



Governance and Transparency Fund public meeting series

‘Demanding accountability from the bottom up’: examining what works, what does not work, and why

‘Good governance is not just about government. It is also about political parties, parliament, the judiciary, the media, and civil society. It is about how citizens, leaders and public institutions relate to each other in order to make change happen’

UK Government White Paper on Making Governance Work for the Poor, 2006

As part of the implementation of the 2006 White Paper, the UK government introduced the £130m [Governance and Transparency Fund](#) (GTF) as a fund to ‘do much more at the grassroots end of political governance’. The idea was to support civil society, the media, parliamentarians and trade unions – those working at the interface between state and society – in their demands for greater transparency and more effective accountability mechanisms. **The basic argument was that there is growing empirical evidence from many countries of the relationship between improved governance and positive social and economic development.** For example, better governance is positively associated with improved investment and economic growth rates; with increasing primary education and adult literacy rates; with reducing infant mortality; and with curtailing the AIDS epidemic.

At a more conceptual level, the GTF was designed to address the ‘responsiveness’ and ‘accountability’ arms of DFID’s [‘Capability’, ‘Accountability’ and ‘Responsiveness’ \(CAR\) framework](#). The GTF also aimed to pursue these objectives with a focus on politics, arguing that how a society makes choices about the way in which people live together, how competing interests are mediated, and how available resources are allocated is an inherently political process ([DFID, 2007](#)).

Four years on, what does evidence from implementing the GTF tell us about what works and what doesn’t, and under what circumstances, when it comes to transparency and

accountability initiatives? A number of UK-based GTF-holders and grantees¹ are now examining some of the evidence gathered, so they can build on their learning from the implementation of GTF projects before the fund comes to an end in 2013. The KPMG-led learning process (including GTF workshops, meetings, summaries of annual reports and mid-term evaluations) has provided a platform for cross-learning between GTF holders and communicating with DFID. GTF holders have also developed their own fora for sharing case studies and experiences from practice.

In order to address the questions asked about social accountability initiatives and to identify gaps or challenges ahead, this **public meeting series** seeks to build on established learning processes by focusing on big ideas that have worked. The meetings will create a shared space for various stakeholders to come together and discuss pertinent issues informed by the GTF and other experiences

This series will convene a varied audience, consisting of researchers, practitioners and policy-makers, and explore evidence emerging from the GTF projects in several thematic areas. The themes are outlined below. **The series aims to synthesise experiences, identify some of the key ideas and innovations that have made a difference, and ask why they have worked.**

The meeting series will also provide a unique opportunity for GTF holders to share and disseminate relevant research, publications, and case study materials that they have produced as part of the Fund. A further objective of the series is to catalyse the production of new publications, including blogs and briefing papers, authored by various GTF holders.

The meeting series will run from March 2012 to January 2013, with a total of six meetings held on a bimonthly basis. Each meeting will likely consist of a panel of high level speakers and discussants, representing GTF holders and the development community more broadly. The proposed schedule of meetings and speakers is as follows:

Scope and themes

Each meeting will be organised by a different GTF holder, and will be based on their interests and areas of expertise.

1. Demand-side governance: are we overstating the claims on social accountability? (ODI)

21 March 2012 – ODI, London

A number of GTF programmes and projects focus directly on building grassroots capacity to demand improvements in the state provision of public goods, especially among hitherto marginalised groups (such as women, disabled people, youths). Evidence emerging from GTF projects seems to support the argument that targeted social accountability initiatives

¹ These include the Overseas Development Institute, Christian Aid, Oxfam, BBC Media Action, and Water Aid.

(or in the language of the World Bank's [2004 World Development Report](#), 'the short route to accountability') can work.

Current research suggests that such social accountability successes do not develop in a vacuum, they tend to be linked with shifts in incentives from the supply side. In other words, progressive change seems to happen as a combination of both top-down and bottom-up pressures. Evidence from the GTF experience will illustrate how positive governance transformations can happen, and whether and how social accountability initiatives can play a constructive role

- **Chair:** Alison Evans, Director, ODI
- **Speakers:** Fletcher Tembo, Research Fellow, ODI; and Kathy Bain, Cluster Lead, Demand Side Governance, Africa Region, World Bank
- **Discussants:** David Booth, Research Fellow and Director of Africa Power and Politics Programme, ODI; and DFID (specific speaker tbc)

2. 'Making women's voices Count: from participation to power' (Oxfam)

May 2012 – Oxfam London office

'The neo-liberal rules for the new woman citizen...are quite clear: improve your household's economic condition, participate in local community development (if you have time), help build and run local (apolitical) institutions like the self-help group; by then, you should have no political or physical energy left to challenge this paradigm'. Srilatha Batliwala and Deepa Dhanraj (2004:13) in 'Gender myths that instrumentalise women: a view from the Indian front-line'.

As media celebration of women's role in the 'Arab Spring' revolutions clearly demonstrates, there is growing interest in the value of women's participation in the shaping and reshaping of governance systems and processes. But when the 'real decisions' start to be made – from household to district, national to international – women disappear. What needs to change to ensure that women's voices really count?

Much can be learned from organisations and movements around the world about how the complex barriers that systematically exclude women can be overcome. Countless innovative ways are being discovered that give women real power and influence in the governance spaces that shape their lives. What can donors and NGOs learn from these experiences? How can we better support women to speak out persuasively and politically, individually and collectively, in the right places and to the right people, to gain a lasting and meaningful voice in the halls and corridors of power?

- **Chair:** tbc
- **Speakers:** Jethro Pettit, Research Fellow, Participation, Power and Social Change, Institute of Development Studies (tbc); Jo Rowlands, Raising Her Voice Programme Manager and Senior Governance Advisor, Oxfam (tbc)
- **Discussants:** tbc

3. How does 'value for money' express itself in citizen voice and accountability programmes? (Christian Aid)

July 2012 – Christian Aid, London

'Our bargain with taxpayers is this: in return for contributing your hard-earned money to helping the world's poorest people, it is our duty to spend every penny of aid effectively. My top priority will be to secure maximum value for money in aid through greater transparency, rigorous independent evaluation and an unremitting focus on results' *Andrew Mitchell, UK's Secretary of State for International Development, speech delivered on 12 May 2010*

In recent years, development practitioners have come under increased pressure to improve levels of accountability. Accountability goes in two directions: downwards to communities and individuals in the countries where practitioners work, and upwards to donors such as DFID – and ultimately to taxpayers. But these 'dual accountabilities' are not always aligned, and are not easy to address in a way that supports the ultimate aim of effectiveness.

Value for money (VfM) is the most visible and widespread manifestation of donor attempts to move development initiatives to a place where results are more easily recorded, with a range of new tools and approaches being trialled. But this agenda contrasts with certain perspectives from the grassroots level, which protest at this limited and unrealistic view of development. Their argument is that the situation suits donors more than the supposed beneficiaries of development interventions.

In this session we will explore the concepts of VfM, effectiveness and accountability, asking if and how they can be brought together in a coherent way, and what such a new approach would look like.

4. The media: a game changer? Analysing its role in promoting more inclusive policy-making (BBC Media Action)

September 2012 – BBC Media Action, London

It is clear that the media is an important and emerging issue in developing country governance, particularly when it comes to media influence both on policy and the way evidence is used. But there is a debate about the exact role that the media plays for real game change in various governance contexts. KMPG organised a GTF holders' workshop in Tanzania to examine some of the aspects of this issue, looking at some key media tools and techniques that GTF holders are using. The big question remains: how far and under what circumstances does the media become a game-changing actor?

5. Ensuring the sustainability of governance programmes and their impact over time: international actors as problem – and solution? (Water Aid)

November 2012 – Water Aid, London

Development actors have long raised concerns that the impact of demand-side governance projects cannot be sustained. What kinds of approaches have different GTF projects sought to develop and implement in order both to ensure the sustainability of their interventions, and to help partner organisations become self-sustaining over the long term? What efforts have been most effective and why, and what are the challenges that still lie ahead?

6. What kinds of social accountability models might work best in fragile states, and why?

January 2013 – Lead organisation to be confirmed

Despite evidence that many social accountability projects are now emerging in fragile states, what is less understood is how strengthening civil society and the media can contribute to states becoming more stable and capable. In governance terms, one of the arguments is that CSOs risk undermining the state even more because they compete with recognised, but often weak, state infrastructures. What can we learn from the experiences of CSOs in GTF countries? How do we develop theories of change when working in fragile environments, in order to contribute effectively to positive political settlements?