Additional Guidance for GPAF initiatives focused on Empowerment & Accountability

Background

Learning from earlier GPAF funding rounds has indicated the need to clarify how projects focused on empowerment can meet the requirement to deliver real benefits to poor people within the project lifespan. The following guidance points have also been developed on the basis of learning from empowerment and accountability projects funded under the Civil Society Challenge Fund (CSCF).[1]

DFID defines empowerment in terms of **choice, challenge and change**:

- **Choice** – poor people's capacities and access to opportunities, resources and services that enable them to make and act on choices about helping themselves and their families out of poverty.
- **Challenge** – channels and institutions, such as social audits and parliamentary committees, that enable poor people to challenge corruption and ineffective delivery and hold officials and representatives to account for their commitments and responsibilities.
- **Change** – political capacities and coalitions across society and between poor people and elites that will enable poor people to voice their concerns, have their interests represented in political processes and change the institutions and policies that keep them poor.

Some Key Learning Points from CSCF Projects Focused on Empowerment and Accountability

The following learning points were developed following a visit to a sample of CSCF projects focused on empowerment and accountability in India and Nepal. They form part of an on-going learning process. The points are not intended to present a prescribed approach for empowerment and accountability projects, but to provide some background information and identify some key issues for consideration.

1. **Empowerment starts with the individual.** The process of empowerment is often illustrated with examples of collective action by groups exerting pressure on duty bearers. It is a **gradual and considered process** that brings about a **mind-set change.**

2. **Identifying the appropriate entry point is a crucial step** to engage individuals and establish trust. Entry points vary considerably across projects and could be philosophical or material in nature. It is clear that there is no one way to approach the community. W**orking as a group and building a critical mass is a powerful** step in being heard by decision makers**.**

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[1] In particular the report on the CSCF Learning Visit to India and Nepal (Feb 2012).

3. **Access to information** is an essential part of the empowerment process. Providing individuals and groups with appropriate and timely information has a stimulating and galvanising effect to help people try to claim their rights. With clear and simple information and guidance on how to use that information, groups can move from a sense of need to one of entitlement, and eventually to a growing sense of unity and partnership that may drive community action. Civil society, as an intermediary between communities and formal institutions, can play a key role in accessing, providing and sharing information – and crucially helping people to understand how to use their new knowledge to demand their rights.

4. Although there are clear steps to empowerment it is not a simple linear process. It is deeply affected by **the dynamic political, economic and social context.** This affects the scope and approaches that CSOs adopted.

5. **Empowerment has an intrinsic value to individuals and communities.** The ultimate indicator of empowerment is the ability to become **agents of change** in the lives of others.

6. Projects should highlight a clear **comparative advantage of local civil society** over other actors (i.e. donors, government, international CSOs, private sector) in certain aspects of empowerment work.

7. **Having a strong and coherent vision clearly underpins any effective project.** For many this vision is best encapsulated in their organisational theory of change which justifies why they are implementing projects.

8. **Empowerment is an on-going process that needs to continuously adapt** as people begin to voice what's important to them, as needs are met and new requirements arise, as peoples aspirations evolve. Civil society is often uniquely placed to respond to this due to their access, understanding and relationships with communities.

9. **Clearly defined exit strategies in the project design are crucial for projects to achieve sustainability**. Successful CSOs tend to be those who have a clear plan to develop capacity in others so that their intervention is no longer required.

10. In terms of measuring results, **CSOs have a key role to play in defining locally relevant indicators**. Civil Society can have the knowledge to know what success would look like, which tells us what development really means for individuals and communities. Particular challenges are measuring the intrinsic value of empowerment and self-worth or measuring incremental, gradual changes within the life of a project. It is recognised that it is a challenge for CSOs to communicate the need for capturing robust results from the donor down the chain

to the community workers who have the information but perhaps not the resources nor the know-how to measure results.

Specific Guidance for GPAF Proposals Focused on Empowerment and Accountability

1. **For projects which encourage uptake of services:** The premise is that unless and until poor people are empowered to claim their rights to services, improvements to their lives are unlikely to be sustained. Therefore, project proposals should provide clear evidence that citizens or target groups will be 'enabled' to do things for themselves and therefore demand better services i.e. the proposals should explain how the project will lead to more active citizen engagement. Current levels of demand for services should be clearly defined as well as the anticipated increase in demand for services as a result of the project intervention (this should also be captured in the logframe indicator baseline, milestones and targets e.g. current demand for services = X, and as a result of the project the demand will increase to Y).

2. **For projects which contribute to changes in policy implementation:** This is a difficult area to demonstrate change as a number of external factors will contribute to this kind of change and it is difficult to attribute results solely on a single project. The proposal should demonstrate as far as possible what their specific contribution would be, and how empowering citizens will effect a change in policy implementation or change in government practice e.g. Participation of women and men in local governance structures can contribute to change in government practice. However, the proposal has to demonstrate specifically how their participation will influence duty holders' practice in terms of increased or improved benefits to people's lives (such as greater access to government social schemes or services, increase of local government budget for education or contraception which have an effect on target beneficiaries).

3. **For projects which contribute to changes in policy or legislation:** This is also a particularly difficult area to demonstrate change within a three-year time period. Proposals for projects focused on this type of change need to be supported by a clear 'theory of change' and include specific milestones to demonstrate how achievements made during the project lifetime would contribute to change in the longer term.

4. **For projects with a combined focus on livelihoods, empowerment and accountability:** Evidence from the CSCF has demonstrated that projects are stronger where these three aspects are clearly linked and integrated. If service delivery is to be included, it must be as an integrated component and not just an 'add-on'. The use of service delivery as an entry point for work with some

communities can be a valid approach, but this should be made explicit in the proposal. It is also important that empowerment and accountability are integrated i.e. strengthening community capacity to claim rights and entitlements leads to actions to make duty bearers accountable for their delivery.

5. **For projects addressing negative impacts of practices (e.g. gender-based violence GBV)**: Project proposals should demonstrate <u>how</u> the negative practices impact on people's lives (e.g. the effect of GBV on quality of life and economic productivity) and demonstrate <u>how</u> the project will address the consequences or causes of these practices.