

Just and Democratic Local Governance

Voice

Representation and People's Democracy



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HRBA Governance Resources

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- Representation and People's Democracy

Published by ActionAid
International Governance Team
February 2012

This resource book has been produced by ActionAid's International Governance Team (IGT) and supplements ActionAid's Human Rights Based Approach – People's Action in Practice. This book is part of a series under the common title of Just and Democratic Governance and focuses on governance issues, approaches and tools that are relevant in all ActionAid's work in Local Rights Programmes.

Acknowledgement of sources

The content of this resource book has been inspired and informed by many other publications, papers and reports and numerous inputs, comments and suggestions from ActionAid staff and partners. A list of major sources appears at the end of the book.

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Human Rights form the basis for ActionAid's work

Human Rights form the basis for ActionAid's work. ActionAid believes that poverty violates human rights and that this happens because of unequal power relations which start in the family and extend up to the global level. Violations of Human rights are often a result of failures in governance. Governance is about the relationship between citizens and the state and the way the state uses its power and authority to manage its political, economic and administrative affairs. ActionAid believes in democratic people-centred governance where governance processes and the exercise of power are guided by human rights principles and values. Together these constitute the idea of rights-based, people-centred governance based on the rule of law and principled on democratic values of participation, equity, justice and fairness.

ActionAid's approach to human rights is explained in the publication: ActionAid's Human Rights Based Approach – People's Action in Practice. This publication informs the Just and Democratic Governance series which this title is a part of.

The Just and Democratic Local Governance Resource Book Series is intended for civil society practitioners and activists working at the local level. The five books can be read independently, but they complement each other and contribute to a more overall picture of key governance issues of central importance to ActionAid's Human Rights Based Approach. The series focuses on the local level and will support practitioners in their efforts to achieve ActionAid's strategic promises of improving service delivery for poor people and achieving a fairer distribution of resources to finance public policies aimed at reducing poverty.

Towards a fairer distribution of resources

It is now generally acknowledged that strengthening accountability mechanisms and holding the state to account plays a crucial role in securing improvements in service delivery. Citizens can most easily influence the state at the local level. Decentralisation reforms in many countries have enabled citizens to form responsive local governments and hold these and other state institutions at the local level to account. Civil society action has demonstrated that considerable improvements can be achieved even without extra external resources by simply focusing on improving local accountability relationships and decentralised governance systems. This approach can achieve significant improvements in a short space of time for the most marginalised, many of whom only have limited access to any type of service.

Clearly many problems cannot be solved at the local level. National and international policies, global patterns of wealth generation and distribution are factors that impact on the local level and determine how much room there is to manoeuvre. The struggle for democracy and human rights at the local level must therefore necessarily be linked to national and international campaigns.

Focusing on the local level

The five books in the series cover issues from a general perspective and do not take specific national contexts into account. However, support will be given to developing national versions of these resource books and translating them into national languages. The current series of five titles is focused at the local level and we hope that it will assist practitioners in improving services for the poor. Forthcoming titles over the next two years will focus on how the local level can effectively link up with national struggles.

Voice and social change

Politics and social change are bound up together. It is difficult, if not impossible, to influence society unless your voice is represented in political processes. But political processes vary greatly from place to place and country to country. Some societies are more open and democratic and others are not.

Social change often happens without the participation of citizens. A strong leader or a strong government simply decides what will happen. In such situations laws, budgets and institutions are imposed on people without their voice being heard. This means that new changes and the way society is managed may not reflect people's interests or their needs. For people living in poverty such decision-making processes often imply that their human rights are neglected and opportunities missed to re-organise society more justly.

This resource book is about people's participation in decision-making and about people's right to have a 'voice', to be heard and to choose their own representatives. Some of the questions we try to answer in this book are:

- How can we engage in democratic processes, and what space is there for people to engage politically?
- How can democracy become more inclusive and participatory?
- How can people's voices be heard in local government and other decision-making forums?
- How can we claim more democratic space?

Democracy is an on-going process of struggle and contestation; political processes are not just about elections, but also about what happens in decision-making processes between elections. To create more just and equal societies, it is essential that ordinary people are heard and can engage with authorities to influence decision-making. We must ensure that democratic 'space' is created in ways that enable real influence for people living in poverty.

This resource book is about how that can be done using established and well-known approaches as well as more recent alternative ways of voicing concerns. People in many countries are demanding greater influence and participation in political processes and developing new democratic ways of mobilising and organising.

This resource book is for local level civil society practitioners who want to make their own voice heard, and who want to involve more people in their efforts to make their opinions and ideas heard at the local level, in elected local government and other state bodies, in civil society organisations, and in public spaces and media. We hope the resource book will inspire you and assist you in your work.

Democratising Democracy



- We voted for our councillor, because she promised to work for a better health clinic. But these promises were empty, nothing has happened.



- It's the same story each time. They tell us we have democracy and that if we vote for them it will lead us out of poverty! I think we need to make democracy democratic!

As we stated in the introduction to this book, we believe that poverty is a violation of human rights, arising from unequal power relations from the household right up to the global level. In other words powerful people who control society look after their own interests first, before considering others. In the family, girls are stopped from going to school; in marginalised communities, the health clinic only has a doctor once a week. At the national level, one province gets many more resources than others, because that's where the president comes from and powerful international institutions dictate the terms of loans and grants to poor countries.

If we are going to change this situation, it means doing things in our societies in a different way. Doing things in a different way involves two things. The first is how we make decisions about what it is important to do and the second is how we actually carry out, or implement, the things we have decided to do. These two things are called governance. Governance is all about how we govern or regulate our societies and what we are concerned about in this chapter is to look at some essential features of governance that would ensure that nobody is left out. This means governing in a way that includes citizens in decision making at all levels and makes sure that everybody's rights are

respected, protected and fulfilled. This form of governance is known as democratic governance.

Making democratic forms of governance happen will take time, but it is these governance structures that provide the means for people who are left out to claim their rights. Governance is therefore the foundation of all inclusive development. In the next sections we will look at the basic building blocks for making sure that society is governed in a way that includes everybody.

First of all we should acknowledge that these issues are not new. Great leaders and thinkers from the beginning of time have struggled to find answers to these questions. After World War II, world leaders felt that the time had come to agree on and record in writing a set of human rights which could be regarded as universal for all people and which all countries should aim to follow. This led to the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the 10 December 1948 at the United Nations. This document explains human rights in detail. It also explains aspects of how we should govern our societies in order to ensure that rights are respected. The following clauses from articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are crucial.

Article 19

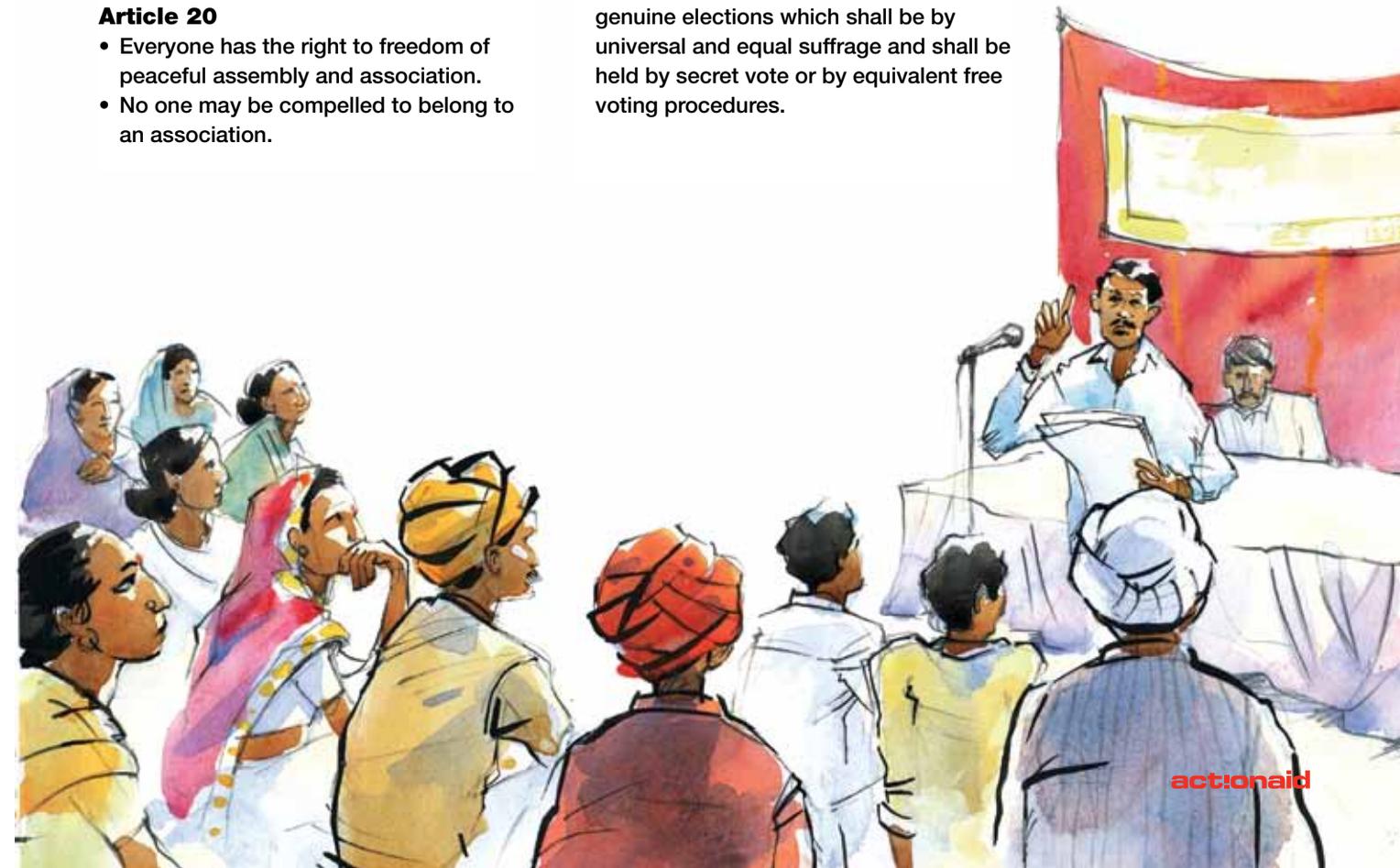
- Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20

- Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
- No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21

- Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
- The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.





- The way democracy develops will of course be different in each country, but the fundamental basics are the same: Values and principles, just laws and people's participation.



- If democracy is going to work, everybody has to adopt democratic values and principles.



Think about this...

There are nine core international human rights treaties, the most recent one on enforced disappearance entered into force on 23 December 2010. Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, all UN Member States have ratified at least one core international human rights treaty, and 80 per cent have ratified four or more. There are 192 UN member states and 196 nations in the world.

Democratic Governance

These and other articles from the International Declaration of Human Rights provide us with a basis for identifying the basic building blocks of democratic governance in any society. The actual form that democracy takes will be different depending on the context, but the fundamental human rights based building blocks are universal.

1. Democratic values and principles

These are fundamental standards that we use to determine what is right or wrong and how we should live our lives. We should internalise and learn these as we grow up, from our parents, our teachers, communities and religions. A key democratic value is that all people are equally entitled to rights and freedoms.

These rights apply to us, but also to everyone else. So just as much as we can demand that our rights be fulfilled, we also have an obligation to make sure that we live up to human rights standards in our own behaviour to others. If we demand our right to water for our cattle and fields, we will also have to acknowledge that villagers downstream also have the same right.

Somehow we will have to work out how we share our water resources. This calls for tolerance, compromise and empathy – the ability to see the world from other people's perspectives.

These values, principles and beliefs form a democratic culture which underpins democratic governance. If people do not internalise these beliefs and live by them in their daily life, it will be very difficult to organise society based on democratic governance.

2. Just laws

Clearly, it is difficult for everybody to live out these values without guidance. This brings us to the second crucial point which is that democratic governance involves regulating society by just rules, laws and punishments. Just means that the rules and laws are considered fair and reasonable and do not contravene human rights.

Democratic governance involves administering society through a large number of rules. A key issue is that these rules apply to everybody equally and are enforced and administered equally and openly. It also means that decision makers

who make the laws and administrators who implement them are held accountable and get punished themselves if they break the laws or misuse them. In this spirit, most important of all is that leaders are also subject to the law themselves. The ultimate expression of this is that leaders must accept the outcome of free and fair elections and resign if they lose (Article 21.3). Elections are the ultimate rules about how power should be transferred from one leader to another without disrupting or destroying society.

3. Participation

This brings us to the final key area which is how democratic governance recognises and encourages the participation of citizens in political and decision making processes and recognises the essential contribution that citizens play in building democratic societies (Article 21.1). If rules and laws are formulated and administered openly, then citizens can participate with their individual vision of how they think society should be; with their knowledge of local conditions which can help inform decision making, and finally by ensuring that leaders and duty bearers are held accountable.

The three areas outlined above form the basis of democratic governance as a system for regulating all types of human behaviour for the common good based on the intentions and values expressed in international human rights. Its success depends on how people make the system of democratic governance work. If people do not respect the values, principles and rules that make up the concept of

democratic governance, then the system will not work. In all societies there are different interests among groups and struggles for power. In democratic societies the values, rules and political decision making structures regulate how such conflicts can play out and people respect these rules and if they refuse to, they are punished by law.

Democratic governance – an on-going project

In this sense democratic governance is an on-going project all over the world. It is not a thing like a building or a machine that once constructed is just there and functioning. In all countries there is a constant flux of improvements and setbacks for democracy. Some countries have gone far in implementing a democratic culture, rules and political systems; others are still dictatorships, where a small elite



- Democracy provides a way of solving conflicts between powerful people, but it requires that they stick to the rules and respect the will of the people!



Think about this...

There is no one way of organising democratic governance. Around the world different countries have found their own specific answers. According to Freedom House, an international NGO that monitors democracy, there are 196 countries in the world and 117 have adopted electoral democracy as their form of governance. This is a large increase compared to earlier times when countries were ruled by a dictator, a monarchy or a colonial power.

What is the situation in your country and in your community in terms of 1) democratic values and culture, 2) The rule of law, and 3) Peoples participation in governance -what works and what does not work – and why?



- Many people see democracy as just being elections. This is problematic as in many places elections can easily be manipulated and the choice of candidates controlled.



- Democracy which truly involves people, is much more than elections. It's about the regular involvement of citizens in day-to-day decision making about things that affect their lives.

controls everything. In an increasing number of countries, democracy is focused on multiparty, representative democracy which means that citizens have the right to vote, that there are political parties which people are free to vote for, that the parties form governments which then take decisions on behalf of citizens and that some liberal rights for citizens are guaranteed in the constitution. This is called a pluralistic representative democracy.

Representative democracy has a number of important democratic features, but often representative democracy alone is not enough to guarantee democratic governance. It is relatively easy for powerful leaders to dominate political parties. The choice of candidates in a political party can be controlled by the party leadership and election processes can be manipulated to ensure that the same powerful people are elected from one election to the next. In particular, this can result in minority and marginalised groups being excluded from political processes and representation. During elections, political leaders may proclaim that they will bring development and justice to the people, but all too often these remain empty promises which they do not intend to honour. In this situation, democracy faces a crisis.

Enabling factors

As we mentioned, building a society based on democratic governance takes time, however there are a number of human rights which are extremely important for building an enabling environment for democratic governance to flourish. These

are **the right to freedom of opinion and expression** and **the right to receive and send information** and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (Article 19.1). In addition, **the right to freedom of peaceful assembly**, which means that citizens can meet in large groups in public, and **the right of association**, which means that citizens can form their own organisations (Article 20.1). Finally, there is **the right to take part in the government** of the country, directly or through freely chosen representatives, which means that you can stand for election yourself or vote for someone of your choice (Article 21.1).

Our theory of change

These three rights form the basis upon which civil society can be founded. It is now acknowledged that civil society has historically played a key role in promoting democratic governance and respect for human rights. Indeed this is our theory of change. We believe that purposeful individual and collective action, led by the active agency of people living in poverty and supported by like-minded individuals and organisations can make important contributions to addressing the structural causes and consequences of poverty as well as promoting governance systems that respect, protect and fulfil human rights standards. For this reason, respect for the three rights discussed above are important for enabling civil society to develop.

Many political and administrative leaders will find that democratic human rights mentioned above restrict their ability to remain in power and control society.



- Democracy and Freedom of Speech are fundamental human rights, so we have the right to have our Voice heard, listened to and responded to!

Therefore, there is a constant temptation for those in power to limit these freedoms. At the same time as we see a global increase in democratic reforms, we also see a trend in limiting democratic space for civil society organisations. It must be acknowledged that a democratic state has the right to protect democracy from elements who want to overthrow government and the democratic system by undemocratic means; however such threats are also often misused in order to limit the freedom of legitimate democratic organisations. In recent years the fight against terrorism has been misused in many countries to limit democratic freedoms.

Another enabling factor is people's empowerment. Earlier we discussed that people's participation is a key element of democratic governance and a key human right. In order to participate and become involved in democratic work people need to be empowered. Too often people are

unaware of their entitlements and rights; they have a passive or fatalistic view of the world where, for example, they see government provision of basic services as a form of charity for which they should be thankful. Moving towards a more active view of the world in which government services are seen as basic rights is a fundamental step. Building people's awareness of their rights is an important component of becoming empowered and aware.

But raising awareness in itself is never enough if we are not also working to build critical consciousness. The term "conscientisation", coined by Paulo Freire, captures the essence of this. Conscientisation is a process of enabling people to perceive the social, political and economic contradictions in their lives and to take action against these. It is a process involving reflection and action that enables people to "perceive the reality of oppression, not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform" (Freire 1970). The key is enabling people to reflect on why they are in the situation they are and also to arrive at an understanding of how they could change this situation. In this process understanding and reflection are linked to action for social change.

Conscientisation is not something that is taught or given, but it can be facilitated or obstructed. People who are empowered or 'conscientised' are able to have an opinion about their life and the situation they are in. They are also able to have a



Think about this...

All countries face potential and real threats from criminal and extremist organisations. All countries also have citizens and organisations which criticise the government or duty bearers for not fulfilling people's rights or providing services to agreed standards. In this connection many countries keep a careful and controlling eye on the right of opinion and expression, the right to information, and the right to assembly and association.

How has your country responded to these issues? Do you think there are limits to what people should be allowed to say in public? How would you build up an enabling environment for civil society which would promote democratic governance?



-There are so many ways that you can make your voice heard and new ways are being invented all the time. You need to find the way that is most likely to get your message heard in the right way, by the right people.

vision of how things could be changed which they are eager to express to others. This is the moment where empowerment transforms into action. This transformation we have called voice and representation which are the key themes of this book. Voice and representation are thus the living embodiment of the three human rights that support the development of civil society which we have discussed in this chapter (Articles 19, 20 and 21 from the International Declaration of Human Rights). We will end this chapter by taking a closer look at voice and representation.

Voice is an action where we express publicly our opinion and concern about politics, social conditions and economic issues and how they affect us and how we would like to see them change. Voice can be expressed in many different ways. Using the established channels, we can complain to our local council, we can vote for parliament, or we can influence decisions in local councils or committees. These are common ways of making our voice heard in a representative democracy. It may not always work because those in power sometimes do not listen or do not want to change their ways.

There are many ways of making our voice heard. Outlined below are five important ways of doing so.

1. Dialogue: This approach is based on influencing and persuading power holders to change policy and practice. It centres on the voice of dialogue, negotiation, lobbying and advocacy. It requires that

power holders are prepared to listen to us. When we demand our rights from duty bearers, we must also acknowledge that citizens have their obligations as well. Solving problems constructively between duty bearers and rights holders requires finding common ground so that the voice of dialogue and negotiation can flourish.

2. Evidence based approaches: This approach is based on collecting objective evidence about a situation and using the evidence to speak our case. This approach often focuses on service provision and staff performance when measured against standards, laws or human rights. Evidence based voice assumes that your evidence will be taken seriously. It also assumes that it is possible to access the information upon which you base your evidence.

3. Communicating with a wider audience: This approach is based on getting our voice heard by other people in order to build support for a case and put pressure on power holders. Communication approaches, for example, using the media, are thus often a means to an end. For example, being able to communicate with a wide range of people and tell them that health services in our area are substandard will help us towards our primary goal of getting health services improved. The assumption is that greater public awareness will force power holders to react and listen to our voice.

4. Peaceful Action and Protests: This is the voice of frustration and anger. Often a voice we need to use when others have failed. The approach is based on letting our voice be expressed through peaceful actions, protests and acts of civil disobedience where citizens draw attention to problems by using public spaces for demonstrations, sit-ins, events and happenings. The assumption is that drawing attention to issues in this manner will make power holders react positively and be prepared to listen. Sometimes however, we need to use this voice just to get an issue recognised as a problem by authorities and the wider public.

5. Humanitarian and Documentation approaches: In conflict situations where violence is rife, it may be very difficult for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to voice opinions or even operate at all. In situations like this, CSOs may be limited to a silent voice that waits to speak another time. In these situations, activists can play an important role in documenting abuses in any way they can, through filming with mobile phones, through interviews or comprehensive note taking. Electronic media make it possible to get information sent abroad which can be a powerful tool for mobilising international support and condemnation of human rights abuses. Carefully documented data about human rights abuses can be used as evidence later in truth and reconciliation processes.

Representation is another important way in which our voice can be heard. Representation simply means *speaking*



Think about this...

One voice or many voices? In reality, people living in poverty have many – and different – voices, so identifying one single voice is, in many cases, difficult. People may agree on some issues, but disagree on others. This can be a big challenge when we want to support people to work jointly for a common cause.

People and their organisations may have different opinions, interests and power relations. Therefore it is important to be aware of how these differences manifest themselves in the community – whether there are potential conflicts. Agreeing on collective action can be a challenge in itself and people living in poverty can easily get left out. What's your experience?

on behalf of other people. If we are not satisfied with the local health post in our village, we do not all go to the district health office to complain. We send a *representative* – a person to speak on our behalf. We expect the representative to speak with the 'Voice' of the village, and to represent our opinions and negotiate on our behalf.

We choose people to represent us in local government and in parliament where they make important decisions on our behalf. We elect, or appoint, somebody to represent us in parliament, in local councils, in unions, in CSOs and in social movements. When we speak about who is representing whom, and who is speaking for whom, it is essential also to keep in mind whether that representative is legitimate. Is she or he really taking care of my interests? Loyalty is the word that describes legitimacy in this context.



-When you choose a representative to speak on your behalf a key issue is that the person really will represent your interests and concerns and not forget about them as soon as the election is over.

For more about Empowerment see ActionAid's REFLECT approach at: www.reflect-action.org and People's Action in Practice: ActionAid's Human Rights Based Approach (2012).



- A democracy that is really a people's democracy means that people have to become involved in peaceful and constructive ways that make sure that people living in poverty are included and not forgotten.

Legitimacy and representation are key elements of democracy at all levels – not only for formal national and local level state institutions which represent constituents, but certainly also for all organisations or movements representing members or supporters.

In conclusion

In this chapter we have discussed some of the key elements of democratic governance and explored the links between democratic governance and human rights. We have seen that democratic governance is a system for organising political, social and economic life and that it can provide a system of governance capable of respecting, protecting and fulfilling people's human rights. We have also seen that democratic governance is not perfect. Indeed it is no better than the people who administer it.

We have discussed that in many places democracy has centred on voting and elections. Although free and fair elections are important democratic building blocks, we have also argued that these processes are quite easy for powerful people to manipulate to their advantage. We have also explored how human rights provide a set of key enabling factors for the development of civil society and people's participation in governance. We have also noted that people's participation is key to the development of democratic governance and explored the concepts of voice and representation and seen how they can help define people's participation. In the next chapter we are going to discuss the issue of voice and representation in connection with elections and elected representatives.

Elections, Voices and the Elected

In this chapter we will look at how you can make your voice heard in local councils and committees and what is needed in order to make elected bodies work.

The idea of space is also introduced to give you another perspective of where to focus your work.

When we are together with friends or family, we debate daily life and politics. We may have different opinions – but we still respect each other. This is how it should be in a democracy; different people, religious groups, politicians and political groups have

different opinions about how society should be organised, and about how to solve the problems we face. Everybody should have an opportunity to raise their voice – and be respected.

However, many of us do not have the opportunity to raise our voice and express our opinions, and this means that we are not heard. When we listen to who speaks on the radio, in parliament or in committees, district councils and village meetings, we mostly hear powerful people.





- Who is active in politics in your community? Do poor people, young people and women have any influence?

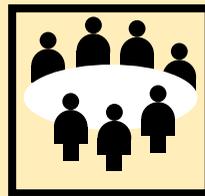
When we are not listened to, we stop talking, and eventually we stop thinking about the issues that actually matter in our society. This is a dangerous development, because if we want to do away with inequality and fight corruption and inefficiency in society, we all need to be active in democratic processes.

Our society may have political parties, elections for councils, committees and parliament, but if our feelings, demands, ideas and aspirations are not voiced and heard, we are actually not living in a democracy, no matter how many fine words are written in the constitution.

The idea of Space

Closed Spaces

Accountability is exercised behind closed doors. The meeting is for a select group of people.

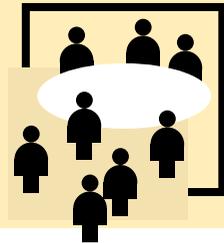


Closed spaces are spaces where accountability is exercised behind closed doors. The meeting is for a select group of people. Civil society is excluded from these spaces and simply not invited to participate. In many places, important decisions that affect the local community are made like this by a few powerful people. Some closed spaces may be closed for a good reason (for example, court cases involving child witnesses).

Others may be closed due to tradition or lack of transparency, and opening them up would be good for democratic governance. The challenge for civil society is to open these spaces up.

Invited Spaces

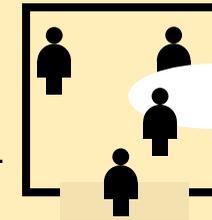
Citizens can participate in accountability mechanisms that have been set up by the government.



Invited spaces are spaces, where citizens can participate in accountability mechanisms that have been set up by the government. Civil society engages in these spaces by invitation from state actors. Invited spaces are often controlled by formal rules about what can be discussed and how much influence civil society is allowed to have. Examples of this are school and health clinic management committees where places are reserved for citizens. There are often opportunities for citizens to influence outcomes in these spaces but there is a risk that civil society can get caught up in what powerful people want. The challenge for CSOs is to use these spaces as effectively as possible and to strengthen the role of civil society in them and make sure that men and women are equally represented.

Under-utilized Spaces

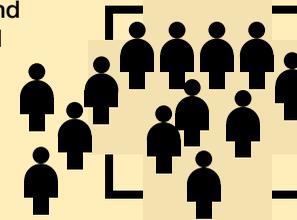
Citizens are entitled to participate, but rarely make use of the option for a variety of reasons.



Under-utilised spaces are spaces that citizens are entitled to participate in but rarely make use of for a variety of reasons. At the local level, it may often be because citizens and officials may not know about them. It may also be because it is expensive to use them (for example the courts) and there may be powerful people who try to stop civil society from using these spaces. The challenge for CSOs is to activate these spaces.

Claimed Spaces

Created and demanded by civil society.



Claimed spaces are spaces created and demanded by civil society. These include forums initiated by citizen groups where government officials are called to account. Claimed spaces may range from public information meetings organised by civil

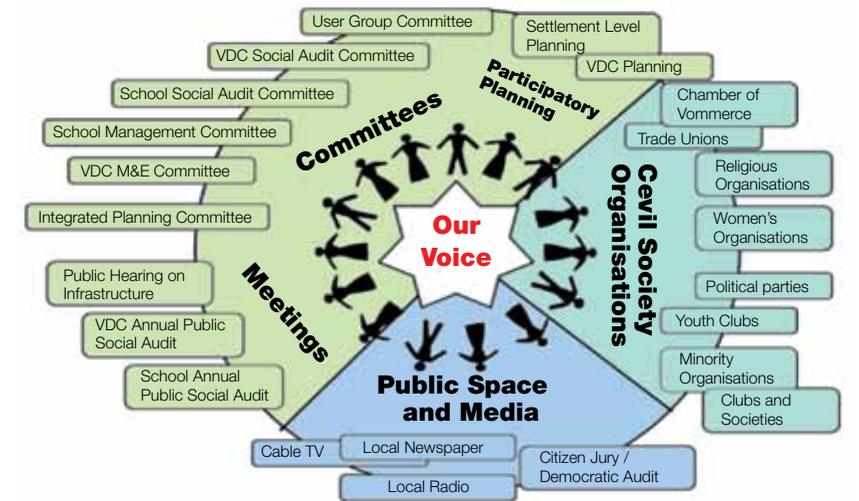
society using street theatre to visits to government facilities to demand information as well as mass meetings calling for greater participation in public affairs. The challenge for CSOs is to identify new and effective ways of communicating with people about accountability issues.

Public Space

Public Space could be a meeting held publicly in the open, for example under the village tree. However, they can also be more formal meetings or hearings that are open to the public. It can also be the opportunity to get on the radio or have time on TV, get articles published in newspapers, on websites, blogs or Facebook. It is in fact any space that is in principle open for anyone to use and speak out in. Read more about Public Space on page 39.

Local spaces - where can you have a say?

It can be a good idea to map out all the various councils, boards and committees in your local area and determine who has access to them and what they are able to discuss and decide. The diagram below is from Nepal and is an example of just how many spaces there are. Many of them may be under-utilised as the people responsible for them may not have time or know enough about how they are managed. Many of the spaces in the diagram are connected with local government where citizens are supposed to have a voice. These are marked in light green.





- We do have opportunities to speak up and make our voices heard. We need to know where and how to do this and local government must listen to us.

Local Government

Local Government comprises both local service provision administration and elected, representative councillors. The people working in the administration are not elected. In this resource book we talk about the ‘elected representative and decision-making bodies’ from district level and downwards to the lowest levels - wards and locations. The members of these councils and committees are the elected councillors, the mayor and in some cases also people appointed by local government.

Our Voice in elected or appointed bodies in Local Government

In this resource book we focus on four ways of making our voices heard and of making representation work within Local Government, these are:

- 1. Elections
- 2. Composition
- 3. Consultation
- 4. Process

We will start by looking at elections.

1. Voice through elections

There are a number of ways to strengthen

Voice and Representation in local government through elections which we will look at in the following seven sections.

Getting the right candidates

Many people find it quite difficult to decide who would be the proper candidate for an elected body. Candidates can be ‘party candidates’ – meaning they are members of a party - or ‘independent candidates’ which means they stand in their own name and are not linked to other parties. In elections for local government most of them will be party candidates. In elections for places on, for example, a school management committee or a user group committee, political parties may not bother to promote candidates. As a citizen there are a number of things you can do.

You can become a member of a party

The most obvious way to influence the selection of party candidates is to become a member of a party. However, many parties are controlled by the top party officials. Often they do not allow ordinary party members to influence the selection of candidates. Women, in particular, face big challenges from male party candidates when they want to be selected as candidates. Additionally, the candidate

the party chooses may, if elected, be more loyal and accountable to the party than to the people, who voted for him or her.

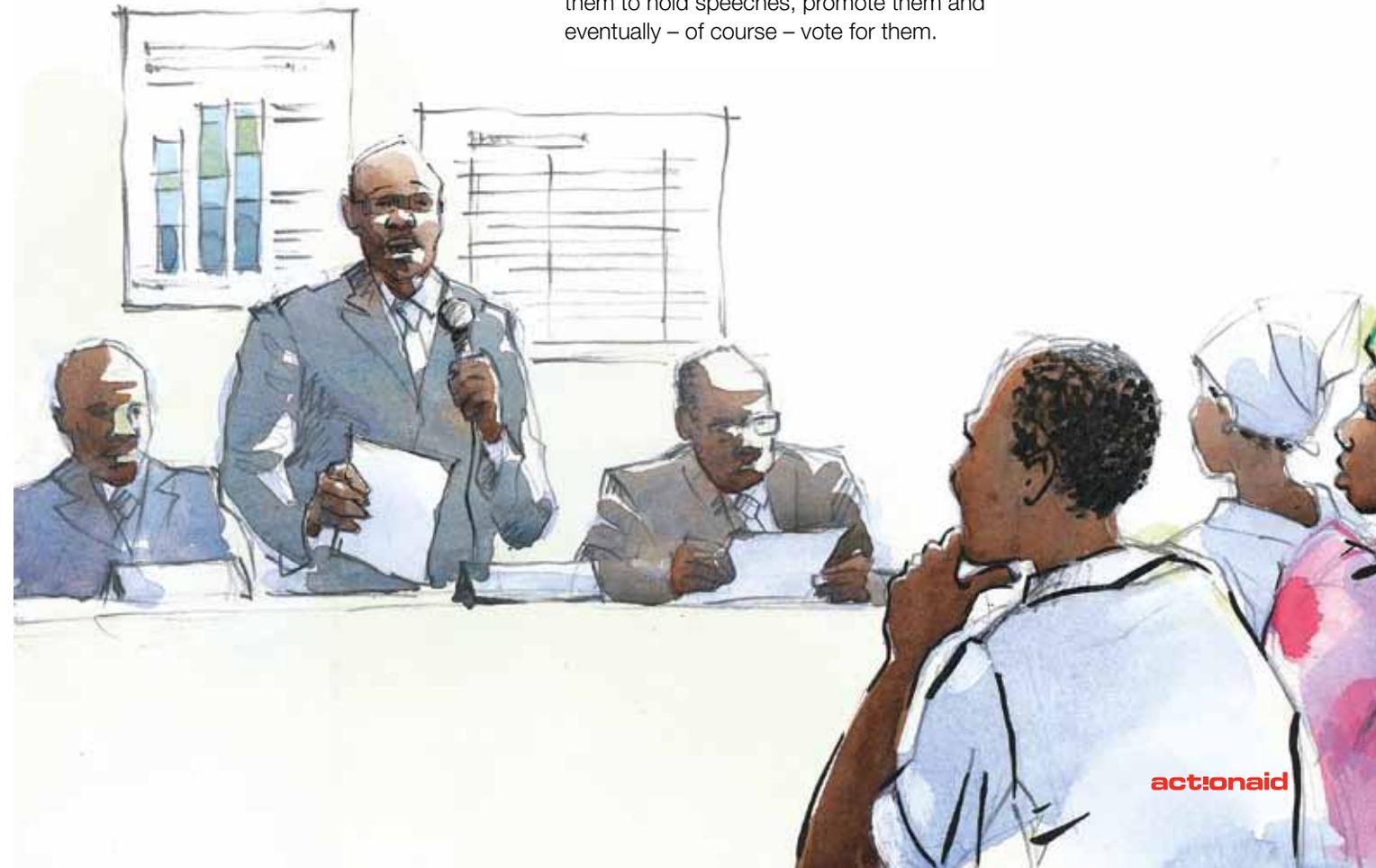
You can make political parties compete for votes

Parties want to win elections and therefore they depend on your vote. You can meet with political party candidates and make it clear to them that if they want your vote, they must promote candidates that represent women, land labourers, poor people and workers. You can organise

public meetings and radio programmes, where the parties can compete and promote candidates people know and trust and who you think people will vote for.

You can support independent candidates

Some candidates may be ‘independent’ with no party affiliation. Independent candidates are more commonly found at the lowest level in election processes. If there are no party candidates to represent your views and interests, you can find your own candidates, help them register, train them to hold speeches, promote them and eventually – of course – vote for them.



Elected representative and decision-making bodies	Administration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Councils. • District Development Councils. • Village Development Councils, Ward Councils/Committees. • School Management Committees, user groups etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service provision at local level, for example sanitation. • Administration of smaller local development grants from central government.



- When people stand as candidates you really need to find out who they are and think about what they are likely to do if they do get elected!

There are risks involved with regards to party candidates as well as independent candidates. It is important to be aware of these risks and make an analysis of them before deciding who to vote for.

You can question and judge the candidates

Some candidates run for election because they have a vision or an issue that they want to struggle for and achieve, others run because they want power and prestige. The challenge is to find out who is who. This can be difficult, because all politicians present themselves as 'friends of the people' struggling for better conditions.

To find out who is who you could organise public meetings with some or all of the candidates and challenge them by asking questions about important issues. This can give you a clearer picture of who the candidates are and what policies they stand for. Be sure to structure the meetings so that the candidates' speeches are kept short and make sure there is sufficient time

for questions and answers afterwards. It is also a good idea to discuss with participants before the meeting starts about what you want to hold the candidates accountable for in the future.

Election processes

Elections should be by secret ballot, even for a small committee such as a School Management Committee or a User Group Committee. This protects people from being pressurised to vote for a certain person. It may be tempting to vote by a show of hands or by having people line up behind the candidate they support. However, this is probably not a good idea as some people who are not used to making their voice heard are likely to wait and then vote for the person most people seem to be supporting, or simply vote along with people they know or depend on. Furthermore, powerful people might abuse these methods in order to control the outcome of the election. Election procedures are usually well described in constitutions and you can play an important role in ensuring that these procedures are actually followed.

Citizen's Manifestos

All over the world CSOs are using written agreements – in some cases called Citizens' Manifestos - to hold politicians accountable for their conduct and performance in terms of service delivery, mandated responsibilities and public obligations. These agreements aim at ensuring regular interactive dialogue between voters and elected councillors. They also allow the voices of disadvantaged

people to be heard in policy and planning processes. The agreements promote performance-oriented leadership, as citizens can choose leaders, not for their "good speeches" but for their "performance" and their capacities to lead and govern.

The processes described in citizen's manifestos often involve five stages spread across the election process from well before to after the elections have taken place. The five stages are preceded by activities such as voter education as well as briefing and organising local CSOs to take part in overseeing election processes.

Before elections CSOs consult people at the village level, and people prepare a manifesto which reflects their concerns. After this, CSOs bring all the electoral candidates to the village for a face-to-face exchange with local citizens. The Peoples' Manifesto is presented and the candidates respond. The presence of media is also vital and helps disseminate information to the wider public. It also functions as a form of documentation of the proceedings, for example, agreements signed or commitments made. One of the goals of this type of meeting is to enter into a signed agreement between citizens and the candidates – the agreement commits candidates to honour election promises and if they are elected, they agree to be held accountable through ongoing public evaluation of their performance.

After elections, CSOs and citizens can hold interactive public meetings to give feedback and evaluate the actual performance of elected officials in relation to their pre-

election commitment to the people's manifesto. The first meeting is held soon after the completion of 100 days in office and a new meeting is held every six months thereafter. Again the media plays a very critical role in helping CSOs revisit the pre-election commitments and in broadcasting the progress of the development programmes and projects.

2. Voice through composition

The second way that people's voice can be heard in local government is by focusing on the issue of composition.

Composition refers to who is on the council in terms of things like social status, ethnicity and gender. How many are men, rich, educated or young? How many members are women, poor people from small ethnic groups or from religious minorities?

You can demand that the composition of these bodies should reflect the composition of the electorate. This means that representation is proportional in terms of things like groups, gender, class, ethnicity and religion.

For example, when 50% of the population are women it makes sense that about 50% of the representatives in a district committee should be women. If 10% of the electorate is from a small ethnic group you can argue that around 10% of the representatives should be from that group in order to ensure that the voice of this group is heard. Composition can be established through laws and constitutions in what we call quotas.



- In our council we have quotas for women, youth and ethnic groups. We all have a chance to voice our concerns and hear the perspectives of the other members.

Risks in elections	
<p>Risks: Party candidates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The candidates are more accountable to the party than to the people they represent, the voters. • The party top prevents the candidates from delivering results that will benefit poor and marginalised people 	<p>Risks: Independent candidates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The candidates have less institutional power and get captured more easily by those in power. • They are not part of a party, they are not accountable to any superior authority.



- If some groups in the community are always under-represented, or not represented at all, it can be an idea to reserve a number of seats for these groups.

Proportional Composition can be promoted in various ways. Here are three examples:

- Making political parties promote candidates from all groups in society. This can be done by outside pressure or by the members of the party. Make parties compete on promoting ‘peoples candidates’.
- Campaigns among, for example, women to vote for women candidates, campaigns among poor people to vote for candidates that are poor. This campaign can be linked to the point above about putting pressure on political parties. Parties will realise that they stand a better chance of winning if they field candidates that represent the different constituents in the area.
- Campaigns among those excluded from standing for elections to committees or user groups.

Many organisations are successful in introducing quotas for women in management and on boards. This is also a way in which women can become empowered by taking up seats reserved for them and becoming politically active.

Free and fair elections to a local representative body and council membership that reflects the composition of the electorate does not in itself guarantee that people’s voice will actually be heard and respected during its period of office. Remember, an election is a single event at a specific moment. People’s voice is limited to making a mark against a name on a ballot paper.

3. Voice through consultations

The third way of making voice and representation work in local government is through consultations. Consultation refers to contacts and dialogue between citizens

Quotas

A ‘quota’ is a law or rule stating that, for example, there must be at least so and so many women or young people on a committee. In our case a ‘quota’ could be defined proportionally in relation to the group’s presence in the local community. If a marginalised group makes up 10% of the community and the committee has ten seats on it, then 1 seat would be reserved for someone from the marginalised group.

For women’s voice to be heard in local representative bodies, it matters how many women are members of the committee. The same could be said with regard to poor people and ethnic minority groups. Of course men may speak out in favour of women’s rights and rich people may speak out for poor people. The important thing, however, is that in a democratic society, marginalised people and minority groups must also have the opportunity to be elected representatives on decision-making bodies.

There are many different opinions about quotas. Here are some examples of arguments for and against quotas for promoting women’s participation.

In favour of quotas	Against quotas for women
Quotas for women do not discriminate but compensate for actual barriers that prevent women from obtaining their share of seats.	Quotas are against the principle of equality for all since women are given preference over men.
Women are just as qualified as men but women’s qualifications are downgraded and minimised in a political system or an organisation.	Many women do not want to be elected, just because they are women. They want to be elected because of their qualifications – not their gender.

and their representatives in-between elections.

Representatives need to be in frequent contact with citizens and hear their voice for a number of reasons. Likewise, citizens need to take the initiative and keep elected representatives on their toes through frequent interaction. This is partly because conditions change and new issues come up, but also because elected members may be influenced in undemocratic ways through bribery, lobbying and threats.

People’s Voice is needed to keep the elected representatives on track, up to date and in touch with people. After all, they have been elected to represent the people. One way of keeping the elected representatives on their toes is by voicing your opinions and by giving feedback and ideas through institutionalised consultation processes between elected representatives and citizens, like for example the Citizens’ Manifesto which we discussed earlier.

Other ways of interacting with elected representatives are:

- Public Hearings
- Meetings in party organisations where party members in representative bodies meet with ordinary members
- Participatory Planning and Budgeting Processes
- Focus group meetings with citizens organised by elected representatives
- Citizens and CSOs organising meetings with representatives
- Social Audits with feedback
- Citizens’ jury (Tool No. 4.)

These are all occasions or ‘spaces’ where you can voice your complaints, make demands and present ideas to your representative. Such forums will probably be dominated by the most educated, the rich and the powerful. The majority of ordinary people may therefore find these meetings rather intimidating and keep quiet. You should therefore be well prepared. Know what you want to say before you have to say it. Ensure that the meetings are



- Real democracy is what happens between elections – it is an ongoing process and hard work.



- Councillors need updated information about what is going on in the community, and what people's needs and challenges are.

well planned and that the issues you want to discuss are on the agenda and finally try to ensure that the meeting is facilitated by someone who is neutral and won't take sides with the powerful.

Before entering into public debate you need to sharpen your 'voice' and plan how you will make sure that you are heard and respected in a big forum. You can meet and discuss, prepare and exercise *speaking power* using information, emotions and the fact that you are 'one of the many'. (Tool No. 1 and 2). You can also conduct a stakeholder analysis where you map the actors and analyse power structures in your community (Tool No. 3).

4. Voice through process

Finally, the fourth way of making voice and representation work in local government is by focusing on the processes of how work is carried out and how decisions get made.

Even with free and fair elections, proportional representation and consultation between you and the representatives, there is no guarantee that the council or other local representative bodies will make decisions that reflect your concerns and ideas. People who represent women, poor people or small ethnic groups need to have speaking power and the capacity to counter attempts to silence them. They need to have skills to make their voice heard, responded to and reflected in decisions.

Many elected councillors find that they do not have the necessary knowledge or skills to work on councils and committees, and therefore they are not capable of representing their constituents properly. They will need support to prepare for meetings and this could be arranged by CSOs which could organise training sessions on committee rules and regulations, on speaking and presentation skills and how to criticise politely and impersonally and negotiate for the best outcomes.

You should also demand that meetings are open and transparent because if citizens and the press are allowed to be present, it will be more difficult to silence people by putting them down. It is very important that the formal rules and regulations are followed in decision-making processes in councils and committees. Generally, the rules have been developed to ensure objective, inclusive and democratic decisions and often the problem is that influential councillors try to skip certain provisions or go through them so quickly that people do not have time to react. This can result in decisions being biased and undemocratic.

Look at Tool No. 7 to get ideas on how to conduct a democracy audit in your area.

Appointed Officials

Finally there is the question of appointed officials. There are many committees and councils at all levels where the members have been appointed and not elected. An appointed committee is set up to serve



Direct Democracy

In India there are examples of local government being run by people themselves. All citizens in the area hold large general meetings and are authorised to make decisions through this form of direct democracy. Between meetings, the affairs of the area are managed by a committee whose members are elected from the different wards (smallest political units) in the area using formal election procedures. However, the decisions of these committees can be overruled by the general meeting. The only involvement from higher levels of government is the committee secretary who has to report to higher authorities whenever requested to do so.



Think about this...

During a meeting in a local planning committee several proposals for using funds were submitted. One was for better roads, another for the repair of irrigation channels and then there was one from some of the women about a proposal for adding an extra room to the local clinic. One of the female members presented the clinic proposal and one of the older men responded by saying: 'Well, that is a good idea, but before we can go forward with it we need a written proposal with costs and benefits'. None of the other proposals were presented in written form with costs and benefits, but the woman felt put down and unsure of herself in this unfamiliar setting, so she sat down and kept quiet. Have you experienced this in a meeting? What did you do? How can women prepare for meetings in committees, so that their proposals are taken seriously?

the people. It is your right to demand that the composition of the committee is proportional in relation to the population, that it holds consultations, and that the meetings are open. You can even argue



- One way of keeping councillors on their toes is by briefing them regularly about what is going on in the community.

A CSO in Zimbabwe strengthens the links between the elected councillor and the female constituents:

In 2009, the organisation WiPSU ("Women in Politics Support Unit") set up a Ward Consultative Forum (WCF) in a ward to strengthen relations between elected women representatives and female constituents. WCF is made up of 50 women from all the villages in the ward and acts as the eyes, ears and legs of the councillor. The main duty of the WCF is to identify women's issues in the ward and take them to the councillor and help her come up with solutions to problems. Thus, the main function of WCF is to facilitate the empowerment of women in the ward and to enhance the work of the councillor so that she is effective as a leader. One woman councillor has, for example, taken the initiative to start building a secondary school for the children in the ward. This was actually one of the issues brought up by WCF. They documented that there were too few schools and that children were having to walk long distances to school. How this school came into being is now used as a model for other wards.



- If you are going to meet an important official, it's a good idea to go as a small group of two or three. You can support and back each other up to make sure your message gets across.

that because members are not elected but appointed they need to consult more with citizens than members of an elected committee would as their authority is not based on a popular mandate obtained through an election.

Our Voice and Government Officers

Many minor decisions are made by appointed bodies or employed officers. In many cases citizens meet service providers in individual face to face situations. Often this may be difficult for people when they find themselves in front of a well-educated and powerful officer. What can you do to make sure your voice is heard in these situations? Here are some suggestions:

- Do not meet officials alone; make sure that at least two of you are present so that you can support each other and make sure the message you want to deliver gets through. Officers are more likely to be welcoming if there are witnesses. In some cases you might be able to get a local leader to accompany you and add his or her professional voice.

- Prepare what you want to say and how you are going to say it. Act the situation out beforehand with colleagues where you take turns at being the official and then your own role. For major issues try and go to the meeting as a group or take a representative of an organisation with you who can support you or back you up.

This concludes this chapter on voice expressed through elected representatives. In the next chapter we are going to look at voice in civil society organisations.

Voice and Representation in CSOs

This chapter focuses on voice inside civil society organisations (CSOs). How is it possible to influence CSOs and make them speak with the voice of the people they represent or work for?

In some CSOs, it is easy to voice your opinion; in others it is very difficult. It is easy to raise your voice in the small savings and credit club, of which you are a member, while it is more difficult in a centrally controlled political party.

There are two ways to influence CSOs:

1. Become an active member and raise your Voice inside the organisations and influence who gets elected, or
2. Raise your Voice about the CSO from *outside* in the media or at public hearings.



Voice and Power are closely linked. For more information about working on power relations see the accompanying resource book in this series: POWER - Elite Capture and Hidden Influence



- In our region there are a great many NGOs. They seem to be very busy all the time, but I really don't know much about what they do.

Both ways are important. In some cases it may be most effective to speak from inside an organisation, but if the CSO in question has closed membership or is corrupt it may be more effective to try to influence it from the outside.

CSO and NGO – what is the difference?

CSOs are defined as being any organisation in society, except for government organisations, businesses, criminal organisations, local militias or guerrilla forces. Non government organisations (NGOs), on the other hand, are more established organisations working for ‘development’, which are often financed by development aid money from international donors.

NGO legislation differs from country to country; some countries have strict regulations, while other countries are less strict. Many CSOs do not have internal democratic and transparent structures, and it can be easy for powerful individuals, families and elite groups to capture and control CSOs. In such cases, it is difficult for staff or members to raise their voice about governance issues and hold the top people in the organisation accountable for their actions.

Types of Civil Society Organisations

It can be useful to group CSOs in order to get an overview of the different types. In the matrix on this page we have identified eight types. The focus here is on organisations that work for justice, human rights and democratisation.

No	Group	Examples
1.	Community Based Organisations (CBOs), local clubs etc.	Savings and Credit Clubs, Local Women’s Clubs, REFLECT circles, youth groups, football clubs as well as cultural clubs etc.
2.	Social Movements and Coalitions	Citizens working together in solidarity for a joint cause
3.	Social ‘Interest Group’ organisations	Women’s Organisations, Minority Ethnic Group Organisations, Caste Organisations and Advocacy Groups etc.
4.	Professional ‘Interest Group’ organisations	Trade Unions, such as Industrial Workers’ Unions, Farmers’ Unions, Teachers’ Unions, but also professional organisations (e.g. Chamber of Commerce and The Bar Association etc.)
5.	Political Organisations	Political Parties
6.	Faith Based Organisations	Religious organisations of all types.
7.	‘Development’ CSOs (NGOs) & Emergency Aid Organisations	Any organisation working for ‘development’ in areas such as empowerment, service provision etc. and financed primarily by development aid money.
8.	International NGOs	NGOs operating in many countries at the same time

Dangers facing Civil Society Organisations

Many CSOs talk about the dangers or challenges they face – perhaps you recognise some of them? Below is a compilation of challenges that CSOs experience and describe.

Individual Capture

Many organisations have been started by a strong and charismatic leader with a clear vision who can mobilise, organise and inspire his or her followers. As the organisation grows, more staff are needed. The founding leader employs the new staff members, but regards them as their extra hands, somebody to help them with their activities. Seen through the eyes of the leader, it is their organisation and only

their voice counts. This type of leader may not understand the need to listen to other people or to staff members and may not be positive about strengthening internal democracy and transparency.

Family and ethnic capture

At first sight, an organisation may appear to be well functioning, but on closer inspection it soon turns out that most of the staff and board members are from the same family or the same ethnic group. You may well question whether staff recruitment procedures and the selection of candidates to elected positions is really open and fair, and whether the way the organisation is composed is actually representative of the population it works with.

Elite Capture

CSOs can also be captured by people, who want personal power, status and income. Such people are often good at making their voices heard in society, but they are poor at listening. So they speak up, but in fact they do not speak on behalf of the people they claim to work for and represent.

Political Party Capture

In order to gain popularity, political parties may start new civil society organisations or capture existing ones. By controlling a CSO, the party can make itself popular with voters. In CSOs with a fairly open membership, a political party can capture the CSO by getting a large number of its supporters to become members. It will then promote its own candidates for seats on



- The ‘Women’s Development Association’ is – according to the name – supposed to be our organisation, but they listen less to us than to the donors. They only come to do ‘activities’



- It's right that CSOs become more professional and better at influencing powerful people, but it's also important to make sure we are supporting and assisting people living in poverty with what they need and want.

the board and in this way it is able to take control of the organisation.

Middle Class Dominance

CSOs are often started by young charismatic leaders who really want to fight for the poor. The organisation may attract funds, the organisation grows, staff are employed, and the leader becomes the manager and starts interacting with the district's well-to-do middle class. Slowly the attention of the leader may drift away from the original idea and increasingly they identify with the middle class. As the organisation grows bigger, it will need to recruit professional staff members who are often from a more academic middle class background themselves. It can be difficult for middle class people to relate to people living in poverty.

Donor Dependency

Organisations that successfully work on reducing poverty and promoting empowerment often attract the attention

of donors with similar priorities. Donors are often keen to provide funding, but they also demand LFA matrices, plans and reports. Consequently, staff who can handle these requirements have to be hired and paid. With more donor support, more grassroots work can be done – but little by little the activities of the CSO are dictated more by the donor's thinking than by the voice of the poor. The organisation may be doing excellent work and donor support may well have helped in making the organisation more effective, but the voice of the people is no longer so clearly heard.

Building democratic CSOs

In the following section we will consider how you can make your organisation more representative and democratic. Below are six key principles about representation and democracy in CSOs. These are also valid in elected local government bodies.

1. Free and fair **elections** to key positions in the organisation
2. **Representative composition** of the elected bodies (boards)
3. **Consultation** between the organisation and its members
4. **Democratic processes** for decision-making
5. Clear **objectives** for the work of the organisation
6. An organisation built up around **membership**

Let us look at these principles one by one:

1. Elections: There are a number of issues about elections and candidates who stand for election. Do members have a realistic chance of running for elections and are these elections regular, timely announced, well prepared, free and secret? Secret ballots can help protect an organisation against elite capture as it enables people to vote for who they want to without anybody knowing who they voted for (although there are other ways of pressuring people to vote for a particular candidate).

Another problem can be that the founding leader or the charismatic president 'forgets' to call elections and nominates candidates single-handedly, or in other ways dominates the organisation while claiming that it is democratic. Further, do candidates have the opportunity to explain their policies and do members have a chance to ask the candidates questions and get answers and can people vote close to home or do they have to travel far in order to do so? Also important to note is what percentage of people actually vote in elections.

2. Composition: Does the composition of your board and staff more or less reflect the composition of the members and the people who are supposed to benefit from your activities? If not, why? Do you have quotas to ensure proportional representation on the board and among the staff? Are all board members and staff qualified for their positions? Are any of the staff and board members relatives?

3. Consultation: When staff members from the organisation meet with members or with people they are supportive, do they ask, listen and discuss or do they simply speak, give instructions and organise activities? Do staff members raise issues for discussion so that they can bring people's opinions and suggestions back to your organisation? Does your organisation have regular meetings among staff and board members in which feed-back from members is discussed?

4. Democratic Processes on the Board: Are board meetings regular, timely announced and is the agenda accessible, so that ordinary members have the possibility to discuss issues with each other or with board members before the meeting? When the board meets, how many of the members actually speak up? Is the board actually able to give strategic direction to the organisation, or do its members mainly listen to reports from the programme manager or speeches from the founding leader? Do board members have the authority to demand that a particular issue is put on the agenda for a meeting?

5. Objectives: Does the organisation have an objective or an aim? Have the members been involved in formulating the objectives that constitute the agreed aim or objective of the organisation? Are you in frequent dialogue with the constituents and do you involve them in the development of the organisation?



- The board is the outward face of the organisation. So the more the board represents the organisation and its members; the more genuine is their outward face.



- Ordinary members should also have the right to influence board meeting agendas. Democracy is only valid, when the participants can choose what to make decisions about!



Think about this...

- Do any of the CSOs or CSO coalitions in your area suffer from the problems mentioned above and what can you do to solve them?
- Where does the organisation get its resources or money from and does it affect the organisation's focus in any way?
- Who are the members and do they pay membership fees?
- Who implements the activities?
- To whom is the organisation accountable?
- Is the organisation local, national or international?
- How often does the organisation interact with the public and how well do they do this?



- *The legitimacy of an organisation is to be found in the members' participation.*

6. Membership: Are the people who are supposed to benefit from your activities, and on whose behalf you speak, also the majority of the members in your organisation? If not, why is that? Is the existence of your organisation justified if the people you claim to represent are not engaged in your work? Are you working on creating a membership base?

The principles described here can help your organisation create democratic structures that can help you to make your organisation more democratic in practice. There may still be challenges with regard to elite capture, but if you put the processes

we have discussed here in place, it is possible to challenge attempts to capture an organisation.

Speaking from Outside CSOs

Not everybody feels like raising their voice *inside* CSOs to improve them. Some people would rather speak up in public and influence the CSO from the *outside*. Sometimes it may simply be too difficult to influence an organisation from the inside if the membership is closed or if the organisation is very corrupt. Because CSOs are part of our society, you can demand that they must be honest, transparent and democratic, irrespective of whether we

are talking about a trades union, a human rights organisation, a religious organisation, a political party or a social movement.

Going public can have greater consequences. You are publicly declaring that something is wrong in the organisation. This information may be of great interest to the local media and once they get hold of the story you may not be able to control how it develops. It may play out in the way you hope, but not necessarily so. If you see that your best option is to go public, you should carefully plan how you are going to do this and what the likely reaction will be and how you will tackle

this. Most NGOs have to be registered and there is generally a national oversight body responsible for this with the power to investigate. It might be possible to suggest that they investigate, if you are convinced that the organisation is corrupt. However, be careful; national NGO oversight bodies are often used by the state to shut down legitimate NGOs which ask too many questions. There is much to consider in situations like this. What options do you have in your community for dealing with this type of situation?

In the next chapter we are going to look at how voice can be used collectively by many people and many organisations at the same time.

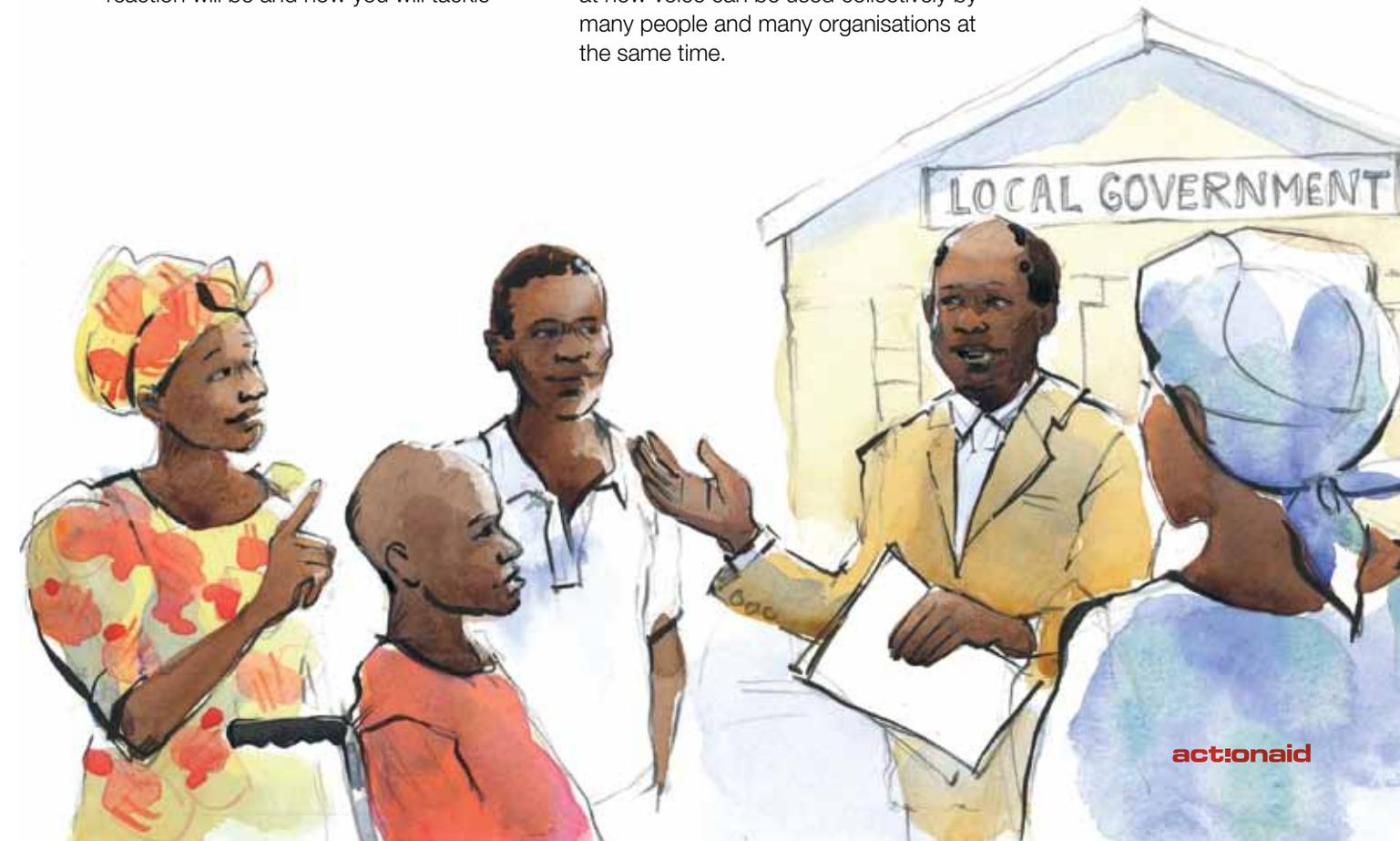


- *When CSOs do not respect human rights, or when they discriminate, employ family members or misuse funds it is our right and duty to speak out about it in public.*

Code of conduct - six principles

A Mozambican CSO, Sociedade Aberta, has developed a guide for district civil society platforms which represent local communities in their cooperation with the local government councils. They have six guiding principles for their work:

- 1. Participation:** The platform is a body where all citizens, in particular the most marginalised, can participate.
- 2. Diversity:** The composition of the platform should reflect the population in general in terms of gender, culture, age, religion etc.
- 3. Independence:** The platform should define its own agenda, independent of other interests.
- 4. Responsibility:** the platform should represent the priorities of the community during dialogues with local government.
- 5. Accountability:** The platform should conduct regular meetings with communities to inform them about its activities. Minutes will be taken during these meetings and shared with all interested parties.
- 6. Access to information:** Before engaging with local government, the platform should seek access to information in terms of plans and budgets.



Collective Voice and Collective Action



- A social movement is a type of loosely organised yet long term campaign which tries to stop or change a specific social issue.

This chapter is about other ways of gaining influence by way of organising ourselves and of having our voice heard through networks, coalitions, alliances and social movements.

However, there are limits to what you can achieve from inside the formal system. There are also limits to what you can achieve at the local level but when many people organise themselves in movements and in organisations, politicians and those in authority have to listen. When we stand together in solidarity we have a stronger voice and are able to demand that more 'spaces' are opened for people to influence democratic processes.

Social movements

A social movement is a type of loosely organized but sustained campaign in support of a social goal, typically either the implementation or the prevention of a change in society's structure or values. Social movements are often quite distinct from political parties or interest groups. They manifest themselves as a collective challenge to powerful elites, authorities, other groups or value systems. Although social movements differ in size, they are all essentially collective. That is, they result from the more or less spontaneous coming together of people whose relationships are not defined by rules and procedures but

who merely share a common outlook on a problem or social issue.

Social movements often form around a particular event which triggers a chain reaction leading to the creation of a social movement. For example the South African shack dwellers' movement Abahlali base Mjondolo grew out of a road blockade in response to the sudden selling off of a small piece of land promised for housing to a developer. Likewise the Polish Solidarity movement, which eventually toppled the communist regimes of Eastern Europe, developed after trade union activist Anna Walentynowicz was fired from her job and the Arab Spring Movement was sparked by the protests that occurred spontaneously in Tunisia on 18 December 2010 following Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in protest of police corruption and ill treatment.

Social movements have been and continue to be closely connected with democratic political systems. Sometimes social movements have been involved in democratizing nations, but more often they have flourished after democratisation. Over the past 200 years, they have become part of a popular and global expression of dissent. One of the earliest social movements was the movement for the abolition of slavery in the UK which started in 1787.

Charles Tilly (2004) sees social movements as a major way for ordinary people to participate in public politics about an issue that they feel deeply about. Tilly has identified three major elements to social movements.

Firstly, they are organised around repeated **campaigns** which are focused on a specific issue. These campaigns make a collective claim or people's claim against a targeted authority which is perceived as wrong or anti-social.

Secondly, social movements generally operate with a **repertoire** of high profile actions such as public meetings, solemn processions, vigils, rallies, demonstrations,

petition drives, and statements to and in public media, and pamphleteering.

Finally Tilly suggests that social movements attempt to focus on four types of message which they try to get across in their public actions. The first of these is that their cause is **worthy** and just, secondly that the movement is **unified** and focused, thirdly that the movement is built on **numbers** – and large numbers of supporters represents a collective power, and finally **commitment**, that the movement and its supporters is dedicated to its cause or to the people they represent.





- TV today is about people out on the streets protesting against corrupt leaders, who have been ruling for too long. Nobody wants to see broadcasts from Parliament where politicians approve high salaries for themselves while people still suffer.

A characteristic of social movements is that they generally do not become institutionalised. They have a life cycle: they are created, they grow, they achieve successes or failures and eventually, they dissolve and cease to exist. Many social movements are created around a charismatic leader and one of the first challenges is to spread the knowledge that the movement exists. Once created, a social movement is often able to gather a group of people who are deeply interested in the primary goal and the ideals behind the movement.

The second phase of attracting broader support usually comes after the movement has had some success. People are attracted to the movement and its cause and participate in its events and campaigns on a more voluntary basis depending on

how much time and how many resources they have available.

Some movements attract the backing of established organisations such as student groups, NGOs, trade unions, faith based and peace groups which support the movement in a loosely coordinated way. However there are some movements which do develop an institutional structure, for example Via Campesina which has worldwide reach, an organisational structure with a General Secretary and Head Office which is supported by various charities and foundations from around the world.

Social movements may sometimes act illegally in order to get media attention and force the state to engage with them. They therefore move between the highly formalised world of legal process and involvement in acts that in theory break the law. Some forms of protest that contravene the criminal code are however now considered legitimate, but a number of social movement leaders have been accused of crimes such as 'breaking and entering' and 'forming a criminal gang'.

The radical nature of social movements can bring them into opposition with the ruling government, and their innovative use of protest which balances on the edge of legality can lead to confrontation with the police and the legal system. This can prove problematic for international NGOs that might otherwise want to support the work of social movements. These issues aside, NGOs need to respect the flexible and reactive way in which social movements work.

New ways

All over the world people, and in particular young people, are challenging unjust systems and regimes and expressing their mistrust and frustration with systems that proclaim they are democratic, but which are clearly not. They are struggling for democracy where power-sharing between the state and the people will be more equal. During 2011 thousands of people in the Arab world challenged their leaders and demanded an end to dictatorial government. They demonstrated that the power of numbers can topple a régime by sustaining demonstrations for weeks on end. They had no spokesperson or official leader, but those who died in the struggle have become heroes, for example Khaleed in Egypt. Today we see new forms of movements in Europe with the slogan "Real Democracy Now" protesting against the role of banks and finance institutions in the economic crisis. Similarly in the USA the "Occupy Wall Street" movement has operated under the slogan: "We are the 99%" as a reaction to the growing income and wealth inequality between the wealthiest 1% and the rest of the population. Young people have occupied central squares for weeks; they have no official leader and no official spokesperson in the media.

Coalitions or movements

Coalitions or alliances may be started at the local level by two or more organisations joining forces for a common goal. It could also be organisations at the national, regional or international level. Social movements or coalitions can work together on campaigns to claim social rights or to challenge policies through mobilising many communities and by using various forms of action, like protests, advocacy and lobbying.

There is no single way to form a movement or a coalition but it may be useful to follow some of the following advice. When starting up a social movement or a coalition around a specific issue on which you want to stage a campaign, it is important to define the group, the roles and the relationships while maintaining the integrity of each member organisation. This structure should allow the active participation of all members in both decision-making and action. You

Working together

Coalitions often have a formal structure, an office and staff. They usually involve long-term relationships among the members. Members of a coalition are organisations that have a common goal, for example "Anti-corruption Coalitions". Alliances generally involve shorter-term relationships among members and organisations, and are focused on a specific objective. An example is Land Alliances that focus on the right to land in a specific geographic location. Networks tend to be loose, flexible associations of people and groups brought together by a common concern or interest to share ideas. Examples are networks of organisations working on HIV/AIDS, Education or Children's Rights. A campaign is generally focused on a specific common objective that organisations, networks, alliances and coalitions might join together on and try to achieve within a set time frame. For example the "Women Won't Wait" campaign is an international coalition of organizations and networks working to promote women's health and human rights in the struggle to address HIV and AIDS and ending all forms of violence against women and girls.



Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) in Brazil.

The MST was officially founded in 1984, by hundreds of rural workers who decided to form a peasant social movement to struggle for the right to land; for agrarian reforms; and for a more just and fraternal society. The members were squatters affected by dams, migrants, sharecroppers and small farmers as well as landless rural workers who were deprived of their right to produce food. Over the years MST had many successes, for example in providing access to education for 200,000 landless children and adults; in supporting associations and cooperatives producing food without pesticides; and in improving working conditions for farmers. MST realized that their struggle is not just against the Brazilian landlords and government, but also against the neoliberal economic model. Today the movement is struggling against massive plantations on land that could have been used for farming, but which is instead used for sugarcane for biofuels.



- Young people are demanding a new world, where the financial sector does not tell governments and the people what to do.



- Getting organised means knowing your rights, deciding what to focus on and then building a coalition around it. The more people involved the greater your voice.

should make sure that all members are consulted.

A coalition must be stronger than its constituent parts in order to sustain active membership and attract new organisations. In larger more formal coalitions or movements, appointing a board of directors or steering committee may be helpful in order to determine roles and responsibilities, monitor programmes, finances and management arrangements. Here are some tips for getting started:

- Develop coalition objectives and be clear about strategies for achieving them.
- Develop membership criteria and mechanisms for including new members and sustaining the coalition.
- If the group is large, appoint a steering committee and people responsible for finance, coordination and media contact, and establish task forces to plan and coordinate different activities.
- Agree on how decisions are made, and agree on how to solve internal conflicts – before they arise.
- Develop a code of conduct to ensure mutual respect, responsibility and accountability.
- Ensure that the movement/coalition has a strong base – that it is rooted in the voice of people living in poverty, and that it is democratic in nature.

A recent innovation to the traditional coalition concept occurred in Egypt recently. A great many young people became spontaneously active in loosely organised groups, but they had nowhere where they could debate and organise themselves. As a result a large group of activists agreed to establish a legal umbrella organisation with formal internal structures in place. This created a platform for several hundred informal youth groups who worked in local communities focusing on social issues. They were able to use this platform to organise themselves and voice their concerns to a much wider audience without being tied up in organisational and bureaucratic requirements. After a few years many of these groups were able to establish themselves as formal organisations and access funding for activities on a larger scale. This approach is sometimes referred to as a 'social activist incubator' as it assists groups to get started.

This concludes the chapter on voice and collective action. In the next chapter we will look at different ways of using voice in public spaces.

Voice in Public Space

This chapter is about how to make your voice heard in public space. Public Space provides everybody with the opportunity to raise issues, present evidence or information, debate and discuss and participate. The forums are endless, under the village tree, in front of the tea house, at public meetings or public hearings as well as social audit processes and informal village meetings. These are all public spaces, where we can raise our voice.

Public Space also covers mediums such as radio, TV, newspapers, blogs on the internet, leaflets distributed by hand, simple newsletters, slogans on walls, stickers and posters. What we say is not directed at a single person or a committee but at 'the general public'. Through these public media our voice can reach large numbers of people. Some may react and voice their opinion in return, perhaps in support or perhaps against us and in this way a public debate in the media can be launched.



- I have seen how people use mobile phones, the internet and mediums like YouTube to get their message across. We need to master these new media in our own work.





- It is amazing that film sequences can be taken on a tiny mobile phone and then sent anywhere in the world. This is a powerful tool for documenting the abuse of human rights.

Public Space

Public Space is public power. It is the power to influence the thinking of large numbers of people. It is the power to link up with others and build solidarity and alliances. It is the power to challenge and embarrass corrupt power holders and it is the power to mobilise people for a cause. Power holders represent the interests of ‘the few’, and one way of countering that is through the power of ‘the many’. The more the voice of ‘the many’ is broadcast in public, the more important it becomes for those in power to listen and respond, if they want to stay in power.



Think about this...

If a group of people want to make a statement in your community suggesting that things be done differently, what is the most effective way for them to do it? Think about what effective means. Obviously it is about proclaiming your message publically, but are there other issues you should consider when you go public?

To make your voice effective, you need to plan and target your message so that it reaches the right decision makers. It is important to choose the right medium for your message. Traditional ways of communicating which are mostly used in rural areas are well known to people and therefore they have a lot of credibility and potential. You can also use electronic social

media which are becoming increasingly popular, but they often depend on electricity, internet access and cell phone coverage, so there are some limits on the use of these media, particularly in rural areas.

In reality there are a great many innovative ways of getting your message across. Recently in Syria young students made their voices heard by leaving their classrooms simultaneously on a previously agreed sign. They went into the streets to shout slogans and then quickly hurried back to class before the police or the military appeared. They repeated this action on a daily basis in many schools.

The following table provides an overview of different mediums for communicating information.



- We can shout, protest, sing, play, write and talk as individuals. But major change only happens when more people join hands and use their collective voice.

Overview of media in public space	
Medium	Advantages and disadvantages
Traditional music, dance and rap	Choose the right music for your message. This gives it credibility. Modern music, such as rap, is popular with young people and can be used to package a political message.
Radio	Many radio stations have phone-in programmes where you can express your opinion. You can also raise funds and buy airtime to produce your own programmes, where listeners can phone in and debate. You can establish radio listeners’ clubs where participants discuss news and programmes that have been broadcast. In Nicaragua CSOs used radio as a way of getting their voice heard and engaging women in politics.
Public TV	Effective but often expensive. Programmes are often produced in the capital and they may not be produced in the local language. For small organizations it is difficult and expensive to get a message transmitted on TV.
Video	Excellent to document human rights violations, poor social services, successful campaigns, experiences from meetings and much more. Videos can be distributed on DVDs and many villages have a common TV with a DVD player.
Local newspapers	Widespread and very popular – precisely because of the local focus. Local journalists can be persuaded to write positively about your views on local issues.
Murals	Locally produced alternatives to newspapers, manually written with drawings and slogans which make a statement.
Billboards	Often placed outside local government buildings where information about meetings, development plans and budgets or other announcements are posted. CSOs can also post alternative information about meetings or local budgets.
Rallies, sit down manifestations, marches & demonstrations	Powerful actions when a large number of people want to show their dissatisfaction and express their common purpose. The number of participants needs to be high and these manifestations need to be driven by people who are themselves affected in order to be representative and have credibility with power holders. You will need a clearly understood slogan in order to be heard.
Tea houses, video clubs, markets	Public spaces where you can advocate and initiate debates with people, distribute leaflets, stickers or other materials.
Community meetings	Called by villagers, elders or chiefs. These meetings are an opportunity to debate and reach consensus. However, these meetings tend to be dominated by men and by those who have power and influence. If you want to use these meetings for getting your voice heard, it requires a lot of preparation and a clear strategy to avoid being overruled.
Community development meetings	Meetings called by local authorities to inform and discuss local development plans and budgets. Preparation and strategy is equally essential here. Read more about getting involved in the budget cycle in the “Budgets” resource book in this series.



- During elections, radio listeners in Niger expressed their views about political candidates by sending SMS messages. The messages made the debate more open and the radio programme set up a toll-free SMS message line to encourage people to send messages in.

Social media

Using different types of electronic media to make the voice of excluded and marginalised people heard in efforts to advance democracy and greater equality is becoming increasingly popular and effective. These mediums help mobilise and empower; they can help spread news faster; they can disseminate facts and enable people share their experience worldwide. They are also powerful media for building national and international solidarity. Today, electronic social media are used increasingly by civil society. They have great potential to strengthen mobilisation and the sharing of information. However, compared to traditional media they are limited to people who know how to use a computer and have access to the Internet and cell phones.

During the demonstrations in Egypt (2011) electronic media played a central role in mobilising and organising people – the uprising was even named the “Facebook or Twitter revolution”. However, social media are only enablers or tools; they cannot

themselves bring about change. People have to become involved in large numbers.

We frequently witness that repressive governments trace users of electronic media and punish them so security is a serious issue. Repressive governments close down Facebook and other Internet sites where people can voice their opinion. So even though we have new spaces for our voice to be heard, they are still vulnerable. Social media can of course be used and abused and maintaining freedom of speech in social media is an issue that civil society should engage with. A key issue is defining what is permissible and inadmissible in social media as they can equally be used to spread hatred and misinformation as well as divulging private or classified information which can cause great harm.

SMS on mobile phones: The use of cell phones and sending SMS has exploded worldwide. It is estimated that today there are 500 million registered mobile phones in Africa alone and the number is increasing daily. Cell phones are used by farmers to obtain information about the latest crop prices, by authorities to give advice about health, by people to transfer money and by CSOs to report corrupt behaviour among officials and politicians as well as disseminating information about violations committed by the police, the army and political parties.

SMS and other media: You can combine cell phone SMS with a computer and in this way send messages for free to many

people at the same time. You can alert them of new developments and encourage them to speak out. For example, they can send SMS to politicians demanding greater transparency or access to information. On the Internet you can find advice about how to use this kind of technology and what devices are needed. On page 56 you will find a list of social media websites. There are many innovative ways of utilising mobile phones to strengthen community voice around the world.

YouTube is the largest online video site on the Internet. During the uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia and Burma, YouTube played a very important role. People now use cameras or mobile phones to film violations of human rights, cases of police brutality or the military’s use of force in repressive regimes. They then upload the video clips onto YouTube. Violations of the rights of people living in poverty have also been documented and posted on YouTube. Everybody with access to the Internet can watch the clips on a computer.

A recent case from Jordan is an example of how powerful a medium YouTube can be. A teacher was filmed while she shouted at a boy in the classroom. The boy was crying but the teacher kept humiliating him. The video clip was uploaded onto YouTube and a CSO discovered the clip. The CSO verified the case, posted it on their website and contacted the Jordanian Ministry of Education to ask them for their comment. The CSO also contacted the media which initiated a discussion about the education system. The clip was shown 50,000 times

on YouTube within 24 hours and created a heated public debate.

Internet Mapping services - These are sites on the Internet where CSOs can, for example, post information about a geographic area and encourage citizens to add information. In Kenya CSOs use this in a large congested area called Kibera to document the lack of public services. Citizens are involved in identifying and demanding what kind of services they need in their area.

Getting started...

You may need help in getting started, when it comes to using electronic social media. You may need to be trained in using a computer, in carrying out mapping, using YouTube or utilising a mix of these media. However, the potential of social media makes it worthwhile. All around the world poor and marginalised people have greater opportunities to access social media and thus get their voice heard. Numbers count, and the more opinions voiced, the more convincing they sound to those in power. Before using electronic social media, there are a number of issues you should think about in terms of security and exposing private or classified information in the public domain. Tool No. 9 gives an overview of different kinds of social media you can use for communication – and the challenges involved.

Whether you use traditional or new social media to get your voice heard, you need to think about planning your action which involves issues like defining objectives,



- Using their cell phones, readers in Namibia commented on articles that had been published in the Namibian print media. In Guatemala listeners SMS’ed their comments about programmes and had them read out live on the radio.



In Uganda (2011) SMS was used during election time to mobilise people to take part in protest actions like “walk to work” or “use your car horn at a specific time of the day” to send a message to politicians. SMS is a powerful tool for organising action and protests. In Mozambique SMS was used to mobilise people to protest against rising food and transport prices in 2010. The protest was not organised centrally - it was a spontaneous protest among ordinary people in the capital and in some district towns. The number of people on the streets voicing their frustration forced the government to review the price increases.



- In many countries the government censor the media because they don't like criticism. But in a democracy public debate about critical issues is exactly what the state wants to encourage.



- All too often politicians or civil servants isolate themselves from the people. We have to break through walls, almost literally, in order to get our voice heard.

determining what to say and finding out who you are targeting and how to do it in the most effective way which is really about deciding what type of medium and what type of message is the most appropriate. In other words you need a communication strategy. Look at an example of such a strategy in Tool No. 8.

Representation and Media

What is in the public interest, to whom is the media accountable and who do the media actually represent? These are key issues in any democracy and usually there is a continuous on-going public debate about these issues. Cases continuously need to be debated and tested in the courts to find the answers to specific incidents. However, in many societies local power holders, such as politicians and the business elite, are in a position to decide what kind of programmes are produced and transmitted on radio and TV. Often the radio does not cover events where activists and CSOs criticise people in power; just as newspapers often do not print articles about poor people when their rights are violated.

Privately owned media is often not accountable to anybody except to those politicians or businessmen who have invested large sums of money in their companies and they certainly do not expect to be criticised by the companies they have invested in. State owned media adhere to the government's media policy and usually governments monitor the media closely.

One way of influencing the media is to monitor the type of programmes aired. If for example you discover that there are biases in the type of radio programmes broadcast you can demand that other types of programmes that are more interactive be broadcast in order to give people the opportunity to raise issues and voice their concerns. You can advocate that articles in local newspapers should reflect other views than just those of the "owner", and you can lobby that readers' views also be published in blogs or letters to the editor. Another option is to demand that the board of the local radio or the local newspaper should be open and transparent and you can try to see if you can get a seat on the board in order to lobby for a greater focus on poverty and more opportunities for the voice of people living in poverty to be heard.

New social media is open for everybody and can be used by everybody in the sense that they are free and democratic. However, those directly benefitting from social media are the ones who can read, who have money to buy a cellphone and airtime, and who have access to a computer. As a CSO your role could be to facilitate the further dissemination of information to people who do not have access to new social media as well as working for the inclusion of people living in poverty in a broader dialogue and communication with the rest of society.



Think about this...

- Does your community radio really promote the interests of the community?
- Is the community properly represented in the management structure of the radio?
- Who makes the programmes?
- Do programmes contribute to explaining important developments within your society?
- Do programmes reflect a diversity of opinions, interests and needs?
- Do programmes play the role of a local watchdog?
- Do programmes give sufficient voice to the voiceless? (Including minorities and women within the community).

Biased and Co-opted Media

Public space is not always public and objective because the media is often:

- Controlled by political parties and therefore unable to criticise the party.
- Dependent on income from advertisements and therefore reluctant to print anything that major advertisers might find offensive.
- Owned by the very business or political elite we want to criticise.
- Dominated by the middle class who have their own news agenda.

Because the media is so powerful, you need to plan strategically and form alliances with journalists who are concerned about printing and disseminating objective, unbiased and insightful articles which will expose injustices and abuses of rights.



Strategies for Collective Action



- We are so used to inequality in our community that we don't even notice whether this or that person is speaking all the time. We think it is OK, but we should make them listen to us more.

In this final chapter we will look at a number of tools that can help us analyse how well we are able to make our voice heard and whether our voice is being heard on equal terms with others. As we have seen throughout this resource book there are many different challenges involved in speaking out and being heard.

Tool No. 1. Mapping the speakers

Objective: To map who speaks in a meeting and compare this to the participants' subjective assessment of whether everybody participated on equal terms.

To become aware of *voice inequality* you can make a plan of who is sitting where during a meeting. Every time somebody speaks you make a tick against that person's name on your plan. At the end of the meeting, ask if the participants felt that everybody contributed. Did everybody get the same amount of speaking time and did everybody contribute in more or less the same way. Most likely people will say that participation was more or less equal. Then show the result of your mapping exercise. It will most likely show that a few people spoke for half of the meeting, some may have spoken a little bit and many may not have said anything at all. Discuss the mismatch between what people feel and what your mapping exercise shows.

Discuss whether participation has actually been satisfactory.

You can also map who speaks most on the radio and TV, and who is quoted most in the newspapers. The exercise can run for a week. Discuss the outcome and find out if you think all people in society, including people like yourself, are truly represented. And if not, what could you do about it.

Tool No. 2. Voice in Public Meetings

Objective: To prepare yourself for local council meetings with politicians.

Here are some tips for preparing for a meeting:

- Decide beforehand what questions to ask and which proposals to put forward.
- Decide who will stand up, take the microphone and speak.
- Appoint two persons to make the presentations: The first person will do the initial presentation on behalf of the group thereby indicating that the 'voice' is backed by many people. The second person will step in and follow up on the issue if those in power should try to silence or humiliate the 'voice'.

In this way the voice of the group will be maintained even when more experienced and powerful people try to silence it.

Tool No. 3. Stakeholder analysis

Objective: To map the interests, power and accountability of various groups that might support or oppose an activity that you are planning.

A stakeholder analysis is carried out when you want to implement an activity in a community. For example, you might want to make a survey about access to water and following the survey you want to call an interface meeting where you want to invite duty bearers, politicians, rights holders and the media and anybody else who might be relevant.

Doing a stakeholder analysis is one way of finding out who to involve. You can design the analysis so that it covers some of the key issues you think are important. For example you may want to know who people represent and who they are accountable to in relation to an activity you want to carry out.

Once you have mapped out the most important stakeholders and identified their links with other groups you can make a table like the one shown on the next page to establish more facts and find out the best way of proceeding. The stakeholders shown here are just examples. The idea is to map all groups relevant to your activity.



- I insisted on speaking and knowing that my neighbour would support me if I got nervous gave me confidence and strength to speak up in front of 50 people.



Stakeholder	Interest Main interest in activity?	Power Power over others? Power to act? Power with others?	Represents Who does the stakeholder represent?	Links Links with others?	Accountable Accountable to whom?	Role Possible role for stakeholder?
Councils						
Political parties						
Village head						
CSOs						
Councillors						
Others....						



- I discovered that all the people that influence or control my life are men. I do not think they are interested in representing women at all. Next time, I will vote for a woman, or stand for election myself.

The following questions can get you going:

1. Who is dependent on whom?
2. Which stakeholders are organised?
3. How can the organisation be influenced?
4. Who has control over resources?
5. Who has control over information?
6. What problems affect which stakeholders?

Key questions about representation are:

1. Does the representative chosen by a particular group or party share the views of the group?
2. Will the representative bring other identities into the process? (For example tribal, class, political).
3. Is the representative a member of the group? How often does she consult the group? Is the representative accountable to the group? Does the group accept her as their true representative?

Tool No. 4. Citizen's jury

Objective: To clarify and put forward your opinions and ideas, for example to the District Council or other representatives of local government bodies in order for them to include these in their decision-making processes.

One way of having your voice heard and engaging in dialogue with your representatives is by organising a citizen's jury to discuss important issues in your local area. These could include, for example, access to clean water, standards in education or in district schools and the standard of health services offered to the population. If juries are organised in more districts, they could influence policy-making, even at national level.

On a larger scale, citizen's juries can be organised to involve several communities or even districts but you can also conduct them in a single community. The following steps outline the process:

1. Identify the jury participants, for example representatives from local authorities, representative bodies, different social groups, user committee members for public services and children (if the issue is education). In particular you should make sure that poor and marginalized citizens, women, young people and different ethnic groups are represented on the jury. Approximately 10-20 people should be identified.
2. Carefully determine the key questions to be debated. For example: What is your experience with using health services? What could be improved in terms of access to medication, distance to the clinic and quality of staff performance.
3. Identify facilitators with sufficient experience to ensure that all members of the jury will get the opportunity to express their opinion.
4. Make sure that during the hearing process members of the jury are given time and the opportunity to deliberate and contribute with their experience and knowledge about the selected issues. The jury should be allowed to call in specialists who may enrich the debate with their inputs.

5. Compile the messages and transform them into recommendations to the representative bodies and the authorities. The recommendations will be stronger if all members agree. Make sure that recommendations are formulated correctly and that the process of deliberation is transparent. You could even record the process on video.
6. Prepare a follow up monitoring process so that jurors know that recommendations have been discussed and make sure that outcomes from any action taken are also followed up on.

Tool No. 5. Boost your Representation

Objective: To carry out training for new councillors.

Those elected or appointed to a committee do not necessarily have the skills or knowledge which will enable them to function effectively on a committee. Here is an outline of a two-day training programme for newly appointed members of a local Planning Committee:

- Day 1
- Rules, regulations and mandates for the committee.
 - Tasks for the councillors and how to maintain contact with constituents
 - Specific challenges for women.
 - How to oppose undemocratic forces in society.



- It is good to be consulted about development in our community; we are the ones who know what needs to be done to make life better. The politicians do actually listen to us now so we will monitor their work to make sure we get good results.



- The jury consisted of representatives from youth groups and their voices were heard. They brought new perspectives to debates! The elders are not used to respecting young people and letting them speak.



- We learned about our mandate in the council and it helped me understand what I am supposed to do. This is good because if I can do the job properly people will respect me and I can make a contribution to the community.

Day 2

- How to prepare yourself for meetings.
- How to respond to attempts from those in power to silence other members.
- How to make a good speech and presentation with confidence.

Organising training like this which involves both civil society organisations, elected councillors and local government secretariat staff can be an effective way to build skills and knowledge about local government, but also an effective way of strengthening and building more cooperative relationships between rights holders and duty bearers.

Tool No. 6. Power and democracy

Objective: To map influential power holders and find out who is able to influence local government and democratic processes in your community.

Knowing who holds power in any given situation is crucial. There are many ways of mapping power and many approaches use a simple matrix like the one here. You can easily make one yourself that is related to a particular issue you are working on. For example, it could be who is powerful and influential in relation to water resources. Mapping like this can help you find out how people are connected and who seems to be the most influential. It is a good idea to make the map as a group exercise as the discussion you have while filling out the matrix can be an important learning experience for your team.

Power Mapping Tool

Local groups and bodies	Who is involved?	Who do they represent?	Who cooperates with whom?	How powerful are they?	What is their primary interest?
Committee A					
Committee B					
Religious grp.					
Local Govt.					
CSO A					
NGO B					
Political Party A					
Political Party B					
Others...					

For more information about analysing and mapping power relations see the accompanying resource book in this series: POWER - Elite Capture and Hidden Influence

Tool No. 7. Democracy audit

Objective: To give your democratic system a check up. For example, what works well, what does not. What needs changing and where could you start.

Audits are a form of snap shot in time about how something is functioning. An audit is essentially a questionnaire that you get people to fill out or go round and ask people their opinion about, and tick

off the answers yourself. The more people you involve, the more credible the results. Getting people to answer all the questions requires that people know something about the subject you are asking them about. This raises the issue of whether you target specific respondents who you think know a lot about the issue, or whether you do a random sample. Both approaches are useful. It is important to have a 'Don't know' or 'No opinion' column. If there are many: 'Don't knows' it tells you something

Audit Tool

H: high; M: medium; L: low

Issue: How effective is our local government?	'Don't know' or 'no opinion'	Fully/good	H	M	L	Not at all/bad
1. What is the physical standard of LG office?						
2. Are records well kept? (Files/minutes/papers etc.)						
2. How well does the LG secretary follow procedures?						
3. Are citizens involved in planning?						
4. Does the LG inform citizens of meetings?						
5. Does the LG make minutes of meetings?						
6. Are minutes displayed on the LG meeting board?						
7. Do people consult the notice board?						
8. etc.						



- We realised that our political rights are not respected and that political parties are not effective membership organisations because the members cannot influence party policy. We need to think in alternative ways.



- We wanted to make elections more free and fair so we conducted a pre-election campaign about politicians buying votes and encouraged constituents to vote for honest politicians.



-We conducted an audit on our local government. It's been a useful tool for starting a dialogue with the councillors and already some things have improved.

about people's general level of knowledge or information about this issue.

You can repeat the process six months or a year later and see if things have changed for the better or worse. There are many ways of conducting audits and some of them are quite complex and time consuming. Here we propose that you select a key governance area relevant to your community. We have chosen local government in the example which is shown on the previous page (51). We imagine that we are looking at the lowest level of government. The key to designing an audit is finding the right questions.

After you have collected all the individual answers you can collate the answers into one matrix. This will tell you what seems to work best and what is problematic. You can then write up your findings. For example, what is the best feature, the most problematic, and what are your recommendations.

Tool No. 8. Communication

Objective: To ensure effective communication.

The matrix on the right is an example of a communication strategy which can serve as a model or template for your own strategy.

Communication strategy

What is the objective of the activity?	What do you want to achieve in relation to the target group? Be specific - for example: <i>We want improved physical conditions for poor people in YY area: access to clean water (2 pumps), standard of primary school improved, and a market constructed within the next 12 months. Increased awareness among local government members of the bad conditions in the area and increased commitment to improve conditions for citizens of YY area over the next 6 months.</i>
What is the issue?	What is the key issue to communicate? <i>Neglect - The local government hasn't done anything in the area for years; they do not listen to requests from local citizens and CSOs. CSOs are not mobilised.</i>
Who is the audience?	Who are you talking to – and with? Women, men, young people, elders, politicians, power holders, the well-educated, people with a few years of formal education, people in urban or rural areas, and so on? <i>We want to make a coalition of CSOs in the area and mobilise citizens for joint action: youth, women and other users of social services in the semi-urban area.</i> <i>We want to address local government and duty bearers and make them aware of the problems.</i>
What are the key messages?	What is the key message for the primary target group and for the secondary target group? <i>"We will not put up with neglect any longer"</i> <i>"Citizens and CSOs should unite in demanding better services in YY before 20XX" (for CSOs and citizens)</i> <i>"Clean water, a new school and market before 20XX" (for local government, duty bearers)</i>
What kind of media?	Do you want to use electronic social media or traditional forms of communication with the target groups, or perhaps both? <i>To mobilise CSOs we use SMS to call meetings and Facebook to explain the action and the idea of making a coalition. To mobilise citizens we will use notices on billboards, SMS to call meetings and protest marches, community radio to talk about the issue and the planned action (protest march). To address politicians we will make a petition that will be handed over during the protest march; we will organise a phone-in radio program where politicians can participate and answer questions from citizens and CSOs.</i>
Who are the users?	If you use traditional communication you must think about who to involve and what they need to know. <i>CSOs should learn to make eye-catching notices for the billboards and learn how to talk on the radio.</i> <i>If you use electronic media, what level of technological skills do they need?</i> <i>Training in linking a cell phone and computer so that you can send SMS on a large scale. How to open a Facebook profile and utilize it for the campaign.</i>
What investments are needed?	If electronic media? <i>Computer and devices to connect computers to cell phones.</i> If traditional communication? <i>Paper for posters and leaflets, funds for airtime on radio programmes.</i>
What are the risks?	Traditional communication: If you expose powerful people, they may get offended or even violent. Make a strategy for how to tackle the risks before you start using powerful communication mediums. <i>CSOs will conduct power mapping and risk analysis.</i> Electronic media: Be aware that when entering public spaces where many people have access, power holders may also be able to access your private information. So be cautious about what kind of information you post on for example Facebook. You should also be aware of what information you post about other people. <i>CSOs will make a Facebook profile for the campaign but will not use their own private profiles to launch it.</i>
Timeline, budget, indicators, evaluation	This is where you make a detailed plan for when to do what, estimate expenses for electronic equipment, paper, and sandwiches - everything! Develop indicators for the objectives and for when and how you want to evaluate your campaign.

Tool No. 9. Overview of strengths and weaknesses of social media

The following matrix gives you a quick overview of some of the major features of various social media.

WHAT	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	COMMENTS
SMS Mobile based service	Cheap, easy to use, accessible to many people. Excellent for quick info sharing and mobilising masses. Can be used with radio to ask questions on live programmes. Can be connected to a computer to send information to many people and can receive many SMS and organise information.	Requires short and concise messages. SMS can be traced to sender and receiver. In repressive regimes: be aware of what kind of information you send.	SMS itself is easy to use. SMS in connection with a computer requires extra equipment (adapter). It also requires training to manage the information going in and out.
FACEBOOK World's largest social network (500m users). Displays the activities and status of you and your friends	Enables people to develop strong links with people of all ages. Useful for creating and announcing events. Useful for disseminating information to many people. People can respond and comment, enables dialogue.	In repressive regimes: be aware of your privacy. Do NOT mix private information with politics. You can choose to open an account under a cover name instead of using your personal profile	Requires basic computer skills and Internet knowledge. Requires regular access to the Internet when the profile is to be used for mobilisation and information sharing
TWITTER Micro-blogging platform 140 characters limit	Enables a direct connection to many people – can be used for expressing opinions, sharing links and giving updates on activities or news. Users can tweet questions to, for example, politicians. Demands short and concise messages, makes it easy for others to read.	Limit of 140 characters. Most users are young people. You must open an account so be aware of your private information.	Requires Internet on computers or mobile phones with the Internet access. Twitter has potential to facilitate democracy and direct personal contact between citizens and authorities and politicians, especially if authorities interact actively and honestly with citizens. Politicians using twitter can be monitored by civil society.
BLOGS A type of website, often interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and even message each other. An opportunity to start longer debates and spice them up with personal information and pictures.	Blogs are cheaper than a traditional website. They are accessible to the public and easy to share. Allow for comments and feedback – and engaging in discussion.	Takes strong commitment to regularly update a blog. Can be difficult to know whether you are reaching your audience. Can be time consuming.	Requires access to the Internet. If you have no access to the Internet, you can link up with people who do, who can help you. There are also cases of newspapers dedicating space for SMS to be part of blogs. See for example: http://www.actionaid.org/activista/swarm
YouTube The largest online video site on the Internet	YouTube videos are easy to share. Offers a massive worldwide audience. Videos of any kind are possible: music, documentary, tutorial.	No dialogue between the producer and the viewer.	Requires access to the Internet. Requires access to video equipment and video editing skills and you need to know how to upload sequences.
INTERACTIVE MAPPING Sites for information collection and sharing maps about a particular location.	Good for visualising a geographic area and showing activities. Can be used in an interactive way.	Can be complicated. Relies on voluntary informers. It has democratic potential by involving local citizens in the development of their communities.	Requires access to the Internet. Useful for monitoring elections, disasters and unrest. www.usahidi.com Kibera map: http://mapkibera.org

In conclusion

In this book we have examined how the voice of people living in poverty can be heard by people in power in ways which force them to take note. We have done this from a human rights perspective which sees poverty as a denial of basic rights.

We have also seen that if rights are to be fulfilled they also need to be protected by governance systems which themselves respect human rights. We have argued that democratic forms of governance are best suited for this task. However, we have also seen how democracy can fail people living

in poverty. We have seen that people's voice and representation is also one of the most important ways of overcoming this failure of democracy. People's voice and representation is therefore a means for ensuring the fulfilment of people's rights and a means to ensuring that

democracy functions in the name of all people. We hope that this resource book has inspired you and will be useful in your work for greater social justice and equitable development based on democratic principles and the rule of law.



- If you want to follow up on some of the social media resources we have discussed, here are some links.

Resources – social media

SMS – and linking up with other media

<http://www.frontlinesms.com/>

[http://www.mobileactive.org/equal-access and](http://www.mobileactive.org/equal-access-and)
<http://www.mobilemediatoolkit.org/mozambique-mobile-phones-are-key-newspapers-identity>

<http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/61247>

<http://www.newtactics.org/en/dialogue/using-mobile-phones-citizen-media>

<http://www.newtactics.org/en/blog/new-tactics/election-monitoring>

<http://globalvoicesonline.org/2011/07/04/bolivia-monitoring-politicians-twitter-performance/>

<http://www.actionaid.org/kenya/shared/information-helps-combat-food-insecurity-kenya>

<http://afrographique.tumblr.com>

<http://afrographique.tumblr.com/post/7087562485/infographic-depicting-smart-and-dumb-mobile>

<http://www.equalaccess.org/>

<http://differentvoices.org/billboards.php>
(Nepal)

Video

http://indiaunheard.videovolunteers.org/category/videos/gender/?utm_content=c.upendranadh%40gmail.com&utm_source=VerticalResponse&utm_medium=Email&utm_term=Videos%20on%20women%20by%26nbsp%3Bwomen%2E&utm_campaign=Video%20Volunteers%20and%20Gender%20-%20Empowering%20Women%20with%20a%20Voicecontent

<http://indiaunheard.videovolunteers.org/category/andwww.videovolunteers.org>

<http://www.youtube.com/KiberaNewsNetwork>

Facebook:

<http://radar.oreilly.com/2010/07/facebook-reaches-half-a-billion.html>

Blog services

Word Press <http://wordpress.org/>

<http://rising.globalvoicesonline.org/projects/guides/>

<http://www.actionaid.org/activista/swarm>

Mapping service/projects

<http://mapkibera.org/>
Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya, was a blank spot on the map until November 2009, when young Kiberans created the first free and open digital map of their own community. Map Kibera has now grown into a complete interactive community information project.

<http://ushahidi.com/>
Non-profit tech company that develops free and open source software for information collection, visualization and interactive mapping

New Social Movements Resources

<http://www.democraciarealya.es/>
Democracy now movement

<http://www.democracynow.org/>

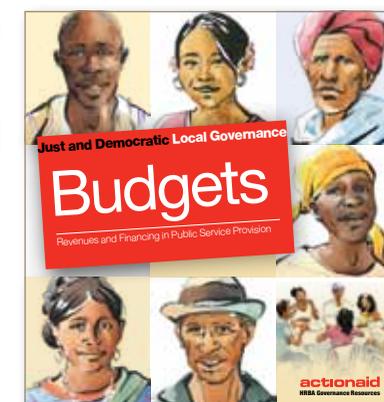
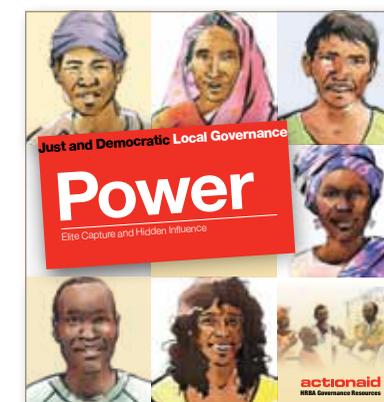
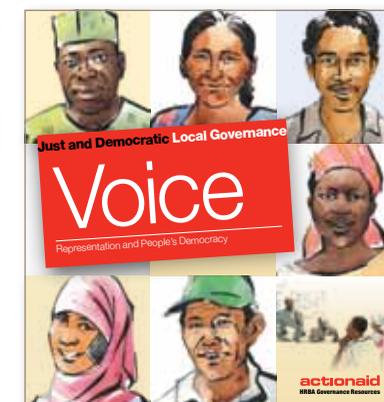
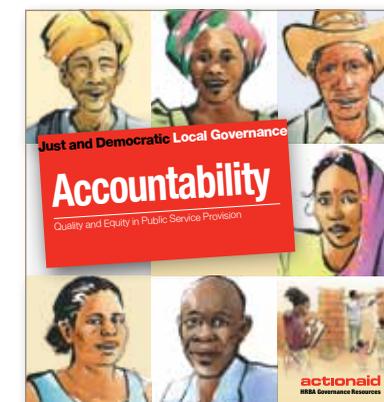
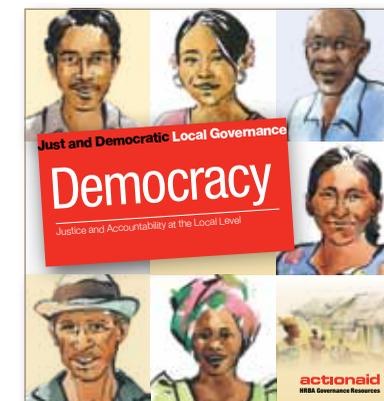
<http://occupywallst.org/>

Acknowledgement of sources

This book has been inspired and informed by the following publications and resources:

- A Summary of United Nations Agreements on Human Rights at: <http://www.hrweb.org/legal/undocs.html>
- Andrea Cornwall (2007) *Deliberating Democracy, Scenes from a Brazilian Municipal Health Council*. IDS Working Paper 292, University of Sussex.
- Andrea Cornwall, Steven Robins and Bettina Von Lieres (2011) *States of Citizenship: Contexts and Cultures of Public Engagement and Citizen Action*. IDS WORKING PAPER 363. University of Sussex.
- ActionAid (2012) *People's Action in Practice: ActionAid's Human Rights Based Approach 2.0*.
- AMARC, SDC, UNESCO (2008) *Fighting Poverty: Utilizing Community Media in a Digital Age* http://www.amarc.org/wccd/text/WCCD_doc_hi.pdf
- Charles Tilly (2004), *Social Movements, 1768–2004*, Boulder, CO, Paradigm Publishers
- John Gaventa and Gregory Barret (2010) *So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement*. IDS Working Paper 347, University of Sussex.
- IDEA democracy Assessment Framework
- Lisa VeneKlasen & Valerie Miller (2002) *A New Weave of Power, People & Politics: The action guide for advocacy and citizen participation*. Practical Action Publishing, Ruby, UK.
- Lucy Earl (2008) *Social Movements and Citizenship: Some challenges for INGOs*. INTRAC Policy Briefing Paper 20. Oxford
- Oxfam and ActionAid: *Driving the bus: The journey of national education coalitions*
- Paulo Freire (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The Continuum Publishing Company
- Upendranadh Choragudi and Gopakumar Thampi (2011) *Concept Paper: Voice –Representation and People's Democracy*. IGT ActionAid.
- Simon Fisher et al (2000) *Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action*. Zed Books, London
- Sokari Ekine (Ed) (2009) *SMS Uprising: Mobile Activism in Africa*. Pambazuka Press
- Srdja Popovic et al (2007). *CANVAS Core Curriculum: A Guide to Effective Nonviolent Struggle*. Centre for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS), Belgrade, Serbia.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

The Just and Democratic Governance Series consists of a series of resource books which aim to support the work of civil society activists in their struggle to reduce poverty and fulfil people's rights. The series supplements ActionAid's Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and focuses on key challenge areas identified in ActionAid's governance work. Under the common title: Just and Democratic Local Governance, the series at present consists of the following titles.



Just and Democratic Governance

Throughout the world, people's demands for democracy are growing louder as many have suffered under oppressive regimes and unaccountable leaders. Without meaningful democracy, elites capture decision-making processes and resources.

For many of the poorest and most excluded groups, there is a strong connection between a lack of political space or influence and the perpetuation of poverty and injustice.

Seeking alternatives, women, men and youth around the world are taking to the streets; using the internet; and or joining local meetings to demand proper political representation and accountability from the State for delivering on basic rights.

ActionAid works through a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and is committed to holding governments and corporates to account and improving the quality, equity and gender responsiveness of public services for five million people living in poverty as well as supporting people and their movements to gain significant victories in achieving a fairer redistribution of resources for financing poverty reducing public policies by 2017.

This book is part of a series of books which supplement ActionAid's Human Rights Based Approach – People's Action in Practice. Under the common title of Just and Democratic Governance, the series focuses on governance issues, approaches and tools that are relevant in all ActionAid's work in Local Rights Programmes.

The series supports the work of civil society activists in their struggle for just and democratic local governance systems which respect, protect and fulfil people's human rights.

The series focus on key governance challenges identified in ActionAid's work in Local Rights Programmes. At present the series consists of the following titles.

Democracy – Justice and Accountability at the Local Level

Accountability – Quality and Equity in Public Service Provision

Voice – Representation and Peoples' Democracy

Power – Elite Capture and Hidden Influence

Budgets – Revenues and Financing in Public Service Provision

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