

# Engaging Citizens in Public Sector Reform

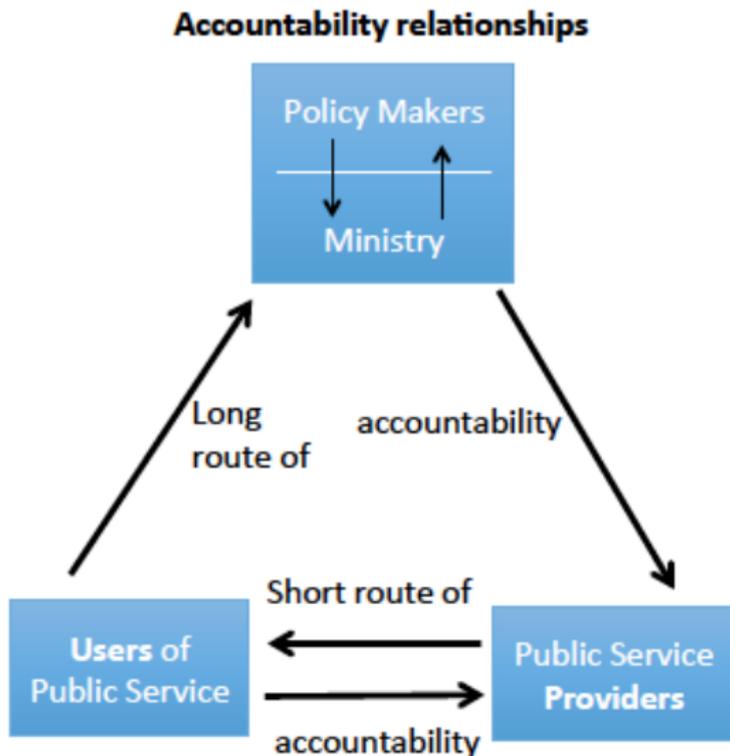
Martina Björkman Nyqvist  
Stockholm School of Economics

**ieGovern Impact Evaluation Workshop**  
**27-30 January, 2015**  
**Istanbul**

# Public service delivery in developing countries

- Anecdotal and systematic evidence show poor service provision in the public sector in many developing countries.
  - Large absenteeism (Chaudhury et.al, 2007);
  - Misusage of public resources and funds (Reinikka and Svensson, 2004);
  - Poor quality of service delivery (Das et. al (2008);
  - etc.
- Incentives for public service providers are poor and they seem to lack motivation to provide the public good.
- How can public service delivery be improved and accountability for service providers be strengthened?

## Two approaches to the accountability relationship



## Accountability chain

- “Long route of accountability” => traditional approach of external control
- Someone in the institutional hierarchy is assigned to monitor, control, reward, and punish agents further down in the hierarchy.
- Enforcements of rules and regulations will strengthen providers' incentives to improve service provision.
- Problem: institutions assigned to monitor the providers may be weak or malfunctioning or are under incentives system that provide little incentives to effectively monitor.

## Accountability chain

- “Short route of accountability” => Beneficiary control / Local accountability
- Relies on strengthening providers accountability to citizens/users
- Increasing the *voice*, *engagement*, and *capacity* of citizens/users to demand greater accountability from public officials / service providers
- Civic engagement where citizens directly participate in extracting accountability.
- Large enthusiasm for community-based monitoring approaches in recent years among donors and NGOs.
- However, no guarantee that community monitoring will work (important with IE!)

## Local accountability: Engaging citizens

- Advantages of community monitoring:
  - Cheaper for beneficiaries to monitor providers since they are better informed about providers behavior than an external agent.
  - Beneficiaries may have means of punishing providers that are not available to others.
  - If service/public good valuable, beneficiaries should have strong incentives to monitor, reward, and punish the provider.
- (Possible) problems with community monitoring:
  - Free-riding problem
  - Unlikely to work if service is not of high demand or if there are easy access to alternative providers.
  - Community must have some direct or indirect way of sanctioning or reward the provider
  - Program might be captured by service providers or higher level authority and beneficiaries are socially inferior to service providers

# Evidence on Citizen Engagement

- Olken (2007): studied two accountability approaches that aimed to reduce corruption in an Indonesian village road project
  - top-down monitoring: increased government audits from 4 percent of the projects to 100  $\Rightarrow$  reduced corruption by 8%
  - increased grassroots participation in monitoring: village meetings in which project officials accounted for how they spent project funds  $\Rightarrow$  little average impact.

# Evidence on Citizen Engagement

- Banerjee et al. (2010): studied beneficiary control in education in India.
  - trained facilitators held small-group discussions with parents and provided them with simple tools to help them generate own information about their children's learning outcomes.
  - information was shared in a village meeting where the school teachers also provided general information about the resources available at the school.
  - No information on teacher performance.
  - ⇒ The intervention prompted no increased teacher effort and no improvement in educational outcomes.

# Evidence on Citizen Engagement

- Duflo et al. (2012): evaluate a contract teachers program in Kenya.
  - School-Based Management training of the PTA committee.
  - training parents on how to monitor and assess teachers' effort and performance and parents' attendance checks on the teachers.
  - formal sub-committee of parents evaluated the contract teacher and delivered a performance report at the end of the year.
  - $\Rightarrow$  reduced teachers' absenteeism and increased student test scores.

## Evidence on Citizen Engagement

- Björkman and Svensson (2009) & with de Walque (2014): community monitoring of the local health clinics in rural Uganda
  - Citizen engagement by trained facilitators who conducted meetings with health users alone and joint meetings between users and providers.
  - Information provision on the quality of health care at their local health clinic.
  - Participatory methods engaged the users to think actively about how to monitor the local health facility provider.
  - Health providers and users jointly agreed upon an action plan for how to improve public health provision together:
    - What should be done, how, when, by who, and who will monitor progress
  - Limited facilitation time: 5 days in one year (and 10 days in 4 years). Community left by themselves to make a change.

# Evidence on Citizen Engagement

- Results: significant short & longer-term improvements in both health workers' performance and health outcomes in Uganda.
  - Quality of care improved: waiting time and absenteeism decreased, adherence to clinical guidelines, etc.
  - Quantity of care improved: 20-60% increase in utilization
  - Health outcomes: 30% reduction in under-1 mortality rate, increased child weight & height.

# Lots of work remain to understand how to best engage citizens

- There is a large enthusiasm for engaging citizens in the accountability chain
- There are some recent mixed evidence on the impact of citizen engagement:
  - when it works, it has large impact and seems to be very efficient!
  - but also cases when it does not work
  - why? and what makes it work?
- Very important to continue evaluate programs focused on citizen engagement because of the potential impact of them are large but we need to understand what are the important mechanisms.

# Lots of work remain to understand how to best engage citizens

- Suggestive evidence so far on important factors:
  - quantitative information on performance and quality of the public providers
  - limit elite capture and free-rider problems
- Many outstanding issues and lots of interesting questions to understand!
  - what does information do by itself do?
  - effect of giving users more power: means of punishment/reward?
  - differences in the method on how to engage citizens?
  - using ICT as a monitoring tool?
  - etc...
- Overall goal: improve public service delivery & the life of the poor people!