



# Participatory monitoring and accountability and the Sustainable Development Goals

## A Learning Report of the *Participate* Network

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### Photo credit

Front cover: © Nava Derakhshani.

*The woman in the image is a traditional Ada poet/spoken-word artist member of Ada's Songor Saltwinner Women's Association. She has rescued a cultural tradition by which through songs and poems people call their local chiefs accountable for wrongdoing or inaction.*

## 1. Introduction and framing

Accountability describes the rights and responsibilities that exist between people and the institutions that affect their lives, including government, civil society and the private sector. Relationships of power and authority are central to how accountability is experienced. Where governance processes lack openness and engagement with the public, trust diminishes and societies can fracture.

Globally, people living in poverty and marginalisation are showing resistance against power imbalances that undermine accountability in their communities and nations. It is from these sites of struggle that we can learn about how to build processes of participatory accountability that rebalance the relationship between people and duty-bearers (i.e. decision makers). This shift can help foster inclusive and sustainable development. At present moment, the intention of the *Participate* initiative is to facilitate learning processes that produce knowledge with those marginalised in society to achieve this goal. In doing so, we need to take into account the sociocultural and historical processes which shape spaces of interaction between citizens within social groups, and between citizens and duty-bearers.

This report is intended as a learning document, both to record key lessons and important insights from *Participate's* [Participatory Monitoring and Accountability for the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) work, and to prompt and encourage future learning and inquiry for any other organisations using participatory approaches to contribute to transformation and social justice. The Participatory Monitoring and Accountability for the SDGs programme was funded by the government of South Korea, and supported by UNICEF. Three pilot projects were conducted in:

- Egypt (Centre for Development Services, CDS),
- Ghana (Radio Ada, Ghana Community Radio Network (GCRN), and ASSWA
- South Africa (Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation, SLF) and the Delft Safety Group.

The pilots were coordinated by Jo Howard, Thea Shahrokh and Erika Lopez-Franco, with input from Danny Burns, at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). They build on the previous work carried out as part of the *Participate* initiative, which was launched in 2012 to bring perspectives of the

most marginalised people into policy debates about the future global development framework. The pilot projects were conducted by partners of the *Participate* research network, all of whom have been working for a number of years (in some cases over 20) with participatory approaches to influence policy (see [www.participate2015.org](http://www.participate2015.org)).

### The Participate research network: our values

We approach our work with an activist spirit, with an emphasis on peer learning, empathy, equity, and hard work. We seek, through our research and engagement, to support the interests of people most affected by injustice and exclusion. We believe that this work requires treating others with love and respect, a careful sensibility to difference, and a sense of joy and humour. As a collective, we support collaboration and cooperation, and a mutual process of building capacity through sharing skills, techniques, and encouraging critical reflection.

The content of this report comes from a collective reflection and synthesis workshop, hosted by Radio Ada and GCRN in Ada, Ghana in December 2016. A total of ten researchers from partner organisations in Egypt, Ghana, South Africa, and the UK came together to reflect and discuss their work over the previous year, which involved using participatory action research to contribute to greater accountability within a framing of the SDGs. Two additional researchers from *Participate's* partner organisations in Uganda (SOCAJAPIC) and in India (Praxis) joined the workshop as they will be involved in the next phase of research alongside the current partner organisations (Egypt, Ghana and South Africa).

Together, participants of the workshop discussed the particular contexts of the pilot participatory action research processes in the three countries in order to identify convergences and divergences. Through an iterative and participatory methods and tools, the group developed some organising concepts that resonate for each case, but also point to some important implications for policy and practice. This report presents a distillation of the insights gained through this collective synthesis process.

The aims of this report, as determined by the organisations and researchers involved in the collective workshop, are to:

- Support ongoing learning through articulating collective insights generated at the workshop;
- Surface and record unresolved questions to prompt critical reflection; and
- Support evolutions and innovations in methodological practice.

This report starts with an overview of the salient contextual features of each case in terms of understanding and explaining wider barriers and opportunities for accountability. Contextual features that were explored include social norms, political processes, governance structures and economic and legal aspects in each of the three pilot countries.

The remainder of the report is organised using the key concepts developed and explored during the collective workshop. These are:

- Meanings of (participatory) accountability
- Methods and processes for building accountability
- Political engagement
- Sustaining accountability across time
- Knowledge from the margins.

This report presents the final distillation of what was learned about each of these concepts across the pilots as well as recommendations for policy and practice developed by the researchers during the workshop.

## 2. Context

In this work, we are concerned with processes through which people living in poverty and experiencing marginalisation in different contexts can build relationships of accountability with duty-bearers. Duty-bearers are actors and institutions in both the public and private sectors that are democratically, or otherwise, mandated to deliver services and are responsible for ensuring that the rights of all are realised. The experience of marginalisation and the factors that drive and compound it are different depending on the setting, and as such, an understanding of context is critical.

In this section, we identify some key factors in each setting that contribute to the marginalisation

## Guiding questions for peer review and synthesis process

Ahead of the collective workshop, participants from Egypt, Ghana and South Africa shared reports on their pilot processes and contributed to a peer review process, including a review from members of the Advisory Group for Participate. The questions for the review helped to inform the structure and approach of the collective synthesis at the global workshop:

1. What have we learned about the meanings of accountability that we can draw on for a collective understanding?
2. What is important about the method/process of building accountability in this research?
  - How and why is the process able to effectively engage people living in poverty and with marginalisation in a sustained way?
  - How does the process support people to effectively influence policy and practice at a local and/or national level?
3. What has enabled national and local decision-makers and policymakers to engage?
  - What has happened as a result?

of different social groups. Four key categories emerged: social norms, political processes, governance systems and economic and legal aspects. These categories relate to forms of power. There is the invisible power of social norms that enables us to believe, for example, that we are not all equal, and that some social groups are more deserving than others (on the basis of their race, ethnicity, gender, age, health status, etc.). There is the visible power of the state and the visible and hidden political processes through which it operates, as well as its institutions and agents that implement policies (police, civil servants, doctors, nurses, social workers, teachers, etc.) (Gaventa 2006). These patterns of power are also reflected in and shaped by economic and legal structures, institutions and practices.

The findings from the three Participatory Monitoring and Accountability pilot projects have highlighted the importance of understanding each of these aspects, and also how they intersect. People experience discrimination and oppression differently

according to the multiple identities and context-specific influences that make up who they are. This is because it is the confluence of spatial, economic and identity-based forms of marginalisation that lead to intersecting inequalities. Each form of marginalisation is profoundly detrimental to people's wellbeing and development, but where they come together, they are often mutually reinforcing (Kabeer 2010). Where these inequalities overlap with each other, 'they give rise to an intersecting, rather than an additive, model of inequality, where each fuses with, and exacerbates, the effects of the other' (Kabeer 2016: 58), and further entrenches perceptions that the marginalisation of certain groups is 'normal'. Unpacking how and why these inequalities intersect can enable contextualised reading of the factors that fuel poverty and marginalisation and how privilege and discrimination are reinforced<sup>1</sup>.

In the contexts we discuss here, people experience intersecting inequalities when discriminatory attitudes towards them interact with poverty, corruption, poor governance, economic inequality and a lack of justice to further reduce their opportunities to affect change in their lives. For example, discrimination often reduces people's options for making a living, forcing them into situations of insecurity, risk and deprivation. Many of the contextual factors discussed in this section interact to amplify exclusion and perpetuate inequalities. Building meaningful and accountable relationships requires first identifying and addressing these factors. These linkages are explored further in each of the subsequent sections.

## 2.1 Social norms

By social norms we mean the longstanding collective beliefs of social groups around the 'appropriate' behaviour in specific social contexts. Norms are generally reinforced by the beliefs and practices of the reference group, which may be large, such as a religion or ethnicity, or small, such as a peer group (Marcus and Harper 2014). How norms are institutionalised by governments and communities can affect how inequalities are experienced on an everyday basis.

### Egypt

The researchers in Egypt focused on a group of children and adolescents living with HIV/AIDS (+CHAD) and their caregivers. In Egypt, people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) have rights but these are regularly undermined through the powerful

social norms which stigmatise and discriminate against them. This means that PLWHA are unlikely to disclose their status because they will be shunned by their fellow citizens. They are also discriminated against by services such as the police and health providers. Sometimes, the police make arrests on suspicion that a person is infected with HIV and the assumption that it was contracted through their own behaviour. There is also widespread prejudice and misinformation about HIV and AIDS. As a result, PLWHA are acutely marginalised from employment, educational and social opportunities. Men and women who are HIV+ tend to be equally stigmatised because according to Egyptian values, AIDS is considered to be a 'behavioural disease' resulting from unethical or religious forbidden practices (which is the case with female sex workers, men who have sex with men (MSM), IV drug injection, etc.); despite the fact children cannot be held responsible they cannot be held responsible for their status they are also stigmatised and excluded. Because of the shame and stigma, parents and carers of +CHAD usually do not disclose to them that they have this condition. The reason to focus on policy change and accountability for this relatively tiny target group (11,000 PLWHA in a population of 92.1 million) is because they are highly marginalised, their needs are neglected, and they are often not able to voice their demands. It is also a strategic decision: CDS researchers' assessment was that it was more practical and wiser to approach accountability through a small-scale problem; they thought the children's situation would provoke an awakening in the policymakers' emotions, so that they would be sensitised. This would allow them to test the accountability model.

### Ghana

The researchers in Ghana focused on a group of women living in the communities of Ada surrounding the Songor lagoon who are spatially and economically marginalised and depend on the lagoon as a source of salt which they 'win' and sell. The Songor is West Africa's largest salt-yielding lagoon, and forms the main livelihood activity for the 45 surrounding communities. This 400 year-old practice was traditionally managed communally; however, in the 1970s and 1980s two companies laid claim to virtually the whole lagoon. Conflict arose as inhabitants were prevented from entering the lagoon to win salt. After a pregnant woman was killed, government policy was reversed and the companies ousted, but no policies to support artisanal saltwinning were created. Local women

were fearful for their livelihoods and cultural identity, and convened by their local community radio station met to discuss what to do. They realised their security and way of living was being threatened by the growing practice of *atsiakpo* – the creation of small private salt pans, with the benefits accruing to formal and traditional leaders. They formed the Ada Songor Salt Women's Association (ASSWA) but call themselves 'Yihi Katseme' (We Are Brave Women). When, in 2011, it emerged that the government was planning to turn Songor into a concession for a petrochemical company, Yihi Katseme took action to develop and publicise a community-based alternative plan for the Songor. The women have been accompanied in this process throughout by Radio Ada.

Ada traditional norms and values are powerful, combining religious, cultural and kinship aspects. These establish people's expectations of their leaders, social norms of interdependence, and the responsibility of the Ada people to ensure the sustainability of natural resources. Traditionally, the Ada people had power over the Songor as a communal resource, and accountability for this power was through the spiritual priests, who managed the resource in arrangement with the clan leaders. The traditional council is male dominated, and although now there are some queens, their voices are not heard. The women were obliged to break the social norm that women do not challenge their male leaders, and have organised themselves and spoken out. The women saw that the men were not fulfilling their role or were unable to act, even though decision-making is in their hands. Despite it being against social norms for women to take up the men's war, they decided to act.

### South Africa

The researchers in South Africa focused on a small group of citizens living in Delft, a residential township on the Cape Flats. It is comprised mostly of formal housing (around 62%), with the majority of houses built in the period 1996–2000 under the Reconstruction and Development Programme. The population comprises an equal mix of Black and Coloured South Africans. In Delft South, 50% of the population speak isiXhosa as their first language, 38% speak Afrikaans and 6% speak English. According to the 2011 Census (Statistics SA 2013), Delft South unemployment stands at 43% of persons aged over 15, but according to the broad definition of unemployment, it is as high as 70%.

The legacy of apartheid underpins discriminatory social norms in South Africa today: the spatial segregation established under apartheid continues today, restricting physical access and movement, and reinforcing other inequalities. Economic and spatial marginalisation trap people in poor neighbourhoods, where gang-based and police-based violence is on the rise, alongside already very high levels of interpersonal and intimate partner violence. Research conducted by SLF with the Delft Neighbourhood Watch between 2014 and 2015 used smartphones to monitor crime. Over six months, the group reported 510 serious crime incidents, including 30 cases of murder, in a population of 43,000. According to the official South African crime statistics, Delft is in the top ten precincts in the country in terms of numbers of murders.<sup>2</sup> The political context is shaped by social norms: political parties mainly operate through racially segregated patronage and populist strategies that fail to address the drivers of insecurity. What is more, the wealthier residents in neighbouring communities who live in gated estates or 'islands of safety' do not see this situation and can turn their backs on the realities of Delft lives, or hold them responsible for the situation without seeing the structural drivers.

### 2.2 Political processes

In identifying the political processes within each context our aim is to highlight the means by which policy is formulated and the space for interaction between diverse social groups and institutions within this process. The concept also refers to the governance structures and mechanisms affecting implementation of policies and rule of law.

### Egypt

Egypt has a population of 92.1 million and has experienced two revolutions in the last six years. Political instability since the Arab Spring has caused a frequent change in ministers which has not allowed for continuity in policies as the length of an administration averaged only nine months. Egypt has approximately 11,000 PLWHA. The statistics on HIV are mostly discovered incidentally when people seek help for other health matters. The system is fragmented, in that the service providers (i.e. fever hospitals) are different from the organisation that coordinates the health budget and service. HIV is not given priority in the Egyptian health-care system, which focuses on diseases of higher prevalence such as viral hepatitis, renal failure and tumor-associated conditions. However, the ministry of

health keeps full control over distribution of ARVs as treatment for PLWHA through its extensive network of fever hospitals; the medications market is highly regulated through the ministry of health, which is the only body in the country with full registry of HIV victims. In response to the international momentum and mandates related to HIV/AIDS, a few years ago the government initiated a national AIDS programme in an attempt to coordinate activities in this area. This programme started some activities to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV; however, this is still quite limited.

### **Ghana**

The central political process with which the researchers are concerned is how decisions are made over natural resources. Under Ghana's Minerals Act, all resources belong to the state. The Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) Law 287 in the Songor case, however, states that the government holds the resource in trust for the people, but this law is not being upheld. The political party system is becoming increasingly divisive because of party links to ethnic groups and the tendency to associate community participation with political party affiliation. Conflict over resource management and privatisation of natural resources is leading to increased inequality and marginalisation. The government has proposed to relocate communities living around the lagoon to make way for industrial exploitation. There is some co-option of traditional leaders by formal authorities, and 'democratic spaces' for citizens to voice their concerns are largely non-functional.

### **South Africa**

The apartheid system officially came to an end in 1994 with the election of Nelson Mandela which brought the African National Congress (ANC) to power. Mandela called for the racially divided groups to embrace each other, and while much has changed, there is still racial inequality that interacts with spatial and economic inequality in South Africa. The ANC government created a 'black economic empowerment scheme' but this has not yet reached the majority. Young people have started to challenge what they see as the political alliance by the older generation with the ANC (who gave them freedom, but who are now responsible for increasing levels of corruption). Young people do not feel part of this alliance, and started symbolic movements around Cape Town against statues from the days of colonial rule ('#RhodesMustFall'), which led to a national student protest. This movement

has now transitioned to challenge the cost of higher education '#FeesMustFall', which they see as a means out of poverty and is a right secured by the constitution.

### **2.3 Governance structures**

**Governance structures highlight where power lies in decision-making as well as the means through which governments can be held to account. By exploring governance structures in each context we hope to understand the implications of wider governance arrangements and systems in terms of the prospects for participatory monitoring and accountability.**

### **Egypt**

Egypt has a presidential and centralised governance system. The health-care system (the researchers' focus) in Egypt is fragmented with various health management and delivery systems. Within Egypt's total health expenditure, the vast majority of Egypt's health spending (72%) comes directly from household out-of-pocket (OOP) payments, the highest proportion among all the middle-income countries in the region. Another 25% comes from the government and the remainder is paid for by private employers (2%) and external sources, including donors (1%). Political instability has led to nine ministers of health in the last six years. These frequent changes have hindered the capacity of citizens to open up or sustain communication channels with relevant governmental bodies.

### **Ghana**

In Ghana there is a centralised presidential system, and strong customary (tribal, 'traditional') and formal ('modern') governance systems at community, local and national levels. Political decision-making relating to the Songor lagoon is intertwined at four main levels within the two governance systems. Traditional authority comprises the four steward clans immediately around the Songor and the larger Ada nation of which they are part. Modern authority is represented by the local government authority and the national government with its executive, legislative and judicial branches. Some local traditional leaders are implicated in the misuse of the lagoon: the traditional council and formal government are colluding to benefit from the atsiakpo (private salt pan) revenues. The local people feel that the government and local and traditional leadership have been quiet on the matter, and a time bomb is ticking away.

## South Africa

South Africa has a parliamentary national government, with the president chosen by the majority party, currently the ANC. There are also provincial and municipal governments, which have responsibility for certain aspects of policy including community safety. Most salient in this project is the high levels of institutional corruption and the lack of reform and oversight of the national police force. In South Africa there is also an extensive system of forums for citizen participation which was set out by the 1994 constitution. In practice, these forums function very unevenly, if at all, and can often be co-opted by corruption or party politics. The most relevant spaces for participation for community safety include:

- Community Policing Forums (CPFs), which are legally mandated spaces for citizen participation and oversight of the police at the local level across all of South Africa. While they exist on paper, in reality they may or may not be functional. In Delft, the CPF has been a source of dispute, with its leadership dominated by men who have links to the police and/or gangsters. Young people are not represented. People who try to raise questions about police corruption have been forced out of the CPF in Delft.
- Neighbourhood Watch (NW), of which there are a variety in Delft. Some are more militarised and have been actively joining in police patrols; others take a position of 'observe and report'. Some members of this action learning process have been part of the NW for 20 years.

## 2.4 Economic and legal aspects

Additional indicators for understanding the opportunities and constraints for realising accountability relate to the economic and legal structures in society. Laws and policies that shape economic and social development mediate the realisation of socioeconomic rights for the poorest and most marginalised, such as access to housing, health, and an adequate standard of living.

## Egypt

ARV drugs are funded through foreign aid, and there is a lack of funding for research into HIV. A new law has been passed limiting civil society organisation (CSO) activity, which further reduces the space for CSOs to access funding to support people who are HIV+. Most of the prevention services are delivered by non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Health, including access to care, is a constitutional right of Egyptian citizens, but this right is not fully realised. Most of the care, support and treatment services are provided by the government. There are regulations against discrimination in health care but it is acknowledged by most stakeholders that there are few consequences for health-care providers who discriminate. Stigma and discrimination are also interconnected with legal factors as PLWHA are often criminalised due to the perceived link to acts that are illegal under Egypt's constitution, such as drug use, sex work and MSM (which is often prosecuted as the criminal offence of debauchery) (NAP 2015).

## Ghana

The PNDC law recognises the Songor lagoon as a communal resource and establishes that the government should hold the resource 'in trust' for them and their employment. Failure to implement this law has led to the privatisation and depletion of the resource, which has particularly impacted on women who depended on it for their livelihoods – they must now work for others earning a meagre income, or face hunger. Privatisation for individual economic benefit also threatens the sustainability of the natural resource. The case is an illustration of the intersecting nature of economic, social, cultural, political and environmental issues.

## South Africa

Delft South is principally a residential township with formal housing, with most houses built in the period 1996–2000. A main road traverses the centre of the site. Social infrastructure includes parks, libraries, clinics and sporting facilities. The residents have a high degree of access to water, sewerage, and electricity. However, spatially speaking, many people living in Delft are essentially disconnected from Cape Town. This is particularly true for individuals with low or no regular income. The area is situated on the city periphery with residents relying mostly on private transport or minibus taxis to connect with centres of employment. In terms of legislation, the 2016 White Paper on Safety and Security offers an important opportunity to include citizens in decision-making processes, since it puts significant emphasis on the role of public and community participation in safety and security.

**Table 2.1: Summary of contextual factors**

	<b>Social norms</b>	<b>Political process</b>	<b>Governance system</b>	<b>Economic and legal aspects</b>
<b>Egypt</b>	Stigma and discrimination towards PLWHA, driven by <b>religious and cultural norms</b> ; institutional discrimination; stigma intersects with gender and age	Two revolutions lead to backlash in authoritarianism; <b>reduced space for civil society</b> , increased regulation of CSOs; high turnover of ministers and civil servants	<b>Centralised</b> presidential system; insufficient budget for health; complex health service hierarchy with communication and coordination issues	Lack of funding for HIV/AIDS treatment and research; new law limiting CSO activity; <b>health is constitutional right</b> but not realised
<b>Ghana</b>	Centrality of <b>cultural, religious and kinship norms</b> ; tribal customs manipulated during/after colonial rule; patriarchy – men have positions of power/women are silenced; stigma of illiteracy, power of written word	Divisive political party system; <b>conflict over resource management</b> and privatisation of natural resources; some co-option of traditional leaders by formal authorities; ‘democratic spaces’ non-functional	<b>Centralised</b> presidential system; strong customary (tribal) and formal governance systems; <b>collusion of tribal and formal leaders</b> to exploit the lagoon	<b>Failure to implement PNDC law</b> which establishes rights of Songor people; privatisation threatens sustainability of resource and livelihoods of the majority
<b>South Africa</b>	Racial hierarchy of apartheid reinforced by spatial segregation; painful, internalised, <b>internal and structural barriers</b> are difficult to speak about	ANC government and ‘black economic empowerment’ does not address inequalities; corruption; <b>lack of space to criticise the government</b> ; discontent of ‘born frees’ (born post -apartheid)	Parliamentary and provincial government; president chosen by majority party; <b>institutional corruption</b> – lack of reform and oversight of national and provincial police system	<b>Collusion between political elite and corporate power</b> ; racial integration promoted through laws but spatial reality unchanged; <b>free education is a constitutional right</b>

**2.5 What resonates across the three contexts?**

Despite the context specificity of the laws, policy processes and norms that affect participatory monitoring and accountability (PMA), there are a number of structural and institutional issues that resonate across the three contexts, and need to be considered in the grounding of PMA approaches. These include:

- Divisive and oppressive social norms that can be traced back to colonial rule (for example, apartheid). These norms perpetuate discrimination through institutions, city planning, and public resource allocation as well as through behaviour and attitudes.
- Multiple barriers to accountability for some groups, for example through poverty, intergenerational conflict, and patriarchal systems that exclude women from decision-making.
- Ineffective justice systems: Rights exist in the legal framework but are not upheld, for example constitutional rights to health, education, and livelihoods.
- Corrupt and/or authoritarian governments are closing down space for civil society to challenge or question policies.
- Stigma and discrimination are widespread, painful, internalised and difficult to speak about.
- Some cultural norms have to be shifted in order to take action (for example, lack of self-belief because of illiteracy, and the tradition that women are silent).
- Women, children and young people are especially marginalised by the confluence of discriminatory norms, corrupt political processes and governance systems, and collusion between political and economic powers.

## Box 2.1 Intersection of discriminatory social norms, spatial, economic and social inequalities

### Egypt:

*'After discovering [that] my husband [had] died of HIV, I went to the laboratory to test myself and I was advised to test my son too. I wanted to kill myself by committing suicide and to kill my son to relieve myself of this stress when I realised he had HIV. However, when I arrived to seek treatment the doctor was like an angel and he gave us plenty of information that helped me to understand the condition. Our neighbourhood – when they discover my medical condition – will ignore me and start stigmatising me. Even my son's condition is not known; if it is known he will be kicked out of school.'*  
(Mother of a child living with HIV, 43 years, Cairo, Egypt)

### South Africa:

*'... someone [a young person] went for a job knowing that there were vacancies, but she was turned away by those who controlled it. A few years later that same girl was on the street begging. She ended up finding support from a local gang.'*  
(Woman, 58, Delft South, Cape Town)

Aunty has often used age as a good example of the discrimination that young people experience. She often speaks about how gatekeepers in Delft (such as lower level government officials, ward councillors, etc.) routinely create unnecessary problems for young people in the area and stop them from finding decent and regular employment.

### Ghana:

*'She told me that it gets to a time that they open the lagoon for everybody and that is what they could use to take care of their children. But that is not what is happening today, because people have wrestled the Songor from them. It is only belonging to some few people, and she doesn't have a stake in the lagoon any longer. Formerly, she knew that she was able to buy a lot of things because of Songor, and she had a lot of foodstuff in her cupboard. But now she can't, because of poverty.'*  
(Songor saltwinner, Woman, 40s, translation of pair introduction at Yihi Katseme workshop, Abokobi, April 2016)

## 3. Themes

Across the three contexts, we identified strategic approaches to addressing the above mentioned discriminatory social norms, spatial, economic and social inequalities and their interaction. These approaches emphasise the importance of building outwards from individual and collective processes of empowerment to establish social movements that hold the people-centred foundations of participatory accountability.

- CDS chose to work with a small group of HIV+ children and adolescents because they see HIV as the entry point for 'testing' the accountability system;
- The women's collective Yihi Katseme, together with Radio Ada, identified the need to work from the ground-up and to collaborate with Queen Mothers and Market Queens (women with significant power in society who can help by giving women's collectives some leverage);
- SLF has worked with young people, Neighbourhood Watch members and community leaders to break down barriers between these

groups, and through digital storytelling to voice the pain experienced as the starting point of a collective process and taking action.

As shown in these cases, participatory accountability requires challenging and shifting unequal power relations. This involves understanding the forms of power that marginalised individuals and groups experience; the extent to which power is visible; and the opening or closing of spaces for interaction (see Table 3.1). In this section, we analyse power in order to understand how power dynamics affect citizens' claims to rights and accountability. It is organised around the themes that have emerged from our collective analysis of the PMA processes, namely: the meaning of (participatory) accountability; producing knowledge from the margins; the role of the methods within PMA processes; political engagement; and the sustainability of change.

<p><b>Spaces of power</b>  <b>Closed:</b> decisions made by closed groups  <b>Invited:</b> people asked to participate but within set boundaries  <b>Claimed:</b> less powerful actors claim a space where they can set their own agenda</p>	<p><b>Faces of power</b>  <b>Visible:</b> observable decision-making mechanisms  Hidden: shaping or influencing the political agenda behind the scenes  <b>Invisible:</b> norms and beliefs, socialisation, ideology</p>	<p><b>Forms of power</b>  <b>Power over:</b> the power of the strong over the weak, including the power to exclude others  <b>Power to:</b> the capability to decide actions and carry them out  <b>Power with:</b> collective power, through organisation, solidarity and joint action  <b>Power within:</b> personal self-confidence, often linked to culture, religion or other aspects of identity, which influences the thoughts and actions that appear legitimate or acceptable</p>
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Source: Table draws on VeneKlasen and Miller 2002 and Gaventa 2006.

### 3.1 The meaning of participatory accountability

Before the three pilots started, we collectively reviewed current literature and thinking about accountability (PMA inception workshop, January 2016). We agreed that we were extending the concept of social accountability, which has been criticised by some for being tokenistic and depoliticised (Houtzager and Joshi 2012; Gaventa and McGee 2013). We built on the notion of social accountability (see e.g. Fox 2007, 2014; Joshi 2013) to develop the concept of **participatory accountability (PA)**. The meaning of participatory accountability is grounded in the extent to which power asymmetries experienced by people living in marginalisation are being redressed. We saw PA as operating at the intersection of vertical and horizontal forms of accountability, and of state and non-state actors. We felt that PA needed to be rooted in processes of individual and collective empowerment; rooted in and generative of empowerment processes and adaptive strategic relationships over the long term. We also felt that PA processes could be supported by ‘interlocutors’ (intermediary organisations and individuals) at multiple levels, from local to global. We defined PA as action-oriented, transformative of power dynamics, relational, temporal and contextual.

As far as ‘monitoring’ is concerned, we are looking beyond monitoring as understood in social accountability framings, which often depoliticise the process, towards how grass-roots movements can mobilise to pressure and support government accountability. This involves engaging in monitoring state actions through both everyday interactions

and episodic mechanisms, as well as the analysis of structural barriers to change that monitoring alone cannot transform.

At the collective workshop in December 2016, we collectively constructed an enriched definition of participatory accountability, drawing on the experience of the three pilot learning processes. This collective understanding draws on the learning distilled through the pilot projects in each context, about concepts and practices of accountability. The following sections synthesise the embedded learning about accountability in each of the three contexts.

#### 3.1.1 Participatory accountability in Egypt

The research process facilitated by CDS identified three kinds of accountability relationships relating to the health system and its responsiveness to people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). There are two horizontal levels of accountability (see Figure 3.1): the first is at the institutional level, and concerns the relationships between actors within the Ministry of Health (the National AIDS Program (NAP), and the fever hospitals); the second level is between caregivers and +CHAD. The third accountability relationship is between these two levels and groups, and is facilitated by organisations and actors who play the role of interlocutor or ‘translocator’ (see Boxes 3.1 and 3.6).

Because of the differentials in terms of knowledge, awareness of HIV status, circumstances and health amongst the children and their caregivers, a great deal of care was needed to build trust within this

### Box 3.1 Collective understanding of participatory accountability

We understand accountability to be rooted in some core principles, i.e. it must be:

1. embedded in context;
2. linked to transparent processes of justice; and
3. inclusive of all

Participatory accountability is a dynamic process that needs to be organic and evolving – it cannot rely on the existing systems of governance alone, but must be proactive in seeking out and building new ones, through ongoing dialogue between the existing and the new. It must be ongoing because accountability is not a destination but a process: today you might get accountability through existing mechanisms, and tomorrow the same steps might not work –especially for people from the margins.

When accountability is participatory, marginalised communities can and must be centrally involved in building accountability. The process will require confrontation and contestation as well as more conciliatory modes of participation in order to change oppressive/discriminatory structures. ‘Translocutors’ (accompanying organisations working with marginalised groups) must themselves be accountable and embedded in the context in which they are working.

group. Since most of the children are not aware of their own HIV status, they cannot voice their rights or challenge directly the health services that they receive. The process of participatory accountability in this context therefore has focused on building a recognition within the group of their right to have rights, and developing a sense of solidarity and ‘internal accountability’ inside the group, in order for the members of the group to get involved in the accountability relationships at another level.

The participants’ sense of the need to be active in monitoring the services provided to them and their belief that they can influence related policies through voicing their stories were enhanced. Empowering participants with knowledge and self-confidence was the key and yielded positive results in the later

stages of the process. The participants were able to identify the real defects in the system and voice their problems in innovative ways. However, this positive change was coupled with pessimism and doubts that their efforts will really impact the policymaking or decision-making spheres within the complex environment they face.

The process in this case was also concerned with addressing the accountability deficit between the curative and preventive branches of the health system. Because of the lack of linkages between decision-makers in these two branches, the project identified the need to work on the internal accountability between the NAP and hospitals as the first target, then to escalate to higher levels accordingly. Where efforts are made to create dialogue and share knowledge between these branches of the health system, foundations for more meaningful participatory accountability can be built.

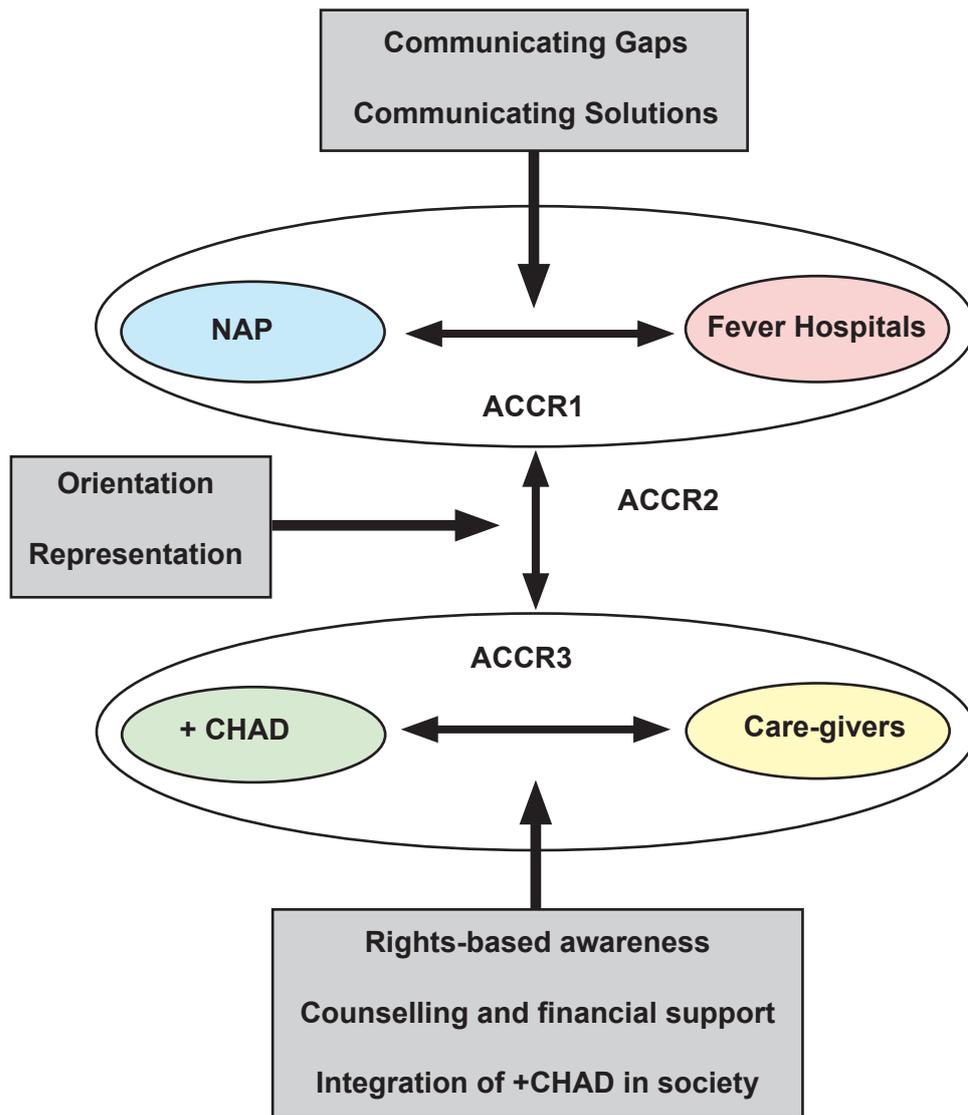
The project has identified that it is critical to establish these horizontal relations of internal accountability at the institutional level, and at the level of the children and their caregivers, before attempting to build vertical accountability relations between these two. **Horizontal accountability within the Ministry of Health, between NAP and fever hospitals, and internal accountability between caregivers and their children are the building blocks of the bigger desired monitoring and accountability system.**

The role of the translocutors (for example, CSOs) in facilitating these accountability relationships between state and the +CHAD group, is also somewhat complex. These actors may have conflicting interests, such as competition for funding, and different limitations in terms of the role they play. CSOs can perform critical roles at various levels of accountability with the aim of promoting the rights of +CHAD in receiving appropriate health-care services. The potential roles of translocutors to enhance participatory accountability are included in Figure 3.1.

#### 3.1.2 Participatory accountability in Ghana

For the Ada people, accountability is embedded in traditional norms of allegiance, answerability and enforceability. Answerability is the ‘call and response’ through allegiance and answerability from family and clan; this originates from the expectations of those who lead into battle, and also

**Figure 3.1 Accountability relationships and roles of translocutors**



**AccR1:** Relationships between governmental bodies. (Horizontal)

**AccR2:** Relationship between duty-bearers and rights holders. (Vertical)

**AccR3:** Relationship between +CHAD and their caregivers. (Horizontal)

 :Roles of intermediary organisations and translocutors

applies to the leaders responsible for the traditional management of the Songor lagoon. Traditionally, the leader is informed by the people, and follows the wishes of the people. Men and women play equal and complementary roles, and a process is set in motion that is continuous, and includes and serves everybody. Women's songs are a source of critique to ensure enforceability. Accountability is a continuous loop, a system of systems that works for everybody, and includes everybody. These beliefs are preserved through non-literate traditions: song,

artefacts and symbols. These recognised features of accountability relationships are embedded in and organic to Ada culture; they are part of the traditional management of the Songor lagoon resource.

The Yihi Katseme proposal for communal access and management of the Songor lagoon (Songor For All Manifesto) is founded on two interdependent facets of accountability: upstream accountability and downstream accountability.

**'Downstream' accountability**, with which rights proponents are most familiar, is in response to decisions taken, policies that have been agreed, and laws that have been established. This is a product of British colonial governance processes that were transferred into the post-colonial Ghanaian state. As Manuh (1994) notes, evidence suggests this type of downstream-only accountability was not part of the collective natural resource management process that existed in the Okor clans prior to colonial interventions into internal Ada politics. In turn, the traditional collective sense of responsibility and answerability within the Ada has fractured. Yihi Katseme argue that the male leadership has undermined this process as there is conflict over the Songor resources, but there has been no response. These women argue that downstream accountability is not functioning, and so are now pressing for 'upstream' accountability (i.e. bottom-up demands for accountability).

**'Upstream' accountability** concerns the engagement of all people in decisions that concern them and the natural environment on which people depend and of which they are part. It requires those who are most affected by an issue to play an equal role in shaping the decisions to be made about it. This approach to accountability is fundamentally participatory, and is rooted in values of inclusion ('no decision about us without us') and recognition of the knowledge and capacity of marginalised groups. Most often, these groups face oppression and discrimination, including children, women, PLWHA, people who are racially discriminated against or excluded in other ways. They should participate at least as equal players, and bring to bear their world view in shaping development priorities, policies and programmes. For the Adas, accountability must constitute holistic social, cultural, economic and environmental sustainability dimensions. Indeed, their views, illuminated by lived experience and often generations of indigenous technical knowledge, offer an irreplaceable and incalculable resource, contrary to views that so-called expert knowledge that is given more value. **Participatory accountability is a process through which the knowledge that the marginalised hold, is engaged with and integrated into planning and monitoring.**

A symbolic representation of these relationships of accountability have been constructed in the Ghana PMA project. The humble egg has been used as

### **Box 3.2 Internal accountability: an example**

A Yihi Katseme planning meeting spontaneously turned into a participatory reflection activity when lack of trust amongst members surfaced. Soberly, participants recalled what they stood for – Songor For All – and reiterated for themselves that their stand against atsiakpo was because its practice countermanded Songor For All. Facilitation sympathetically acknowledged that in practical terms the stand against atsiakpo was easier or harder for some, depending on whether and to what extent their communities practised it. It called on those present to continue to affirm or to withhold their individual stand, on the reassurance that they would still be held with – and the word was used – love.

The question was raised: as individuals, did they still hold to the belief that eliminating atsiakpo was necessary to achieve Songor For All? To answer the question, a simple exercise, from the work of Radio Ada and other community radio stations in Ghana, was used. They were asked to close their eyes and use hand gestures to signify their response: arm raised upwards for 'Yes', arm stretched out in front for 'Not sure' and arm stretched downwards for 'No'. It was emphasised that their answers needed to be individual – not plural, Wamaasi (We stand firm), but singular, Imaasi (I stand firm). They were then asked to open their eyes. Spontaneous clapping broke out to see arms raised unanimously upwards; yes.



an evocative image to represent downstream and upstream accountability, where the shell, the yolk and the albumen together represent the whole. If the egg is cracked from the outside, either by hostile forces or without due care, life ends; but if cracked from within, life begins. Thus, the empowerment of Yihi Katseme creates new life for Songor as a 'Resource for All'. They can only have the strength to emerge as new life, however, if there is trust, respect and love embedded in the solidarity relationships within (see Box 3.2 for an internal accountability example).

The research in Ghana embeds notions of vertical accountability between citizen and state within Ada history and culture, and deepens and enriches the concepts. **Accountability is thought of as a system of mutuality, call and response, with upstream and downstream accountability coming together to support the participation of those most affected in informing decisions and policies (upstream), as well as holding decision-makers, policymakers and local power holders to account (downstream).**

### 3.1.3 Participatory accountability in South Africa

The research in Delft shows the possibilities for participatory accountability, which extends one-off or 'episodic' social accountability processes to include more 'everyday' forms of accountability. The process of participatory accountability begins with bringing people together to combat a profound sense of isolation and marginalisation, and to build recognition, belief in oneself and power within at a personal level alongside a sense of dignity and rights. **Attention to this personal dimension of accountability is the starting point for building the foundations for collective action towards accountability.**

Episodic forms of participation for accountability in this context may be Community Policing Forums, elections, and ward committees; and everyday forms of participation for accountability may include day-to-day interaction with police and government officials. Central to participatory accountability processes is **an opening up of the political space and better governance, and increased responsiveness of governance actors reflecting shifts in power towards marginalised groups** across both episodic and everyday encounters with the state and other power holders.

Episodic and everyday forms of participation for accountability are linked. The Delft research finds

that episodic opportunities for **participation to increase accountability (such as consultation on safety plans, and citizen-based monitoring of police services) will not be successful without accompanying attention to the factors that limit or enhance everyday forms of accountability.**

Everyday forms of accountability can be addressed through paying attention to dynamics of power in Delft and considering the implications of these for how to design processes for accountability at scale. For example, existing forums for community participation, such as the Community Policing Forum and the community safety planning process, appear to give the possibility for accountability. In reality, these spaces are dominated by local elites, who are adept at manipulating these episodic encounters to bolster their own power. They are able to divert the common good to protect and enhance their personal and/or political agendas.

As well as police, other duty-bearers of the state became visible through the process in the Delft context, including the locally elected ward councillors, schools, and social workers. The films and the stories created through this process point to the multiple and mutually reinforcing failures of accountability in Delft, at both everyday and episodic levels. While the issues with the police are at the fore in terms of insecurity, exclusion is deepened by the rejection of children and young people from school, the lack of responsiveness/corruption of locally elected officials, and the lack of adequate support or resources from social workers. In the analysis by the group, the most important issues in Delft in terms of accountability are police corruption and brutality, the lack of legitimate political leadership at the local and national levels, and the need for youth-led development.

The participatory learning process in Delft highlighted that **it is not enough to provide episodic opportunities for participation to increase accountability (for example, social accountability mechanisms). Episodic forms need to be accompanied by processes that build everyday forms of participation for accountability. This means building accountable relationships between citizens and street-level duty-bearers in everyday settings.**

### 3.1.4 Conclusions

Looking across the three contexts and the learning in each, there are systems of service provision which have broken down, or are corrupted, and which people feel powerless to challenge.

### **Box 3.3 Collective statement on participatory accountability**

Building outwards from individual and collective processes of empowerment, we can understand accountability as a system rather than as a structured initiative (as tends to be the case with social accountability mechanisms). Isolated individuals, especially those who have been systematically marginalised, cannot easily change entrenched relations of power. This means that we need to put social movement at its heart, and where these have broken down, then movement building becomes a priority. What we have learned highlights that without building social movements and alliances between people from the margins and those in positions of power in government, civil society and the private sector, formal and informal accountability mechanisms will not be sustained over time.

Standard accountability initiatives assume that if the information is made accessible to marginalised groups, then they will be able to act rationally to demand their rights, and services will improve. This ignores the power dynamics (especially stigma and discrimination) which hold people in marginality, and the vested interests in maintaining levels of insecurity in townships, or privatisation of natural resources. A focus on power therefore is critical.

Power analysis and understanding how to grow and shift power is integral to accountability relations. Many approaches talk about accountability as if it was power blind. Power is often unaccountable – especially top-down power or ‘power over’. ‘Power with’ (as exercised by all groups) has to have internal accountability for the group to have strength. This is illustrated by the arm-raising exercise undertaken by Yihi Katseme (see Box 3.2) – in expressing their singular Imaasi they make themselves accountable to each other, which builds Wamaasi. This connection between individual and collective accountability speaks to the complexity of the process, of the difficulty of standing firm when others around you are benefiting from corruption; of the power of the collective; and of the need to reflect and not be afraid to engage with disagreement and conflict within the group (see the Section 3.3 on methods and processes and Section 3.4 on political engagement).

### **3.2 Knowledge from the margins**

Knowledge from the margins as a concept represents the **complex and unique set of characteristics that distinguish knowledge of those who are marginalised from other, more narrow definitions of data**. The latter are often divorced from context – in terms of spaces, places, and people’s lives. It is knowledge that individuals, groups and communities hold from their everyday lived experiences and that they use for their livelihoods or survival. This knowledge base is essential for an inclusive approach to the implementation of the SDGs and other development practices. In terms of the characteristics of **knowledge from the margins, and the significance of the category, we are referring to knowledge that makes visible to many what has been invisible to most**. For example, in the narratives and policy discourses on community safety in South Africa, the particular experiences of children and young people in an urban township like Delft are largely absent. Instead, these narratives are characterised by the attribution of blame and criminalisation of young people, especially young men. In Egypt, HIV status is socially stigmatised because of perceived associations with ‘unethical behaviour’. Knowledge from the margins makes visible the suffering of +CHAD due to this stigmatisation.

In making the invisible more visible, knowledge from the margins directly contravenes dominant narratives and discourses about pressing social issues. Knowledge from the margins includes attention to the embodied and experiential nature of knowledge that carries with it the pain and trauma and violence of living with stigmatisation and marginalisation. It also incorporates forms of knowing that contain traditional and pre-colonial knowledges and alternatives to mainstream perspectives.

Knowledge from the margins challenges the idea of literacy as solely about writing/reading, and expands literacy to include the ability to communicate, validating non-literate knowledge. Knowledge from the margins also facilitates new understanding about how a particular form of marginalisation impacts on other areas of people’s lives. For example in Egypt, narratives of how +CHAD experience stigmatisation cuts across their access to health services, education, and even safety in their communities. A more contextualised understanding of how people

### **Box 3.4 Examples of communication literacy** from Yihi Katseme and Radio Ada, Ghana

Yihi Katseme – the popular name for the Songor women as a collective – stands for ‘Brave Women’. Appreciating just how brave, is helped by using a framework of power and space. The Songor women face oppressive power over their lives on every level – domestically, culturally, from traditional governance structures and practice, and from centralised government that is geared more towards patronage than participation. Among other things, this has conspired to keep many of the saltwinner women non-literate and largely silenced especially in the public sphere, repressing their power within. No more! A key change has been the sustenance and intensification of a multi-layered participatory process that (i) is drawn from and continually reinvigorated by the rich oral traditions of the Songor women; (ii) uses visual tools and gestures that overcome the limitations of the written word; (iii) is extended and legitimated to a different level by modern communication methods such as radio; and (iv) is then threaded back to refresh and enrich the core conversation in an ongoing loop.

The process begins with collective memory (both prideful and painful), recalling in various ways (stories handed down, oral testimony, song) both heritage and struggle, and finding in both the individual and collective rationale for the advocacy. The process uses simple, visual tools – some generated on the spot in response to unspoken questions – using materials at hand (for example, leaves, sticks and stones, and arm signals) to connect experiential knowledge to complex analysis. Crucial technical and legal documents are parsed for common understanding, equipping the women with the information and the confidence to engage in debate as equals with official duty-bearers at the highest level (and indeed, sometimes exceeding their knowledge of the issues).

Accompanying Yihi Katseme throughout is their community radio station, whose role they recognise in this transformation of power relations. The community radio station is also a source of countervailing power: the bard [oral poet] of the movement sings of Radio Ada as the women’s ‘armour’. The bard similarly is a source of countervailing power – she composes songs that challenge the formal and traditional authorities, and which are broadcast on the radio. Her song ‘*N nE n ko li, n ko le*’ (what someone knows, someone doesn’t know) has become the anthem of the movement. It is also core to the ongoing process of communication literacy for the Songor women: ‘What? I thought I didn’t know/ couldn’t know, but I do! We all do!’ Thus, their slogan ‘*Wamaasi*’ (we stand firm) – is based on *Imaasi* – I stand firm/I am sure in myself, which connects power within to power with, and leads undeniably to *power to*.

experience life in the margins exposes impossible choices (for example, the impossible choice of becoming involved in violence as a means of survival).

Recommendations for policy change put forward based on knowledge from the margins are not naive or incomplete alternatives, but sophisticated and nuanced propositions that are rooted in context. Knowledge from the margins, when articulated well and with care, is powerfully relevant and essential to sustainable development.

It is also important to highlight the risks involved in using knowledge from the margins: making visible what is often invisible can expose new vulnerabilities and lead to backlash. In terms of the pilot processes, more work is needed to document and analyse what has happened with the public use of knowledge from the margins. Overall, we

found that the way of speaking out will be relevant to the context. We have identified that ‘translocator’ organisations may help with knowledge of the political context, actors, etc. and an assessment of risk. However, ultimately it is for the people from the margins, themselves, to judge what risks they will take.

In terms of some initial results from the process of surfacing knowledge from the margins, we have some strong examples of how greater visibility can generate the power to break a discriminatory norm. In Ghana, for example, the activism of the Yihi Katseme women has won them recognition by the local chiefs as important knowledge holders and gained them a place in discussions about the future of the Songor lagoon, breaking the norm that women do not have a voice in decision-making. In South Africa, through the digital stories and collective films, the experiences of economically,

### **Box 3.5 Collective statement on ‘knowledge from the margins’**

When ‘knowledge from the margins’ is engaged with critically and brought into dialogue with others, it has the power to break discriminatory norms and silence around injustices, and can be the basis for mobilisation at multiple levels, in order to contribute to accountability. It can thus form the basis for truly sustainable development as it is inclusive, and transformative.

Who are the bearers of knowledge from the margins? People who are living at the intersection of multiple inequalities and injustices in their daily lives (for example poverty, discrimination, spatial segregation, insecurity). Because of the combination of these factors (see Section 2.1 on social norms), their realities are made invisible, physically out of sight because of where they live (Delft Safety Group members); silenced by gendered norms (women in the Songor); afraid to speak out because of stigma (+CHAD and their carers, Egypt).

spatially and racially marginalised Delft citizens were made visible and a dialogue took place between them and city-level policymakers who would not normally seek the views of this constituency. In Egypt, health policymakers and professionals were moved by the collective film (made by the carers) that conveyed the experiences of +CHAD, and they entered into dialogue with the parents and carers, most of whom are themselves PLWHA. We have also documented numerous changes in the people directly involved in the participatory research process itself, and previous experience suggests that these are the most durable of the changes that result from this type of work.

### **3.3 The role of the methods within PMA processes**

Building participatory monitoring and accountability processes that are transformative of unequal power relations demands a methodology which combines dialogic processes with campaigning and movement-building processes. We took participatory action research as the basis for our common approach, and in each context partners developed their own combination of visual and creative methods appropriate for working with the group

in question. The methods selected were chosen to facilitate individual and collective processes of empowerment, and relationship building, as a vehicle for mediating risk, and also as a tool for advocacy. The learning about these methods and their contribution to building accountability is discussed below: firstly in each of the three contexts, and secondly the synthetic learning about methods is presented.

#### **3.3.1 Egypt**

The PMA process in Egypt was designed to build and nurture collective action on the part of +CHAD and their caregivers, to make them more visible to the providers of health-care services, and to arouse an emotional response in these service providers that would motivate them to improve the attention this group receives. The process also had an element of building alliances with other organisations and collectives in Egypt advocating on HIV and AIDS. The importance of this approach for accountability is that (i) it built trust and solidarity within the target group, strengthening their confidence and building a sense of rights; (ii) it was flexible and responsive enough to deal ethically with the vulnerable situation of the +CHAD group and to work sensitively in the particular political context; and (iii) it produced visual materials that built the confidence of the group and which have prompted an emotional response and opened up dialogue between the group and duty-bearers.

#### **Individual and collective digital storytelling**

CDS opted for using digital storytelling (DST) as a methodology to assist the project’s targeted group, both individually and as one group, to create a vivid and powerful voice to their experiences. The aim is to generate interest and attention of their duty-bearers, demand accountability, and prompt change in the stigmatised perceptions they face. It was anticipated that the process of storytelling in itself would serve as a tool for empowering the +CHAD and their caregivers as they reflected on their own experiences, see that their stories are recognised, and realise that they can have an influence on how they are treated. The storytelling process encompassed four principal phases; orientation, design, sharing, and production. The process assisted the group to develop five individual stories from the caregivers about their children covering three main themes in each story: experiences with health-care service providers, intra-family dynamics and relationships, and experiences with schools

### Box 3.6 Translocutors

'Translocutor' is a term that emerged at our collective workshop. We started referring to 'intermediary' or 'interlocutor' organisations, but we felt that these words did not accurately reflect the complexity of the positionality of the space in between groups from the margins and policy processes. Instead, we wanted a word that suggests an active role in translating different forms of knowledge, as well as direct support for the bridging between these positions.

Translocutors are people, organisations and collectives that act as:

- Mediators between different perspectives and positions;
- Translators of forms of knowledge (for example, between knowledge from the margins and policy discourses);
- Advocates for people from the margins; and
- Allies to those committed to addressing injustices

The translocutor is central to the whole implementation of the process of participatory monitoring and accountability. They have four key roles to play: partnering, bridging, facilitating, and stimulating. To elucidate, by *partnering* we mean building relationships founded upon trust and creation of safe and available spaces for engagement; *bridging* the gap between the citizens/people and duty-bearers when it is safe and appropriate to do so; *facilitating* rather than directing the engagement processes; and *stimulating* citizen action built on knowledge of the most affected and informed people. So, for those translocutors facilitating the PMA process it has been essential to be reflective and aware of their role and position. The legitimacy that translocutors are granted by the group/community to be intermediaries will depend on the circumstances; it is not a permanent state. The process must also allow for the translocutors to step away if needed, once the most affected people are confident and ready to keep going on their own (see Section 3.5 on sustainability).

#### Responsibilities of the translocutor:

- The translocutor supports the articulation and 'visibilisation' of knowledge from the margins. The role of the translocutor is to provide a continuous level of interpretation at each stage of the process of developing participatory accountability. The translocutor supports the merging of knowledge from the margins with other knowledge(s) (for example, from different policy contexts, or from other related contexts). The translocutor has the ethical responsibility to ensure no one is left behind.
- Accessing this knowledge is a big challenge, and requires sensitivity, collaboration, respect, a genuine desire to engage, and a long-term commitment. It is not a neutral process, and since societal power imbalances are experienced by the most marginalised in traumatic ways, analysis of these experiences can often surface pain. The translocutor organisation bears witness to these experiences as they engage with groups, and in so doing make themselves agents/actors of accountability.
- Once this knowledge is accessed, it needs to be heard in order for people to know that they matter. It is essential for organisations that work with marginalised groups to take responsibility for this process and bring this knowledge into spaces where it can be heard.
- There is a risk of romanticising, tokenising or instrumentalising knowledge from the margins in the way that this knowledge is represented or communicated in policy dialogues and in academic writing. In order to avoid these risks, processes of facilitating knowledge from the margins require critical reflection periodically and in an ongoing way.
- A sense of clarity about a unity of purpose between the facilitating organisation and the ground-level group is important, and dissonances between these two groups can undermine the process. The translocutor organisation bears the responsibility for vigilance on this point, and constantly keeping a space open to discuss what could be a shared purpose.
- Translocutors are self-selected, or intentional duty-bearers. For example by their self-chosen mandate, community radio stations have taken it upon themselves to be duty-bearers to the communities they serve.

and society at large. The CDS team took the lead of putting the stories together in scripts and designed a plan with the families to create the videos.

### **Alliance building with key actors**

Alongside this visual process, there was a strong component of relationship building. A group of CSOs working on issues relating to HIV/AIDS was convened from different regions of Egypt in order to explore the similarities and differences in perception based on the geographical distribution. CDS led some capacity building of these CSOs, which focused on activities to introduce the project and the concept of 'participatory accountability', and develop their interest in participating in the project. CDS also established dialogue with the National AIDS Program (NAP) as the main governmental body for coordinating the work with the PLWHA, sharing with them the accountability related concepts and process through multiple meetings over the lifetime of the project.

### **3.3.2 Ghana**

Radio Ada has used community radio in conjunction with a range of participatory action research (PAR) methods to facilitate a flexible adaptive process starting from where the key actors were at. Certain steps or activities were predetermined in the process, but others evolved spontaneously in response to the current situation of Yihi Katseme and the challenges they faced. Even within the predetermined steps, the content or process was generally developed in reaction to something said or waiting to be spoken. It was therefore very much a process of active listening, of 'call-and-response'. Langdon and Larweh (2015) have described this process as 'moving with the movement', where the methodology of this research moves with the shifting strategies and realities of the movement. This is possible because the work of Radio Ada, both with its longstanding academic partner Saint Francis Xavier University in Canada and with this current research effort that builds on it, is embedded in a PAR methodology that is interlinked with social movement development (Choudry and Kapoor 2010; Kane 2001). **The importance of this approach for accountability** is that the action-reflection process (i) builds confidence and critical capacity in the individuals and enables the group to critically develop as a collective; (ii) directly contributes to the space for dialogue-based learning and decision-making; and (iii) frames action processes as they adapt to changing dynamics and learning from engagement.

The basic steps undertaken by Radio Ada must be explained as an emerging process:

### **Initial participatory analysis by Songor saltwinner women leaders – 'leaves, sticks and stones':**

A core group of 15 Songor saltwinner women leaders clarified for themselves the heart of their advocacy: that the Songor salt lagoon should be a Resource for All. A tool was produced using familiar symbols (leaves, sticks and stones) to help them assess where different stakeholders stood in relation to their advocacy.

### **Initial community mobilisation/extending the core group:**

The core group, supported by Radio Ada facilitators/broadcasters and volunteer documenters, worked in teams to sensitise the 45 communities immediately surrounding the Songor on their core advocacy. In the process, they also recruited an additional 30 women confirmed as 'leaves' to spread the advocacy.

### **Participatory study, review and planning workshop – 'Abokobi':**

The enlarged group of Songor saltwinner women advocacy leaders gathered at a five-day residential workshop in Abokobi to bond, to deepen their understanding of the origins and heritage of the Songor and the struggle to maintain communal access, and to learn the key technical proposals and laws related to their advocacy. They produced a manifesto (*Songor For All*), an interim Constitution and a work plan, and elected an interim executive.

### **Community engagements around the Yihi Katseme manifesto and Asafotufiami:**

Yihi Katseme carried their manifesto and what they had learned about the Songor to their communities; and their leaders lobbied the President of Ghana to make a statement in support of *Songor For All* at the High-level Platform Forum for the SDGs (SDG HLPF) in New York, and at Asafotufiami, the annual festival of the Ada people. A Yihi Katseme representative made a video presentation at a side panel of the SDG HLPF, but the President was unable to go to New York. Yihi Katseme were not allowed by the festival authorities to present their manifesto to the President at Asafotufiami; and what was worse, the President made a statement at the festival in support of the private sector investment policies that eroded the traditional open access and communal management of the lagoon.

### **Strengthening of internal cohesion, ‘Singing for the Songor’ and ongoing engagement:**

Yihi Katseme faced setbacks and criticism after their rebuffed attempt to engage with the President, leading them to question each other on their commitment to *Songor For All*. This was discussed openly, and all the women independently reaffirmed their commitment. They used traditional song and dance to communicate this commitment, enabling them to facilitate discussion of the burning issues while dissipating potential conflict and strengthening cultural cohesion. In their wide process of engagement, Yihi Katseme also stumbled upon new imports of salt from Nigeria being sold in nearby markets and ‘outed’ their find on air on Radio Ada.

### **Demonstration and press conference:**

Moving on from the unsuccessful outcome of their Asafotufiami engagement, Yihi Katseme organised a demonstration in the town nearest to the Songor on 12 October 2016 and a simultaneous press conference in Accra, and a half-page statement and petition to the President in the most widely read national daily newspaper. The live broadcast by Radio Ada of the entire demonstration and feeds from the press conference turned Yihi Katseme into heroines in their communities, while national media reports led the national government minister for the sector to seek a meeting with Yihi Katseme and declare his support for their advocacy.

### **National Forum and chiefs’ equal air time:**

Yihi Katseme organised a National Forum, which was broadcast live by Radio Ada. It drew representatives from similar advocacy initiatives in the nearby Keta salt lagoon and a community in the north being ravaged by foreign encroachment into their gold reserves, as well as unprecedented statements of support from local government officials. It was spurned by the chiefs, the traditional custodians of the Songor, as a communal resource. The chiefs were criticised on-air by Forum participants for not participating, which led them to request equal air time. A live two-hour panel discussion then took place on 11 November, at which the chiefs admitted that they were not fully conversant with the laws and other developments on the Songor, and that some of them were involved in *atsiakpo*. This opened hitherto closed doors to an ongoing dialogue with Yihi Katseme; in particular, they offered to collaborate with them on stopping salt importation.

### **3.3.3 South Africa**

The pilot in South Africa used a layered combination of creative and participatory processes that bring people’s experiences and their ideas for change to life. These methods use technology to articulate and amplify these experiences and ideas, so that people can use their stories and film to initiate new conversations, dialogue and debate on accountability. In this pilot, these two processes were linked by a visual analysis of power within personal stories, and were situated in an action-learning framing. Through these methods, SLF worked with people from Delft to constitute a new group that is actively engaged in seeking community safety by addressing failures in accountability. Together, this group (the Delft Safety Group) and SLF have used the research process to launch a public campaign called #DelftLivesMatter. This campaign is targeting politicians and influential policymakers as well as the media and the general public. **This approach is important for accountability** because through its layering of methods and processes, it connects personal stories with collective analysis and political engagement.

### **Personal storytelling for transformation**

Personal storytelling for transformation (PST) is a method that operates simultaneously on three levels: the *personal*, the *collective* and the *social*. Within a group context, the PST process invites participants to explore an experience of deep significance in their personal lives through reflective and creative techniques. The methodology enables participants to recall and share their experiences safely in a group setting with other participants whose lives have been affected by the same social issue(s), and to craft these experiences into powerful short-form stories.

### **Collective visual power analysis**

This method involves people in a visual analysis of their own stories, using power as a lens to disaggregate their story and understand why things happened. The visual analysis process enables participants to see shifts in power within their stories and to reflect upon what thoughts, actions or inactions caused those shifts to happen. Considering the individual stories in this way creates the basis for a collective analysis of the connections between personal experiences, the structural drivers behind the problem being addressed and the dynamics of accountability. Finally, interrogating these connections opens the possibility for thinking through grounded potential solutions.

### **Collaborative narrative-based filmmaking**

This method allows people and groups to visually communicate their perspectives and positions using compelling narratives in film. The process is intended to enable people to take action towards solving the problems they face, by communicating their perspectives to decision-makers, their communities, their families and the wider public. It is an iterative, creative process in which the group develops every aspect of the film together over an extended period of time.

### 3.3.4 In sum, what did we learn?

From our work throughout the last year, we have learnt various lessons in relation to the centrality that methods have in the process of building participatory accountability, their evolution and adaptation to diverse circumstances, and the need to constantly reflect on their shortcomings.

**Methods that build power within and power with must be central to PMA; elements of popular education are key because they facilitate reflection, dialogue and relationship building as an integral part of the accountability process.**

Building an individual (power within) and collective sense of rights (power with) is a long-term, iterative process that is anchored in dialogue and relationship building (see Box 3.4). When a PMA process is new for a group of people, as in the case of Egypt, this process can take at least a year to develop. If this process is rushed and/or imposed with methods which are not appropriate to the people involved, the sense of rights may not be internalised. In all cases, it was evidenced how important it is to start from personal experience as this enables the surfacing of common lived experiences and opens a way towards a collective understanding of the issue. Only when each person is able to personally relate to the problem, a window is opened for demands/action for accountability to occur.

In the cases of South Africa and Ghana, the methodological evolution allowed for changes to extend beyond the core group involved in the PMA process; enabling shifts in wider power relations. In South Africa, **leadership** for strengthening participatory accountability surfaced; also, the process **shifted** how people living on the margins speak to others in their community as well as how they hold those who have power over them to account. Through the process, the Delft Safety Group developed a strong sense of their own power

to challenge the police brutality they have been subjected to for decades. In Ghana, Yihi Katseme were able to build countervailing power, with Radio Ada accompanying every step of the way:

- The exercise of *power* over the women had diminished their power within, which participatory community radio has proven a ‘magical’ capacity to restore and build by giving voice and validating indigenous knowledge and experience. This capacity needs to be applied more towards building the power within of women.
- *Power within* is a necessary precondition for power to – that is, the power to effect change – but is insufficient in itself. This is especially so when pitched against hidden power, which is often exercised in *closed spaces* – which community radio, using a dialogic mode, lifts the veil off, and attempts to transform into *invited spaces*. By doing so, and especially where it combines broadcast interventions with community work, community radio also taps into and grows *power with*, or the ability to act together.

Methods cannot be depoliticised; they are not neutral. Decisions around which method to use at what time, who to invite, even where to hold a meeting, are all political as these can significantly shape both the strength, sustainability, and inclusivity of a the process. **The identities and experiences of exclusion (i.e. intersecting inequalities) of members within the group had to be recognised, acknowledged, and taken into account in all three processes of methodological evolution.**

Across the three learning processes there was a recognition that all the groups involved were made invisible by their context. In Ghana, a strong patriarchal social context (see Section 2.1 on social norms) means that women are not permitted to interfere with issues which belong to the male sphere; so, the decision of ‘going public’ and directly confronting their chiefs for not protecting the Songor lagoon could not be imposed by Radio Ada but had to originate from the women of Yihi Katseme. In South Africa, the convergence of many structural factors has led to people living in townships being seen as guilty of their own insecurity issues; this had to be first recognised by members of the Delft Safety Group and taken into account throughout every step of the process, in particular when linking

### **Box 3.7 Collective statement on the process of building participatory accountability**

*Truly inclusive* participatory monitoring and accountability processes must be sensitive to the context in which they are being developed, gauge the willingness of people to move towards direct action, and weigh the risks of this direct action and/or confrontation. An essential element of the process is critical reflexivity.

to policymakers who are (or act as) unaware of this. Finally, the colleagues in Egypt had to carefully navigate a very complex context; firstly, understanding the contradictions of the bureaucratic HIV service provision system and secondly, working within the confidentiality and other ethical challenges unique to HIV compared to other lifelong conditions.

Weighing the risks of taking action and/or confrontation is not a one-off assessment to make. This risk has to be constantly revised and all our partners were confronted with challenges; people must feel comfortable about backing-off from a decision if suddenly the contextual or group dynamics has changed. In some environments, directly confronting duty-bearers or even more powerful actors within the household (parents or spouse) can prove highly detrimental to the wellbeing and safety of those most affected. The level of action taken by the participants in the three contexts ranged from complete anonymity to direct/face-to-face confrontation with powerful actors. As such, **the choice of the methods and next steps in the search for accountability cannot be made by the translocator; they can only facilitate the process for the most affected to make those choices.**

### **3.4 Political engagement**

Central to the way that we have defined accountability in this pilot is the process of political engagement. In building greater accountability, sustained political engagement is needed between marginalised groups representing their concerns for a better, more just life and society; and those in positions of power at different levels. Political engagement includes the mobilisation of the most marginalised and excluded, as well as engagement by and with policymakers and decision-makers. Much of the existing literature on accountability does not give sufficient attention to the importance of

political engagement. This pilot shows that without political engagement, the many mechanisms and tools for accountability promoted by governments, donor agencies, and multilateral organisations under the auspices of the SDGs will not lead to sustainable changes in relations of power.

When there are opportunities for community participation, instigating and sustaining the capability for political engagement for people on the margins is far from a foregone conclusion. There are many difficulties in constructing a legitimate basis for social organising in contexts of exclusion. Discriminatory social norms, intersecting

### **Box 3.8 How change happens (and why it sometimes doesn't)**

We are interested in how the people involved with us in this research are finding ways to hold duty-bearers to account. In the first phase of the *Participate* initiative, our collective research highlighted factors that promote change in the lives of the poor and marginalised, both positive and negative.

**Triggers** spiral people into a different life trajectory, such as the break-up of a marriage, death, severe illness, shocks such as a natural disaster or an accident, relocation and loss of livelihood, and exposure to violence. Policies that are not sensitive to the dynamics of people's lives can amplify the impact of these triggers.

**Tipping points** and **breaking points** occur where a series of influences accumulate and prompt a sudden change for an individual, community or group. These sorts of changes are often not predictable: 'Multiple micro changes in attitudes and behaviours can lead to sudden rapid positive change; for example, when education for girls is quickly established as a norm despite a long history of their exclusion (Burns *et al.* 2013: 12). The interaction between people's own agency and structural factors, such as those that create tipping points, is complex. However, patterns also emerge when considering this interaction: these include **amplifications and intersecting inequalities**. Amplification is about the interconnectedness of issues, where one problem is compounded by another, or where one positive change leads to another.

inequalities, and the necessity to fulfil basic needs for survival can all create barriers for organising. The nature and character of local power struggles, and the wider social, political and economic context, also inform the possibilities for groups coming together around a collective agenda (see Section 2). Reviewing the experiences from the pilot cases, we identified some features of how groups of people from the margins can engage in activism towards achieving accountability.

**Multi-level activism is important to the successes documented through the pilot cases. By multi-level, we refer to activism that engages simultaneously with different kinds of audiences:** a highly localised audience that overlaps with the origin of the activist group; local power holders and decision-makers (including traditional leaders, local government officials, religious leaders, local politicians, and local media); provincial/state and national actors (including government officials and politicians, influential media outlets, and the general public); and global institutions.

As this example from Ghana demonstrates, people from the margins can manoeuvre through different levels of political engagement in order to leverage influence and protect themselves from risks. The ability to communicate effectively at different levels and with a variety of audiences has grown from this participatory research process, which supported the development and articulation of positions. An important part of this process was for the group to analyse the various levels available for engagement and to consider when and how to use these, thus strengthening the possibilities for multi-level activism.

Also illustrated by the example above is the way that recognition from political engagement at levels outside of the very local can result in pressure on the social norms and behaviours in the local area. This result occurred in the South Africa case as well: political engagement with city, provincial, and national political leaders and bureaucrats created pressure on police and members of the Community Policing Forum (CPF) in Delft to act differently because they became aware of the external attention on what is happening within Delft. These examples show how there can be a 'virtuous circle'

### Box 3.9 Examples of multi-level activism

Three intersecting levels of authority hold the power over that, in the absence of citizen participation, determine the fate of the Songor. These are: (i) traditional authorities, to a large extent increasingly alienated from their custodial role over communal resources; (ii) local government authorities, theoretically part of a decentralised structure of governance but in practice with limited autonomy; and (iii) the national government, the chief arbiter and often shielded from meaningful engagement with community members including the traditional and local authorities. There is hard evidence that these three authorities conspired together to remove the Songor women and their households/communities from around the Songor to facilitate private development.

To navigate and penetrate these multi-level and interconnected hidden and closed spaces requires similar multi-level and interconnected activism. It begins with the communities of Yihi Katseme – through ongoing community engagement, strengthening the alliances of the 'leaves' and transforming the 'sticks' and 'stones' – and extends to allies outside. Even before the PMA process began, and intensified in its early months, Yihi Katseme sought dialogue with all three levels of authorities and were turned away most publicly at Asafotufiami, the annual Ada festival (see Section 3.3.2). They thus decided to hold a public demonstration at the town closest to the Songor Lagoon and a press conference in Accra. Communication media were deployed to reach the authorities at all levels: (1) Radio Ada's live coverage of the demonstration incorporated feeds from the press conference and put the local traditional and government authorities on notice; (2) the advertisement in the national newspaper challenged the national leadership; (3) the running commentary on Facebook of the events for the Ada diaspora reached an international audience.

At the end of it all, the women were hailed as true Yihi Katseme by their communities and recognised as a formidable force by the authorities. In an unprecedented move, it prompted the sector national minister to seek a meeting with the women. It also won new allies; policemen who had previously tried to block the demonstration told Yihi Katseme: 'You are the kind of people we need in parliament.'

where multi-level activism can produce dividends in terms of how power holders and policymakers engage with people from the margins, but it can also lead to positive changes in attitudes and behaviour in relation to the issues of injustice and marginalisation.

### **Box 3.10 Building an awareness of citizen rights and modalities of political engagement**

Building awareness of citizen rights through participatory action research is an unpredictable and long-term process. Some people may move from a sense of self-blame for problems, to a sense of having and claiming rights. The claiming of rights may be through dialogue or confrontation, but this depends on the context. With the Delft Safety Group, the desire for confrontation, particularly towards corrupt officials and police officers, has increased during the year of the pilot project. The group has crossed a point in terms of their levels of awareness and their commitment towards action that suggests that they are not going to retreat from engagement with the government.

However, this trajectory of creating awareness and political engagement will not be the same in each context: there are no 'set steps' or template for creating an awareness of rights connected to achieving accountability. In the case of the Delft Safety Group, there was a 'tipping point' when people believed that confrontation was necessary. In other cases, such as Egypt, direct confrontation may make things worse. Instead, what the pilots have shown is the importance of a sustained and careful process of facilitation to support the formation of groups from the margins, and the development of a strategy that is deeply informed by the particular context.

In addition to the strategic analysis and use of different levels of engagement, **the pilots demonstrated the importance of making use of available spaces and forums for engagement or participation, and building alliances.** Where there is a legal provision for accountability or citizen participation (such as Community Policing Forums in South Africa, community radio in Ghana, and basic anonymous feedback mechanisms like suggestion/feedback boxes in hospitals in

Egypt), this pilot showed how groups supported through a participatory research process can make better use of these spaces. People developed greater confidence in using these spaces, but also understood how to connect their efforts between existing spaces and other aspects of their strategy for engagement.

### **Finally, the pilots showed very clearly that creating and sustaining knowledge about citizenship rights and accountability is a crucial outcome of the political engagement process.**

The awareness of citizenship rights and the need for accountability and how this actually relates to people's everyday lives is central to how to scale-up demand. This aspect is another that is often missing from approaches to social accountability and participatory monitoring for accountability. People on the margins may not have a deep awareness of their rights, or clarity about how to address their lack of rights. A fundamental component of a participatory action research process as carried out in these pilots is the support for groups of people from the margins to gain this awareness and experiment with different forms of political engagement as a result.

#### **3.4.1 Engagement between people from the margins and policymakers**

In analysing the pilot PMA processes, some important insights emerged about what prompted decision-makers and politicians to engage with groups of people from the margins. In some cases, such as in Egypt, the nature of the problem is such that policymakers are often either unaware of or uninterested in the problems facing +CHAD. Therefore, the challenge in the pilot was to get the attention and interest of policymakers, and to create an opportunity for greater awareness about the need for changes in health-care provision, and accountability towards +CHAD. In other cases, such as in South Africa and Ghana, the issue was not primarily a lack of awareness of the problem, but a lack of motivation or capability to address it. In South Africa, most politicians are aware of the issues surrounding community safety, but the scale and complexity of the problem means that they may be unsure how to address it. Also, there are political reasons why other issues have a higher priority, in terms of appealing to a political base for the established political parties. At the same time, understanding the nature of the problems underlying community safety within policy circles is often insufficient to really address them through policies.

### **Box 3.11 Community mobilisation and political contestation**

Community mobilisation is not a linear process because (a) the community's ownership of issues depends on the context and the power relationships within the community; (b) the duty-bearers are often at different stages of sensitisation about the issue as well as their capacity to address the issue; and (c) often the stigmatisation internalised by the marginalised community prevents it from even seeking their rights and entitlements.

Because of internalised stigma, some groups desire to remain hidden, and their accountability projects may seek agency through anonymity. Their agency may begin in the form of a set of individuals. The PMA process needs to work with these individuals to build their personal confidence and dignity (power within) so that they can develop collective agency (power with). Collective action (when a community as a whole comes together) is critical, because it usually takes a vibrant community for the state to be made aware of the problem and become responsive. The relationships between *power within*, *power with*, and power to are not linear or certain, but what these pilots have explored is the conditions under which this sequence can be secured or strengthened.

Participatory monitoring and accountability requires realigning power relationships within the marginalised community; between the marginalised community and wider society; and between the state and the marginalised community. Ensuring the participation of the marginalised community to seek this accountability is challenging and non-linear, characterised by various ups and downs. It is important to partner with state actors to proactively create systems that ensure that voices of marginalised people get into the decision-making systems of policymakers and implementers. When we try to measure the progress of participatory monitoring and accountability, it is important to understand that a stage of the journey is likely to be political contestation.

### **Box 3.12 Stigma or political process? The relationship between social norms, rights, service providers and citizens**

At the outset of the pilot in Egypt, researchers at CDS thought that stigma associated with HIV was a major reason why service was refused; but *in fact it is because those in need of service provision lack the relevant knowledge and are not aware of their right to claim it*. Stigma is very strong but the key barrier to service provision is the lack of awareness on the part of care receivers to claim their rights, as well as the lack of understanding of people in policy and health-care provision roles about the issue. Thus, weakness on the demand and supply sides means that accountability is not realised. To address service providers' lack of understanding requires challenging and shifting the social norms that reinforce stigma around HIV and AIDS, and lead to poor service, behaviour and attitudes of service providers towards PLWHA.

In all the pilot cases, **it was clear that political engagement happened when there were shifts in power that made such engagement possible.**

This could occur through carefully planned sequences of events, such as with Yihi Katseme (see Box 3.9 and Section 3.3.2); or, it could happen through existing channels for community participation but with renewed vigour.

**In each of the pilots, there are clear examples of the importance of emotions in prompting political engagement by power holders: humiliation and shame, anger and sadness.** The use of compelling and powerfully communicated stories through film, radio and print provoked an emotional response from policymakers and those in positions of power, leading them to recognise the importance of the accountability issues at stake. This emotional response led to further possibilities for engagement through dialogue and discussion and the exploration of concrete actions.

While emotions play an important role in instigating new opportunities for political engagement, more is needed to sustain this engagement over time. Factors that could help to sustain political engagement include: (i) constitutional or legal provision for participation and accountability; (ii) the recognition of how to use public events and spaces

### Box 3.13 Examples of an emotional response from policymakers leading to political engagement

#### South Africa:

When policymakers are brought into dialogue with people's authentic stories, there can be emotion and a shift. At events of the Delft Lives Matter campaign (launched by the Delft Safety Group and SLF) the importance of the stories was clear. No one remained unmoved and new conversations took place between different people from Delft. Instead of focusing on party politics or internal divisions, the stories turned the focus of politicians and others towards the importance of authentic stories as presented by storytellers. One storyteller said: *'Telling my story has been part of the healing process we all need'*. Alderman J.P. Smith spoke at the final national engagement event, where he publicly supported a call for a commission of enquiry into the lack of responsiveness and suspected corrupt activities of officials based at the Delft SAPS precinct. His speech was in response to the stories and films produced by the Delft Safety Group, which he described as 'something different; that we had shaken the tree hard', and that he liked this.

#### Egypt:

In response to the collective digital story presented during the meeting with all stakeholders, a representative from one of the CSOs said: 'We always believed that shock is the only reaction of a family when told their child is infected with HIV, but we can see now that confusion about life trajectory is another dimension of this reaction. Maybe we need to stress on addressing such aspects while passing the news to the families.' This reaction was affirmed by the head of the National AIDS Program, who highlighted that more focus is being directed to children while developing HIV and AIDS-related policies and strategies.

#### Ghana:

The impact Yihi Katseme made through their simultaneous demonstration and press conference caused the Minister of Land and Energy to seek a meeting with them. After hearing them out, he openly stated that he was moved by their courage and would align with their cause. He subsequently sent a director of his ministry to represent him at the movement's National Forum who made a similar statement on his behalf. His party lost the December 2016 general election and it remains to be seen whether his successor can become similarly engaged.

strategically; and (iii) the formation of alliances, especially between different groups of people from the margins with the media, sympathetic policymakers and politicians, and academic institutions.

Finally, our collective analysis of the pilot cases exposed some interesting and important differences around the nature of people's engagement in the political process and the modalities required. In some cases, the groups and issues involved required dialogue to take place between power holders and people from the margins. In some moments, confrontation and protest was needed; and at other times, it was important to step back from political engagement for periods of reflection or because of the high level of risk involved. All of these modalities are part of the unfolding processes of political engagement in each of the cases. This diversity in modalities of engagement (dialogue, confrontation, protest, and even silence) has an

important influence on the ultimate sustainability of political engagement. The temporal dimension of this engagement is significant: sustained and ongoing interaction is needed, and there must be allowances for reversals as well as advances towards greater accountability.

### 3.5 Sustaining participatory accountability processes across time

At our collective workshop, we initially approached the issue of sustainability in terms of how to sustain increased institutional accountability and responsiveness. However, as our collective analysis unfolded, the theme shifted to include the sustainability of the mobilisation processes with people from the margins, as well as sustaining the institutionalisation of shifts in accountability. These dimensions of accountability are deeply interconnected.

The sustainability of the mobilisation process refers to how knowledge from the margins becomes a vehicle for transformation beginning with the awareness of people from the margins themselves about their own situations. This occurs within a process of the development of collective will to change the circumstances and address the underlying causes of exclusion. This process is discussed further in Section 3.4 on political engagement in terms of how people develop a sense of citizenship rights; and in Section 3.2 on knowledge from the margins regarding how to make visible largely invisible forms of knowledge and experience.

### 3.5.1 Institutional accountability and responsiveness

Through the peer reviews ahead of the workshop, and as a prompt for discussions at the workshop, we asked:

*In what ways do processes of participatory monitoring and accountability need to be supported by national governments (or other institutions) to ensure that they can be an effective vehicle for meaningful participation across the country?*

However, as our discussions considered the experiences of political engagement (and the difficulties these posed), we revised the question to focus more specifically on the changes needed within government that would allow for participatory accountability processes to be given adequate attention and support:

*How can national governments and other institutions themselves be transformed to enable and support meaningful participation?*

This question suggests a different assumption: that the current configuration of political and economic power in the pilot countries must first be changed in order to contemplate meaningful participation. The disposition towards participation of each pilot country's government is different. In Egypt, constitutional provisions granting space for citizen participation are in place; however, translation of these provisions into engagement is lagging behind due to the authoritarian regimes ruling under Mubarak's leadership over the past decades. In Ghana, there are some opportunities for engagement and participation, but these are still framed by the legacy of colonialism and the vestiges

### 3.14 Collective statement on sustainability

True sustainability begins in the hearts and minds of the marginalised, starting from a process of critical reflection that begins with their individual and collective recognition and articulation of their marginalisation and analysis of the reasons for it, followed by a determination to break away from marginalisation. This builds a collective transformation of consciousness which can build power and motivation from their understanding of the most vivid aspects of their living context, whether that be a cultural legacy that continues to drive community norms, a pervasive experience of endemic violence, or severe and systematic stigmatisation.

The transition to taking action for these mobilised communities requires a recognition of the patterns of power underlying their marginalisation, beginning with the false perception and rejection of their own powerlessness. Ensuing actions taken will enliven and impassion their consciousness. Their consciousness will gain strength from the common cause forged with others, marginalised or otherwise, who have come to share their consciousness, even if their collective analysis is derived from different experiences and manifestations of marginalisation. This activated consciousness will continually experience ebbs, plateaus and crests. It is the continued learning and creative response to this iterative dynamic that, collectively harnessed, shifts and lifts marginalisation into inclusion.

of indirect rule incorporated into the governance system. While a democratic dispensation was restored in 1992 and provides the framework for citizen participation, the inherent contradictions between indigenous culture, the traditional governance structure, the legacy of colonialism and indirect rule, the legislative process and even the constitution itself, are often resolved in favour of biases, interests and processes that dilute and even obstruct equitable citizen participation. In South Africa, there are many provisions for citizen participation within the constitutional framework, but in reality there are huge barriers to participation, many legacy of apartheid.

Given these varied starting points in terms of the institutional environment for participation, a process of evolution is required in each case to create a participatory process that can influence as far as possible the transformation of government structures so that they will be more conducive to participation of the most marginalised. The exact nature of how (and indeed if) this can be achieved varies in each context. Assuming that headway can be made, the next step is the institutionalisation of the processes of participation within government structures. While institutionalisation of participatory processes is not desirable in the longer term, it can be a necessary step in the immediate term to reinforce the utility and relevance of participatory processes, and to guide action. Finally, it is then possible to work towards the greater institutionalisation of participatory processes within governments. This entire set of steps is quite lengthy and is not possible within the time frame of the pilots, but it does inform the wider work of several of the organisations involved.

#### 4. Conclusions

People living in poverty and marginalisation are faced with multiple exclusionary barriers that reduce the room they have to claim citizen identity, exercise agency, and to engage in accountability relationships both with those around them, and with duty-bearers. Through coming together to share experiences, analyse their situations, identify and take actions, people living in poverty and marginalisation will be better able to build identity, strengthen agency and develop horizontal and vertical accountability relationships. **This is participatory accountability.** Furthermore, the construction of accountability relationships happens at multiple levels and is nonlinear. They can be internal, i.e. within the solidarity groups that citizens coalesce around to claim rights, and external, i.e. with and between different external governance actors themselves. There are also multiple intersections between citizens' groups and governance actors, which includes the wider sector and civil society.

We work through **participatory methodologies**, which are central to how we understand participatory accountability, since they facilitate (a) dialogic and relational forms of accountability, and (b) the political mobilisation which shifts system dynamics to enable these processes of change to be possible. Participatory research can

be used in many ways to stimulate accountability. Annex 1 outlines how this theory of change has been implemented in each of the participatory accountability processes in the three pilot countries.

#### 5. Implications and questions for the next phase/future

As a learning-orientated collective, we have raised and discussed a number of questions that remain open and could be considered in our current and future activities, and are relevant to other movements, groups and organisations engaging in building participatory accountability.

Given the time frame of the participatory processes we have been catalysing, it has not been possible to focus as much attention on the effects of speaking out about experiences from life in the margins, or trace how alliances or confrontations with power holders play out. In our future work, we need to plan for and carry out an analysis of the impacts of speaking out with knowledge from the margins through public events, demonstrations, engagements with political power holders, and also set aside time to better understand the policy responses and shifting relationships with policymakers. This will mean understanding how knowledge from the margins can influence policy decision-making, and also how these processes impact on the relationships between people from the margins for whom engagement in the research has formed a basis for collective action. Finally, this understanding should also include how we, as researchers, engage in the power relations of the policy process. In particular, we are interested in exploring further the role of emotions within the accountability and policymaking processes: how emotions can be engaged, recognised and used in connection with knowledge from the margins, and with what consequences in particular contexts.

In terms of the concepts of accountability that we have been developing here, more work is needed to develop sharper articulations that are culturally embedded and do not assume a 'Western' conceptualisation and practice of accountability. The development of these ideas needs to be bold in terms of contesting the drivers of marginalisation. We need to do more work to understand how accountability is part of wider efforts and intentions to achieve peace, justice and rights. Related to this, we are interested in doing more work on the intersections of different forms of exclusion, and

how powerful stigma and discrimination can be countered through the process of breaking with social norms. We think that more work is needed to understand how and when to make visible the invisible, and with what consequences and risks. This concern with visibilising the invisible also relates to questions around 'data': what constitutes data and what this implies for ideas of 'scale', particularly in the context of the SDGs. We need processes that do not silence or make invisible knowledge from the margins by simply aggregating up.

The role of the translocator will need further consideration, and how this role evolves and transforms.

- We noted the importance of contestation and confrontation in processes of accountability and rights claiming, and it would be useful to give greater attention to these aspects of engagement alongside the existing attention on more consensual modes of participation.
- Finally, we have a set of questions around the nature of the groups we are helping to form/ally with/support, and the extent to which we 'stand with' them or endorse their efforts, and for what length of time. We are concerned with questions of what happens to accountability in a context of profound and continuing breakage of social structures, and the risks of marginalised groups feeling abandoned by us (as translocators), or by other allies.
- We continue to think critically about our own role as researchers, communicators and activists, and how we draw appropriate boundaries and respond to ethical dilemmas in our capacity as translocators. As translocators, we are navigating roles of witness, advocate, broadcaster, facilitator of processes of contestation as well as consensus with the groups we work with, and broker of spaces for dialogue with duty-bearers. Through these various roles, we need to support each other to be critically aware of our own evolving relationships of accountability.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> At our collective workshop, we prefaced our analysis with an exploration of the most salient aspects of the context for each pilot case, which also pointed to the importance of intersecting inequalities. The learning from this pilot has informed the next phase of our work, which focuses directly on intersecting inequalities and accountability.

<sup>2</sup> [www.saferspaces.org.za/blog/entry/round-up-crime-stats-2014-15-all-you-need-to-know](http://www.saferspaces.org.za/blog/entry/round-up-crime-stats-2014-15-all-you-need-to-know), accessed on 16 February 2017

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## Annex.1 Participatory accountability pilot processes in three countries: Egypt, Ghana and South Africa

	Power within	Power with	New knowledge	Spaces of participation	Governance actors	Reflection/outcomes
<p><b>Egypt:</b> +CHAD building rights to health service provision in a context of stigma, discrimination and fractured governance</p>	<p>Telling your own story challenges stigma and isolation and builds self-recognition of the value of your life and contribution to enhancing the lived experience of others</p>	<p>Building knowledge of rights and state responsibilities for health care, supported solidarity relationships between PLWHA that were previously isolated</p>	<p>Experiences of barriers to health care of an extremely marginalised group, the defects they experience in the health system and the wider societal stigma that impacts self-perception</p>	<p>Bridging horizontal and vertical accountability, a collective film helped to translate knowledge to stakeholders whilst respecting the anonymity of the group</p>	<p>Translocutors built relationships with local service providers as allies to build their capacity and undertook national level advocacy with key institutions</p>	<p>Self-confidence and group strength are building blocks for accountability. A fractured governance context creates challenges in engaging duty-bearers and changing health care</p>
<p><b>South Africa:</b> Community representatives and youth creating space for change in safety and security in a context of extreme violence and corruption in state service providers</p>	<p>Personal and creative storytelling enables people to explore their everyday experiences of violence and accountability. This builds an intimate connection to the process of change and builds confidence for the individual to be a part of that change</p>	<p>Working with others to analyse power visually shows the connections to the wider societal problems to be tackled. This shared understanding leads to grounded ideas for solutions and mobilises action within the group to create change in the community</p>	<p>Building relational knowledge by engaging with people across generations affected by insecurity. Visual and representative knowledge can catalyse dialogue between citizens and different stakeholders</p>	<p>Established forums for engagement between communities and the police could be reinvigorated. Human stories enabled a personal connection from policymakers and a wake-up call that catalysed support for an inquiry into policing</p>	<p>Highlighted the need to consider everyday and episodic forms of accountability. Political engagement with city, provincial and national political leaders created pressure on police and members at the local level to act differently</p>	<p>Reflective practice is needed to critically consider whether unequal power relations, such as with the police, are shifting. With difficult issues, it can be helpful to work with allies at the national level to have influence locally</p>
<p><b>Ghana:</b> Women's collective addressing power imbalance in resource management in order to build sustainable livelihoods for all</p>	<p>Space is created through song, poetry and cultural practice to ensure self-expression of ideas within the group. Democratic processes allow individuals to voice opinion in group decision-making</p>	<p>Women affected by resource extraction built a social movement to address conflict and inequality in natural resource management. Further mobilised women to evolve dialogue and build support for the manifesto</p>	<p>Dialogue facilitated through community radio builds understanding across diverse contexts. Women's voices heard in a traditionally male-dominated cultural context. Recognition of indigenous knowledge</p>	<p>Pushing downstream accountability by claiming public spaces to raise awareness of a collective manifesto for change. Engaged the national media, which sparked interest of a government minister. Radio dialogue created space for diverse actors to come together</p>	<p>Lobbied politicians and traditional governance actors from local to national level. This approach looked to inform actors of the inequality in natural resource management and strengthen their capacities to respond</p>	<p>Importance of fluidity in order to be reactive and respond to changing context highlighted. Also continuous reflection on the internal accountability and solidarity within the advocacy group</p>

The *Participate* initiative is a global network of participatory research organisations. It works to ensure that marginalised people have a central role in holding decision-makers to account, from local to global levels.

*Participate* aims to:

- Bring perspectives of those in poverty into decision-making processes
- Embed participatory research in global policy-making
- Use research with the poorest as the basis for advocacy with decision-makers
- Ensure that marginalised people have a central role in holding decision-makers to account throughout the life of the SDGs
- Generate knowledge, understanding and relationships for the global public good

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