



Active Citizens and Accountable Governments: Three Approaches to Guide our Grants and Learning

MAY 2017

INTRODUCTION

The Hewlett Foundation's Global Development and Population Program is pleased to share drafts of three new substrategies that offer greater detail about (a) our grantmaking to further transparency, participation, and accountability and (b) the questions we are asking along the way. We are sharing these drafts to solicit your feedback with an aim to become more transparent, adaptive, and effective grantmakers.

In December 2015, we shared our strategy¹ to make government transparency matter. It builds on more than a decade of providing support to organizations that work on a major, worldwide challenge: how to increase opportunities for citizens to understand where their governments get money, how that money is spent, and whether commitments to deliver health care, education, and other public services are being fulfilled. We were motivated to refresh our strategy, in part because governments are now publishing more information about their revenue, budgets, and spending. However, we still haven't seen citizens use much of that information to hold their leaders accountable to improve the quality of government services. In our refreshed strategy, we have shifted focus from making information available to strengthening the ability of citizens to act collectively around service delivery challenges. We aim to learn whether and how disclosure and participation are mutually reinforcing drivers of accountability, improved decision making, and hence better public services.

The refreshed strategy from 2015 is specific enough to outline shifts in emphasis in our grantmaking over the next five years. And it is broad enough to allow for further refinement based on emerging evidence and the expertise of the four program officers who are responsible for implementing it. We are sharing the first three of four substrategies — **fiscal transparency, governance channels, service delivery monitoring** — to identify priority areas of grantmaking and learning that reinforce disclosure and enhance citizen participation. These substrategies are not intended as a blueprint for the field. Rather, they are an attempt to articulate our priorities, assumptions, and questions given the resources and constraints with

¹ <http://www.hewlett.org/making-transparency-matter-an-updated-strategy-to-engage-citizens-in-delivering-better-public-services/>

which we work.

- The **Fiscal Transparency** substrategy developed by Joseph Asunka explores:
 - How can we continue building on the momentum for greater budget transparency in these challenging times?
 - How do we create conditions that make tax collection more efficient and transparent?
 - How do we make government procurement more transparent, fair, and competitive?
- The **Governance Channels** substrategy developed by David Sasaki explores:
 - How do we connect citizens and their governments *in between* elections?
 - Does participatory budgeting live up to the hype?
 - Can paralegals help marginalized groups access their rights to basic services like water, health, and education? Who will pay their salaries?
- The **Service Delivery Monitoring** substrategy developed by Pat Scheid explores:
 - How does community-level monitoring of public services connect to national-level policy reforms?
 - How does gender affect citizen participation? Who wields influence and who benefits in the end?
 - How do we know when social accountability isn't the right approach to improve public service delivery?
- In the coming months, we will share the fourth and final substrategy on **Field Learning** led by Alfonsina Peñaloza, which takes into consideration the learning questions of the three previous substrategies and outlines how we aim to contribute knowledge to the transparency, participation, and accountability field.

The four areas of grantmaking have some complementary overlap. For example, participatory budgeting is a governance channel that depends on budget transparency. Taken together, the four substrategies add up to our larger strategy that was released in December 2015.

HOW WE MAKE GRANTS AND WHAT WE AIM TO LEARN

We are mindful that there is a tension between grantmaking that is (a) flexible enough to enable grantee organizations to quickly adapt to opportunities and challenges as they arise and (b) intentional enough to test theories of change and learn from those efforts. We live that tension every day, because of *how* we do our grantmaking and the priority we place on generating particular types of knowledge for ourselves and the larger field.

The Hewlett Foundation favors flexible support to capable, curious organizations that have a deep understanding of the local context and the best available evidence from around the world.

We assume that grantees are better positioned than we are to decide how they use resources to achieve their goals. Regarding what we aim to learn, these substrategies describe some of the issue areas and learning questions we will address over the next four years. They focus on processes and platforms, which are more replicable across contexts, rather than politics and power dynamics, which are highly localized and relatively unique to each context. We don't discount the importance of power and politics in improving the governance of service delivery. Rather, we believe our grantees are better positioned to understand and to account for the different contexts in the design of their programs and projects.

We will continue to provide flexible support to capable organizations that prioritize learning, adaptation, and working in coalitions with partners. We think our support is most likely to have an impact on service delivery outcomes in emerging democracies with free and fair elections, a decentralized local government system with some level of political competition, an organized civil society, and a free press. We are especially active in West Africa, East Africa, and Mexico. We will not pursue grantmaking in authoritarian or unstable states.

In addition to our long-standing support to proven organizations, we will make new grants to address some of the specific issue areas and learning questions described in each substrategy. Our intent is not to impose particular tactics on grantee organizations, but rather to seek out patterns of learning across their work.

TRYING TO GET BETTER

Those of us who work in private philanthropy and international development like to poke fun at ourselves for the seemingly interminable cycle of strategizing. After a while it all begins to feel like a lot of navel-gazing when in fact our priority is to serve our grantees to do their important work.

So why did we spend nine months developing substrategies after having already spent a year on a larger strategy refresh? At their essence, these substrategies are a public-facing snapshot of an ongoing conversation by which we try to become more sophisticated and responsive grantmakers. Our grantees tell us in the Grantee Perception Report² that they want to hear from us more often, especially regarding the opportunities and challenges we see to advancing the transparency, participation, and accountability field. This is our attempt to share our insights and questions more publicly and to invite your feedback so that we become savvier and better informed. We hope you won't hesitate to share your comments and criticisms; they help us question our assumptions and draw our attention to areas we may inadvertently overlook.

These substrategies offer a level of specificity that enables us to hold ourselves accountable to our aspirations. Over the coming years we will be accompanied by independent evaluators

² <http://www.hewlett.org/grantee-perception-reports/>

from Itad to (a) help us address and evolve the learning questions, (b) question the assumptions embedded in each substrategy, and (c) evaluate the implementation of our strategy and provide us with recommendations to improve our grantmaking. Those three activities will depend on an uncommon level of trust between a funder and its grantees. It will require that grantee organizations take us at our word that we are more interested in their contribution of practical, timely knowledge to the field than checking off some metrics of success. And it will require an ambitious effort by a small team based in California to consume, comprehend, and connect as many actionable insights as possible across our constellation of grantees and fellow funders. We'll try our best and with your feedback and support we hope to constantly get much better.

Fiscal Transparency

By [Joseph Asunka](#)

GOAL

We seek, under this substrategy, to foster an enabling environment for effective implementation of the transparency, participation, and accountability strategy in target countries. Our goal is twofold:

- To promote effective country-level implementation of global and regional norms, standards, and processes, as well as national policies that foster greater government transparency and increase citizen voice in decisions about how public resources are allocated and used.
- To create and reinforce an environment that enhances resource mobilization and integrity in public financial management.³

LINKS TO STRATEGY

The fiscal transparency substrategy contributes to our broader objective to create and reinforce norms and standards that foster greater transparency and public participation. A large and growing number of countries are signatories to potentially impactful global and regional norms and standards on fiscal governance, notably on transparency and public participation — e.g., the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, Open Contracting Data Standard, Addis Tax Initiative, etc. However, there is no clear evidence (yet) on the contribution of these norms to governance and service delivery outcomes.⁴ Experience in some countries and emerging research increasingly attribute this to poor implementation at the country level.⁵ We will therefore aim to support interventions to promote effective implementation of some of the fiscal governance norms and standards at the national and subnational level, including relevant national policies. Focusing on country-level implementation gives us the opportunity to test the theories and underlying assumptions of some of the existing norms and standards on fiscal governance, learn more about those that make a difference and those that do not, adjust our grantmaking decisions accordingly, and document and share some of these lessons with the transparency, participation, and accountability field.

³ The emphasis will be on corporate tax practices — closing loopholes for tax evasion/illicit financial flows and investigative journalism to uncover and deter corrupt practices in public financial management.

⁴ See this 2013 [Development Policy Review](#) article.

⁵ E.g., Ivar and Arne's article in [World Development](#) and [this blog on the OGP process in the Netherlands](#) highlight this point.

Governance channels and service delivery monitoring substrategies

The **governance channels** substrategy aims to support research, innovation, and advocacy to strengthen new and existing channels for citizens and civil society groups to engage with governments to improve public services. The **service delivery monitoring** substrategy also aims to contribute to more equitable and better quality public services by promoting accountability and effective implementation of service delivery policies, and enhancing the quality and accessibility of service delivery information to foster citizen participation. The fiscal transparency substrategy contributes to those substrategies in at least two ways:

- Strengthening country-level implementation of global and regional norms and standards, including relevant national policies that foster greater transparency and public participation would create the enabling environment for effective implementation of both substrategies. Take, for instance the Open Budget Survey: two of the three components of a budget accountability system assessed in its surveys — i.e., public availability of budget information and opportunities for public participation in budget processes — are directly relevant to the two substrategies. Advocacy to improve Open Budget Index scores would facilitate access to relevant budget information for service delivery monitoring; it also creates opportunities for participatory budgeting, one of the tactical approaches under the governance channels substrategy. We will seek to support implementation of norms, standards, and policies that have direct implications for the two substrategies.
- The potential for citizen-government engagement to drive improvements in service delivery outcomes is dependent on the amount of resources at the disposal of governments and how those resources are managed. We will support efforts to create and reinforce an enabling environment for improved resource mobilization — e.g., closing tax loopholes and preventing illicit financial flows — and strengthen the integrity of public financial management, for example, through civil society advocacy and oversight and investigative journalism to uncover and deter corrupt practices.

GRANTMAKING FOCAL AREAS

The last decade has witnessed a significant rise in global and regional initiatives aimed at improving the quality of governance and public service delivery. The expectation is that these initiatives, if adopted and implemented well, would create necessary conditions for improved fiscal governance and hence the quality and delivery of public services. However, research on the contribution of some of these interventions to governance and service delivery outcomes

at the country level is inconclusive.⁶ What seems to be emerging from experience and new research is that the quality of implementation at the country level is important.⁷

Our focus on country-level implementation is motivated in part by this emerging trend and we view this largely as a learning endeavor. We will support activities and interventions by civil society groups that seek to improve the quality of implementation of governments' commitments to global and regional norms and standards, as well as related national policies on fiscal governance. Specific areas of grantmaking will include these elements:

- **Budget transparency:** We will support existing and new efforts to operationalize fiscal governance norms and standards such as the requirements to make budget information available and accessible to citizens in a timely manner, ensure public participation in budget processes, provide feedback on budget implementation to citizens, ensure that all public financial transactions have a basis in law, etc. We will also support organizations that leverage national policies, notably public financial management and procurement laws to promote accountability in fiscal governance.
- **Extractives transparency:** The Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) standard has evolved considerably over time, with increasing focus on public participation. The standard now requires governments to ensure that there is an enabling environment for civil society participation. We will support organizations that seek to enhance quality implementation of the EITI standard as well as those that leverage this standard to push for increased space for civic engagement. We will also support research to better understand the contribution of global and regional norms and standards such as the EITI to fiscal governance and service delivery outcomes within countries.
- **Aid transparency:** We will continue to support efforts to promote aid transparency, but with increasing attention to in-country use of aid data. We will support initiatives that seek to enhance the use of aid data by governments for planning and by civil society organizations to hold governments accountable. We will also support projects that seek to track the impact of declining foreign aid on aid-dependent countries, including sector-specific impacts. Finally, we will support efforts to promote greater transparency of non-DAC⁸ aid providers, notably the BRICS — Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

We will also support global, regional, and national initiatives aimed at deepening open and accountable fiscal management and fostering an enabling environment for improved revenue mobilization and retention. This will include advocacy and other interventions to reduce or stop outflows of revenues from developing countries, promote fair international tax systems responsible private sector practices, and build the capacities of researchers and journalists to

⁶ On the impact of the EITI for instance, see [Savacool and Andrews, 2015](#); [David-Barrett and Okamura, 2013](#); [Corrigan, 2013](#).

⁷ E.g., Ivar and Arne's article in [World Development](#), and [this blog on the OGP process in the Netherlands](#) highlight this point.

⁸ Countries not belonging to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the of the OECD.

investigate, document, and report on illicit financial flows and other corrupt practices in public financial management. Grantmaking will include these specific areas:

- **Open public contracting:** Public procurement accounts for a significant share in the GDP of most countries, reaching a high of about 33 percent in some low-income countries.⁹ We will support advocacy and other interventions by civil society groups to promote open contracting across all levels of government. In addition to increasing government transparency in fiscal management, open public contracting could minimize resource leakage that is characteristic of opaque public contracting.
- **Beneficial ownership transparency:** The Panama Papers saga has revealed how anonymous companies facilitate tax evasion and the looting of public resources by officials. We will support advocacy and related efforts to promote effective implementation of existing initiatives such as beneficial ownership registers and other new initiatives designed to address the issue of anonymous companies.
- **Country-by-country (CbC) reporting:** Base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) is another loophole that facilitates the outflow of government revenues from developing countries. By requiring multinational companies to file annual reports on all payments in each tax jurisdiction, CbC reporting should help to mitigate high-level transfer pricing and other BEPS-related risks. We will therefore support organizations that seek to promote, reinforce, and track implementation of the requirements under CbC reporting.
- **Addis Tax Initiative (ATI):** About 45 countries and organizations subscribed to the Addis Tax Initiative in 2015, declaring their commitment to “enhance the mobilization and effective use of domestic revenues and to improve the fairness, transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness of their tax systems.”¹⁰ We will support organizations that seek to facilitate in-country implementation of the ATI and to hold all signatories accountable for their commitments.

WHAT WE WILL NOT SUPPORT

We are keen on experimenting with existing global and regional norms and related advocacy to foster an enabling environment for fiscal transparency, public participation, and enhanced domestic resource mobilization. We will therefore not support the following:

- New global or regional norms and standards on transparency, participation, and resource mobilization.
- Investigative journalism that is not clearly linked to advocacy to address any challenges uncovered.

⁹ See [this report](#) from the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

¹⁰ See the [Addis Tax Initiative](#) website.

- Initiatives that seek to expand the adoption of global or regional norms and standards without sufficient evidence of their impact in implementation countries.

LEARNING

Learning will be an integral part of this substrategy. We seek to deepen our understanding of the contributions of global and regional norms and standards to fiscal governance — transparency, participation, and accountability — and service delivery outcomes. We will also explore the role of taxation as a mechanism for citizen-government engagement. This will include questions around the relationship between budget transparency and citizen participation in fiscal matters and whether and how this varies with context; whether and how government transparency and citizen participation in budget processes impact citizen behavior: e.g., willingness to pay taxes and trust in public institutions; and government behavior: e.g., accountability and responsiveness. Some specific questions include the following:

- To what extent and how do global and regional norms and standards — e.g., EITI and ATI — influence the quality of fiscal governance and service delivery outcomes?
- Under what conditions does public participation in the budget process lead to improved service delivery outcomes — availability, quality, and alignment with citizen priorities?
- Are citizens more likely to pay taxes when government is open and transparent about how public resources are allocated and spent?
- Does budget transparency affect citizen trust in government/public institutions?
- What is the relationship between taxation and government accountability? Are citizens more likely to hold public officials to account when they honor their tax obligations?
- What are some of the (unintended) consequences of taxation as a tool for redistribution?

We will also leverage the learning portfolio and the ongoing strategy evaluation to answer broader questions around corporate taxation, tax evasion, and illicit financial flows, among others. As the implementation proceeds, we will continue to adapt this learning agenda to reflect what matters most for our grantmaking and for our grantee engagements/interventions.

WHAT WILL ALL THIS LOOK LIKE IN FIVE YEARS?

In the next four to five years, we expect to see progress in important dimensions of fiscal transparency and public participation in target countries, including at the subnational level. Among others, we expect to see progress in the following areas in target countries:

- Increased adoption of institutions and practices that guarantee space for civic engagement and mandate public participation in governance and budget processes.
- National and local governments proactively and consistently publishing budget information in accessible formats to the public.

- Civil society organizations, including our service delivery monitoring and governance channels grantees leveraging a favorable environment to reinforce the quality of citizen-government engagement and delivery of public services.
- Citizens and civil society organizations using budget information to monitor budget implementation and to hold governments accountable for service delivery.
- Robust public discourse in the media and other platforms on budgets and public resource management.
- A significant reduction in revenue losses from corporate tax evasion, illicit financial flows, etc., and improvements in domestic revenue mobilization. Our hope is that by the end of five years, we begin to see signs that domestic revenues are becoming the most important source of government revenues, especially in countries such as Uganda and Tanzania where foreign-financed public expenditures are very high.

Governance Channels

By [David Sasaki](#)

GOAL

We aim to support research, innovation, and advocacy that strengthen the effectiveness and inclusiveness of new and existing channels for citizens, media, and civil society organizations to help improve the delivery of public services.

LINK TO STRATEGY

Our 2016-2021 strategy notes that “norms for increased transparency are being complemented by expectations about greater citizen participation and engagement,” but that “citizens typically have few avenues to communicate directly and effectively with government representatives.” Parliaments represent the voice of constituencies in policymaking while official auditing bodies oversee implementation by government agencies, but few channels beyond the ballot box “exist for affected citizens to act collectively and express their views effectively.” Our fourth strategic goal is to “build and strengthen channels that provide citizens constructive ways to engage with all levels of government.”

PRIORITY AREAS OF GRANTMAKING AND LEARNING

We aim to strengthen governance channels that enable both “frontline service accountability” and “political accountability.”¹¹ Frontline service accountability tactics enable “regular citizens” to demand increased responsiveness from the service providers and institutions they interface with directly: school directors, administrators, doctors and nurses at hospitals, and even the meter reader of the local utility. While there is some evidence that significant gains can be made through greater compliance in the local provision of services¹², they are frequently constrained by resources and political will. A newly elected politician may promise to improve health care or expand access to clean water, but such promises are seldom fulfilled without the oversight of media and watchdog organizations. We will explore grantmaking in governance channels that address both frontline service accountability and political accountability, and in the best of cases, are able to bring the two together.¹³

¹¹ This distinction is similar to the “short route” and “long route” to accountability described in the World Development Report 2004, “Making Services Work for Poor People.” We recognize that frontline service accountability and political accountability are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing.

¹² See “Power to the People: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment on Community-Based Monitoring in Uganda” by Martina Björkman and Jakob Svensson and “Dictator games in the lab and in nature: External validity tested and investigated in Ugandan primary schools” by Andrew Zeitlin and Abigail Barr.

¹³ For example, the media and advocacy groups can play a role in comparing what governments commit to at international fora with what citizens report on the ground. There may be an opportunity to generate synergies

There is increasing consensus among researchers and theorists that new governance channels are most effective at bringing about improved service delivery where there is political will among public officials and an active, coordinated civil society.¹⁴ Therefore, we will be seeking to support organizations that operate in reasonably favorable environments

We will support organizations that clearly frame their goals while prioritizing learning and adaptation in their implementation. Prospective grantees should be aware of existing research relevant to their work and will have a track record of executing their vision. Organizations that work in national or subnational contexts should have a savvy understanding of sociopolitical context, and will have a record of elevating the lessons they have learned to inform international discussions. International organizations should have partnerships with local actors built on experience, trust, shared incentives, and aligned strategic goals.

FRONTLINE SERVICE ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Participatory budgeting:** Twenty-seven years after participatory budgeting began in Porto Alegre, Brazil, it has spread to countries around the world, including Senegal, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, and Kenya. While participatory budgeting has a mixed record of shifting resource allocation and improving service delivery¹⁵, most studies have found that participatory budgeting initiatives lead to an increase in civic participation and availability of revenue and budgetary information. We shouldn't expect our relatively modest resources to transform a process that was established nearly three decades ago, but there may be opportunities to support research, innovation, and iteration that advances the impact of participatory budgeting — for example, by testing attempts to attract more diverse participation and by using technology to establish ongoing feedback loops that enable participants to effortlessly track the implementation of projects they voted for.
- **Paralegal support:** A global network of over 1,000 affiliate organizations¹⁶ is working to build a movement of paralegals who assist individuals and communities in using the legal system to demand their legislated rights to services such as water, education, and health. (Think “front line health care workers for the legal system.”) By identifying common obstacles experienced by citizens to access quality services, paralegals can help shape an advocacy agenda to bring about changes to improve service delivery.¹⁷

between citizen action, independent media, and more autonomous public oversight institutions like audit bureaus and evaluation agencies.

¹⁴ See *Participatory Governance Reform: A Good Strategy for Increasing Government Responsiveness and Improving Public Services?* by Johanna Speer; *Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement* by Gaventa & Barrett; and *Social Accountability: What Does the Evidence Say* by Jonathan Fox.

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_budgeting#Outcomes

¹⁶ <https://namati.org/network/meet-the-network/>

¹⁷ See “[What Do We Know About Legal Empowerment](#)” by Laura Goodwin and Vivek Maru of Namati.

- **Citizen complaint platforms:** Complaint platforms offer citizens an opportunity to seek redress to individual problems with their public services. They offer service providers and regulators citizen input on how to improve their performance. And they offer journalists and advocacy organizations access to data that could reveal patterns of blockages to access services. There is an opportunity to support research¹⁸ and innovation that tests how complaint platforms can attract more diverse participation by citizens and responsiveness by public officials.

POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Journalism:** Public interest journalism has a legacy of amplifying the voices of citizens in political debate while monitoring the promises of politicians and holding the powerful to account. We will explore how a rapidly evolving media landscape could amplify underrepresented citizen voice, track the implementation of policy commitments related to service delivery, and investigate public financial management. We will explore innovations in digital media as well as accountability efforts through community radio.
- **Access to information laws and open data portals related to public services:** This is the governance channel that we have supported the most so far, and we can point to some success stories¹⁹. We will continue modest support of this channel through platforms that encourage greater use of access to information laws,²⁰ and open data indexes²¹ that work with local partners to incorporate data into their monitoring and advocacy campaigns.
- **Co-creation:** A number of platforms²² and “invited spaces” have launched over the past decade that bring together government reformers with civil society organizations to develop shared plans for improved public administration and service delivery. Additionally, some governments have explored innovation fellowship programs²³ that bring representatives of civil society into government to develop an innovative new service within the government structure. We will continue to support and learn from platforms that aim to advance innovation and accountability through co-creation between government and civil society.

¹⁸ Building on research by Peixoto and Fox earlier this year, mySociety’s user testing of [FixMyStreet](#), and IDB’s “[Can 311 Call Centers Improve Service Delivery?](#)”

¹⁹ See Article 19’s [use](#) of Mexico’s access to information law to hold health care providers to account in rural Chiapas.

²⁰ See mySociety’s [partnership](#) with InfoLib in Liberia to design an access to information service based on Liberia’s constitutional reform.

²¹ Open Knowledge’s [Global Open Data Index](#) will merge with the Web Foundation’s [Open Data Barometer](#) in 2018.

²² Including the Open Government Partnership, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, the Sustainable Development Goals, and What Works Cities.

²³ See Reboot’s guide to “[implementing innovation](#)” based on one such fellowship program in Mexico.

There is a spectrum of involvement of “regular citizens” in the above channels. Participatory budgeting and paralegals explicitly target non-elite citizens. Citizen complaint platforms, while dependent on internet access and basic tech literacy, increasingly aim to reach underrepresented users. On the other hand, the use of media, technology, access to information laws, and open data portals is more limited to civil society organizations and activists. On the far end of the spectrum, the Open Government Partnership is a platform to make commitments that establish new governance channels or strengthen existing channels, but it does not attract the participation of “regular citizens” who aren’t already involved in civil society.

Our priority areas of learning focus on how we can support the strengthening of relatively new channels that enable citizen voice to influence governance beyond the ballot box. We are also mindful of the worrying trend of factors that inhibit citizen participation, including censorship, surveillance, violence against journalists, and the persecution of activists and civil society organizations. We will work with partner funders to support their efforts to defend “civic space.”²⁴

We also recognize that the social contract between governments and citizens is less clear and more fragile for refugees and “stateless persons” without citizenship. While this is an issue we are not well positioned to take on directly, we will continue to follow the work of Namati and other grantees that secure citizenship rights through advocacy and accountability.²⁵

GOVERNANCE CHANNELS THAT WE WON’T PRIORITIZE

We will not prioritize new grants to organizations that focus solely on the following activities, even though we recognize that they are important components to the larger accountability ecosystem and our grantees may decide to engage in these areas to further their strategic goals. Again, our funding aims to support strong organizations rather than particular tactics.

- **Social movements:** We are not well positioned to respond to the quickness and agility with which social movements, which are crucial to social change, usually take shape — often in response to key events.
- **Social audits:** With a few exceptions, social audits are divorced from mandated responsiveness by relevant government authorities and are difficult to sustain once funding has dried up.

²⁴ See [Why the Space for Civic Engagement Is Shrinking](#) by Chris Stone of Open Society Foundations.

²⁵ See <https://namati.org/ourwork/citizenship/>.

- **Citizen surveys:** Another crucial source of information to amplify the voices of constituents and shape an advocacy agenda, the citizen survey area is already well funded and quickly evolving with the adoption of social media.
- **Civic tech without government buy-in:** This can lead to participation fatigue and disillusionment with democracy when governments don't respond.

LEARNING QUESTIONS

Existing research addresses each of the following questions and subquestions. With the help of consultants and our grantees, we aim to support work that builds on what is already known. Over the next four years we will address the first two learning questions, though ultimately we are working toward the third — how to improve services and development outcomes. We intend to update this document each year with new research that contributes additional insight to the questions below.

Which governance channels and tactics most effectively encourage citizen participation in identifying and improving service delivery challenges?

- Are citizens sufficiently aware of the service delivery responsibilities of their government? Does greater awareness motivate greater participation?
- Which platforms connect individual grievances, such as a lack of medicine at a public hospital, with collective action, such as an advocacy campaign demanding better oversight of medical supplies?
- Which factors motivate or inhibit participation by underrepresented citizens, including women, ethnic and religious minorities, the poor, and rural residents?
- How does closing civic space and fear of reprisal affect citizen participation?

Which governance channels and tactics most effectively elicit responsiveness from public officials?

- When and why do public officials and service providers respond to citizen grievances?
- When are confrontational versus collaborative approaches more successful at eliciting government action to address service delivery challenges?
- To what degree and how do promising tactical approaches elicit responsiveness within specific national contexts? How and why does the deployment of similar sets of tactics lead to different outcomes in different contexts? How do initiatives spread from one district to many, or from one sector to another?

When public officials respond to citizen grievances, does service quality improve as a result?

- Who benefits the most from increased access to services?

- Are there any observable development outcomes as a result, such as improved health or learning outcomes?

ASSUMPTIONS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We will support innovation, research, and advocacy of governance channels that build on what has already been funded and researched. We will contribute to the research agenda on governance channels.
- We recognize the limits to the replicability of effective governance channels in differing political, historical, and sociocultural contexts.²⁶ What works in, say, a parliamentary system with a diverse media market may not work in a presidential system with a media monopoly. We will prioritize governance channels that are relatively adaptable to multiple contexts so as to contribute toward an enabling environment that facilitates citizen participation and the oversight of service delivery.
- We will start by focusing on governance channels that facilitate greater, more effective communication between citizens and their *local* governments, since it is local government that typically oversees service delivery and is best positioned to respond to citizen grievances. However, substantive change to service delivery by local governments is constrained by their relative lack of resources and legislative influence. We aim to support channels with local governments that also have the potential for national-level awareness and coalition building around common grievances.
- We recognize that most governance channels have not attracted representative participation from women, ethnic minorities, the poor, and rural residents. As such, there is a risk that our support of governance channels could strengthen the political voice of the already-empowered at the expense of those who are not. We will support work on governance channels that is intentionally inclusive and prioritizes the participation of citizens who are underrepresented in political discourse and government oversight.
- We will prioritize organizations and initiatives that are designed with the input of intended users. We will refrain from funding channels and platforms that assume “if you build it, they will come.”
- We recognize that addressing individual grievances is not enough for transformative change of public service delivery. Strengthening governance channels must go hand-in-hand with coalition building, advocacy campaigns, and strategic partnering with government auditing institutions.

²⁶ Francis Fukuyama’s “Political Order and Political Decay” (summarized [here](#) by Duncan Green) emphasizes the importance of minding the context of each country’s unique journey of political development and not succumbing to standardized approaches to measure or improve governance.

WHAT WILL THIS ALL LOOK LIKE IN FIVE YEARS?

Imagine you live in Nakuru, Kenya, where you work as a hairdresser to support yourself and your three children. You listen to the news on the radio every morning and at least one conversation with a client about politics comes up daily. Your three children go to public school, and at least once a year you're asked to pay school "fees." Lately, the teachers only show up around 75 percent of the time. You're considering putting your eldest in private school. A new public hospital was built last year, but it still takes just as long to be seen by a doctor or nurse. And your access to water is cut off at least once a week. You've heard that local factories are using more than their allotted water quotas.

You vote in most elections, but it's hard to judge candidates based on what they say they'll do rather than what they've actually done. Now, imagine that you have four other ways to express your opinions and grievances to the government: Once a year you could participate in a day-long audit of the performance of local officials. Every two years you could help decide what gets funded via participatory budgeting. When your water isn't working, you can report it via text message and demand a response to get alerted when it will be restored. And, if for some reason it isn't restored, you then have access to a paralegal who can help guide you and your neighbors to take legal action to secure your constitutionally guaranteed right to water.

Will you use all of these channels? Probably not. But together they contribute toward an enabling environment in which you have more options to demand better services in your life should you want to. And they will help connect you to fellow citizens who are suffering from the same issues.

It will almost certainly take more than five years for the residents of Nakuru to have access to all four channels. Alternatively, perhaps only one of the four channels will truly take off through an iterative process of adoption and adaptation. Either way, we can contribute toward research, innovation, and advocacy so that reformers entering government who want to strengthen citizen participation and improve service delivery are better informed about how to implement effective, inclusive governance channels.

Service Delivery Monitoring

By [Pat Scheid](#)

GOAL

The goal of the Hewlett Foundation's service delivery monitoring substrategy is to contribute to more equitable and better quality services in health, education, water, and sanitation, especially for women, girls, and other marginalized groups. The intent is to produce these intermediate outcomes:

- Governments (national and local) and service providers do a better job of implementing service delivery policies and system reforms. This means making clear what governments' responsibilities are, committing budget and other needed resources, and ensuring those resources reach communities in a way that is responsive to citizen feedback, demands, and needs and that is gender-sensitive.
- Inclusive citizen groups gain confidence in their ability to understand and use information and implement advocacy strategies to affect positive change in the services they receive.
- Citizens' trust and confidence in governments' ability to deliver on their promises increases, especially among those citizens who have been traditionally marginalized or encountered barriers to full participation.

LINK TO STRATEGY

This substrategy focuses on where citizens most frequently expect to receive benefits from their governments: the provision of essential public services. Under this substrategy we will support programs that offer inclusive opportunities to demonstrate and learn more about how to increase the motivation and ability of citizens to work together to hold their governments (both national and local) and service providers accountable for the delivery of quality public services. The programs can take many forms, but are commonly referred to as "social accountability."

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Context and the politics of service delivery matter. In recent research, Fox and Aceron (2016) suggest that social accountability interventions will be more likely to succeed where practitioners are equipped to analyze and effectively navigate their local context — the politics, administrative structures, regulations, oversight bodies (or absence thereof), and stakeholder

groups associated with service delivery. One or more of these factors may also differ across public service sectors within a country.

In countries where implementation of decentralization or devolution of public service delivery are still in an early stage, local governments may be hampered by lack of authority, capacity, or budgetary resources to affect change (World Bank, 2017). In their systematic review of community accountability initiatives in the education sector, Westhorp et al. (2016) note that it is important to understand the state of play, but that democratic or political decentralization where adequate power, authority, resources, and accountability is devolved to local governments is the most conducive to successful community accountability.

Some local contexts may appear “open,” but in fact still prove challenging. Government policies that support transparency and expansion of citizen participation may be in place, but not yet aligned with ways for citizens to engage with their government. Important factors include whether there is sufficient space for civil society organizations to play a role beyond direct service provision, whether citizens have trust in their governments or the confidence that their own actions can effect positive change (citizen agency), and whether there are capable NGOs and local grassroots organizations, associations, or a culture of collective citizen action that can be harnessed.

Constructive engagement can take many forms, and may change over time. Given a range of contexts, different tactics are required. Constructive engagement exists on a continuum that includes a range of adversarial and cooperative tactics. These may be adapted over time depending on the types of information, advocacy, and citizen collective action that ultimately incentivize governments and service providers to respond positively.

Citizens need information that is meaningful, actionable, and that creates a response.

The salience of different types of information is not only conditioned by the context. The type of information matters, as does the support that local stakeholders receive to take action that matters. In their recent research, Björkman Nyqvist et al. (2017) find that community-based monitoring in the health sector in Uganda did produce significant long-term impacts on health outcomes when comparative information about health facility performance was provided, and when health providers and community groups agreed on and followed through on actions (or where needed, sanctions) that were both within their local control and could affect service quality. Gullo et al. (2016) and Westhorp et al. (2016) likewise find that community-based monitoring shows promise where local stakeholders (service providers and community groups) are able to exercise sufficient agency and focus on those actions that are most likely to affect health and education service quality and outcomes.

Boydell and Keesbury (2014) identified the following enabling factors for social accountability to lead to improvements in service delivery:

Enabling Factors

Citizens have access to relevant information.	Citizens know their entitlements, have the ability to access information about specific commitments and services as well as information about the relevant decision-making processes.
Citizens have the capacity to use information.	Once citizens have accessed the pertinent information they have the capacity to use information to support their demands.
The state has the capacity to respond to citizens' requests.	Once citizens' demands are made, duty bearers have the interest and capacity (staff, resources, and remittance) to respond to citizens' requests.
Incentives and sanctions are in place to compel decision makers to respond.	Formal and institutionalized incentives and sanctions that compel duty bearers to act upon requests from citizens are in place.

Power and participation asymmetries often exclude the most marginalized groups. The World Bank (2017) observed that participatory processes in service delivery governance are easily subject to elite capture. The most marginalized citizens are often the least able to participate in a meaningful way due to such factors as opportunity/time costs as well as social and political norms. Facilitated and structured processes for ensuring equitable participation or other mechanisms that level the playing field and lower these barriers are thus needed if social accountability is to achieve its promise.

PRIORITY AREAS OF GRANTMAKING

We envision these specific areas of grantmaking under our service delivery monitoring substrategy:

- Supporting the work of **exemplar organizations** that use social accountability approaches in a way that will contribute to the Hewlett Foundation's goal and intermediate outcomes (see page 1).
- Supporting **empirical research**, impact evaluations, convenings, and peer learning that will generate and share evidence to better understand whether and how these interventions work, their contribution to improve development outcomes, and the extent to which these approaches can be scaled and sustained over time.
- Creating opportunities to close the knowledge gap and better **connect activists, advocates, and sector-focused practitioners** of social accountability to the transparency, participation, and accountability field to cultivate more practice-based learning.

As noted, most social accountability tactics depend on citizens using information about government commitments, spending, and/or service delivery quality to press their case. This information may come from official sources, or be externally generated. To advance and sustain citizen engagement, information must be what users need and care about and must come in a form they can digest and act on in ways that are likely to make a real difference — concerns that will inform our future grants.

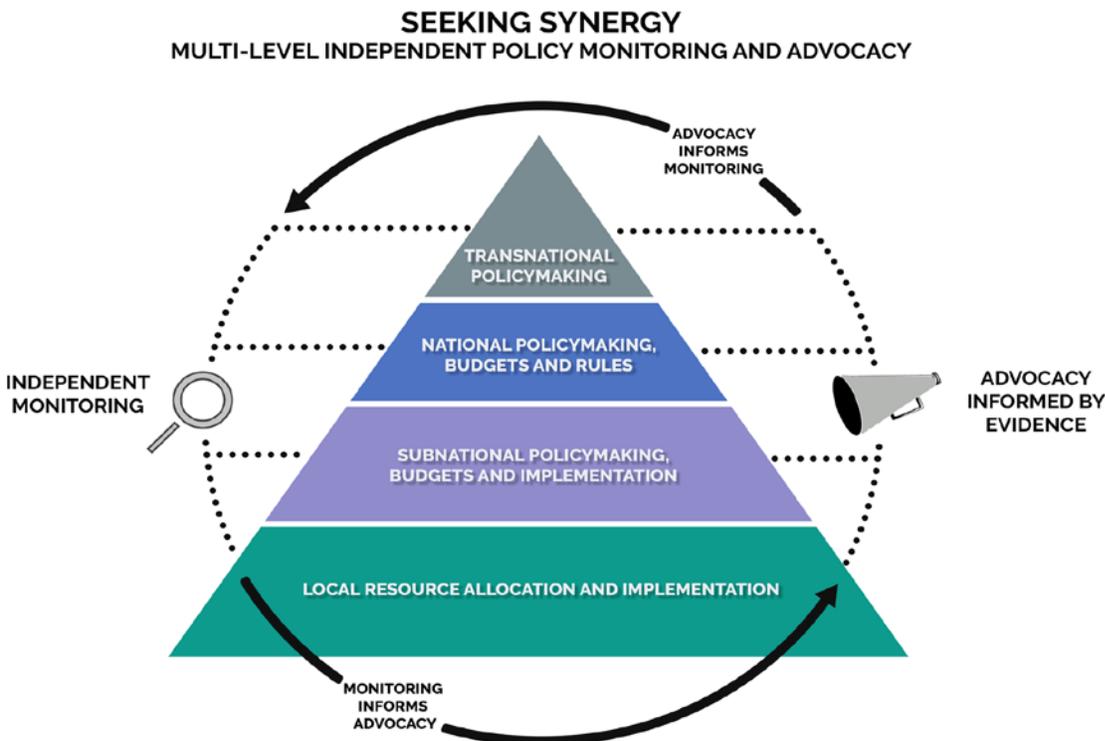
Some of the types of information that we think will be important include the following:

- Information about citizens' rights and the government's responsibilities and commitments in relation to public services provision and reforms; this could also include country-level commitments in response to global agreements (for example, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals related to education, health, water, and sanitation, and the United Nations Foundation's Family Planning 2020).
- Information about service delivery quality standards, service delivery inputs (budgets and expenditures or timely delivery of critical inputs and supplies), facility-level performance indicators, or progress in improving development outcomes (measures of children's learning, women's use of contraceptives, maternal and child health, safe water, etc.).
- Citizen feedback about their satisfaction with service provider performance in specific areas of concern, or on their experiences at health facilities, schools, or other points of service delivery.
- Information about corruption or corrupt practices that affect citizens' access to quality services.
- Information about the amount that people are taxed and what they are receiving (or not) in terms of service delivery in return.

Achieving and then translating accountability gains from the subnational level to the national level is often elusive. Therefore, our future grantmaking will also place more attention on a challenging frontier: finding ways for civil society organizations and citizen groups to engage in strategic advocacy or collective action that builds and sustains accountability at the national level.

Given the significant experimentation that has already taken place in social accountability interventions, and the foundation's limited resources, our grantmaking in service delivery monitoring will be directed toward organizations that have a well-articulated hypothesis about how their program will lead to changes in citizens' sense of agency and ability to take collective action, government or service provider responsiveness, and more equitable and better quality service delivery. Organizations must also demonstrate a commitment to learning through evaluation, and connecting and sharing with other practitioners, researchers, and donors.

We will strongly prefer programs that can help reveal, and importantly contribute to, closing the gaps between the promises that donors and national governments make and the service delivery realities that people experience in their communities. Thus, we anticipate that many of our service delivery monitoring grantees will also use the results from social accountability interventions as evidence to strengthen and “give teeth” to advocacy campaigns and policy dialogue, as illustrated below (Source: Jonathan Fox and Waad Tammaa in Fox and Halloran (2016), p.6).



Finally, we will strongly prefer organizations that can articulate a vision about how their intervention will lead to normalization, broader uptake, and sustained transparency, as well as more inclusive citizen participation and accountability mechanisms within a country or region. Fox and Aceron (2016) describe this as “taking scale into account,” referring to “how different levels of decision-making interact with each other (from the local level to district, provincial, national and transnational arenas) – both for the public sector and for civil society.”(p. 3)

WHO WILL WE SUPPORT?

The field of social accountability has grown over the past decade. More international and national-level nongovernmental organizations have begun to experiment with social accountability approaches that enable citizens to better understand their rights, have a voice in determining local development priorities, and exercise oversight over public service delivery. Some of these organizations identify themselves as practitioners in the “transparency, participation, and accountability” field. Others identify themselves as human rights

organizations or development organizations that have adopted a rights-based approach. Still others are sector-specific development organizations that focus on ensuring effective service delivery through system-strengthening work or advocacy, and recognize that citizen engagement is part of a long-term effort for sustained progress. The Hewlett Foundation is interested in what can be learned from a range of effective organizations that apply social accountability approaches in education, health, water, and sanitation.

The most successful service delivery monitoring grantees/organizations will be those that have the knowledge and ability to do the following:

- Deeply understand the context in which they work and have a commitment over the long haul.
- Build capacity of *organized and inclusive citizen groups* to interpret and use information, especially member-based organizations.
- Facilitate citizen *collective action* to use this information to make demands and/or co-create solutions with service providers and governments.
- Leverage existing or creating new *channels or platforms for citizen feedback, constructive engagement, or redress actions* with service providers or governments.
- Link these efforts to *well-structured, evidence-based advocacy campaigns*.

We hypothesize that these grantees/organizations will be more likely to achieve positive changes in citizen agency, government responsiveness, and service delivery improvements. Positive changes in government responsiveness may in reality exist along a continuum that could range from listening to citizen feedback and taking it into consideration during priority setting, resource allocation, and policy implementation, as well as planning more robust feedback loops and joint problem-solving.

We hypothesize that “constructive engagement” also exists on a continuum from more adversarial to more cooperative interactions with government, and could change over time. Similarly, different stakeholders within government or other influential actors may react differently to different types of information. Organizations should choose and continue to adapt their use of information, different forms of engagement (adversarial or cooperative), and advocacy strategies based on their analysis of the local context and their continuous learning about what gets governments and service providers to respond, implement, and sustain positive changes.

By *organized and inclusive citizen groups*²⁷ we mean local groups with the following conditions:

- Groups that are already constituted/formed and have a history of working together (and which may be informal such as membership organizations, neighborhood associations, local activists groups, etc.).

²⁷ The Hewlett Foundation is not able to make grants to local citizen groups.

- Groups that have a direct stake in the problem and are thus motivated to engage in a sustained way in its resolution with intermediaries and government actors.

In summary, the foundation will consider the following selection criteria in our service delivery monitoring grantmaking among international, regional, or national-level NGOs:

- Strong relationships with *organized and inclusive citizens' organizations* already in place, and that are perceived as legitimate by them.
- A track record and a commitment to sustaining their work with these groups over time.
- Constructive and multifaceted relationships with relevant government entities (at the national or local level or both, depending on the theory of change).
- Some experience using and/or knowledge of existing governance channels.
- The capacity to analyze and understand the politics of service delivery and barriers that need to be overcome in relation to gender and inclusion.
- A demonstrable interest in learning, adapting, and sharing what they do and how they do it.
- A connection to global transparency, participation, and accountability networks and platforms.

We also expect grantees to be curious about and have some ideas about how they will test their assumptions and adapt their theory of change over time. We will look for ways to provide additional support (through Organizational Effectiveness grants, peer learning exchanges, and other technical support) to grantees who need help figuring out how to test their assumptions, learn, and adapt.

WHAT WE ARE NOT FUNDING

We do not intend to fund the following:

- Thematic, stand-alone global or national advocacy or media campaigns that are neither evidence-based nor connected with social accountability or service delivery monitoring efforts.
- Pilot or micro-level social accountability programs, unless they offer exceptional opportunities for answering some of our priority learning questions (see Section 7) and ideas for how they will do so.
- Programs outside of the Hewlett Foundation's focus regions or sectors.²⁸

²⁸ Our focus regions are: West Africa, East Africa, and Mexico; our priority sectors are education, health, water, and sanitation.

LEARNING QUESTIONS

As the foundation implements this substrategy, we will be seeking to answer learning questions related to our theory of change, operational and contextual factors, and related assumptions. Following are the priority areas for learning.

Theory of Change — Connection between outcomes and intermediate/ultimate outcomes:

- **To what extent does service delivery monitoring lead or contribute to improved health, education, water, and sanitation outcomes for citizens?** Are there differences in the outcome improvements across sectors? By gender or among certain marginalized groups?
- **Closing the gap between local and national efforts.** What is required to close the gap between subnational or local social accountability efforts to improve service delivery, and national-level implementation of service delivery commitments and reforms?

We will seek to test these related assumptions:

- Well organized and strategic advocacy campaigns that use evidence and build upon subnational service delivery monitoring programs will create sufficient pressure for national-level service delivery reforms.
- NGOs/CSOs are able to coordinate and act collectively on national level advocacy campaigns.

Theory of Change — Outcome-level:

- How can a range of types of information across multiple sectors be made more accessible and relevant to citizens?
- What ways of presenting information are most likely to encourage citizen action?
- How can this information be used to catalyze local action among organized civic groups, local officials, and other community leaders? Are there differences in the types of information that are most important/motivate certain types of civic groups or people (especially women, youth, other marginalized groups)?
- What can be coupled with this information to increase the likelihood that action is taken? Are there differences in the types/composition of groups or people that take action?

We will seek to test these related assumptions:

- Local CSOs have capacities and resources to generate reliable accurate and accessible information; citizens can understand and are motivated to use information; government accepts information is reliable and accurate.

- Government and/or service providers have the incentive to listen to citizens requests; government has authority, capacity, and incentive to make changes to improve service delivery.
- Government and/or service providers respond positively and deliver improved and equitable services that meet citizens' needs.
- With ability, motivation, and the right conditions (e.g., supportive environment, sufficient time and resources, strategies and practices to overcome gender barriers), citizens will join together to express their interests and take action.
- Government will listen and respond to citizens who speak and act collectively and this will produce a sustained engagement between citizens and government.

Theory of Change — Outcome Level:

- Which citizen-government interfaces are most effective, and why (and how) do gender barriers affect citizen participation, and, if so, how can they be overcome?

We will seek to test these related assumptions:

- Channels for constructive citizen engagement with government can be identified, constructed, and learned; making use of information can be an important part of citizens' constructive engagement.
- Government will listen and respond to citizens who constructively engage with them under the right conditions and these conditions can be identified/learned.

Operational and contextual questions:

- What are the most effective means to support subnational civic groups such as teachers' and parents' associations, youth groups, women's organizations, school management committees, health committees, etc.? How can such groups avoid being captured by elites and how are these groups engaging (or not) in useful ways with national-level civil society organizations?
- What are the synergies between service delivery monitoring and governance channels work, and how do we facilitate those connections?
- How do we know when political economy contexts suggest that efforts to encourage accountability should be abandoned?

We will seek to test these related assumptions:

- Grantees/CSOs can build partnerships (trust and respect) with citizens, citizen groups, and other CSOs; can avoid being captured by elites; and not compete with each other for resources.
- Grantees are capable of developing tactics in relation to analysis of context (political/economy/cultural); monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness; and learning and adapting their tactics accordingly over time to increase the chance of success.

WHAT WILL ALL THIS LOOK LIKE IN FIVE YEARS?

In five years, we hope to have seeded multiple service delivery monitoring/social accountability interventions that have demonstrably increased government responsiveness to citizens' demands and needs for improved service delivery. Through this work, we hope that the evidence base around social accountability is much stronger and more nuanced. We also hope to better understand gender barriers and which approaches are more successful at overcoming these, and whether there are differences in the results that can be achieved across different types of services (education, health, water, and sanitation).

Within the next five years, we expect that many of our grantees will have achieved the following intermediate outcomes:

- Sustained participation of a variety of citizens in solving service delivery problems, and increased citizen agency and trust in their government.
- Increased government and service provider responsiveness to citizen feedback and demands.
- A better track record of performance by governments in delivering on their promises (relevant Sustainable Development Goals and other commitments for improving service delivery and people's social outcomes).
- We also expect that through these experiences and our encouragement and support for our grantees' learning, we will have contributed evidence and knowledge related to the priority learning questions identified in this substrategy. Finally, we expect our grantmaking portfolio to have evolved in the following ways:
 - We have a better understanding of the role of gender in service delivery monitoring initiatives.
 - We have a cohort of grantees in the health, education, water, and sanitation sectors who are both testing service delivery monitoring interventions and approaches for moving from local to national-level reforms and accountability, as well as sharing what they are learning with others.
 - We have examples of effective collaboration between organizations (CSOs/NGOs and civic groups, advocacy organizations, researchers, etc.) working toward transparency, participation, and accountability goals.
 - We have connected those doing social accountability and budget/fiscal openness work in specific sectors to transparency, participation, and accountability field learning platforms and networks resulting in expanded field learning.

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