Public Practices and Institutions for Enhancing Public Accountability and Preventing Corruption in the Delivery of Public Services through the Engagements of Citizens

Session 1

Concepts and Terminology
What is the meaning of accountability?

Conceptually, the idea of accountability contains two distinctive dimensions that need to be analytically distinguished:

**ANSWERABILITY**
The obligation of public officials to *inform* about their activities and *justify* their decisions

**ENFORCEMENT**
The authority to impose *sanctions* to those public officials who have violated the law or who have not fulfilled their obligations
The two dimensions of accountability

**ANSWERABILITY**

INFORM: policies that promote governmental transparency and the right of citizens to access relevant and reliable public information*

EXPLAIN AND JUSTIFY: feedback and two-way forms of communication between citizens and governments (mutual learning)

**ENFORCEMENT**

SANCTIONS: officials can be called into question and formally punished for any act of omission or commission by a sanctioning authority or informally sanctioned by public opinion (symbolic sanctions)
Transparency and access to information

“Opaque” transparency policies

- Selective disclosure of largely irrelevant information
- Information presented in a format that makes it difficult for ordinary citizens to comprehend it
- Disclosure of unreliable data
Different forms of accountability

**LEGAL**

concerned with procedures (a logic-of appropriateness). Evaluating public officers according to its consistency with existing legal norms and administrative procedures

**POLITICAL**

concerned with outcomes (a logic of consequences). Public officers are made accountable for the consequences of their decisions
Different forms of accountability

HORIZONTAL
Complex system of intrastate exchanges among a network of agencies and mechanisms of control

VERTICAL
Relies on an external actor (voters, civil society, the media)
Traditional approach: arenas and agents of accountability

**Horizontal mechanisms**

- Auditors
- Comptroller General
- Prosecutor General

Executive

Legislative

Judiciary

**Vertical Mechanisms**

- Elections
- Public Sphere

- Individual Citizens

- Civil Society
- Media
New developments: creation of new agencies & mechanisms and emergence of social accountability politics

**Supply Side**

Creation of new agencies & mechanisms

- Anticorruption agencies
- Ombudsman
- Human Rights Commissions
- Social policy councils
- Participatory Budgeting
- Participatory urban planning
- Score cards
- New constitutional mechanisms for rights protection
- Citizen complaint mechanisms

**Demand Side**

Social accountability politics

- Social watchdogs organizations (budgets, public works, corruption, human rights, environment, corruption, etc.)
- Watchdog and investigative journalism (media exposes of governmental wrongdoing)
- Victim’s movements of illegal encroachments by the state
- Public interest litigation and lobbying
- Right to information movements
New developments in democratic accountability

Auditors
Comptroller General
Prosecutor General

Ombudsman
HR Commissions
Anti-corruption agencies

Legislative
Executive
Judiciary

Citizen Complaint Systems & Score Cards
Policy Councils
Articulated Oversight
Judicialization Lobbying
Right to information campaigns Exposes of corruption & illegal encroachments

Individual Citizens
Civil Society
Media

Right to information campaigns
Exposes of corruption & illegal encroachments

Social accountability politics
Social accountability politics

External monitoring and social pressure on public officials & horizontal agencies. Examples citizen monitoring of public bids in Colombia or budget monitoring in Mexico, Brazil, Uganda, India,

Articulated oversight between horizontal and social agents. Example: monitoring of the clean-up plan of the Riachuelo- Matanza river basin in Argentina.

Policy councils. deliberation and decision capabilities over the design, performance and allocation of public services (education, health, urban infrastructure, etc.) Examples: health and social councils, participatory budgeting, participatory urban planning in Brazil
Social accountability politics

Plurality of forms of collective action

- Involves a diverse universe of civil society organizations (victims movements, neighborhood organizations, community associations, NGOs)

Plurality of strategies/mechanisms

- Indirect or external: activation of horizontal agencies through protest, judicialization, media exposes, lobbying
- Direct or internal: articulation with horizontal agencies
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