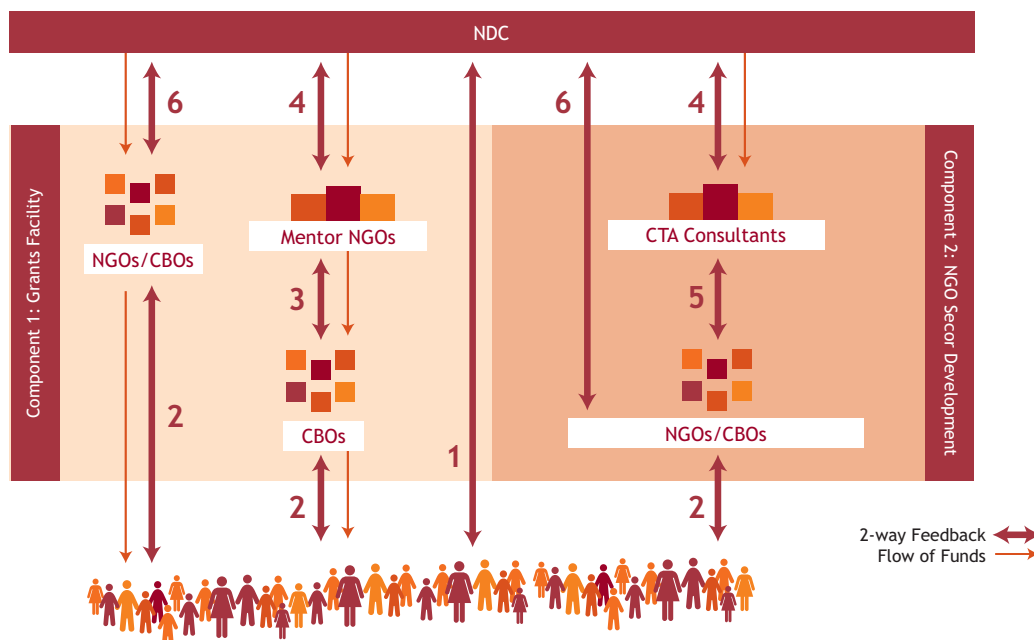
place several downward accountability mechanisms, such as scorecards, participatory needs assessments, and focus group discussions, in order to gather feedback from its constituents—NGOs and CBOs—and to inform its decision making.

Piloting the diagnostic tool. In March 2012, a half-day group diagnostic exercise that piloted SARAT was conducted to identify and assess the key downward accountability relationships between important stakeholders (figure 2). The diagnostic highlighted the strength of each of these relationships, identified crucial social accountability measures that are currently in place, and provided recommendations for addressing weak social accountability links. The diagnostic highlighted several areas within this "accountability chain" to guide NDC in further strengthening its social accountability measures in order to improve trust and relationships with the communities with which it

works and to improve the current mechanisms that are in place to gather feedback.

The diagnostic led to the conclusion that the accountability relationships between NGOs/CBOs and citizen beneficiaries are strong due to the accountability measures in place, such as a transparent selection process, a participatory needs assessment process, and the use of scorecards to gather feedback. Social accountability measures between NDC, its partner NGOs, mentor NGOs[13] CBOs, and Coaching and Technical Assistance (CTA) consultants were considered adequate and did not require further strengthening. These included the use of focus groups, quarterly review meetings, and quarterly progress report feedback collection processes. Social accountability measures between CTA consultants and the NGOs/CBOs, which include a

---

13. NDC supports smaller NGOs and CBOs through mentor NGOs who on-grant funds and provide technical support to these smaller organizations.

Table 2. Assessing the Strength of Downward Accountability Relationships between the NDC and its Partners			
Accountability relationship	**Existing social accountability measures**	**Adequacy of accountability measures**	**Additional measures to enhance accountability, if any**
1. Citizens—NDC	• Beneficiary impact assessment (conduct once every three years) • Disclose documents • Public hearings on annual report	Weak	• Create a grievance redress mechanism • Issue operating guidelines for POs to disseminate project information during field visits
2. Citizens—NGOs/CBOs	• Scorecards (conduct three times during project) • Participatory planning/needs assessment • Transparent selection process by some NGOs	Strong	• Ensure that scorecards are well conducted • Conduct subproject beneficiary impact assessment • Ensure all NGOs have transparent selection processes
3. NGOs/CBOs—mentor NGO	• Participatory planning/needs assessment	Weak	• Standardize feedback forms • Conduct scorecards
4. Mentor NGO/CTA consultants—NDC	• Feedback through focus groups • Feedback section in quarterly progress reports • Feedback solicited in quarterly review meetings • Transparent selection process	Adequate	• No additional measures; ensure compliance of existing activities.
5. NGOs/CBOs—CTA consultants	• Participatory curriculum development • Transparency in consultant activities	Adequate	• No additional measures; ensure compliance of existing activities
6. NGOs—NDC	• Feedback solicited through a separate section in quarterly progress reports • Feedback solicited in regular quarterly review meetings • Transparent NGO selection process • Poll for suggestions to improve portal (Masader) • Annual report dissemination	Adequate	• No additional measures; ensure compliance of existing activities
Source: World Bank.			

participatory curriculum development process, were also considered adequate. However, NDC thought its direct relationship with citizens and NGO/CBO relationships with their mentor NGOs require further strengthening (table 2).

The SARAT process resulted in several concrete recommendations to improve downward relationships within PNGO IV. NDC is exploring the possibility of further strengthening its downward accountability relationships with citizens by: (1) proactively disseminating information about NDC's programs and instituting a grievance redress mechanism to improve NDC–citizen relationships; (2) ensuring that existing activities to promote social accountability are uniformly and consistently implemented in the West Bank and Gaza by standardizing procedures through checklists, guidelines, and regular monitoring; and (3) expanding the scorecard participatory monitoring approach to other PNGO IV components, such as the mentoring grant component, and where possible, to encourage PNGO IV-supported NGOs to scale up the use of the scorecard to non-PNGO IV supported programs.

Bibliography

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). 2005. "Stakeholder Power Analysis." Power Tools, IIED, London. http://www.policy-powertools.org/Tools/Understanding/docs/stakeholder_power_tool_english.pdf.

Malena, Carmen, Reiner Forster, and Janmejay Singh. 2004. "Social Accountability: An Introduction to the Concept and Emerging Practice." Social Development Paper 76, World Bank, Washington, DC.

World Bank. 2013. "Mapping Context for Social Accountability: A Resource Paper." Social Accountability Department, World Bank, Washington, DC. http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/Resources/244362-1193949504055/Context_and_SAcc_RESOURCE_PAPER.pdf.

———. 2012a. "Country Social Analysis: Questions on Social Accountability." Social Development Department, World Bank, Washington, DC. http://www.copsa.in/PDF/4_CSA_Social_Accountability.pdf.

———. 2012b. "Social Accountability Innovations in the NGO Sector in West Bank and Gaza: The Palestine NGO Projects." Social Development Notes, World Bank, Washington, DC.

———. 2011. "How, When, and Why to Use Demand-Side Governance Approaches in Projects." Social Development Department, World Bank, Washington, DC. http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/Resources/244362-1193949504055/4348035-1296838689014/7712311-1298494972121/DGGG-in-Operations_Final.pdf.

———. 2010. "Rapid Feedback: The Role of Community Scorecards in Improving Service Delivery." Social Development Department, World Bank, Washington, DC.

———. 2009a. "A Guidance Note on Bank Multi-Stakeholder Engagement." World Bank, Washington, DC. http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/Resources/244362-1193949504055/4348035-1298566783395/7755386-1301510956007/Multi-Stakeholder-Engagement.pdf.

———. 2009b. "Governance and Anticorruption in Lending Operations: A Benchmarking and Learning Review." QAG, GAC Secretariat, and Social Development Department, World Bank, Washington, DC. http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTLAWJUSTINST/Resources/GAC_review_2009.pdf.

———. 2007. World Bank Social Accountability Sourcebook. Washington, DC: World Bank. http://www.worldbank.org/socialaccountability_sourcebook/.

The World Bank, Social Development Department
1818 H Street NW
Washington DC 20433

Fax: 202-522-3247
Email: asksocial@worldbank.org
Web: www.worldbank.org/socialdevelopment