Local Voice and Rights in Practice:
A Review of Initiatives to Strengthen Demand-Side Accountability in Tanzania[1]

Gemma McKenna[2] and Ben Taylor[3], Daraja[4]

November 2008

[1] This working paper is based on a longer paper that was submitted as a Masters Dissertation by Gemma McKenna to the Institute for Development Policy and Management of Manchester University, UK. The longer paper and this working paper were both commissioned by Daraja.

[2] Gemma McKenna (gemmamckenna@email.com) is a researcher on politics and development. This paper is based on her Masters dissertation on a similar topic.

[3] Ben Taylor (ben.d.taylor@gmail.com) is a policy analyst and researcher, specialising in local governance in Tanzania. He currently works as Policy Team Leader for WaterAid Tanzania, and works as a volunteer for Daraja in his spare time.

[4] Daraja is a recently-formed Tanzanian NGO working to make local government more responsive to the community in rural Tanzania. Our work involves developing and demonstrating innovative approaches to making local government more responsive, and conducting independent research and advocacy on local governance in policy and practice.

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List of Acronyms

CSC	Community Score Card
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
GRO	Grass Roots Organisation
IOPA	Institute for Orkonerei Pastoralists Advancement
LG	Local Government
LGA	Local Government Authority
LGRP	Local Government Reform Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ORS	Orkonerei Radio Service
PEDP	Primary Education Development Project
PET	Public Expenditure Tracking
TAMWA	Tanzanian Media Women's Association
TASAF	Tanzania Social Action Fund
WB	World Bank
UC	Unit Committee

1. Introduction: local government reforms and demand-side accountability

Tanzania is currently undergoing an ongoing process of local government (LG) reforms, popularly known as decentralisation by devolution or "D by D". The reforms were initiated for three main reasons: i) to spread the load of government more efficiently, so that national government is not overly burdened with the practicalities of delivering services, ii) to give government the flexibility to respond to the differing needs and priorities of different communities, and iii) to bring government closer to the community and thus to increase accountability of government to the community.

Although this decentralisation process has been underway for 10 years, it has struggled to deliver increased efficiency, responsiveness and accountability. It has neither completely failed nor completely succeeded, but remains unproven, facing challenges but still with a lot of potential. There are several related reasons for this slow progress, three of which are particularly important:

1. National government and donors have been reluctant to give Local Government Authorities (LGAs) the autonomy and policy space to respond effectively to local priorities.
2. Local government capacity for administration and service delivery remains weak.
3. Demand-side actors (those representing the community such as councillors and civil society organisations) have not developed as a strong force for local government accountability.

The third reason has been referred to as the "missing link" in decentralisation reforms, and can be seen to some extent to underpin the other two factors. National government and donors are likely to resist letting go unless they are confident that other actors will be exerting accountability pressures on LGAs. And unless local government faces pressure from the community to improve the delivery of services, it is unlikely to develop the capacity it needs.

This shortage of demand-side accountability pressures on local government has been widely recognised for some time, and a number of approaches have been developed to address the challenge, such as community radio, community score cards and public expenditure tracking. These approaches have been repeatedly documented and evaluated separately, but rarely have they been compared and common lessons extracted.

This paper will review and compare four such approaches, looking at the experiences of actors in Tanzania and beyond. It aims to learn lessons from each of these approaches separately and in comparison, and therefore to increase understanding of how the accountability of local government to the community can be increased. Four related approaches will be considered, as follows:

1. community media (radio and local print media),
2. community score cards (CSCs),
3. public expenditure tracking (PET), and
4. capacity building for grassroots organisations (GROs).

A case study methodology is employed, drawing on multiple examples of known DSA projects and programmes. The examples are based on published and unpublished literature. Since the analysis is developed from the case study material, the methodology involved the collection of instances of 'demand' and 'accountability' initiatives, their classification by type and purpose, and the application of a comparative analysis. The cases are not a random selection of 'demand' and 'accountability' mechanisms, but are instead a purposive sample, chosen subjectively for the lessons they offer.

Sections 2-5 of this paper will present and discuss the various case studies, looking at the key aspects of each approach, their strengths and weaknesses, and drawing lessons on their implementation. The final section then synthesises the different approaches, drawing comparisons under four headings to express means of increasing accountability 1) information generation; 2) lobbying to influence planning and policy formation; 3) awareness raising and capacity building to mobilise; 4) and citizen-based monitoring and evaluation. Common factors that appear to influence the success of the approaches are discussed, as well as overall conclusions.

2 Community Media

Community radio and local print media can help to ensure accountable local government by providing a platform for local debate, providing opportunities for demand-side actors to raise their voice, and disseminating information on a mass scale. They are relatively accessible for all regardless of their social or economic status.

2.1 Case studies

The **Orkonerei Radio Service (ORS)** in Terrat, Tanzania was established by the Institute for Orkonerei Pastoralists Advancement (IOPA) in partnership with the local community and donors. Although the station is a partnership it is run essentially by the community. ORS aims to improve the quality of life of dry-land pastoralists in Northern Tanzania by broadcasting information and education on areas of need, including; health; environmental issues; laws and rights; and farming methods. It also promotes change by encouraging pastoralists to attend school and older people to take up vocational education and places strong emphasis on gender equality.

What makes this station a particularly successful example of the community radio approach is ORS's fundamental concern with increasing peoples' voice through participation of the community in developing program schedules and content. Furthermore, listeners are invited to use the station for lobbying for better public services, particularly transport which is key to improving the lives of the marginalised in Northern Tanzania (Siemering & Fairbairn, n.d.).

Community radio is often owned, managed and shaped by the people it serves. In such cases, community radio services are usually managed and controlled by a board democratically selected by members of the community and legally constitute a voluntary organisation set up by the community (Bussiek & Bussiek, 2004).

There are also instances in Tanzania and elsewhere where international agencies have set up community radio stations to purport their own agendas or where governments have aired party political broadcasts (Bussiek & Bussiek, 2004). An example of this is the Africa Good Governance Programme, **On the Radio Waves**, which was launched by the World Bank in 2006. This was aired on the Africa Learning Channel to municipalities in Tanzania. The main objective of the project was to support LG capacity building and community empowerment via dissemination of information related to anti-corruption, civic participation and fiscal decentralisation. However, the programme was not designed in collaboration with citizens and was also only broadcast in English thus excluding large groups of people (Communication Initiative, 2004).

In some cases, community radio has been used to strengthen formal democratic processes, such as in **Mozambique's 2003 local elections**. Initially the radio programmes were used to encourage citizens, particularly women, to take part in the election process. However, bias towards various political parties became evident, despite the development of a code of conduct for electoral coverage (Communication Initiative, 2004).

In this case, it seems a lack of independent financing undermined independence in the stations' output. Although capital costs may be provided by donors, the community is generally responsible for the costs involved in running and maintaining the station. Community radio stations may therefore be willing to take cash from political parties to supplement their income (Bussiek & Bussiek, 2004), or may become restricted in their editorial freedom if funds are provided by an important local actor, such as local government itself.

The strength of the print media sector has grown fast in the past 15 years in Tanzania: there are currently over 450 registered publications including magazines, periodicals and newsletters. There are also numerous publications circulated by CSOs who are beginning to realise the power of local print media to voice development concerns and encourage civil society to mobilise around issues that are of importance to them (Swanston, n.d).

One such example is the **Tanzania Media Women Association (TAMWA)**, which has demonstrated an impressive capacity in policy advocacy in Tanzania. TAMWA uses the media to sensitise society on gender issues and advocate and lobby for policy and legal changes which favour the promotion of the rights of women and children (Kiondo, 2004). One of their key strategies is to persuade national and local newspapers to include feature articles on issues such as gender violence and the Sexual Offences Act. Moreover, they use promotional and educational material including the publication of the popular Sauti ya Siti magazine to raise awareness and act as a mobilising tool for collective community action against gender violence (Kiondo, 2004).

A second positive example of local print media comes from beyond Tanzania: the **Ugandan government's newspaper campaign to reduce elite capture**. The aim of the campaign was to boost schools' and parents' ability to monitor local government officials' handling of a large school grant programme. Information on central government transfers was made available to all, at both the national and local level through newspapers and in the schools through notice boards. By increasing transparency, capture was reduced because local officers knew they would be identified and held accountable for any fund deficits. This empowered citizens at the local level if discrepancies were found in the information posted on school boards (Reinikka & Svensson, 2005a).

The **FIX Nigeria Initiative** also has useful lessons. This CSO led programme worked with a range of actors, including the youth, the media, faith-based organisations, trade unions and the private sector to develop media campaigns and increase capacity in anti-corruption reporting with a view to combating corruption in government and promoting transparency and accountability (Communication Initiative, 2008).

2.2 Analysis and lessons

These examples show how community radio and local print media can have a significant impact on demand-side accountability, but also highlight some challenges. On the positive side, the approach has a wide reach, can encourage the engagement of ordinary citizens, and can address a wide range of social, economic and political issues. It can also strengthen other approaches by providing a wider audience for communications. However, to achieve its full potential, a number of challenges must be overcome.

First, the approach is at risk of capture by powerful local actors such as government, political parties or advertisers, upon whose finances or consent community radio and local print media may depend. The result is an approach which is not accountable to local people but to these institutions. To overcome this obstacle it is vital that the community's role in organisation and management is strong and well protected. Transparency in operations and management is also important, so that information on potential bias is openly available rather than hidden. And having a more diverse set of income sources can encourage greater editorial independence.

Second, financing can also be a problem for donor-initiated community media. Such initiatives can have greater independence from local actors, but they suffer from a different form of dependence. In particular, they can be held to real or perceived donor priorities rather than responding to the needs and priorities of the community. They can also be perceived as lacking in legitimacy if funded by sources outside the country.

Third, while local media can have a powerful strengthening effect on community voice, it can struggle to bring the community and local government decision makers together for effective dialogue. There is no formal method of bringing citizens together or to meet elected officials. Indeed, it can even antagonise government, undermining the strategic partnerships that Saito (2003) and others have identified as playing a key role in local government effectiveness.

3 Community Score Cards (CSC)

The use of Community Score Cards (CSC), also known as *Pima Cards* in Tanzania, is an approach that is gaining in practice, particularly in rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa. The World Bank is a key supporter (Amin et al, 2007; Sundet, 2004). The approach is a community monitoring tool which mixes the techniques of social audit and community monitoring by facilitated discussions in focus groups to bring out qualitative assessments on projects, processes or service provisioning (Sundet, 2004; Singh & Shah, 2003). Table 1 gives an example of the type of formats that are used.

Table 1. Sample CSC (from a community focus group for Health in Malawi)

Community-Generated Data	Scores					Remarks
	1 Very Bad	2 Bad	3 OK	4 Good	5 Very Good	
Availability of staff						
Availability of ambulance						
Availability of drugs						
Availability of furniture						
Attitudes of staff						

Source: Singh & Shah, 2003

There are four main components of the CSC method, namely i) input tracking scorecards, ii) community-generated performance scorecards, iii) self-evaluation scorecard by service providers, and iv) interface meetings between service providers and the community which allow for immediate feedback (Singh & Shah, 2003).

3.1 Case studies

The CSC process has already been put into practice in Tanzania by a number of CSOs. A particularly successful CSC identified by Sundet (2004) was carried out by **HakiKazi Catalyst**, a leading Tanzanian CSO. The aim of the project was to devise a scorecard which enabled the communities involved to evaluate the progress of the government's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) process and to "exact social and public accountability". An interesting part of the methodology of this exercise was the combination of the scorecards with self-evaluation forms for participating local government officials. This enabled honest and probing exchanges between the local communities and the officials. Furthermore, a preliminary analysis of the findings indentified that LG was definitely failing in its duties towards citizens. This was established by poor funding in service provision and a lack of transparency regarding receipt and use of funds at local level (Sundet, 2004).

This example also stands out for combining Community Score Cards with the Citizens' Report Cards approach. The Citizens' Report Card method concentrates its unit of analysis at the household or individual level rather than the level of the community through questionnaires. By combining the advantages of the two approaches the data collected can be more readily aggregated and compared between localities (Sundet, 2004).

A second example of successful CSCs in practice comes from beyond Tanzania: the **Local Government Enhancement Project in Ghana**. The Northern Ghana Network for Development initiated a CSC project to strengthen civic participation in local government. The Network

Secretariat worked with one of their member organisations to build a CSC that would assess the performance of District Assemblies. The Unit Committee (UC) is the level of LG closest to the people in Ghana, but unfortunately, UCs often struggle to know what their role is. By providing training in the CSC method, this project helped to give UCs a role, ensuring that District Assemblies are downwardly accountable and provide quality services (*Community Scorecards, n.d*).

3.2 Analysis and lessons

These examples show how the CSC approach has considerable potential to increase accountability pressures on local government to the community, including the following factors:

- The approach can produce detailed assessments of community satisfaction in a short time.
- CSCs give community members a significant role in scrutinising local governance performance and processes.
- The information generated is specifically focused on the interests of the citizen.
- CSC have great potential to mobilise citizens by showing them how they can contribute to monitoring and improving local government.
- Interface meetings between the community and service providers can help institutionalise the findings of the scorecards.
- Interface meetings can also provide the kind of environment where local strategic partnerships can thrive (Saito, 2003).
- The different components of the CSC allow for enhancement of several accountability relationships, from the level of the community to that of service providers and local politicians and officials.
- CSCs can assist LG in understanding better their role as a provider and to identify their place in the community.

However, there are also a number of challenges. First, CSCs have been widely promoted by the World Bank as a tool for making service delivery more demand-responsive. While this is not necessarily a problem in itself, it can undermine the legitimacy of the approach (Dauda, 2004). It can potentially also present a bias in the issues discussed – are these really community-driven or do they reflect World Bank interests? For example, a WB-funded CSC exercise on health and education in Bagamoyo conducted in collaboration with the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF), focussed on the quality of services themselves and excluded governance processes (Thindwa & Singh, 2003). Elsewhere, attention on governance processes has resulted in more fundamental governance reforms that arguably have a bigger long term impact for improving service delivery (Bovaird et al, 2003).

Second, CSCs can produce too much information to be handled easily. To overcome this, one option would be to engage the services of data handling experts. However, this would take the process out of the hands of the community, which is perhaps the biggest strength of the approach. Alternatively, if the score cards can be kept focussed, a reduced amount of more powerful data can be collected.

Third CSCs can put pressure on the integrity of local organisations which are funded by the local authority or other local public agencies, because they have to make assessments of the performance of that agency (Bovaird et al, 2003). However, this is a potential challenge for any approach to strengthen demand-side accountability pressures, not just CSCs.

4. Public Expenditure Tracking (PET)

PET has its origin in studies carried out by donor agencies to track the use of their funds. However, more recently they have also been adopted by CSOs to increase the accountability and responsiveness of LG (De Graf, 2005). In Tanzania specifically, PET studies have been used as part of the government's major reform programmes, including the Local Government Reform

Programme (LGRP), to strengthen service delivery in response to citizens needs (Sundet, 2004). The rationale behind the approach is that by demonstrating how money is spent or transferred at different bureaucratic levels, the local decision makers can be held to account by civil society and a deeper understanding of the existing degree of accountability to civil society can also be uncovered. Moreover, by making the tracking information available to the community and its representatives they can be empowered to hold the administrative bureaucracy to account (De Graaf, 2005; Sundet, 2007).

PET studies generally follow a linear methodological process. First a research team hold consultations to identify the issues and problems that most affect the chosen sector through dialogue with a range of stakeholders – a statement of the study's objectives is then finalised (Reinikka & Smith, 2004). Following this, a set of questionnaires is drafted corresponding to different tiers of the hierarchy and categories of respondents, and piloting of the questionnaires than takes place. The sample, should allow cross-validation of data between different tiers of government. The team then conducts the relevant interviews and retrieves data from the institutions related to the service under review (i.e. schools, local government), before analysing the results and attempting to answer the research questions. Hence, PET studies are a multi-angular data collection strategy (i.e. a combination of information from different sources) which circumspectly considers which sources have incentives to misreport (Reinikka & Smith, 2004). Table 2 gives an example of PET in practice.

Table 2 – Example of PET in practice: flow of funds in the agriculture budget, Babati District, 04/05

Budget Item	Budget	Received / collected	Spent at District HQ	Spent at village level	Balance
Recurrent Budget					
From central govt: other charges	21,476,100	34,017,039	27,969,660	3,851,800	2,195,579
Development Budget					
DADP (from central govt)	30,396,248	30,396,248	0	30,396,248	0
PADEP	0	115,705,500	86,884,215	26,962,500	1,858,785
LAMP	79,691,800	79,691,800	0	53,425,840	26,265,960

Source: Follow the Money: A resource book for trainers on Public Expenditure Tracking in Tanzania, published by Hakikazi Catalyst, REPOA and TGNP (HakiKazi et al, n. d.)

4.1 Case studies

De Graaf (2005) conducted a study looking at PET studies conducted **by five Tanzanian NGOs** to identify whether or not they had contributed to accountability at district level in Tanzania. The framework of analysis used for the study was the World Development Report (World Bank, 2004) description of accountability relationships. The effects on accountability relationships were mixed (de Graaf, 2005).

First, community empowerment to demand accountability (*enforceability in World Bank terms*) was poor. Of all of the initial PET only one was successful in increasing enforceability and that was achieved by the NGO organising recurring community training sessions and meetings to inform citizens about their rights and provide basic budgetary analysis training.

Second, the study showed little evidence to suggest increased accountability of elected leaders to the community through PET. Although leaders appreciated and used the information provided by the PET, it has not changed their attitude towards informing the community rather they use the information to enhance their relationship with organisational providers. All the PET studied had successfully empowered elected officials (councillors and street leaders) to demand accountability

from organisational providers (*enforceability*). Information generated by the survey was welcomed by the councillors and street leaders and used to raise concerns and demand explanations from organisational providers.

Third, the accountability of providers to councillors and communities (*informing*) proved to be the weakest link in the accountability relationships. There was little evidence of any marked change in attitude and behaviour in terms of accountability and the willingness by organisational providers to participate in a survey or provide information was minimal.

Fourth, PET did not increase responsiveness of frontline providers (*performing*) to citizens but it did clarify the role and highlight the difficulties faced by frontline providers to citizens (de Graaf, 2005). Overall, using PET as an evaluation tool to measure its own success has provided unique insights in the accountability relationships that need to be strengthened in order to meet citizens' needs and priorities.

An example of **PET from Peru** seems to have delivered more convincing results, in particular, demonstrating the potential of PET to expose instances of corruption and issues of transparency, which are both prevalent in Tanzania (Sundet, 2004). A diagnostic PET on education in Peru was performed by a number of social science researchers to gain wider understanding of budget formulation, resource allocation and opportunities for corruption present in the budget process. The aim of the survey was to formulate policy recommendations that would improve the process of transfers to schools (Reinikka & Smith, 2004).

The study found that spending per student on goods and services was extremely low, and was able to identify several sources of leakages. The main leakage was found in payroll and benefits which constituted to 90% of total spending (Reinikka & Smith, 2004). The study also uncovered and helped resolve a complicated mix of actors funding the education system in Peru, which is also prevalent in Tanzania (Sundet, 2007; Carlitz, 2007).

A third case study comes again from Tanzania, where in 2002 a PET was led by the WB with support of the Tanzanian government to measure leakage with regard to the **Primary Education Development Project (PEDP)**. However, poor methodological practice meant that fund transfers were only assessed from the Ministry of Finance to schools. The consultants from the WB had not realised that both the Ministries of Education and Local Government had also disbursed funds, and what had originally been found in the PET to be a minimal leakage was, in fact, considerable (Sundet, 2007). Overall, it appears that poor methodology and lack of communication between donor and host government caused the PEDP to fail.

4.2 Analysis and lessons

The evidence of these case studies suggest that PET is not a simple approach to employ successfully. While the detail it provides has considerable potential to uncover funding blockages and leakages, as was the case in Peru and some of the Tanzanian examples, the same detail makes it more technically complex to implement than community score cards or using local media. The potential of PET as a tool to enhance LG accountability comes from its ability to deconstruct complex relationships and identify where they need to be strengthened (Roberts, 2004). However, the approach has a number of problems, including the following:

- The methodological process is complex.
- The process of gathering information from government officials and agencies is subject to their discretion and key financial information may be purposefully left out or bias (Roberts, 2004).
- Although the PET data can potentially quantify capture of funds in a public programme it does not determine what actually happened to the funds after they had been captured (Reinikka & Svensson, 2005b).
- Complex modes of fund transfers make it difficult to track and keep track of funds.

- Translating the outcomes of the findings into concrete policy is problematic without political support, which will be limited if the PET reveals significant corruption at the level of which support is required (Reinikka & Svensson, 2005b).
- It is difficult to construct a formal mechanism to include citizens in the process.
- Problems are identified some time after they happen, rather than being prevented from occurring.

One might argue that the complex relationships between actors and the complicated funding streams endemic in both the Tanzanian and Peruvian examples are due to both poor decentralisation reforms and those reforms not having time to bed-in. Whether or not this is a correct analysis, the complexity undermines the potential of PET.

The answer may lie partly in combining the approach with other DSA approaches. Local media, particularly print media can provide a regular platform for summarised budget information to be made public, monitoring developments as they happen and alert citizens to potential problems. Combining the approach with the CSC could provide some more user friendly sources of information and encourage community involvement.

Second, a simplified approach, focussing on expenditure at district and community level rather than on national-local transfers could reduce the technical challenges and make community engagement more realistic.

5 Capacity building for Grassroots Organisations (GROs)

Grassroots organisations (GROs), defined as membership-based organisations such as women's groups, farmers groups, trade unions and faith-based groups are increasingly being seen as channels for promoting economic and social development and also contributing to democratisation (Uphoff, 1993). In contrast to NGOs, many of which are dominated by a small group of urban elites, GROs typically represent a substantial section of the community – their members. This gives them significant political weight. They also offer closeness to the people of local conditions, responsiveness to peoples' needs and information generation to help communities mobilise to demand accountability from service providers (Uphoff, 1993).

5.1 Case studies

PACT, Tanzania, supported by USAID, has identified the following components of GROs strengthening, as a guide to community mobilisation (Pact Tanzania, n.d.):

- designing ways for people to participate in policy debates and political processes through CSCs or Parent-Teacher associations for example
- articulating the problem or situation which needs attention, clearly and forcefully
- identifying key stakeholders and engaging them, thus highlighting the need for all actors to work together to solve the problem
- establishing a common definition of the problem and all stakeholders identifying means for dealing with it
- obtaining political and economic support for the planning process and action programme to be realised

In Northeast Thailand, the ***Assembly of the Poor*** is a loose farmers' network that uses a range of campaign approaches to get government and policymakers to consider the concerns of rural populations living in poor and insecure areas. The Assembly has been able to open up spaces for negotiation and recognition of rural issues to a level which was not possible before. The features of the network which make it successful include decentralised, locality-based organisation, diffused leadership, ability to mass mobilise, advocacy on both local and global issues, and the ability to negotiate with government officials. (Goetz & Gaventa, 2001).

5.2 Analysis and lessons

The political weight of grassroots organisations gives them a lot of potential as a force for demand-side accountability in democratic societies. There are practical examples of this potential being realised, such as in the *Assembly of the Poor* in Thailand. Strengthening GROs is responsive to peoples' needs, generates information, and can create democratic space to help communities mobilise to collectively change their circumstances and influence decision makers. They also have the potential to encourage wider participation and mobilise communities (Dagnino, 2005).

Nevertheless, the approach is far from simple. A number of challenges have been identified from the examples given above, along with other sources. Partly as a result of these challenges, the influence of GROs on decision making at district level in Tanzania remains weak.

- The nature of GROs means that although they demonstrate common interests, like any group, internal conflict can arise.
- Although space for GROs to influence policy has been expanding in Tanzania (Lister & Nyamugasira, 2003), this space is still hotly contested.
- GROs that started at the community level but have since expanded their reach can become bureaucratised and distant from their members, thus compromising their position. Criticism is often levelled against them that they have become urban elites where the original representative structure at local level is not as extensive as they suggest (Goetz & Lister, 2001).
- A similar problem can arise when GRO leaders work closely with government, for example in official working groups. In this situation, they can lose credibility in the eyes of their members if they are seen as having been co-opted.

Linking capacity building of GROs with other mechanisms to strengthen demand-side accountability could help to overcome these challenges and enable GROs to achieve their potential as a force for accountability. Local media would provide a more effective platform for debate if a range of voices are engaging in local debates, and GROs are an ideal source of such voices. GROs would also benefit from the space provided by local media to voice their concerns – providing an outlet would encourage GROs to develop. Similarly, working with GROs on Community Score Cards and Public Expenditure Tracking would give those tools greater political weight, and would strengthen the voice of the GROs involved.

6 Summary and conclusions

The preceding sections of this paper have analysed four approaches to promoting demand-side accountability pressures on local government. We have asked whether each approach has succeeded in achieving instances of "demand" and "accountability", and identified the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. This section now aims to combine these findings and to extract common lessons.

6.1 Summary

None of the four approaches presented provides a simple and complete answer. Each has some strengths and faces some obstacles. Table 3 summarises these, as discussed in sections 2-5.

Table 3 – Summary of approaches

Approach	Main Strengths	Main Challenges	Ideas to Overcome Main Challenges
Local media	– wide reach – can encourage the engagement of ordinary citizens – can address a wide range of issues – can provide a means of communication for other tools	– risk of capture by powerful local actors upon whose finances or consent media depend – risk of being donor-driven, undermining legitimacy and affecting priorities – can antagonise LG	– strong community role in organisation and management – transparency in operations and management – diversify income sources
Community Score Cards	– quick, detailed, relatively simple – key role for community members – encourages local partnerships – can assist LG to understand role	– can produce too much information to be handled easily	– keep score cards narrowly focussed – link with local media for better dissemination
Public Expenditure Tracking	– detail has potential to uncover funding blockages and leakages	– methodologically complex – dependent on government for data – does not determine what happened to captured funds – complex processes are difficult to track – difficult to include citizens	– combine with other DSA approaches: local media can provide a platform and CSC could provide more user friendly information and strengthen community involvement – simplify the approach, focussing on local level rather than national
Capacity Building of Grassroots Organisations	– political weight of GROs – responsive to peoples' needs – has potential to encourage wider participation	– policy space for GROs is limited – bureaucratised and distance from members – members perceive leaders to be co-opted by government	– link with local media: media benefits from more voices and GROs benefit from the space provided by local media, encouraging more GROs to develop. – link with CSC and PET to give those tools political weight, and strengthen the voice of the GROs

6.2 Common lessons

There are also a number of common lessons that can be drawn, including the following:

1. There is a need to ensure that all projects and programmes are community-driven, particularly in the conception, management and organisation. Capture can be by local economic elites, local government, or indeed by donors.

2. A combination of approaches can provide synergies that can help overcome the weaknesses of individual approaches. Community radio and local print media can provide all the other approaches with a powerful channel of communication, both to the community and to strengthen community voices. Grassroots organisations can provide other approaches with political weight.

3. Accessing information from local government can be problematic, with data sometimes unavailable or incorrect. This can undermine approaches by introducing bias and reducing the validity of the data.

4. Using these tools to focus attention on service delivery alone misses an opportunity – focusing on governance processes is also valuable. This can unblock more fundamental obstacles to responsive and accountable government.

5. These approaches struggle in part because the institutional arrangements for decentralised governance are not well designed, or not functioning well in practice. For example, where budget data is not easily accessible, or financial systems are overly complex, the potential of these approaches is undermined.

6. Turning the products of these approaches into concrete changes in government policy and practice is not easy. Generating information is not itself sufficient, but needs to be supported either by effective dialogue mechanisms or by enough political weight to grab government attention.

6.3 Two final comments

Despite the various problems that have been highlighted here, all these approaches have considerable potential to increase the accountability of local government to the community. To achieve this, those who are involved in developing, delivering and funding these approaches need to ensure that enough attention is given to maintaining quality and to learning, documentation and sharing.

It is also worth remembering that decentralised government is the framework that makes all this possible. Attempting to strengthen the accountability of government to the community under a centralised system would be a lot more difficult. The presence of elected local councils and devolved responsibilities for service delivery offer a great deal of potential for more efficient, responsive and accountable government. That this potential has not yet been fully realised should not be used as an excuse to roll back reforms and re-centralise.

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