<u>Introduction and Social Accountability Concepts</u>
<u>Building Blocks of Social Accountability: Key Factors for Success</u>

Slide 1 – Introduction

Social accountability in practice today is a rapidly growing field that uses a wide range of tools For this reason, it is important to reflect upon what elements, if any, are common to most social accountability approaches. During this presentation we'll "unpack" social accountability programs and tools in order to identify the core elements that can lead to success in social accountability initiatives.

Slide 2 – Building Blocks of Social Accountability

As a field, social accountability is at the frontier of good governance, and is replete with innovation and experimentation. Currently, there are a broad range of social accountability approaches and tools practiced around the world – including hundreds of locally-based tools that increase civic engagement within government and strengthen accountability. While highly varied in their application, there are several core elements, or "building blocks," that are common to most social accountability approaches. These core elements are: (i) *accessing information*, (ii) *making the voice of citizens heard*, and (3) engaging in a *process of negotiation for change*

Slide 3 – Accessing Information

Accessing or generating relevant *information* and making it public are critical aspects of social accountability. Building credible evidence to hold public officials accountable often involves obtaining and analyzing both *supply-side information* from government and service providers as well as *demand-side information* from users of government services, communities and citizens. Combining supply-side data with demand-side data allows Civil Society Organizations to form a rich and reliable information base for social accountability interventions.

Slide 4 – Supply-Side Information

Supply-side data most often refers to government information, coming from the Ministry of Statistics or sectoral agencies. It may also originate from service providers and publicly contracted organizations. Types of information civil society can utilize in support of social accountability initiatives include policy statements, budget commitments and accounts, records of inputs, outputs and expenditures, and audit findings. Government transparency and its capacity to produce data and accounts remain crucial for accessing supply-side information. Social accountability interventions can also focus on lobbying for enhanced information rights, such as freedom of information laws and public transparency. To completely satisfy the building block of access to information, supply-side data must be fully accessible, reliable, of high quality, and received in a timely manner once requested.

Slide 5 – Demand-Side Information

The generation of high-quality, reliable demand-side information is an important building block of social accountability programs and is an exercise itself. A wide variety of participatory methods and tools—such as community scorecards, citizen report cards, and participatory monitoring and evaluation techniques—have been developed to generate citizen data while raising awareness of local-level mobilization and organization.

Participatory methods are both an effective empowerment tool and are valuable for the government, which may lack the resources for gathering broad-based data. From a donor perspective, participatory methods serve to increase the data surrounding a particular project, and generating information from the bottom up improves local project monitoring, evaluation, and accountability.

Slide 6 – Making the Voice of Citizens Heard

A second building block of social accountability is giving *voice* to the needs, opinions and concerns of citizens, helping government to better understand citizen priorities and how to better serve the people. "From shouting to counting," this common quote refers to the peoples "voice", as a means to consolidate, channel, and effectively communicate public opinion to policymakers in a productive manner. There are important strategies such as: creating public debate space and platforms for citizen-state dialogue and building citizen confidence and rights awareness. It also includes, facilitating coalitions and alliances to aggregate opinions and strengthen the citizenry's voice, and strategic use of both modern and traditional forms of media. A principal challenge is assuring that marginalized groups are heard and not overshadowed by more powerful and vocal groups.

Slide 7 – Engaging in a Process of Negotiation for Change

The most crucial and challenging element of a social accountability strategy is the ability to elicit a response from public officials and achieve long-term change. *Negotiation* processes may be ad hoc or institutionalized, and can take the form of direct citizen-state interaction, community level meetings with government officials, or more indirect forms of consultation and negotiation. Experience has also shown that a "third way" between the two, using a "neutral" facilitator or trained mediator, can also be highly effective in ensuring more productive citizen-state relations and more constructive engagement exercises.

In negotiating change, citizen groups employ a range of both informal and formal means of persuasion, pressure, reward and sanction. These include creating public pressure through media campaigns and public meetings, or when necessary resorting to formal means of enforcement (such as legal and judicial processes). The space and opportunity for negotiation, and the possibility of appeal to formal means of sanction, vary greatly from one context to another. In many countries, citizens' groups have found that legal and/or institutional reforms are necessary to facilitate meaningful negotiation.

Slide 8 –Synergy between the Building Blocks

The three building blocks of social accountability are highly related and, when applied within a program's design, go hand in hand to implement social accountability and effect change. For example, accessing or generating useful government information can position civil society as a valuable government partner in policy and program design. The possession of high-quality reliable data serves as hard evidence, increasing civil society's leverage at the government bargaining table and making government more willing to engage in negotiations with civil society. Similarly, giving increased voice and visibility to civil society's needs and demands can increase government pressure to engage with civil society, effectively increasing citizen willingness to actively participate and claim ownership of social accountability programs.

Slide 9 – Accessing Information: Nigeria

Let's now examine a few examples of social accountability success stories illustrating the use of the three building blocks. Nigeria's "Publish What You Pay" Initiative provides a useful example of how to *access and use information* to bring about greater government accountability. Beginning in January 2004, the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Finance began to publish the federal, state, and local government shares of revenue from the country's federal account. These shares were published on a regular monthly basis in major national newspapers, as well as the agency's website. Almost immediately, ordinary citizens could trace the flow of public resources, accessing names of those accountable for the delivery of services. Government officials unable to account resource allocation or undelivered services were pressured by their constituents and suffered politically. Complementary institutional reforms resulted in curbing corruption and increasing transparency in resource allocation.

Slide 10 – Making the Voice of Citizens Heard: Latin America

In Latin America, community radio projects have been used as platforms for expanding the collective citizen voice. Community radio has been described as an important social agent in promoting human rights and participation because, according to one practitioner, "community and civic radio incorporates new languages, new formats, other sounds, types of music, voices. It brings other ways of talking, new relationships with listeners, ways of asking and answering questions, ways of making demands and pressuring the authorities." For example, in Guatemala, a cultural diversity project created radio and TV spots in a local Mayan language as part of a larger freedom of information monitoring project that evaluated the Guatemalan government's transparency, accessibility and inclusivity. Beyond giving a previously marginalized population an enhanced voice and outlet for expression, these new media channels also broadcast information about government activity and an administration that had previously been largely inaccessible due to language barriers.

Slide 11 – Negotiation for Change: India

In India, thoughtful, strategic social accountability programs have been institutionalized, used as advocacy tools, and have given civil society considerably greater bargaining leverage with government. A classic social accountability field example is the Bangalore Citizen's Report Card, which successfully persuaded and supported government agencies in needed reforms within public service delivery. After conducting several report card exercises, civil society actors engaged in an information dissemination campaign, using local media to publicize the results. Many agencies were pressured to initiate reforms, using participatory methods to provide feedback on the reform results.

Another creative case of social accountability mechanisms feeding into negotiation channels is the Citizens' Charter in Mumbai, led by an NGO called Praja. The charter's objective is twofold – providing citizens with easily understandable and accessible information of the town's civic services, while providing a codified system for complaint resolution. Each chapter of the Charter is devoted to a specific service, with avenues for grievance redress and clearly delineated public sector points of contact. The Charter has been published in the local Yellow pages in three languages. By codifying government services and giving citizens clear information about how to voice their complaints, the Charter empowers citizens, strengthens their collective negotiation capabilities, and holds government increasingly accountable for the provision of quality services.

Slide 12 – Review

This presentation covered several core elements within the rapidly-growing social accountability "toolbox," describing and illustrating three key building blocks: information, voice, and negotiation. The first building block of ***information*** can come from both the supply and demand sides, and ideally will be drawn from a range of stakeholders for the most thorough analysis. The second social accountability building block of ***increasing citizen voice*** is achieved through communication efforts using a range of media to consolidate, channel, and engage policymakers to discuss public opinion. Finally, ***negotiation***, the third and most challenging of the building blocks, allows citizens to go from "shouting to counting," working with policymakers to enact change reflective of their needs, priorities, and demands.