STRATEGIC SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

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What is *strategic* social accountability?

- **Multi-pronged**: Multiple, coordinated tactics
- **Enabling environments for voice**: To reduce perceived risks of collective action
- **Voice needs teeth to have bite**: To be heard, citizen voice needs governmental reforms that bolster public sector responsiveness
- **Take accountability to scale**: Vertical integration of monitoring & advocacy, plus broad geographic & social inclusion
- **Realistic assessment measures**: Because build accountability involves iterative, contested & therefore uneven processes.
Dimensions of strategic social accountability for tomorrow’s workshops…

- Accountability systems
- Political economy interventions
- Constructive engagement
- Coalition-building
- Citizen trust
- Scaling accountability
ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

- For checks & balances to work - **no one institution is enough**

- **How can SAcc activate & empower accountability institutions**, when they may be weak, non-existent or captured?

- The difference between **weak & captured** accountability institutions matters – both for CSOs & for the WB – *you don’t want to bet on the wrong horse*

- **How can accountability institutions, in turn, motivate citizen voice & action?**

- Public *answerability* can legitimate rights claims, but how do they grow *teeth*?

- The goal of building autonomous & honest public accountability institutions with teeth poses a contradictory challenge – **political elites need to cede power**

- This brings us to the domain of **POLITICAL accountability**
What is political economy? **Interests & incentives**

PE analysis can be a sterile technical exercise – or it can map who the **winners & losers** from SAcc initiatives would be...

This would help to identify both potential **coalition partners** & likely bottlenecks.

The PE challenge is that for potential losers, the **costs of SAcc are very tangible**, whereas for potential winners, the **benefits are hypothetical**.

“What counts” as an intervention? Does it really change incentives - & for whom?

Keep in mind: **accountability is a public good** – so who pays for it?
CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT

- Speaking of PE analysis, what are the interests and incentives that make state-society collaborative problem-solving possible?
- How can CSOs collaborate with gov’t partners while sustaining their autonomy?
- The distinction between ‘constructive’ & ‘adversarial’ approaches poses a false dichotomy.
- A strategic approach to building countervailing power may involve both – collaboration to strengthen pro-reform forces, conflict to weaken vested interests.
- Insider-outsider strategies involve the productive convergence of external pressure with insider reform efforts.
- Sandwich strategies also involve both collaboration & conflict: coordinated pressure from above & below.
- “State-society coalitions for change” may be more precise than “constructive engagement”.
COLLECTIVE ACTION & COALITION BUILDING

- Coalitions are partnerships among distinct actors that \textit{coordinate action} in pursuit of \textit{shared goals}

- PE analysis again: Trust & shared ideals help, but \textit{productive coalitions are grounded in shared interests}

- Building SAcc coalitions involves \textit{finding common ground across difference} (in power, social base, culture, political goals)

- \textbf{Clear terms of engagement}: Who speaks for whom? Can we “agree to disagree?”

- M. Keck: “\textit{Coalitions are networks in action mode}”

- Networks often need \textit{shared targets} to become coalitions –
CITIZENS’ TRUST

- Governments that seek **legitimacy** expect citizens’ trust

- But **trust is earned**, & citizens tend to take an evidence-based approach towards whether to trust their government

- When mistrust has been earned, where **confidence-building measures** are needed, who makes the first move?

- **Bridge-building requires investment**, architects & long-term maintenance

- **Interlocutors are facilitators of two-way communication**, & their role is often crucial for bridging cultural & power gaps

- For governmental reformers to earn citizens’ trust, they may need to **invest political capital** to offset vested interests
Scaling accountability combines depth & breadth

- **Scaling up** usually means replication, to do more of X

- Yet ‘more of X’ could still be **limited to just one level** of public sector decision-making (local, nat’l)

- This leaves SAcc efforts vulnerable to the “**squeezing the balloon**” problem

- In contrast, **vertical integration** of citizen monitoring & advocacy involves a multi-level strategy that addresses local, district, national & international decision-making

- **Scaling across** = broad geographic & social inclusion

- **Scaling accountability** combines vertical integration with horizontal representation
To sum up: Connect the dots with *integrated approaches*

- Strategic approaches that reach **scale**:
  - Are *vertically integrated/multi-level*, combining monitoring & advocacy bottom to top
  - Are *geographically & social inclusive*, building a broad social base for voice
  - Take the *systems of horizontal accountability* into account – bolstering the weak & challenging the captured

- Strategic social accountability *connects the dots with fully integrated strategies*