



DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE
Citizenship, Participation
and Accountability



A Summary of Findings from
a Decade of Collaborative
Research on Citizen Engagement

Blurring the Boundaries

Citizen Action Across States and Societies



Acknowledgements

This document owes its insights to numerous researchers, too many to list here, including all those who have been involved with the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability (the Citizenship DRC) during the ten years that it existed as a global research consortium. It is intended as a summary of and reference guide to the Citizenship DRC's work. Though it is not comprehensive, the aim of the document is to highlight the major findings whilst signposting the original research. For readers who wish to reference these ideas in future publications, it is preferable, where possible, to cite the original Citizenship DRC research. In instances where this document must be cited directly, please list the author as the Citizenship DRC. The document has been written by Nicholas Benequista with major contributions by John Gaventa.

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This document has no executive summary. To condense ten years of research into so brief a document was sufficiently challenging. However, readers can skim through highlighted paragraphs for a sense of each section and skip to the "Guideposts" chapter for policy recommendations.

Our own lines to cross

Citizenship DRC

With funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), as well as from the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations in the United States, the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability has been a collaborative network of some sixty researchers and practitioners in nearly 30 countries. The partnership has produced more than 150 empirically grounded case studies on how citizen action shapes states and societies. Taking a 'citizen's perspective', looking upwards and outwards, these studies offer a unique insight into how citizens see and experience states and other institutions which affect their lives, as well as how they engage, mobilise and participate to make their voices heard.

Researchers from the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability spent a decade working with citizens from around the world who are taking action to sway the institutions that affect their lives. The researchers were led to dozens of local associations: cooperatives, women's groups, religious assemblies, and other civic organisations. They visited the offices of movements and networks that are pressing national governments and international actors for change on their behalf. They observed the public forums where the state has invited citizens to voice their concerns and interests, discuss solutions and collaborate - an array of participatory arenas such as health councils, local legislative bodies and policy forums. A simple yet important discovery was made in the process. The most effective citizens are the most versatile: the ones who can cross boundaries. They move between the local, the national and the global, employ a range of techniques, act as allies and adversaries of the state, and deploy their skills of protest and partnership at key moments and in different institutional entry points.

Accompanying citizens from around the world on this journey has brought the researchers across all manner of boundaries, including those delineated by their own assumptions. When the Citizenship DRC began in 2000, a core concern of many development agencies - including DFID - was how to develop a '*rights-based approach*' to development. This agenda was then embedded in social development approaches that were, and largely remain, separate from state-led 'good governance' reforms. On one side of this divide were initiatives to bolster 'voice', encompassing the variety of formal and informal ways that citizens make themselves seen, heard and understood; on the other side stood state-led reforms

to strengthen the institutions of accountability. Both of these may be pre-conditions for poverty eradication and democratic change, but the Citizenship DRC's research suggests that the way that development policy has pursued these goals separately has been ineffective. Governments often become more capable, accountable and responsive when state-led reform and social mobilisation occur simultaneously.

This briefing note highlights this and other key findings, especially those that link to the debates surrounding policy statements and projects that have proclaimed to support bottom-up participation and citizen-led development for the last two decades.

In the pages that follow, we elaborate our 'seeing like a citizen' approach. In the subsequent section, entitled 'Destinations', we draw on our evidence base of more than 150 case studies to give an overview of the contributions made by different forms of citizen engagement. The benefits of engagement often begin with the strengthening of citizenship itself, but there are other, more commonly measured outcomes documented by the Citizenship DRC's research related to development, to building responsive and accountable states, and to realising rights and deepening democracy, which are each described in turn. The next section, 'Pathways', presents findings on how, and under what conditions, such change occurs. It also highlights the challenges and risks along the way. An additional section, 'Fractures', gives attention to the issue of citizenship in fragile settings. In the final section, 'Guideposts', we give some guidance on how donors, NGOs, and government offices can use our research.

This summary represents only a partial glimpse of the over 450 publications and outputs of the Citizenship DRC over the last decade. Further references may be found at www.drc-citizenship.org, in Zed Book's 'Claiming Citizenship' series, or from other resources described on the inset of the back cover.

What may not be so evident here is how the process of doing this research has itself made a difference - engaging researchers, activists and policymakers around the world in dialogues and debates about critical questions of our time. By linking research to practitioner networks, the insights from the project have already brought benefits at the local level. Nomadic tribes demanding their rights in India, community groups working to end violence in Brazil and Nigeria, associations of civic groups in Angola, and community health workers in Mexico are among the individuals and organisations at the grassroots that can cite the usefulness of the Citizenship DRC to their work.

Our thanks to all of the partners and others who have made it possible to blur the lines between research and action.

Seeing like a citizen

Citizenship implies a legal equality, but the reality in all countries - whether in the North or South - is that not all votes count the same, not all voices are heard, and equal rights are unequally distributed. This contrast between *what is* and *what is supposed to be* has led to a growing sense among citizens of alienation from political institutions. The Citizenship DRC sought to respond to this perceived crisis of trust and legitimacy between citizens and the state, and also between the citizens and the civil society and market institutions that affect their lives. The centre's central research objective was to provide insights into how this gap can be addressed: to understand how poor and marginalised people acquire the political agency and power they need to ensure a dignified life.

By 'citizen', the Citizenship DRC does not necessarily mean someone who is a formal, documented member of a nation state. The Citizenship DRC has been concerned with disenfranchised groups like migrants, refugees, and ethnic and religious minorities who are entirely without citizenship in the legal sense, yet still manage to act politically. What actually determines a citizen's abilities is a complex set of relationships: both vertical and horizontal, local and global.¹ Vertically, citizens are connected to institutions of authority by virtue of the rights and responsibilities conferred on them through constitutions, laws and policies, which historically were mandated by local and national governments, though are now often also a product of global forms of authority. Citizens, however, also have rights and duties with relation to non-state actors - their families, local associations, trade groups, religious communities - which are also increasingly global in nature and can be important sources of influence and solidarity, or sources of exclusion and discrimination. Hence, in addition to the vertical links to state-based authority, a citizen, in our view, also connotes:

... someone who belongs to different kinds of collective associations and defines their identity from participation in activities associated with these different kinds of membership.

Their sense of citizenship lies in the terms on which they participate in this collective life and the forms of agency they are able to exercise. And when they are only able to participate on highly unequal terms, or are denied access altogether, citizenship relates to their attempts to challenge these exclusionary practices and bring about change (emphasis ours).²

To adopt this understanding of a citizen is to recognise the importance of people's aspirations for justice, recognition and self-determination as a driving force for development. To implement this approach is to put people as rights-bearers at the heart of the process, acknowledging that they are actors, whose knowledge, voices, and ability to mobilise can make a contribution to solving key problems, whether in their own communities, with their governments, or in global affairs.

The secondary citizen

This is in sharp contrast to many other approaches to development and democracy that impose rigid constraints on the role of citizens.³

- A neoliberal market approach constructs citizens as *consumers* who exercise voice by deciding where to spend or invest their money;
- A narrow state reform approach constructs citizens as *users and choosers* of state services, who may exercise voice by holding the state accountable but do not help shape policies themselves;
- An electoral democracy approach constructs citizens as *electors*, who participate through elections, yet are more passive in between elections;
- A legalistic human rights approach constructs citizens as *holders of legal rights*, but focuses on the delivery of rights by the duty-bearers, not through the action of the citizens themselves;
- Even a 'thin' civil society approach may focus largely on NGOs as deliverers of services, and as professional mediators between the state, market and citizen in the development process, leaving citizens as *beneficiaries* in the process.

¹ Gaventa, John and Tandon, Rajesh (2010) 'Introduction', in J. Gaventa and R. Tandon (eds), *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, London: Zed Books

² Kabeer, N. (ed.) (2005) *Inclusive Citizenship: Meanings and Expressions*, London: Zed Books: 21-22

³ Gaventa, John (2010) "Seeing Like a Citizen": Re-claiming Citizenship in a Neoliberal World, in *NGO Management: An Earthscan Compendium*, London: Earthscan

In each of these approaches, 'citizens' are treated as a by-product and expected to act and respond in conformity to the institutional structures they have been given. The assumption here is that if markets, elections, legal frameworks and civil society organisations are working, then citizenship identities will follow: as consumers, users and choosers, voters, or legal entities or beneficiaries, but rarely as drivers of political and social change in their own right.⁴

In study after study, the Citizenship DRC challenges this view. Whilst markets, states, elections, legal frameworks and NGOs are all important, they do not automatically empower citizens, especially women and minority groups.

Rather than focusing on institutional design as a starting point, we start with the perceptions of citizens themselves and ask how they interact with and view the institutions that serve them. This perspective on the development process reshapes our understanding of citizens, who are actively engaging to claim their rights and to assert their voice, but not necessarily in the ways or spaces ascribed to them by the dominant institutions. Rather than seeing such institutions as 'good' for citizens, we now understand that many of these institutions are seen by citizens as part of the problem, such as in Bangladesh, where in some instances alliances are formed between state actors and local urban developers to harass and dislodge slum-dwellers.⁵

An actor-orientated approach

In this actor-oriented view, the question emerges of how and why citizens engage in more robust and participatory forms of political action that go beyond the functions available to them as voters, beneficiaries or consumers. How do citizens become the 'makers and shapers' of policies instead of merely 'users and choosers' of services or the 'beneficiaries' of development actors?⁶ Why is it that a women's movement in Morocco, for example, took upon itself the responsibility of campaigning for the reform of a legal code governing the role of men and women in the family, and how has the Global Campaign for Education been able to draw together vast networks of civil society organisations to ensure that international actors and national governments deliver on a Millennium Development Goal to make education universal?⁷

Such coalitions do not come together overnight. Examples from across the Citizenship DRC's research highlight the processes by which citizens acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for these more ambitious projects. This is highlighted by local

membership groups in Bangladesh and resident associations in Angola, where citizens are learning about government institutions and gaining the confidence to negotiate with them. These skills are crucial not only to support social movements but also for the success of local participatory democracy; Brazilian health councils and the local legislative bodies in India known as the panchayati raj, for example, are only as effective as the citizens that populate them.

And yet the approach of 'seeing like a citizen' is not entirely new. It builds upon and reinforces a number of traditions and debates in development, which may stand counter to the dominant approach.

Picking up themes and debates from emergent 'rights-based' approaches to development, it focuses on issues of inclusion, participation through organised collective action, and the development of democratic institutions that have obligations to protect and promote rights.

Building on debates about the multiple forms of citizenship, especially from Latin America, it views citizenship as attained not only through the exercise of political and civic rights, but also through social rights, which in turn may be gained through participatory processes and struggles.⁸ Indeed, the right to participation itself may be seen as a social right, which enables the capacity to claim other rights.⁹

Interacting with the literature on deepening democracy, this approach focuses on the process through which citizens exercise ever-deepening power over decisions which affect their lives, and in which democracy is extended 'from a democracy of voters to a democracy of citizens'.¹⁰

And in agreement with much feminist literature, the Citizenship DRC's research maintains that citizenship is not exclusively a public affair. For the lived experience of citizenship to be meaningful, especially for women, changes need to take place in the private and domestic spheres as well.

Despite the intention of this document to convey general lessons, it is essential to remember that to see like a citizen is to see distinctly in every context. The Citizenship DRC has always allowed for the concept of citizenship to remain grounded in particular places, each with its own history. Research of this kind challenges tendencies within international development to assume that an identical conceptual lens can be used to explain phenomena universally.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Kabeer, N. and Haq Kabir, A. (2009) *Citizenship Narratives in the Absence of Good Governance: Voices of the Working Poor in Bangladesh*, IDS Working Paper 331, Brighton: IDS

⁶ Cornwall, A. and Gaventa, J. (2001) *From Users and Choosers to Makers and Shapers: Repositioning Participation in Social Policy*, IDS Working Paper 127, Brighton: IDS

⁷ Gaventa, J. and Mayo, M. (2010) 'Spanning Citizenship Spaces through Transnational Coalitions: The Case of the Global Campaign for Education', in J. Gaventa and R. Tandon (eds), *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, London: Zed Books

⁸ Dagnino, E. (2005a) *Meanings of Citizenship in Latin America*, IDS Working Paper 258, Brighton: IDS

⁹ Gaventa, John (2002) 'Exploring Citizenship, Participation and Accountability', *IDS Bulletin* 33.2: 1-11

¹⁰ UNDP (2004) *La democracia en América Latina: Hacia una Democracia de Ciudadanos y Ciudadanas*, New York: UNDP

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Destinations: Understanding the outcomes of citizen engagement



What difference can citizens make?

Despite almost a decade since participation has become somewhat mainstreamed in development practice¹¹ and since strengthening the *demand* side has become attractive in good governance strategies,¹² we still have very little evidence about the outcomes of citizen engagement, how they occur and in what contexts and conditions.

Evidence from the Citizenship DRC gives us an opportunity to help fill this knowledge gap. Citizens, when organised and empowered, can make a difference in the achievement of development goals, they can make states more democratic and responsive, and they are invaluable in making human rights a reality.

In a 2010 synthesis study on 'Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement', Citizenship DRC researchers review the results of 100 original, qualitative case studies that the Citizenship DRC conducted in 20 countries, largely in the developing world.¹³ Using a meta case study approach – increasingly used in other fields, but relatively unique in research on development – the researchers coded over 800 instances where citizen engagement was linked, by a series of observable outcomes, to the processes of development, state-building and democracy-building.

Overall, 75 per cent of these outcomes may be seen as 'positive', though many of these beneficial effects remain invisible to donors who look to measure progress on broad targets such as the Millennium Development Goals. In general, the research lends further support to a study by the Overseas Development Institute that concluded that donor assumptions and expectations on what participation can offer are too great, or at least that there needs to be more effort to establish a middle ground of attitude and behaviour indicators that are a direct outcome of citizen voice and accountability activities.¹⁴

Our case studies have helped to chart a range of intermediate outcomes that result from people being politically active, with the discovery that benefits can accumulate over time. Citizen engagement can build people's knowledge and awareness, or what might be described as their sense of citizenship; this in turn strengthens the practice of participation as citizens learn their constitutional rights, how to file complaints, and how to organise meetings, among other things. Over time, citizen alliances and networks often thicken, and these skills are transferred across issues and arenas. More effective citizen action in turn can contribute to more responsive states,

which deliver services, protect and extend rights, and foster a culture of accountability. Citizen action can also contribute to a broader sense of inclusion of previously marginalised groups within society and has the potential to increase social cohesion across groups.

But citizen engagement cannot be expected to cut poverty overnight, especially in more fragile democratic contexts. There is a long and arduous process that occurs between the time when people feel powerless and marginalised and when, perhaps many years later, they are cooperating with the government to reduce maternal mortality, for instance, or mobilising for improved health services, or demanding that their vote counts.

The research also warns us that citizen engagement does not always lead to positive results. The benefits of citizen engagement can be mirrored by their opposite. Where in many cases engagement can contribute to construction of active citizenship, in other cases it leads to a sense of disempowerment and a reduced sense of agency, or increased dependency on 'experts', or reinforced exclusions.

Where engagement in some instances can contribute to strengthened practices of participation, at other times participation is perceived as meaningless, tokenistic, or manipulated. New skills and alliances can also generate complications related to accountability and representation, serving corrupt or discriminatory ends, or allowing for elite capture. Where sometimes engagement leads to building responsive states and institutions, at other times it faces bureaucratic 'brick walls', failures to implement or sustain policy gains and, in many cases and reprisals, including violence by state actors against those who challenge the status quo.

Where sometimes engagement can contribute to social inclusion and cohesion, by bringing new voices and issues in the public sphere, at other times it can contribute to a greater sense of exclusion. Participatory spaces can merely reinforce old hierarchies based on gender, caste or race. They can also contribute to greater competition and conflict across groups who compete for the recognition and resources in new ways.¹⁵

The fact, however, that the vast majority of the outcomes found in the studies are positive provides strong evidence of the contribution of citizen engagement for achieving development goals, building responsive and accountable states and realising rights and democracy. For donors and policy makers, therefore, the core question is not whether citizen engagement makes a difference, but how to understand the conditions and pathways under which it does so.

¹¹ World Bank (1994) *The World Bank and Participation*, Washington, D.C.: World Bank

¹² UN (2008) *People Matter: Civic Engagement in Public Governance*, New York: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

¹³ Gaventa, John and Barrett, Greg (2010) *So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement*, IDS Working Paper 347, Brighton: IDS

¹⁴ O'Neill, T., Foresti, M. and Hudson, A. (2007) *Evaluation of Citizens' Voice and Accountability: Review of the Literature and Donor Approaches*, London: Department for International Development: 43

¹⁵ Drawn from Gaventa, John and Barrett, Greg (2010) *So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement*, IDS Working Paper 347, Brighton: IDS

¹⁶ Adapted from Gaventa, John and Barrett, Greg (2010) *So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement*, IDS Working Paper 347, Brighton: IDS

¹⁷ These outcomes related to changes in individual or group perceptions of their right to participate, as well as of their capacity to participate.

Figure 1 The outcomes of citizen engagement, both positive and negative¹⁶

Positive	Negative
Increased civic and political knowledge	Increased dependency on a few intermediary experts
Greater sense of empowerment and agency ¹⁷	Disempowerment and reduced sense of agency
Increased capacities for collective action	New capacities used for 'negative' purposes
Greater access to state services and resources	Denial of state services and resources
Deepening of networks and solidarities	Lack of accountability and representation in networks
Enhanced state responsiveness and accountability	Violent or coercive state response
New forms of participation	Tokenistic or 'captured' forms of participation
Greater realisation of rights	Social, economic and political reprisals
Inclusion of new actors and issues in public spaces	Reinforcement of social hierarchies and exclusion
Greater social cohesion across groups	Increased horizontal conflict and violence



Citizen capabilities

Gaining citizenship is not only a legal matter of becoming a full rights-bearing resident of a nation, but involves the development of citizens as actors, capable of claiming their rights and acting for themselves. This actor-oriented perspective, which has been at the heart of the Citizenship DRC's work, is 'based on the recognition that rights are shaped through actual struggles informed by people's own understandings of what they are justly entitled to'.¹⁸ Yet in many of the societies in which we have worked, citizens may be unaware of their existing rights, lack the knowledge needed to interact with the state, or do not feel they have the agency and power to act. In such conditions, our work suggests that an important first step – perhaps even a prerequisite to further action and participation – is to develop a greater awareness of rights and of one's agency. In these contexts, one important function of citizen participation is that it helps to create and strengthen citizenship itself.

Citizenship is learned through action

To develop such an active citizenry, however, requires time and experience. Through trial and error, citizens gradually acquire crucial knowledge, a sense of their ability and a disposition to act. Such knowledge may be of one's rights and responsibilities, more technical knowledge needed to engage more effectively with the state, or awareness of alternatives to the status quo.¹⁹ Perhaps more importantly still, in many of the cases studied by the Citizenship DRC, citizens who were active for the first time gained new confidence and overcame their fears. The journey from silence to a sense of citizenship has occurred in many small steps, as explained by a woman from a cooperative in Mexico:

We joined this organisation because we wanted to have peace in our lives. When we joined this organisation, we found direction. First, we went to the assembly and our forces were growing and growing. Then we began to join with other women partners to inform them about the information that we got in the meetings where we participated. That was the way we began to organise other women. And then we began to understand the importance of being organised... We are not isolated in seeking change. Women have organised to claim their rights, to participate, and now that women are organised, men accept our right to participate. We consolidate our advances, and we have created our own spaces because we were well organised. Then we began to look for ways to sell our handicrafts and how to demand better payment for our work... At the local level women now participate in the assembly... there are women that participate in the meetings and take part in public demonstrations. (Eleuteria, indigenous Tzeltal artisan from Mexico)²⁰

The benefits of citizen action accumulate with time

There are many instances documented by the Citizenship DRC of citizen action that has made no immediate contribution to poverty eradication

or, worse, has incited a backlash by the state. But in many of the cases, citizen action – whether through associations, social movements or through participatory forums – has left behind key skills that come back into play in the next meeting, next campaign or next policy debate. People learn how to take legal action, how to organise meetings, how to attract media attention. They build and strengthen alliances and relationships. In other words, the benefits of citizen action accrue, such that enhancing skills in one arena can strengthen the possibilities of success in others. In Brazil, one study found that participation in protests also contributes to a greater likelihood of participation in more institutionalised participatory budgeting processes.²¹ In South Africa, citizens who learned skills in the anti-apartheid movement were able to use those skills and practices of citizenship in mobilising for new rights around HIV/AIDS in the Treatment Action Campaign.²²

Citizen capabilities can be used for private rather than public gain

Development actors – whether NGOs, grassroots associations or social movements – must also understand that citizen empowerment can be converted to private rather than public gain, or new skills and alliances put to exclusionary rather than inclusionary purposes, as cases from India²³ and Kenya²⁴ illustrate. Contrasting faces of civil society exist simultaneously, reflecting the multiple and changing identities of citizens themselves and their diverse repertoire of tactics. Everyday realities of clientelism, patronage and authoritarian local politics also affect emerging forms of citizen mobilisation.²⁵ As a comparative study of citizen–state interaction in India, Brazil and South Africa concluded,

... from the perspective of the resource-deprived, the critical issue is not a choice between state patronage or empowerment, but both; not fear or aspiration for closeness, but both; and not

¹⁸ Nyamu-Musembi, Celestine (2005) 'Towards an Actor-Oriented Perspective on Human Rights', in N. Kabeer (ed.), *Inclusive Citizenship: Meanings and Expressions*, London: Zed Books

¹⁹ Gaventa, John and Barrett, Greg (2010) *So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement*, IDS Working Paper 347, Brighton: IDS

²⁰ Cortez Ruiz, Carlos (2005) 'Rights and Citizenship of Indigenous Women in Chiapas: A History of Struggles, Fears and Hopes', in N. Kabeer (ed.), *Inclusive Citizenship: Meanings and Expressions*, London: Zed Books: 6

²¹ Houtzager, P., Gurza Lavalle, A. and Acharya, A. (2003) *Who Participates? Civil Society and the New Democratic Politics in São Paulo, Brazil*, IDS Working Paper 210, Brighton: IDS

²² Friedman, S. (2010) 'Gaining Comprehensive AIDS Treatment in South Africa: The Extraordinary "Ordinary"', in J. Gaventa and R. McGee (eds), *Citizen Action and National Policy Reform: Making Change Happen*, London: Zed Books

²³ Thekkudan, J. (2010) 'Enhancing Everyday Citizenship Practices: Women's Livelihoods and Global Markets', in J. Gaventa and R. Tandon (eds), (2010) *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, London: Zed Books

²⁴ Okello, D. (2010) 'The Dynamics of Political Change and Transition: Civil Society, Governance and the Culture of Politics in Kenya', in V. Schattan Coelho and B. von Lieres (eds), *Mobilizing for Democracy: Citizen Action and the Politics of Public Participation*, London: Zed Books

²⁵ Houtzager, P. and Acharya, A. (2010) 'Associations, Active Citizens and the Quality of Democracy in Brazil and Mexico', *Theory and Society*, Volume 40, Number 1: 1-36

²⁶ Mohanty, Ranjita, Lisa Thompson and Vera Schattan Coelho (2010) *States of Mobilisation? A comparison of modes of interaction between states and social actors in India, Brazil and South Africa*, African Centre for Citizenship and Democracy: Cape Town: 5

²⁷ Schattan Coelho, Vera P. and von Lieres, Bettina (eds), (2010) *Mobilizing for Democracy: Citizen Action and the Politics of Public Participation*, London: Zed Books

²⁸ Nyamu-Musembi, C. (2010) 'Have NGO Political Empowerment Programs at the Grassroots Level Contributed to Deepening of Democracy in Kenya?', in V. Schattan Coelho and B. von Lieres (eds), *Mobilizing for Democracy: Citizen Action and the Politics of Public Participation*, London: Zed Books

²⁹ Gaventa, John and Barrett, Greg (2010) *So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement*, IDS Working Paper 347, Brighton: IDS

³⁰ Cornwall, A. and Gaventa, J. (2001) *From Users and Choosers to Makers and Shapers: Repositioning Participation in Social Policy*, IDS Working Paper 127, Brighton: IDS

³¹ Schattan Coelho, V., Favareto, A., Shankland, A., Menino, F., Pompa, C. and Fanti, F. (2010) 'Synthesis Paper: Citizenship and Development in Brazil', unpublished paper submitted to the Citizenship DRC, Brighton: IDS

³² Shankland, A. (2010) 'We Got it into Our Heads that We Should Do the Job of the State': The Indigenous Peoples' Movement, 'Forest Citizenship' and Struggles over Health Services in Acre, Brazil', in V. Schattan Coelho and B. von Lieres (eds), *Mobilizing for Democracy: Citizen Action and the Politics of Public Participation*, London: Zed Books

³³ Rodgers, D. (2007) 'Subverting the Spaces of Invitation? Local Politics and Participatory Budgeting in Post-crisis Buenos Aires', in A. Cornwall and V. Schattan Coelho (eds), *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas*, London: Zed Books

³⁴ Layton, M.D., Campillo Carrete, B., Ablanedo Terrazas, I. and Sánchez Rodríguez, A.M. (2010) 'Reducing Maternal Mortality in Mexico: Building Vertical Alliances for Change', in J. Gaventa and R. McGee (eds), *Citizen Action and National Policy Reform: Making Change Happen*, London: Zed Books

³⁵ Avritzer, L. (2010) 'Democratizing Urban Policy in Brazil: Participation and the Right to the City', in J. Gaventa and R. McGee (eds), *Citizen Action and National Policy Reform: Making Change Happen*, London: Zed Books

desiring a provider of services (welfare state) or an enabler of empowerment, but both.²⁶

Whether citizen engagement simply reproduces existing inequalities or democratises public politics depends largely on the nature of the civil society in which it takes place.²⁷ One study on civic empowerment programmes in Kenya found that trained respondents were more knowledgeable than non-trained respondents

about institutionalised channels for engaging the state and accessing state resources at the grassroots level, and that they were more likely to utilise institutional channels than the average person. However, trained respondents were also more likely than non-trained respondents to seek out the personal attention of politicians for their own private benefit.²⁸ This underscores the importance of learning citizenship in a normative context.

Effective services and access to development resources

A great deal of debate exists about whether citizen engagement can lead to tangible developmental or material outcomes – especially related to the current focus on the Millennium Development Goals. The Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement study²⁹ gives over 30 examples of where this has occurred in the areas of health, education, water, housing and infrastructure, and access to livelihoods. But whilst many approaches to the role of citizens in service delivery focus on their role as self-providers, or on NGOs as providers of services for the state or instead of the state, most of the examples from the Citizenship DRC present a different path. Citizens engage through collective action throughout the service delivery process, from advocating and pressing for social policies and programmes, to working with the state as partners in the implementation process, to holding the process to account through both formal and informal means. By using these means, citizens not only gain access to critical resources; they also leave behind a democratic dividend.

Citizens can be makers and shapers of services

Mainstream approaches to service provision stress the quality of the state's policies, institutions and bureaucracies. From this perspective, citizens are treated as *consumers* who exercise their power by deciding where to spend or invest their money, or by playing a watchdog role to hold service deliverers accountable.³⁰ Whilst giving citizens a choice and powers of oversight can be useful, the research from the Citizenship DRC on service delivery – especially on health – suggests that service delivery systems will appropriately, effectively and fairly serve the marginalised and poor only when citizen-led organisations are able to bring independent and sometimes contentious views to bear at both the local and national levels. In Brazil, overall spending on health in rural areas has lagged, but spending on indigenous health has risen five-fold³¹ as a result of the Indigenous Movement's coordinated efforts at protest, participation in the management of health services outsourced by the government and involvement in national policy debates.³² In Argentina, engagement in participatory budgeting processes by 14,000 local residents of Buenos Aires led to the identification of 1000 priorities for action on

urban services, 600 of which were incorporated into the city's plan.³³ In Mexico,³⁴ Brazil³⁵ and many other cases, citizens demonstrate that they can be makers and shapers of effective services.

Service delivery is a collective concern

Where state or private service providers have implemented complaint systems or citizen charters to empower the voices of their users, these 'direct accountability' approaches that focus on action by individual consumers may do little to help poor people who have no access to services in the first place, and are too vulnerable to undertake the effort and risks involved.³⁶ Examples from the Citizenship DRC instead highlight the importance of collective engagement to convert a development *resource*, which can be taken away, into a *right*, to which people can lay a moral claim. The Treatment Action Campaign, South Africa's most influential AIDS advocacy group, has organised protests, confronted policymakers in their offices, waged a media war and sued the South African Government and global pharmaceutical companies partly because the group's members, who are living with HIV/AIDS, have wanted to overcome social stigma and to assert new, more positive identities. The public

recognition they have gained has been integral to their success at winning over 60,000 people access to anti-retroviral medicines supplied by the government.³⁷ The crisis in public housing in Mombasa is another example of failed public service that could only be addressed collectively. Tenants from three estates have joined to form a Shelter Committee of ILISHE Trust, an umbrella advocacy organisation bringing together community-based groups in the coastal province to demand decent quality housing and to battle corrupt landlord practices like rigging waiting lists and backdating eviction notices.³⁸

Sustained and equitable progress depends on citizen capabilities

Changing policy or legislating new rights may not lead to reform being taken up unless it is accompanied by new cultures and constituencies for change in the broader policy environment. Apart from winning a change in the letter of the law, citizen campaigns can also lead to more democratic decision-making procedures and bolster the ability of citizens to later hold service providers to account, meaning that gains are more likely to be sustained and to be meaningful to people's lives. In Mexico, the use of participatory approaches in healthcare has led to a network of community clinics, as well as new

collaboration with the state health ministry on dealing with infectious diseases.³⁹ In India, mobilisation on occupational health by workers bolstered the capacity of citizens to demand better diagnoses and treatment of occupational disease.⁴⁰

But citizen engagement will not always result in increased responsiveness in the provisioning of services. What appears to be a gain in one instance can be illusory, victories can be reversed and alliances can be undone, even in the presence of well-established social movements. South Africa's national anti-retroviral treatment programme is an example of a positive gain that was then undermined by issues of coverage and sustainability. Despite the continued efforts of organisations like the Treatment Action Campaign to expand the programme, it has been dogged by ongoing challenges, including the lack of health infrastructure and access to appropriate levels of treatment. Yet another risk is posed by social movements that win uneven gains. Though health outcomes have improved for indigenous people in Brazil as a result of the Indigenous People's Movement, inter-ethnic and inter-regional inequalities have arguably risen as a more fragmented system of political representation has allowed some groups to stake greater claims, whilst ignoring the needs of others.⁴¹

Responsive and accountable states

How do citizens help to build accountable and responsive states? Increasingly, the accountability agenda is seen as critical in development and democracy circles. Accountability is used to refer to the responsibilities of states to their citizens, development agents to their recipients, corporations to their stockholders and stakeholders. Whilst state accountability in the past has often been seen as a 'horizontal process', in which one branch of the government monitored another, our research focuses on how to build vertical strands of accountability that connect marginalised and discriminated groups to international and state institutions.⁴² A number of research studies by the World Bank, ODI, UNDP and bilateral agencies already refer to the contributions of citizen engagement to accountability,⁴³ but the Citizenship DRC's research gives a more confident appraisal, in part because of the scale of its dataset. Of all the outcomes documented from the Citizenship DRC's 100 case studies, numerous examples relate to states becoming more accountable and responsive as citizen action contributes to new legal frameworks, mechanisms and cultures that make accountability possible.

Citizen engagement can strengthen accountability frameworks

States may feel compelled by international pressure to be more accountable to citizens, but the impetus for greater accountability may also come internally from citizen movements and other groups advocating for change in national legislation.⁴⁴ In India, the Right to Information Act, one of the most powerful in the world, came about from a bottom-up movement, which then connected to champions of change inside the government

in Delhi.⁴⁵ In other cases, citizen engagement led to other forms of institutionalised practices that in turn strengthen the possibilities of further citizen engagement and citizen-led accountability demands.⁴⁶ The campaign for the right to education in Nigeria opened up spaces for participation at the national and regional levels for civil society organisations to monitor education policies.⁴⁷ In the Americas, citizen mobilisation led to mechanisms whereby the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation was required to receive

³⁶ Joshi, A. (2008) 'Producing Social Accountability? The Impact of Service Delivery Reforms', *IDS Bulletin* 38.6: 10–17

³⁷ Friedman, S. (2010) 'Gaining Comprehensive AIDS Treatment in South Africa: The Extraordinary "Ordinary"', in J. Gaventa and R. McGee (eds), *Citizen Action and National Policy Reform: Making Change Happen*, London: Zed Books

³⁸ Nyamu-Musembi, C. (2006) 'From Protest to Proactive Action: Building Institutional Accountability through Struggles for the Right to Housing', in P. Newell and J. Wheeler (eds), *Rights, Resources and the Politics of Accountability*, London: Zed Books

³⁹ Cortez Ruiz, C. (2010) 'The Struggle towards Rights and Communitarian Citizenship: The Zapatista Movement in Mexico', in L. Thompson and C. Tapscoff (eds), *Citizenship and Social Movements: Perspectives from the Global South*, London: Zed Books

⁴⁰ Murtidhar, V. (2005) 'Demystifying Occupational and Environmental Health: Experiences from India', in M. Leach, I. Scoones and B. Wynne (eds), *Science and Citizens: Globalization and the Challenge of Engagement*, London: Zed Books

⁴¹ Shankland, A. (2010) 'We Got it into Our Heads that We Should Do the Job of the State': The Indigenous Peoples' Movement, 'Forest Citizenship' and Struggles over Health Services in Acre, Brazil', in V. Schattan Coelho and B. von Lieres (eds), *Mobilizing for Democracy: Citizen Action and the Politics of Public Participation*, London: Zed Books

⁴² Newell, Peter and Wheeler, Joanna (2006) 'Making Accountability Count', *IDS Policy Briefing* 33, Brighton: IDS

⁴³ McGee, Rosemary and Gaventa, John (2010) 'Review of Impact and Effectiveness of Transparency and Accountability Initiatives: Synthesis Report', prepared for the Transparency and Accountability Initiative Workshop, October 14–15, 2010: Brighton

⁴⁴ Newell, Peter and Wheeler, Joanna (2006) 'Introduction', in P. Newell and J. Wheeler (eds), *Rights, Resources and the Politics of Accountability*, London: Zed Books

⁴⁵ Baviskar, A. (2010) 'Winning the Right to Information in India: Is Knowledge Power?', in J. Gaventa and R. McGee (eds), *Citizen Action and National Policy Reform: Making Change Happen*, London: Zed Books

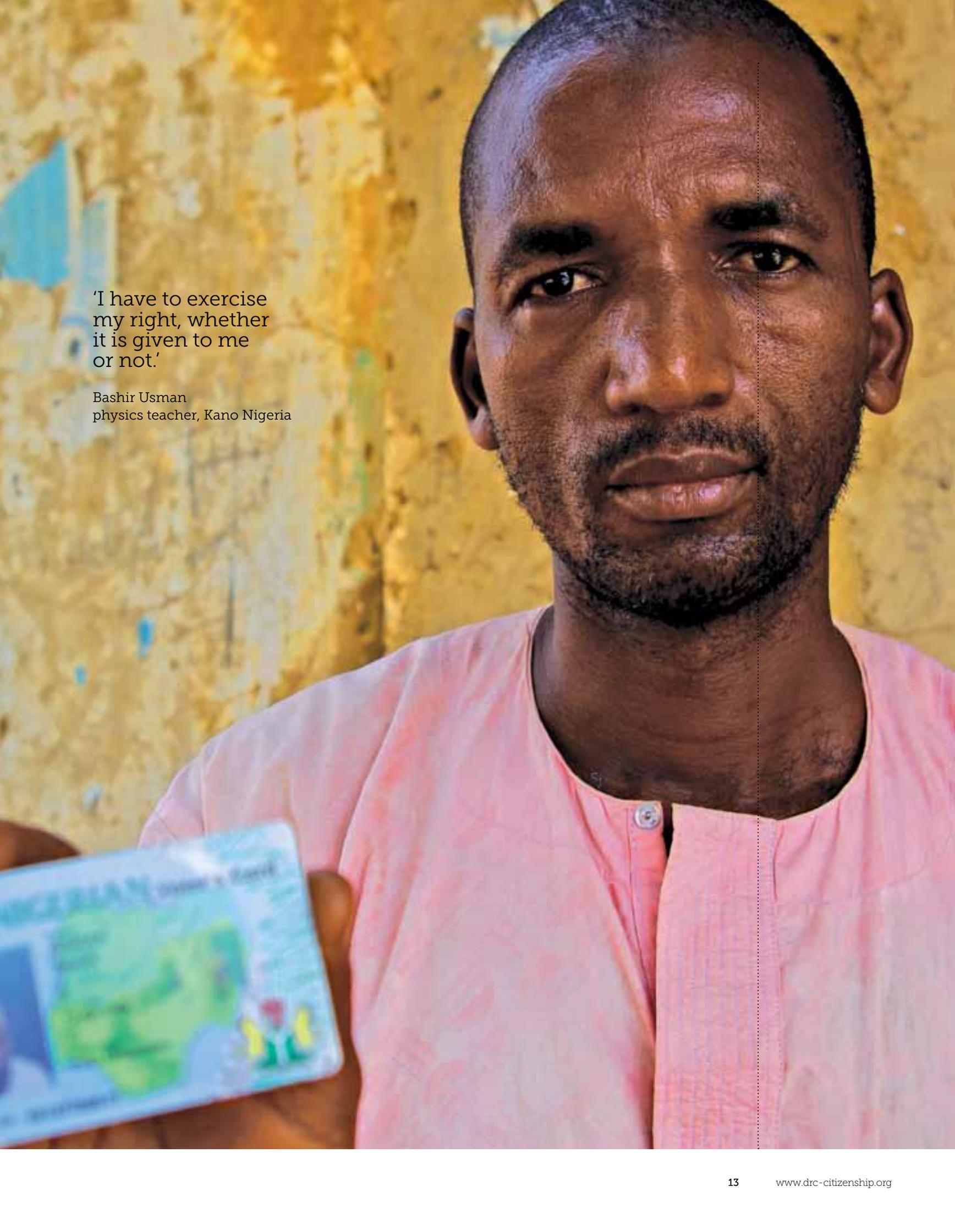
⁴⁶ Citizenship DRC (2009) 'Backed by Popular Demand: Citizen Actions for Accountability', *Citizenship DRC Case Study Series*, Brighton: IDS

⁴⁷ Gaventa, J. and Mayo, M. (2009) *Spanning Citizenship Spaces through Transnational Coalitions: The Case of the Global Campaign for Education*, *IDS Working Paper* 327, Brighton: IDS



'I will cross the sea
of turbulent waves...'

First line of a Bangla
revolutionary song, played
at the *Nagorik Adhikar Mela*
(Citizens' Rights Fair) in
Dhaka, Bangladesh,
January 2010

A close-up portrait of a man with a short beard and mustache, wearing a light pink shirt. He is holding a Nigerian National Identification Card (NIN) in his left hand. The card is blue and white with a green map of Nigeria. The background is a textured, yellowish wall with some blue paint splatters.

'I have to exercise
my right, whether
it is given to me
or not.'

Bashir Usman
physics teacher, Kano Nigeria

⁴⁸Icaza, R., Newell, P. and Saguier, M., (2009) *Democratising Trade Politics in the Americas: Insights from the Women's Environmental and Labour Movements*, IDS Working Paper 328, Brighton: IDS

⁴⁹Hossain, N. (2009) *Rude Accountability in the Unreformed State: Informal Pressures on Frontline Bureaucrats in Bangladesh*, IDS Working Paper 319, Brighton: IDS

⁵⁰Abah, O.S. and Okwori, J.Z. (2006) 'Oil and Accountability Issues in the Niger Delta', in P. Newell and J. Wheeler (eds), *Rights, Resources and the Politics of Accountability*, London: Zed Books

⁵¹Newell, Peter and Wheeler, Joanna (2006) 'Introduction', in *Rights, Resources and the Politics of Accountability*, P. Newell and J. Wheeler, eds London: Zed Books

⁵²Gaventa, John and Mayne, Ruth (2008) 'Building Responsive States: Citizen Action and National Policy Change', *In Focus 5*, Brighton: IDS

⁵³See www.ids.ac.uk/go/citizens for summaries of eight case studies on the role of citizen action in national policy change

⁵⁴Avritzer, L. (2010) 'Democratizing Urban Policy in Brazil: Participation and the Right to the City', in J. Gaventa and R. McGee (eds), *Citizen Action and National Policy Reform: Making Change Happen*, London: Zed Books

⁵⁵Borras Jr, S.M. and Franco, J.C. (2009) *Transnational Agrarian Movements: Struggling for Land and Citizenship Rights*, IDS Working Paper 323, Brighton: IDS

⁵⁶Paré, L. and Robles, C. (2006) 'Managing Watersheds and the Right to Water: Indigenous Communities in Search of Accountability and Inclusion in Southern Veracruz', in P. Newell and J. Wheeler (eds), *Rights, Resources and the Politics of Accountability*, London: Zed Books

⁵⁷Newell, P., Anand, V., Arjumend, H., Jaitli, H., Kumar, S. and Ranga Rao, A. (2006) 'Corporate Accountability and Citizen Action: Cases from India', in P. Newell and J. Wheeler (eds) *Rights, Resources and the Politics of Accountability*, London: Zed Books

⁵⁸Borras Jr, S.M. and Franco, J.C. (2009) *Transnational Agrarian Movements: Struggling for Land and Citizenship Rights*, IDS Working Paper 323, Brighton: IDS

and to respond to citizen complaints related to environmental law.⁴⁸ Our research also highlights the importance of more informal processes that citizens have developed to hold states to account, like forms of 'rude' accountability⁴⁹ and local forums for citizens to express grievances.⁵⁰ Accountability is not only about rules and procedures, but about creating a culture of accountability, in which citizens and duty-holders are aware of their rights and responsibilities, and seek to respond accordingly.⁵¹

Citizen engagement bolsters state capability

The Citizenship DRC's research turns political opportunity theory on its head. Conventional wisdom in political science is that social movements emerge when the political system creates opportunities to do so. Our research, by contrast, shows how social movements, from the outside, create and hold open democratic spaces that create possibilities for reformers on the inside to change and implement policy.⁵² The implication is that building responsive and accountable states without recognising and supporting the contributions of organised citizens to the process will do little to bring about sustainable change. A series of eight case studies illustrate significant pro-poor national policy reforms that have come about due to significant broad-based alliances between civil society organisations, the media, intellectuals, and state reformers.⁵³ The Citizenship DRC has also shown how the urban reform movement in Brazil known as the Right to the City campaign led to access to public goods and housing for the urban poor, as well as to increased state capacity for urban planning,⁵⁴ whilst in the Philippines the movement for land reform contributed to access to land and livelihoods for poor farmers.⁵⁵

Movements for accountability face their own accountability issues

As demands arise for accountability, questions

too emerge about who speaks for whom. As civil society organisations and citizens face pressure to mandate a small number of representatives to negotiate on their behalf, the possibility arises that some voices will be silenced. Furthermore, civil society organisations that challenge the official position must be prepared to respond to accusations surrounding their legitimacy. The Citizenship DRC documents several examples of these challenges. In Mexico, the efforts of indigenous communities in Veracruz, Mexico, to win more accountable practices from the municipal and state institutions managing water required years of social organising to confront patronage politics at the village level.⁵⁶ In Visakhapatnam District, India, an NGO helping a resident to demand redress for the consequences of the construction of a power plant learned that it had to be conscientious about maintaining a supporting role, even when members of the community were reluctant to show leadership.⁵⁷

When mobilisations attempt to link across levels, these questions become even more important. In the case of IIASTD (International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development), international civil society representatives were placed in the powerful and very responsible position of speaking *for* farmers whose lives would be affected by the agricultural policies being discussed, but there was little direct consultation *with* the farmers themselves. By contrast, in the case of the transnational agrarian movements, Via Campesina challenged the legitimacy of the NGOs and the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, which traditionally had represented peasant voices in global forums, and advocated a distinct space where peasants and small farmers could speak for themselves.⁵⁸

Fulfilling rights and deepening democracy

Citizen engagement also contributes to the fulfilment of rights, and in the process can help to deepen democracy. The myriad of social, cultural and political struggles in both the North and South – autonomous movements such as those of women, the landless and indigenous peoples – have repeatedly put people on the path from clientelism to meaningful citizenship. By documenting this process, the research highlights the socially and politically transformative nature of rights claims, especially those that include demands for new rights and for participation in decision-making. Where social movements exist that can weave together international discourses on rights with local symbols and values, and where participatory spaces allow citizen groups to demand their entitlements, the state often emerges more capable of protecting and enforcing human rights. In this sense, the Citizenship DRC's research demonstrates how democratisation is a continuous process of struggle and contestation rather than the adoption of a standard institutional design and presents a series of insights into how social movements, civil society organisations and ordinary citizens contribute to this process, in both the North and the South.

Demands for new rights are socially and politically transformative

Historically, if one had simply applied an agenda of upholding existing rights rather than supporting the struggles for *new* rights, then the rights-based agenda would simply have strengthened the status quo, and forces from below pressing for new rights – such as inclusion of women and minorities in democratic processes – would have been ignored. The Citizenship DRC research underscores that international development cannot afford to ignore these forces. Many of the cases demonstrating the largest democratic and developmental gains involve groups that have demanded *new* rights or sought to reinterpret old ones. Indeed, the right to create new rights is essential for a democracy to evolve.⁵⁹ Take, for example, how a concerted campaign by women's and lesbian, gay and bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organisations succeeded in achieving a revolutionary change in the philosophy and content of the Turkish Penal Code on issues of gender and sexuality.⁶⁰ Because of a successful three-year campaign, the new Code recognises women's ownership of their sexuality and their bodies, ending a history of sexual offences being regulated by patriarchal constructs such as 'chastity' and 'honour'. The change has prompted a shift in public and social attitudes.

Rights are made real by action

Enshrining rights in law and building the capacity of the judicial sector are necessary elements for building effective states, and the enduring importance of the international human rights framework to social movements and citizen groups is apparent in many of the Citizenship DRC's cases. However, these legal and institutional factors will not by themselves ensure that poor people will receive their rights. In practice, states may be guilty of *sins of omission* by merely failing to prioritise certain rights, in some cases because they simply lack the resources or the institutional capacity to deliver on them. South Africa, for example, was the first country to enshrine the right to water in its constitution. In line with the constitution, the 1997 Water Services Act stated that a basic level of water should be provided to those who cannot pay. Four years later, South Africa announced that it was going to provide a basic supply of 6,000 litres of safe water per month to all households free of charge (based on an average household size of eight people). Yet despite South Africa's intentions, a lack of financial resources and poor institutional capacity has hampered the government's efforts to extend water service universally, and so the country has increasingly relied on private companies, and pursued a strategy of cost recovery. According to data from the Human Sciences Research Council, millions

of people have had their water service cut off as part of the cost recovery strategy.⁶¹ Protests against water disconnections and prepaid meters are widespread, and the use of the courts to enforce socioeconomic rights is becoming more regular, largely thanks to the involvement of social movements such as the Coalition against Water Privatisation.

'We'll fight for our water, because it's our right', said Zodwa Madiba, an activist who has worked with the coalition in Johannesburg. 'We'll mobilise people on the ground and go door to door and we'll explain why water is important'.

Social mobilisation extends and deepens democracy

The Citizenship DRC's work highlights a citizen-led approach to deepening and strengthening democracy.⁶² Our research shows that democracy is not easily engineered by political institutions or developmental interventions alone, but that organised citizens also strengthen democratic practice when they demand new rights, mobilise pressure for policy change and monitor government performance. When citizens act, they sometimes generate benefits to society that form the preconditions for the proper functioning of democratic institutions. They acquire an awareness of their rights, essential knowledge about political processes and core civil and democratic values, such as tolerance, a belief in dialogue and deliberation, trust, solidarity and reciprocity.

A citizen-led approach argues that democracy is not a set recipe that can be reproduced anywhere. It is not about transferring one set of mechanisms or practices from one context to another, nor is it about following a straight linear path. 'Democratisation' is an ongoing process of struggle and contestation that occurs uniquely in each cultural and historical setting. In Nigeria, Africa's largest democracy, huge amounts of funding went to a government-appointed commission to oversee 'fair' elections April 2007, yet little external money went to support civil society organisations, which mobilised members across the country to monitor the election process themselves, with many risking their lives to do so.⁶³ By the time this document was being printed more than three years after the election, the public was still clamouring for election reform.

'The key question is "why would the parliament accept this if they rigged themselves into office?'," said Jibrin Ibrahim, director of Nigeria's Centre for Democracy and Development. 'We have a political class that is complicit in the history of electoral fraud. Given this context, our position in civil society is that at the end of the day, it is direct citizen action that can make the difference'.

⁵⁹ Eyben, Rosalind (2003) 'The Rise of Rights: Rights-based Approaches to International Development', IDS Policy Briefing 17, Brighton: IDS

⁶⁰ Ilkcaracan, P. (2010) 'Reforming Laws to Secure Women's Rights in Turkey: The Campaign on the Penal Code', in J. Gaventa and R. McGee (eds), *Citizen Action and National Policy Reform: Making Change Happen*, London: Zed Books

⁶¹ For more on South Africa's right to water, see Mehta, Lyla (2005) *Unpacking Rights and Wrongs: Do Human Rights Make a Difference? The Case of Water Rights in India and South Africa*, IDS Working Paper 260, Brighton: IDS

⁶² Schattan, Vera P. Coelho and Bettina von Lieres (eds), (2010) *Mobilizing for Democracy: Citizen Engagement and the Politics of Public Participation*, London: Zed Books

⁶³ Gaventa, John and Benequista, Nicholas (2009) 'Reversing the Flow – A New Democratic Conversation', *Alliance Magazine*, 14.2

The Bangladesh paradox: A citizen's view

Bangladesh has come to embody an interesting paradox. With approximately 22,000 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Bangladesh has among the highest number per capita of all developing countries. These NGOs are partly credited with the country's slow but steady decline in poverty and impressive progress in terms of social development (Bangladesh has outperformed some of its richer neighbours on a number of Millennium Development Goals). Yet the NGO presence has not created similar improvements in governance indicators. Bangladesh was declared the world's most corrupt country for five years running by Transparency International's index.

What explains this paradox in Bangladesh? If NGOs have helped Bangladesh to achieve such steady progress against poverty, why have they failed on governance?

The Citizenship DRC's research has sought insight into this question by looking at six development NGOs with different strategies and the effects each has had on the lives of their members.⁶⁴ The six NGOs represent the full range of strategies. All six organise their membership into groups but whereas microfinance organisations use the group-based strategy to ensure loan repayment, the social mobilisation organisations use it to build the collective consciousness and capabilities of poor men and women.

- **Samata** is largely focused on social mobilisation to address issues of land rights, gender equality and good governance. It also maintains a savings and loans programme.
- **Nijera Kori** is largely focused on

social mobilisation of landless men and women. Its activities include social awareness-raising through regular group discussion and training, collective action to protest injustice and claim rights, along with an internal savings and lending programme.

- **Proshika** combines the provision of microfinance with a focus on livelihoods and rights-based training, advocacy for good governance, legal aid and social mobilisation.
- **BRAC** has a major microfinance programme but combines it with programmes on social development, human rights awareness and legal services.
- **Grameen** is largely focused on microfinance but also offers loans for housing, student scholarships, life insurance, a savings

programme and a deposit pension scheme.

- **ASA** is largely focused on microfinance but also offers health and life insurance.

A survey of both old and new members of each organisation was used to gather information on their impact on poverty reduction, as a proxy for their contributions to development goals, along with information on participation in civic and political life as a proxy for their contributions to grassroots democracy. The impact was estimated using regression analysis to control for individual, household, and location-specific characteristics that also have an influence on the impact indicators. The table right summarises the indicators for which significant results were reported.



This pattern of impacts is somewhat at odds with the expectation that ASA and Grameen, the two organisations at the purely microfinance end of the spectrum, would report the strongest performance in relation to development goals, as proxied by the poverty reduction indicators, whilst Samata and Nijera Kori at the purely social mobilisation end would report stronger performance in relation to democracy, as proxied by participation in civic and political life.

Whilst NK and Samata do indeed perform better than the other organisations on the 'democracy' indicators, ASA, which has been ranked as the most successful microfinance organisation in the world, performs extremely poorly on all the indicators, both development and democracy. Indeed, Nijera Kori performs better than the other organisations in terms of development and, along with Samata, on democracy. If the number of significant impacts reported by each organisation is counted, they are found to decline consistently in the move from the social mobilisation end of the spectrum to the microfinance end. The social mobilisation organisations do unambiguously better than both the pure and mixed microfinance organisations on democracy indicators, though the picture is somewhat less clear-cut in relation to economic indicators.

Taken together, the findings suggest that minimalist microfinance organisations have had minimal impacts on the lives of their intended beneficiaries, poor women and their families in rural Bangladesh. If poor women and men in Bangladesh are to overcome the economic, political

and social barriers to their progress, it is evident that they need support on a variety of fronts. Financial services are important if poor people are to cope with crisis and respond to opportunities, but on their own, do not equip them with the capacity to translate these services into lasting economic progress or to engage with 'bad governance' at the local level. Equally, an overemphasis on social mobilisation without due attention to livelihood issues may promote grassroots participation but will not overcome the barriers to economic advancement.

In terms of explaining the Bangladesh paradox, the study does not offer definitive answers but it does suggest that the strategy adopted by development NGOs makes a difference to the impacts that they are able to achieve. The focus on microfinance can help to promote development goals, particularly if it is combined with social development services, but without building the collective capacity of poor people, it is unlikely to contribute a great deal to countering 'bad governance' in the context of Bangladesh. And yet the international donor community – the major source of funding for development NGOs – has largely favoured microfinance organisations over the social mobilisation ones, such that the very existence of the latter is being threatened.

Overall, these findings resonate with those of other research from the Citizenship DRC. It is not simply the presence or absence of civil society associations that affects democracy, but what these organisations actually do.

⁶⁴Kabeer, N., Mahmud, S. and Isaza Castro, J.G. (2010) NGOs' Strategies and the Challenge of Development and Democracy in Bangladesh, IDS Working Paper 343, Brighton: IDS

Figure 2 Summary of findings relating to impact of NGO membership in Bangladesh

 a rise

 a decline

	Samata	Nijera Kori	Proshika	BRAC	Grameen	ASA
Total number of significant results	9	9	8	5	4	0
Likelihood of food shortage						
Diversity of foods in diet						
Access to paid work						
Ownership of at least half acre of land						
Ownership of cows						
Likelihood of accompanying others to offices						
Participation in shalish (a dispute resolution council)						
Membership of a committee						
Consulted for advice						
Participation in collective action against unjust						
Interaction with Thana Nirbahi Officer (local official in an urban area)						
Interaction with member of the Union Parishad (local government in a rural area)						
Consultation by Chair of the Union Parishad (local government in a rural area)						
Likelihood of campaigning in local election						
Opinion that quality of justice has improved						
Thinks of self as a citizen						
Thinks that all are equal citizens						
Trusts people from other religions						

0.2

Pathways: Moving between state and society and across the tiers of governance



⁶⁵ Gaventa, John (2004) 'Towards Participatory Governance: Assessing the Transformative Possibilities', in S. Hickey and G. Mohan (eds), *From Tyranny to Transformation*, London: Zed Books: 27

⁶⁶ See www.ids.ac.uk/go/citizens for summaries of eight case studies on the role of citizen action in national policy change.

⁶⁷ Gaventa, J. and McGee, R. (eds) (2010) *Citizen Action and National Policy Reform: Making Change Happen*, London: Zed Books: 34

⁶⁸ Mohanty, Ranjita, Lisa Thompson and Vera Schattan Coelho (2010) *States of Mobilisation? A comparison of modes of interaction between states and social actors in India, Brazil and South Africa*, African Centre for Citizenship and Democracy: Cape Town

⁶⁹ Various authors (2008) 'Building Responsive States: Citizen Action and National Policy Change', *In Focus Policy Briefing and Research Summaries*, Brighton: IDS

⁷⁰ Thompson, L. and Nleya, N. (2010) 'Passivity or Protest? Understanding the Dimensions of Mobilization on Rights to Services in Khayelitsha, Cape Town', in V. Schattan Coelho and B. von Lieres (eds), *Mobilizing for Democracy: Citizen Action and the Politics of Public Participation*, London: Zed Books

What strategies can citizens use?

As people's sense of citizenship grows, they begin to engage *politically* with the state. The Citizenship DRC's research has looked specifically at how they do this in ways other than, or in addition to, voting and participating in political parties. These are through:

- local associations and non-governmental organisations (neighbourhood associations, cooperatives, trade unions, religious groups, etc.);
- state-sponsored participatory forums (health councils, forest management committees, area planning councils, etc.);
- self-organised social movements and campaigns (the Brazilian rainforest movement, resistance to dams in India, the international campaign for universal education, etc.).

In reality, these are not mutually exclusive choices. In their interactions with the state, citizens often take multiple approaches, employing a range of strategies, and aligning themselves with an array of organisations, both inside and outside the state. From early in the

research, the Citizenship DRC has argued for strengthening citizen voice on the one hand, whilst supporting responsiveness from the state on the other. As Citizenship DRC director John Gaventa wrote early in the research programme: 'To rebuild relationships between citizens and their local governments means working both sides of the equation – that is, going beyond "civil society" or "state-based" approaches, to focus on their intersection, through new forms of participation, responsiveness and accountability'.⁶⁵

Research on successful cases of citizen action for national policy change confirms that social mobilisation and citizen demands from outside the state can provide opportunities for reformers to generate change from within.⁶⁶ Still, civil society engagement in policy processes is not sufficient to make change happen: 'Competition for formal political power is also central, creating new impetus for reform, and bringing key allies into positions of influence, often in synergy with collective action from below'.⁶⁷

More recently, comparative research in India, Brazil and South Africa found that 'neither civil society nor the state are isolated entities capable of promoting democracy on their own; actors from both fields are constantly engaging with each other thus shaping and re-shaping society-state relationships'.⁶⁸



The research does not, however, support the notion that state-society relations, if only properly managed, will always involve consensus. In the face of contentious issues, contentious politics are required.⁶⁹ For residents of Khayelitsha, South Africa's largest township, joining protests organised by local street committees has been instrumental in their struggle for a right to housing.⁷⁰ In Zimbabwe, the Election Support Network braved brutal repression to stand up for the principle that a person's vote is their inalienable right.

Moving across the tiers of governance

Whilst 'working on both sides of the equation' implies the necessity for building horizontal links for change across state and society, other work has shown the importance of also thinking vertically – about how citizen engagement changes in a world of multi-tiered and multi-layered governance. What happens at the international level – the decisions of multilateral institutions or global institutions, whether the World Bank or the Global Fund – affect what states and citizens at the national and local levels can do. Conversely, local and national actors – both states and civil society organisations – can also appeal to international authority and use international pressures to bring about change. Whether led by grassroots activists or high-level policymakers, by donors, NGOs or social movements, to be effective in a global world, change must link simultaneously and synergistically across levels. Success must

be understood not only in terms of change at one level of governance, but in terms of its consequences for power and inclusion in other interconnected arenas as well.⁷¹

The research shows the challenges for citizen action in navigating the complexities of multi-tiered governance, as citizens try to link their local and national demands to international decision-makers. National governments can play a critical role in helping to mediate and support these linkages.⁷² International and global actors may attempt to engage citizens from above, like the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development⁷³ or the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.⁷⁴ Such efforts, however, can be thwarted or used for different purposes if they do not link effectively to local and national mediating organisations. The primary focus of the research has been on what this changing context means for how citizens mobilise to exercise their voice and to claim their rights.

In the following sections, we examine lessons for the research on how change happens when citizens engage (a) through their own associations, usually at the grassroots level; (b) through government-initiated participatory forums; and (c) through advocacy, social movements and campaigns, especially those that link and 'scale up' from the local to the national and global levels.

⁷¹ Gaventa, John and Tandon, Rajesh (2010) 'Introduction', in J. Gaventa and R. Tandon (eds), *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, London: Zed Books

⁷² Gaventa, John and Tandon, Rajesh (2010) 'Introduction', in J. Gaventa and R. Tandon (eds), *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, London: Zed Books.

⁷³ Scoones, I. (2010) 'The Politics of Global Assessments: The Case of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD)', in J. Gaventa and R. Tandon (eds), *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, London: Zed Books

⁷⁴ Cassidy, R. and Leach, M. (2010) 'Mediated Health Citizenship: Living with HIV and Engaging with the Global Fund in the Gambia', in J. Gaventa and R. Tandon (eds), *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, London: Zed Books

⁷⁵ Just 10 per cent of outcomes resulting from associations were negative, compared with 35 per cent of the outcomes from other forms of citizen engagement (including cases where multiple strategies were pursued).

Nurturing associations at the grassroots

The links between associationalism and democracy in western democracies have long been highlighted, yet international development actors in recent years have paid little attention to the role of local associations in poorer countries. But local, membership-based, groups that gather for a common purpose – a cooperative, savings group or religious assembly – can play important roles not only for service delivery or community cohesion, but also as building blocks of democracy. The Citizenship DRC documented over 30 such case studies of grassroots associational life. In many examples, these local associations have served as schools of citizenship, transforming the outlook of their members, and in doing so, helping to reconfigure social relations.

Not all local associations are 'virtuous', however, as work on local youth associations, gangs and militias reveals in Nigeria, Jamaica and Brazil revealed. Still, the Citizenship DRC's research has found the negative outcomes from associational life to be far lower than from other forms of citizen engagement, and to be largely positive in some of the weakest democracies.⁷⁵

And even in the context where democratic institutions have been tried and tested, associational life still remains a vital source of socially progressive values that needs to be nurtured.

⁷⁶ Abah, Oga Steve, Zakari Okwori, J. and Alubo, Ogoh (2009) 'Participatory Theatre and Video: Acting Against Violence in Northern Nigeria', *IDS Bulletin*, 40.3: 19–26

⁷⁷ Ferreira, I. and Roque, S. (2010) 'The Nucleo Representativo das Associações (NRA) do Dombe Grande: Building Democracy and Citizenship at the Local Level', in V. Schattan Coelho and B. von Lieres (eds), *Mobilizing for Democracy: Citizen Action and the Politics of Public Participation*, London: Zed Books

⁷⁸ Schattan Coelho, V. (2007) 'Brazilian Health Councils: Including the Excluded?' in A. Cornwall and V. Schattan Coelho (eds), *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas*, London: Zed Books

⁷⁹ Nyamu-Musembi, C. (2010) 'Have NGO Political Empowerment Programs at the Grassroots Level Contributed to Deepening of Democracy in Kenya?' in V. Schattan Coelho and B. von Lieres (eds), *Mobilizing for Democracy: Citizen Action and the Politics of Public Participation*, London: Zed Books

⁸⁰ Nyamu-Musembi, C. (2006) 'From Protest to Proactive Action: Building Institutional Accountability through Struggles for the Right to Housing', in P. Newell and J. Wheeler (eds), *Rights, Resources and the Politics of Accountability*, London: Zed Books

⁸¹ Mahmud, Simeen and Nyumu-Musembi, Celestine (2010) 'Gender and Citizenship at the Grassroots: Assessing the Effect of NGO Initiatives in Social Mobilization and Political Empowerment in Kenya and Bangladesh' Citizenship DRC Synthesis Paper: Brighton

⁸² Kabeer, N., Mahmud, S. and Isaza Castro, J.G. (2010) *NGOs' Strategies and the Challenge of Development and Democracy in Bangladesh*, IDS Working Paper 343, Brighton: IDS

Associations can be schools of democracy

Associations can contribute to the construction of political subjects and enhance political participation and the control of citizens over public policy. Associations may socialise individuals into practising core civic and democratic values, such as tolerance, dialogue and deliberation, trust, solidarity, and reciprocity. For those donors working in fragile and weak settings, it is important to recognise the role that local associations and other citizen activities can play in the strengthening of cultures of citizenship and building responsive states. The research has found associations to be of the greatest consequence in fragile settings. In Northern Nigeria, youth groups, religious groups, and other local civil society organisations have helped create dialogue between communities fragmented by riots.⁷⁶ In Angola, local associations, which had originally been formed as committees of displaced people during the conflict period, have survived in the post-war period, and with decentralisation are gradually engaging with local government officials on key issues related to social and economic life in their communities, a case described in greater detail on page 35.⁷⁷ Even in a country like Brazil, home to some of the most successful cases of participatory democracy, the Citizenship DRC found that the councils where ordinary citizens are invited to discuss health service delivery in some cases suffered from dominance by the 'usual suspects'.⁷⁸ However, in areas where associational life was strongest, these participatory forums were more representative of the wider community.

The nature of the association makes a difference to its democratising potential

This is not a call for indiscriminate support to civil society; the research helps to dispel the myth that more civil society will always lead to more democratic practices, pointing to the importance of what NGOs do, and how they do it. In Bangladesh, microfinance NGOs such as Grameen and BRAC may bring citizens together in local microfinance groups with positive outcomes in the livelihoods of those who participate, but the impact of these associations is limited when compared with the effects that social mobilising groups have had on both the economic and political lives of their members, as the detailed case from Bangladesh illustrates in the previous section. In Kenya, the empowerment programmes of civil society organisations have scored poorly on their contributions to improving the quality and equality of representation of interests in local governance, in part because these organisations have taught the theory of citizen participation without actually offering any opportunities for

action.⁷⁹ By contrast, the residents of housing estates in Mombasa have taught themselves, with no training or support from outsiders, that to win policy change they will need strategic action in addition to the protests they organise to defend themselves from the most egregious abuses.⁸⁰

Associations can challenge social hierarchies, but face structural limitations

Participation in associational life can serve to expand the sphere of chosen rather than given relationships in the lives of a sizeable number of poor people. This effect is of particular significance to women, who are far more likely than men to be confined to limited communities of family and kin. Yet debates on the gendered nature of citizenship have often neglected this intermediate sphere of social interaction. This is the sphere in which most of 'community life' takes place. It is the sphere of informal work. It is the space occupied by religious bodies, forums for informal dispute resolution and local governance, and the institutions that consolidate and enforce custom. The Citizenship DRC has found this intermediate sphere to be consequential for gender relations.

In both Kenya and Bangladesh, the presence of organisations that use membership-based schemes to promote social mobilisation and political empowerment have to some degree challenged social hierarchies.⁸¹ In Bangladesh, for example, female members of the social mobilising organisation Nijera Kori are far more likely than women who are not involved in a local association, and even more likely than those enrolled only in a microcredit group, to move unaccompanied by a husband or male relative in public spaces like markets or government offices.⁸² In both countries, women who are members of these organisations are more likely to be registered to vote, more likely to serve on committees that manage community amenities or dispute resolution mechanisms, more knowledgeable of formal political processes and more likely to use formal state systems. However, the research also warns that civil society initiatives alone are not enough to erode the power of male networks that control public political space at the grassroots level. In spite of these programmes, men continue to dominate public committees that depend on appointment by politicians or senior government officials, including leadership in political parties. And the higher up the institutional ladder one looks, the wider the gap. So though NGO initiatives can play a role in strengthening the political agency of women, other strategies are needed to directly challenge these networks of political exclusion.

Making new spaces for public participation more inclusive and effective

Many countries have adopted a variety of techniques and forums that invite citizens to participate in policymaking. These new democratic spaces include community and user groups and participatory consultation exercises of various kinds, participatory sectoral councils and the institutions of participatory budgeting and participatory planning. These new arenas are found at multiple tiers of government, sometimes arising from processes of democratic decentralisation, or as part of a national consultative process. Even at the local level, their remits vary greatly: some local co-management initiatives focus on mobilising communities' own resources, whilst others oversee the allocation of public funds. Taken together, they represent an increasingly vibrant new aspect of democracy, and imply new relationships between citizens and their governments. However, only a few are strongly accountable, inclusive and representative, and fewer still go beyond resource management or delivery to help shape laws and policies. In each case studied by the Citizenship DRC, the difference is made by a series of contextual factors: legal and institutional variables; small details in the design and management of the participatory process; and the social legacies left behind by a country's particular history of social mobilisation. Importing a best-practice model from elsewhere will not guarantee success.

Legal and institutional context is crucial for success

The absence of an enabling legal framework may make it difficult to integrate a new democratic space with the formal structures of government. In India, for example, the far-reaching panchayati raj local governance reforms have created a system of elected authorities down to the village level. In the absence of such national reform programmes, local and regional initiatives to support participation may be promoted by individual 'champions' and political parties.⁸³ These initiatives can be vulnerable to changes in government, however, and their ability to survive depends both on establishing a solid legal framework and on a sense of ownership among citizens.⁸⁴

In many places, new institutions have found themselves competing with existing participation spaces. Areas of responsibility and lines of accountability among different local bodies – for watershed management, forestry, health and other concerns – remain unclear in India, for example, undermining the legitimacy of the panchayati raj institutions as the main focus of decision-making on local issues.⁸⁵ At the same time, traditional 'informal panchayats' dominated by older and wealthier men can use their power to block attempts by women and members of scheduled castes to participate in the panchayati raj institutions, despite the system of reserved seats for these groups.⁸⁶ Many of the new democratic spaces have been created with the explicit aim of

making service providers more accountable, both to citizens and to donor or central government agencies funding the services. In Bangladesh, 'health watch committees' set up by an activist NGO with international development agency support encouraged inclusive participation and rights-claiming, but were unable to secure accountability since they lacked a clear legal mandate, leaving decision-making to rest with officials in the health service.⁸⁷

The design of spaces must consider the cultures of excluded groups

Another major justification for the creation of new democratic spaces is that they enable more inclusive and effective deliberation over problems and proposals. Survey research carried out in 31 sub-municipalities of Brazil's largest city, São Paulo, yielded important insights into the composition of the Health Councils that allow citizens to inspect public accounts and demand accountability from health service providers.⁸⁸ Public managers, the research suggests, have tremendous influence over the outcome of councillor elections, so whether they value citizen participation or not matters. Increasing the transparency of procedures for selecting the councillors and a strong associative life in the surrounding community will also help bring diversity to the local council. Unless attention is paid to the quality of the process, however, people can be excluded from discussions, even when they are physically present. The framing of the agenda, the language used, and the style of debate

⁸³ Dunn, A., Foot, J., Gaventa, J. and Zipfel, T. (2007) 'Champions of Participation: Engaging Citizens in Local Governance. An International Learning Report', Brighton: Development Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability

⁸⁴ McGee, Rosemary (2003) 'Legal Frameworks for Citizen Participation: Synthesis Report', Brighton: Logolink

⁸⁵ Gaventa, John (2004) 'Strengthening Participatory Approaches to Local Governance: Learning the Lessons from Abroad', *National Civic Review*, 93.4

⁸⁶ Mohanty, R. (2007) 'Gendered Subjects, the State and Participatory Spaces: The Politics of Domesticating Participation in Rural India', in A. Cornwall and V. Schattan Coelho (eds), *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas*, London: Zed Books

⁸⁷ Mahmud, S. (2007) 'Spaces for Participation in Health Systems in Rural Bangladesh: The Experience of Stakeholder Community Groups', in A. Cornwall and V. Schattan Coelho (eds), *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas*, London: Zed Books

⁸⁸ Schattan Coelho, V. (2007) 'Brazilian Health Councils: Including the Excluded?' in A. Cornwall and V. Schattan Coelho (eds), *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas*, London: Zed Books



'My work entails... helping the community to be able to understand and get involved in water service provision. The beneficiary community needs to be empowered.'

Edith Kamundi, a 'pioneer' of citizen participation from the Nairobi City Water and Sewerage



⁸⁹ von Lieres, B. and Kahane, D. (2007) 'Inclusion and Representation in Democratic Deliberations: Lessons from Canada's Romanow Commission', in A. Cornwall and V. Schattan Coelho (eds), *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas*, London: Zed Books

⁹⁰ Leach, M., Scoones, I. and Wynne, B. (eds), *Science and Citizens: Globalization and the Challenge of Engagement*, London: Zed Books

⁹¹ Piper, L. and Nadvi, L. (2010) 'Popular Mobilisation, Party Dominance and Participatory Governance in South Africa', in L. Thompson and C. Tapscott (eds), *Citizenship and Social Movements: Perspectives from the Global South*, London: Zed Books

⁹² Newell, P., Anand, V., Arjumend, H., Jaitli, H., Kumar, S. and Ranga Rao, A. (2006) 'Corporate Accountability and Citizen Action: Cases from India', in P. Newell and J. Wheeler (eds), *Rights, Resources and the Politics of Accountability*, London: Zed Books

⁹³ Mohanty, R. (2007) 'Gendered Subjects, the State and Participatory Spaces: The Politics of Domesticating Participation in Rural India', in A. Cornwall and V. Schattan Coelho (eds), *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas*, London: Zed Books

⁹⁴ Ibid: 86

⁹⁵ Alonso, Angela (2010) 'Hybrid Activism: Paths of Globalization in the Brazilian Environmental Movement', in J. Gaventa and R. Tandon (eds), *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, London: Zed Books: 219

can be exclusionary in these forums.⁸⁹ Rapid advances in science and the emergence of new technologies exacerbate this problem. Public engagement with science can be dominated by narrow technical debates about risk that engage the public only to promote acceptance or deflect controversy.⁹⁰ The extent to which the process of inviting citizen participation is reflexive and iterative – how far the participants are allowed to define the terms in which they participate, the issues they address and the form the deliberation takes – is essential for success.

What happens outside is just as important as what happens inside

Creating new spaces for previously excluded groups is not enough by itself to erase deeply embedded cultural inequalities and to empower the marginalised to shape national policy.

Such forums may only help to deliver for poor people when there is effective mobilisation and representation by citizens to enter and use those spaces. In spite of progressive legislation in South Africa designed to establish a system of participatory democracy at the local level through Ward Committees, research by the Citizenship DRC found that there is little to suggest an impact at the local government from the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 that mandated the changes. Ward Committees have suffered from many failings, but one of the problems illustrated by case studies in eThekweni and Msunduzi municipalities is that civil society has yet to mount a clearly articulated and well-organised stance in these spaces.⁹¹ This is partly due to a legacy of the anti-apartheid struggle; broad-based civil society organisations were largely absorbed by the government after the victory of the African National Congress in 1994, and have only begun to grow again since 2000. By contrast, in many parts of India, NGOs have for three decades occupied an important place in the everyday lives of citizens, with links to urban research and advocacy organisations that link them also to policy engagement at the provincial and national levels. For example, the Paravada-based NGO Sadhana worked with the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), a Delhi-based centre for research and learning, to help organise the people affected by the construction of a power plant in Vizag.⁹² These organisations used participatory methods to help generate a People's Development Plan, which presented the community's view of how the grievances could be adequately addressed in mutually beneficial ways.

People can feel disempowered as a result of empty or decorative forms of citizen engagement

Our cases highlight a set of concerns over whether participatory action is seen as merely cosmetic, decorative, meaningless, or a 'waste of time'. In other cases, participatory action may be seen as 'manufactured' or 'captured' from above by politicians, parties, NGOs or other elites seeking to use it for their own ends. In some cases, participatory action may have occurred, but was seen as simply legitimating decisions perceived to have already been made by state or other powerful actors. Such scenarios risk reinforcing a sense of disempowerment and contribute to people's reluctance to engage in the future.

In our research we found many examples of these empty or coerced forms of participation. In both Brazil and India, we found instances in which women were present in yet remained silent in new participatory spaces, largely because they were there at the behest of others, or were fearful of reprisal if they spoke out.⁹³ Their participation is an indicator of dependency, not autonomy, and is experienced as humiliation rather than empowerment. As one of the case writers in India reports of an interview with an elected woman panchayat member:

I only know this much, that I am a member, nothing beyond that. Family members said that there is a seat reserved for women, you contest the election, we will manage it after that.

'Why did she contest the election then?', I ask. Her voice chokes – 'family members insisted, but you see, it's so humiliating. All these women make fun of me all the time and tell me that I am no more than a peon in the panchayat.'⁹⁴

Or, as an environmental activist from Brazil said about the tokenistic quality of his participation at a forum in Vancouver:

In fact, I did not say anything; there was no place on the agenda for me. Everything had been agreed beforehand... and I was called almost to legitimise... And I felt very uncomfortable.⁹⁵

Mobilising and mediating for global change

Whilst much of the focus of how citizens engage with states has been on institutionalised processes, whether through elections or through other forms of state-sponsored participation, our research also points to the important role that social movements, advocacy campaigns and other forms of collective action play in building more responsive, accountable and pro-poor states. Change happens in a number of ways: protests outside the seats of power whilst lobbying on the inside; working with the media to shape public opinion whilst working with experts to engage in technical policy debates; contesting elites through litigation whilst collaborating with them as well. These and other forms of activism do not constitute the failure of democratic politics; they are an essential component.

Change also happens across levels, from grassroots communities to national governments to international authorities. To hold together diverse movements for change, the role of mediators (those who interpret, represent, and communicate the movement both within and outside the movement) is critical. However, the growing role of mediators – be they individuals, networks or organisations – also raises questions of legitimacy, representation and accountability of the mediators themselves. Mobilisations can be used for many purposes, some of which are in the interests of poor people, and others which are not. Even those movements and campaigns that seek pro-poor or democratic governance reform may produce new forms of exclusion or patronage within them.

Rarely do civil society organisations or professional NGOs bring about change alone

Whilst a great deal of attention in recent years has focused on the decline of the nation state brought on by decentralisation on the one hand or the rise of global governance on the other, or by the rise of non-state actors and networks, the Citizenship DRC work shows that nation states remain critical both as arenas of policy and authority, and as actors who can shape the success or failure of citizen action. Rarely does national policy change happen through civil society pressure alone. Rather, research on Citizen Action and National Policy Change suggests that it involves highly complex coalitions that link NGOs, social movements, faith-based groups, the media, intellectuals and others in deep-rooted mobilising networks. Whilst the state is often a target in such movements, actors within the state also play a critical role, opening and closing opportunities for engagement, championing and sustaining reforms, and protecting the legitimacy and safety of the movements. In Chile, for example, an NGO-led coalition on child rights linked civil society and state champions together, and led to a new policy framework benefiting children, contributing to a decrease in child poverty.⁹⁶ Though some government donors may find it difficult to directly support social movements that challenge the

state, they can play an important role in shaping or encouraging how the state responds.

Social movements can be measured by more than short-term policy results

Often there is a tendency to measure advocacy campaigns or social movements in terms of their 'policy success' in the short term. Yet policy success is not always accompanied by the more fundamental and less obvious outcomes that underpin lasting change, such as popular awareness, increased capacity of organisations and stronger leadership. These outcomes are needed to maintain the gains that have been made and become essential resources in future campaigns as well. Many social movements or campaigns which are successful similarly build upon enabling conditions, experienced leaders, or coalitions that had been developed in previous movements or other issues. Success needs to be measured broadly, not just in terms of narrow policy wins, and over long periods of time.

Research featured in the book *'Mobilizing for Democracy'*,⁹⁷ illustrates 'how social movements can successfully press for state responsiveness to citizens' agendas and rights', as well as strengthen democratic processes and institutions. In Brazil, for instance, indigenous peoples seeking better healthcare altered their tactics from rights-claiming outside of the state, to direct participation in the management of government health services, and back to claiming from the outside – all of which contributed to greater recognition by the state of the needs of indigenous people. In Nigeria, the anti-Third Term campaign – a broad-based social movement involving members of Parliament, civil society, parties and popular masses – created an alliance that has continued to press for government reform.

New tiers of governance, from the local to the global, pose challenges and opportunities for civil society organisations

Citizen-state interactions are not just a local or national matter. A series of case studies on

⁹⁶ Fuentes, C. (2010) 'Protecting the Child in Chile: Civil Society and the State', in J. Gaventa and R. McGee (eds), *Citizen Action and National Policy Reform: Making Change Happen*, London: Zed Books

⁹⁷ Schattan Coelho, V. and B. von Lieres (eds), (2010) *Mobilizing for Democracy: Citizen Action and the Politics of Public Participation*, London: Zed Books

⁹⁸ Gaventa, J. and Tandon, R. (eds), (2010) *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, London: Zed Books

⁹⁹ Cassidy, R and Leach, M. (2010) 'Mediated Health Citizenship: Living with HIV and Engaging with the Global Fund in the Gambia', in J. Gaventa and R. Tandon (eds), *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, London: Zed Books

¹⁰⁰ Mehta, L. and Napier-Moore, R. (2010) 'Caught between National and Global Jurisdictions: Displaced People's Struggle for Rights', in J. Gaventa and R. Tandon (eds), *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, London: Zed Books

¹⁰¹ Gaventa, J. and McGee, R. (2010) Introduction, in J. Gaventa and R. McGee (eds), *Citizen Action and National Policy Reform: Making Change Happen*, London: Zed Books:17-18

¹⁰² Scoones, I. (2010) 'The Politics of Global Assessments: The Case of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD)', in J. Gaventa and R. Tandon (eds), *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, London: Zed Books

¹⁰³ Cassidy, R. and Leach, M. (2010) 'Mediated Health Citizenship: Living with HIV and Engaging with the Global Fund in the Gambia', in J. Gaventa and R. Tandon (eds), *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, London: Zed Books

¹⁰⁴ Gaventa, J. and Mayo, M. (2009) *Spanning Citizenship Spaces through Transnational Coalitions: The Case of the Global Campaign for Education*, IDS Working Paper 327, Brighton: IDS

¹⁰⁵ Gaventa, J. and Barrett, G. (2010) *So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement*, IDS Working Paper 347, Brighton: IDS

¹⁰⁶ Borras Jr, S.M. and Franco, J.C. (2010) 'Redistributing Land in the Philippines: Social Movements and State Reforms', in J. Gaventa and R. McGee (eds), *Citizen Action and National Policy Reform: Making Change Happen*, London: Zed Books

¹⁰⁷ Barnes, M. (2007) 'Whose Spaces? Contestations and Negotiations in Health and Community Regeneration Forums in England', in A. Cornwall and V. Schattan Coelho (eds), *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas*, London: Zed Books

¹⁰⁸ Mahmud, S. (2010) 'Why do Garment Workers in Bangladesh Fail to Mobilize?', in L. Thompson and C. Tapscoff (eds), *Citizenship and Social Movements: Perspectives from the Global South*, London: Zed Books

¹⁰⁹ Mohanty, R. (2010) 'Contesting Development, Reinventing Democracy: Grassroots Social Movements in India', in L. Thompson and C. Tapscoff (eds), *Citizenship and Social Movements: Perspectives from the Global South*, London: Zed Books

¹¹⁰ Thompson, L. and Nleya, N. (2010) 'Passivity or Protest? Understanding the Dimensions of Mobilization on Rights to Services in Khayelitsha, Cape Town', in V. Schattan Coelho and B. von Lieres (eds), *Mobilizing for Democracy: Citizen Action and the Politics of Public Participation*, London: Zed Books

global citizen engagements⁹⁸ demonstrate that decisions at the international level – whether by multilateral institutions like the World Bank or non-state actors like the Global Fund⁹⁹ – affect what states and citizens can do. Conversely, local and national actors can also appeal to international authority and use international pressures to bring about change at home. International frameworks are especially important for those who have been displaced from their home country and who have few legally inscribed citizen rights in the locality where they live.¹⁰⁰ The Citizenship DRC, however, also found cause for caution when invoking international law. Appeals to these frameworks and pressure from international groups can also raise concern about 'outside interference', thus undermining the legitimacy of citizen voice locally.¹⁰¹ International institutions that seek to engage citizens 'from above' may find their efforts to hear new voices thwarted or captured for different purposes if they do not link effectively to local and national mediating organisations as well – dangers illustrated by the cases of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development¹⁰² and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.¹⁰³ Still, the research demonstrates the potential of transnational forms of citizen action to realise development goals when effective and accountable mediators are in place. The Global Campaign for Education, for instance, has been a very important force, linking citizen action on the right to education across local, national and international arenas.¹⁰⁴

Citizen action can lead to state reprisal

Getting citizen engagement right does not mean that the state will follow. We have argued in this document that citizens cannot be treated like a residual, but neither can the nature of the state be ignored. The right kind of engagement can still prove disastrous in the wrong kind of environment.

In fact, the highest percentage of 'negative' outcomes of citizen engagement recorded in our studies is not related to citizen practices, but to the response of the state. Just over one third of the negative outcomes were coded in this area.¹⁰⁵ In many cases, as we have seen,

these outcomes are experienced as simple state recalcitrance. Authorities simply refuse to respond to citizen voices or demands. In other cases, they respond, but in a piecemeal or tokenistic fashion; e.g. a policy may be declared but not implemented. In other cases, victories are short-lived; gains are quickly followed by reversals. In some cases, the loss of key reformers or champions inside the state can affect the sustainability of outcomes. In the Philippines, for instance, reformers in the state played a key role in supporting civil society movements for land reform; yet when the reformers moved on, especially those at the top, the movements were difficult to sustain.¹⁰⁶

Whilst all of the above mechanisms of institutional recalcitrance are well documented in literature on state responsiveness and accountability, what was more surprising in our case studies was the number of times in which reprisals were taken by authorities in response to greater citizen voice. States may have been 'responsive', but their responsiveness was in the form of backlash, designed to stifle dissent and crush opposition. Such reprisals were experienced in a number of ways. In some instances, those who challenged the status quo found themselves 'uninvited' to government-run participatory forums or labelled and ostracised as 'troublemakers' rather than as representatives of genuine citizen concerns.¹⁰⁷ In other cases, harsher political and economic tactics were used. Workers who spoke out against working conditions risked losing their jobs and were silenced by economic power. In other cases, developmental benefits were used as political weapons – welfare benefits, land, housing rights, forests could be given by authorities but could also be taken away.

Worse still, in a striking number of cases, the Citizenship DRC documented violent attacks and other acts originating from state apparatuses that infringe upon civil and political rights. These have occurred as the result of labour mobilisation in Bangladesh,¹⁰⁸ environmental mobilisation in India,¹⁰⁹ and public-service protests in South Africa,¹¹⁰ among other examples where violent responses to citizen mobilisation creates a circle of physical conflict, undermining the potential for deepening the democratic dynamic between state and society.



In Brazil, citizen pathways to better health

Brazil is one of the few countries on track to meet the fourth Millennium Development Goal, which calls for a two-thirds reduction in the infant mortality rate by 2015.

Brazil slashed infant mortality rates; those among children under one year of age fell by 60 per cent between 1990 and 2007, according to a 2009 study by UNICEF.¹¹¹ The report cites a decline in the national death rate from 49 deaths per thousand live births to around 20. Even in Brazil's indigenous communities – some of the worst-affected areas – things are improving. According to Brazil's health agency, Funasa, there was a 10 per cent drop in infant deaths in indigenous areas between 2007 and 2009.

Brazil owes its success in this and other health indicators at least partly to a long legacy of citizen action.¹¹²

During the 1970s, grassroots dissatisfaction with the exclusion of Brazilian citizens from access to basic healthcare led to the creation of a number of 'popular health movements' which coalesced into the *Movimento pela Reforma Sanitária*, or Movement for Health System Reform, under the leadership of reformist health professionals known as *sanitaristas*. At the end of military rule, many of these *sanitarista* health professionals were recruited into the Ministry of Health, where they acted as activist-bureaucrats to facilitate an unprecedented level of participation by representatives of the popular health movements. In doing so, they pioneered an approach to policymaking based on institutionalised state-society interaction that has since underpinned Brazil's health policies. The Brazilian 'Citizens' Constitution' of 1988 established health as the right of

all, defined its provision as the duty of the state and guaranteed the right to participate in the governance of health. The constitution also created the *Sistema Único de Saúde* (SUS) – a universal, publicly-funded, rights-based health system, which is a rarity in Latin America. Middle-class Brazilians may continue to use private health services, but the government has an obligation to serve everyone.

Citizen action, however, continued to play a major role in shaping how the principles of the Brazilian constitution were interpreted and implemented. For example, the Ministry of Health began to sign contracts to give municipalities the responsibility to manage, though not to directly deliver, health services. Within these contracts were important stipulations about accountability and transparency in health service delivery. The movement at this point advocated for an institutionalisation of a national health conference, a national health council and also for the establishment of local health councils.

Now it is common to find citizens jammed together into municipal halls on neat, narrow rows of white plastic chairs, each a personal podium for the citizens-cum-policymakers participating in these health councils, which are active in nearly all of the country's 5,000-plus municipalities. These councils are empowered by law to inspect public accounts and demand accountability, and some strongly influence how resources for health services are spent. This innovation has not been trivial.

Each month tens of thousands of Brazilian citizens representing a spectrum of civic associations – churches, women, black, disabled

and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual movements, unions, non-governmental organisations, neighbourhood associations and more – meet with those who run their health services and provide their healthcare. They come together with a broader body of citizens, health managers and health workers every two or four years in municipal health conferences, from which delegates are put forward for conferences at the state and national levels. Hundreds of thousands of citizens took part in shaping proposals that were then debated amongst 3,500 participants at one National Health Conference in 2008. At such events, proposed amendments collated from days of group work are blazoned across giant screens, the kind used at rock concerts, whilst members of the crowd wave placards or chant when their desired amendment comes up for a vote.

Through this process of debate, contestation, refinement and reformulation, good ideas from citizens often survive to find a place in state and national policies. And when they do not, citizens who recognise the value of their ideas often continue to fight for them: some as health user representatives elected to represent their communities at the councils; others through their civic associations or political parties. Amid all the debate, one important consensus has emerged around the value of maintaining the national health service itself.

Yet, just as the passage of Brazil's progressive constitution did not mark the end of a citizen struggle, neither has the advent of health councils rendered redundant the work of civil society organisations and social movements on health. The truth of the claim that

participatory councils can help to make health services pro-poor depends on whether marginalised and vulnerable people are truly represented, which requires efforts both by the state and social actors.

Who gets to sit in these new citizen assemblies – those who represent the interests of public health managers and local political elites or those who represent the genuine interests of citizens? Citizenship DRC research in three regions of Brazil reveals that many citizen groups are represented in the councils, though diversity is not guaranteed. Breaking the grip of powerful actors on the councils often depends on a public manager who is willing to champion the cause of participation, on strong civil society groups or other associations who refuse to let their constituencies be left out and on the rules and regulations that govern the election of councillors.

Survey research carried out in 31 sub-municipalities of Brazil's largest city, São Paulo, yielded important insights into the composition of the councils.¹¹³ Public managers, the research suggests, have tremendous influence over the outcome of councillor elections, so whether they value citizen participation or not matters. This research also reveals that more transparent procedures used to select the councillors and a strong associative life in the surrounding community will also help bring diversity to the local council. These conditions did not relate to the socioeconomic profiles of areas researched.

Ethnographic and participatory research in health councils in Pernambuco and Acre, in north

eastern and northern Brazil respectively, showed the significance of relationships that exist between public managers, civil society representatives and political parties.¹¹⁴ Where there is alignment around an ideological commitment to popular participation, councils can serve as a space for what one health manager termed 'constructive co-existence'. Citizens and their representatives are able to make demands on government for accountability, and government is able to engage citizens and civil society organisations in monitoring the effectiveness of public policies and the functioning of the public health system.

These experiences show the value of popular participation in sustaining political commitment and popular support for the national health service. Furthermore, the research contradicts the idea that deliberative arenas should be insulated from political passions. Rather, the participation of mobilised social actors contributes to the effectiveness of these forums. With all the antagonism and conflict that implies, it also means that these sites become important focal points for the larger political and cultural battles of society. This can be a challenging environment for public officials, which is why training of councillors and the council chairs on their roles and responsibilities is crucial. And so are reminders for all those involved – from high-ranking health officials to ordinary citizens – that getting people involved in shaping health provision makes more than practical good sense: it is about what it means to be a democracy.

¹¹³ UNICEF (2009) *The State of the World's Children: Maternal and Newborn Health*, New York: UNICEF

¹¹² Schattan Coelho, Vera P. (2011) *What Did We Learn About Citizen Involvement in the Health Process: Lessons from Brazil*, Citizenship DRC Synthesis Paper: Brighton

¹¹³ Schattan Coelho, V. (2007) 'Brazilian Health Councils: Including the Excluded?' in A. Cornwall and V. Schattan Coelho (eds), *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas*, London: Zed Books

¹¹⁴ Cornwall, A. (2007) 'Democratising the Governance of Health Services: The Case of Cabo de Santo Agostinho, Brazil', in A. Cornwall and V. Schattan Coelho (eds), *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas*, London: Zed Books; and Cornwall, A., Romano, J. and Shankland, A. (2008) 'Brazilian Experiences of Participation and Citizenship: A Critical Look', IDS Discussion Paper 389, Brighton: IDS

0.3

Fractures: Citizenship in violent and insecure settings



How does violence divide states and citizens?

Violence and everyday insecurity are amongst the root causes of poverty: a statement that has at last been acknowledged in several international agreements, including the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence (2008) and Dili Declaration (2010). Several new funding mechanisms have even been established to support efforts to reduce violence, including those that address the special security needs of excluded groups, women, youth and children. The UK Department for International Development has promised to increase by 50 per cent its budget for operations in the states prone to violence. The World Bank has established a State and Peace-Building Fund with an initial deposit of \$100 million.

What recent policies have failed to adequately consider, however, is that poor and dispossessed people often perceive the state as a perpetrator or accomplice – whether by active complicity or passive omission – in the violence visited upon them. Furthermore, research by the Citizenship DRC in a range of contexts characterised by violence and everyday security reveals a complex relationship between violent and non-violent actors, and between forms of everyday violence and political violence. Whether in the favelas of Brazil or the garrisons of Jamaica or the peri-urban areas of Angola,¹¹⁵ citizens can exercise their rights in non-violent, socially legitimate ways, but taking a bottom-up approach to development in these settings requires both a more honest recognition of the role of the state in violence, and a better understanding of how communities coexist with violent actors.

State actors can be a source of security and insecurity

Looking at issues of security and democracy from the perspectives of those most affected by violence can unsettle many common assumptions, primary among them that states have a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence and that they exercise the security function in the best interests of all citizens. In many contexts the state's security forces are seen to protect the interests of the state itself, of local or transnational private capital, or of particular groups – acting in favour of some sectors by wielding violence against others

- In **Nigeria**, citizens report that both the Federation and southern states often prioritise protection of the transnational

oil industry in the Delta region above the protection of civilians and their basic welfare needs. The state's 'zero-tolerance' of vigilantism in the region, whilst seen by many as valid, can weaken voice and agency and exacerbate sectarian tensions.¹¹⁶

- In **Bangladesh**, in some instances alliances are formed between state actors and local urban developers to harass and dislodge slum-dwellers.¹¹⁷
- In **Jamaica**, the police rarely investigate or address crime, and sometimes act as 'ganstas' or hired guns for those with grudges against their neighbours. In contexts where official state security provision is weak or inadequate, the security function is effectively delegated to non-state actors. These often deploy a mix of violence and protection to perpetuate their political, social and economic control, with varying degrees of active complicity or passive tolerance from the state.¹¹⁸
- In **Medellín**, Colombia, paramilitary groups that were officially demobilised whilst in negotiations with the state continue to control many poor areas of the city, offering protection against the very violence they help to generate.¹¹⁹
- In Rio's *favelas*, **Brazil**, militias armed with police equipment and formed of off-duty, retired and suspended military, civil police officers, prison guards and firemen, invaded and took control of the favelas, expelling those associated with drugs trafficking.¹²⁰
- In **Khayelitsha** township, South Africa, given the lack of state protection from soaring crime, 'street committees' established to provide public services to meet basic needs have strayed into the realm of extra-legal 'security' provision.¹²¹

That states often fail to provide adequate security for citizens or undermine democratic governance through acts committed in the name of security, as these examples attest, calls into question top-down approaches to reducing violence.¹²²

Citizens adopt a range of strategies to cope with, respond to or resist the violence and those who perpetrate it

In the absence of an effective response from the state to the everyday violence and insecurity they suffer, citizens may adopt a range of strategies to cope with, respond to or resist the violence and those who perpetrate it. These coping strategies and alternative structures are not necessarily benign. They can have both positive and negative consequences for citizens,

¹¹⁵ Roque, S. and Shankland, A. (2007) 'Participation, Mutation and Political Transition: New Democratic Spaces in Peri-urban Angola', in A. Cornwall and V. Schattan Coelho (eds), *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas*, London: Zed Books

¹¹⁶ Osaghae, E.E. (2010) 'Social Movements and Rights Claims: The Case of Action Groups in the Niger Delta', in L. Thompson and C. Tapscott (eds), *Citizenship and Social Movements: Perspectives from the Global South*, Zed Books: London.

¹¹⁷ Kabeer, N. and Haq Kabir, A. (2009) *Citizenship Narratives in the Absence of Good Governance: Voices of the Working Poor in Bangladesh*, IDS Working Paper 331, Brighton: IDS

¹¹⁸ Moncrieffe, J. (2008) *Making and Unmaking the Young 'Shotta' (Shooter): Boundaries and (Counter)-Actions in the 'Garrisons'*, IDS Working Paper 297, Brighton: IDS

¹¹⁹ Baird, Adam (2009) 'Methodological Dilemmas: Researching Violent Young Men in Medellín, Colombia', *IDS Bulletin*, 40.3: 72–7

¹²⁰ Wheeler, J. (2010) *Claiming Citizenship in the Shadow of the State: Violence and the making and unmaking of citizens in Rio de Janeiro*, Dphil Thesis, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.

¹²¹ Nleya, Ndodana and Thompson, Lisa (2009) 'Survey Methodology in Violence-prone Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South Africa', *IDS Bulletin*, 40.5: 50–7

¹²² Hilker, L., Benequista, Nicholas and Barrett, Gregory (2010) 'Broadening Spaces for Citizens in Violent Contexts', *Citizenship DRC Policy Briefing*, Brighton: IDS

¹²³ McGee, R., Pearce, J. and Wheeler, J. (2011) *Violence, Security and Democracy: Perverse Interfaces and their Implications for States and Citizens in the Global South*, IDS Working Paper 357, Brighton: IDS

¹²⁴ Osaghae, E.E. (2010) 'Social Movements and Rights Claims: The Case of Action Groups in the Niger Delta', in L. Thompson and C. Tapscott (eds), *Citizenship and Social Movements: Perspectives from the Global South*, London: Zed Books

¹²⁵ Hilker, L., Benequista, Nicholas and Barrett, Gregory (2010) 'Broadening Spaces for Citizens in Violent Contexts', Citizenship DRC Policy Briefing, Brighton: IDS

¹²⁶ Pearce, Jenny and McGee, Rosemary (eds) (2009) 'Violence, Social Action and Research', *IDS Bulletin*, 40.3

¹²⁷ Abah, Oga Steve, Zakari Okwori, J. and Alubo, Ogoch (2009) 'Participatory Theatre and Video: Acting Against Violence in Northern Nigeria', *IDS Bulletin*, 40.3: 19–26

¹²⁸ Wheeler, Joanna (2009) 'The Life That We Don't Want': Using Participatory Video in Researching Violence', *IDS Bulletin*, 40.3: 72–7

¹²⁹ McGee, R., Pearce, J. and Wheeler, J. (2011) *Violence, Security and Democracy: Perverse Interfaces and their Implications for States and Citizens in the Global South*, IDS Working Paper 357, Brighton: IDS

their democratic participation and levels of violence in their communities, and as such they are a critical link between forms of everyday violence and political violence. The Citizenship DRC's research reveals three main strategies employed by citizens in violent contexts¹²³

- *Withdrawal into partial citizenship or self-censorship*: In the face of physical and symbolic appropriation of space by violent actors, citizens in Rio de Janeiro's favelas in Brazil withdraw from public spaces and public facilities, leaving them to the militia and drug gangs.
- *Peaceful coexistence with violent actors*: In Jamaica citizens evoke protective services of 'community gangs' against the real 'criminal gangs'; in one case in Colombia, citizens bolstered the authority of violent actors by 'keeping them sweet'.
- *Establishing parallel governance or security structures*: In Bangladesh, NGOs work to prevent and redress gender-based violence using the parallel community arbitration mechanism known as Shalish; in the Niger Delta, citizens have established their own vigilante groups to protect their interests against predatory foreign capital.¹²⁴

Participatory and action research can help to identify local strategies

Participatory and action research methods are one way of providing a space for citizenship.¹²⁵

By employing techniques such as participatory video and public theatre, researchers can promote dialogue and cooperation in communities, which can help to address the causes of violence.¹²⁶ In northern Nigeria, researchers working with the Theatre for Development Centre found that participatory learning and action (including theatre, song and dance) had positive impacts.¹²⁷ Community-designed performances created the space for citizens to transcend traditional hierarchies and voice their concerns and complaints, without fear of sanctions from the local elite. Following this, communities were able to catalogue their collective concerns before meeting with local authorities. In Brazil, researchers put video cameras in the hands of favela residents living with everyday violence and worked with them to produce a documentary film.¹²⁸ The resulting film and multi-media CD-ROM addressed popular myths about favela residents and have since been used to promote dialogue with community leaders, government officials, politicians and the media on security issues in Rio de Janeiro. In these ways, researchers can support mechanisms for local groups to develop and articulate an agenda for negotiating with formal state institutions.¹²⁹ At the same time, such techniques carry risks. Public media like theatre and video can exacerbate the already difficult task of holding discussions on sensitive topics, and should be used with caution in violent contexts.



Broadening space for citizenship in post-conflict Angola

A fragmented society, high levels of inequality, restrictive legal frameworks, a highly authoritarian political culture and a history of armed conflict make for a difficult setting in which to pursue citizen participation. Yet two case studies from Angola suggest that post-conflict interventions – set in precisely those conditions – should incorporate participatory aspects as early as possible.

The first case concerns an urban poverty programme with a large-scale water and sanitation component in Luanda that was supported by DFID with £16 million from 2001.¹⁵⁰ The programme, however, diverged from the standard post-war intervention model by taking a participatory approach, which included establishing residents' local development associations, water user committees to supervise water standposts, and associations of those groups to interface with government authorities.

The second case involves an NGO, Acção para o Desenvolvimento Rural e Ambiente (ADRA), and its efforts to build the capacity of the civil society associations that emerged amidst the conflict in the displacement camps.¹⁵¹ ADRA's intervention has been central to the creation of the Federation of Representative Associations of Dombe Grande (known by its Portuguese acronym NRA), a federation of 15 local associations in the small town of Dombe Grande.

While both of these projects may have improved the effectiveness of service delivery, their most remarkable achievements have been their contributions towards a new culture of collaboration between communities and government officials and the fostering of new local leaders, who have continued to engage in broader



aspects of democratic decentralisation. To bridge the gap between ad hoc, project-based interventions and wider processes of social and political democratisation, as these projects have done, is one of the key challenges for development in post-conflict societies.

A country often described as suffering the 'resource curse', Angola's crushing poverty is strongly linked to violent conflicts for control of its rich deposits of oil and diamonds. The country's 14-year-long independence struggle was quickly followed by 27 years of civil war between factions in the liberation movement vying for control of the country and its natural wealth. The violence left more than half a million people dead and forced more than four and a half million to abandon their homes.

Bolstered by oil exports, Angola has a GNI per capita three times sub-Saharan Africa's average, yet its Human Development Index is nevertheless

among the worst in the world, with the country rated 146th out of 177 nations.¹⁵²

With the end of the civil war in 2002, Angola could have been another target of the 'emerging consensus' of the international post-war peace-building community, according to whose prescriptions the fragility of the state is addressed first by transitional governing measures, then by multi-party elections and finally with support for good governance and civil society. Despite some moves in this direction, the ruling MPLA party has largely refused to follow this script, leaving donors to conclude that little progress towards democratisation was possible under the current regime. However, the projects studied by the Citizenship DRC show how much can be achieved even in this unpromising context through a bottom-up approach to tackling the link between limited participation and accountability and lack of social justice.

The Luanda Urban Poverty Programme (LUPP), which began in 1999, is a DFID-funded project carried out in partnership between CARE International, Save the Children UK, Development Workshop and One World Action to work in the capital's peri-urban areas. The project initially prioritised poverty reduction through livelihoods support and development of infrastructure for service delivery, but since 2003 has increasingly incorporated strategic goals of empowerment and good governance through participatory development. In line with this emphasis, a significant share of LUPP's effort has been channelled into fostering social organisation at the local level. In order to improve water management, for example, LUPP created Water Committees – neighbourhood-based groups with two members elected by local residents to manage water standposts. But in response to the difficulties experienced by committees in dealing with state institutions, LUPP assisted some of the committees to federate for mutual support.

Three trends are resulting from this strategy. First, local associations, such as the Water Committees, have become trusted by both government authorities and local residents, helping to bridge the gap between the state and the marginalised citizens of peri-urban settlements. Second, the local leadership has become increasingly motivated to promote local development more broadly, starting new projects and networking with other organisations to take part in policy discussions. And third, LUPP's emphasis on transparency and accountability is spilling over into local government structures, where new citizen participation fora have been established. The programme's experience influenced the 2007

Decentralisation Law, which established CACS (Council for Social Consultation and Dialogue) as an institutionalised space where local government and civil society groups come together to discuss plans and budgets.

About 600 kilometres south of the capital in the town of Dombe Grande, an Angolan NGO known as ADRA has been promoting another structure built upon associations that is reconfiguring the state–society relations: the Federation of Representative Associations of Dombe Grande (NRA).

The majority of the associations in the NRA represent small-scale farmers, some of them are service providers working with humanitarian aid programmes, whilst a few of the member organisations are civic in nature, for example offering education services to citizens and to members of the police force. These latter organisations have introduced concepts like participation, participatory governance, citizenship and human rights into the communities.

The NRA has several main functions. It brings together and represents the demands of its member associations to the local government and donors. It also provides services for its member associations, such as training, advice on their constitution, mediation with potential donors and technical agricultural assistance.

Recently, the NRA has also been able to develop relationships with civic organisations from other municipalities in the province. At present, the NRA is the representative of community associations in the provincial coordination group of CSOs (civil society organisations) that is responsible for organising an annual CSO conference – the first time

that community associations have engaged in this space. The federation has also participated in CACS (Council for Social Consultation and Dialogue), which is an institutionalized space where government and civil society groups come together to discuss actions and budgets to orient the government programmes at the communal and municipal levels.

Both cases highlight how even when national-level progress seems stalled, significant 'invisible' processes of democratisation may be underway – including the emergence of new leaders at the local level and shifts in citizens' expectations of their interactions with government. By building a sense of citizenship and democracy, the initiatives have encouraged new relationships between highly marginalised communities and government officials, and helped to foster leaders in local civil society organisations who can also engage in broader aspects of democratic decentralisation. This process has not only influenced policy in a more formal sense, but also contributed to cultural change in politics, challenging notions of who deserves a say in decisions – which may well prove a more enduring contribution to Angola's long and uncertain democratic transition.

But these examples also illustrate that moving from 'project participation' to 'political participation' cannot be done solely at the local level. NGOs' approach to mobilisation and institutional design needs to move beyond conventional concerns, and begin to focus on wider political effects of interventions as much as on their immediate poverty reduction impact.



¹³⁰ Roque, S. and Shankland, A. (2007) 'Participation, Mutation and Political Transition: New Democratic Spaces in Peri-urban Angola', in A. Cornwall and V. Schattan Coelho (eds), *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas*, London: Zed Books

¹³¹ Ferreira, I. and Roque, S. (2010) 'The Nucleo Representativo das Associações (NRA) do Dombe Grande: Building Democracy and Citizenship at the Local Level', in V. Schattan Coelho and B. von Lieres (eds), *Mobilizing for Democracy: Citizen Action and the Politics of Public Participation*, London: Zed Books

¹³² For statistics from the Human Development Report, see <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>

'I saw myself as a facilitator and this was an important part of the research process.'

Idaci Ferreira,
Citizenship
DRC researcher
working in Angola

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Guideposts: Making strategic decisions at the nexus of state and society



What separates success from failure?

Since its inception, the Citizenship DRC has argued for the importance of ‘working on both sides of the equation’, with state institutions and with citizen groups. At its core, this was not a novel idea. Strategies for promoting good governance, of which citizen engagement is commonly one component, have often evoked the economic concepts of supply and demand. The state, on one side, is the supplier – the duty-bearer and the agent being held accountable. Citizens do their part on the other side of the transaction by demanding their rights and an account of what the state has done. The Citizenship DRC, however, distinguished its perspective from the supply and demand approach by insisting that one side of the equation – the citizen’s perspective – be privileged when determining the balance. In the course of the ten years since its establishment, the Citizenship DRC has come to assume an even more distinct position.

Our work now suggests that change happens not just through strategies that work on both sides of the equation, but also through strategies that work across them – that build the alliances, mechanisms and platforms which link champions of change together from both state and society. As this document has argued throughout, there is a

need to go beyond the simplistic dichotomy of supply and demand towards a recognition that state and society do not exist in isolation from one another. In practice, the lines between them are blurred; they may be interdependent and mutually constructive.

This approach has important implications for donors, and for civil society as well as government actors, for it points to new ways of working that deliberately cross state–society boundaries. This final section outlines some of the concrete lessons learnt by the Citizenship DRC about how to work in this manner.

A word of caution, however, is needed: even after ten years of research there remain no easy-to-follow instructions for how to promote successful citizen engagement. Nor should there be. A ‘cookie-cutter’, ‘one-size-fits all’ approach to change will rarely fit neatly into the diverse circumstances in which citizens find themselves. Rather, our research underscores that social and political change is a highly iterative process, rarely linear, often uneven and scarcely predictable. Even the stories of ‘success’ – where citizens have engaged to change a policy, claimed their rights, or improved their communities – have been fraught with setbacks, missteps, reversals and unintended consequences. This is not to say that that ‘success’ is completely contingent on context, but the process of change is complex, and the tension between this complexity and the need of project-oriented initiatives to show results persists.

¹³³Gaventa, John and Barrett, G. (2010) *So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement*, IDS Working Paper 347, Brighton: IDS: 60

The factors that make a difference

Despite the complexity, we can still deepen our understanding of the factors that make a difference for how change happens. Whilst our research has pointed time and again to the positive contributions that citizen engagement can make, it also has warned of the risk that a citizen-led approach can go wrong. A key question for the future, we have argued, is not simply to ask ‘what difference does citizen engagement make?’; we also need to understand further the conditions under which it makes a positive difference.¹³³ Whilst we may not be able to give step-by-step instructions for change from our research, we can point to a number of contextual factors that need to be considered in assessing its possibilities. As illustrated in Figure 3, the Citizenship DRC has identified six factors that have an influence on whether citizen engagement takes on the positive, self-reinforcing dynamic that we have seen in so many cases, or whether, vitiated by hollow or tokenistic forms of participation, it generates a negative cycle. None of these factors constitute an insurmountable obstacle to citizen engagement, which is possible even in post-conflict and insecure settings. The difference, rather, between positive and negative outcomes will be determined by whether the chosen strategy for citizen engagement is appropriate to the contextual factors.

Figure 3 The factors that influence the success of citizen engagement

A successful strategy for citizen engagement must contend with these six factors



When it works, engagement strengthens people's sense of citizenship and contributes to more effective citizen practices, which in turn help to create more responsive and accountable states and more inclusive and cohesive societies. When it fails, however, engagement can lead to disempowerment, more clientelistic practices, a less responsive state and an increasingly divided society. The difference between the two is often a product of six factors. The institutional environment, the capabilities of citizen groups and the strength of champions inside government are three closely interrelated factors. Another is the depth and breadth of the engagement – whether it employs diverse strategies and links at levels from the local to the global. Two final factors that need to be considered, but that cannot in themselves be changed, are the history and style of engagement in a given context or locality, and the nature of the issue at the heart of the engagement. In any given context, consideration of these factors will help to identify appropriate strategies.

The institutional and political environment

The research from the Citizenship DRC has often been critical of the institution-building approach to democratisation, but this is not to say that formal democratic institutions are not important, or for that matter also broader political economies and incentives that can circumscribe the behaviour of different actors. Indeed, the presence of free and fair elections and the existence of independent government institutions with a mandate to protect citizens' rights (among other common 'indicators' of a healthy democracy) will strongly influence the strategies for citizen engagement that are possible. In regimes where essential freedoms are entirely absent, for instance, citizens have a more limited repertoire of actions. In the cases we have examined in post-conflict and fragile societies, citizen action has largely been restricted to involvement in grassroots associations, whereas in states where democratic practices and norms are more institutionalised, we have found citizens entering participatory spaces and social movements in addition to joining local associations. In these different contexts, different outcomes can also be expected. In more fragile settings, associations make a crucial contribution to social cohesion and political cultures, whilst in the more 'mature' democracies we have found that the accountability of the government and the allocation of state resources are often at stake. This is a valuable insight, but it should not be taken as prescriptive. Associations are vitally important everywhere. Even in so-called strong democracies, the basic democratic process

of developing informed and active citizens is a continuous task. Furthermore, citizen engagement is not necessarily any 'safer' in more mature democracies; 'state capacity' can also imply a greater ability to oppress citizen action, as well as be responsive to it.

Prior citizen capabilities

Just as a lack of state capacity can hinder governance, so too can a lack of capacity among citizens. To act, citizens need self-confidence and a belief that they can have an impact. They also need knowledge of their rights and legal entitlements, of state procedures and other civic issues. And they need skills – how to hold meetings, organise petitions, litigate, network and raise media attention. In contexts where the knowledge and skills needed to be an effective citizen are lacking, it is unrealistic to expect citizen action to deliver accountability or development goals. Yet, these capabilities are also an outcome of citizen engagement. The Citizenship DRC's research has strongly indicated that getting citizens involved is the best way to improve their knowledge and skills, succeeding where training programmes that are divorced from any practical application have failed. In situations where citizen capabilities are weak, strengthening them through practice can contribute important intermediate steps to broader success.

The strength of internal champions

Change often happens when there is both citizen pressure on the one hand, and political will from inside the state on the other. But rather than try to assess the level of political will for citizen engagement in the abstract, researchers from the Citizenship DRC have found it more useful to enquire whether there are 'champions' for citizen engagement inside the government. The presence of influential officials who are committed to holding open the door for citizens significantly expands what can be accomplished through citizen engagement – and further still when those officials have a background in activism. Many times, such champions emerge as a result of elections or internal competitions for political power. In some cases, champions exist, but remain silent in their institutions and unaware that others like them exist. A series of workshops with champions of participation around the world point to the multiple strategies and challenges that those within the system play in creating and supporting the spaces for civic engagement.¹³⁴ Working at the interface of state and society can mean efforts to empower champions inside to build the necessary will to support those seeking change from the outside.

¹³⁴ 'Champions of Participation: Engaging Citizens in Local Governance, International Learning Event Report', 31 May–4 June 2007; 'Pioneers of Participation Event Report', Cape Town 9–13 November 2009. Both of these may be accessed at www.drc-citizenship.org





¹³⁵ Mohanty, Ranjita, Lisa Thompson and Vera Schattan Coelho (2010) *States of Mobilisation? A comparison of modes of interaction between states and social actors in India, Brazil and South Africa*, African Centre for Citizenship and Democracy: Cape Town

¹³⁶ See earlier box on Angola and Ferreira, I. and Roque, S. (2010) 'The Nucleo Representativo das Associações (NRA) do Dombe Grande: Building Democracy and Citizenship at the Local Level', in V. Schattan Coelho and B. von Lieres (eds), *Mobilizing for Democracy: Citizen Action and the Politics of Public Participation*, London: Zed Books

¹³⁷ Mohanty, Ranjita, Lisa Thompson and Vera Schattan Coelho (2010) *States of Mobilisation? A comparison of modes of interaction between states and social actors in India, Brazil and South Africa*, African Centre for Citizenship and Democracy: Cape Town

¹³⁸ Gaventa, J. (2008) 'Building Responsive States: Citizen Action and National Policy Change', *IDS InFocus* 5, www.ids.ac.uk/go/citizens. See also Pittman, A. with Naciri, R. (2010) 'Winning Women's Rights in Morocco: Cultural Adaptations and Islamic Family Law', J. Gaventa and R. McGee (eds), *Citizen Action and National Policy Reform: Making Change Happen*, London: Zed Books: 174–194

The history and style of engagement

Research across Brazil, India and South Africa demonstrates how the 'modes of interaction' may differ for historical and cultural reasons, regardless of the similarities shared between the three countries as large democracies with relatively well-organised civil societies.¹³⁵ Research in settings like Angola have revealed that beneath a long legacy of conflict is also a history of community-based associations which can be used as a building block for development and democracy after the conflict is over.¹³⁶ Understanding these differences in history is crucial for designing context-appropriate programmes. What forms of action have citizens taken in the past and how did the state respond? What institutional practices or cultural norms did past engagement with citizens leave behind? Where are past citizen leaders now? This kind of enquiry can help to highlight past mistakes, and to reveal where an established pattern of citizen engagement already exists.

The nature of the issue and how it is framed

The very nature of the issue at the centre of citizen engagement will also influence possibilities of change. Whether the issue deals with questions of science, whether it is socially and culturally contentious, whether it has been framed by global actors or whether it has already been acknowledged as a political matter, a variety of these questions can drive the form of engagement, as well as the nature of the response. How issues are framed thus becomes an important strategic challenge. Research on the distinct modes of interaction in Brazil, India and South Africa demonstrates that where citizen demands are perceived to be within existing policy frameworks, they have a greater chance of being heard through participatory modes of engagement. Where they

challenge those frameworks, more contentious forms of protest may be needed, though will likely meet resistance.¹³⁷ Research on successful cases of national policy change suggests that whilst framing demands in terms of international norms, such as human rights standards, gives legitimacy to citizen demands in many instances, in others it can backfire. In these settings, it may be better to put more emphasis on local and national norms and values, as suggested in the case of the reform of religious law affecting women in Morocco, where activists used a variety of framing strategies to reach diverse audiences.¹³⁸

The location of power and decision-making

A point that has been made repeatedly through this document is that in an increasingly globalised world, authority is held across many levels, and decisions are made through networks of actors. In this environment, it is crucial that citizen engagement follow the changing patterns of power – from the local, to the national to the global – in order to bring about effective change. For this reason, citizen engagement is most effective when it employs multiple strategies, and when those strategies touch upon multiple stages of the policy process. The presence of strong associations, participatory spaces and social movements increases the likelihood of meaningful engagement when each reinforces the other. Having engagement through all the stages of the policy process also strengthens outcomes. Again, there is a mutually reinforcing dynamic when citizens are involved 'upstream' during the agenda-setting, policymaking and budgeting, and 'downstream' for monitoring and evaluation. This coordinated, multifaceted, multilevel way of approaching citizen engagement is crucial for positive outcomes.



Steps in the right direction

From these contextual factors, we can suggest several practical implications for a variety of actors, be they civil society, governments, donors or researchers.

For NGOs and civil society actors

Assess the benefits and risks of various strategies of engagement.

As we have seen, citizen action can lead to positive change, but it also can go wrong, leading to disempowerment instead of empowerment, reprisal instead of constructive response. Actors seeking change through citizen engagement need to carefully assess which spaces of change to enter, which strategies to employ, and how to minimise the risks of negative outcomes. Forms of power and political context analysis can be helpful in this regard.¹³⁹

Develop clearer strategies and policies for mediating and linking across actors.

Using multiple strategies across levels of power and spaces of change means building alliances and linking them with others. These relationships often require effective mediators – individuals, organisations, or networks that link various actors in an accountable and collaborative way. The impacts of mobilisation are strongly linked to the effectiveness and legitimacy of the mediators, who connect local and global actors, or those on the outside of the state with those on the inside. Mediation that is done well allows for stakeholders at the different levels to shape the framing of the issues and contribute to a strategy for action, whilst still remaining nimble enough to act on short-term opportunities at any level.

For sustainable results, develop approaches that build the constituencies for change.

Increasingly there are pressures on civil society organisations to deliver quick results that can be easily counted and measured. But sustainable change means strengthening and empowering citizens affected by those policies and services, so that they can maintain the gains through their own voice and action. The style of intervention – whether in campaigns or grassroots development – can make a big difference to whether it just delivers quick results, or whether it builds constituencies for change that can address the underlying causes of the problem over the long term.

For government officers & elected representatives¹⁴⁰

Recognise that citizen engagement – even if it is challenging and contentious – can build effective governance and better political leadership.

Just as organised citizens need support to bring about change, they can also be effective partners in processes of policy change and political reform. Citizen participation does not necessarily weaken effective representation and political leadership, it can enable them. But to do so requires a shift in mindset – from a style of leadership that speaks to and for the citizens, to one that works with them as well.

Go beyond an ‘invitation’ to citizens to participate.

Listening to citizens is more than setting up a public consultation. Time and again, our research has shown that these ‘invited’ spaces for participation are more effective when they are backed by enabling policy frameworks that encourage the right to participate, put real resources and issues on the table for consideration, and are supported by both organised civil society groups on the outside and effective and committed champions on the inside of the government. When reaching out to citizen groups, build long-term relationships that allow you to work on a wider agenda, including policy change.

Reach out to champions in other levels and areas of government.

Working with citizen groups can sometimes imply a tremendous shift in the way a government works. Building an institutional culture and a set of practices to support citizen engagement will require more than a single office or department. Rather, support for engagement with citizens needs to become an integral way of working across all departments, and to happen effectively needs strong central leadership, changes to incentive structures, commitment of resources, and a willingness to take risks.

¹³⁹ For examples of power analysis see www.powercube.net

¹⁴⁰ For a more complete set of lessons for government officials see ‘Champions of Participation: Engaging Citizens in Local Governance, International Learning Event Report’, 31 May–4 June 2007

¹⁴¹ Gaventa, John and Tandon, Rajesh (2010) 'Introduction', in J. Gaventa and R. Tandon (eds), *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, London: Zed Books

¹⁴² Hilker, L., Benequista, Nicholas and Barrett, Gregory (2010) 'Broadening Spaces for Citizens in Violent Contexts', *Citizenship DRC Policy Briefing*, Brighton: IDS

¹⁴³ Mehta, Lyla (2007) *Somewhere Over the Rainbow? The Politics and Dilemmas of Researching Citizenship and Marginality*, IDS Working Paper 288, Brighton: IDS

¹⁴⁴ Pearce, Jenny and McGee, Rosemary (eds), (2009) 'Violence, Social Action and Research', *IDS Bulletin*, 40.3

¹⁴⁵ Wheeler, Joanna (2007) 'Creating Spaces for Engagement: Understanding Research and Social Change', *The Citizenship DRC*, Brighton: IDS

¹⁴⁶ Brown, David and Gaventa, John (2008) *Constructing Transnational Action Research Networks: Observations and Reflections from the Case of the Citizenship DRC*, IDS Working Paper 302, Brighton: IDS

For donors

Think 'vertically' as well as 'horizontally'.

The organisation of many international donor agencies is often divided between departments which work with governments and those which work with civil society, and may also be layered into separate global, national and local offices or programmes. This structure does little to encourage the intersections of change between states and societies, and across the levels of political authority. Donors can do more to encourage building both horizontal and vertical alliances for change. Success must be understood not only in terms of change at one level, but in terms of its consequences for power and inclusion in other interconnected arenas as well.¹⁴¹

Help to protect the space for citizen engagement, including for social movements.

Throughout our work, we have found that citizen engagement requires security – the freedom to participate without fear of violence and reprisal, whether in the household or through backlash from the state.¹⁴² Donors can do more to link their concerns with violence and security to the concern to protect the spaces for participation. Though some donors may find it difficult to fund social movements, they can play a role by supporting the enabling conditions in which they occur, and urge against reprisal.

Give citizen engagement more time.

Increasingly, the pressure for rapid results in the name of more effective aid can encourage shortcuts to the sometimes slow process of building citizen engagement. But the long-term process of citizen engagement still does not fit within the two- or three-year project cycle. Ultimately, the proof of aid effectiveness will be whether it delivers the kind of development that citizens want and which meets their needs – and this requires their participation. Donors would do well to recognise – and measure – the development of citizen awareness, efficacy and engagement as building blocks of aid effectiveness.

For researchers

Understand the importance of 'seeing like a citizen' in the research process.

Using methods and taking a stance that puts citizen knowledge and voice at the centre of the research process can give insights on institutions and on processes of change that may not be found through more mainstream and often 'top-down' approaches. To do so, though, often requires changing the positionality of the researcher, from someone who is perceived as coming in from the outside on behalf of others, to one who is seen as a partner and companion over time in a change process.¹⁴³

Recognise that the ways of working on citizenship can be as important as the findings themselves.

Citizenship research is not only about producing high-quality knowledge but can also help to bring about change through informing citizen action and state policy, strengthening the awareness and capacities for change, and linking to processes of social action. This often involves innovative and participatory research methods,¹⁴⁴ and embedding communication and involvement with the stakeholders you are trying to influence throughout the research process, not just as end users.¹⁴⁵

Build collaborative multi-stakeholder and transnational partnerships to address complex global issues.

Just as other actors, researchers need to learn to work across the boundaries. Working iteratively in teams that bridge countries (North–South and South–South), disciplines (political science, sociology, anthropology, etc.) and sectors (academic, NGO, public) can bring new insights as alliances for change. Doing so requires new skills of how to work collaboratively, how to learn across theory and practice, and how to converse across multiple forms of knowing and learning.¹⁴⁶

The final phase of our work, currently ongoing, will reflect upon and further document these lessons from ten years of 'researching citizenship'. Further publications and other resources on this topic can be found on our website: www.drc-citizenship.org

For all

Blurring the boundaries between state and society poses a challenge to us all to think and work differently. But to truly change the way we practise development or run a government or lead a social movement or do research also implies a commitment to change the institutions where we work. In the Citizenship DRC, we have tried to embrace this challenge by paying attention to our own ways of

working, as we have also tried to understand how others act as citizens. This has meant, for instance, learning how to work as mediators across spaces and levels of change, building our own forms of internal accountability, linking our research to action – and learning from our mistakes, as we tried to strengthen our impact.

Supporting citizen engagement is not just about what others do. How we engage as citizens in our own institutional settings is vitally important to how effective we are in enabling the engagement of others.



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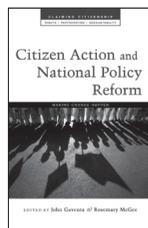
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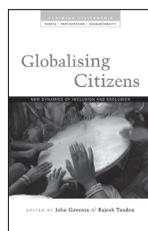
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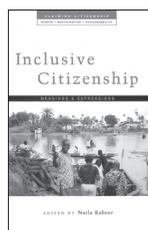
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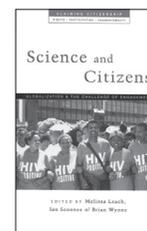
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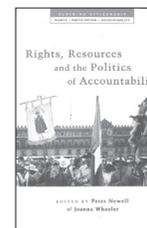
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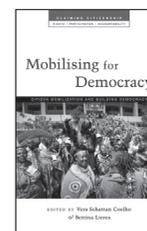
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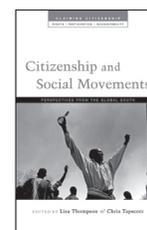
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Visit the website www.drc-citizenship.org to search hundreds of more publications.

A final series of synthesis papers - which are cited in this document - can also be found on the website at www.drc-citizenship.org/pages/synthesis-papers



