



Global Partnership for Social Accountability

2018 Global Partners Forum

Money Matters: Public Finance & Social Accountability for Human Capital

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If *money can't buy happiness*, as they say, it still *makes the world go round*. Money, the universal medium of exchange and store of value, is as central to development, governance, and social accountability as it is to any other field. Thirty years after the introduction of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, the GPSA takes stock of the role of social accountability in public finance. Money matters in the public sector, with particular emphasis on human capital, is the theme of the **2018 GPSA Global Partners Forum**.

Citizen-driven efforts can contribute to marshal investment in people for growth. The World Bank is leading efforts to step up government investments in human capital, or the sum of a population's health, skills, knowledge, experience, and habits. According to [World Bank President Jim Yong Kim](#), "Neglecting investments in human capital can dramatically weaken a country's competitiveness in a rapidly changing world, one in which economies need ever-increasing amounts of talent to sustain growth".

Money is, by definition, a finite and scarce resource, and more so in the field of development. Scrutiny on how governments raise revenue, plan and implement its allocation into public services and goods is a powerful means of improving development effectiveness. Citizens have played a critical role in this field, at times as recognized rights holders, at others as advocates and watchdog. Participatory budgeting, expenditure tracking, citizen participatory audit, anti-corruption campaigning, and other forms of citizen action focus on money as a leverage point to achieve transparency and accountability as a goal in itself or to solve specific governance or development problems such as service delivery bottlenecks. In the experience of the GPSA, citizens, civil society organizations (CSOs) and public authorities can solve these problems within accountability relationships that catalyse meaningful government response. Collaborative social accountability, as understood by the GPSA, encompasses the goals of collaboration, accountability and solving problems that affect the daily lives of the citizens, in vital human capital sectors such as education and health, among others.

GPSA-supported initiatives led by Global Partners show that social accountability plays an important role in fiscal policy design and implementation. In Bangladesh, for example, CARE's long-standing work in the Northwest region to advance an inclusive participation model to strengthen local governance planning and public finance system, resulted in improved pro-poor allocation and tax collection, but also empowered poor and marginalized groups to use formal participative mechanisms. In Ghana, SEND's work in the country's poorest districts, in partnership with other CSOs and the Ministry of Finance, has led to increasing budget allocations to primary healthcare, as well as for goods, services and capital expenditures in education, in addition to over 50% of citizen inputs reflected in the national budget.



Examples like these abound and are growing in numbers but also in their inter-connectedness across the spectrum of the budget-making and fiscal policy cycle. By connecting local and central public resource management through structured processes that combine direct public participation with response mechanisms, social accountability offers a space to advance new public governance models that genuinely put citizens at the center. International development partners, including the GPSA and the World Bank, can and are supporting these processes towards scaling.

Quality of investment in Human Capital is as much about inclusiveness, participation and responsiveness as it is about sound fiscal policy and public financial management. Indeed, a Twaweza study in Education concluded that “a lack of accountability and incentives explains why budget increases have not resulted in improved learning outcomes”. Nonetheless, money can be a formidable proxy indicator of results, comparable across fields, and an unrivalled leverage point for policy focus and scrutiny. It follows that interventions aiming to ensure the proper allocation of money may also more easily measure and quantify their own effectiveness in financial terms. A social accountability intervention that can demonstrate savings by uncovering or preventing corruption, that improves the quality of spending or that increases tax revenue, for example, is more likely to be perceived as a value-for-money investment by development funders allocating their own scarce resources, underscoring the importance of social accountability to development finance. Several initiatives across the globe also demonstrate the potential for technology to transform how citizens monitor public finance. *Follow the money*, goes the saying, to make sure *you get what you paid for*.

Yet the success of these efforts depends on enabling conditions, foremost being recognition of civil society as an independent sphere of citizen voice and action and a legitimate guardian of public finance. Protecting ‘civic space’ is therefore an important goal for advancing collaborative social accountability. It includes right to access to information and the freedoms of assembly, association, as well as expression and media freedoms. Civil society and state capacities are also essential, both technical, such as knowledge of public finance, ability to use diverse tools, mechanisms and strategies for social accountability, and non-technical, including ‘civic capabilities’ and the skills for collaborative problem-solving.

The Global Partners Forum of the GPSA takes place annually at the World Bank Group’s headquarters in Washington, DC and has become the preeminent global summit on social accountability for development. It convenes the GPSA’s vibrant Global Partners Network consisting of practitioners and thought leaders across civil society, governments, academia and business, alongside World Bank professionals. The Forum is actively co-created with the GPSA’s Global Partners, who have indicated public finance as a cross-cutting theme relevant to their diverse interests and aims.

The aim of the Money Matters 2018 GPSA Global Partners Forum is to better equip the GPSA multi-stakeholder partnership to operate in the broad field of public finance, as a resource to improve people’s health, skills, knowledge, experience and habits, or human capital. The Forum will highlight innovations and build shared perspectives, through plenary discussions and break new ground through partner-led sessions, focusing on skill sharing and capacity building, as well as showcasing thought leadership, practices and research in the field. As a field-shaping initiative, the Forum will assess what



has been achieved through social accountability initiatives in public finance, where we fall short on our aspirations, and what opportunities and challenges does the field present, influencing the agenda of governments, donors, civil society groups, and other development partners. The Forum will prominently showcase experiences led by GPSA Global Partners, including the examples of ongoing and recently completed GPSA-supported initiatives. As Benjamin Franklin once noted, *an investment in knowledge pays the best interest.*

Global Partnership for Social Accountability

The World Bank established the Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA) in 2012 to expand opportunities for civil society to work together with governments, using citizen feedback and engagement to improve public governance and development results. The program supports a range of strategies that are problem-driven involving the use of social accountability methods mediated by multi-stakeholder compacts led by civil society groups working in collaboration with governments, and supported by GPSA and World Bank staff. The GPSA is hosted by the World Bank's Governance Global Practice and seeks to advance the World Bank's twin goals of eliminating extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity.

GPSA Global Partners

GPSA Global Partners are a diverse network of more than 300 organizations from civil society, the donor community, private sector and academia that share the GPSA's goal of building the field of social accountability and its evidence base for development. Global Partners collaborate with the GPSA on knowledge exchange and learning, research, and technical assistance. The Global Partners Forum is the primary space for Partner engagement, though Partners are regularly involved in a variety of GPSA Knowledge activities and events.