Supporting domestic accountability: Exploring conceptual dimensions and operational challenges

Jean Bossuyt
Jan Vanheukelom
Faten Aggad
Alisa Herrero-Cangas
Niels Keijzer

Discussion Paper No. 93
October 2009

European Centre for Development Policy Management
Centre européen de gestion des politiques de développement

Supporting domestic accountability: Exploring conceptual dimensions and operational challenges

Jean Bossuyt
Jan Vanheukelom
Faten Aggad
Alisa Herrero-Cangas
Niels Keijzer

Table of contents

Acronyms

AAA	Accra Agenda for Action
CSO	Civil-society organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
DGIS	Directorate-General for International Cooperation
EKN	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
GOVNET	The OECD/DAC's Network on Governance
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PE	Political economy
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
VNG	Association of Netherlands Municipalities

Acknowledgments

This ECDPM Discussion Paper was written by Jean Bossuyt, Jan Vanheukelom, Faten Aggad, Alisa Herrero-Cangas and Niels Keijzer. It was produced as part of the ECDPM's support for nine country initiatives taken by Dutch development partners in promoting domestic accountability. These initiatives, which are introduced in the section entitled 'About this document', are all partnerships between the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Directorate-General for International Cooperation, the Netherlands Development Organisation, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities and other involved organisations.

Though the production, publication and dissemination of this summary document was supported financially by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the authors bear full responsibility for its contents, which should not be attributed to any other person or institution.

About this document

On 15 January 2008, the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation called for closer collaboration between the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), the Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS), the embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) and other relevant Dutch development partners, including the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD). The aim was to translate the Ministry's policy focus on domestic accountability into operational activities of a strategic nature. It was agreed to identify the options for intensifying country-level cooperation by means of specific activities designed to foster participation and accountability. Following further discussions among the partners, the overall goal for this initiative was defined as follows: *'(…) to ensure that ongoing efforts of DGIS, SNV – and other developments partners as applicable – contribute credibly and explicitly to strengthening the domestic accountability of government institutions to citizens, directly, through democratically elected bodies or through other mechanisms.'*

The following partners and countries are presently involved in this initiative:

Benin	EKN, SNV and VNG International
Bolivia	EKN and SNV
Ghana	EKN and SNV
Guatemala	EKN and NIMD
Mozambique	EKN and SNV
Rwanda	EKN and SNV
South Africa	EKN and a South African partner organisation
Tanzania	EKN, SNV and VNG International
Zambia	EKN and SNV

In November 2008, the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) was commissioned by DGIS – in agreement with the other partners – to support the country initiatives in the following four areas: (i) content inputs; (ii) backstopping field activities; (iii) suggestions for learning and process; and (iv) coordination.

It was understood from the start that the Dutch development partners in the field should be in the driving seat of this experimental process. Local realities were hence to determine possible windows of opportunities for influencing domestic accountability, as well as the type of intervention strategies.

As part of its support activities, the ECDPM drafted four practical notes to assist the country teams in drafting and operationalising their interventions. These notes were subsequently shared with all country teams via an on-line discussion group (see www.dgroups.org), a password-protected website and a mailing list that was set up to facilitate the exchange of information among the teams.

Although these practical notes were drafted basically for internal purposes, the DGIS asked the ECDPM to publish them in order to foster debate and inform interventions. The contents of the notes have remained more or less unchanged; hence the frequent references in the notes to the nine pilot countries. The four notes address the following topics:

1. political economy analysis;
2. process support;
3. measuring results; and
4. promoting complementarity.

The four notes are preceded in this document by a brief exploration of the main conceptual dimensions associated with domestic accountability.

Introduction: conceptual and policy dimensions of domestic accountability

This introductory section provides a basic overview of the key dimensions of domestic accountability. It seeks to build a shared understanding among actors of why domestic accountability matters, what it means, how it can be more effectively supported and how joint learning could take place.

Several ***push factors*** help to explain why the issue of domestic accountability is gradually moving to the forefront of the development agenda:

- *Growing support for governance and a more political approach to cooperation.* The international development partners community has dramatically increased its support for political and institutional reforms. In the process, it is slowly but steadily adopting a more political approach to cooperation. Accountability is a cornerstone of this governance agenda. It is also perceived to be a key factor in determining development effectiveness.
- *Putting domestic political processes first.* In the past decade, the international cooperation system has sought to give partner countries more ownership of their development agenda, for example stepping up government-to-government cooperation and introducing new aid modalities such as sector and budget support. Whilst this centralised approach has many potential benefits, it also runs the risk of privileging 'upward' accountability mechanisms (i.e. from partner governments to development partners) to the detriment of 'downward' accountability (i.e. resulting from domestic political processes involving parliaments, local governments, civil society and citizens).
- *Building inclusive citizenship and democracies*. Accountability is not just a bureaucratic or legal term. Rather, it is about improving democratic processes, challenging power and claiming citizenship. Development partners can help to build a culture of accountability from below by using a variety of support strategies in specific areas of cooperation and in society at large.
- *Accounting for development results*. The recent Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) made it unequivocally clear that, in order to speed up progress, *'(…) achieving development results — and openly accounting for them — must be at the heart of all we do'.* The Accra statement also stressed the need to spearhead the broadening and deepening of development cooperation by involving key actors much more systematically in the core development relationship. Domestic accountability is key to ensuring effective mutual accountability. It was therefore agreed that these actors, including parliaments, civil-society organisations, local authorities and the citizens of the developing countries, need to become more involved and gain a bigger stake in the development process.

The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has taken strong interest in the work on domestic accountability in its preparations for the Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011. Although concerns about domestic accountability are not new, it is now a much more prominent feature of the aid effectiveness debate. This is largely due to the greater evidence of the adverse impact of all sorts of aid modalities – including new ones such as budget support and basket funding – on domestic processes, institutions and systems of accountability. The DAC recently launched a new work stream on domestic accountability,[1] and it is likely that the issue of domestic accountability will feature prominently in the next two years and beyond.

[1] For more information, please see: www.oecd.org/dataoecd/45/26/42811639.pdf

Promoting domestic accountability from the outside, however, opens a ***huge, complex and politically sensitive agenda***. It means investing simultaneously in effective states and empowered citizens. It is about substantive democracy, rights and citizenship. It is about building social capital as well as state capacity to respond to citizens' demands. It implies a need to examine the way accountability actually operates in developing countries and how development partners can influence it. Greater accountability in societal relations is not a simple output. By definition, it requires a long-term process that needs to be carefully nurtured with the aid of a wide range of strategies, mechanisms and concrete step-by-step achievements throughout the accountability chain. Yet, development partners need to show results within a relatively short space of time, i.e. between two and four years. The big challenge is to reconcile these two imperatives.

In practice, strengthening domestic accountability has proven a ***difficult task*** for development partners. Experience suggests that the effectiveness of current donor approaches is hampered by several factors, including:

- A tendency to focus primarily on the supply side of improved accountability provided by 'duty-bearers' (through investments in capacity development, procedures and systems in the public sector) and less on the demand side or 'right-holders' (i.e. through the empowerment of democratically elected bodies, pressure groups, media, civil-society organisations, etc.).
- A lack of appropriate strategies for identifying the demand side of accountability and the domestic drivers of change that can push the agenda forward. This is reflected, for example, in a tendency to focus more on formal mechanisms such as legal systems and less on the informal realities and rules underpinning social relationships and power structures, i.e. the reality 'behind the façade'.
- A reliance on normative or technocratic approaches in designing and implementing support strategies. In other words, accountability is seen as a depoliticised, technical problem, to be addressed primarily by means of capacity development.
- Unrealistic assumptions about social change processes in the developing world,[2] about the best route for promoting domestic accountability[3] and about the role played by development partners in this connection.
- The absence of sufficient claim-making capacity in society, which makes it difficult to use the available information and transparency mechanisms to improve accountability.
- The reduced political space in states with authoritarian styles of governance for holding those in power accountable.

The concept of domestic accountability

According to the New Oxford Dictionary of English, a person, organisation or institution that is *accountable* is *'required to justify actions or decisions'*. In the development sector, however, the core meaning of accountability is less straightforward. It has become a ***malleable and often nebulous concept***. The term is all-encompassing to such a degree that people try to give it more direction and focus by adding an adjective (i.e. downward, upward, horizontal, exogenous, endogenous, traditional or domestic) or linking it with associated concepts (i.e. voice, participation and citizenship). These qualifications reflect the specific domains of accountability; the various actors involved; the nature and direction of power relations; and the ways in which accountability is either demanded or provided. Yet, in essence, accountability is all about justifying decisions and actions. Domestic accountability

[2] Including Western biases (i.e. the emphasis placed on regulating as opposed to facilitating a process).

[3] An example is the assumed link between transparency and accountability. Empirical evidence suggests that transparency is a necessary but far from sufficient condition for accountability. The key question is therefore: under which conditions can transparency lead to accountability (see also Fox, J. *The uncertain relationship between transparency and accountability*. Development in Practice, Vol. 17, Numbers 4-5, August 2007)?

focuses on the obligation of partner governments to be ***accountable towards their own citizens*** in a broad sense.[4]

The term 'domestic accountability' is flagged in the ***DGIS policy note entitled 'Our Common Concern'***, which states that domestic accountability is strengthened by 'joint decision-making'. This is understood as *'(…) the partner country taking the lead* [in managing development cooperation] *and being accountable to all levels of society'*. Although the policy note does not define the term 'domestic accountability', it does state emphatically that *'true accountability means revealing political choices and opening the matter up to debate. The political, cultural and economic causes of poverty, such as the lack of property rights of women, should be on the agenda for which government is held accountable. The same applies to corruption.'*[5]

Against this background, it seems commendable that the Ministry has proposed to define domestic accountability in a ***pragmatic way*** in the context of this exercise: *'Domestic accountability covers a range of accountability relationships and could be approached from many different angles (for example from a political, administrative or social perspective). It relates i.e to (political) decision-making, the quality of regulation, implementation of policies, transparency about results achieved and action to address mal-performance. It requires inclusive and transparent governance structures at all levels. It is usually not a single form of accountability but a number of these, relating different actors that make a system work better.'*

Core elements and approaches

There is no shortage of analytical models that can help:

(i) to assess how domestic accountability actually operates in a given country or sector or at a given level of governance;
(ii) to identify the core elements of accountability that need to be addressed; and
(iii) to conceive possible support strategies.

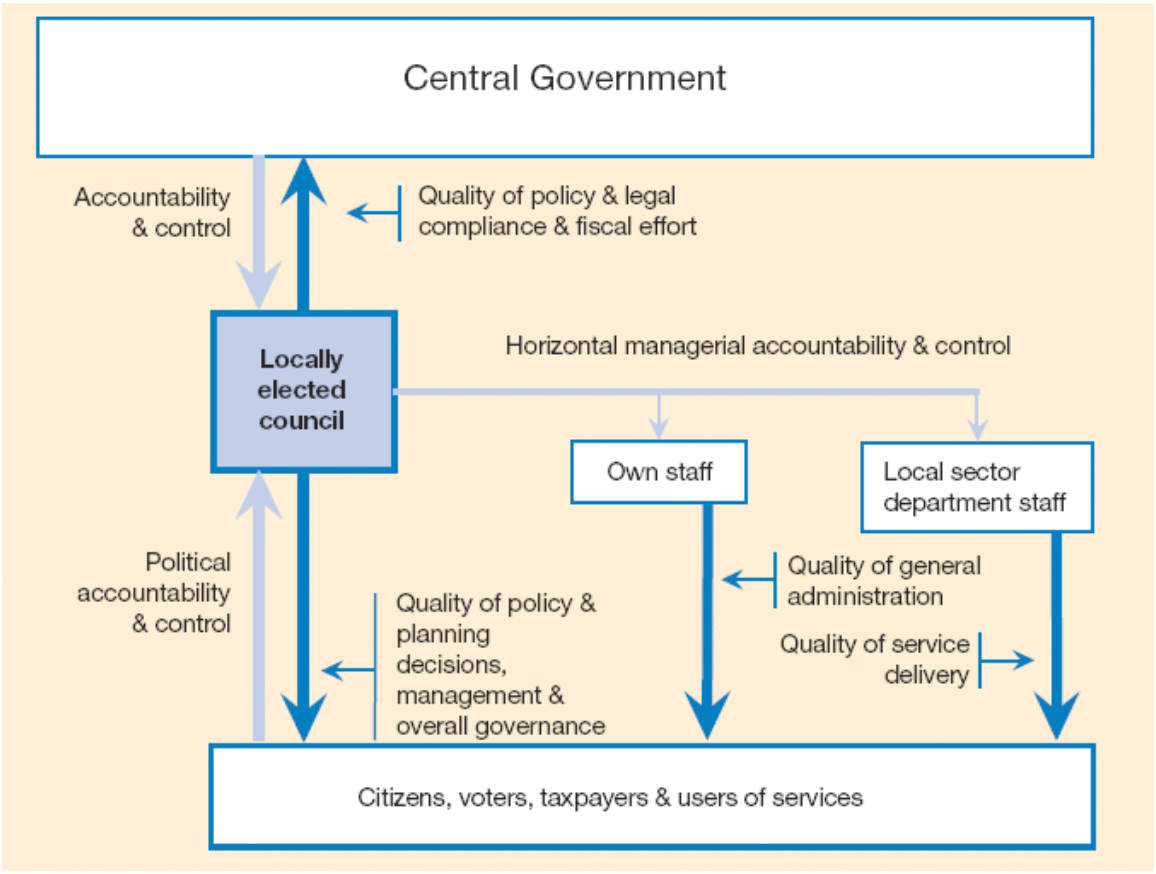
These models are documented in detail in various publications, including in a recent compilation produced by the Ministry.[6] This note therefore only provides a brief recapitulation of the core elements of and approaches to accountability:

- Two elements are central to the public administration or governance approach to promoting accountability: *'answerability'*, i.e. forcing power-holders to explain their actions, and *'enforceability'*, i.e. sanctioning poor performance. The latter implies that power is needed so as to be able to demand and enforce accountability.
- Another approach distinguishes between *right-holders* and *duty-bearers*, and makes it possible to illustrate the relationship between, for instance, service-providers (i.e. the supply side) and users of services (i.e. the demand side) and the importance of accountability mechanisms in linking the two (with defined rules, rights and responsibilities for both sides). This model focuses on the relationship between *voice* and *responsiveness.*
- The World Development Report (2004) focused on accountability for service delivery, especially to poor people. It is based on the well-known *triangle* of power and accountability relationships between three sets of actors: citizens or clients, the state and

4 The accountability of public authorities goes beyond delivering services to the population.
5 The policy note is available at www.minbuza.nl/dsresource?objectid=buzabeheer:32207&type=pdf
6 See: *A rich menu for the poor. Food for thought on effective aid policies*. DGIS, accessible at www.minbuza.nl/en/Key_Topics/Quality_and_Effectiveness/A_Rich_Menu_for_the_Poor

service-providers. This model identifies five features of accountability, i.e. delegating, funding, performing, informing and enforcing. It also distinguishes a *short route* of accountability and a *long route* as possible response strategies.[7]

- The focus on poverty reduction as a central development objective has fuelled the search for a more comprehensive approach to domestic accountability. In this context, accountability is not only a question of promoting citizen participation in elections or improving access to social services. The key challenge is to ensure that citizens have equal rights and equal opportunities, with the state serving society by regulating and promoting public accountability in a diversity of domains, i.e. in the political process; in the civil service; with regard to semi-public or private parties to whom services have been delegated; and through legislation.
- There is a growing body of literature examining the distinction between *accountability from above* and *accountability from below*.[8]
- Other models could provide a source of inspiration for the nine pilot countries, including the analytical framework below, which illustrates the overall *chain of accountability*.



Source: EuropeAid. Supporting Decentralisation and Local Governance in Third Countries. January 2007: 31. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/multimedia/publications/publications/manuals-tools/t109_en.htm

[7] For a clear overview, see Floris Blankenberg, DGIS: *Taking Responsibility and demanding rights. Accountability in service delivery*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. www.minbuza.nl/dsresource?objectid=buzabeheer:48069&type=org

[8] See, for instance, *State Reform and Accountability*, Institute of Development Studies, January 2008.

Towards innovative approaches: key strategic and operational challenges

Innovation lies at the heart of this pilot project. The participating actors in the nine countries are exploring new ways and means of strengthening domestic accountability, based on lessons learnt and an explicit political economy model. But what does innovation actually mean in practice? How should it affect the design and implementation of future collaborative support programmes? How can the pilot teams be supported in their quest for innovation?

The first step is to agree on the main ingredients of an innovative approach. At least six types of innovations are conceivable:

1) ***Stake out the difference with past approaches to strengthening domestic accountability*.** Innovation should not be sought for its own sake. It is only relevant if current approaches fall short of expectations in terms of their ability to address thorny accountability issues. In this logic, the first task is to build as much as possible on existing good practices at a national level and to be clear about what is really new in the proposed approach. This offers the actors, at the outset of the process, an opportunity to take stock of what has worked well and what has worked less well, and also to identify, on this basis, any changes that may need to be made to the support strategy.
2) ***Assess the way in which accountability actually operates***. This is a second crucial step in the design process. Here, normative or technocratic approaches are replaced by a more thorough political economy analysis of real (formal and informal) accountability relationships, including an assessment of critical factors such as power, resources, interests, incentives to change, etc. Many 'how to do' questions are likely to arise. Already, available governance assessments may help in this analysis, as well as other existing studies and locally driven initiatives on domestic accountability. ***Section 1*** of this document provides operational guidance in this respect.
3) ***Identify promising entry points for strengthening domestic accountability***. Based on a more refined political economy analysis, including a risk assessment, it should then be possible to determine where best to intervene in terms of creating more space for political processes of participation, voice, responsiveness, transparency and domestic checks and balances.
4) ***Choose the right mix of approaches and instruments to promote domestic accountability***. This implies thinking through which accountability strategies may work, when, why and for whom. It also means supporting both the demand side and the supply side of accountability. In order to provide additional sources of inspiration, ***section 2*** summarises good practices (i.e. strategies and approaches that have had a positive impact on domestic accountability) and lessons learnt from evaluations.
5) ***Identify macro-meso-micro linkages that affect domestic accountability***. This challenge is related to the development of a more enabling environment for voice and accountability, as well as for civic engagement. The partnership model adopted in the pilot project may help to create these linkages with the aid of smart synergies and complementarities between embassies, SNV and other actors where applicable. ***Section 4*** of this document explores the options for building effective synergies between Dutch actors involved in domestic accountability processes.
6) ***Redefine the desired results.*** Experience shows that traditional input-output-outcome models are not appropriate for monitoring and evaluating progress in a politically sensitive and complex area such as domestic accountability. Although accounting for results remains a key objective in this type of programme, new ideas will be needed about the way in which impact should be assessed; about the tools and indicators that should be used to measure progress; and about moving towards a multi-actor approach to delivering results. ***Section 3*** goes into these operational challenges in further detail. It

should be stressed that three types of result are important in this experimental programme:

- results in terms of improved domestic accountability;
- results in terms of joint learning;
- results in terms of (DGIS) intervention strategies and approaches used (with a view to informing practices in other countries).

1. Political economy analysis and domestic accountability

The pilot project initiated by the Ministry seeks to promote a more political approach to cooperation in supporting domestic accountability in partner countries. This, in turn, places a premium on the presence of a solid political economy (PE) analysis. In recent years, several development partners, including the Dutch development partners, have sought to enhance their knowledge and operational capacity to undertake such diagnostic exercises.[9]

This first section provides some additional food for thought and operational guidance for country teams to integrate their own down-to-earth political economy analysis into a realistic strategic support strategy. To this end, it briefly recapitulates the potential benefits of political economy analysis (section 1.1); summarises both the progress achieved in using this instrument and the many remaining 'grey zones' in operational terms (section 1.2); explores how the draft proposals initially sought to deal with political economy analysis while raising a number of operational questions that may need to be addressed at a future stage (section 1.3). Additional information on instruments for PE analysis is given in annex A.

1.1 Benefits of political economy analysis

PE analysis is a tool that is growing increasingly popular among Dutch development practitioners. It may be useful to recapitulate its main operational benefits in a few key pointers (see Box 1) so that the country teams can see for themselves how they have been dealing with these aspects in their respective design processes.

Box 1: Operational benefits of PE analysis

- ***Actors:*** Map key actors in state and society; understand the (formal and informal) relationships between actors; identify the drivers of change.
- ***Reform readiness:*** Analyse power relations, interests and resources.
- ***Space for effective change***: Identify windows of opportunity, the incentives for change and the obstacles to improved domestic accountability in various settings.
- ***Support strategies:*** Design realistic support strategies based on lessons of the past; well-chosen entry points; the right mix of supply-side and demand-side support.
- ***Results:*** Build a more realistic appreciation of the speed and trajectory of social and political transformation in partner countries and the potential results.
- ***Development partner roles:*** Identify how development partners can 'do no harm', work together and exert a beneficial influence when involved in domestic accountability processes.

1.2 PE analysis in practice: progress and grey zones

The use of Political economy analysis in development cooperation is relatively new. They have been promoted by a dedicated group of development partners looking for answers to basic questions about why things are as they are and what the likely prospects and mechanisms for change are. Over the past few years, major advances have been made in using this instrument. However, experience suggests that many thorny operational problems remain unresolved. Table 1 below summarises the progress made and the remaining 'grey zones' with regard to the use of PE analyses in governance-related processes such as the

[9] The best known donor-driven assessments are the Dfid Drivers of Change, the SIDA Power Analysis and the World Bank's IGR, with the SCAGA's Power and Change Analysis integrating some of the other methodologies. For more general information on political economy approaches, see: www.thepolicypractice.com

promotion of domestic accountability.[10] This may help country teams to assess their own response strategies and examine the extent to which they have integrated PE analyses into their planned interventions.

Table 1: How far has the art of PE analysis evolved?

Progress made in using PE analysis	Grey zones and thorny issues
Various PE diagnostic tools – both country-wide and specific – have been developed, providing opportunities for joint learning and dialogue among development partners.	In the field, development partners are still largely ***working out on their own how best to proceed.*** There have not been many examples of cooperation in integrating and applying the lessons learned from PE analysis.
Some development partners have become more savvy at getting ***'behind the façade'*** of political dynamics and institutional processes. PE analysis brings more honesty into the design process and helps to fundamentally question the assumptions underlying the choices of strategies, programmes, sectors, partners/stakeholders and tools.	But many development partners are ***either unwilling or unable to integrate the findings of PE analysis into their interventions***. This may lead to a *de facto* weakening of PE analysis and a return to business as usual in development partners' response strategies.
PE analysis puts domestic political processes at the centre of ***risk assessments*** – and also highlights what will happen if certain actions are not undertaken.	In real life, ***corporate pressures*** on development partners to reduce country risks and ***institutional incentives*** to meet spending targets tend to pull development partners in different directions than PE may suggest.
The findings of PE analysis suggest that powerful and sustainable incentives may result from ***citizen pressure*** and civil-society scrutiny in the domain of domestic accountability (i.e. a focus on a demand-side approach).	Too often, development partners still ***focus on supply-side approaches*** in the form of direct technical assistance and capacity development in partner countries. There is still limited tested knowledge on how best to engage citizens in domestic accountability processes.
PE analysis may indicate how and where ***development partners behaviour*** is likely to adversely affect domestic accountability processes.	***Political and managerial imperatives in development partner agencies*** may lead them to downplay what is politically relevant and institutionally feasible in a particular country.
PE analysis offers opportunities for joint learning and constructive ***dialogue between development partners and partner countries.***	Yet support for such dialogue and for domestic PE diagnostic work is ***fragmented***. Transparency is not always managed strategically.

1.3 How the nine pilot cases deal with PE analysis

This section relates directly to the field realities and operational challenges faced by the various country teams. It proposes an assessment framework (see Table 2 below) for understanding how the nine pilot cases have so far formally incorporated PE analysis into the design of their support strategies, based on first drafts of their collaboration proposals as published in the second half of 2008. The framework:

[10] Based on DAC-OECD, GOVNET. 2005. *Lessons learned on the use of Power and Drivers of Change Analyses in Development Cooperation*.

(i) examines the main strategic and methodological choices made in the various draft proposals with regard to PE analysis (in the left-hand column); and
(ii) raises, for each of these key choices, a number of operational questions which may need to be explored (in the right-hand column).

Following the production of this note, the teams were invited to perform their own self-assessments of whether and how their interventions could be strengthened by conducting an additional PE analysis.

Table 2: Assessment framework for reviewing PE analyses

What key choices were made with regard to PE analysis?	**Operational questions that need to be explored**
1) Draft proposals generally do not refer to or build on lessons learnt from past efforts to promote domestic accountability, which would justify the adoption of a more 'political' approach to cooperation.	* Is there a need to take further stock of past experiences, including the lessons learnt from technocratic approaches to promoting accountability? * Can or should the differences or similarities between this pilot project and past approaches (i.e. 'what is really new?') be articulated more clearly in the project proposal?
2) Only a few pilot proposals make explicit reference to the core findings of PE analyses.	* Is there a need to further specify the outcomes of the PE analysis in the project proposal so as to better understand the design choices made? * To what extent are some of the findings of the PE analysis too uncomfortable to use in the design process? * How does the country team deal with any less optimistic findings of PE analysis? * What are the limits of current PE analyses? External? Internal to the development partners? Shared with the government? * Are further PE analyses (i.e. at a local level) or studies required?
3) Analysis of 'reform readiness' tends to be fairly limited or implicit.	* Has PE analysis led to a better understanding of the 'reform readiness' of the key players targeted in the project? * Is there a need to be more explicit about the main opportunities for and the resistances to more domestic accountability? * Have particular groups of actors taken on new positions, attitudes and capacities that may help promote effective change? * Is it sufficiently clear which incentives should be offered to whom in order to move forward?
4) A multitude of actors and stakeholders are mentioned, though often in the form of 'clusters'. In order to obtain a better insight into the reform readiness, more detailed information is often needed on actors, including an analysis of their hold on power, their interests, their interrelations, the incentives at play, etc.	* Is it useful or feasible to deepen or disaggregate the actor analysis? * Is it sufficiently clear what the formal and informal 'rules of the game' are that inform the behaviour of and the accountability relations between actors? * Did the PE analysis allow for a proper identification of key drivers of change whose involvement is critical to the success of the pilot case?
5) Several draft proposals for strengthening accountability are situated at sector level and target various levels of governance (i.e.	* How profound is the PE analysis about governance and accountability in the planned sector of intervention? * Has the PE analysis also assessed the reform readiness at a national level, in terms of the willingness to improve

national and local). Yet there is relatively limited contextual information on how the sector is influenced by the broader political and institutional setting.	performance in various sectors? * If there are clear obstructions to the proper decentralisation of sector responsibilities, how will pilot cases respond to such obstacles?
6) Some pilot cases make explicit reference to joint development partner and partner country efforts in support of strengthening domestic accountability. Others do not dwell on this aspect.	* How can the project offer a better overall picture of 'who does what' in promoting domestic accountability? * What are the main risks of 'doing harm' inherent to prevailing development partners' approaches to promoting accountability (i.e. flooding the civil society sector with aid, thus compromising its legitimacy)? * What steps have been envisaged for working out a division of labour and complementarity with other development partners with regard to the pilot project (in line with the commitments made under the Paris Declaration and related Joint Assistance Strategies)?
7) Only a few draft proposals assess the potential adverse impact of development partner choices (i.e. with regard to aid modalities) on domestic accountability.	* Should a more detailed analysis be made of the (potentially adverse) impact of the aid provided, including the modalities used, on domestic accountability? * How could such an analysis inform decision-making on the right mix of support for the pilot project? * Have development partners adopted mechanisms for assessing the joint impact of their assistance on domestic accountability systems? * Have development partners and their partners adopted a mechanism for assessing and monitoring the accountability principles of the Paris Declaration? * Has sufficient thought been given to the potentially adverse effects on domestic accountability caused by regional and global players in the sector of intervention (i.e. in natural resource management)?
8) There is a limited amount of information on how the country teams are to undertake further PE analyses during the course of the implementation process.	* Do country teams see PE analysis as a task to be performed *ex ante*, i.e. during the design process, or as an ongoing and iterative process, i.e. so as to take stock of evolving situations and opportunities? * What kind of instruments and mechanisms could help ensure that an efficient and cost-effective form of ongoing PE analysis is undertaken throughout the programme cycle, including mid-term reviews?

2. From analysis to action: how best to support domestic accountability processes

Undertaking a PE analysis is not an end in itself. Its aim is to help external agencies design and implement more realistic support strategies, built on a solid understanding of societal dynamics, governance processes and prospects for improved accountability. However, as development partner agencies adopt a more political approach to promoting domestic accountability, they enter into troubled waters. Many of the assumptions on which their previous support strategies were based may no longer be valid. There is no clear operational guidance available on:

(i) how to translate PE analysis into action;
(ii) how to select the best entry point for action;
(iii) how to target and support promising accountability actors and processes.

There is no universal check list that applies in equal measure to all countries, sectors and time frames. Distinct institutional, economic, social and cultural factors are likely to determine which initiatives are more or less successful than others. Good practices are often context-specific and do not lend themselves easily to generalisation. The promotion of domestic accountability is clearly more of an art than a science. The way forward lies in ongoing processes of experimentation, learning and adaptation.

This is also true of the ambitious pilot project launched by the Ministry. As country teams refine their intervention strategies, a wide range of new operational issues are likely to arise. The best way to address these is by exchanging relevant information, experiences and innovative practices on an ongoing basis. This second section briefly recapitulates key lessons learnt from past efforts to promote domestic accountability (section 2.1); identifies the main challenges for improved effectiveness (section 2.2); and discusses the specific example of the role of citizens in domestic accountability processes to illustrate how the search for operational guidance could be organised (section 2.3).

2.1 Key lessons learnt from promoting domestic accountability in the past

The growing body of literature and evidence on domestic accountability and related development partner support makes for sobering reading. While many interventions have yielded positive intermediate outcomes, it has usually proven difficult to fundamentally alter the logic and operation of domestic accountability systems. Experience suggests that the effectiveness of current development partner approaches is hampered by various factors, including:

- ***The limited political scope*** for holding those in power accountable. This applies not just to states with an authoritarian style of governance, but also to many formal democratic systems. This imposes serious limitations on what development partners can achieve and puts pressure on their overall capacity to deliver.
- ***An absence of sufficient claim-making capacity in society***. Accountability processes are hampered by broader development constraints such as low levels of education, restrictions on transparency and communication, and the limited maturation of democratic processes (including channels of political representation and processes of mobilisation through organised civil society or active citizens).
- ***Unrealistic assumptions and expectations about social change processes.*** Available evaluation results show that development partner interventions are seldom underpinned by a clear theory of social change, including a critical analysis of the role

and limitations of external agencies in domestic accountability processes. This often leads to:

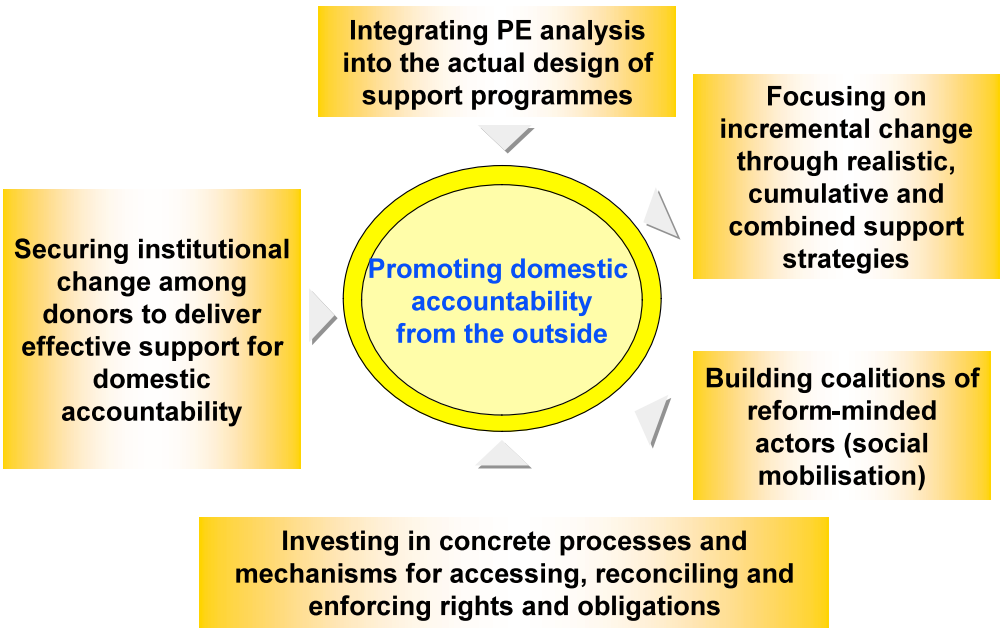
(i) Western biases in the design of support strategies;[11]

(ii) depoliticised approaches to promoting governance principles such as participation[12] and transparency; and

(iii) poor linkages between domestic accountability projects and broader political reforms.

- ***Development partners' reliance on normative or technocratic approaches***, focusing primarily on formal mechanisms and less on informal realities and power structures. As a result, accountability is often seen as a technical problem, to be solved by capacity development. This also explains the tendency to focus primarily on the supply side of improved accountability, i.e. that of duty-bearers, and less on the demand side, i.e. the right-holders, meaning citizens, civil-society organisations, pressure groups, media, parliaments, political society at large, etc.
- ***Limited operational guidance for designing interventions***. There is a growing consensus that the promotion of domestic accountability needs to be firmly rooted in a solid contextual analysis. However, there is still a steep learning curve in terms of establishing frameworks or typologies that relate domestic accountability to context. There have been promising assessment methodologies, but these need to be further operationalised in particular settings at appropriate levels of engagement. Furthermore, there is a lack of systematic evidence about the effectiveness of development partners' activities in this area.[13]

Main challenges to greater effectiveness in promoting domestic accountability



[11] In practice, the approach adopted for the promotion of domestic accountability is heavily influenced by the liberal democratic model. As a result, donors tend to work back from the ideal, thus sidelining a more fundamental discussion of the causes of poor governance, the incentives and constraints shaping behaviour and of the factors that may induce change.

[12] For a fascinating analysis of this issue, see Cleaver, F. *Institutions, Agency and the Limitations of Participatory Development Approaches.* In: Participation: The New Tyranny? Edited by Cooke, B. and U. Kothari. Zed Books, 2001.

[13] This is confirmed by recent work performed by the ODI on 'Voice and Accountability' on behalf of a consortium of donors. See O'Neill, T. and others. *Evaluation of Citizens' Voice and Accountability. Review of the Literature and Donor Approaches*, August 2007.

2.2 Main challenges to improved effectiveness

Development partners recognise the limitations of the current approaches adopted in support of domestic accountability. This awareness has engendered a search for more relevant intervention strategies, particularly at a field level. Based on these experiences, we have identified five main ***operational challenges*** to improved performance, as illustrated in Figure 1 on page 12.

These five challenges are the ***building blocks for a more realistic and integrated approach*** to promoting domestic accountability in a variety of political and geographic contexts. Each of these clusters of challenges, taken separately, opens up a huge agenda and requires a serious rethinking of current development partner intervention strategies, aid modalities and political and institutional incentives for quality support:

- The first cluster of challenges requires development partner agencies to translate their increasingly honest PE analyses into ***new-style support strategies*** and to tailor interventions to the prevailing political context (including both the formal and the informal 'rules of the game'). This is no easy matter. During a recent workshop in Tanzania on the draft proposal compiled by EKN, SNV and VNG, a local civil-society actor asked a provocative question: 'Donor agencies are increasingly honest in their analysis of the situation on the ground (in terms of domestic accountability). But are you also ready to show the same level of honesty when it comes to designing concrete support strategies?'
- The second cluster calls for a more sophisticated set of ***intervention strategies*** based on (i) 'basic-first approaches';[14] (ii) more emphasis on getting citizens on board; (iii) a smart combination of support for the supply and demand sides of domestic accountability; (iii) a capacity to link interventions at micro-meso-macro levels; (iv) a careful consideration of the impact of new aid modalities on domestic accountability processes; (v) a readiness to relate project interventions to broader reform processes such as accountability and fiscal decentralisation.
- The third cluster of challenges focuses on the ***actors dimension*** of improving domestic accountability. It invites development partners to (i) make effective use of PE analysis and to try and identify actors who may drive or block change; (ii) design support strategies that target non-traditional actors beyond civil-society organisations; (iii) overcome the public-private divide by building alliances between reform-minded actors across the board; (iv) recognise the limits of individual agency, i.e. where poor citizens act as agents of accountability, and focus on collective action in a realistic way, by mobilising social movements, media and civil-society organisations which seek to make state failures public and to trigger other forms of accountability, including those exercised by legislatures and judiciaries.[15]
- The fourth cluster stresses the need to invest in ***institutional development***, i.e. in the establishment of ***concrete mechanisms and channels*** for improving government accountability or enhancing the democratic scope for citizens to voice their views and take action.
- The final cluster focuses on the implications for development partners of the adoption of a more political approach to cooperation. It calls upon donor agencies to thoroughly review their own political, institutional and operational methods if they wish effectively to

[14] This means preferring small incremental changes in domestic accountability to grand designs. A case in point is raising basic awareness of existing accountability mechanisms and how best to use them.

[15] Recommended reading with regard to this cluster is the recent IDS Bulletin on *State Reform and Social Accountability* (with examples from Brazil, India and Mexico). Several case studies make a convincing argument for multi-actor approaches and processes of collective action for promoting domestic accountability. Institute of Development Studies, Volume 38, Number 6, January 2008.

influence governance processes such as domestic accountability.[16] See Annex B for further details on this ***development partner reform agenda***.

2.3 Extending knowledge of domestic accountability: citizens' involvement as an example

Domestic accountability can occur at many different levels, involve multiple stakeholders and offer differing entry points for development partners to engage. In the context of this paper, we clearly cannot address all the various operational challenges that may arise in domestic accountability processes and present good practices for each of these.

This concluding section illustrates the challenge of organising relevant knowledge in support of country teams, by focusing on a ***specific problem,*** i.e. the whole question of ***ensuring effective citizens' engagement*** in domestic accountability processes. This is a core aspect of the accountability system, yet it has proven a particularly difficult one to understand and address in practice. Although the nine pilot proposals do refer to citizens (in varying ways), most of them are fairly vague as to how these actors should be brought more prominently into the domestic accountability equation.

What type of operational guidance can be provided? How can key insights into this particular dimension of domestic accountability be presented in a relevant format? One way to proceed is to ***focus on three questions***:

1) What are the main issues requiring examination?
2) What lessons have been learnt from promoting citizens' involvement in the past?
3) What good practices can serve as sources of inspiration?

(1) What are the main issues requiring examination?

Experience gained from promoting citizens' engagement in domestic accountability suggests that three issues merit particular attention on the part of those planning interventions:

- Assessing barriers to citizens' involvement in accountability-related processes (linked to history, culture, power relations, levels of education, informal allegiances, gender, etc.).
- Embedding support strategies into the dynamics of a country's state-society relations. Ideally, actions taken in relation to domestic accountability should factor in key questions such as: How does the state perceive its citizens? Have any struggles preceded the conclusion of one or other type of 'contract' between state and citizens? Are large groups of citizens isolated from access to participation and power? Is there a sufficient understanding of the coping mechanisms and the often intricate survival strategies at play and of their implications for the demand side of accountability? What do citizens expect from the state, i.e. in terms of service delivery? What are the prevailing attitudes towards public goods, taxation and corruption?
- Making clear choices with regard to the theory of social change underpinning the support provided. The key here is to identify the type of incentives that may help to change the behaviour of citizens, particularly poor and marginalised people using survival strategies.

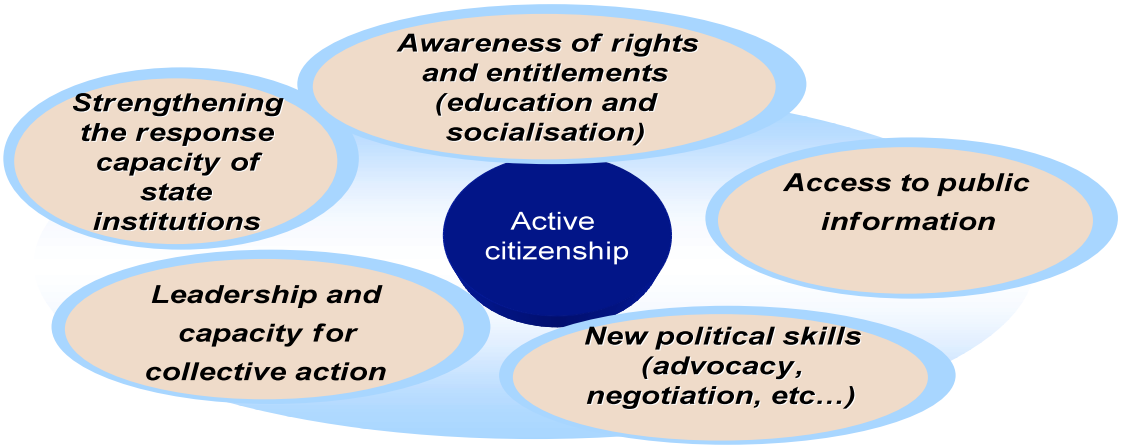
[16] A shared responsibility among donors to increase transparency on their aid (both on- and off-budget) is one concrete item in this cluster.

(2) What lessons have been learnt from promoting citizens' involvement in the past?

Several important lessons may be drawn from a review of the literature and evaluative material:

- ***Look at different levels of citizens' empowerment*:** psychological (i.e. self-image and identity, creating space, acquiring knowledge); cultural (i.e. rules and social norms, recreating cultural practices); social (i.e. leadership in community action, social inclusion, literacy, etc.); economic (i.e. security of livelihood, ownership of productive assets, etc.); organisational (i.e. collective identity, establishing representatives, organisational leadership, etc.); and political (i.e. participation in local institutions, negotiating political power, and accessing political power).
- ***Consider citizen-building as a step-by-step process.*** Active citizenship – or empowerment – does not arise as a natural response to increased public space or political opportunity. An integrated, multi-dimensional approach is required to promote citizenship, as illustrated by Figure 2 below.
- ***Adopt a rights-based approach.*** Experience shows there is a need to move beyond capacity-development approaches in promoting citizens' voice and to raise people's awareness of their rights, particularly with regard to services delivered by government and development funds.
- ***Use specific development challenges such as local service delivery as entry points for developing new forms of state-citizen engagement.***
- ***Combine supply and demand.*** By working directly with state institutions and service-providers, successful projects go beyond raising people's awareness of their rights and ensure they can enjoy them.
- ***Define appropriate strategies and mechanisms for channelling field concerns to national advocacy work.***
- ***Be aware of the risks of speaking out.*** Experience shows that poor people are exposed to considerable danger when they struggle for their rights. This means that development partners must carefully consider the political implications of their interventions, as well as the supportive structures needed to protect citizens.[17]

Figure 2 : Working on the different dimensions of citizenship



[17] This insight was confirmed by a thematic evaluation of Dfid development assistance in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment. See Dfid, Working Paper no. 7, March 2005.

(3) What good practices can serve as sources of inspiration?

The above figure illustrates the scope of the agenda involved in promoting wider citizens' engagement in domestic accountability. It should be possible to apply the lessons learnt and good practices to each of these dimensions. In the framework of this brief Note, however, we have decided to highlight only a small number of good practices:

- ***Unpacking the demand side from the citizen's perspective.*** *Laboratoire Citoyennetés* (LC) is a regional initiative emanating from civil-society actors, supported by strategic partners (including SNV). It seeks to improve local governance and decentralised public service delivery in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. To this end, it undertakes detailed research in targeted municipalities so as better to understand how the market for local social services *actually* works. These field studies generate a wealth of information on citizens' norms, attitudes, expectations and coping mechanisms. For the LC, this type of information is a precondition for effective action on local service delivery. There is already evidence that research findings are being translated into new approaches for effectively delivering public services to citizens. The LC network is currently trying to link these research insights to the decentralisation process and development partner support programmes.

- ***Providing civic education while addressing key development challenges.*** There is no shortage of development partner-supported civic-education programmes aimed at raising citizens' awareness of their rights and obligations. A particularly interesting example is the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE) in Malawi. It was launched in the late 1990s to address the huge barriers to citizen participation that were inherited from a long period of authoritarian rule. The NICE programme is now in its third phase (ending in 2009) and boasts an impressive track record in raising awareness and enhancing citizens' claim-making capacity. The methodological choices underpinning NICE have proven their relevance in Malawi. These include:

  (i) the adoption of an impartial, non-partisan and neutral approach to civic education;

  (ii) a highly decentralised programme structure, encompassing NICE offices in every district and region;

  (iii) a needs-based approach to civic education, linking awareness-raising of citizens' rights to specific challenges such as food security, environment, HIV/Aids and local governance;

  (iv) a solid outreach structure of professionals and a network of 6,000 para-civic educators, working on a voluntary basis in remote rural areas;

  (v) a comprehensive information and communication strategy on policies affecting rural livelihoods using locally relevant channels, training of young and senior politicians and traditional leaders in local governance practices, etc.

  For further information, including a recent document listing best practices, see www.nicemw.org.

- ***Bringing citizens into participatory budget processes in rural Zimbabwe.*** The Municipal Development Partnership (MDP) programme introduced a participatory budgeting initiative in a rural district council in Eastern Zimbabwe. The initiative was initially resisted. At central level, there was suspicion about hidden intentions, while at a local level, the elected leadership was not comfortable, for political reasons, with the idea of involving civil society in decision-making processes. To overcome this resistance, strategic partnerships between government, key political players, civil-society groups, citizens and traditional leadership structures were established. Various tactics were used: public hearings were held, round-table and one-to-one meetings were organised, and all-stakeholder workshops were organised to share the vision. Both protocol and local traditional norms were observed. As a result, the initiative became an important conflict-management and conflict-resolution tool, and galvanised all stakeholders in support of local governance.

3. Demonstrating the progress made in enhancing domestic accountability

The pilot project launched by the Ministry is keen to achieve results at three levels:

(i) improving domestic accountability on the ground;
(ii) fostering joint learning; and
(iii) enhancing overall DGIS intervention strategies and approaches for promoting domestic accountability (across countries and regions).

This section focuses on the challenge of accounting for results in the various programmes implemented in the nine pilot countries. This is a particularly complex issue, primarily because of the inherent tension between the long-term nature of domestic accountability promotion and the need to demonstrate short-term results as the programmes progress. Furthermore, there is a growing consensus that traditional input-output-outcome models are not suitable for monitoring and evaluating the progress made in governance processes such as improving domestic accountability. Fresh ideas are clearly needed, about ways of looking at results; about the tools, indicators and dialogue mechanisms used for measuring progress; and about a multi-actor approach for achieving a sustainable impact. The pilot process is an opportunity to test innovative approaches to demonstrating the results obtained from domestic accountability processes. To this end, it briefly recapitulates the limitations of current systems in terms of their ability to measure results (section 3.1); reviews the main operational challenges involved in designing a more appropriate M&E system (section 3.2) and provides illustrations of possible approaches to tracking results in domestic accountability (section 3.3).

3.1 The limited ability of current systems to measure results

Development cooperation has undergone major changes in the past two decades. The initial focus on providing financial and technical support (mainly through short-term projects) has shifted towards supporting major political and institutional reforms in developing countries (increasingly by means of budget and sector support as well as other programme-based approaches). This shift is reflected by the growing development partner support for processes of governance, decentralisation, civil-society development and domestic accountability.

As development partners move into supporting complex processes of societal transformation, the current systems for reporting on results and (sustainable) impact are also coming under pressure. In particular, the traditional, relatively linear and mechanistic 'input-output-outcome' model (logframe) has proven of limited use in governance-related processes.[18] These are just some of the reasons:

- ***The current systems focus on projects rather than on long-term change.*** Greater societal accountability is not a simple output or outcome, to be achieved in a short-term project. Its promotion requires the adoption of long-term process approaches that are designed to structurally change the 'rules of the game'. There is little room for 'quick fixes' or linear causalities between inputs, outputs and outcomes. Logical frameworks and related monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, which focus on outputs and activities, are of little use in identifying the changes that may have occurred during the lifetime of a project. It is not easy to reveal the pathway from improved domestic accountability to

[18] The same applies to many other 'soft' areas of intervention such as institutional development, civil-service reform, support for civil society, etc.

broader development outcomes. A considerable amount of uncertainty is involved, as evolving political conditions and many other factors heavily influence the ultimate success or failure of external interventions. This, in turn, places a premium on a high degree of flexibility in managing the results, as well as a willingness to adapt the focus in order to achieve the long-term objective. Traditional result measurement systems are ill-suited to integrate all these features.

- ***Single-actor approaches rather than co-responsibility for impact.*** There is still a strong tendency to deal with the attribution issues by singling out the contributions of individual actors. There is now a growing consensus that the whole question of results and impact – particularly in governance-related processes – needs to be addressed in a much more 'systemic' way by the various actors and stakeholders *jointly,* by means of proper dialogue, stock-taking and learning mechanisms.
- ***Limited local ownership.*** Prevailing M&E practices tend to emphasise the information needs of development partners and central governments rather than assist local stakeholders in making their own evaluations. This approach relies more on external experts than on local knowledge and has failed to strengthen the ownership of programmes and their outcomes.
- ***Overall administrative culture of development partners***. Despite a host of reforms aimed at improving the overall quality of aid (including the Paris Agenda), the prevailing culture in donor administrations is still concerned primarily with disbursement, minimising risks and short-term results that are both attributable and visible. The emphasis on financial control tends to reduce the duration of the interventions, the scope for experimentation and the flexibility of implementation –all factors that are essential for achieving results in domestic accountability.

While the development partner community is starting to recognise the need to adopt long-term approaches to governance reforms, M&E systems have not evolved along the same lines. In practice, this often places operational staff in a quandary. They know that existing M&E approaches and tools are not suitable for dealing with the question of effects and results. However, they may be forced to rely largely on them because of a lack of workable alternatives. The pressure exerted from higher levels (i.e. Parliament and ministries) to show 'quick results' may compound the problem and push field staff to define unrealistic (short-term) results for their programmes. In the context of this pilot process, it will be interesting to see how country teams have tried to cope with some of these dilemmas during the design process.

3.2 Main challenges in building a more effective M&E system

The quest for a more appropriate means of assessing the results of governance-related support programmes is not new. In many places, the issue is being debated, experiments are being performed, learning is taking place and new tools are being developed to measure the results of processes such as the promotion of domestic accountability. The Dutch cooperation actors are also participating actively in this debate and are acquiring relevant knowledge.[19] The following box presents some key operational challenges which country teams are likely to face when developing M&E approaches for their domestic accountability programmes (in the left-hand column), as well as possible elements of a response strategy (right-hand column).

[19] Some of these experiences have been documented in the Rich Menu for the Poor series, and DGIS-developed result chains are available in the 2006 *Results in Development Report:* www.minbuza.nl/en/Key_Topics/Development_Cooperation/Results_in_Development

Key operational challenges	Elements to consider
What type of results are we looking for in domestic accountability processes?	* identify the baseline conditions (or preconditions) for obtaining results in domestic accountability (through a solid political economy analysis)[20] * define the levels at which changes are expected (i.e. national and local) and the articulation between both levels * clarify the type of (tangible and intangible) changes that are sought, in terms of policy (regulatory frameworks); practices; channels and processes; behaviour; and power relations * differentiate between different types of outcome (i.e. short-term, intermediate and long-term) * explore linkages between improved domestic accountability and broader development outcomes (i.e. better service delivery and democratisation)
How can we usefully measure the progress made in promoting domestic accountability?	* agree on dialogue mechanisms for discussing the design of a monitoring process * define, in a manner in which the various stakeholders have a say, the quantitative and qualitative (process) indicators for both the local and national levels[21] * identify innovative tools for tracking the progress made in boosting domestic accountability * consider the proper sequencing of results in a coherent chain, in line with the long-term nature of domestic accountability processes * consider what sort of data stakeholders need in order to improve their performance
How can we satisfy the demand for short-term results?	* consult with stakeholders to identify indicators that relate to organisational capacities or aspects of internal governance (i.e. representation, participation by members or citizens, capacities to aggregate and represent interests, etc.) * focus on small, incremental steps in which progress can be made * identify quick wins that may help to motivate local stakeholders * develop an appropriate communication strategy for reporting on short-term results
How can we address the question of the impact on domestic accountability as a shared responsibility?	* Define the expected roles of the various key stakeholders in moving towards results (i.e. central and local governments, civil society, local capacity-builders and other development partners) * integrate the responsibility of these actors in the results chain * foster dialogue and joint learning between the various stakeholders on ways and means of optimising outcomes

[20] For an example, see the local SGACA carried out in Tanzania. This recognises that the legal framework considers participation an important attribute of governance, which is expected to help curb corruption. However, the power and change analysis also revealed major barriers to effective citizen participation, which will inevitably affect the type of results that can be achieved.

[21] A useful national indicator could be the greater visibility of the concept of domestic accountability in general discussions in the sector or field concerned.

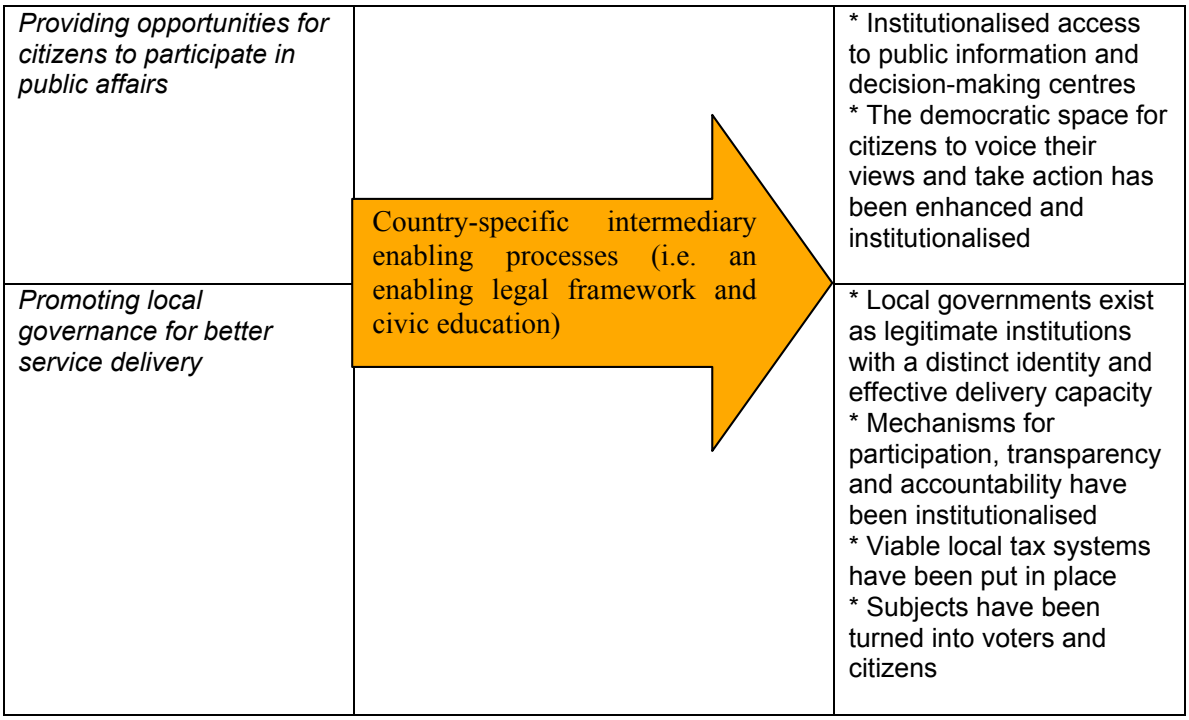
3.2 Possible means of tracking results in domestic accountability processes

Within the scope of this brief Note, we cannot give a full overview of the innovations that are taking place with regard to the M&E of domestic accountability promotion, or respond to questions from country teams about their specific fields of intervention. Hence, this section seeks only to present a few examples of how the results of domestic accountability processes might be assessed. Further exchanges between country teams should be used to deepen the analysis, exchange existing sources of knowledge on innovative practices and seek concrete solutions to shared challenges (i.e. how best to demonstrate short-term results). Three brief examples are given below.

(1) Broadening the view of what constitutes 'results'

The adoption of a political economy approach to promoting domestic accountability enables us to get 'behind the façade' and obtain a better grasp of the factors that may induce effective change in the rules of the game. These (often intangible) elements should be incorporated as far as possible in the framework for assessing results. This, in turn, means that country teams need to define more clearly the systemic outcomes that their actions may produce in the long term. The below box gives a few illustrations of how concrete interventions (in the left-hand column) could be linked with broader systemic outcomes (in the right-hand column). This is not a theoretical debate. Current evaluations show that development partner support strategies often target laudable objectives such as improving participation and transparency, but without investing enough in building the institutional channels and mechanisms required to sustain these gains.

Domestic accountability interventions		**Possible systemic outcomes**
Strengthening the capacity of governments to become more accountable	Country-specific intermediary enabling processes (i.e. an enabling legal framework and civic education)	*Institutionalised and durable mechanisms have been put in place to improve government accountability (with regard to policy and implementation)
Strengthening the capacity of civil society to influence policy and demand accountability		*A viable civil society has been put in place, with the legitimacy and capacity that are needed to participate in the overall governance of the country *Improved state-civil society relations have been built around a shared social contract



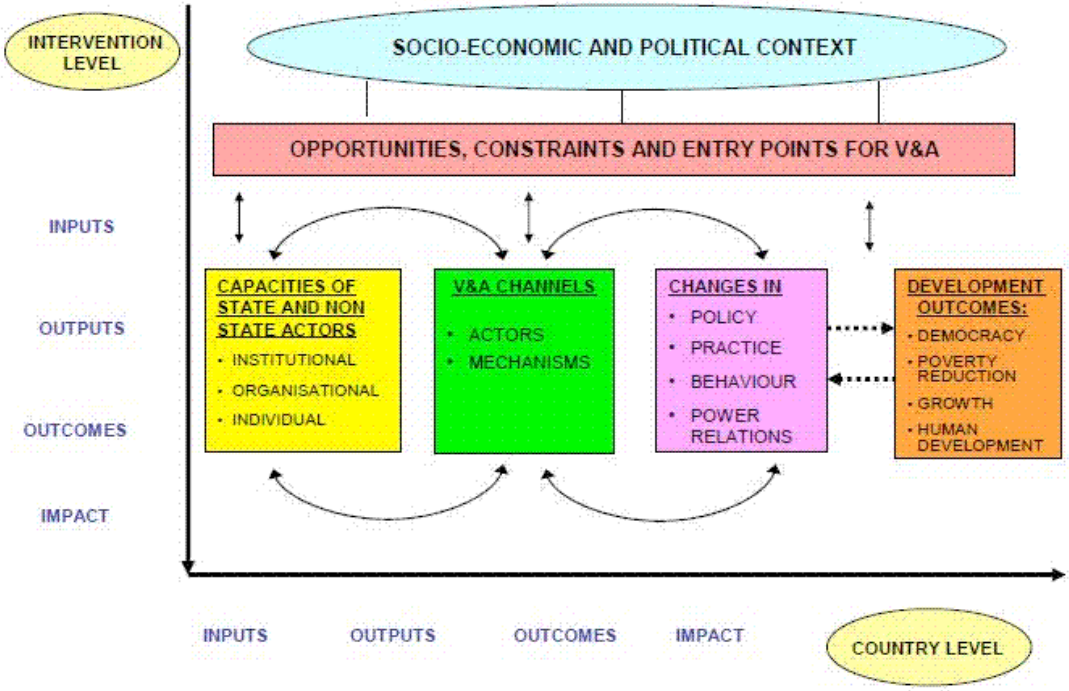
(2) Adopting an 'open-systems' approach to assessing results

In order to provide effective support, development partners need to understand the overall domestic accountability system. This consists of various interacting and interdependent elements embedded in a political and societal context. This is the only way of meaningfully discussing the results chain linked to development partner interventions. We refer in this context to a recent study, sponsored by a consortium of development partners and performed by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), which attempted to define a joint evaluation framework for assessing aid for voice and accountability (V&A).[22] Based on solid desk research of past development partners' interventions and pilot testing in two countries, an interesting framework (see figure below) was developed to represent the relationship between:

(i) the socio-economic and political context;
(ii) components of V&A;
(iii) the different levels of results and outcomes (in the specific field of V&A and at country level).

The figure below, reproduced from ODI's *Evaluation Framework of Citizen's Voice and Accountability* (see footnote 5), presents the context, framework components and the different levels of results and outcomes.

[22] Foresti, M. and others (ODI). *Evaluation of Citizens' Voice and Accountability. Evaluation Framework.* August 2007.



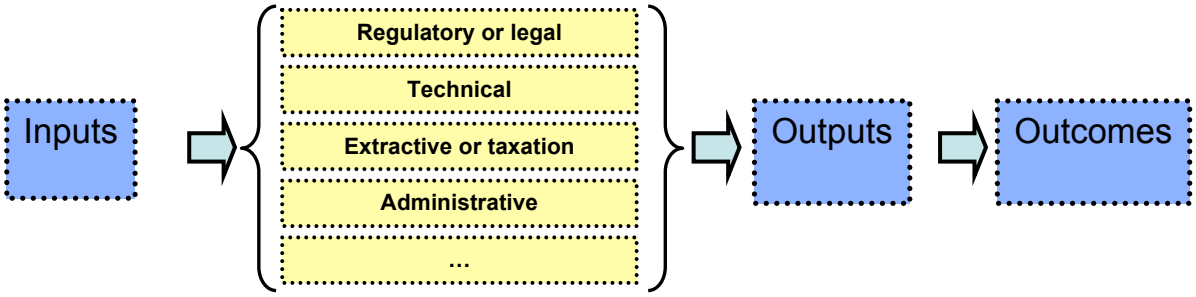
(3) Integrating domestic accountability in the result chain

As the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation states in his policy document entitled *Our Common Concern*, domestic accountability is a legitimate end in itself, rather than merely a means of achieving certain development results. For this reason, it is even more important to integrate the concept into overall intervention strategies, and to unpack and specify the concept of domestic accountability into the context of the nine country programmes. One way of doing so is by distinguishing various domestic accountability dimensions, which contribute in an interrelated manner to an organisation's (or group of organisations or society, depending on the context) capacity to promote domestic accountability. The following domestic accountability dimensions are proposed here, but they may be adapted to each specific context in which they are used[23]:

(1) the regulatory or legal dimension;
(2) the technical dimension;
(3) the extractive or taxation dimension:
(4) the administrative dimension.

[23] Source of these dimensions: www.uneca.org/prsp/docs/SPEAKING%20amend.doc

Identifying process indicators in relation to these dimensions and monitoring them regularly can help explain why certain inputs do or do not lead to certain outputs. The dimensions are visualised in the following diagram. This diagram shows the four proposed dimensions as placed in a typical results chain, and is located as a mediating stage in between the input and output stages.[24]



[24] This approach is inspired by Terms of References produced by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of Dutch the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (IOB) for an ongoing series of evaluation studies of 'the Dutch support to capacity development': www.minbuza.nl/dsresource?objectid=buzabeheer:28873&versionid=&subobjectname=

4. Promoting complementarity between partners working on domestic accountability

A key new feature of the pilot process on domestic accountability launched by the Ministry is the search for greater complementarity between Dutch cooperation actors in the field (i.e. embassies, SNV and VNG). The aim is to push existing forms of collaboration a step further towards genuine forms of partnership, based on a division of responsibilities that is in line with each player's added value. The expected benefits are greater synergies between the activities of the various actors, as well as a stronger impact on domestic accountability processes (by means of improved macro-meso-micro linkages, among other things).

This section discusses how this complementarity might work out in practice. It clarifies the concept as promoted by the Ministry (section 4.1); analyses the different approaches to complementarity followed by the various country teams (section 4.2); and reviews the key implementation challenges to be addressed in constructing these new-style partnerships (section 4.3). The challenges presented here are not exhaustive and may differ from one country to another.

4.1 Complementarity in domestic accountability

The pilot project seeks to capitalise on the comparative advantage of each actor in the field and encourages the creation of synergies between them in order to promote domestic accountability. The Inception Note for the pilot process clearly states that *'the overall objective of the current initiative is to ensure that ongoing efforts of DGIS, SNV – and other development partners as applicable – contribute credibly and explicitly to strengthening the domestic accountability of government institutions to citizens, directly through democratically elected bodies or through other mechanisms.'*[25] This quote makes clear that the pilot process is not intended to create something completely new, but rather to reinforce the existing synergies between approaches and activities already in use, so as to boost their effectiveness. In this context, complementarity is expected to take different forms and to yield substantial benefits:

- *Complementarity in focus and locus*: the focus of the actors involved in the pilot projects is different. The embassies' support for budget and sector approaches means that they are increasingly closely involved at the national level. From this position, they are well-placed to help create a more enabling environment for domestic accountability, for example by using policy dialogue more effectively. The strength of SNV lies at the meso and local levels (thanks to the advisory role it plays in implementation), while VNG's fieldwork is targeted primarily at a local level and national associations (through direct support and technical assistance). This diversity of roles, knowledge and capacities among Dutch cooperation actors is a fertile breeding ground for ongoing and mutually beneficial exchange of information and for effective cooperation, as well as an effective division of labour on the basis of comparative advantages.
- *Complementarity of resources*: Promoting domestic accountability involves a wide variety of actors and processes. Flexibility and the reach of aid mechanisms differ substantially from one development partner to another. So working on complementarity can help broaden and deepen the reach of actors. It can also allow development partners to support each other in terms of resource mobilisation, both human and financial.
- *Complementarity with other development partners*: working on domestic accountability requires actors to take a careful look at the roles played by other development partners

[25] *Towards more far-reaching cooperation between embassies and SNV on domestic accountability issues*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. AVT08/BZ89828.

and at the impact they seek to achieve. This is not merely a matter of avoiding duplication or enhancing efficiency. It is also a matter of fulfilling the commitments of the Paris and Accra agendas. For example, a lack of harmonisation may result in a fragmentation that discourages rather than encourages governments to act in more accountable ways. As a second example, a lack of collective development partner efforts to provide timely, transparent and comprehensive information on aid flows reduces transparency and the scope for domestic stakeholders such as parliaments and citizen's watchdogs to engage.

- *Complementarity in terms of impact*: a strong partnership between players at different levels should make it possible to influence a broader set of dimensions and actors, thus potentially increasing the scope for a sustainable impact.

The above-mentioned Inception Note lists a range of activities in relation to which embassies and SNV could add value to each other's work. The aim is not to engage in all these activities, but rather to *'decide on a clear focus in their joint work, based on the analysis of the country of sector specific bottlenecks in domestic accountability and/or specific added value that can be expected from a joint initiative'*

The notion of ***joint work*** is particularly important as it illustrates the Ministry's desire to foster the development of a ***new type of partnership*** between DGIS and the other Dutch actors involved in this pilot project. This will mean moving away from a relationship between a client or funding agency (i.e. an embassy or DGIS) on the one hand and an executive agency or service-provider (i.e. SNV) on the other hand, and replacing it by a 'partnership between equals', who are jointly responsible for defining and implementing a common programme. This new type of partnership will ***fundamentally alter the relationships between the actors***. This is particularly true of the embassies, which are now invited to play a direct role in development programmes.

4.2 Approaches to complementarity in the pilot projects

The draft proposals from the nine pilot countries take different approaches to complementarity. Based on document analysis, we can distinguish two basic models. The first proposes a genuinely joint programme that aims at fostering a fully-fledged partnership approach to cooperation between the embassies and SNV. This fundamentally alters the nature of cooperation between the embassies, SNV and other partners. The second model is less ambitious, and is based on a functional form of cooperation that focuses less on the transformation of the relationship between SNV and the embassies, and more on each actor's role in providing the inputs and resources that are required for the success of the project. The characteristics of each approach and the related implementation challenges are listed in the table below.

	Key features	Main challenges
Approach 1 (complementarity based on a fully-fledged partnership)	- EKN/SNV (and possibly VNG) ***jointly*** develop a new, self-standing, long-term ***programme*** for promoting domestic accountability, owned by the various parties - Joint responsibility for overall implementation and management of the programme - Joint responsibility for results - Clear choice for a fully-fledged partnership between EKN and SNV (and possibly VNG) rather than a client- service-provider relationship	- Need for innovative institutional arrangements to jointly manage the programme, arrangements that build on roles and comparative advantages - Remove institutional and procedural obstacles (within the legal framework) to building a new relationship (i.e. tender procedures) between EKN and other partners.
Approach 2 (complementarity based on functional cooperation on existing projects)	- EKN and SNV explore how they can strengthen the domestic accountability dimension of existing projects - Search for a more efficient division of labour with a view to enhancing the impact on domestic accountability - Each partner remains responsible for the management of its own project-related activities - Each partner is responsible solely for the results linked to its part of the programme - No fundamental change in the relationship between EKN and SNV (and possibly VNG)	- Identify overlaps or synergies between different projects - Look for complementarity between different projects and programmes (or actors and stakeholders in projects) in support of shared accountability outcomes

The table does not make any judgements about the merits of these two options. However, it does raise some policy questions that the various actors in the pilot process may want to address:

- What are the ***ambitions*** of the pilot project with regard to complementarity? Is the aim to encourage all countries to form new partnership relations based on joint programming and management responsibilities (as suggested in the Inception Note and tested in a minority of draft proposals), or has a choice been made to adopt a diversity of approaches, including functional cooperation in the framework of ongoing projects?
- What ***measures*** could be taken to encourage and support those country teams that are willing to move towards ***new partnership relationships*** in promoting domestic accountability? Is it possible to create the right institutional and procedural conditions for promising and innovative country dynamics to be translated into practice?
- What ***added value*** may be expected from these new forms of partnership? What synergies are required in order to have the greatest possible impact on domestic accountability? Is a partnership approach more appropriate than functional forms of collaboration?

4.3 Operational challenges to complementarity

The creation of complementarity between actors should be seen as a means to an end (i.e. domestic accountability) rather than as an end in itself. Furthermore, there is a long tradition of collaboration between the embassies and SNV on which this pilot project can build. However, Dutch players are likely to face a number of operational challenges when trying to intensify collaboration or establish new forms of partnership. A prerequisite for such an undertaking is a realistic assessment of the trade-offs (in terms of the speed and nature of decision-making processes, the degree of visibility, the mix of operational and monitoring systems, etc.) involved in opting for one or other type of complementarity. Another, related question is whether the right mix of incentives, institutional arrangements and capacities has been put in place for the type of complementarity that is sought. The following box presents a non-exhaustive list of operational challenges (in the left-hand column) and the related strategic issues that need to be addressed (in the right-hand column).

Critical implementation challenges with regard to complementarity	Strategic issues that need to be addressed
Innovative nature of the collaborative arrangement between Dutch partners	* What is really new in terms of promoting collaboration between the embassies and SNV (compared with previous modes of cooperation)? * What is the likely added value of enhanced cooperation in relation to the promotion of domestic accountability? * Should improved cooperation between Dutch actors be seen as a specific result of the pilot project? * If so, how should the impact of these collaborative arrangements on domestic accountability be assessed?
Type of complementarity sought	* What is the aim? Programmes jointly owned and implemented by the various parties, or improved collaboration on ongoing projects targeted at domestic accountability? * What mechanisms have been created to assess the adequacy of complementarity arrangements and take any remedial action that may be needed?
Division of labour among partners	* Has the full potential of working together on domestic accountability been adequately assessed? * Has the division of labour between the various actors been clearly spelled out and formally agreed? * How can partners such as VNG and NIMD be integrated into the pilot process? * What mechanisms will be used to assess whether the agreed division of labour is working or needs to be reviewed?
Institutional framework for creating stronger synergies and complementarity	* What type of new institutional arrangements have been put in place to manage the new partnership or functional cooperation and to solve potential trade-offs in such a way that complementarity is boosted? * Is there an agreement on the decision-making procedures in relation to any adjustments that may need to be made to the programme in the course of the implementation process? * How can the pilot project guarantee the joint monitoring, evaluation and reporting of results?
Complementarity with **other development partners**	* To what extent is the search for greater cooperation between Dutch actors compatible with the implementation of the commitments made in the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action? * What type of institutional arrangements have been made and incentives offered to create synergy with activities undertaken by other development partners? * What can be learned from SNV's attempts to develop strategic alliances with other development partners?

Annex A: Possible sources and instruments for carrying out a political economy analysis

This Annex sets out some instrumental guidance that may help country teams to address possible 'grey zones' with regard to governance assessments.

1) GOVNET guiding principles for enhanced impact of development partner governance assessments[26]

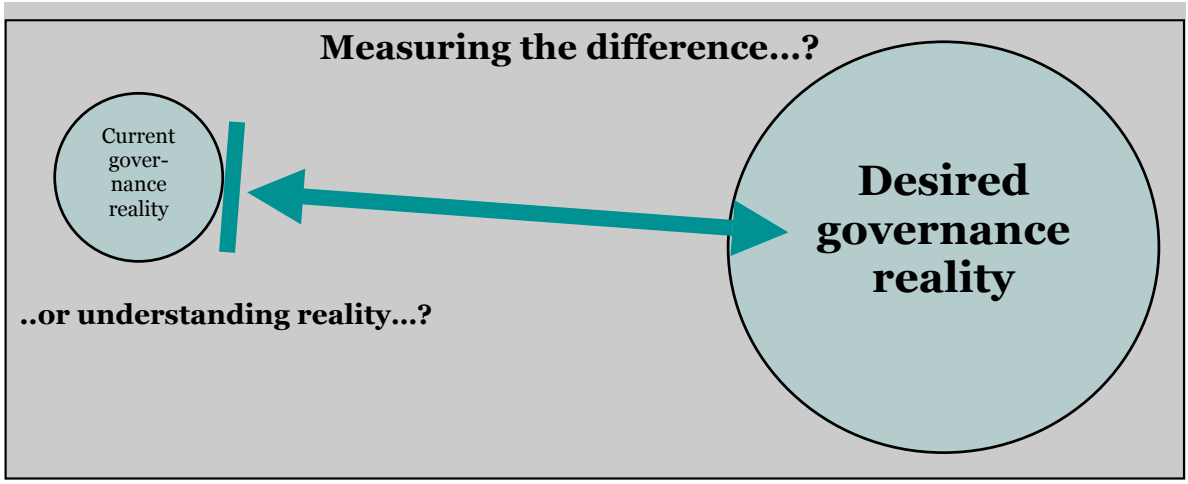
Recently adopted by the DAC GOVNET, these principles are highly relevant to PE diagnostics. They can be shared with and discussed by embassies, among Dutch partners and with other development partners, as well as with strategic country partners. In future, these principles will be included in peer reviews conducted of and by development partners.

…Building on and strengthening nationally driven governance assessments - Drawing on and aligning with nationally driven or peer-based assessments. - Strengthening domestic capacity to assess and debate governance. - Involving partner country stakeholders in tool development.
…Identifying a clear key purpose to drive the choice of assessment tools and processes - Separating governance assessments intended for an agency's internal purposes from those intended to impact on partner country processes. - Limiting the number of purposes of a single governance assessment, and relying on various types of governance assessment.
…Assessing and addressing governance from different entry points and perspectives - Embracing diversity and further development of governance concepts. - Making assumptions, use of concepts and methodologies explicit and publicly available. - Promoting joint governance assessments integrated in diagnostics for sectoral and thematic programmes.
…Harmonising assessments at country level when the aim is to stimulate dialogue and governance reform - Harmonising when there is a clear added value. - Drawing on ongoing processes and limiting transaction costs for partners.
…Making results public unless there are compelling reasons not to do so - Making assessment results public whenever possible. - Clarifying and agreeing on what transparency means beforehand.

[26] These guidelines are available at www.oecd.org/dataoecd/27/31/42338036.pdf

2) *The EC Sector Governance Assessment Framework: From prescription to PE analysis, making the iceberg visible*

There are different ways of looking at accountability and other governance relations in a particular sector. The approach adopted by EuropeAid for its sector governance analysis is analytical. A completely different approach starts by mapping an ideal future state, and then measures the distance to that ideal. Often, a lot of time and effort is wasted on this type of normative approach, leaving the development partner with no more relevant ideas about the causes of deficiencies or the opportunities for progressive change. So it is important to choose the right lens for examining accountability and governance dimensions.



Source: *Addressing Governance in Sector Operations,* Reference Document, EuropeAid, http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/infopoint/publications/europeaid/149a_en.htm

In order to make a realistic assessment of how accountability in a particular sector can be strengthened (or governance more generally), the European Commission has developed a matrix for mapping key governance actors and stakeholders. Together with the other components of the analytical framework, this grid heightens understanding of a sector's readiness to enhance accountability – or, more generally, to improve its governance. It looks at actors' roles and importance, their interests, the power they wield and the resources they hold, as well as linkages and incentives.[27]

[27] Useful information may be obtained from the World Bank's *Tools for Institutional and Political Analysis,* 2007.http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTTOPPSISOU/Resources/1424002-1185304794278/TIPs_Sourcebook_English.pdf

	Role and importance for actual governance/ accountability	Interests	Power and resources	Key formal and informal linkages	Incentives
Non-public sector Actor 1, actor 2, etc.					
Political system – Actor 1, actor 2, etc.					
Core public agencies: Actor 1, actor 2, etc.					
Front-line service-providers: Actor 1, actor 2, etc.					
Checks and balances: Actor 1, actor 2, etc.					
Development agencies and external actors Actor 1, actor 2					

Annex B: Institutional changes required among development partners

Development partners that intervene in governance processes – including the quest to strengthen domestic accountability – are not neutral players. Rather, they are actors themselves with the ability to act as positive change agents, supporting societal dynamics by providing smart forms of aid.

Thanks to the experience gained over the years with the promotion of governance reforms, we now have a good idea of how development partners can perform this role as change agents. However, practice suggests that the provision of smart forms of aid for governance processes (such as domestic accountability) is not only a policy challenge (i.e. 'What do we do?'), but also a question of bringing about institutional changes within the development partners themselves, so that they become responsible and accountable political players in development processes (i.e. 'How do we re-engineer the agency so that it can effectively deliver aid?').

The table below lists the key institutional changes required among development partners, using a three-tier structure of analysis: commitment, capacities and incentives.

	Challenges	**Possible or ongoing responses**
Commitment	Even with strong political and high-level management support for political economy approaches to aid (including a focus on domestic accountability), strong counterpressures remain in development partners Pressure groups tend to overload the aid agenda with additional components that alienate it from the local reality and crowd out the voice of local accountability actors The political commitments made by development partners in the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda do not resonate strongly with constituencies and stakeholders yet.	* Engage Parliament in a proper debate on the domestic accountability agenda * Embed the debate within the broader implementation agenda of the Paris and Accra commitments * Engage with specialist CSOs on these commitments and set up a transparency and accountability mechanism * Engage with CSOs in building policy research capacities on political economy approaches and domestic accountability processes

Capacities	Development partner systems are not adapted to respond flexibly to new opportunities and societal dynamics in partner countries, and to embed their support in long-term domestic political and institutional change processes. Staff numbers are often inadequate for responding to a) development partner requirements for accountability, and b) the new demands arising from a greater focus on domestic accountability systems The staff composition and volume of work at development partners is often not compatible with a commitment to develop a more detailed knowledge of country and sector context so as to feed politically feasible strategies Capacities to act as a political player across the entire project cycle need further reinforcement. This is particularly true of relatively new capacity requirements linked to conflict management (development partner support for domestic accountability can be risky and have political consequences) and political dialogue	* Create a degree of administrative flexibility for prioritised experimenting and piloting * Ensure responsiveness to demands from the field for appropriate process and content managers * Link up with like-minded development partners involved in domestic accountability processes, gradually expanding to harmonised approaches (i.e. joint diagnostics, complementarity and division of labour, joint programming, etc.) * Connect with and participate in joint learning and evaluation programmes * Ensure linkages with the DAC Network on Governance (accountability work stream, but not exclusively) and with the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness
Incentives Disincentives	The dominant political, cultural and organisational incentive structure among development partners still strongly favours technical and financial approaches to what are inherently slow, political and social transformation processes. Disbursement pressures, overambitious expectations and unrealistic time spans all create disincentives for reflection, proper evaluation and research, and learning. The institutional pressure to demonstrate results or value for money tends to push field practitioners away from what is feasible and necessary (based on a political economy analysis of drivers and processes of change) to what is manageable or reportable in response to highly sophisticated development partner standards. The lack of willingness of development partners to accept and manage risks in using country strategies and systems ushers practitioners towards comfort zones rather than towards opportunities for progressive change.	* Adapt human resource management – including career paths, capacity development and staff rotation – to the requirements posed by a stronger emphasis on knowledge and learning, * Place evaluation and research at the core of strategic and operational planning, rather than a results culture * Assess or evaluate past efforts at developing mutual accountability strategies and programmes – and share or promote lessons and experiences * Efforts to strengthen domestic accountability stand to benefit from the overall Dutch efforts in support of the implementation and monitoring of the principles of the Paris Declaration (especially on mutual accountability and alignment)

The European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) aims to improve international cooperation between Europe and countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific.

Created in 1986 as an independent foundation, the **Centre's objectives** are:

- to enhance the capacity of public and private actors in ACP and other low-income countries; and
- to improve cooperation between development partners in Europe and the ACP Region.

The Centre focuses on **three** interconnected thematic programmes:

- Development Policy and International Relations
- Economic and Trade Cooperation
- Governance

The Centre collaborates with other organisations and has a network of contributors in the European and the ACP countries. Knowledge, insight and experience gained from process facilitation, dialogue, networking, infield research and consultations are widely shared with targeted ACP and EU audiences through international conferences, focussed briefing sessions, electronic media and key publications.

ECDPM Discussion Papers
The ECDPM Discussion Papers report on work in progress at the European Centre for Development Policy Management. They are circulated among practitioners, researchers and policy-makers who are invited to contribute to and comment on the Discussion Papers. Comments, suggestions, and requests for further copies should be sent to the address below. Opinions expressed in this paper do not necessarily represent the views of ECDPM or its partners.

The European Centre for Development Policy Management
Jacquie Dias
Onze Lieve Vrouweplein 21
6221 HE Maastricht, The Netherlands
Tel +31 (0)43 350 29 00 Fax +31 (0)43 350 29 02
E-mail info@ecdpm.org www.ecdpm.org (A pdf file of this paper is available on our website)

ISSN 1571-7577

The ECDPM acknowledges the support it receives for these Discussion Papers from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in Finland, Luxemburg, the Netherlands and Sweden, the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation in Belgium, Irish Aid, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Instituto Português de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento in Portugal, and the Department for International Development in the United Kingdom.