



A•P•A•C

ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC  
ACCOUNTS COMMITTEES

***“Improving local government financial accountability”***

**Commission Chairperson: Hon. AJ Beukes, Hon Haskin**

**Facilitator:**

**Rapporteur:**

## ENHANCING FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT SPHERE

Accountability is more likely to be achieved where there is a committed political will on the part of central government. Good leadership and effective supervisory mechanisms are more essential to accountability than participation in public affairs<sup>1</sup>.

### Context of Accountability in South Africa

Government in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) comprises of three distinctive, interdependent and interrelated spheres, namely national, provincial and local government. These three spheres are required by the Constitution, 1996, to “provide effective, transparent, accountable and coherent government for the Republic as a whole”.

Accountability is one of key elements of good governance. The Municipal sphere of government is constitutionally required to “promote democratic and accountable government for local communities” (The Constitution of RSA, 1996, section 152 (1) (a)).

The Government of South Africa has initiated various interventions and programmes aimed at enhancing municipal service delivery and governance since the 1994. However, despite these investments, municipalities in South Africa find themselves in a state of distress. This is due to the following challenges identified in the State of local government Report of 2009:

- Huge service delivery and backlog challenges, e.g. housing, water and sanitation;
- Poor communication and accountability relationships with communities;
- Problems with the political administrative interface;
- Corruption and fraud;
- Poor financial management, e.g. negative audit opinions;
- Number of (violent) service delivery protests;
- Weak civil society formations;
- Intra - and inter-political party issues negatively affecting governance and delivery; and

---

<sup>1</sup>Nick Devas and Ursula Grant, 2003, Local Government Decision – Making – Citizen Participation and Local Accountability: Some Evidence from Kenya and Uganda in *Public Admin, Dev*: 23, p311 Published online 28 July 2003 in Wiley InterScience [www.interscience.wiley.com](http://www.interscience.wiley.com) Downloaded on 18 September 2013.

- Insufficient municipal capacity due to lack of scarce skills.

In an attempt to reverse the challenges faced by municipalities, government launched the Local Government Turnaround Strategy (LGTAS) in November 2009 which defined an ideal municipality as one that should:

- Provide democratic and accountable government for local communities
- Be responsive to the needs of the local communities
- Ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner
- Promote social and economic development
- Promote a safe and healthy environment
- Encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government
- Facilitate a culture of public service and accountability amongst its staff
- Assign clear responsibilities for the management and co-ordination of these administrative units and mechanisms.

Releasing its general report for the 2010/11 financial year, the Auditor-General of South Africa, stated that the “accountability of local government is slipping in certain areas”<sup>2</sup>. He highlighted that only 128 (45%) of the 283 municipalities had financially unqualified financial statements; of which only 13 out of the 283 received ‘clean audits’.

Considering the depressed financial status of municipalities in South Africa, despite dedicated programmes to avert the crises at local government level, the need for greater control is emphasized. There appears to be a sense of powerlessness experienced by local authorities who are held accountable, responsible and liable for weaknesses and failures in the system of service delivery, adversely affecting specifically vulnerable and poor groups. This powerlessness is experienced not only by officials, local government staff and political members, but also the very communities and populations manifesting violent protests and unrest. It is at this critical point that the prospect of participatory governance probably needs to be considered and weighed against that of oversight, building resources and forming partnerships to strengthen and develop

---

<sup>2</sup> T Nombembe in Business News, 24 July 2012.

accountability at local government level. Various literatures suggest that it is at local government level where inadequate service delivery, high poverty levels and exclusion of vulnerable groups are the most severely felt and therefore needed.

By power we mean the ability to make decisions and put them into practice- to be in control. Power is the vital ingredient needed to make policies and institutions work. Of course power in the wrong hands, or badly used, is the reason why some policies and institutions don't work and why others cause increased poverty and inequality. Tools are needed to put power in the right hands-in those best placed to improve the lives of poor people<sup>3</sup>.

The discussion below centres on two parts: the first part discusses Accountability as Oversight which incorporates Capacity Building, Performance and Information sharing processes while the second part looks at Public Participation particularly in far flung districts rendering vulnerable groups invisible from national governments.

Another element of this discussion is (given the increased accountability in view of participatory governance); do vulnerable and minority groups have *agency* or *power* / *knowledge* to change their lived experiences of marginality and exclusion from resources? A political economy view is relevant here.

Political Economy analysis is therefore essentially concerned with the interaction of political and economic processes in a society. It focuses on the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and other processes that create, transform and sustain these processes over time. When applied to situations of conflict and crisis, political economy analysis seeks to understand both the political and economic aspects on conflict, and how these combine to affect patterns of power and vulnerability<sup>4</sup>.

Michel Foucault is the first scholar to coin the notion of the Power/Knowledge dichotomy and he traces power relations in post - colonial societies.

Power is ubiquitous, and appears in every moment of social relations-hence, the operations of power are not departures from the norm, but rather constantly present...

---

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Gaventa, 2003, *Power after Lukes: An overview of theories of power since Lukes and their application to Development*, p17, [power\\_after\\_lukes.pdf](#).

<sup>4</sup> Collison in Gaventa, 2003: 16.

Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere... Power is not an institution, nor a structure, nor a possession. It's the name we give to a complex strategic situation in a particular society<sup>5</sup>.

## ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT AT THE LOCAL SPHERE

The Community Law Centre at the University of the Western Cape argues that accountability ascends as an element of public finance management but has grown to be **critical part of governance**. Accordingly, modern accountability is not only focused on checks and balances to combat abuse of power and potential corruption; but also include “accountability for improving the efficiency and reducing waste in carrying out public programme”<sup>6</sup>.

Mettler and Maclean (2011: 1372) claims that “the local sphere of government is characterised by poor financial controls, thus opening an avenue for fraudulent activities”. This state of affairs exists despite the financial management legislation which prescribes and pronounces sound and sustainable financial management practices for improved accountability.

Accountability is the foundation upon which democracy and good governance flourish. Fourie (2007) states that “accountability is one of the prerequisites of democracy and good governance”... as it “seeks to determine who is liable for what and what kind of conduct is illegal”. Fessha echoes Fourie by stating that “the accountability of the executive to the council is a cardinal principle of good governance<sup>7</sup>. It is thus clear that accountability involves effective and efficient systems and procedures to determine liability and performance. This, in the South African context, can be traced to various legislation and policies emphasizing the need for accountability and its mechanisms in the municipal sphere.

Accountability and oversight are key mechanisms in achieving good governance. Botes, noting Hedger (2008), states that “accountability obligation therefore originates from the practical need to delegate certain tasks to others so as to distribute delivery of large and complex workloads”<sup>8</sup>.

---

<sup>5</sup> Foucault in Gaventa, 2003: 4.

<sup>6</sup> Community Law Centre, 2008:8.

<sup>7</sup> Fessha, 2008:8.

<sup>8</sup> Hedger in Botes, 2011.

He further argues that “the oversight process entails that the delegating authority expects the executive authority to explain and defend his or her plans, actions and decisions taken in relation to an agreed accountability period. Oversight can happen before, during, or at the end of an agreed accountability period”. Accountability as established earlier, is generally an *ex post* mechanism which occurs after implementation.

It can be argued that accountability and oversight are ‘two-sides of the same coin’; which is good governance. Figure 1, below, depicts this relationship.



Fig

1: Accountability and Oversight Relationship

The Community (voters) gives the mandate to Councilors to develop and implement policies and programmes addressing the needs expressed in the Integrated Development Plan. As elected political representatives of their communities, Councilors are accountable to the communities which elected them into public office

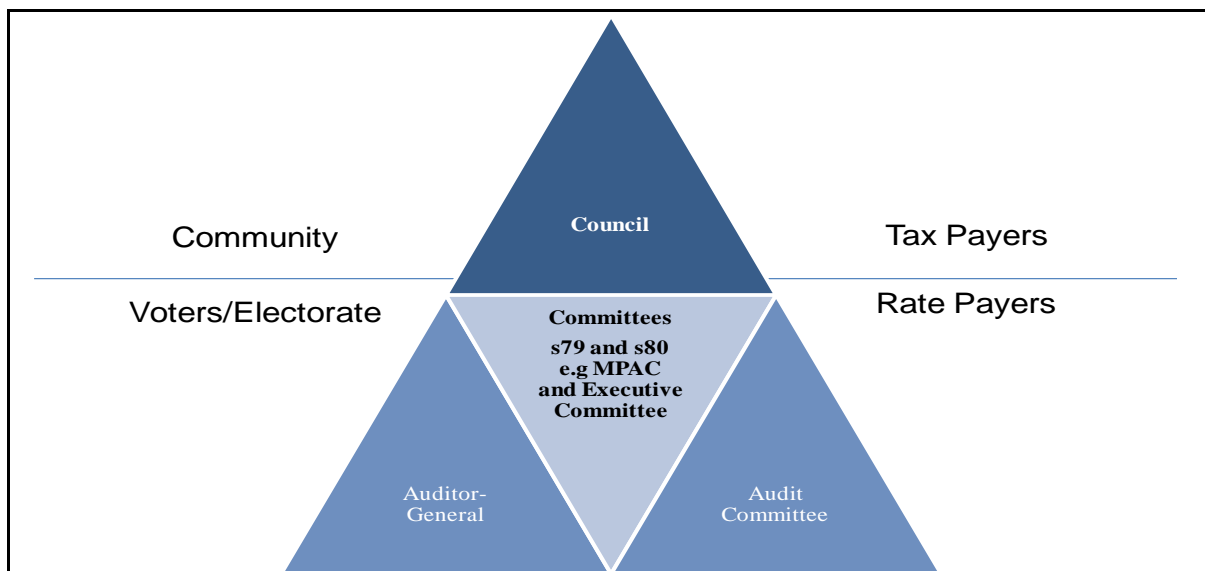
The executive responsibilities of municipal Council are performed by the Executive Mayor and the municipal Administration. The Executive Mayor and the municipal administration (under the leadership of the Municipal Manager) implement municipal policies and the budget as approved by Council.

Municipalities also utilise service providers to assist in fulfilling its function. These service providers are accountable to municipal administration for the delivery of services awarded or contracted to them by the municipality.

Linking these role-players through oversight and accountability is thus imperative towards achieving good governance.

### Accountability Stakeholders

Pauw notes that “there are several structures that are relevant when dealing with municipal financial management” or municipal finance accountability. These structures involve both internal and external stakeholders and can be broadly categorised as; political and administrative structures. Figure 2, below, highlights four critical structures and its relationship with one another as well as with the environment within which it operates<sup>9</sup>.



**Figure 2: Accountability Stakeholders**

These stakeholders include:

- Internal stakeholders being;
  - Council which is the legislative and policy-making/formulating authority as well as the executive authority as per the Constitution;
  - Committees of Council
    - Sections 79 i.e. Municipal Public Accounts Committees; and
    - Section 80 committees i.e. Mayoral and Sectoral/Functional Committees.

<sup>9</sup> Pauw et al, 2009.

- External stakeholders which include the;
  - Auditor-General which is a constitutionally mandated institution and must report on the ‘accounts, financial statements and financial management of all municipalities’.
  - Audit Committee as an administrative structure deriving its responsibilities from section 166 of the MFMA. Audit Committees are not regarded as a committee of council, “since councilors are not allowed to serve on it, but is an independent advisory body” advising council, councilors and the accounting officer and senior managers on matters of financial control and management.
  - Community (or the electorate) who also become the source of revenue through taxes and levying of rates. The community is critical to the accountability relationship as it is this stakeholder who ultimately holds the power to elect political representatives.

A sound synergistic relationship is required between these stakeholders in improving municipal finance accountability. In this framework of multiple stakeholders, it becomes imperative to view accountability as that of building the capacities, co-operation networks and resources of all role players involved and engaged.

### **Accountability as Capacity/Resource Building**

The Bukoba District Council (BDC) in Tanzania and the NGO, *SVN* entered into a cooperation agreement in 2005 for the implementation of a Capacity Building Programme which was supported by the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) so that the BDC could not only bring about management enhancement but also qualify for support and become more responsive. Another outcome of the agreement was towards the strengthening of capacities of political leaders so that they may hold the executive accountable. In addition, *SVN* has been working with Civil Society Organisations and Private Sector Organisations in the district and region to enhance their capacity for having dialogue with local government and holding the Local Government accountable through investigative journalism and public expenditure tracking. To build capacity and in effect resources; the key activities involved the training of councilors after a baseline



study and Self-assessment exercises towards support of planning processes and promoting linkages between BDC and non-state actors<sup>10</sup>.

Based on more than 25 case studies in over 12 countries, the *SVN* attempted to strengthen the accountability capacity of citizens, government and service providers. It found multi-stakeholder approaches particularly valid and highlights the critical need to empower citizens, especially marginalized groups<sup>11</sup>. ‘Successful services for the poor people emerge from institutional relationships in which the actors are accountable to each other’. In 2004 the World Bank’s annual World Development Report (WDR) focused on the need to improve service delivery for poor people and highlighted the central role of accountability<sup>12</sup>.

According to a political economy approach, vulnerability should be understood in terms of powerlessness rather than simply material need or the failure of basic ‘entitlements’. Power and powerlessness determine the distribution of access to food and other key commodities and assets among and within different groups. Those who lack power cannot safeguard their basic political, economic and social rights, and may not be able to protect themselves from violence<sup>13</sup>.

In the run up to the Third High Level Forum in Accra, Ghana in Sept 2008, donors and partners debated priorities for strengthening the effectiveness of aid provision. The forum focused on the need to extend the principles of ownership and mutual accountability laid down in the 2005 Paris Declaration to include domestic accountability to parliaments, civil society and citizens. Blankenberg concludes that the delivery of public services to poor people in social sectors such as education, health, water and sanitation fails as a result of a lack of accountability (2007)<sup>14</sup>. An accountability framework developed by the WDR 2004 is largely dependent on capacity

---

<sup>10</sup> *SNV Connecting People’s Capacities, Strengthening Local Level Service Delivery and Accountability* the case of Bukoba District Council, Tanzania.

<sup>11</sup> Bill Tod, *Strengthening accountability for improved service delivery: SNV’s local capacity development Approach*.

<sup>12</sup> World Bank annual World Development Report in Tod, 271.

<sup>13</sup> Collison in Gaventa, 2003: 16

<sup>14</sup> Blankenberg in Tod, 271-272

development at local level because it is assumed that it is at local government level that policy is implemented and poor people reside<sup>15</sup>.

Importantly, the empowerment of citizens, which is seen as the weakest actor in the accountability relationship is privileged. In addition, the key focus is on bringing the relevant role-players together, rather than focusing exclusively on supply-side or demand-side initiatives. Furthermore, it is recognised that accountability relationships are circular, iterative and made up of a number of features or actions.

A mapping tool was devised by *SNV* which provides for a better insight into the complex relations between different actors at different levels in a sector. The mapping tool takes on an advanced capacity approach in that development goes beyond technical/professional training and organizational development; it covers activities that strengthen network and partnership capacities and that develop a more enabling institutional environment<sup>16</sup>. In keeping with the power/knowledge notion of Foucault, it is for this reasons that the configurations of power in a particular context needs to be understood. The power/knowledge practice of the given NGO also needs to be interrogated as a cautionary note in that often NGO networks perpetuate the very same categories of ethnicity and marginality that it aims to subvert by following homogenous and universal practices across the world.

Despite diverse social, cultural, political and economic settings, we find that NGOs working in very different environments around the world are frequently talking the same language and following similar development agendas<sup>17</sup>.

A wide range of Civil Society Organisations (CSO's) are provided to strengthen their capacities to hold governments and service providers accountable. In the accountability relationship, delegation and prioritization has to be matched by funding and all too often the financial arrangements are insufficient. At local level, participatory planning often becomes an academic exercise resulting in a wish list of priorities from communities without resources being allocated

---

<sup>15</sup> World Bank annual World Development Report 2004 in Tod, 271.

<sup>16</sup> Tod, 273

<sup>17</sup> Mawdsley et al in Gaventa, 2003:16.

to carry them out. Participatory planning and budgeting therefore have to be performed together. Making full budget information available is also frequently an issue.

Donors and external development partners should target their interventions by analyzing the capacity of all three actors (citizens, government, service providers) in relation to the five accountability actions (delegating, financing, performing, informing and enforcing). Therefore, accountability is often best strengthened by working through a multi stakeholder approach involving citizens, governments and service providers.

Furthermore, effective capacity building needs to be offset by various mechanisms assessing, developing and monitoring Performance for increased accountability.

### **Accountability and Performance**

The Bukoba District, one of eight administrative districts in the north-western corner of Tanzania, with a population of approximately 400,000 people, recorded a number of reasons for inadequate service delivery. The district is unable to collect its own revenue resulting in a high dependency on central government and donor funding. Councilors and staff have been accused of 'low capacity management' and 'unsatisfactory leadership' rendering them untrustworthy, ignorant and incompetent to serve the population. The attitudinal habits of staff members cause them to be ignorant of what their contributions would mean and how it would impact on the Council. At the same time staff underestimates the role of councilors whom they perceive to be uninformed and this severely undermines the oversight work of councilors as they are increasingly being controlled by staff members. Furthermore, once councilors get elected, they appear to forget the lofty promises of service delivery. A general lack of a culture of accountability and little pressure placed on the Council by the electorate and Civil Society Organisations is widespread.

The Tanzanian government embarked on the LG Reform Programme (LGRP) with its Development Partners, such as the World Bank, and the governments of the Netherlands and the UK, to establish the Local Government Capital Development Grant (LGCDG) system. This initiative sees discretionary funding flows to Local Government Authorities (LGAs) for provision of new, and rehabilitation of existing infrastructure and capacity building activities. Councils are assessed on a set criteria which includes Financial Management, Fiscal Capacity;

Planning and Budgeting; Transparency and Accountability; Human Resource Development; Procurement; Project Implementation; and Council Functional processes by an external team and dependent on its performance, qualifies to access the grants<sup>18</sup>.

To render accountability as that of performance visible and transparent, local government needs to frequently and openly make information about resources and budget planning available to its various publics.

### **Accountability as Information sharing**

Accountability requires that both citizens and central government have accurate and accessible information about local government: about available resources, performance, service levels, budgets, accounts and other financial indicators. A lack of transparency in budgetary procedures and outcomes makes it hard for the electorate to judge government spending programmes.

In New Zealand, the Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Bill passed during 2010, allows and enables ratepayers to apply greater influence on the work of their councils in relation to improved information about council costs, rates and other activities, so that greater influence, planning and decision making are exercised by ratepayers. This prompts the introduction of pre-election reports to stimulate debate for council elections. A more strategic emphasis is placed on the planning of service delivery. In providing plain English financial reporting, ratepayers may know better what they are paying for, how assets are managed and what the financial health of the council is. The Act focuses on multi-year accountability to the community rather than to high levels of government or donors<sup>19</sup>.

A leaflet designed for Local Authorities in Tanzania ask critical questions related to: Where does local government money come from and how these funds are allocated? Communities are subsequently informed that LG funding mostly originates from the form of transfers from central government; recurrent block grants, sector basket funds and subventions, the local government capital development grant (LGCDG), and special development grants. A small amount comes

---

<sup>18</sup> SNV Strengthening Local Level Service Delivery and Accountability: the case of Bukoba District Council, Tanzania.

<sup>19</sup> Rodney Hide, 2010, Decisions for better transparency, accountability and financial management of local Government, Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Act.

from the local tax revenue. However, it is just as important to ensure that the money is spent as planned.

A bottom-up process known as Opportunities and Obstacles to Development (O&OD) feed local priorities into a system that goes a long way up to national government through a series of participatory exercises and focus groups culminating in a village plan. This plan is later presented to the village assembly for approval. The O&OD initiative has however faced several challenges as vulnerable groups are often marginalized in the process. It was found that village plans are often over ambitious considering the available resources (or rather the lack thereof). The process is expensive and the village level O&OD have only marginal influence on LGA plans.

Even if we have good policies and monies are budgeted for the ‘right’ things (local priorities), it will not have an impact if it gets lost along the expenditure chain. The Public Expenditure Tracking (PET) device aims to achieve that of tracking public spending and keeping community structures informed. PET is following the money from where it is disbursed by central government authorizes, through local government, to end users such as schools and clinics.

Citizens’ report cards or community scorecards/PIMA cards are a simple way for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to facilitate community assessments of local government performance. This can either monitor performance progress against budgets or can also be very powerful input into the planning process<sup>20</sup>.

Local media is important for spreading political news and public information, but often do not have resources to undertake investigative journalism. Radio may be a key vehicle at the local level in providing local news, talk shows and Q & A programmes to all citizens whether they be literate or illiterate, rich or poor, alike.

It often becomes unrealistic and too expensive for small newspapers and radio stations to sponsor the work necessary to undertake investigative journalism. To make political news from all sources available to as wide an audience as possible, the answer is radio. Radio (especially AM

---

<sup>20</sup> This leaflet was written by Ben Taylor of Daraja and WaterAid for Policy Forum. It is based on the local government chapter of HakiElimu and Policy Forum’s Understanding the Budget Process in Tanzania.

band) is cheap to operate and local news, talk shows and Q & A programmes are all excellent ways to spread political news widely. Mali has 77 private rural radio stations promising to become strong instruments of accountability as the new DLG system takes shape. The low distribution of radio receivers is however a serious constraint in this country. In India (as in many former British colonies), the government retains a monopoly over radio. Some mayors have gone on television to publicise their budgets and invite public debate about them. There is promise that the media can become an effective instrument of accountability, but for the most part that promise has yet to be realized<sup>21</sup>.

## ACCOUNTABILITY AS PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

Such mechanisms of participation and accountability do exist but are often dominated by local elites to the exclusion of the poor. However, representations of 'poor' and 'vulnerable' by the West, often undermine the agency of societies wishing to change the status quo.

Representations of people in the South as underdeveloped, traditional, poor and vulnerable sustain 'the reality that feeds such an image'; static categorisations that are both 'overdeterminate and underdescriptive' 'the poor' into an 'abnormality to be treated' and assign the cause of the 'problem' to factors internal to the poor while presentation of people in the South as homogenous 'ultimately robs them of their historical and political *agency*'<sup>22</sup>.

Post-colonial critic, Homi K Bhaba, emphasizes the importance of social power relations in defining subaltern social groups as oppressed, racial minorities whose social presence was crucial to the self-definition of the majority group; as such, subaltern social groups, nonetheless also are in the position to subvert the authority of the social groups who hold hegemonic power<sup>23</sup>.

Electoral systems often marginalize women, minorities and vulnerable groups. Accountability is identified by Crook and Sverrisson (2002) as being key to increasing the responsiveness of local government to the poor and making developments more pro-poor. The institutional obstacles of

---

<sup>21</sup> Harry Blair, 2000, Participation and Accountability at the Periphery: Democratic Local Governance in Six Countries in *World Development* Vol. 28 p29.

<sup>22</sup> Escobar in Gaventa, 2003: 13

<sup>23</sup> Homi K Bhaba in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subaltern\\_\(postcolonialism\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subaltern_(postcolonialism))

the voice of the poor are in fact greater at the local level than at the national level given the dominant position of local elites and their links to national elites.

The concept of 'citizen voice' implies an engagement with the state that moves beyond consultation to more direct forms of influence over spending and policy decisions. Participation can be inhibited by social dynamics of exclusion and inclusion at the community level regarding difference in age, income, religion, caste, ethnicity and gender. Furthermore, the powerful impose their decisions on others<sup>24</sup>.

There is no need to hear your voice, when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still the colonizer, the speaking subject; and you are now at the centre of my talk<sup>25</sup>.

Civil society is deemed as an organized force with which local governments can engage in a variety of ways, including participation. However, there is no guarantee that the interests of the poor will be represented, and formal organisations often act to reinforce patterns of inequality and exclusion. For local government policy makers it is easier to reach the visible community elites than the poor.

### **Participation, Representation, Empowerment, Benefits**

The question though is, whether the increase in participation will in fact have a domino effect in reducing poverty. At the same time, businessmen, local notables, large farmers, professionals and possibly some labour leaders will quickly find a place on local councils.

In six cases, two constituencies gained representation for minority ethnic groups and women. Women in significant numbers sit on local councils in countries where their inclusion is mandated. In the Philippines the Local Government Code requires that at least 25% of the voting members on local development councils be from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) chosen by the local constituencies.

---

<sup>24</sup> Nick Devas and Ursula Grant, 2003: 309.

<sup>25</sup> Hooks, marginality as a site of resistance in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subaltern\\_\(postcolonialism\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subaltern_(postcolonialism))

Bolivia has taken a different approach, setting up parallel vigilance committee members to monitor elected bodies. These vigilance committee members are selected from traditional local governance systems such as peasant syndicates and neighbourhood councils and they tend to be non-elites. In Karnataka local elites still control councils and steer most benefits to them, reflecting the lack of empowerment of marginal groups. For example, they upgrade existing high schools (which their children attend) rather than spend public funds to expand primary and secondary education to serve all children. The flow of benefits remains the same.

Latin America, where civil society has developed more than elsewhere in aid-receiving countries, offers some further evidence of local ability to undertake activities benefitting constituents across the socio-economic spectrum. At this insistence of its vigilante committee, Cochabamba municipality in Bolivia is building primary schools in its outlying and poorer neighbourhoods, moving away from the old pattern of building mostly in the wealthier suburbs.

The Philippines have shown signs of civil society that is an effective instrument of public accountability at the local level. Building social capital and civil society will probably take a long time. But there will have to be much social change before civil society can become a major engine of social accountability at the local level in all these settings. Here a number of approaches can work – there is no ‘best way’ to promote accountability.

In bringing together Participation and Accountability, it is implied that: civil society and political parties have to be the key institutions in bringing marginal groups into the DLG political arena. In the final analysis, bringing as many citizens as possible into the political arena and assuring that local governors are responsible to the governed for their actions, accountability is heightened.

In the mid-1980s in Uganda the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government under Yowerri Idi Museveni sought to re-establish the governance of the country from the bottom up, through a five-tier system of Resistance Councils (renamed Local Councils) starting from the village or ward level (LC1), through the parish (LC2), sub county (rural) or division (urban) (LC3), county (rural) or municipality (urban) (LC4) to the district (LC5).

This system has been successful in creating multiple opportunities for participatory decision-making at all levels. Gender and minority interests are protected in principle through reserved



seats for women, youth and disabled at each level. Citizens are able to participate at various levels in real choices about real resources. Local councils and institutions (schools and clinics) are requested to display information about grants received so that citizens can question those responsible about the use of the money. There are nevertheless weaknesses. Meetings are held infrequently while participation is much less than what is suggested. However, there are examples of local councils which have attempted to make the budget conference into an inclusive process with proper discussion of budgetary choices. The transfer system has become complex though<sup>26</sup>.

While major problems persist, the financial position of most LA's still remains dire and this undermines people's trust and confidence in the participatory process. The extent of participation remains narrow where those with the greatest interest tend to be those from the business community and select NGOs or community organisations. Decision making remains non-transparent while lack of publicly available information on budgets and accounts persists. Major problems of corruption, improper accounting, and abuse of tender processes and over-employment of junior staff are widespread<sup>27</sup>.

Hence do subaltern social groups create social, political and cultural movements that contest and disassemble the exclusive claims to power of the Western imperialist powers, and so establish the use and application of local knowledge to create new spaces of opposition, and alternative non imperialist futures<sup>28</sup>?

## **CONCLUSION:**

It is evident then that despite sophisticated mechanisms of accountability; limited control is applied here in South Africa, elsewhere in other post-colonial African and Asian states. There are numerous successes in exercising transparent and democratic governance in various local government spheres across the world yet the failures and weaknesses bear heavily against sound accountability practices. As suggested here, the locations of the power/knowledge notion or discourse needs to be understood as it plays itself out in various contexts and relations. There appears to be no easy remedies of simply applying a 'one-size fits all' accountability approach. Perhaps it is precisely at local government level that the opportunities for deepening

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid: 312.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid: 315.

<sup>28</sup> Gaventa, 2003

accountability are situated in that the specificity of the event of answerability is linked in a new and unique way to each and every locality of vulnerability and powerlessness.

“...subaltern is not just a classy word for ‘oppressed’, for the Other, for somebody who is not getting a piece of the pie...In post-colonial terms, everything that has limited access or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern – a space of difference. Now, who would say that’s just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It’s not subaltern...Many people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus; they don’t need the word subaltern’ ...They should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are. They are within the hegemonic discourse, wanting a piece of the pie, and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern<sup>29</sup>.

---

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Gayatri Spivak, the Author of *Can the Subaltern Speak*, at the New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa (1992).

## REFERENCES

1. APAC, 2012. Good Practice Guide for Municipal Public Accounts Committees. First Draft. Compiled by Nthabiseng Ngozwana
2. Auditor-General South Africa, 2012. Northern Cape audit outcomes remain stagnant. 23 Jul 2012. <http://www.info.gov.za/speech>
3. Blair H, 2000. Participation and Accountability at the Periphery: Democratic Local Governance in Six Countries. *World Development* Vol. 28.
4. Botes C, 2011. Adopting the Public Accounts Committee Model for Financial Oversight in South African Municipalities – A Case study of the Public Accounts Committee in the City of Cape Town. Thesis. Masters of Public Administration. University of Stellenbosch.
5. Business News, 24 July 2012. Nombembe lashes out at mayors and councilors. <http://www.iol.co.za/business/business-news>.
6. Devas Nick and Grant Ursula, 2003, Local Government Decision – Making – Citizen Participation and Local Accountability: Some Evidence from Kenya and Uganda in *Public Admin, Dev*: 23, p311  
Published online 28 July 2003 in Wiley InterScience [www.interscience.wiley.com](http://www.interscience.wiley.com)  
Downloaded on 18 September 2013.
7. Fessha Y.T 2008. Holding the municipal executive to account. Local Government Bulletin, Vol 10, Issue 2, Apr/May.
8. Fourie D, 2007. Financial control measures enhancing good governance. Journal of Public Administration, Vol 42, Issue 7, Nov.
9. Gaventa J, 2003. *Power after Lukes: An overview of theories of power since Lukes and their application to Development*, p17, power\_after\_lukes.pdf.

10. Hide R, 2010. Decisions for better transparency, accountability and financial management of local Government, Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Act.
11. Mettler G, 2008. Strengthening Accountability and political oversight. Local Government Bulletin, Vol 10, Issue 2, Apr/May.
12. Pauw, JC, Woods G *et al*, 2009. Managing Public Money – Systems from South Africa. Sandown: Heinmann.
13. Republic of South Africa, 1996. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996. Pretoria. Government.
14. Republic of South Africa, 1998. Municipal Structures Act, No 117 of 1998. Pretoria. Government Printers.
15. Republic of South Africa, 2000. Municipal Systems Act, No 32 of 2000. Pretoria. Government Printers.
16. Republic of South Africa, 2003. Municipal Finance Management Act, No 56 of 2003. Pretoria. Government Printers.
17. Republic of South Africa 2011. Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and Department: National Treasury. Guidelines for establishment of MPAC, available on website: [www.treasury.gov.z/mfma](http://www.treasury.gov.z/mfma)
18. Republic of South Africa 2009. Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. State of Local Government Report, available on website: [www.dplg.gov.za](http://www.dplg.gov.za)
19. Republic of South Africa 2009. Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. Local Government Turnaround Strategy, available on website: [www.dplg.gov.za](http://www.dplg.gov.za)
20. Republic of South Africa 2006. Department: National Treasury. MFMA Circular 32. The Oversight Report, available on website: [www.treasury.gov.z/mfma](http://www.treasury.gov.z/mfma)
21. SALGA, 2012. Enhancing oversight in the Municipality. Practical Guide.

22. SNV Connecting People's Capacities, Strengthening Local Level Service Delivery and Accountability the case of Bukoba District Council, Tanzania.
23. Tod B, Strengthening accountability for improved service delivery: SNV's local capacity development Approach.
24. Ben Taylor of Daraja and WaterAid for Policy Forum. Leaflet is based on the local government chapter of HakiElimu and Policy Forum's Understanding the Budget Process in Tanzania.
25. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subaltern\\_\(postcolonialism\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subaltern_(postcolonialism))
26. Interview with Gayatri Spivak, the Author of *Can the Subaltern Speak*, at the New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa (1992)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subaltern\\_\(postcolonialism\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subaltern_(postcolonialism))