CITIZENS AS DRIVERS OF CHANGE
Practicing Human Rights to Engage with the State and Promote Transparency and Accountability
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CITIZENS AS DRIVERS OF CHANGE
Practicing Human Rights to Engage with the State and Promote Transparency and Accountability

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ....................................................................................................................... iii
Overview ........................................................................................................................................ iv
- Learning from three case studies of corruption in service delivery ........................................ iv
- A framework for analysis: WDR 2017 and a human rights lens ................................................ iv
- Key research findings ........................................................................................................ vi
- Lessons for international actors ........................................................................................... ix
- Navigating this report ............................................................................................................ x
Abbreviations ............................................................................................................................. xi

## CHAPTER 1: Citizen engagement, human rights, and development ........................................... 1
- Analytical framework ............................................................................................................ 4
- Research design and case study methodology ..................................................................... 5

## CHAPTER 2: A brief literature review ......................................................................................... 11
- Emergence of citizen engagement in development practice and research ........................... 13
- Citizen engagement in World Bank practice and research .................................................... 14
- Citizen engagement in the health and education sectors ....................................................... 15
- Citizen engagement, anticorruption, and collective action .................................................. 16
- Citizen engagement, fragile contexts, and peacebuilding ..................................................... 17
- Rights begetting rights: Using citizen engagement to improve development outcomes ......... 18

## CHAPTER 3: Case studies ......................................................................................................... 21
- Afghanistan: Improving education outcomes through community-based monitoring of schools ........................................................................................................................................................................... 23
  - SPOTLIGHT 1: Current challenges in the education system in Afghanistan ....................... 25
- Paraguay: Engaging in youth-driven contestation to gather resources for education ............... 31
  - SPOTLIGHT 2: Current challenges in the education system in Paraguay ......................... 33
- Serbia: Reducing corruption and improving publicly funded public health care services through citizen agency ................................................................. 46
  - SPOTLIGHT 3: Current challenges in the health care system in Serbia .............................. 48

## CHAPTER 4: From analysis to action ......................................................................................... 61
- Key messages and takeaways ............................................................................................... 63
- Lessons for international actors .......................................................................................... 69

## APPENDIXES .......................................................................................................................... 73
- APPENDIX A: Integrity watch Afghanistan’s CBM-S framework .......................................... 74
- APPENDIX B: Serbia on the move’s manifesto ................................................................. 76
- References ............................................................................................................................ 77
List of Boxes
0.1: Summary of three case studies of citizen engagement .......................................................... v
1.1: Summary of three case studies of citizen engagement .......................................................... 6
2.1: Terms related to citizen engagement ..................................................................................... 13
2.2: Human rights and citizen engagement .................................................................................. 18
3.1: Recollections of an IWA provincial coordinator .................................................................... 28
3.2: Monitoring teacher absenteeism and "ghost teachers" ............................................................. 29
3.3: Application of human rights, reAcción ................................................................................. 35
3.4: Application of human rights, Integrity Watch Afghanistan ..................................................... 40
3.5: Select questions and results from patient perception surveys, Hospitals without Corruption project .................................................................................................................. 41
3.6: Exposing FONACIDE corruption in Ciudad del Este .............................................................. 42
3.7: Serbia on the Move’s project structure ................................................................................. 50

List of Figures
0.1: Role of social organizations through the lens of the WDR 2017 framework ................................ vi
1.1: WDR 2017 framework: Governance, law, and development .................................................... 4
1.2: Role of social organizations through the lens of the WDR 2017 framework ................................ 6
1.3: Space for civil society and citizen engagement: Afghanistan, Paraguay, and Serbia ................ 8
1.4: Power asymmetries and their manifestations: Afghanistan, Paraguay, and Serbia ................ 9
3.1: Afghanistan’s governance score rankings, 2000 and 2015 ...................................................... 24
3.2: Paraguay’s governance score rankings, 2000 and 2015 .......................................................... 32
3.3: Historical trend in corruption in Paraguay, 2009–16 (CPI ranking) ........................................... 33
3.4: Corruption Perception Index 2016: Paraguay in comparative perspective .............................. 33
3.5: Corruption, education outcomes, and clientelism in Paraguay .............................................. 34
3.6: Examples of data visualizations of FONACIDE funding allocations ........................................ 38
3.8: Serbia’s relative levels of corruption and societal engagement ............................................ 46
3.7: Serbia’s governance score rankings, 2000 and 2015 ............................................................. 46
3.9: Outcomes in Serbia’s health sector, 2014–15 ........................................................................ 47
B3.7.1: Citizen engagement project structure of Serbia on the Move ........................................ 50

List of Tables
0.1: Application of rights: Integrity watch Afghanistan, reAcción (Paraguay), and Serbia on the move .......................................................... vii
1.1: Broad economic and governance comparison of case study countries ..................................... 7
3.1: Common problems observed by IWA local monitors in 2016 and their fix rate ........................ 29
3.2: Application of human rights, Integrity Watch Afghanistan ..................................................... 30
3.3: Application of human rights, reAcción ................................................................................... 44
3.4: Altering elites’ incentives on the ground: Five SoM projects .................................................. 52
3.5: Selected questions and results from patient perception surveys, Hospitals without Corruption project .................................................................................................................. 57
3.6: Application of human rights, Serbia on the Move .................................................................... 58

List of Photos
3.1: Honorary badge: “I am not on the take, I work for the salary” .................................................. 53
3.2: SoM’s anticorruption tool poster in hospital, Hospitals without Corruption project .................. 56
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Since 2014, the World Bank Group (WBG) has formally mainstreamed citizen engagement in its strategy to end extreme poverty and share prosperity, building on 25 years of emerging practice and research. Indeed, since the 1990s the WBG has sought to fight corruption and poverty by empowering the poor, leading to a shift from focusing primarily on the client—that is, the borrowing state entity—to focusing increasingly on the ultimate project beneficiaries and citizens more broadly. In the early 2000s, the WBG issued guidance on multistakeholder engagement to strengthen accountability relationships through citizen participation and ensure that the benefits of development projects reached the poor. Most recently, the development community has acknowledged that development outcomes improve when citizens participate in development, leading to the WBG mandate to mainstream citizen engagement across sectors and countries. This followed popular movements in 2010 and 2011, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), that led World Bank president Robert Zoellick to argue for a “new social contract for development” because 2011 was “the year we learned that civic participation matters to development.”

Although citizen engagement has become increasingly important to WBG operations, many gaps remain in understanding how it can be effectively harnessed and supported. The research described in this report, made possible through the Nordic Trust Fund (NTF), a multidonor knowledge and learning program on human rights for World Bank staff, aims to deepen understanding of citizen engagement in the development arena through in-depth study of three grassroots initiatives in which empowered citizens played a central role. All three initiatives embraced the anticorruption, transparency, accountability, and citizen-state interface as they sought to improve the quality and delivery of essential public services. The research complements existing approaches by explicitly adopting a human rights perspective, as well as focusing on organic citizen-led initiatives rather than WBG- or client-initiated projects. In analyzing these cases, this report applies the framework of the World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law (WDR 2017) to understand how citizens effectively disrupted the persistent power asymmetries that undermined development outcomes (World Bank 2017b).

Learning from three case studies of corruption in service delivery

This report analyzes citizen engagement to reduce corruption in service delivery in three diverse settings: in Afghanistan, improving education outcomes through community-based monitoring of schools; in Paraguay, monitoring sovereign wealth fund resources allocated to education to improve the infrastructure of marginalized schools; and in Serbia, promoting transparency and the integrity of physicians to reduce corruption in the health sector (box O.1). Citizen engagement can have particularly strong positive effects on service delivery, including health care and education, by giving voice to the less powerful and in turn improving the accessibility, coverage, and quality of service delivery.

All three cases are examples of successful bottom-up citizen engagement initiatives at the nexus of corruption and essential public services. Citizen engagement is organic rather than induced by external actors; citizens, working on a voluntary basis, help select and design initiatives. In addition, in all cases citizens employ multiple institutional and noninstitutional collective actions over an extended period rather than one-off actions or spontaneous public outbursts. These actions help to achieve the social organizations’ stated goals. Yet, these three cases differ significantly in context across region, income level, fragility, polity, corruption level, and the sector targeted by the citizen initiative. This diversity helps capture the wide variety of citizen engagement permutations and enhances general lessons for development actors.

A framework for analysis: WDR 2017 and a human rights lens

To draw broader lessons about how to harness citizen engagement to improve development outcomes, this report applies the WDR 2017 analytical framework as well as a human rights lens to these three citizen-led initiatives. The WDR 2017 approach compelled consideration of the underlying power asymmetries that undermine the functional effectiveness required for service delivery, and it pointed to ways in which citizens act collectively and engage strategically with...
elites and international actors to rebalance power and shape elites’ incentives and preferences.\(^1\) The human rights–based approach helped demonstrate mechanisms through which citizen groups ensure voluntary commitment to their causes, as well as complementary strategies whereby citizen groups use the availability of certain rights to help fight for additional rights.

According to WDR 2017, power asymmetries between societal actors can undermine the functional effectiveness of policies by preventing commitment, coordination, and cooperation. An understanding of power—the ability of groups and individuals to make others act in their interest and bring about specific outcomes—and power asymmetries is essential to understanding whether policies are designed and implemented to support development outcomes. Negative manifestations of power asymmetries are capture, clientelism, and exclusion. Fortunately, three levers of change can change power dynamics so that governance plagued by capture, clientelism, and exclusion moves toward governance that serves the public interest. These levers consist of changing incentives to pursue particular goals; changing the underlying preferences and beliefs of relevant actors; and increasing contestability—that is, who participates in the policy arena. Using these levers for change often requires multiple sets of actors, including elites, citizens, and international actors. Acting individually, citizens are largely ineffective, but they can organize to apply pressure in the policy bargaining process. Power is thus at the heart of citizen engagement initiatives, and the WDR 2017 framework helps elaborate how citizens can shift power asymmetries through collective action and social organization.

Although WDR 2017 explains how citizens can affect outcomes in the policy arena through social organization, it does not explore how citizens can overcome their substantial collective action challenges through social organization, nor does it delve deeply into the strategies employed by social organization to effect change. The analysis in this report seeks to fill these gaps, drawing on the transparency and social accountability literature as well as the application of a human rights lens. Citizen engagement is a powerful tool through which people can help fulfill their social and economic rights, such as to health care or education, by exercising their civil and political rights. Citizen engagement is linked, in particular, to the freedoms of association, assembly, expression, and information, and the right to participate in government. These rights enable people to become knowledgeable about public problems, voice their concerns even if contrary to

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\(^1\) For the purposes of this report, “elites” are defined as those persons who have the ability to directly influence the design and implementation of a certain policy (World Bank 2017b); “international actors” are entities such as foreign states, multinational corporations, development agencies, or transnational non-governmental organizations (World Bank 2017b, 257).
those of the elites, and organize peacefully to tackle these problems.

The case studies begin by exploring how three organizations overcame collective action challenges through bottom-up efforts to enhance citizen voice through the power of numbers. The studies then explore how these social organizations employed strategies and tactics that relied on a variety of tools and coalition-building strategies (figure O.1). When successful, these strategies and tactics were able to mitigate power asymmetries by shifting elite incentives, reshaping preferences and beliefs, and enhancing contestability. All of these stages of social organization were shaped in part by the local context within which the organizations operated, particularly existing laws and societal norms.

**Key research findings**

**Collective action can shift power asymmetries**

In all three cases, power asymmetries drove the underlying functional challenges that spurred citizen action, resonating with the WDR 2017 framework. In Afghanistan, the high levels of corruption that were undermining the access to and quality of education were driven by the exclusion of citizens and communities from addressing education-related problems in their communities, and teacher quality was undermined by clientelism and patronage. In Paraguay, problems of local clientelism and capture meant that funds from the National Public Investment and Development Fund (FONACIDE) were targeted to politically favored schools rather than marginalized ones, as intended. The would-be recipients were excluded from the allocation process and indeed were often unaware they should be receiving funds. In Serbia, the effective exclusion of patients from using institutional means of controlling corruption in the health care sector and punishing wrongdoers resulted in doctors possessing asymmetrical power relative to that of their patients. Because of the difficulty in challenging these entrenched power asymmetries, under-the-table bribes in exchange for medical services have become an entrenched norm in Serbian society.

Eventually, though, citizen-driven collective action helped shift power asymmetries and gave citizens a seat at the table through their power of numbers, enhancing contestability. Change was brought about most effectively by strategically combining institutional with extrainingstitutional engagement. Extrainingstitutional pressure is especially needed when elite-led institutional policies do not support the rules and policies needed for transparency, accountability, and development outcomes. Examples of such pressure are the community-based monitoring undertaken by Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA), reAcción’s student monitoring in Paraguay, and the grassroots campaigns organized by Serbia on the Move (SoM). As for responses, after organizing silent protests and a petition drive that delivered 3,000 signatures to authorities, SoM received a request from the Ministry of Health to jointly undertake a text messaging service that would enable citizens to securely report corruption.

**Human rights are an effective tool for collective action**

The case studies suggest two main ways in which the active use of human rights helped achieve goals. First, the absence of rights served as a focal point for collective action. Human rights are more than abstract aspirations and moral imperatives; their presence or absence is experienced in daily life. For example, citizens are denied the right to development through the ill effects of corruption, the insufficient and low-quality provision of vital public services, marginalization, poverty, and poor governance. Imagine, for example, being a parent whose sick child is refused treatment because you cannot afford the requested bribe, or attending a school where classes are regularly cancelled because teachers do not show up to work. Notions about claiming rights informed these civic ini-

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**Figure O.1:** Role of social organizations through the lens of the WDR 2017 framework

![Figure O.1: Role of social organizations through the lens of the WDR 2017 framework](source: Based on WDR 2017.)
Initiatives: the right to education (IWA, reAcción), health care (SoM), and information (all cases). The experience of being denied rights, combined with awareness of those rights, served as motivation for collective action.

Second, human rights were used to gain other rights. All three cases are examples of the active practice of human rights for instrumental purposes. The practice of certain rights, such as freedom of association or the right to information, helped citizens in all three cases fulfill other rights, such as to health care and education. Exercising rights related to citizen voice and action (often through monitoring and evaluating elites and services) was also prominent. The nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) catalyzing citizen engagement educated citizens about such rights—from the general public (Serbia) to youth (Paraguay), communities (Afghanistan), and patients (Serbia). Meanwhile, the introduction of right to information laws in Paraguay and Serbia helped citizen groups access the information they needed to expose and combat corruption (table O.1).

### Intangible motivators and participation benefits can spur effective collective action

All three case studies of organic citizen engagement highlight the importance of volunteerism and agency in overcoming collective action problems, adding depth to the WDR 2017 framework. Highly structured, induced social accountability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application of right</th>
<th>Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA)</th>
<th>reAcción (Paraguay)</th>
<th>Serbia on the Move (SoM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Association</strong></td>
<td>Creating community-based monitoring initiatives with local monitors who are elected by citizens</td>
<td>Creating a grassroots youth group that evolved into a formally registered nongovernmental organization (NGO)</td>
<td>Creating a formally registered NGO; creating volunteer-based national and subnational SoM committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assembly</strong></td>
<td>Conducting public meetings, monitoring, local monitor training, local monitor peer-to-peer monthly gatherings, and stakeholder capacity-building workshops, thereby mobilizing communities to overcome problems identified during monitoring</td>
<td>Conducting public meetings and workshops for citizens and municipalities, monitoring, hosting WhatsApp and Facebook groups, and increasing public awareness about how FONACIDE works and its entitlements</td>
<td>Conducting public meetings, workshops for citizens and medical professionals, recruitment activities, digital monitoring, and evaluations of medical professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expression</strong></td>
<td>Circulating monitoring reports, answering questions in the baseline and endline surveys, and expressing demands and views in meetings with education officials</td>
<td>Publishing monitoring reports on FONACIDE, data visualization, blogging, Tweeting, and hosting Facebook and WhatsApp groups</td>
<td>Publishing citizen-generated medical assessments, reports, and surveys about corruption, irregularities, and health care services; publishing policy recommendations and assessments of the adoption and implementation of policies by the Ministry of Health; providing citizens with the information needed to report corruption and irregularities in public hospitals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information</strong></td>
<td>Requesting information from education elites, gathering information through monitoring, and canvassing community members for the baseline survey</td>
<td>Requesting information about FONACIDE from state officials at the national and subnational levels, utilizing government data portals, and interviewing high school principals</td>
<td>Providing access to information about the licenses of medical practitioners and citizen-generated information about medical practitioners and health care facilities; educating patients about their rights and citizens about their rights to health care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation in governance</strong></td>
<td>Providing monitoring results to school management and education officials to improve the quality of education, rectify problems, and prevent corruption; participating in community development councils, school management shuras, and provincial education sector group meetings</td>
<td>Providing government officials with monitoring results, policy recommendations, and accountability tools to improve FONACIDE administration and prevent corruption; raising awareness and educating government officials about FONACIDE at the national and subnational levels; and combining extrastitutional collective action with institutional action, such as submitting formal, legal complaints about corruption uncovered by monitoring</td>
<td>Providing citizen-generated monitoring and evaluation results and policy recommendations to government officials and nonstate professional medical bodies in order to reduce corruption and increase transparency and accountability in the public health care sector and to improve the provision of publicly funded health care services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
interventions in which elites identify the problem, objectives, and desired outcomes and choose the modes of engagement with elites and nonelites are not conducive to volunteerism and initiative, whereas citizens voluntarily contribute their time, energy, effort, and other resources. Citizens choose to participate in part because they connect to the grievance or problem, share objectives, are able to overcome inhibitions (such as fear and apathy) to act, and begin to feel a collective sense of responsibility, ownership, and identity—the so-called intangible motivators (Beyerle 2014).

These intangible motivators foster commitment, cooperation, and coordination, help overcome fear and apathy, and build and sustain participation. Before moving to the action phase of their citizen engagement efforts, all three organizations in this study crafted tailored narratives about the value of citizens improving their lives and how they could go about it. IWA built a narrative around “our” rights to education and how “we [the community] can play a role.” ReAcción cultivated collective responsibility by emphasizing how corruption and misuse of FONACIDE funds were affecting citizens and their schools. In Serbia, SoM found that citizens avoid civic activities in part because they are fearful of interacting with fellow citizens. To counter this atomization, SoM created a narrative that strengthened the sense of collective identity and that shared stories of “us” and how “we” (collectively) are the hope to change Serbia. This narrative was reinforced by badges and T-shirts, which served as symbols to help people recognize each other and bolster the sense that they were not alone in wanting to reduce the role of corruption in health care.

In addition, all three social organizations stressed that participants should have a role in planning and decision making, helping to create a sense of collective ownership. In Afghanistan, working with volunteers and building collective ownership based on community engagement helped IWA avoid the problem encountered by previous interventions when school management councils became inactive after funding and attention from international donors moved elsewhere, or the interventions were captured by prominent nonstate community elites. Working instead with volunteers and building collective ownership helped to foster sustainability, and collective ownership increased the legitimacy of the communities’ demands.

The organizations also built and sustained citizen engagement by providing more concrete benefits for participation such as useful skills, confidence, dignity, and social recognition. IWA sought to bring local monitors together for networking events and increased their local status through officialization ceremonies and awards. The opportunity to gain transferable skills also served as a motivation for participation. All three social organizations provided specialized training that could help participants become effective in the organization itself and would equip them with new skills. For example, ReAcción’s core team applied themselves to learning, adapting, contextualizing, and applying new technologies. None of the youth making up the core team had a background in computer science, and yet they taught themselves and made use of MOOCs (massive online courses) to learn how to code and use visualization tools. They now do all of their own digital work, from social media networking to mobile/web app and website development.

Effective engagement strategies combine pressure, collaboration, and coalition building

All three organizations were particularly effective at achieving change when they combined pressure with positive inducements and collaboration rather than focusing exclusively on exposing corrupt behavior. When civil society groups challenge a corrupt, inequitable status quo and seek to increase contestability in the policy arena, they can end up challenging the benefits and interests of elites, which can preclude constructive engagement, at least at the outset. A solely confrontational relationship with the elite actors who ultimately are in charge of policy formulation and implementation can be counterproductive.

These social organizations, however, managed to demonstrate that citizen engagement can bring elites benefits, even though such organizations are often perceived as antagonistic to government and elite interests. At times, the organizations used positive inducements and collaborative relationships to change the incentives of the elite actors they needed to engage. Because elites in a sector or institution are not monolithic, those who champion pro-development and anticorruption policies or seek to implement them may need the support of citizens to overcome obstacles or resistance from other elites. SoM’s “I’m not on the take, I work for the salary” campaign provided such backing for doctors who wanted to say “no” to corruption. Meanwhile, elites also benefited from citizens serving as the government’s eyes and ears in identifying corruption, poor-quality public services, and mismanagement. The information these social organizations publicized had legitimacy precisely because it came from the grassroots. ReAcción’s two-tier mapping and data visualizations of FONACIDE allocations were the first of their kind in Paraguay and are being used today by government officials and the media.

Meanwhile, when certain elite groups resisted cooperation, these social organizations built coalitions with other actors and institutions and selectively engaged with other sets of elite actors to increase pressure. Organizers in all three organizations made deliberate efforts to map and navigate institutions and elite actors. This involved cultivating alliances with elite state and nonstate actors and institutions that over time perceived these actors and institutions as stakeholders. For example, IWA has developed what it calls a “holistic ap-
proach to enhancing stakeholder involvement.” The policy and governance landscape in war-torn Afghanistan is particularly confusing because of its complex layers of national, subnational, and local levels of institutions and authorities and its weak rule of law. IWA initially secured a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Education, a seal of approval that gives it credibility to engage with other elites throughout the education system at different stages of the community-based monitoring initiatives. Through its “Focal Points” (local staff), IWA traverses these channels to identify elite interlocutors at the relevant national, provincial, and local levels, all the way to oversight of individual schools.

Finally, these social organizations shifted power asymmetries through collective action that wielded pressure and disrupted the corrupt status quo. Thus their approaches helped to change elites’ incentives through both pressure and positive inducements. In addition, these case studies reveal that successful strategies change over the course of engagement, necessitating an ability to learn and adapt.

**Lessons for international actors**

Lessons can be drawn from these case studies for international development practitioners. Because the “operationalization note” issued in conjunction with this report fleshes out lessons for the World Bank, this section is devoted to a list of broad takeaways rather than specific operational messages (Jespersen and Schott 2017).

**Support citizen engagement in all contexts.** Even in fragile contexts and highly corrupt environments social organizations can be effective. Indeed, especially in these environments grassroots movements may be essential to gaining legitimacy, building trust, and partnering with the state. International support for citizen engagement may then be particularly relevant in the more “difficult” contexts. In this research, organic citizen engagement initiatives emerged in spite of less than ideal settings in all three cases. The three countries share a recent history of grim starting points and collective trauma. They have endured authoritarian rule, replete with brutal repression of dissent, human rights abuses, and, in Afghanistan and Serbia, violent conflict. They presently face entrenched corruption and social insecurity resulting from this legacy. Overall, IWA, reAcción, and SoM report similar starting points vis-à-vis citizen mobilization—principally, minimal engagement with elites, general apathy and cynicism, lack of awareness of entitlements and rights, deficits in rule of law, and lack of transparency and information, in particular about policies and responsibilities related to public welfare and services.

**Build on organic structures and bottom-up solutions.** Organic, bottom-up citizen engagement can help enhance participation and is also more effective at generating context-specific, home-grown solutions than induced participation, which is often seen as illegitimate. Effective collective action rests on a sense of collective ownership, responsibility, and identity, which are more likely to be found in organic rather than induced participation. The three organizations described here—Integrity Watch Afghanistan, reAcción, and Serbia on the Move—defy conventional classifications. On the one hand, presently they are all formal, registered NGOs. On the other hand, they have a strong grassroots base that gives them legitimacy, resources (volunteers, in-kind donations, and support), and numbers (people power). For international actors, a key lesson is that citizen engagement “projects” can incorporate the strategic analysis and dynamic elements of bottom-up campaigns. International actors could extend support to the hybrid NGOs and informal groups that are beyond the traditional, often technocratic organizations operating largely in capital cities and unconnected with the grassroots. Civil society groups can lose credibility in the eyes of citizens when they appear to be following a foreign agenda and getting paid handsomely for their efforts, including citizen engagement.

**Create spaces to convene and deliberate.** International actors have an important role to play in supporting social organizations financially, but they may be most effective at creating spaces for social groups to convene, both among themselves through peer-to-peer exchanges (horizontal) as well as with elite actors (vertical). In these case studies, the social organizations benefited from financial support from external actors, but also benefited considerably from international interventions to create spaces for deliberation. For example, in late 2015 reAcción learned that FONACIDE transparency was among the government’s 2014–16 Open Government Partnership (OGP) commitments, and it was accepted into Mesa Conjunta, the group of civil society organizations monitoring the government’s OGP action plan commitments, along with representatives of the public institutions responsible for fulfilling those commitments. Through this forum, supported by the Democracy and Governance program within the U.S. Department of International Development (USAID), reAcción presented its monitoring system and findings and contributed input on FONACIDE’s education commitments to the upcoming OGP 2016–18 action plan.

**Focus on process, not “best practice.”** Rather than replicate a technique, method, tool, or social accountability intervention, international actors should support assistance that scales up processes. The conventional view in development is that a technique, method, tool, or social accountability intervention should be widely replicated. The underlying assumption is that what works in one context can work in another. The WDR 2017 framework points to the conceptual weakness of this assumption because power asymmetries vary and each policy arena has its own interplay of drivers of policy effectiveness, levers for change, and drivers of change. The question is not “What works?” but “What are the dynamics and
rather than scaling up interventions, international actors should scale up the approaches and processes through which solutions are developed (Walji 2016). This form of scale-up is evident in IWA’s community-based school monitoring program. From 2014 to 2016, 180 communities/schools participated voluntarily, and plans are to expand to 270 in 2017. IWA has developed a clear framework with contextually driven interactions and tools, but each initiative has its own unique characteristics, and the communities themselves drive solutions to the problems identified by the local monitors.

Support flexible arrangements and incremental outcomes. It often takes time to build power in the policy arena. Effective citizen engagement cannot be achieved in one-off interventions, but rather contributes to development through nonlinear processes over time. The three case studies reveal that social change is discontinuous and outcomes are incremental, building modestly over time with interim objectives and small victories. Looking at citizen engagement initiatives in isolation rather than holistically over time, one may miss the longer-term power shifts. For example, had this research concentrated on just one SoM effort in Serbia or just one CBM-S initiative in Afghanistan, the conclusions would be much different. It is the cumulative impact of initiatives over time that can lead to general improvements in governance and development. International actors can best support citizen engagement by extending project horizons or supporting consecutive initiatives that build on one another. They can also provide seed funds for new initiatives that enable organizations to test out new approaches and learn from them. And they can support the flexibility and adaptability required by forward-looking social organization strategies by becoming more judicious in defining success and failure.

Navigating this report

This report proceeds as follows. Chapter 1 describes the analytical framework of WDR 2017 and use of the human rights lens. It also explains the evolution of citizen engagement research and practice within the World Bank and the development community. Chapter 2 then puts this research in context by offering a brief literature review. The three case studies are discussed in detail in chapter 3. It describes the country and service delivery sector context; explains how social organizations overcame collective action problems to build and sustain citizen engagement and enhance contestability through the power of numbers; describes the strategies these organizations used to effect change by changing elite incentives, preferences, and beliefs; and discusses how human rights were used in achieving social organization goals. The concluding chapter 4 builds on these cases to distill key messages and lessons for international actors.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIGA</td>
<td>Alliance for Open Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBM-S</td>
<td>Community-Based Monitoring School (program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDD</td>
<td>community-driven development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMU</td>
<td>country management unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>civil society organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DALP</td>
<td>Democratic Accountability and Linkages Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DfID</td>
<td>Department for International Development (U.K.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FONACIDE</td>
<td>Fondo Nacional de Inversión Pública y Desarrollo (National Public Investment and Development Fund)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>gross domestic product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPSA</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Social Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICCPR</td>
<td>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>information and communications technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IWA</td>
<td>Integrity Watch Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEF</td>
<td>Monitoreo de Ejecución Física (Physical Implementation Monitoring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOOC</td>
<td>massive open online course</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>nongovernmental organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NTF</td>
<td>Nordic Trust Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>OGP</td>
<td>Open Government Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMO</td>
<td>social movement organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>school management shura (council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SoM</td>
<td>Serbia on the Move</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPA</td>
<td>transparency, participation, and accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO TERCE</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>U.S. Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-Dem</td>
<td>Varieties of Democracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>WDR</td>
<td>World Development Report</td>
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<td>WGB</td>
<td>World Bank Group</td>
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In this report, all dollar amounts are U.S. dollars unless otherwise indicated.
CHAPTER 1: Citizen engagement, human rights, and development
I  

n 2013 the World Bank adopted a strategy calling for ending extreme poverty and increasing shared prosperity in a sustainable and inclusive manner. Integral to this strategy is citizen engagement, which "entails empowering citizens to participate in the development process and integrating citizen voice in development programs as key accelerators to achieving results" (Manroth et al. 2014, 1). In 2014 the Bank released a strategic framework to mainstream citizen engagement in the institution’s operations (Manroth et al. 2014).

The research project described in this report furthers this agenda by exploring citizen engagement policy and implementation in two related ways. First, it examines the human rights elements of citizen engagement, specifically the core rights and principles underpinning citizen action, as well as their active use in tackling development and corruption challenges on the ground. Second, because the rollout of the Bank's citizen engagement policy is under way, the project aims to complement the institution's knowledge and inform operationalization through in-depth study of three grassroots initiatives in which empowered citizens are playing a central role. In all three initiatives, the emphasis is on fostering the anticorruption, transparency, accountability, and citizen-state interface in order to improve the quality and delivery of essential public services.

The 2017 edition of the Bank’s World Development Report provides a conceptual framework that is ideally suited to this research project (World Bank 2017b). The World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law (WDR 2017) examines how governance determines development outcomes and how power asymmetries can undermine the effectiveness of policies. In doing so, WDR 2017 addresses the roles and capacities of citizens and, in particular, the ways in which citizens can act collectively to shape governance and development outcomes. Based on those considerations, this project has four main objectives:

1. Contribute to the Bank’s corporate agenda by outlining ways to effectively mainstream human rights and citizen engagement in its operations.
2. Inform operationalization of WDR 2017 by demonstrating the applicability of its conceptual framework and key components related to citizen engagement, as well as by highlighting ways to extend and develop the WDR’s central lessons.
3. Contribute more broadly to the literature on citizen engagement—that is, how citizens can mobilize effectively, wield power, and promote “change” and human rights.
4. Demonstrate how external actors can support citizen engagement—engaging with and empowering citizens to support inclusive development and governance—at a time when civic space is shrinking around the world (World Bank 2017b, 235).

To better understand how citizens and citizen engagement can more effectively improve development outcomes, the research team sought to answer questions in the four areas that underpinned the research and the questions that they in turn raised:

5. Human rights, citizen engagement, and development. What key human rights are exercised in citizen engagement initiatives involving grassroots collective action to obtain basic and improved services, transparency, and accountability?
6. Citizen collective action. Extending the WDR 2017 framework, how do civil society organizations cultivate commitment, cooperation, and coordination among citizens? How does this relate to the concept of “intangible motivators” for collective action in the nonviolent social movement field? How is human rights language used to motivate participants? How are information and communications technology (ICT) and other types of technology used in grassroots citizen engagement initiatives to mobilize citizens?
7. Citizen coordination with elites. How do citizens alter the balance of power through mobilization, collective action, coalition building, and engagement with elites to promote change? What tools do they use? How are ICT and other technologies used by civil society organizations to engage state and nonstate elites?
8. Role of external actors. How do external actors directly or indirectly support grassroots citizen engagement initia-

2. The term citizen is used in a general sense to refer to people residing within a defined territory or nation. This research project follows the definition used by McGee and Greenhalf (2011, 26) “We define [citizens] here not in terms of voting rights, birthplace or country of residence, but as people with rights—all those covered in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ensuing treaties and conventions.”
tives for transparency, accountability, and development outcomes? What are the limitations of such support?

This report explores these questions by applying human rights analysis and the WDR 2017 analytical framework to three cases: (1) in Afghanistan, improving education outcomes through community-based monitoring of schools; (2) in Paraguay, monitoring sovereign wealth fund resources allocated to education in order to improve the infrastructure of marginalized schools; and (3) in Serbia, promoting transparency and doctor/hospital integrity to reduce corruption in the public health sector.

**Analytical framework**

As highlighted in WDR 2017, governance is crucial for understanding development outcomes. *Governance* is defined as the process through which state and nonstate actors interact to design and implement policies within a given set of formal and informal rules that shape and are shaped by power. These interactions occur in what can be called the *policy arena*—that is, the setting in which policies are formulated and implemented. Governance can take place at different levels, from international bodies to national state institutions, all the way down to local government agencies and context-specific customary entities.

WDR 2017 highlights a functional approach to analyzing policy effectiveness, and it argues that the major functional drivers of policy effectiveness for development outcomes consist of ensuring *commitment*, enhancing *coordination*, and inducing *cooperation*. Rather than approaching development by seeking to achieve particular “forms” (such as laws, regulations, or institutional designs), the WDR 2017 approach begins by asking what functional goals policies aim to achieve. Sometimes, reforms must ensure a credible commitment to policy choices in the face of changing circumstances; at other times, interventions seek to enhance coordination to change the expectations of a group of actors and elicit socially desirable actions by all; and some policies seek to encourage cooperation to prevent free-riding and induce voluntary compliance. It is through these functions that actors and actions in the policy arena determine development outcomes (figure 1.1).

In the WDR 2017 framework, power—the ability of groups and individuals to make others act in the interest of those groups and individuals and bring about specific outcomes—is a crucial determinant of policy effectiveness. Indeed, efforts to enable commitment, coordination, and cooperation are affected by the distribution of power. The unequal distribution of power in society—*power asymmetries*—is a critical determinant of whether policies are designed and implemented in ways that support development outcomes. Although power asymmetries are not necessarily detrimental, negative manifestations of these asymmetries can include *capture* (rules benefiting narrow interests), *clientelism* (short-term benefits at the expense of long-term, socially desirable goals), and *exclusion* (sidelining those who do not share the same self-serving objectives). All three of these manifestations of power asymmetries can undermine policies that positively affect large groups of citizens. Development outcomes themselves often support the status quo because policies are designed to benefit those in power, leading to persistence of ineffective policies (figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1:** WDR 2017 framework: Governance, law, and development

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Note: Rules refers to formal and informal rules (norms). Development outcomes, in the context of WDR 2017, refers to security, growth, and equity. The actors in the policy arena can be grouped into elites, citizens, and international actors.
Although most development thinking considers only the effects of policy design and implementation on outcomes, what WDR 2017 calls the “outcome game” (the right-hand loop in figure 1.1), decisions in the policy arena also determine the rules by which policies themselves are designed and implemented, or what WDR 2017 calls the “rules game” (the left-hand loop in figure 1.1). Power asymmetries can be persistent and self-reinforcing, undermining equitable development outcomes, but WDR 2017 argues that changes in the “rules of the game” are indeed possible.

Three levers of change can reshape the policy arena: changing incentives to pursue particular goals; changing the underlying preferences and beliefs of the relevant actors; and increasing contestability—that is, who participates in the policy arena. Often, change comes about when the circumstances that underpin elite bargains evolve, thereby changing the interests of elites themselves. In these cases, reforms are often intended to strengthen certain groups of elite actors or to provide insurance against a loss of power.

Although elites directly shape the content and implementation of policies, citizens, and in some instances, international actors, acting alone or together, can also effect change through the three entry points or levers of change just described. Acting individually, citizens are largely ineffective, but they can organize in order to apply pressure to influence the outcome of bargains in the policy bargaining process. International actors can strengthen or alter the incentives of elites and citizens by providing resources (monetary and nonmonetary); they can shift the preferences of elites and citizens, often through longer-term engagement; and they can even affect contestability in the policy arena by providing alternative sites for contestation or by entering the domestic policy arena themselves.

Citizen-based collective action in the WDR framework includes elections, political organizations such as parties, social organizations (ranging from social movements to campaigns to grassroots civic initiatives driving organic participation), and direct participation and deliberation (through both informal and induced formal state interventions). However, WDR 2017 argues that these four modes of citizen engagement are all imperfect and work best when combined strategically.

Citizen engagement through social organization is the primary focus of this research project. Social organization can affect the three levers of change by

- **Enhancing contestability** by reducing the barriers of entry into the policy arena and allying with actors (elites and nonelites) to challenge other elites and reduce their respective bargaining power.

Although WDR 2017 explains how citizens can affect outcomes in the policy arena through social organization, it does not explore how citizens can overcome their substantial collective action challenges through social organization. In a sense, elections themselves overcome collective action challenges—they are a means of aggregating preferences, but their introduction ultimately requires the approval of state authorities. Similarly, deliberation and participation help citizens enter the policy arena, but citizens must first gain a seat at the table. Social organization does rely on citizens themselves, but the barriers to collective action loom large.

### Research design and case study methodology

This report analyzes citizen engagement in two sectors in three diverse settings—education in Afghanistan and Paraguay and health care in Serbia, and the efforts described contributed to reducing corruption in service delivery. Box 1.1 provides a brief summary of the three case studies, which are presented in detail in chapter 3 of this report.

This analysis, based on the WDR framework, focuses on (1) the country context and functional challenges (commitment, coordination, and cooperation), and how power asymmetries drove these challenges; (2) how citizens acted collectively through social organizations, building power to contest in the policy arena through grassroots volunteers; and (3) how these social organizations used strategic pressure and engagement to change the incentives, preferences, and beliefs of elite actors in the policy arena. In taking this approach based on WDR 2017, the team drew on concepts from nonviolent collective action and the evolving transparency, participation, and accountability (TPA) field, and it devoted considerable attention to the ways in which the social organizations used human rights—both language and the rights themselves—to achieve their goals.

Figure 1.2 summarizes this approach visually. The case studies begin by exploring how the organizations overcame collective action challenges through bottom-up efforts and attention to intangible motivators for participation (often such motivators both implicitly and explicitly involved human rights language). The case studies then explore how these social organizations engaged in strategies and tactics using a variety of tools and coalition-building strategies. Often, these strategies depended on the existence of particular human rights to help fight for other human rights, or what is called here “rights begetting rights.” When successful, the tactics and strategies employed by these organizations were able to change the pol-
icy arena by shifting elites’ incentives, reshaping preferences and beliefs, and enhancing contestability. All of these stages of social organization were shaped in part by the local context within which the organizations operated, particularly existing laws and social norms.

In technical terms, this study falls in the category of a structured, focused comparison (George and Bennett 2005). It is based on an applied, action-oriented methodology, which Gaventa and Barrett (2010, 10) describe as “empirically grounded case study research, designed to examine core questions, and to generate findings ‘upwards.’” A structured, standardized set of questions was applied to each case study to gather comparable data. The data were then used in turn to answer a set of specific research questions. Although the sample size was modest, thereby qualifying generalizations, the diversity of contexts, sectors, and types of citizen engagement studied facilitated the extrapolation of lessons learned.

The selection of the three case studies ensured consistency across the following four criteria:

1. The citizen engagement initiatives are at the nexus of corruption and essential public services, including quality and delivery.

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**Box 1.1: Summary of three case studies of citizen engagement**

**Afghanistan**

Founded in 2005, Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) conducts community-based monitoring programs in several sectors aimed at increasing transparency, accountability, and integrity in Afghanistan. In July 2014, IWA launched the Community-Based Monitoring School (CBM-S) program, which seeks to (1) improve the quality of education in Afghanistan; (2) increase contact and coordination between communities and officials by bringing together stakeholders in the education of Afghan children; (3) increase the responsiveness of school officials to citizens; (4) encourage communities to take the initiative in addressing education-related problems in their locales; and (5) use the results of community-based monitoring in policy advocacy at the local and national levels.

**Paraguay**

ReAcción Paraguay is a registered youth anticorruption organization that was first launched in 2010 as an informal anticorruption group composed of young people in Ciudad del Este, the second largest city in Paraguay. Its mission is to empower citizens to prevent corruption and improve the provision of public services, particularly public education. The group works primarily to monitor the sovereign wealth fund expenditures allocated to education in Paraguay and increase transparency and citizen engagement to ensure that these funds reach their intended targets.

**Serbia**

Serbia on the Move (SoM) seeks to reduce corruption in Serbia’s health sector by strengthening prevention mechanisms, transparency, and accountability through citizen engagement. The organization was founded by a group of young professionals and officially launched as a registered association in July 2009. Its objectives are to (1) raise citizens’ awareness about how to fight corruption in publicly funded health care; (2) formulate new transparency and accountability mechanisms to reduce corruption in health care; (3) build the capacity of citizens to actively push for the adoption and implementation of these new transparency and accountability mechanisms; and (4) build a coalition of stakeholders (citizens, civil society organizations, state institutions, public health practitioners) interested in reducing corruption in the health sector. Serbia on the Move has carried out five projects targeting corruption in publicly funded health care, working with health care practitioners, regular citizens, and elites to improve integrity.

**Figure 1.2: Role of social organizations through the lens of the WDR 2017 framework**

Source: Based on WDR 2017.
2. Citizen engagement is organic rather than induced by external actors. Citizens provide input into what initiatives are selected and how they are designed, engage in a variety of peaceful actions, and participate on a voluntary basis. The change intermediaries are civil society entities, ranging from registered nongovernmental organizations to less formal civic groups.

3. Multiple extrainstitutional (as well as institutional) collective actions are employed over an extended period of time in contrast to one-off actions or spontaneous public outbursts.

4. The citizen engagement yields successful outcomes, with success defined as achievement of the objectives outlined by the civil society organization (CSO) behind the initiatives.

The case studies differ significantly, however, in context—by region, income level, fragility, polity, corruption levels, and the sectors targeted by the citizen initiative (see table 1.1).

Beyond income, social progress, and political system, the selected countries differ considerably in terms of the space devoted to citizen engagement and participation. As shown in figure 1.3, civil rights, level of government censorship of media, civil society participation, and a broader index of voice and accountability vary widely. Although all of these metrics are positively correlated with income per capita, the case countries often vary beyond what their income level would imply. For example, civil rights and civil society participation in Afghanistan are ranked lower than would be expected for Afghanistan’s level of income, whereas Serbia “outperforms” on these metrics. Paraguay, despite a relatively low score on voice and accountability, has a much more open press than the other two countries.

The space for citizen engagement is largely shaped in these countries by power asymmetries. In all three countries, but to varying degrees, power tends to be distributed by socioeconomic position (panel a, figure 1.4); citizens without wealth have less power to influence political decisions. This factor translates into the manifestations of power asymmetries discussed earlier: capture, loosely proxied by public sector corruption (panel b); exclusion, proxied by a low degree of consultation in policy making (panel c); and clientelism (panel d). Across these categories, all three countries tend to underperform, with corruption particularly high in Afghanistan and Serbia and clientelism particularly high in Paraguay.

The research process, from case study identification to data gathering and analysis, was collaborative. The case studies were identified by the team, who subsequently consulted with the respective country management units (CMUs) of the World Bank for their approval. The leaders of the three citizen initiatives were then sent an extensive, in-depth questionnaire that they filled out and returned. These were followed by a series of face-to-face or Skype interviews and written correspondence to elicit supplemental data and provide clarifications. The research design and questionnaire were informed by a literature review of previous studies in the field, in particular on social accountability, citizen engagement in the health and education sectors, and the links among human rights, citizen engagement, and development. The questionnaire was designed not only to document the particulars of each case, but also to capture the inner workings and dynamics of the citizen engagement initiatives, including grievances and iden-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study country</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Fragility</th>
<th>Polity</th>
<th>Social Progress</th>
<th>Corruption Levels - Perception</th>
<th>Control of Corruption</th>
<th>Political Rights and Civil Liberties</th>
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<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>SAR</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Low income</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Open Anocracy</td>
<td>36/100</td>
<td>169th</td>
<td>4.81%</td>
<td>24/100</td>
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<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Upper middle income</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>67/100</td>
<td>123rd</td>
<td>15.87%</td>
<td>64/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Upper middle income</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>72/100</td>
<td>72nd</td>
<td>50.96%</td>
<td>78/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1.1**: Broad economic and governance comparison of case study countries

Sources: Fragility: World Bank, Harmonized List of Fragile Situations; polity: most recent Polity IV score; social progress: Social Progress Index (on a scale of 0–100 where 100 indicates highest level of progress; data are from 2016); corruption levels-perception: Transparency International, Corruption Perception Index (ranking of 176 countries, where 1 is least corrupt and 176 is most corrupt); control of corruption: World Bank, Worldwide Governance Indicators (percentile rank from 0 to 100 percent where 100 percent is least corrupt; most recent data are from 2015); political rights and civil liberties: Freedom House, Freedom in the World ratings (on a scale of 1–100 where 100 is freest).

Note: ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean; SAR = South Asia.
tification of the problem, articulation of objectives, recruit-
ment and sustainability, organization and decision making,
strategic analysis, nonviolent collective actions carried out by
the initiatives, intangible collective action motivators (collec-
tive responsibility, collective ownership, collective identity),
education and training, technology, elite engagement, inter-
action with international actors, and elite reprisals against
citizens.

The cases were then analyzed through the lens of the WDR
2017 analytical framework (see chapter 3), and the findings
were compared across the three cases (chapter 4) to identify
patterns and key lessons learned and to produce recommen-
dations for effective citizen engagement relevant to the World
Bank’s citizen engagement policy mandate and operational-
ization. First, however, chapter 2 offers a brief review of the
literature in this area.

**Figure 1.3:** Space for civil society and citizen engagement: Afghanistan, Paraguay, and Serbia

Sources: Civil rights and civil society participation scores: Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI); government censorship of media: V-Dem (Varieties of Democracy) Version 5.2; voice and accountability
index: World Bank, Worldwide Governance Indicators; GDP per capita: World Bank, World Development Indicators (database).
Figure 1.4: Power asymmetries and their manifestations: Afghanistan, Paraguay, and Serbia


Note: For power distribution by socioeconomic position, 0 indicates that those with economic wealth monopolize political power, while 4 indicates that all citizens have equal power regardless of wealth. The DALP database has no data on clientelism for Afghanistan.
CHAPTER 2:
A brief literature review
CHAPTER 2
A brief literature review

This chapter briefly reviews the literature related to citizen engagement, World Bank policy, and the conceptual and research links between citizen engagement and human rights.

Emergence of citizen engagement in development practice and research

Citizens are now firmly rooted in the lexicon and change frameworks of development practitioners. Terms such as voice and participation are not only common in development discourse, but also reflected in policies and practices, such as the World Bank’s citizen engagement mandate. And they are joined by related terms, from civic engagement to social accountability (see box 2.1). What these concepts have in common is seeing regular people as agents and as a necessary and constructive force for development. This is a paradigm shift from the traditional notions of citizens as either the victims of poverty, disease, and natural disasters or as the beneficiaries of elite-driven efforts and interventions. The present research builds on the range of World Bank practices and research that have emerged over the last 25 years. It complements the existing approaches by explicitly adopting a human rights perspective, as well as focusing on organic, citizen-led initiatives rather than Bank- or client-initiated projects.

Box 2.1: Terms related to citizen engagement

Terms related to citizen engagement and citizen participation have proliferated in recent years, but they do not necessarily share common definitions. For purposes of clarity, we present the following definitions, and in some instances their limitations.

Voice is the capacity of citizens to express their preferences to state actors through formal or informal channels and to be heard by them (GSDRC 2014, 4). Voice can also target nonstate actors or both sets of actors at the same time. Voice is about harnessing and exercising power derived from the grassroots. The World Development Report 2017 recognizes the importance of voice by incorporating power analysis and examining citizens as drivers of change in its framework.

Citizen participation encompasses the wide range of bottom-up activities. At one end are circumscribed feedback mechanisms such as citizen report cards or community scorecards assessing public services and state activities. Further along the spectrum are participatory budgeting and planning, and monitoring of budgets, spending, institutions, services, and social programs. At the other end are organized grassroots campaigns and social movements.

Citizen engagement, often used interchangeably with citizen participation, is the term used principally in this report. For World Bank purposes, it is a “two-way interaction between citizens and governments or the private sector within the scope of WBG [World Bank Group] interventions—policy dialogue, programs, projects, and advisory services and analytics—that gives citizens a stake in decision-making with the objective of improving the intermediate and final development outcomes of the intervention” (Manroth et al. 2014, 8). Ideally, this interaction underscores power and information sharing, as well as mutual respect between officials and citizens, rather than merely inviting highly structured input from citizens on programs, policies, or other matters, with limited opportunities for the public to participate in designing these programs (Sheedy 2008).

Civic engagement is when “ordinary citizens, civil society organizations, or both participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability” (Grandvoinet, Aslam, and Raha 2015, 1). What is generally implied is that a certain degree of organization and mobilization on the side of the citizens is involved, and that typically pressure is exerted on the state (as well as nonstate entities) to comply with its duties and responsibilities.

Social accountability is a fuzzy concept with no generally accepted definition about the range of actions that fall within its domain, which has been defined as “the extent and capability of citizens to hold the state accountable and make it responsive to their needs” (World Bank 2012).

Social movements refers to citizen mobilization clusters that use collective action, have change-oriented demands and goals, are sustained over time, and involve some degree of unity building and organizing. Such movements can use a variety of tactics, including extrastitutional tactics that are sometimes combined with institutional measures (Stephan, Lakhani, and Naviwala 2015). Social movements can involve multiple campaigns.

Civic campaigns are a form of citizen mobilization consisting of “highly energized, intensely focused, concentrated streams of activity with specific goals and deadlines” (Ganz 2013, 44).
Citizen engagement in World Bank practice and research

Since the 1990s, the World Bank has sought to actively address corruption and fight poverty through empowerment of the poor. These efforts have led to a shift from focusing primarily on the client—that is, the borrowing state entity—to focusing increasingly on the ultimate project beneficiaries and citizens more broadly. Building on the work of a Bank-wide learning group on participatory development launched in 1990, the Bank issued the paper "The World Bank and Participation" a few years later, stating, "The Bank needs to broaden its business practices to encourage the participation of a much wider range of stakeholders, in order to improve and sustain its development efforts" (World Bank 1994, i). Participation was recognized as central to both the effectiveness and sustainability of development outcomes.

In line with this shift to more participatory development, the World Bank began supporting community-driven development (CDD) projects, which soon constituted $3 billion of the Bank's portfolio (Mansuri and Rao 2004). These projects allowed the Bank to gather experience on the benefits as well as the pitfalls of locally driven development. This shift toward participatory development occurred at about the same time that World Bank president James Wolfensohn declared at the Bank's 1996 annual meetings, "We need to deal with the cancer of corruption."

Recognition of the value of participatory development and the urgent need to deal with corruption lay the groundwork for a shift toward increasingly engaging beneficiaries and citizens in order to improve development outcomes. In the early 2000s, the Bank produced a Social Development Strategy and a Governance and Anticorruption Strategy that argued for the need to strengthen accountability relationships through, among other things, citizen engagement to curb corruption and ensure that the benefits of development projects in fact reach the poor and serve the public interest (World Bank 2005, 2007, 2012). Building on these strategies, the Bank issued a guidance note on Bank multistakeholder engagement—in particular, engagement with civil society, media, and government—and launched the Communication for Accountability and Governance Program, which focused on communication and access to information as the driving and enabling conditions needed to create demand for accountability.3 Around the same time, two World Development Reports emphasized the need to increase accountability and participation. In 2001 the WDR argued for supporting empowerment and strengthening accountability in order to "attack poverty" (World Bank 2001). Three years later, in 2004, the report analyzed how service delivery for the poor could best be improved, finding that enhancing accountability is central to that effort (World Bank 2003). By the end of the first decade of the new millennium, social accountability and citizen engagement had become widely recognized as the cornerstones of successful development interventions.

The popular movements of 2010 and 2011, most notably but not limited to countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), underlined the urgency of the accountability and participation agenda and demonstrated that it was not merely a change in the technical approach to development but in fact a pressing demand by citizens themselves. The World Bank president at the time, Robert Zoellick, consequently called for a "new social contract for development" that would democratize "development economics so that all can play a part in designing, executing, and continually improving development solutions." He then reminded his audience that 2011 was "the year we learned that civic participation matters to development." In line with this change in approach, the Demand for Good Governance agenda was launched in 2010 and the Global Partnership for Social Accountability in 2012, which is directly funding civil society organizations working toward strengthening accountability. Meanwhile, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are emphasizing the link between poverty eradication and participation and accountability. Goal 16 on just, peaceful, inclusive societies incorporates corruption reduction, accountability, participatory and representative decision making, and the right to information.4

Research undertaken by the World Bank has identified context specificity and a nuanced understanding of existing country systems and dynamics as crucial factors enabling effective and sustainable citizen engagement. The recent policy research report Making Politics Work for Development: Harnessing Transparency and Citizen Engagement emphasizes the political nature of participation (Khemani et al. 2016). The authors find that political context significantly affects the potential for healthy engagement by citizens and civil society and thus the positive impact that participation can have on development outcomes. The report echoes the need for context specificity expressed in Opening the Black Box: The Contextual Drivers of Social Accountability by Grandvoinnet and her colleagues (2015). They develop a framework that identifies the capacity for and effectiveness of civic mobilization and citizen action, in addition to state action and access to information, as among the key drivers of social accountability. The importance of understanding power relation-

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3. The Communication for Governance and Accountability Program (CommGAP, 2006–11) focused on communication and access to information to create demand for accountability (World Bank 2009).
ships and building on organic structures as well as the need to pay deliberate attention to the inclusion of marginalized groups for successful social accountability approaches have also been raised by other researchers such as O’Meally (2013). This finding resonates with the warning by Mansuri and Rao (2013) that capture of local development initiatives and lack of inclusion are threats. In Localizing Development: Does Participation Work? Mansuri and Rao (2013) stress the need to develop a nuanced understanding of the existing local structures and organic initiatives and build on them rather than implement conventional blueprints for citizen engagement and social accountability.

The current president of the World Bank, Jim Yong Kim, continued to expand this agenda by introducing the citizen engagement mandate in 2014. By fiscal year 2018, all investment lending projects, across regions and sectors, will have to engage citizens. As guidance for its teams, the Bank developed the Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Citizen Engagement in World Bank Group Operations (Manroth et al. 2014). It lays out the rationale for mainstreaming citizen engagement, focusing on improved development outcomes, especially in service delivery. Citizen engagement in design, implementation, and monitoring of projects is thus considered not only the right thing to do but also the smart thing to do.

## Citizen engagement in the health and education sectors

Some of the strongest evidence of the positive impact of citizen engagement on development outcomes is in service delivery, including in the health and education sectors (Manroth et al. 2014, 2, 10, 71). Citizen engagement has been shown to improve the accessibility, coverage, and quality of service delivery, particularly when service delivery is affected by corruption (Manroth et al. 2014, 11, 71). Service delivery is unique in that it provides multiple routes of accountability between the state and the citizen: the “long route” between policy makers and citizens and the “short route” between service providers and service users (World Bank 2003, 79). A recent study on service delivery in the MENA region showed that citizens’ level of trust in the state is heavily influenced by the quality of service delivery (Brixi, Lust, and Woolcock 2015).

Among the biggest challenges to meeting development goals and improving the quality of service delivery in the health and education sectors are corruption and lack of access by marginalized groups (World Bank 2014, 6–7). Citizen engagement can help mitigate these challenges through improved social accountability and inclusion by giving voice to the less powerful. The World Development Report 2004: Making Services Work for Poor People devotes an entire chapter to citizen voice and ways to increase accountability in order to support pro-poor policies in service delivery (World Bank 2003, chap. 5). In addition to using elections, it identifies various citizen initiatives as successful examples, especially those that generate and share specific information about budgetary allocations and service delivery outputs (World Bank 2003, 87–88).

Although many studies have found a positive link between engagement and development outcomes in the two sectors, not all studies have found a significant impact. The latter finding has been attributed to the role played by context as well as to the specific operational modalities of the interventions, such as the limited effect of public information campaigns where government responsiveness is low (Manroth et al. 2014, 71). Multiple case studies and randomized control trials have assessed the impact of citizen engagement on development outcomes in the health and education sectors. Successful interventions have, for example, included social justice committees in Gujarat, India, that advocated for public service delivery to Dalit communities (Mohanty 2010); public deliberations on health policy in Brazil (Cornwall and Shankland 2008); and increased avenues for parent participation in school management in Mexico (Shapiro and Skoufias 2006).

Khemani (2008) compares the findings of a study on community monitoring in the health sector in Uganda and a study on community monitoring in the education sector in India, and he attributes the differences to the influence of the sociopolitical context. Khemani et al. (2016) stress the importance of healthy political engagement and the local political environment to successfully inducing citizen engagement. Citizen engagement undertaken in the context of development projects or programs should be designed with a keen awareness of politics. It has to be safeguarded from capture by local leaders as well as given teeth by demanding accountability from elected leaders. This finding resonates with the observation that social accountability initiatives in the health sector are successful if they actively contest power relations, especially when the power structures are marked by social inequality and the exclusion of marginalized groups. Furthermore, context matters to the impact that citizen engagement can have on outcomes in health and education because of the differing levels of access to information (George 2003; World Bank 2014, chap. 4).

5. A more detailed overview with summaries of key studies can be found in Manroth et al. (2014, 71–74).
Citizen engagement, anticorruption, and collective action

Effective strategies for citizen engagement can build on lessons not only from research on citizen engagement itself, but also from collective action and work on transparency, participation, and accountability (TPA). “Social accountability efforts may have a lot to learn from political accountability initiatives,” posits Fox (2016, 7). One dimension is what he describes as a move from a tactical to a strategic approach. The tactical approach is what Fox calls “bounded” interventions to disseminate localized information about public service delivery and state resource allocation. The strategic approach involves multiple coordinated tactics, actionable information for citizens, measures to enable collective action, service provider incentives, and cultivation of synergies between citizen voice and government policy shifts and reforms (Fox 2016). In operational terms, the objectives of strategic citizen engagement for accountability and development are not limited to frontline service delivery outcomes; they also include vertical outcomes “up the policy process supply chain” (Fox 2016, 4). Learning from the Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPiSA) application process, Guerzovich and Poli (2014) also advance a strategic approach to social accountability.

These more holistic approaches recognize that poverty, marginalization, corruption, fragility, impunity, and injustice are linked rather than parallel challenges requiring distinct efforts. Beyerle (2014) analyzes 12 social movements, campaigns, and community initiatives targeting corruption and finds that regular people do not view graft in a vacuum. Rather, it is connected to other injustices or deprivations, from poverty and marginalization to police abuse, absent or low-quality public services, or large-scale elite malfeasance, often perceived as contempt for the citizenry. “Accountability” consists of outcomes such as preventing or rectifying shoddy reconstruction and development projects (Afghanistan); reopening an HIV dispensary that was shuttered when the municipal land on which it stood was sold illegally (Kenya); obtaining the needed state documents, utilities, and public services to which citizens are entitled (India); or protecting an effective anticorruption commission (Indonesia).

Citizen engagement strategies can also draw on research that has been conducted on collective action and social movements, in particular on what creates motivation and enables mobilization of citizens, on the one hand, and what supports the success and sustainability of those movements, on the other. Effective collective action is typically stimulated by intangible motivators (Beyerle 2014). Among these are collective identity, collective responsibility, and collective ownership. Even though intangible motivators have not been the direct focus of traditional scholarship on transparency, participation, and accountability, practitioner-scholars such as Gauri, Woolcock, and Desai (2012, 160) indirectly attest to their importance through the related concept of intersubjectivity—that is, “the extent to which relevant actors share a common understanding of the problems they face and possible solutions to those problems.” The importance of these intangible motivators also resonates with the findings of Mansuri and Rao (2013) as they distinguish the characteristics of organic participation from those of induced participation, emphasizing that the former is driven by intrinsically motivated local actors, while the latter is extrinsically promoted, typically by a large bureaucracy. They furthermore highlight the role of leaders in organic participation efforts: “Organic participation is driven by self-motivated leaders who work tirelessly, with little compensation, often at a high opportunity cost. They are constantly innovating, networking, and organizing to get the movement to succeed” (Mansuri and Rao 2013, 32).

Research on collective action and social movements also highlights the importance of power and its distribution, which resonates with the World Development Report 2017 (WDR 2017) framework. In a series of three publications, the collaborative Transparency and Accountability Initiative has examined the role and relevance of social movements to the transparency and accountability field (Halloran and Flores 2015; Joyce 2015; Joyce and Walker 2015). In the first of these publications, Halloran and Flores (2015, 1) conclude: “Citizens can successfully pressure and support government accountability through collective mobilization strategies that require capable, autonomous and representative grassroots organizations and movements.” Citizen-based collective action can have a dual function. On the one hand, it can pressure elites, thereby shifting power asymmetries, to enact or implement policies. On the other hand, it can support actors and institutions, seeking to reduce corruption or improve development outcomes, thereby building coalitions to change the incentives of elites. In the latter case, elites and citizens can play synergistic roles to foster positive outcomes. For example, in their strategic, vertical integration analysis of the well-known Textbook Count initiatives in the Philippines, Fox and Aceron (2016) highlight the constructive relationship between civil society and the Department of Education (national, subnational, and local) in seeking to tackle both the causes and the symptoms of corruption and bottlenecks in public school book production and distribution (Fox and Aceron 2016; Guerzovich and Rozenzweig 2014).

Power is central to citizen engagement and social accountability by way of its asymmetries (World Bank 2017b), shifts (McGee and Gaventa 2011), relationships (Halloran 2016), vertically integrated power structures (Aceron and Issac 2016; Fox 2016), and dynamics (Beyerle 2014). Power emanating from citizen-based collective action, also called people power, refers to the social, economic, political, and psychological pressure that is placed on state and nonstate elites by significant
numbers of individuals organized around shared grievances and goals and engaging in a variety of nonviolent actions such as community monitoring initiatives, demonstrations, cultural expressions, and solidarity with state integrity champions and reformers (Beyerle 2014).

Three main underlying dynamics of citizen-based collective action matter for the transparency, participation, and accountability context: (1) disrupting systems of graft and abuse—that is, interfering in their smooth functioning; (2) engaging with power holders and the public to shift their loyalties and positions and pull them toward a citizen engagement initiative, campaign, or movement; and (3) applying nonviolent pressure through the “power of numbers” (Beyerle 2014). These three collective action dynamics complement the conceptualization of power asymmetries in WDR 2017 by adding the “how” to citizen engagement manifested through social organizations—that is, how citizens wield power to affect the policy arena through the three levers of change. Depending on the policy arena, these collective action dynamics can alone or in tandem shift elites’ incentives, reshape preferences and beliefs, and increase contestability.

Finally, recent literature on social accountability points to an evolving notion of scaling up. The greater focus on the relevance of context for the success of development and citizen engagement challenges the conventional view of scaling up, which consists of widely replicating a technique, method, tool, or social accountability intervention. The conventional view was built on the assumption that what works in one context can work in another. In the WDR 2017 framework, the focus on power reveals that this assumption is conceptually weak because power asymmetries vary and each policy arena has its own unique interplay of drivers of policy effectiveness, levers for change, and drivers of change. Citizen engagement takes place in complex contexts and involves complex processes (Wajli 2016). Thus social accountability actions “need to resonate with the existing culture and values in the particular society, and provide motivational and emotional resources to those who engage in them and those who react to them” (Beyerle 2014, 271).

Research on scaling up of social accountability initiatives has also uncovered weak results. For example, the World Bank study by Mansuri and Rao (2013) on localizing development found that scaled-up induced community participation tended to be captured by local elites. Rather than scaling up induced interventions or solutions, Wajli (2016) proposes scaling up the approaches and processes through which solutions are developed. Fox (2016, 13) distinguishes between scaling up and taking scale into account through vertical integration that links “citizen action at the grassroots with action at the national level, while seeking to broaden their coverage horizontally in terms of the geography and social inclusion of excluded citizens.” In terms of power, scale is related to the power of numbers, one of the three collective action dynamics. It incorporates the notion of scaling up citizen engagement as a source of pressure on elites.

### Citizen engagement, fragile contexts, and peacebuilding

Citizen engagement and social accountability can also positively affect development outcomes in fragile contexts and even contribute to peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Engagement and accountability help to build trust in a context that is marked by distrust and divisions; participation gives citizens an opportunity to voice their concerns and engage politically through nonviolent means; and community-based organizations and citizen-led initiatives often play a crucial role in contexts in which the state is unable to provide effective governance.

Citizens in fragile countries, whether emerging from a conflict or in danger of falling into a conflict, typically display lower levels of trust in their government (World Bank 2011, 100). However, rebuilding trust is central to rebuilding peace. As laid out in WDR 2017, the goals of governance are achieving security, growth, and equity (World Bank 2017b, 4). When the state appears unable to provide these, citizens are less likely to trust the elites. As noted earlier, a recent analysis of service delivery in the MENA region following the uprisings of 2011 links the level of trust citizens have in the state to its performance in service delivery, the accountability of institutions, and citizen engagement and voice (Brix, Lust, and Woolcock 2015). These factors can form either a vicious cycle in which poor services and the absence of voice erode trust or a virtuous cycle in which greater opportunities for participation help to build trust. Institutional legitimacy is central to stability (World Bank 2011, xi). Because such legitimacy and citizens’ trust in the state are easily undermined by corruption, strengthening social accountability and voice is key to building more stable societies and repairing the social contract.

Meanwhile, providing opportunities for civic engagement in fragile states and involving civil society in peacebuilding decreases the risk of violent action and support the sustainability of peacebuilding efforts. Several scholars such as Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) have in recent years compared the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance and violent resistance. Countries that experienced nonviolent resistance were found to be at least 50 percent more likely to qualify as a democracy five years after a conflict than those in which change was brought about violently. Even some groups that previously engaged in violence shifted to nonviolent tactics when it promised greater chances of success (Dudouet 2015). These findings demonstrate the importance of an environment responsive to nonviolent action. If nonstate actors in conflicts have a great-
CITIZENS AS DRIVERS OF CHANGE

er chance of achieving their goals nonviolently, a strong argument can be made that there are strategic incentives to choose nonviolent tactics over the harmful and less successful path of violent resistance. More broadly, involving civil society in conflict transformation and peacebuilding promises greater success and sustainability of peace agreements by reflecting a wider range of perspectives and helping to forge a consensus across societal groups (Fischer 2011).

Engaging citizens and civil society in social accountability in fragile contexts has proven useful when the state falls short (Grandvoinnet, Aslam, and Raha 2015, 206). Even in contexts in which a country is divided or levels of institutional legitimacy are low, community-based organizations have the potential to strengthen a sense of citizenship (Gaventa and Barrett 2010). The case study of Integrity Watch Afghanistan in this report demonstrates the unique and fruitful role that a civil society organization engaged in social accountability efforts can play in a context marked by profound divisions and high levels of fragility.

Rights begetting rights: Using citizen engagement to improve development outcomes

Citizen engagement, inherent in the human rights framework, is a powerful tool through which people can, among other things, improve the fulfillment of their social and economic rights, such as health or education, by exercising their civil and political rights. Citizen engagement is linked especially to the freedoms of association, assembly, expression, and information and the right to participate in government (see box 2.2). These rights relate to people’s opportunities to be knowledgeable about public problems, voice their concerns even if contrary to those of the elites, and organize peacefully to tackle these problems. In addition, citizen engagement is integral to the fundamental principles guiding the entirety of the human rights framework: indivisibility of rights, universality of rights, nondiscrimination and equality, and principles related to good governance. The way a society is governed is also essential for the realization of human rights (World Bank and OECD 2013, 74). Adherence to the rule of law ensures equality and nondiscrimination in the application of rights. Transparency allows monitoring the implementation of rights, and accountability ensures that those responsible for protecting and promoting rights do so correctly. Citizen engagement then ensures that rule of law, transparency, and accountability are actually used as tools for ensuring that rights are respected and fulfilled.

The right to development conceptually and practically links human rights and development in a way that creates mutual gains for both fields. It is defined as “an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.” The right to development provides a holistic approach that integrates aspects of both human rights and development by defining development as an economic, social, cultural, and political process, not just as growth. It also encompasses all human rights—civil, political, economic, social, and cultural—and combines the rights of peoples with the rights of individuals in a way that makes it a more suitable framework for the global problems of today. The right to development framework therefore requires a comprehensive, human-centered development policy with strong participatory development processes, including the active, free, and meaningful participation of affected right holders. In line with the rationale of the World Bank’s citizen engagement mandate, empowering citizens to participate in the development process and integrating the voice of citizens in development programs are key contributors to achieving better results.

Box 2.2: Human rights and citizen engagement

Basic human rights are laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and codified into international law through nine core instruments, among them the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Citizen engagement is related to the following rights:

- Freedom of expression and right to information (ICCPR, Article 19)
- Freedom of assembly (ICCPR, Article 21)
- Freedom of association (ICCPR, Article 22)
- Right to participate in government (Universal Declaration, Article 21).

These rights are guided by a set of principles, including universality and nondiscrimination, recognizing that all people hold them and should be able to enjoy them without discrimination.

8. Article 1.1, Declaration on the Right to Development.
Citizen participation to reduce corruption and improve development outcomes can be viewed as the active practice of human rights for three reasons. First, it involves both claiming and exercising fundamental rights through voice and action at the grassroots. Second, the collective processes involved in citizen engagement and action—including shared grievances and goals, coalition building, and joint action—by their nature tend to incorporate human rights principles. Third, positive outcomes enhance the achievement of rights. The next chapter explores how this plays out on the ground and in the policy arena through three case studies.
CHAPTER 3:
Case studies
Afghanistan: Improving education outcomes through community-based monitoring of schools

The challenges to better governance in the Afghan education sector are many, and the obstacles to citizen engagement are significant. The country remains fragile, suffers from high rates of corruption, and is struggling to overcome capacity constraints. Moreover, the vast quantities of development aid that have flowed into the country for almost two decades have only ramped up the opportunities for corruption and aggravated the threat of capture.

The mission

Often, citizens are hesitant to become involved in the policy arena because they feel ill-equipped or not entitled to do so and doubt their engagement will bear fruit. Meanwhile, elites tend to hesitate to engage with citizens, who are often thought to be more troublemakers than constructive collaborators. Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA), a nongovernmental organization (NGO) seeking to increase transparency, accountability, and integrity in the country, has been working to change that perception through its community-based monitoring programs. The programs depend on harnessing the power of numbers by overcoming people’s hesitation to leap into the fray. They do so by cultivating collective responsibility and collective ownership. IWA trains citizens in local monitoring, equipping them with the tools and networks needed to become involved and work constructively toward tangible change in their communities. The organization also acts as a facilitator between communities and elites by working with elites from the national to the local level, sharing with them data and promoting their interaction with communities.

IWA conducts community-based monitoring programs in sectors that are particularly plagued by corruption. Founded in 2005, IWA began its citizen engagement efforts with community-based infrastructure monitoring in 2007 (Beyerle 2014). It then expanded to monitoring trials and resource extraction operations in 2011, and in July 2014 it launched the Community-Based Monitoring School (CBM-S) program. The CBM-S program reflects widely shared and growing public concerns about education. In the 2014 “National Corruption Survey” conducted biennially by IWA, corruption ranked second and education seventh among the most serious problems facing Afghanistan. In the 2016 survey, access to education moved to second place and corruption moved to third place. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education was ranked as the seventh most corrupt institution in 2012 and moved to third place in the 2014 and 2016 surveys.

Primary and secondary public education was rated the most accessible government service in the same surveys, with over 90 percent of the population directly interacting with it. Working from the bottom up by targeting corruption and mismanagement in schools thus promised to be of direct relevance to citizens and to provide them with opportunities for incremental and tangible achievements.

The main goal of the community-based monitoring program in schools is to improve the quality of education—a key public good that is a foundation of development. Monitoring of schools is designed to facilitate improvements by, on the one hand, identifying and rectifying problems stemming from corruption, mismanagement, insufficient resources, insecurity, or a combination of them, and, on the other, preventing corruption and mismanagement.

Although fragile states such as Afghanistan face many of the same corruption challenges as other developing nations, fragility compounds the risk of malfeasance (Chene 2012).

“We want to involve citizens and help them understand that they have to take responsibility and find solutions. We want to enhance a culture of oversight, of asking questions, so that officials should feel they need to be accountable and responsive.”

Kowsar Gowhari, former manager of programs, Integrity Watch Afghanistan

10. IWA, https://iwaweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/NCS__English__for-web.pdf p.30. Supplemental information, clarifications, and data were gathered from IWA through Skype or in-person interviews and e-mail communications between July 2016 and April 2017 with Kowsar Gowhari, former program manager, IWA; Khadija Mehmood, program officer, CBM-S; and Naser Sidiquee, former program manager, CBM-S.

Corruption can occur at all levels, from policy to the central government, from the regional government to the local administration and schools (Hall 2012). In Afghan schools, corruption is manifested in many ways such as teachers who pay bribes to receive salaries, ghost teachers (nonexistent, absent, or double-registered educators), unqualified teachers and other personnel, embezzlement from budgets, procurement leakages, shoddy or neglected infrastructure and facilities, and extortion of parents (Hall 2012; Sigsgaard 2009). On the ground, such corruption results in large class sizes and teacher absences (because there are fewer teachers), substandard teaching, insufficient supplies, and inadequate infrastructure and sanitation (Hall 2012). These are the types of problems identified in IW A’s community-based school monitoring program.

Other goals of the program are (1) to increase contact and coordination between communities and officials by bringing together all those who have a stake in the education of Afghan children; (2) increase the responsiveness of school officials to citizens; and (3) encourage communities to take the initiative in addressing their own education-related problems. Yet another goal is to use the results of community-based monitoring in policy advocacy at the local and national levels because problems identified in schools are often the result of corruption and mismanagement originating upstream at the provincial and national levels (Hall 2012). IWA envisions a national program within the Ministry of Education that is implemented through the school management shuras (parent-teacher associations)—see Sidiqee (2016). Consequently, IW A’s CBM-S program is fundamentally about improving governance for public school education.

The rest of this case study describes how IW A has forged collective action, increased contestability, and contributed to creating incentives and shaping the preferences of elites in order to improve access to quality education across the country, but first it looks at the setting and the challenges it poses.

**Background context and challenges**

Afghanistan is a low-income country suffering from widespread fragility and corruption, both of which are jeopardizing its development. Decades of war and oppression have shaped Afghan politics, and instability continues to pose a significant risk to development efforts. Ongoing violence constrains where programs can be implemented and how sustainable they are. In that context, smaller projects with community support and implemented over a wider area have been found to be relatively more successful (Kapstein 2017). Meanwhile, corruption is undermining progress across the board, from posing a disincentive to private sector investments to lowering the quality of public service delivery. The World Bank’s new country strategy (2017–20) therefore seeks to support the government in tackling corruption and building more accountable institutions in order to fight poverty and reduce inequality.

The Afghan government recently signaled its intention to become a member of the multilateral Open Government Partnership (OGP) as a step toward strengthening its fight against corruption and improving transparency and accountability. Such efforts to improve governance and build an enabling environment for development are much needed. The evidence is that Afghanistan continues to score poorly on a range of indicators. It was rated as an “open anocracy” by Polity IV (2013); deemed “not free” by Freedom House (2016); and received a 5 percent (out of 100 percent) rating by the World Bank (2015) on its control of corruption (figure 3.1).13 Freedom House cites in particular the obstacles to free media, and the fulfillment of civil liberties and political rights more broadly, because of insecurity and the threat of harassment and violence. The Access to Information law passed in June 2014 is a noteworthy step toward improved transparency and accountability.14

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14. Despite this progress, implementation of the law faces several challenges on the supply side, such as lack of cooperation among ministries and agencies and poor technical and financial resources to train public officials, as well as on the demand side, such as limited awareness among ordinary citizens (Oversight Commission on Access to Information 2013–16). IW A recently launched a “Request for Information” campaign at the national and provincial levels (IW A 2017).
The public education system in Afghanistan suffered decades of upheaval in the 1980s (Soviet occupation) and 1990s (civil war and the emergence of the Taliban’s movement). Since 2002, however, education has been one of Afghanistan’s success stories. In 2001 no girls attended formal schools, and boys’ enrollment was 1 million. By 2014 the total net enrollment rate in primary schools (ages 7–13, grades 1–6) was 86 percent.

Despite this progress, coverage in secondary education (ages 13–19, grades 7–12) remains a major problem with a net enrollment rate of 48 percent. Furthermore, access to education in Afghanistan still suffers from significant disparities across gender, geographical location, and household income. In 2014 girls’ enrollment reached 71 percent for primary education and 35 percent for secondary education, and girls’ dropout rates are high in the secondary grades. In addition, the higher education enrollment ratio is about 5 percent, which is one of the lowest participation rates in the world, and it contributes to the adult literacy rate, which is one of the lowest in the world, about 38 percent (World Bank 2016).

The education sector in Afghanistan faces a number of challenges, including poor infrastructure, poor-quality teachers, and lack of resources.

**Infrastructure.** In 2015, of the total registered schools only about half had proper buildings (the rest were operating as home-based schooling—in tents, houses, and under trees). Furthermore, most schools had inadequate facilities—that is, 62 percent lacked surrounding walls, 31 percent lacked drinking water, 33 percent lacked functional sanitation facilities, and 76 percent lacked electricity, all of which negatively affected access and retention (Ministry of Education 2015, 2016; World Bank 2016).

**Poor quality and shortage of teachers.** Only 38 percent of all teachers meet the requirements of becoming a teacher (14th grade graduate). The remaining who have not yet met the criteria to be professional teachers are recruited as contact teachers in remote areas. The shortage of teachers is evidenced by the high pupil-teacher ratio of 45:1 (2013). Only 28 percent of the total number of teachers are female. They are located primarily in urban areas, which has important implications for female student attendance. In 2012 about 31 percent of schools were running on multiple shifts and consequently on reduced teaching hours. Absenteeism from the classroom—by both teachers and students—necessarily interrupts and shortens learning time (Ministry of Education 2015; World Bank 2016).

**Low expenditure on education.** As of 2015, the government expenditure in the education sector in Afghanistan as a share of GDP remained low at 3.2 percent, falling from 3.46 percent in 2010 to 2.53 percent in 2012 and 3.32 in 2015.


Over the last 15 years, Afghanistan has made impressive progress in achieving better education outcomes, and yet the challenges remain large because of high dropout rates, lack of qualified teachers, and missing infrastructure (World Bank 2016). Since 2001, the country has moved from zero enrollment of girls in the formal education system to a female student population of almost 40 percent in universities. At the same time, however, almost half of all schools lack buildings, and adult illiteracy rates remain high—only 38 percent of Afghans above the age of 15 are literate, and only 23 percent of adult women. Education in Afghanistan has suffered not only from the many years of war as well as Taliban rule, but also from high rates of corruption, resulting, among other things, in teacher absenteeism, inappropriate procurement in construction and equipment, and payments for grades (Hall 2012; Sigsgaard 2009; USAID 2009). The problem is so acute that, according to the NATO Civilian-Military Fusion Center’s 2012 report, corruption is perceived to be a key obstacle to education development (Hall 2012). Indeed, since 2014 respondents in IWA’s National Corruption Survey have consistently ranked the Ministry of Education among the three most corrupt public institutions in the country.16

In Afghanistan, among the many obstacles to citizen engagement are citizens’ lack of awareness and interest, as well as the poor security and violence that undermine the feasibility of such initiatives in some regions. Often, people do not understand how their involvement in community monitoring, for example, can bring about change and reform. They see corruption and inferior public services as problems for state elites to tackle, not citizens. This pattern stems in part from the international reconstruction and development process in which huge amounts of funding were poured into the country, corruption was rampant through shoddy projects, and communities and local authorities were not usually consulted about their needs, particularly in the early years.17 As for security, on the ground it is unstable. For example, citizen engagement initiatives by IWA in two schools in the Enjil dis-

17. For documentation on corruption in reconstruction and development, see SIGAR (2016).
Citizens as Drivers of Change

District in Herat had to be halted because of worsening security.

Further obstacles are norms and practices normalizing graft and caution about upsetting established hierarchies. Although graft is roundly condemned, some citizens (unwillingly or willingly) still take part in corrupt transactions, often benefiting from them. Meanwhile, because of the country’s societal norms about gender and its strong patriarchal system, women have not played a prominent role in monitoring activities.

As noted, elites are often hesitant to engage with citizens, and citizen engagement initiatives can be easily captured by local elites. Community monitoring in the Afghan context takes perseverance and patience because government officials are not necessarily forthcoming and willing to cooperate. Initially, there was little enthusiasm for community-based monitoring by either citizens or elites. In the words of IWA’s former program manager Kowsar Gowhari, “officials from the Ministry of Education didn’t want to cooperate because they see them [citizens] as a nuisance. Community members saw no point, and school management didn’t want trouble-making.” Another challenge was to avoid disturbing local power and resource balances or unintentionally tilting the program’s support in favor of particular individuals or subgroups in the community. As several experts on local development and social accountability have pointed out, it is essential to be aware of these nuanced dynamics on the ground and to prevent elite community members from hijacking an initiative for their own personal gain (Fox 2014; Mansuri and Rao 2013).

Power asymmetries in the education policy arena also hamper meaningful citizen participation and lead to the exclusion of marginalized communities in particular. These communities, which can be found in urban, rural, and periurban environments, typically lack access to well-functioning schools and resources for school buildings and infrastructure, and they are rarely included in decision making. The exceptions are some of the induced citizen-state deliberation bodies created in the context of development projects, following policy recommendations by international actors. The exclusion of such communities is exacerbated by country’s recent and ongoing experiences with violent conflict, Taliban rule, and state collapse.

Collective action to enhance contestability

IWA uses a carefully designed approach to community monitoring. It is built around collective responsibility and collective ownership and is aimed at overcoming the significant obstacles to better governance and citizen engagement just described. Working steadily with all the relevant stakeholders, from the Ministry of Education down to the local monitors, the organization secures buy-in across levels of hierarchy. The CBM-S program follows an eight-stage model that recognizes the importance of gaining the support of the authorities (it begins by securing a memorandum of understanding from the Ministry of Education and coordinating with officials at the provincial, district, and local levels), as well as creating genuine interest within the grassroots (such as through capacity- and community-building activities)—see appendix A.

Establishing formal cooperation with the ministry and other authorities and forging working relationships with them are essential for building credibility as well as for leveraging it to create pressure to address the issues identified through the monitoring initiatives. Formal cooperation helps to generate institutional and social pressure for government elites to engage with communities. On the side of the communities, it helps to overcome apprehension about challenging the status quo through monitoring and interacting with authorities. Furthermore, problems on the ground identified through community monitoring can require action from different elites at different levels, thereby fostering a vertical scale of accountability.

Also at the local level, IWA is respecting and utilizing established hierarchies, thereby securing support from entire communities. It recruits communities rather than individuals, as is common for many grassroots campaigns and social movements, and it establishes the support of the community before launching an initiative. IWA Focal Points (district-level staff working with communities and engaging with subnational and local elites) approach communities by speaking with respected members such as elders and mullahs, the local school management, as well as regular citizens in informal gatherings.

IWA encourages communities to take ownership of the monitoring process, which makes it meaningful to them. If a community is interested in participating in the CBM-S program, the local community development council selects a local monitor. By ensuring that the monitors are elected locally, IWA increases the legitimacy of their work, which is done on behalf of the community. Local volunteer monitors have included community elders, farmers, shopkeepers, university graduates, and students. The majority have been men, but IWA is trying to include more women by giving them additional support to help them overcome safety concerns and social pressures. Among the 150 active local monitors in 2016, 88 were male and 62 were female. The volunteers are not paid for their time and only receive a modest monthly stipend of 1,000 Afghans (about $15) to cover transportation and

18. Personal communication, Kowsar Gowhari, former program manager, IWA, July 2016.
19. Community development councils are a feature of the Afghan government’s National Security Program. The objectives are to improve rural villages’ access to basic services and support democratic village governance and female participation. Outcomes and longevity are mixed (Beath et al. 2013).
communication expenses during their monitoring activities. Volunteerism, a pillar of IWA's citizen engagement initiatives, helps to avoid distorting the incentives for becoming involved and strengthens ownership. “When money is involved, people don’t take ownership,” maintains Gowhari.

At first, the CBM-S program followed a pilot community scorecard program focused on empowering school management shuras to evaluate education services, identify school problems, and encourage locally driven solutions. However, IW A found that scorecards were reactive in nature and lacked a regular monitoring system. Moreover, IW A observed that many such councils became inactive after funding and attention from international donors shifted, or they were captured by prominent nonstate community elites. The latter outcome has been documented by scholars in other contexts (Fox 2014; Mansuri and Rao 2013). Working instead with volunteers and building collective ownership have helped to foster sustainability.

Capacity building and peer-to-peer exchanges are also used to encourage citizens to participate and to overcome the hopelessness and helplessness that tend to prevent them from becoming involved in public matters. For example, at the district level IWA organizes monthly meetings for local monitors to enable peer-to-peer exchanges and learning, support network building, and foster unity across communities. “Meeting every month has brought them so close to each other that they now deem themselves as one family,” reports Naser Sidiqee, former program manager of the CBM-S program. Training provides citizens with concrete pathways to become involved and with a network. Local monitors also participate in monthly school management shura meetings, where they update community members and local school officials on their findings and seek cooperation to address the problems. Finally, IW A also facilitates monthly coordination meetings for the community at large. These gatherings help to incorporate accountability and legitimacy in the citizen engagement initiative because local monitors report back to fellow citizens. The meetings are intended to harness grassroots support and encourage collective action to address problems identified by the local monitors. During the third quarter of 2016, for example, 16 coordination meetings were held with communities in Parwan province.

IWA uses its ability to coordinate citizens to bring forward previously underrepresented demands and interests—one of the key abilities of a social organization (Heller 2013; World Bank 2017b). As of December 2016, 150 community monitoring initiatives under the CBM-S program were coordinating action among citizens around specific problems uncovered in target schools by monitoring and raising demands to rectify these problems. In addition to these demands, they were finding creative solutions in conjunction with elites.

IWA’s work has been facilitated by tangible assistance from international actors. Since 2007, IWA has had a productive relationship with Integrity Action, an international NGO and network of practitioners, scholars, and policy makers. It has been a source of funding and informed discussion for the CBM-S program. IWA is active in its network and has participated in peer-to-peer workshops that have helped to build knowledge and skills and have led to creative ideas on how to develop CBM-S. For example, IWA has taken inspiration from Palestinian social audits led by students, and it is looking into how to better include and empower youth in community-based monitoring (Darby 2017). In August 2016, in conjunction with the CBM-S program, IWA began launching youth integrity clubs in schools, and as of March 2017, there were 90 active groups. In 2014 IWA received three-year core funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), which enabled it to build the CBM-S program (SIDA 2015).

**Initiatives to change elites’ incentives and preferences**

Community-based monitoring of schools has helped to create incentives for elites to engage with communities and work to improve the quality of education as well as to reshape elite preferences. Monitoring and identifying tangible problems in some of the target schools have altered elites’ incentives by increasing the social cost to them. Particularly in close-knit settings and at lower levels of government, collective action could wield strong social pressure. Collective ownership has increased the legitimacy of the communities’ demands to elites and has been a source of power by creating social pressure. “When people [local monitors] represent the demands of the community, authorities feel compelled to listen. When it’s presented as top-down, they don’t feel so obligated,” Gowhari notes. Monitoring has changed elites’ incentives by providing positive political and social benefits derived from visibly taking action or supporting particular policies. In the CBM-S program, IWA surmises that some government elites likely came on board to build up their reputations.

The program also works toward reshaping elite preferences and beliefs by bringing new interests into the education policy arena, creating spaces for elites from the national to the local level to interact with citizens, and encouraging coalition building. Although it is difficult to assess success in changing preferences, IWA’s approach is clearly geared toward that goal, and anecdotal evidence suggests that bringing actors together and providing space for them to solve problems collectively has altered prior conceptions (see box 3.1). Local monitors engage with elites at various levels, from school management shuras to provincial education sector groups. IWA initially created provincial monitoring boards for education, bringing together all stakeholders, from community representatives...
Box 3.1: Recollections of an IWA provincial coordinator

Ali Ahmad Mashal Afroz, IWA provincial coordinator, Kapisa:

I remember when my friends and I saw the Sher Khan High School in Kohistan-e-Awal for the first time in 2015; there were no walls except the one where a door had once been. At first all we saw were classrooms in ruins and without students. A few steps further there were some students studying in an open area who complained to us about the school’s condition. During social gatherings and talks with community members we were able to make them aware of how they could make a difference. We encouraged them to identify the specific problems with their school and encouraged them to engage with the Education Department. It is worth mentioning that the local people had already complained to the Education Department authorities but without success.

Today, after two years, there have been huge changes at Sher Khan High School: 750 meters of school walls have been constructed thanks to a $60,000 grant from the Education Department’s budget and a contribution of 228,000 Afghans (about $3,500) from the community. These walls now protect both students and staff. The local people and the local management shura (SMS) also provided the school with potable water at a cost of approximately 41,000 Afghans (about $600). The people connected the deep well, located about 1.5 kilometers north of the school, to the school with pipes. The SMS will invite representatives of the government to the inauguration of this project in the near future, and large participation is expected. There are now regular monthly meetings of the SMS, hygiene and security have improved, all teachers have teaching plans, student discipline is good, and the interaction between the school administrators and the students’ parents has improved significantly.

Source: IWA Newsletter, October 2016.

and local monitors to education officials, to address problems that go beyond local school management or require coordination and resources at the provincial level. But it then changed course after finding that a range of subnational education entities already existed in the three provinces where the CBM-S program operates. It has since worked to establish links with these bodies, particularly the education sector groups in Parwan and the provincial education directorates in Kapisa and Herat, and convene meetings involving them as well as other education stakeholders and decision makers such as those from the provincial councils and governors’ offices. Since 2016, local monitors have been participating in these higher-level meetings.

Conclusion

Summary of outcomes

The CBM-S program has mobilized citizens to become involved in improving education in their communities and to help establish working relationships with stakeholders, including communities, local officials, and provincial education authorities. From 2014 to 2016, 180 schools were monitored in Parwan, Kapisa, and Herat provinces. Of the 150 CBM-S initiatives in 2016, half were girls’ schools. In 2017 IWA is expanding the program to nine provinces and 270 schools. From 2014 to 2016, the program involved 180 volunteer local monitors chosen by their communities, of whom 150 were still active as of March 2017 (88 male, 62 female). IWAs role as a convener of stakeholders has helped to improve the receptivity of elites, particularly at the local level but also higher up the provincial authority chain. In the Sher Khan High School in Kohistan-e-Awal, for example, communities had tried in the past to interact with education officials but to no avail. Through the CBM-S program, they contacted the officials again, and this time they received a response.

Collective action and engagement with elites have also helped to foster social cohesion and opened opportunities for collective problem solving. Anecdotal evidence suggests the variety of ways in which CBM-S initiatives have helped communities find solutions to the problems they detected. They have included fundraising campaigns, in-kind donations such as of land, and carrying out repairs, sometimes together with teachers and students. In a fragile and low-capacity environment, initiatives that help build a community are particularly important.

Local monitors have identified numerous problems in the schools they are monitoring, and in 37 percent of cases were able to report back that the problem was solved (box 3.2). In 2016 the monitors identified 988 observable problems (see table 3.1). Among the most common were lack of drinking water, dirty latrines and facilities, inadequate security arrangements, and nonfunctioning science labs. Over 50 percent of problems were grouped into an “other” category, ranging from absent teachers to insufficient teachers, classrooms, equipment, desks, chairs, and textbooks and damaged or missing blackboards, windows, and walls. Communities thus detected an average of 6.6 problems and were able to solve between two and three of them. These problems mirror the problems identified by elite stakeholders.

20. These bodies are an IWA innovation, originally created to foster communication and problem solving among state and citizen stakeholders for reconstruction and development projects.

21. These data were not disaggregated by individual community monitoring initiative and thus do not reveal the number and severity of the problems per target school or the difficulties in overcoming them. Integrity Action recommends that fix rates be used in conjunction with other data and qualitative information.
Case Studies

Box 3.2: Monitoring teacher absenteeism and “ghost teachers”

Nazeera was a local monitor, chosen by her community for the Ishaq-Abaq Girls High School in Parwan province. In the course of her regular monitoring, she uncovered “ghost teachers,” also known as “paper teachers,” who were regularly absent for long periods of time but still drawing salaries. One of them was the husband of the school principal. Although the school list indicated that there were enough teachers for every subject, in speaking with students Nazeera heard complaints about the shortage of teachers. She then shared her findings with the school management, but the principal told her to keep quiet and threatened her with reprisals if she revealed the information.

The monitor told her husband what had transpired, and he encouraged her to tell the community through the local shura. She shared her discovery with local female shura members, other community members, as well as with the Department of Education at the Jabal Saraj district level. “Local community members and local female shuras went to the school, all together as one body and conducted a meeting with the school management and informed the school management to remove all the ghost teachers names from the list,” reports Khadija Mehmood, program officer for CBM-S. News of this achievement led to changes at other schools. Local monitors informed IWA that other ghost teachers were cleared from school lists, and teachers are now arriving on time and are signing attendance sheets. When interviewed for this case study, Nazeera avowed, “My commitment is to my work, which I learned in the training conducted by Integrity Watch Afghanistan to fight corruption and establish accountability. I promised to myself to deal determinedly with every problem that faces me.”

Source: Summary based on an interview conducted by IWA, April 2017.

Table 3.1: Common problems observed by IWA local monitors in 2016 and their fix rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Frequency (observed)</th>
<th>Frequency (solved)</th>
<th>Fix rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presence of staff on time</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not using lessons log</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of teaching material</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classrooms not in order</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unavailability of drinking water</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School management shura (SMS) meetings not conducted</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School assembly not being held daily</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School not clean and tidy</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science laboratory not functioning</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security arrangements not in place</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers with no lesson plan</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers absent</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilets not clean and tidy</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usual number of teachers not present and on time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usual numbers of students not present and on time</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>988</strong></td>
<td><strong>369</strong></td>
<td><strong>37%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the types of corruption-related results in the education sector discussed earlier in this case study. They create an inhospitable learning environment and can inhibit female enrollment. Evidence suggests that parents can be uncomfortable sending their girls to school if there are no suitable toilets, perimeter walls and gates, and security personnel (Saunders 2015).22

22. It is notable that these problems correspond to some of the priority categories to be addressed among the intermediate results indicators of the 2016 Bank EQUIP Implementation Status and Results Report (Lahire 2016).
A cornerstone of anticorruption is prevention, and monitoring is recognized as a method of deterrence (Langseth 1999; Osche 2004; Richards 2006). Proposing an “anticipatory strategy” to address corruption in education sector development, Tanaka (2001, 163) recommends that prevention programs include measures to “secure the quality of goods, services, personnel resources, etc., which have implications for student protection.” IWA’s strategy aligns with this prescription. The challenge for development practitioners is that prevention cannot be measured. However, voices from the World Bank are hailing the importance of prevention. A report on fighting corruption in Afghanistan notes that prevention “is an all too often neglected dimension of an anti-corruption strategy” (Ishihara and Byrd 2009). In a blog on social accountability to address fragility and help societies rebuild, Jeff Thindwa, head of the Bank’s Global Partnership on Social Accountability (GPSA), calls on the Bank to “invest in prevention” (Thindwa 2017). Given the baseline of extensive graft in Afghanistan’s education sector, IWA’s qualitative reports of improvements in school administration and education provision as a result of ongoing community-based monitoring initiatives indirectly suggest a degree of corruption prevention and increased accountability.

However, monitoring in the Afghan context takes perseverance and patience because government officials are not necessarily forthcoming and willing to cooperate. Another challenge is to avoid disturbing local power and resource balances or unintentionally tilting the program’s support in favor of particular individuals or subgroups in the community. For IWA, it is essential to be aware of these nuanced dynamics on the ground. The organization is careful to prevent elite community members from hijacking its initiatives for their own personal prestige (Fox 2014; Mansuri and Rao 2013). Its local Focal Points play an essential role in preventing or at least navigating these pitfalls. This is a critical lesson for external actors seeking to design and implement induced social accountability interventions. International and even national staff based in the capital may not be fully cognizant of these context-specific local spoilers of citizen engagement.

Evaluating the success of the CBM-S program in preventing corruption, one of its key goals, is another challenge. The data gathered through the surveys conducted within the framework of the program may point, for example, to missing or defunct equipment, and while a link to corruption or at least mismanagement is typically implicit, the data do not allow for a definite conclusion. Similarly, the absence of more blatant cases of corruption in the data gathered by the monitors may point to the fact that the program is acting as a deterrent, yet the data again do not allow for a definite conclusion.

### Rights begetting rights

By exercising their rights to association, information, and participation, communities involved in the CBM-S program are working to improve the fulfillment of their right to education. Through realizing their civil and political rights, they are thus supporting the state in promoting a right that falls into the category of social, economic, and cultural rights. “As beneficiaries of public education services,” explains Sidiqee, the former CBM-S program manager, “Afghan citizens have the right to demand high quality education and hold government officials responsible as well as accountable if these services fail to meet the needs of Afghan school children.” By seeking to improve state responsiveness through collective action and elite engagement, communities are pressing for better education for their children. As the previous section described, these efforts have at least in some cases borne fruit. In addition, through the local monitor training, IWA is showing citizens how to exercise their rights in order to improve education and development in their communities (table 3.2).

### Table 3.2: Application of human rights, Integrity Watch Afghanistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right</th>
<th>Application of right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td>Creating community-based monitoring initiatives with elected local monitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly</td>
<td>Conducting public meetings, monitoring, local monitor training, local monitor peer-to-peer monthly gatherings, and stakeholder capacity-building workshops, thereby mobilizing communities to overcome problems identified during monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>Circulating monitoring reports, answering questions in the baseline and endline surveys, and expressing demands and views in meetings with education officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Requesting information from education elites, gathering information through monitoring, and canvassing community members for the baseline survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in governance</td>
<td>Providing monitoring results to school management and education officials to improve the quality of education, rectify problems, and prevent corruption; participating in community development councils, school management shuras, and provincial education sector group meetings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Paraguay has faced challenges in following through on commitments to deliver quality education to all of its citizens. Since its transition to democracy nearly 30 years ago, Paraguay has made considerable progress toward more transparent and accountable government, but the country remains plagued by high levels of corruption, inequality, and clientelism. In recent years, Paraguay committed itself to greater transparency by joining the Open Government Partnership and promised to use revenues from electricity sales to Brazil to finance infrastructure in local schools through the National Public Investment and Development Fund (FONACIDE) created in 2012. However, there is a low level of commitment to delivering these funds for the intended purposes. Driven by local clientelism and capture, funds are sometimes directed to politically favored schools rather than marginalized ones, as intended, and the targeted recipients are excluded from the FONACIDE process and often unaware they should be receiving funds.

**The mission**

Challenges in the implementation of FONACIDE funds set the stage for the founding of reAcción, a youth anticorruption organization emphasizing civic education and citizen engagement for transparency in public education and seeking to harness citizen engagement for greater contestability. Its overall strategy until 2016 was to channel citizen outrage over corruption in FONACIDE into collective action through organized, grassroots monitoring. In the short term, reAcción aims to empower students to gain social accountability for FONACIDE entitlements, increase FONACIDE’s transparency, and educate stakeholders about the fund’s annual distribution process. In the longer term, it seeks to strengthen mechanisms of inclusion and social participation and alter common perceptions that corruption is an unavoidable part of Paraguayan culture.

To accomplish these goals, reAcción has had to overcome collective action obstacles that previously had prevented citizens from entering the public education policy arena. They have done so by using FONACIDE as a focal point for engagement, emphasizing tangible benefits for student participants and cultivating three intangible motivators: collective identity, collective responsibility, and collective ownership. In pursuing these intangible motivators, reAcción generated an environment of collective identity and collective responsibility, often using human rights language as a tool for motivation. Cultivation of the intangible motivators was facilitated by more tangible assistance, including training, international funding, and effective use of technology.

Today, reAcción is a comprehensive, volunteer-driven NGO that can bargain directly in the policy arena to change the incentives facing officials and policy makers in public education, particularly at the Ministry of Education and municipal government levels. ReAcción has engaged with the relevant stakeholders in government, applying both carrots and sticks. Its repertoire has included direct engagement with elites, information gathering through collective action, open data analysis and visualization, media relationships, coalitions with other NGOs, and legal strategies. Through these strategies, reAcción has reshaped the incentives of government actors, making it more difficult for municipal and national officials to ignore its pressure to make the FONACIDE processes more transparent and inclusive.

**Background context and challenges**

Paraguay is a young democracy, still marked by the legacy of a 35-year dictatorship. Since 1989 and the end of Alfredo Stroessner’s rule and beginning of the transition to democracy, Paraguay has made significant improvements in governance and, as of the early 2000s, economic growth. Since 2000, the Paraguayan economy has grown at over 4 percent annually in constant terms after growing at only 2.6 percent annually in the 1990s. Meanwhile, over the same period Paraguay
Despite this progress, Paraguay has seen its international rankings improve across multiple aspects of governance (figure 3.2).

Despite this progress, the country still lags behind the regional average on all governance dimensions captured by the 2015 Worldwide Governance Indicators. In particular, Paraguay ranks in the lowest 20th percentile on control of corruption, government effectiveness, and the rule of law. The government's weak institutional capacity for planning, implementing, and monitoring policies directly affects the performance of the public administration and undermines its ability to efficiently improve the delivery of basic services to its citizens, especially the poor and most vulnerable. As a result, although access to primary education and electricity is almost universal, the quality of basic public services remains low and needs to better target people living in poverty.

Historically, weak accountability and low transparency in Paraguay’s public administration have created a social environment in which perception of corruption continues to permeate public affairs. In 2009 Paraguay was ranked the second most corrupt country in the Latin America and Caribbean region, ahead of only Haiti. The adoption of new transparency and anticorruption laws and regulations have contributed to remarkable improvements in Paraguay’s ranking since 2014 (figure 3.3). Despite this progress, however, important challenges remain: according to the Transparency International’s 2016 Corruption Perception Index (CPI), Paraguay still ranks 123rd out of 176 countries (figure 3.4), the fifth worst position among LAC countries—ahead only of Venezuela (166), Haiti (159), Nicaragua (145), and Guatemala (136). Likewise, in the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) 2015, Paraguay ranks 139 out of 140 economies on the ethics and corruption dimension; 136 out of 140 on the undue influence dimension; and 136 out of 140 on the wastefulness of government spending indicator. One-third of the population (37 percent) has experienced corruption; 43 percent consider corruption to be “highly generalized” in the government; almost 84 percent report that the government is led by few powerful groups acting in their own interest; and 66.3 percent still believe there is no or little transparency in government. Changing these perceptions requires further efforts to advance implementation of policy reforms, thereby strengthening the credibility of the government’s commitment to tackling corruption.

Despite widespread perceptions of corruption, Paraguay has become relatively open in terms of the space for citizen engagement. According to the 2013 Global Corruption Barometer, 86 percent of its citizens believe that ordinary people can make a difference in the fight against corruption. This is largely a result of the political and civil rights and political freedoms gained after the transition to democracy, combined with the government’s efforts to promote transparency in the public administration. The first transparency law was enacted in 2014 (Law No. 5189/14) requiring all public offices to disclose information about the use of public funds to pay salaries. A few months later, the government adopted the landmark Access to Information and Government Transparency Law (Law 5282/2014).

One major cause of citizens’ discontent is public education. They find that generally it is low in quality and highly unequal, often as a result of corrupt and clientelistic behavior by public authorities. Article 85 of the 1992 constitution mandates that 20 percent of the national budget be allocated to education, and public funding for education reached 19.6 percent of the budget in 2012. Paraguay now grants free access to basic education, but implementation remains a challenge. The 2013 Global Corruption Barometer found that 11 percent of Paraguayan respondents reported having paid a bribe for education services.

In 2015 high school and university students protested the...
SPOTLIGHT 2:
Current challenges in the education system in Paraguay

Paraguay has made progress in expanding public school enrollment. As of 2015, it had achieved universal coverage (98 percent) in primary schools. But enrollment rates are lower in the third cycle of basic education (grades 7–9). The real bottleneck in the education system, however, is secondary schools (grades 10–12), where enrollment rates were 73.8 percent in 2015. In addition, enrollment is low and dropout rates high among disadvantaged groups in rural areas, especially in secondary schools (64.5 percent net enrollment), affecting the equity of the education system.

The system is also producing poor overall student learning outcomes, as evident in the results of the latest standardized national test that are available publicly. According to the Sistema Nacional de Evaluación del Proceso Educativo (SNEPE), only one in four students in the third grade have the required levels of math and communication skills, and the performance in communication is lower among students attending rural schools (De Hoyos 2013). Similarly, according to results from the Tercer Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo (TERCE), Paraguay has one of the worst-performing education systems in the region, ahead of only the Dominican Republic. Moreover, student performance shows significant variations across learning areas. This is an additional challenge for the education system because it requires not only improving the average learning outcome but also achieving a more homogeneous performance across different learning areas (UNESCO 2015).

The key challenges facing the Paraguayan education system in providing high quality education for all of its children are public schools that lack basic infrastructure and employ poor-quality teachers. This situation is reinforced by low levels of public spending on the education sector overall and on infrastructure investments specifically (Wodon 2016).

**Infrastructure.** All basic education institutions are required to fulfill the minimum physical infrastructure and equipment standards defined by Decree 6589. Despite the legal mandate, most schools in Paraguay fall short of this requirement: only 11 percent of urban schools and virtually no rural schools are considered to be in “good” condition (that is, have basic infrastructure) and almost two in three schools in rural areas are in “poor” condition, lacking basics facilities such as bathrooms, drinkable water, and electricity.

**Poor-quality teachers.** Although Paraguay has made important progress in improving the quality of the teacher recruitment process, many challenges remain: (1) the pedagogical institutes (Institutos de Formación Docente) are poorly regulated and do not ensure a minimum quality for all of their graduates; (2) almost 40 percent of the in-service teachers are not certified or have qualifications that do not correspond to their teaching duties; (3) formal schemes for continual education and skill upgrades are lacking; and (4) remuneration is not based on years of experience.

**Government expenditure on education.** As of 2015, the government expenditure on educational institutions in Paraguay as a share of GDP remained below the regional average of 5 percent—and it only increased from 3.2 percent in 2003 to 4.4 percent in 2015. However, the proportion of the total education budget allocated to capital investments remained low, at about 6 percent over the 2003–15 period, accounting for the poor conditions of the school infrastructure.

Sources:
CITIZENS AS DRIVERS OF CHANGE

misuse of education funds and the poor quality of education. This protest led to the resignation of the rector of the National University of Asunción and his arrest on corruption charges (Economist 2015). In 2016 the minister of education resigned after student protests erupted when a wall collapsed in a secondary school. In reaction to the 2016 protests, the government granted the student groups an advisory position on FONACIDE and agreed to form a roundtable to meet monthly with the government (Economist 2016). The Ministry of Education also created a web portal to receive complaints about irregular payments.

The quality of education remains a concern. Test scores in Paraguay are well below those of other Latin American countries (except the Dominican Republic), according to the Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (TERCE) scores of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)—see panel b, figure 3.5. Expert surveys indicate that Paraguay has the fifth lowest level of educational equality in the world, ahead of only South Sudan, Somalia, Pakistan, and Timor-Leste (panel c, figure 3.5).

A driving cause of educational inequality in Paraguay is clientelism, a manifestation of power asymmetries in which short-term material benefits are exchanged for electoral behavior. Of 88 countries included in the Democratic Accountability and Linkages Project (DALP), Paraguay ranks 84th in terms of expert perceptions of clientelistic practices (panel d, figure 3.5). Clientelism prevents the emergence of programmatic policies that are likely to have broad-based positive effects on medium- and long-term education outcomes. The poor, with higher discount rates for the present, are the most susceptible to such practices, helping to explain the cross-country rela-

Figure 3.5: Corruption, education outcomes, and clientelism in Paraguay

Note: Data are for 2014, except in panel d (clientelism), which are for 2011.


In May 2011, the Brazilian Congress approved the agreement under which the price of power transfers from Paraguay to Brazil was renegotiated, thereby increasing Paraguay’s revenue from US$120 million to US$360 million (1.6% of GDP in 2011). . . . Given the magnitude of those additional resources, a debate ensued regarding their use, which included civil society (education NGO “Junta por la Educacion”), which advocated using the resources to finance investments in the sector. In September 2012, the second bill was passed: Law 4758 creating the National Public Investment and Development Fund (FONACIDE). Under this law, 30% of the funds would be earmarked for a National Fund for Excellence in Education and Research (FNEEI), 28% for infrastructure, 25% for departmental and municipal governments, 10% for health, and 7% to finance the Development Finance Agency (AFD). The law also provided that, under the FNEEI, a series of minimums and maximums would be distributed among various investment categories (information and communication technology, education supply, scholarships . . . .

Under the FONACIDE law (Articles 14 and 15), the Fund will be administered financially by the AFD and will be governed by a board of directors chaired by the Minister of Finance and made up of the Minister of Education and Culture, the Minister of Public Health and Social Welfare, the Technical Secretary for Planning, and the President of the National Science and Technology Council (CONACYT). In addition, four education experts appointed by the President of the Republic would participate in the leadership of the board, though with no voting rights. The main function of the board is to decide on the proposed investment projects, ensuring the proper use of FONACIDE’s resources (Article 16).

Despite these challenges, in recent years Paraguay has taken important steps toward battling corruption and addressing power asymmetries through new laws on transparency and accountability. Perhaps most important, as a member of the Open Government Partnership since 2011, Paraguay has committed itself to improving transparency and increasing citizen participation and oversight. Along with its 2030 National Development Plan, the government aims to increase the efficiency and transparency of public management. The current OGP action plan explicitly links this goal to the need to guarantee the rights of citizens without discrimination.32

Paraguay’s participation in the OGP has helped to shift the governance landscape and address the power asymmetries that undermine transparency and accountability.33 In particular, the 2014 Access to Information law and the creation of open data portals at the Ministry of Education and the National Directorate of Public Procurement—commitments filled under Paraguay’s OGP 2014–16 action plan—have moderately improved access to information. Although a right to information is guaranteed in Paraguay’s constitution, no law regulated it before September 2014, and so public authorities could block or delay access to information. The OGP provides opportunities for a citizen-state interface, as well as citizen engagement, influence, and pressure vis-à-vis elites. The inclusion of citizen groups in deliberations with the government, along with access to elites, has opened new avenues of communication. In essence, the OGP has increased contestability, enabling greater citizen entry into the policy arena.

The potential to improve education services received a positive shock in 2012 with the establishment of FONACIDE to finance local education. The Paraguayan economy relies primarily on agriculture and natural resource exploitation, most notably through hydropower dams such as the Itaipu dam at the border with Brazil. In 2012 Brazil agreed to pay Paraguay a higher price for the excess electricity it bought from Paraguay’s share of the dam. Later that year, after a campaign to rally public support to direct this new revenue stream into a fund for education, Law 4758/2012 was passed, establishing FONACIDE (box 3.3). Thus each year approximately $360 million is added to the fund from the revenue produced by the dam. Because the government’s goal is to reduce poverty and improve services, especially for the disadvantaged as laid out in the 2030 National Development Plan, 25 percent of FONACIDE is distributed to local governments for investments related to education, and, of that amount, 50 percent is intended for infrastructure, particularly for marginalized schools.34

The existing power asymmetries, however, have worked against proper implementation of the law, although the extent of the challenges was not clear prior to the citizen engagement initiative described here. Municipal elites were capturing policies and funding to serve their narrow interests. In Ciudad del Este, municipal officials did not follow the prioritization lists of public schools (elementary and secondary) with urgent infrastructure needs—lists that municipal representatives helped to create. In 2015, an election year for mu-

nicipalities, FONACIDE school infrastructure projects were earmarked for areas more centrally located as opposed to the shanty towns on the periphery—centrally located, highly visible school improvements were more likely to let voters see “progress,” thereby serving political purposes (reAcción 2015).

Overall, insufficient transparency and negligible awareness among beneficiaries (students, parents, teachers, and principals) undermined proper implementation of the law. As emphasized in World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law (WDR 2017), laws on paper are not always enforced or followed (World Bank 2017b). Law 4758/2012 establishing FONACIDE included measures for public deliberation, which can enhance contestability. According to Decree 10504/2013, which regulates Law 4758/2012, beneficiaries (principals, parents, and students) were supposed to identify their school infrastructure needs and articulate them to the higher authorities, who in turn would incorporate their input. However, this interactive process was not always being followed, and beneficiaries were not necessarily aware of this opportunity even of their entitlements under the FONACIDE law. In April 2016, the law was modified to incorporate sanctions and, through an online portal, require transparency in the use of FONACIDE.36

The creation of FONACIDE was a turning point; its weak implementation reflected Paraguay’s broader governance challenges, but the law itself provided possibilities for development and served as a focal point to demand better services. However, civil society organizations and national media soon pointed out FONACIDE’s weak transparency and monitoring mechanisms, which had created a situation ripe for corruption. This situation was also acknowledged in the OGP review and national action plan process.37 Instances of corruption soon began to surface in news reports, leading to broad discontent. A May 2014 public opinion poll by Paraguay Debate, a coalition of Asunción NGOs, found that 64 percent of respondents favored a centralized administration of FONACIDE in contrast to its actual implementation.38 Meanwhile, an entrepreneurial group of young people began to seek ways to harness this discontent and make FONACIDE work better to achieve its potential.

Collective action to enhance contestability

ReAcción, a youth group based in Ciudad del Este, has catalyzed collective action through citizen engagement initiatives that help youth enter the policy arena, where they can directly enhance contestability in funding for education.39 Its initiatives highlight FONACIDE’s weaknesses, poor administration, and proclivities for corruption, providing policy recommendations to address these problems and abuses. The organization’s objectives relate to FONACIDE’s transparency, access to information, and administration, with the goal of ensuring policy compliance and implementation by the relevant institutions and respective elites for the provision of quality education, particularly for students in schools deemed the most in need.

ReAcción Paraguay was launched in 2010, prior to FONACIDE’s creation, as an informal anticorruption group composed of young people (mostly friends) in Ciudad del Este, the country’s economic hub and second-largest city. David Riveros García, a student council leader who had just graduated from high school, founded the organization, whose overarching vision was a “transparent Paraguay.”40 Its mission has been to empower citizens to prevent corruption and improve the provision of public services. Initially, the fledgling group sought to build anticorruption awareness in local high schools through student councils and parent groups. However, these efforts lacked a clear purpose, and reAcción found it difficult to sustain students’ interest or to involve parents.

The creation of FONACIDE and the subsequent national discontent with its operation served as a focal point for citizen engagement that reAcción’s leaders were able to harness. Meanwhile, Riveros García believed the government did not have much experience administering massive sums of money, particularly at the local level—25 percent of the funds were to be distributed to the country’s 17 departments (departamentos) and 250 local municipalities. FONACIDE thus tapped multiple concerns: transparency in new investments in the education sector; allocations to schools based on need rather...
than political connections or pressures; and equal access to quality infrastructure. In late 2012, FONACIDE made its first disbursement, and Ciudad del Este was slated to receive one of the largest transfers of funds. By June 2013, reAcción had begun to investigate what the Ciudad del Este Junta Municipal (municipal legislative body) was doing with the money it had received.

In March 2014, it launched a new project, ParaguaYOite, with the help of a €3000 Transparency International Social Entrepreneurs micro-grant. In choosing the name ParaguaYOite, a combination of Spanish and Guaraní meaning truly Paraguayan, it sought to associate national identity with citizen participation, honesty, integrity, and transparency.

ReAcción’s mapping and monitoring of FONACIDE, working with open data from official sources and data collected during visits to targeted elementary and secondary schools, exposed mismanagement in the use of FONACIDE and helped to demonstrate the ill effects of power asymmetries in this policy arena. Through its activities in Ciudad del Este, reAcción discovered that the consultative process outlined in Law 4758/2012 was not being followed, and that beneficiaries were not aware of this opportunity or even of their entitlements under the FONACIDE law. The youth group and its volunteers learned how FONACIDE actually works, beyond the “theory” of how it should work according to the law. As for FONACIDE’s disbursements for elementary and secondary school infrastructure, schools in Ciudad del Este slated for support on the basis of need did not always receive funds, and principals, parents, and students did not necessarily have a say in deciding on the infrastructure projects to improve their respective schools. ReAcción discovered that funds were being channeled to schools that were not at the top of the official Ministry of Education prioritization list, resulting in the exclusion of marginalized communities, schools, and students from the benefits of FONACIDE.

And yet, despite a degree of general discontent with corruption in public education and particularly with the operation of FONACIDE and its ineffectiveness in allocating funds to the neediest schools, reAcción faced many collective action challenges, including public disinterest in and skepticism about reAcción’s motivations (there were suspicions that it was being manipulated by political interests). According to Riveros García, the fund’s process is so labyrinthine, and the effort to understand it is so demanding, that it left people confused and frustrated. Citizens simply did not understand how FONACIDE disbursements could improve their children’s education and lives or the effects of corruption in use of the fund.

In its efforts to overcome these challenges, ReAcción cultivated collective responsibility by emphasizing how students were the direct beneficiaries of FONACIDE and revealing how corruption and misuse of the fund were affecting them and their schools. “Once they [students] learned about their right to organize, associate and demand information, and once they knew about the amount of money schools should receive or how that money was being misused at their own schools, this built a sense of collective responsibility and indignation,” explains Riveros García. As a result, students became empowered through understanding their rights, FONACIDE was no longer a distant and irrelevant policy instrument, and corruption and mismanagement were no longer abstract problems irrelevant to their lives.

ReAcción also ensured that students would have a role in planning and decision making (collective ownership) and share common values and objectives (collective identity). “Unity is a necessary factor for any grassroots monitoring initiative to succeed,” asserts Riveros García. Workshops were highly participatory, and they began by listening to and collecting volunteers’ views and ideas about their education and the condition of their schools. ParaguaYOite was itself designed to foster unity and collective identity through the association of the name (“truly Paraguayan”) with the positive values espoused by reAcción (integrity, citizen participation, honesty, and transparency). The group’s logo was laden with familiar symbols associated with Paraguay, and it was emblazoned on T-shirts that members and student volunteers wore to activities.

According to Riveros García, another key to motivating participation was convincing citizens that they could have an impact. For this reason, reAcción initially targeted its recruiting efforts to the marginalized schools in which it was seeking to channel FONACIDE funds. For example, in ParaguaYOite’s first year, three out of the four schools were in poor communities. Since 2015, the organization has also reached out to other schools and has brought students from the different schools together to foster solidarity.

Educating beneficiaries (students, parents, schools, municipalities) and raising awareness about FONACIDE and why it matters to them have been critical. This effort has included face-to-face interactions, presentations with specially developed informational materials, and social media. An example of the latter was the “Common Myths about FONACIDE” Facebook campaign. Subsequently, educational activities shifted to practical information about how the fund should work, how schools should get resources, how disbursement and spending procedures should be carried out, and what the responsibilities of local officials were. ReAcción has convened several “leveling up” workshops for team members, so they

Figure 3.6: Examples of data visualizations of FONACIDE funding allocations

**INSTITUCIONES EDUCATIVAS**

del Municipio de CDE que recibieron reiteradas intervenciones en los años 2014, 2015 y 2016

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<td>77 61</td>
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<td>57 28</td>
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<tr>
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<td>46 44</td>
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<tr>
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<td>32 45</td>
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**REFERENCIAS**

- **Aulas**
- **Sanitarios**

**NOMENCLATURA**

- **Escuela Nacional**
- **Escuela Básica**

**Municipios con mayores montos transferidos en concepto de FONACIDE a nivel nacional desde el 2012 al 2016**

- **Ciudad del Este** 45.350
- **Asunción** 44.633
- **Capiatá** 22.711
- **Encarnación** 24.987
- **Fdo de la Mora** 17.625
- **Hernandarias** 16.732
- **San Lorenzo** 25.899
- **Luque** 29.719

**Montos en millones de guaraníes.**


**Source:** ReAcción.

**Note:** The first graphic reads: “Municipalities with highest transferred amount in terms of FONACIDE funds at the national level from 2012 to October 2016. Shown in millions of guaraníes. The size shows the total sum of transfers from 2012 to October 2016.” The second graphic reads: “Schools in Ciudad del Este that have received more than one infrastructure project through FONACIDE funds between 2014 and 2016.” The symbols indicate the type of project (classrooms or bathrooms) and the right-most column shows its position on the Ministry of Education’s prioritization list. This graphic demonstrates mismanagement by showing that low-priority schools received funding from FONACIDE for infrastructure projects more than once.
can in turn lead and train teams of volunteers, interact with the media, and plan public events. Figure 3.6 shows two examples of the data visualization graphics used by reAcción to present its findings on the allocation of FONACIDE funds.

ReAcción’s targets for volunteers at the grassroots level are FONACIDE’s potential beneficiaries—students and their parents (who can potentially pressure school authorities), principals and teachers who are not familiar with FONACIDE, as well as university students. Secondary and university students are an essential source of support, team member and volunteer recruitment, legitimacy, and social pressure.

To recruit members and volunteers, reAcción has found over the years that direct contact is essential. In the early days, committed volunteers and student monitors were engaged through reAcción’s initial efforts to establish student clubs in four high schools. As reAcción began to garner attention through media coverage and social networks, young people started contacting it. Later, it proactively put out calls for youth monitors through press releases and social media. With the new recruits on board, it began holding FONACIDE events at high schools and the National University of the East, through which it enlisted more volunteers.

Without its base of youth members and volunteers, reAcción could not exist. Yet managing them—their expectations, sustained interest and commitment, discipline, skills development, and even differing objectives—requires an ongoing effort. ReAcción acknowledged early on that a two-way relationship is needed to build commitment to the organization—in other words, participants must derive benefits from their participation. Thus ReAcción has ensured that volunteers receive both intangible and more concrete benefits for participation. Intangible benefits include an overall sense of collective responsibility to a meaningful cause, collective ownership of ParaguaYOite, and collective identity as “true Paraguayans.” More concrete, tangible benefits include the acquisition of useful experiences and skills such as engaging state elites and learning data visualization techniques and computer programming.

Through these efforts, reAcción has successfully recruited a loyal, dedicated, and expanding group of members and volunteers. During its first five years of existence, reAcción was completely volunteer-based. By 2014, the core consisted of three (unpaid) staff, 10 regular members, and an indispensable cadre of students from four high schools in Ciudad del Este. In 2017 reAcción organized its first camp for 10 young student leaders on the impact of corruption on education (Vanguardia 2017).

Relying on its core group of engaged volunteers, reAcción has gradually become more formally organized and has expanded its membership and its goals, thanks in part to funding from international sources. Indeed, international mini-grants have served as a lifeline. ReAcción reached a milestone in 2015 when together with the Center for Information and Resources for Development CIRD, an NGO based in the capital, Asunción, it submitted a grant proposal to the National Endowment for Democracy. They were jointly awarded the grant, sharing $22,000, which enabled the “weekend NGO” to proactively take steps toward sustainability. Riveros García then reorganized the core team, contending that to increase its impact and influence policy making the group had to transcend a “club culture” and develop a more rigorous ethos of commitment, discipline, and collective identity that would encompass beneficiaries in general, not just those in their immediate circles. ReAcción set up a small office with Internet service and furnished it through donations from citizens, and it hired two full-time paid staff. As part of its expansion, reAcción also created the Alliance for Open Government (AIGA), a complementary initiative composed mainly of university students, including some of ParaguaYOite’s former high school volunteers (Riveros García 2015). AIGA’s role is to organize and develop workshops on FONACIDE for various stakeholder groups, focusing on social technology solutions for the fund. AIGA also works directly with high school students to transform the information they gather from monitoring into an open data format and data visualizations.

In 2016 reAcción legally registered as an NGO. Given the realities of donor funding requirements for civil society organizations, it realized it could not apply for most grants without a legal identity. Its founder, Riveros García, continues to see it as a hybrid of an NGO and a grassroots anticorruption movement that maintains a strong citizen engagement component: “We are a mix. This gives us a way of pressuring the government when we need to, combined with content, recommendations, and constructive criticism arising from the grassroots.”

By overcoming collective action challenges, reAcción is now able to directly challenge the exclusion of marginalized communities, schools, and students from the FONACIDE allocation process. It has enhanced contestability by providing a platform for these marginalized actors to engage in the FONACIDE policy arena, where it is patiently pressuring elites to reform the fund, increasing transparency and accountability, and improving its implementation in order to prevent corruption and benefit needy schools and students. As Riveros García notes, “For years the municipality ignored and underestimated us. . . . We have grown and reached a point where we are confident we can start rallying people and exercising people power against the corrupt in the municipality.”

42. In 2013 reAcción received a $5,000 mini-grant from the Global Changemakers initiative (originally incubated by the British Council in partnership with the World Bank Institute) to empower youth-driven social change. In 2014 it received an €3,000 Transparency International Social Entrepreneurs Initiative mini-grant. And in 2016, Sumá Fraternidad, based in Argentina, awarded it a $2,500 mini-grant (Ferreira 2013).
Initiatives to change elites’ incentives and preferences

Having entered the policy arena through citizen collective action, reAcción seeks to influence policy behavior by changing the behavior of government actors. The organization has articulated the following demands based on an internal participatory process to highlight potentially effective entry points:

- **Transparency in the allocation of funds and timeliness in publication of data by the Ministry of Education.** The Ministry of Education portal is not regularly updated, so by the time reAcción can access information, the contracts have already been signed by the Ciudad del Este municipality. As a result, it cannot prevent mismanagement and corruption; it can only expose it.

- **Municipal disbursements of resources to the schools at the top of the Ministry of Education’s four priority lists for the city.** These lists correspond to four intervention categories: classrooms, toilets, furniture, and other school spaces. ReAcción discovered that, in practice, the municipality does not respect these lists.

- **Provision of prioritization lists sent to the municipality by the Ministry of Education.** In the absence of such lists, since 2015 reAcción’s team has been collecting data from the Ministry of the Treasury, the National Directorate of Public Procurement, and the Ministry of Education to determine which schools are prioritized at the top of the lists in order to monitor them.

- **Informing principals of FONACIDE’s requirement to involve parents and students in identifying the needs of their respective schools.** The Ministry of Education’s FONACIDE manual states that after consultation principals should submit their request, and then the ministry together with the local municipality will prioritize schools on the basis of need. In reality, not all principals know about these procedures and are not communicating their needs to the Ministry of Education.

To achieve these goals, reAcción engages with a wide range of government actors, particularly at the municipal level and in the Ministry of Education (box 3.4). It seeks to increase FONACIDE transparency, improve administration of the fund, empower needy schools to access disbursements, and make policy recommendations to improve transparency and increase citizen engagement on the part of beneficiary groups (students, parents, teachers, and principals). For example, it has engaged with the National Directorate of Public Procurement to improve the transparency of FONACIDE’s open data portal so that citizens are able to find contracts financed by the fund.

Such engagement has been difficult, with considerable pushback from the elites reAcción seeks to engage. At times, reAcción has experienced hostility and censorship from some school principals, teachers, and municipal officials, who are presumably uncomfortable or threatened by its investigations into school prioritization and selection, FONACIDE allocations, spending, and end results. For example, in December 2016 the Facebook pages of reAcción and ParaguaYOite were blocked simultaneously a few days after the group published its annual report online. The report described irregularities and mismanagement in the use of FONACIDE resources by the municipality of Ciudad del Este (ABC Color 2017).

ReAcción has employed several strategies and tools that seek to influence policy by increasing public pressure on elites, altering the incentives they face. These strategies include coalition building with other nonstate actors and exploiting divisions among government elites, and the tools used are aimed at shaping opinions or employ legal measures. All these efforts are based on reAcción’s ability to gather and disseminate information. ReAcción collaborates strategically with these coalition partners to influence policy by changing the incentives.

Box 3.4: Targets of government engagement, reAcción

The FONACIDE policy arena consists of elites from the following institutions and other actors:

- **Ministry of Education** (director of planning, local supervision offices, school principals, open data portal). Interaction at all levels, from the minister of education downward, was deemed necessary because of the fund’s decentralized structure. The director of planning coordinates the entire process by which schools identify infrastructure needs and works with municipalities and submunicipal bodies to create priority lists of schools based on need.

- **Ministry of the Treasury.** A central player in FONACIDE, it is in charge of distributing the fund’s resources to municipalities and checking their spending reports.

- **Office of the Comptroller General.** This body is responsible for monitoring the execution of FONACIDE, and, under the law, municipalities are supposed to submit documented biannual reports of their spending.

- **Technical Planning Secretariat.** This body is in charge of leading the Open Government Partnership initiative in Paraguay.

- **Local municipal government** (mayor of the municipality of Ciudad del Este, director of urban development, Junta Municipal). Local governments are responsible for carrying out public procurement and construction for FONACIDE. They fund education infrastructure projects and are supposed to ensure that work is conducted according to contract specifications.

- **Nonstate actors** (from civil society, the media, higher education, and the legal community, as well as international actors related to the Open Government Partnership).
of elite actors through the publication and dissemination of information using print and social media, and it is beginning to experiment with changing elites’ incentives through direct legal strategies.

In the longer term, reAcción seeks to train the public in how to shift the preferences and beliefs of elite actors toward prioritizing investments in education in marginalized communities. ReAcción has developed a variety of training sessions and workshops for reAcción team members, ParaguaYOite and AIGA volunteers, high schools, municipalities, universities, and journalists. For example, in 2014 the youth organized a public panel at the National University of the East entitled “Monitoring FONACIDE.” It was the first forum that brought together the most relevant stakeholders from the local government, Ministry of Education, Office of the Controller General, parents, and students.

Information gathering is the cornerstone of reAcción. The group was the first in the country to map the entire FONACIDE process, and it then developed a systematic monitoring process to document how funds were actually being administered in Ciudad del Este, down to contracts and construction in individual schools. Four prioritization lists—for classrooms, washrooms, furniture, and other spaces—are established annually by the Ministry of Education for each municipality, in principle with input from schools as well as municipalities. All the public schools (elementary and secondary) are ranked in terms of need. Thus schools can have different rankings among the prioritization lists. For example, a school may rank first for classrooms, 10th for washrooms, 40th for furniture, and not be on the prioritization list at all for improvements in other spaces.

In 2015 reAcción focused on the top 15 schools on the prioritization list for classrooms. Since 2016, it has been monitoring the top five schools on each of the prioritization lists. Because of the overlap, the top five on the four lists is usually 12–14 schools. Thus the selection is based on the priority list ranking, not on whether they are elementary or secondary schools. The young people then engage with principals and teachers in the targeted schools. They geolocate them on a custom Google Map and organize visits with permission from the principals. On the ground, ParaguaYOite team coordinators (themselves students) and volunteers (also students) visit and survey the schools. Among other things, they interview principals and students using prepared questionnaires, record videos, and take photos of the schools and respective FONACIDE projects. Before leaving, they inform the principals about the FONACIDE tools and sources of information available. Finally, the AIGA team (university student volunteers) digitalize the data gathered through the questionnaire, analyze and match the data with open data from official sources, and create data visualizations that are more intuitive for citizens to understand.

In 2015, among the schools visited not one principal knew that his or her school was entitled to receive resources from FONACIDE. Among those institutions actually receiving FONACIDE improvement projects, not one principal had access to the contract and therefore had no way to check the qualifications of the contracting company, specifications, budget, timeline, and so forth. In April 2017, reAcción presented 12 letters to the municipal body during a weekly public session and asked that it not approve the mayor’s procurement process because it would not benefit the prioritized schools with urgent needs. The youth group considers this an opportunity to exert pressure on political elites as primaries are being held for political parties leading up to the 2018 presidential elections.

44. ReAcción gave the Junta Municipal the Ministry of Education’s official prioritization list, a letter with legal arguments supporting its claim of irregulari-
Beyond gathering information and engaging with local schools, reAcción seeks to have a broader and more systematic impact by strategic dissemination of the information it has gathered. Information alone (transparency) without publicity and accountability is unlikely to be effective at shifting power asymmetries (Beyerle 2014; Fox 2007; Halloran 2015; Joshi 2014). In 2015 reAcción began publishing an annual monitoring report (Monitoreo de Ejecución Física, MEF) that it disseminates publicly and submits to the OGP. The MEF documents irregularities in the local administration of FONACIDE and provides policy recommendations for each public institution involved in FONACIDE’s administration (reAcción 2015, 2016). As a result, in 2015 the youth group was invited to present its methodology and findings at the OGP National Seminar in the capital, and several of its recommendations for improving FONACIDE administration were incorporated into the OGP Independent Review Mechanism 2016 Mid-Term Report (Open Government Partnership 2016)—see box 3.5.

Two important tools for dissemination have been the traditional media and social media. Engagement with the media has had several strategic objectives: disseminate knowledge about how FONACIDE works; increase exposure for Paraguay’s reAcción’s overall activities; and indirectly place pressure on government elites about transparency, corruption, and mismanagement. Over time, reports Riveros García, journalists have begun to take reAcción’s findings seriously. In 2016 Vanguardia, Ciudad del Este’s biggest newspaper (print and online), contacted the group to cooperate in exposing FONACIDE irregularities in Ciudad del Este. The youth also conducted a workshop for the newspaper’s journalists and are teaching them how to use the government’s post-2015 open data portals and create data visualizations for “data journalism.”

By engaging with journalists, reAcción has been able to scale up the results of its student monitoring through media coverage. It has a good relationship with Vanguardia, which not only taps reAcción’s data and visualizations for stories, but also has conducted its own investigations based on the findings. Box 3.6 highlights one outcome.

In 2016 reAcción began using social media to communicate with elites. It tagged its Facebook and Twitter accounts with those of the Ministry of Education and Enrique Riera, the minister of education. Thus far Riera and reAcción have had two rounds of communication. In the first round, Riera vowed to review reAcción’s linked documents exposing corruption, retweeted some of its tweets, and publicly promised to review its MEF report and accompanying policy recommendations to improve the administration of FONACIDE. However, his cooperation came to a halt once the youth group revealed that the Ministry of Education was not following certain procedures to check on institutions receiving FONACIDE disbursements. In February 2017, during a second round, however, the minister asked reAcción to send him more documents, including detailed project indicators of success and methodology. In addition, at the end of 2016 the youth organization began publishing a series of articles on a blogging platform to expose irregularities documented through the student monitoring.

Coalition building with other nonstate actors in the policy arena has been essential to the effectiveness of reAcción’s engagement with government. ReAcción has engaged with established civil society organizations (CSOs), including technocratic NGOs based in Asunción, CSOs working on open data, and members of the OGP civil society group. ReAcción has benefited from cooperation with a few organizations to enhance its skills in data visualization and mapping and to

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43. https://twitter.com/search?q=%40reaccionpy%20%40riera2013&src=typd.
45. In 2015 reAcción was invited to present its methodology and findings at the OGP National Seminar in the capital, and several of its recommendations for improving FONACIDE administration were incorporated into the OGP Independent Review Mechanism 2016 Mid-Term Report (Open Government Partnership 2016)—see box 3.5.
46. The Ministry of Education is responsible for creating the prioritization list for schools to receive FONACIDE disbursements for infrastructure projects. Apparently, it does not consistently cross-check its lists with those sent to it by the municipalities, which leaves room for corruption because local governments do not necessarily put the neediest schools on the list.
partner on a U.S. Agency for International Development (US-AID) grant. In late 2015, reAcción learned that FONACIDE transparency was among the government’s 2014–16 OGP commitments, and it was accepted into Mesa Conjunta—the group composed of civil society organizations monitoring the government’s OGP action plan commitments, along with representatives of public institutions responsible for fulfilling those commitments. Through this forum, supported by US-AID’s Democracy and Governance program, reAcción presented its monitoring system and findings and contributed input on FONACIDE education commitments to the 2016–18 action plan.

ReAcción has leveraged its growing membership by building coalitions with institutions of higher education. As some of the initial team members graduated from high school and went on to university and as the group expanded its pool of volunteers and needed alternative free spaces to meet, reAcción began to make contacts with the National University of the East located in its city. Since then, the relationship has grown: students there have joined AIGA, and the administration invited the group to conduct FONACIDE workshops on campus. In 2015 reAcción signed a formal agreement of cooperation with the university that will enable the organization to increase its engagement with students and faculty to promote monitoring of FONACIDE. Also, it is now actively pursuing cooperation agreements with academic departments at the National University of the East.

In 2016 reAcción added legal strategies to its extrainsitutional repertoire, engaging with lawyers in an attempt to directly tackle FONACIDE elite accountability in Ciudad del Este. The same year, reAcción began working with a local association of lawyers, who provided the legal advice needed for the youth group to become a registered entity. As a result of this relationship, reAcción plans to file legal complaints and sue elites based on the evidence of corruption the civic engagement initiative has gathered over the years. The Office of the General Comptroller accepted reAcción’s first official complaint about corruption in the municipality, and subsequently it replied that the complaint would be considered for inclusion in the 2017 General Auditing Plan. In early 2017, reAcción assembled a volunteer legal team composed of senior-year law students from the National University of the East. It seeks to engage the university’s law school in promoting access to information through strategic litigation.47

Have the tools and strategies just described changed minds and solved problems? The combination of legal strategies and information dissemination has begun to shift elites’ incentives to respond to reAcción’s pressure. For example, when the mayor of Ciudad del Este ignored a questionnaire from reAcción during her reelection campaign, the group invoked Paraguay’s Access to Information law to compel her to provide the answers and finally published a blog revealing that she defied the law by not responding to the legal request.

Through coalition building and the use of information and legal strategies, reAcción has effectively changed incentives at the level of municipal government and in the Ministry of Education itself. Outreach efforts at the Ministry of Education led the ministry to officially declare Paraguay’s OGP commitment to improve the ministry’s plans to improve the open data portal and open data tool. Riveros García proposed signing a cooperation agreement between reAcción and the ministry to improve its monitoring of FONACIDE and collaboration to create audiovisual animations for citizens explaining FONACIDE’s administrative process in a simple, appealing manner. The director promised to present these ideas to the Minister of Education.

At the municipal level, reAcción’s success at changing elites’ incentives has become increasingly difficult to ignore. With the passing of the Access to Information law in September 2014 and the creation of open data portals at the Ministry of Education and the National Directorate of Public Procurement—commitments filled under the country’s OGP action plan—reAcción found it somewhat easier to gather information.

In 2017 Ciudad del Este’s Junta Municipal, the city’s legislative body, declared reAcción’s activities to be of interest for the city’s development. After the 2015 municipal elections—and for the first time in 10 years—the Junta Municipal had a majority of local deputies (Concejales) who opposed the mayor. ReAcción made the most of this situation and exploited the opposition and rivalry between the simple majority in the Junta Municipal and the mayor of Ciudad del Este. Therefore, of the 12 elected members of the Junta Municipal, nine voted in favor of the 2017 declaration about reAcción and its activities, two abstained, and one was absent.

Success at the municipal level is also on view in the demands from other municipalities to engage the group. In June 2016,

47 A formal cooperation agreement between reAcción and the National University of the East’s law school is now in place. Among other things, the agreement allows law students to undertake internships at reAcción and receive academic credit.
the municipality of Presidente Franco invited the youth group to conduct monitoring workshops for all high schools in its city.

Conclusion

Summary of outcomes

In early 2016, reAcción was featured on the World Bank’s Spanish website. An article on youth action against corruption states, “Seis años después, [reAcción] ha convertido en una de las principales organizaciones promotoras de participación ciudadana, transparencia y buena gobernanza del país” (Six years later, [reAcción] has become one of the main organizations promoting citizen participation, transparency and good governance of the country)—World Bank (2017a). In November 2016, reAcción was featured in the regional open data overview by the UN’s Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (Nasser and Rosales 2016). Overall, in the four years since reAcción began to focus on FONACIDE, it has made progress in achieving its stated goals of improving the fund’s transparency and administration and fostering citizen empowerment and participation in the process. In the short term, reAcción is empowering students and school authorities (the beneficiaries of FONACIDE allocations and infrastructure projects) to track, monitor, and record corruption and mismanagement down the administrative pipeline to the Ciudad del Este municipality and individual target schools selected for monitoring. This tracking includes which schools received disbursements, which categories were covered (classrooms, toilets, furniture, and other school spaces), their rankings on the Ministry of Education’s priority list, amounts slated for beneficiary schools, companies contracted for school improvements, amounts received by these companies, and inspection of target school and FONACIDE-funded improvements.

ReAcción has demonstrably increased the transparency of FONACIDE through its mapping and visualizations of the administrative process, cross-data research and visualizations, and monitoring of selected schools. It has then strategically used the results and tools to further two related objectives. The first is to educate state elites, civil society, the media, and beneficiaries about FONACIDE—its policies, administration, annual distribution process, weaknesses, irregularities—through social media outreach, participation in the OGP process, one-on-one interactions both in person and through Twitter, and public events and workshops with students and state elites. The second is to improve administration of the fund in order to reduce corruption, enhance the provision of education to needy schools and marginalized students, and ultimately increase social inclusion.

Meanwhile, reAcción has encountered numerous difficulties as it has tried to broaden its impact and scale up its activities. Adequate funding has been an ongoing problem. The youth group depends on volunteers, as well as a pool of meager resources from the sale of T-shirts and stickers, from donations, and from limited grants from external actors. The lack of regular finances has created uncertainty, hampered medium-term planning, and limited the scope of its activities. For example, Riveros García wanted to engage tiny municipalities, schools, and students in rural areas, which are largely marginalized and among those most in need of FONACIDE disbursements, but lack of funds has made this engagement impossible. In June 2016, reAcción did, however, achieve a breakthrough. A proposal submitted to the National Endowment for Democracy that same year was selected, and in 2017 the group will receive $25,000 to further develop and expand ParaguáYoitë.48 Nevertheless, because of resource constraints it has had to drop the development of two new tools that could empower municipalities and schools to launch their own monitoring initiatives and collect data.


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Table 3.3: Application of human rights, reAcción

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right</th>
<th>Application of right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td>Creating a grassroots youth group that evolved into a formally registered nongovernmental organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly</td>
<td>Conducting public meetings and workshops for citizens and municiplalities, monitoring, hosting WhatsApp and Facebook groups, and increasing public awareness about how FONACIDE works and its entitlements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>Publishing monitoring reports on FONACIDE, data visualization, blogging, Tweeting, and hosting Facebook and WhatsApp groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Requesting information about FONACIDE from state officials at the national and subnational levels, utilizing government data portals, and interviewing high school principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in governance</td>
<td>Providing government officials with monitoring results, policy recommendations, and accountability tools to improve FONACIDE administration and prevent corruption; raising awareness and educating government officials about FONACIDE at the national and subnational levels; and combining extrainsitutional collective action with institutional action, such as submitting formal, legal complaints about corruption uncovered by monitoring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With limited funding, the organization has stressed the importance of adaptability and continued learning for success. For example, when funding to expand into other marginalized communities was not forthcoming, the organization decided to expand its reach and impact through tech tools (including an app under development), workshops, YouTube information videos, and FONACIDE monitoring guidelines that would be of use to students and groups in other parts of the country. When an early project to strengthen anticorruption education in student councils failed, reAcción used the experience to build ties with high schools and expand the pool of youth leaders who would later become members of reAcción and catalysts for the ParaguaYOite project. The youth subsequently returned to these schools for awareness-raising, volunteer recruitment, and monitoring.

Recognizing the importance of continued learning, reAcción has engaged with external actors to gain knowledge and skills. Riveros García participated in Transparency International’s 2013 School on Integrity and the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict’s 2016 Summer Institute at the Fletcher School at Tufts University in Boston. In 2015 USAID’s Democracy and Governance program supported ParaguaYOite by funding two workshops and sending experts in open data to train its team of university students.

**Rights begetting rights**

Citizen engagement, as expressed through reAcción, involves the active application of several fundamental human rights. As outlined in chapter 1 of this report, citizen engagement derives from specific human rights—freedoms of association, assembly, expression, and information and the right to participate in government. These rights most explicitly and formally relate to people’s opportunities to be knowledgeable about public problems, voice their concerns (even if contrary to established power interests), and organize to tackle these problems nonviolently. Table 3.3 illustrates some of the ways in which reAcción has exercised these rights.

Through this case study, it is possible to see how the realization of one right can also facilitate the advancement of other rights. According to Riveros García, prior to passage of the 2015 Access to Information Law, reAcción found it extremely difficult to get the information needed about FONACIDE to track the administration of funds and infrastructure projects from the Ministry of Education down to individual high schools. After the law came into effect, the situation improved. Thus realization of the right to information enhanced the ability of the students to monitor FONACIDE and increase its transparency, with the ultimate goal of improving their rights to education and development.

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49. These entry points of change are not discussed here in absolute terms. Rather, they reflect an ongoing process to secure the benefits of FONACIDE for its rightful beneficiaries (prioritized schools and their students on the basis of need).

**Shifting incentives, reshaping preferences, and increasing contestability**

ReAcción has altered power asymmetries in the policy arena by activating the three levers for change described in the World Development Report 2017 (World Bank 2017b):

**Altering elites’ incentives.** ReAcción is gradually affecting elites’ incentives in the policy arena by documenting and exposing (through reports, workshops, elite engagement, social media, and media exposure) mismanagement, transparency, and corruption related to the fund. After several years of citizen engagement that have yielded outcomes and affected power asymmetries in the FONACIDE policy arena, the young people are in a stronger position to change elites’ incentives by increasing the costs (including legal sanctions) of certain actions (corruption and mismanagement) and increasing the costs of particular kinds of inaction (failure to improve administration and the transparency, quality, and availability of information).

**Reshaping preferences and beliefs.** The youth organization is slowly trying to reshape preferences and beliefs about FONACIDE transparency, administration, and disbursements for school infrastructure projects and beneficiary entitlements. As noted, in February 2017 it succeeded in convincing the Ciudad del Este Junta Municipal to declare ParaguaYOite a project “of interest” to the city. This bestows on the citizen engagement initiative a degree of official legitimacy and credibility that it hopes will reduce the power of hostile local education officials, including principals and teachers. It is also attempting to have a wider effect on beliefs by directly engaging students about FONACIDE entitlements through workshops, events, and social media, and, more broadly, by engaging the citizens of Ciudad del Este and Paraguay at large through media coverage and social media efforts.

**Enhancing contestability.** The youth-led organization has increased contestability by overcoming collective action challenges to effectively bring young peoples’ voices, demands, and policy recommendations regarding FONACIDE into the policy arena for education and development. Over the last three years, it has built coalitions for change by cooperatively engaging with more and more elite actors, such as the media, legal profession, and those in higher education. It has expanded the boundaries of the policy arena over time by focusing elite, media, and public attention on FONACIDE’s problematic transparency and administration, disregard for the prior-
ity lists, corruption, and lack of beneficiary knowledge about the process and entitlements. And it has done all this with a team whose average age is 21.

Serbia: Reducing corruption and improving publicly funded public health care services through citizen agency

Serbia faces challenges in the equitable delivery of high-quality health services because of the country’s entrenched corruption and low levels of transparency. Although Serbia has broadly improved its governance environment and political stability over the last 20 years, pockets of corruption continue to plague the delivery of public services, including health care. Moreover, challenges persist in terms of public access to information about doctors and hospital’s performance. The obfuscation of this information makes it more difficult for patients to make optimal decisions about their care.

The mission

Serbia on the Move (SoM) is a social organization that from 2009 to 2015 coordinated action among citizens on the issues of publicly funded health care service corruption and quality. It brought to the policy arena new demands and interests, specifically policy recommendations based on collective information and feedback generated by the over 35,000 citizens who took part in collective action, participated as volunteers in the NGO, or both.

Through these actions, and through strategic engagement with subnational and national policy makers as well as hospitals and doctors themselves, SoM helped to shift incentives and preferences to increase transparency and begin to reduce levels of corruption. Its five citizen engagement projects from 2009 to 2015 began with a 1,000-signature drive in support of the overall initiative and volunteer recruitment, followed by engagement with elite stakeholders both directly and indirectly through media outreach and communications. Together with policy measures undertaken by the Government and the Ministry of Health (MoH), these initiatives contributed to increased transparency and accountability in the publicly financed health sector through citizen-generated data about medical personnel and health facilities; support for ethical doctors; professional continuing education on anticorruption, transparency, and accountability courses for physicians and nurses; citizen monitoring of hospital boards; and public access to doctors’ licensing records.

Figure 3.7: Serbia’s governance score rankings, 2000 and 2015

Source: World Bank, Worldwide Governance Indicators.
Note: Scores are cross-country rankings for 2000 and 2015. Values correspond to global percentile rank. Zero is the lowest rank and 100 the highest rank. Serbia has seen improvement in all six governance categories covered by the World Bank’s Worldwide Governance Indicators.

Figure 3.8: Serbia’s relative levels of corruption and societal engagement

Sources: Public sector corruption and engaged society scores: V-Dem (Varieties of Democracy) Version 5.2; GDP per capita: World Bank, World Development Indicators (database).
Background context and challenges

Serbia’s politics and economic development are shaped by the country’s past as a part of the former Yugoslavia. After the breakdown of the Soviet Union in 1991, Serbia experienced war and the violent redrawing of its borders with neighboring states, as well as the authoritarian rule of President Slobodan Milošević. Today, the legacy of political instability remains a primary obstacle to inclusive economic development. Serbia’s overall political and governance risk ratings are considered “substantial” (World Bank 2015a, 43).

Across several metrics of governance used by the World Bank’s Worldwide Governance Indicators, Serbia’s relative and absolute performance has improved greatly since the turn of the century (figure 3.7). However, problems remain with corruption in the public sector (figure 3.8). Although a solid legislative framework for anticorruption in the public sector is in place, its implementation is lagging.

Despite governance challenges, Serbian society has robust experience with successfully mobilizing its citizens and building the movements of groups from across civil society that waged the pro-democracy and antiwar campaigns in the 1990s. These movements culminated in the resignation of Milošević. Protests began in response to the government’s war politics, hate speech, and conscription of regular citizens into the armed forces. For over a decade, the opposition grew in strength and also began to focus on domestic politics. In 1998 a youth group founded the Otpor! social movement for democracy, which was instrumental in mobilizing citizens in response to the 2000 elections. They challenged the false election result reporting that had favored Milošević, and they successfully pressured the Federal Electoral Committee to announce the corrected results, leading to the resignation of Milošević. Citizen engagement and mobilization were thus instrumental in pushing for transparency and integrity and instituting a democratic system of governance (York, and Zimmerman 2002).

More recently, the European Union (EU) accession process has provided incentives and guidance for political and governance reforms. To become a member of the EU, Serbia has to comply with the Copenhagen criteria, which include “the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities.”50 In line with this requirement, Serbia has become a signatory to a number of international and regional treaties promoting human rights and good governance. In 2008 the newly elected government made corruption a priority issue, developed a National Anticorruption Strategy and Action Plan, and established entities such as the Anticorruption Agency to support and monitor the implementation of its commitments. Public sector anticorruption and ethics leg-

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CITIZENS AS DRIVERS OF CHANGE

SPOTLIGHT 3:
Current challenges in the health care system in Serbia

Serbia’s key health outcomes are good for its income level: life expectancy at birth is 75 and the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) is 17 per 100,000 live births (2015). The under-5 mortality rate (USMR) declined from 28 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 7 per 1,000 live births in 2015 and the infant mortality rate from 24 to 6 per 1,000 live births in the same period. However, poor and marginalized groups—such as the Roma—have worse health and nutrition outcomes (World Bank 2015c).

As the population of Serbia has aged, the burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) has grown. Since 1990, the Serbian population has decreased by an average of about -0.2 percent annually. The percentage of the population age 65 and over went up from 10 in 1990 to 14 percent in 2012, and it is projected to reach 25 percent by 2050. Because of its aging population, the disease burden in Serbia is now weighted toward NCDs and external causes such as injuries. The top three causes of premature death in 2010 were heart disease (19.9 percent), stroke (18.8 percent), and cancers (about 18 percent), which implies that coverage and quality of prevention, promotion, and first-line screening and treatment at the primary care levels are key (World Bank 2015b).

The health care system in Serbia is based on universal health coverage. About 94 percent of the population has health insurance, but lower-income groups tend to have higher unmet medical needs and lower insurance coverage (HPI 2014; World Bank 2015c). Besides the need to expand the access to care for marginalized groups, other major challenges in Serbian publicly funded health care are improving the quality of care and health outcomes and enhancing the efficiency of health spending.

Health care quality. Use of hospital care went up between 2006 and 2013. In a recent survey, 7.8 percent of respondents age 15 and over (compared with 6.5 percent in 2006) said they had been treated in a hospital in the 12 months preceding the survey. This increase cannot be explained just by the aging of the population. Other factors are also responsible, including unnecessary hospital admissions, shortcomings in primary care, excessive use of acute care beds for long-term care, and inadequate use of day surgery. Wait lists for elective procedures are frequent and significantly longer than in member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). They contribute to the high prevalence of bribery, particularly in the hospital sector (World Bank 2015b).

Inefficient government expenditure on health. In Serbia, total public health spending increased from 5.2 percent of GDP in 2000 to 6.4 percent in 2013, higher than the average for upper-middle-income countries (3.9 percent) and slightly higher than the European Union average (6.3 percent). In the Western Balkans, only Bosnia and Herzegovina spends more on health. In 2009-13, Serbia’s per capita government health spending was three times higher at US$715 per capita per year than the average for countries with similar GDPs, US$298 per capita per year. Despite Serbia’s considerably higher spending, its health outcomes are similar and sometimes lower than those of other Central European countries, which suggests that inefficiency in the use of public funds combined with corruption is a primary concern for national authorities. For example, there are only five hospital beds for every 1,000 Serbians—lower than the European and Central Asia average (World Bank 2015a, 2015b).


Current challenges in the health care system in Serbia

Serbia joined the Open Government Partnership in 2012. Its OGP action plans have been aligned with other efforts to improve the efficiency of public administration and strengthen integrity in order to reach EU standards. The second action plan (2016–18) seeks to improve the consultation processes with civil society and increase the involvement of citizens in these reform processes. Ongoing efforts also include improving access to information and the availability of open data, as well as increasing the transparency of public procurement.51

Although its progress on these issues has been good, Serbia’s score on press freedom has declined. Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are protected under Serbian law, but journalists report facing political pressure, resulting in an increase in self-censorship and a decline in investigative journalism.52

Goverance improvements have helped improve service delivery, but Serbia continues to face challenges in eliminating corruption in basic services, particularly health care. Serbia has significantly increased its spending on health care over the last decade, by almost 4 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP), and now outperforms other countries at its income level in life expectancy and infant mortality (panels a and b, figure 3.9). And yet health care is lagging in quality as well as access for marginalized groups.53 For example, in 2006 for Roma living in urban slums the estimated infant mortality rate and probability of death before age 5 were three times the national average.

The health sector is one of the sectors perceived by citizens as the most corrupt, as, for example, in a 2010 survey by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the 2006 Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer. The surveys also ranked corruption as the factor most likely exacerbating existing inequalities in access to and quality of care and thus in multiple ways undermining development efforts as well as the fulfillment of human rights. Indeed, corruption plagues the health system, making a transition toward improved treatment and prevention of noncommunicable diseases more challenging. Serbia now faces challenges related to noncommunicable diseases that are similar to those of other upper-middle and high-income countries (GBD 2015 Mortality and Causes of Death Collaborators 2016), and yet there is a culture of not seeking out preventive care (Hjelm et al. 1999).

Such corruption and irregularities in public health care have resulted in discrimination and inequality. Because they are unable to meet bribe demands, poor people experience discrimination in health care while those with greater economic means receive preferential attention and treatment. Even though checks and balances are in place on the books to control corruption and punish wrongdoers, enforcement has been lax. For example, the Serbian Medical Chamber frequently does not revoke the professional licenses of doctors found guilty of corruption in criminal cases even though this is stipulated in the country’s legal system. One reason given is that the Medical Chamber has not been informed of the verdicts. As well, there is a perception among citizens that judicial processes are slow and sentences relatively lenient.

Because citizens seeking health care often face demands for bribes, the power of doctors is asymmetrical relative to that of patients. Proving corruption and bringing perpetrators to justice are a daunting process. Victims or whistleblowers must go to the police, which is not necessarily an appealing prospect because the police are second to doctors in terms of reported bribe payments. SoM reports that police then plan a sting operation with the victim to catch the medical practitioner in a criminal act of corruption. But such an operation has requirements: the citizen or family member must have enough time before the medical intervention to take action, and the medical practitioner must make a direct bribe demand (as opposed to an indirect or third-party demand). Because of the difficulty in challenging these entrenched power asymmetries, under-the-table bribes in exchange for medical services have become an entrenched norm in Serbian society.

Collective action to enhance contestability

Serbia on the Move (Srbija u Pokretu) was officially launched as a registered association in July 2009 by a small group of young professionals in their 20s. They had a vision of empowering citizens to hold those in charge of public resources accountable. SoM was co-led by Ana Babović, who at the time served as adviser for European integration to Serbia’s deputy prime minister, Bozidar Đelić. The organization operates under three guiding principles:

1. **Citizen support.** SoM requires written support from 1,000 citizens before implementing any overall initiative. As described here, this requirement was applied to the focus on corruption in the publicly funded health sector, which spanned five projects over six years.

2. **Community organizing.** The realization of SoM projects and activities depends on the direct involvement of citizens.

3. **Transparency.** All of the organization’s resources and expenditures are available publicly on its website.

SoM began by focusing on combatting corruption in health care because of the widespread complaints about the problem. Grievances ranged from demands for bribe, to public doctors setting up private clinics and channeling patients to them, to receiving monetary and other valuable perks from pharmaceutical companies. Because of citizens’ perceptions of graft among health care professionals, SoM found that many public doctors themselves were aggrieved, feeling underappreciated while working long hours for relatively low salaries. In addition, corruption in the health sector was particularly salient and personal because access to health care is deemed fundamental to society, and citizens directly contribute to the National Health Insurance Fund through their earnings. Thus health care is considered both a right and an entitlement that people themselves ultimately fund. After researching the problem, SoM concluded that, although several laws and bylaws regulated health care, supported integrity, and punished graft, in reality checks and balances as well as judicial functions were not working optimally.

SoM sought to reduce corruption in the health sector by strengthening prevention mechanisms, transparency, and accountability through citizen engagement. To accomplish this goal, the young professionals identified four mutually reinforcing short-term objectives. First, raise awareness among citizens about how to fight corruption in publicly


55. The 2010 UNDP survey reported the following results: “In most cases the bribe was given to doctors (57%), then to police officers (26%) and to state administration employees (13%). The trend of corruption incidence in these sectors is increasing. Corruption in other sectors is rarely reported.” http://www. undp.org/content/dam/srbia/Publications%20and%20reports/UNDP_SRB_Serbia_Corruption_Benchmarking_Survey.pdf, p. 8.

56. Babović left her position in 2012 to become Serbia on the Move’s executive director. Until assuming this official position, she worked on a voluntary basis. She was selected to be a Ford Foundation Mason Student Fellow in 2016 and is currently a research fellow at Harvard’s Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, while also maintaining her active involvement in Serbia on the Move.
Box 3.7: Serbia on the Move’s project structure

Predrag Stojičić, a medical doctor, was exposed to the community organizing resources developed by Marshall Ganz, a senior lecturer in public policy at the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, before he co-founded Serbia on the Move in 2009. He and his co-founder, Ana Babović, further studied Ganz’s approach through online resources and discovered they were already practicing much of his model. After Ganz launched a distance learning course in 2010, Stojičić convinced SoM’s core leadership to take it, and they adapted what they learned to the Serbian context (see figure B3.6.1).

In the snowflake model, citizen mobilization is integrated into project organization rather than treated as a stand-alone objective. At the center is the core leadership team, initially the founding young professionals of SoM. At the next level are the project leadership teams. Each member at the core of a project team is in charge of leading the people (volunteers) working on one functional part of the project. Common functional teams include education and training (including leadership development), community organizing, logistics and public actions, public relations, and evaluation. The community organizing team is responsible for recruiting team leaders, who in turn are tasked with recruiting 10 volunteers on the ground. In this framework, interdependent leadership teams are composed of individuals who bring complementary strengths to bear on solving the problem. Collaboration is essential to create “power to” based on the interests of all parties. Each SoM project has its own leadership team.

Figure B3.7.1: Citizen engagement project structure of Serbia on the Move

Using analytical resources developed by Ganz, SoM conducts a strategic analysis of each citizen engagement project incorporating the following components:

1. People. Who are my people?
2. Problem. What is their problem and what change do they need?
3. Map of actors. Who are the relevant actors at the local, state and national levels in terms of their interests and resources, including citizen engagement constituency, opposition, allies, supporters, competitors, collaborators, and others (such as media, judiciary, general public).
4. Power. Based on the map of actors, who holds the resources (decision-making authority, funds, time, skills) that our constituency needs to achieve its goal(s).
5. Theory of change. What is our hypothesis about how our constituency can use its resources to create the power needed to achieve the stated change, beginning with a specific campaign goal that is clear and measurable and involves a specific outcome that can focus citizens’ efforts, leverage our constituency’s resources, build capacity, and motivate participation?

funded health care in contrast to conventional public awareness efforts that simply aim to identify corruption. Second, formulate new transparency and accountability mechanisms to reduce graft in health care. Third, build a coalition of stakeholders (citizens, civil society, state institutions, public health practitioners) interested in reducing corruption in this sector. Fourth, build the capacity of citizens to actively push for the adoption and implementation of these new transparency and accountability mechanisms.

These goals were accomplished by relying on a project structure that is built on citizen engagement and organized around the concept of interdependent leadership and a snowflake organizational structure (box 3.7). Like WDR 2017, Marshall
Ganz’s community organizing model rests on power analysis (Ganz 2013). It presumes that an imbalance of power can exist between those with decision-making roles (elites) and those (citizens) affected by their decisions (policies) in negative or socially unjust ways. Community organizing can thus be understood as a form of citizen engagement involving highly strategic collective action, whereby grassroots power is built and wielded in the policy arena (contestability) to affect outcomes. “To create change, you need power. If you don’t have power, use the resources you have. People are a source of power,” says Babović.

Citizens are the source of SoM’s power, and, as a volunteer-based organization, its key challenge is overcoming collective action challenges to ensure commitment from volunteers to the organization’s initiatives. SoM was founded through voluntary efforts. None of the seven members of the original strategic team has ever been paid. Citizens are the drivers of the organization’s activities as volunteers in projects, as supporters of projects, as a key constituency whose problems are addressed by the citizen engagement initiatives, and ultimately as resources and sources of power. Each grassroots project is carried out by dozens of volunteers organized around the snowflake structure. Babović recognized the potential power of citizen engagement and highlighted the limits of the existing theories of change in Serbia, which focused on raising awareness and then “asking those in power to do something to solve our problems,” based on the belief that “power is something that others have and we don’t.” By contrast, SoM focused on harnessing citizen power itself to contest in the policy arena.

Public apathy, fear, cynicism, and lack of trust of NGOs have been key obstacles for the organization. Early on, when the group reached out to NGOs and discussed their mobilization strategy, the reaction was often laughter. “They would say this is impossible unless we have money to pay them [citizen-volunteers] and even in that case it’s quite unlikely it would happen,” says Babović.

SoM thus sought to change citizens’ beliefs and preferences about collective action, power, and prospects for change. This was achieved in part through personal interactions, notably the 1,000-signature requirement to launch an overall initiative, an inclusive process that fostered a sense of community and countered feelings of isolation. “To get them to go out in the field, they need to understand they’re not alone,” explains Babović. SoM also attempted to create collective responsibility by emphasizing that it was not created to provide services or other benefits for citizens and communities, but rather to work together to address problems and achieve improvements. The group also sought to overcome negative views about NGOs through community and university events, personal narrative videos, and public training, which served as well to recruit members and volunteers. SoM engaged citizens and recruited volunteers through contact with local patient organizations; local civil society organizations; university outreach (lectures and workshops, including at schools of law, medicine, pharmacy, and political science); “anticorruption coffee” meetings; creative, often humorous street actions (“teaser events”); free training and workshops; and social media.57

As noted, to launch an overall initiative SoM, together with its volunteers, must first gather at least 1,000 signatures of support from citizens. Each signature represents a one-on-one conversation with a citizen about the subject of the project and why it is important. Citizens are asked about their view of the problem and proposed actions and whether they want to show support through their signature. For example, in 2009, prior to implementation of the first citizen engagement initiative, “I am not on the take, I work for the salary,” 5,000 people made the following affirmation: “With this signature I want to express my support of doctors who publicly declare themselves as uncorrupted and who commit to promote zero tolerance of corruption in their work or health care facility.” This action has multiple functions: it is an information-gathering tool to get input from citizens and gauge the proposed project’s appeal; it helps to prime a base of citizens for potential mobilization if the project is launched; and it is one way in which SoM recruits volunteers, ranging from post–high school young people to university students, professionals, and unemployed youth. The latter group is an acute socioeconomic challenge for the country.58

To ensure volunteer commitment, SoM cultivates collective responsibility and collective ownership. The first point of SoM’s manifesto (appendix B) is “We are free to express and use the resources you have. People are a source of power,” says Babović.

57. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYys-B_mCg
on the street. Preparations include sharing stories of “us” and their linkages to the objectives of the citizen engagement project and greater hope to change Serbia. The organization strategically creates and crafts a narrative to build collective identity and a sense of agency among citizens. As mentioned earlier, through some of its projects it also has cultivated a collective identity among ethical medical practitioners. A visible example is the “honorary” badge doctors wore after taking a public integrity pledge.

From its initial organic roots, SoM has expanded and become more formally structured. International actors, including the European Commission, UNDP, and USAID, have provided SoM with financial support. For example, when SoM received its first grant from USAID for the “I’m not on the take, I work for the salary” project, the young founders hired a project manager and two part-time program assistants. As SoM’s activities and experience grew, it created in 2013 a new structure to improve citizen coordination and cooperation. It consisted of a national committee and five regional committees composed of volunteers largely drawn from previous projects. This structure enhanced citizen cooperation and coordination in the policy arena and reinforced a sense of collective identity.

**Initiatives to change elites’ incentives and preferences**

In its health care initiative, SoM reduced barriers for entry in the public health and anticorruption, transparency, and accountability policy arenas, first through citizen-driven collective action, which cumulatively affected power asymmetries. As this form of contestability gained traction, SoM proactively sought to align with other actors (state and nonstate) to pressure other elites through stakeholder consultations and coalition building. As well, it contributed to fostering a new collective identity among other elites—specifically, honest professional doctors and nurses through social affirmation and professional development courses accredited by the Serbian Medical Chamber. Finally, it helped stimulate public de-

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**Table 3.4:** Altering elites’ incentives on the ground: Five SoM projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Outcomes (by altering costs of action, inaction, or opposition)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I am not on the take, I work for the salary” and Anticorruption Citizens Charter</td>
<td>Collection of 10,000 citizen signatures through direct, one-on-one interactions demanding Citizens Charter.</td>
<td>Prior to collection of the signatures, the Ministry of Health was unresponsive to SoM’s engagement efforts. Afterward, it called SoM for a meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“What’s your doctor like?”</td>
<td>Collected 12,640 evaluations of 5,000 doctors and made them available through the SoM website.</td>
<td>Public disclosures to increase the transparency and accountability of unprofessional doctors and recognize professional doctors, thereby altering the incentives for negative and positive behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice for Health</td>
<td>Citizens reported corruption and irregularities using the SMS (text messaging) tool.</td>
<td>Ministry of Health invited SoM to cooperate on policy recommendations based on information generated by citizens; this reflected a change in incentives for putting policy measures in place that address corruption in medical facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals without Corruption</td>
<td>Cooperated with patients’ rights groups to conduct 62 public workshops on patients’ rights, thereby educating 852 citizens about the mechanisms available to counter corruption in hospitals.</td>
<td>Increased transparency and accountability in hospitals by empowering patients with information and user-friendly mechanisms to increase the costs of corrupt actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to Know</td>
<td>Cooperated with elites to prominently post anticorruption policies and reporting mechanisms in the country’s five major hospitals.</td>
<td>Cooperated with elites to prominently post anticorruption policies and reporting mechanisms in the country’s five major hospitals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducted a comparative policy analysis of different models of patients’ rights to information concerning physicians, and held stakeholder consultations through engagement with the Serbian Medical Chamber.</td>
<td>The Serbian Medical Chamber agreed to publish and maintain a list of all licensed public and private doctors in the country on its website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>200 volunteers in five cities recruited and trained to raise public awareness and encourage citizens to access a list of all licensed public and private doctors in the country on the Serbian Medical Chamber’s website.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Convened public workshops on patients’ rights attended by 700 citizens.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
liberation through the Hospitals without Corruption project, whereby representatives of patient organizations or communities gained access to the five main hospital boards in the country.

SoM sought wide engagement with elites in the policy arena. The individuals and institutions varied according to the particular citizen engagement project. From 2009 to 2015 for its health care initiative, SoM engaged with

- Government policy makers at the national and subnational levels, including the Ministry of Health, Anticorruption Agency, Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection, Ministry of Justice, Ombudsman, Parliament’s Committee on Health, National Health Insurance Fund, National Police, Belgrade City Health Secretariat, and local governments
- Hospital and health care facility administrations and ethical boards
- National and subnational professional medical associations, including the Serbian Health Council, Serbian Medical Society, Serbian Medical Chamber, and Regional Medical Chambers of Novi Sad, Nis, Kragujevac, and Belgrade
- Doctors and nurses, including both perpetrators of health care corruption and irregularities as well as honest professional providers of medical services.

Based on Ganz’s community organizing model, SoM identified and mapped the relevant actors at the local, state, and national levels in terms of their interests and resources, including the citizen engagement constituency, opposition, allies, supporters, competitors, collaborators, and others (such as the media, judiciary, and general public). SoM then overlaid the map of actors with a power distribution of who holds the resources (decision-making authority, funds, time, skills) needed to achieve the organization’s goals. Finally, using this map and the power distribution, SoM developed hypotheses about how to effect change, beginning with a specific campaign goal that is clear and measurable and involves a specific outcome that can focus citizens’ efforts, leverage its constituency’s resources, build capacity, and motivate participation.

In mapping the actors in the public health care policy arena, SoM identified a variety of elite stakeholders and institutions that play a role in adopting and implementing policies and developed strategies for effectively building coalitions and selectively pressuring certain groups. It eventually understood that it was not possible, necessary, or strategically wise to tackle problems at all levels (on the ground, subnational, and national) simultaneously because of the overlay of multiple state institutions, professional medical bodies, and confusing lines of authority and decision making. Rather, a vertically integrated approach could unfold over time through multiple, consecutive citizen engagement initiatives that would build on each other. SoM thus developed citizen engagement projects that would wield grassroots power, thereby affecting power asymmetries and elites’ incentives. Table 3.4 summarizes the five citizen engagement projects that SoM carried out from 2009 to 2015 and that are described in more detail in this section. Each effort began with volunteer recruitment, followed by engagement with elite stakeholders, both directly and through media outreach and communications.

Project: “I am not on the take, I work for the salary” (2009–10) and Anticorruption Citizens Charter (2010–12)

The objectives of these linked initiatives were to promote the values of integrity and an ethical code of conduct among physicians. During the “I am not on the take” initiative, 5,000 citizens signed a declaration in support of ethical physicians, and 300 trained volunteers directly interacted with 1,000 doctors in Belgrade and later more practitioners in five major cities. The doctors were encouraged to sign an anticorruption code of conduct. In the end, almost 1,000 physicians in Belgrade (70 percent of the total) and 50–70 percent of their counterparts in other cities took the integrity pledge; wore a “badge of honor” stating, “I am not on the take, I work for the salary”; and agreed to have their names publicly listed on SoM’s website (photo 3.1).

At the same time, SoM called for the adoption of an Anticorruption Citizens Charter to be displayed prominently in
primary health care facilities, first in the capital and then throughout Serbia. In 2010 volunteers collected 10,000 signatures from citizens in support of the charter, which SoM submitted to the City of Belgrade Health Secretariat because it controls primary health care facilities under its jurisdiction and can send the request to the Ministry of Health. The objective was to devise an anticorruption mechanism that would be useful to honest health care professionals and citizens while creating deterrents for corrupt practices.

Through publicity and the power of numbers, SoM changed physicians’ and hospitals’ incentives to embrace integrity and corruption and also gained access to policy makers at the sub-national and national levels. Prior to collecting the 10,000 signatures demanding an Anticorruption Citizens Charter, the young professionals had tried to engage with officials at the Belgrade Health Secretariat but without success. By contrast, after this exercise of collective action the secretariat called SoM for a meeting at which it agreed to ask the Ministry of Health to write the charter. UNDP supported the ministry in this endeavor. However, the process was slow, prompting SoM’s leadership team to draft its own version. Members solicited input from experts within the country and abroad, including from Harvard, and convened a public stakeholder roundtable in October 2012, which received significant press coverage. Through contacts, SoM also passed its draft charter to the ministry. The final version of the charter was similar to that prepared by SoM. To SoM’s disappointment, however, there was no implementation because the Ministry of Health never posted the charter in health care facilities.

Project: “What’s your doctor like?” (2012)

Serbia on the Move’s next project centered on citizen evaluations of doctors. The objectives were to increase transparency and accountability in public health care by exposing bad doctors and acknowledging good ones; gathering actionable data on corruption that could be used for policy recommendations; and channeling citizens’ reports of graft to government authorities for investigation. SoM sought to change incentives by increasing the costs of corruption through public disclosure and investigations and to reshape preferences and beliefs by acknowledging integrity and creating a sense of collective identity among honest doctors.

SoM created a website with multiple functions for citizen engagement in the digital realm, including rating individual physicians by asking three simple questions: “Did your doctor listen to you?” “Do you trust your doctor?” “Would you recommend your doctor to family and friends?” People could also answer yes/no questions about bribe demands and referrals to private health care facilities.80 Finally, patients could securely report instances of corruption to the Public Prosecutor’s Office through the platform (McDonough 2012). To mobilize citizens to rate their doctors and report corruption, SoM recruited and trained 30 team leaders, who in turn created teams of 10 volunteers operating in seven cities across the country. They used cartoons and personal narrative videos, social media, university presentations, teaser (street) actions, a launch event with 200 people and journalists, and a contest for the best short story and aphorism about Serbia’s health care system. Voting on the 100 submissions was held through the social media.80

To launch the website, SoM engaged with national regulators to gain support and ensure compliance with the law. At the time, the law on transparency of public information and personal data protection was quite new. Nevertheless, the group secured a green light from the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection for the website. It also was in contact with the Public Prosecutor’s Office to set up the digital conduit for citizens to report corruption.

The website was launched on November 17, 2012. Within 10 days, it had logged 30,000 visitors and 12,650 citizen evaluations of 5,000 doctors—essentially 22 percent of all public health physicians in the country. The results greatly exceeded SoM’s expectations. Only 5 percent of the practitioners evaluated by the public received the lowest score (1) and 55 percent received the highest score. In addition, only 8 percent of respondents reported that they had been asked for bribes. For SoM, the data indicated that most doctors actually were competent and not corrupt in contrast to general perceptions.

The group quickly suffered a setback, however. Following a complaint from the Serbian Medical Chamber, the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection reinterpreted the law and ordered the organization to remove the names of all physicians from the site, thereby blocking public access to the information. In response, SoM assembled a small team of volunteer lawyers to mount a legal challenge, but it was unsuccessful. The Commissioner’s decision backfired, however. It stoked public outrage, which SoM tapped to win greater support for its efforts. Through social media, SoM published the government’s contradictory official opinions on the legality of the “What’s your doctor like?” website. It quickly organized on-the-ground and digital actions with volunteers, from a silent protest to a “Call the Commissioner” day; collected the signatures of 3,000 citizens for delivery to the Ministry of Health on International Anticorruption Day (December 9); and made media appearances (including on popular national talk shows).80

60. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBU8t40D2bs; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYys-B_mvCg.
61. The following links are to coverage of and social media reactions to the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protec-
less, in the short term SoM experienced a setback that forced a strategic and operational reassessment.62

Project: Voice for Health (2013)

With its next initiative, SoM developed an integrated approach to improving the health care system, combining citizen engagement, cooperative engagement with elites, investigative journalism, and coalition building. The initiative had three objectives: to increase transparency over how the publicly funded health care services were functioning, to promote ethical standards among practitioners, and to develop evidence-based policy for the Ministry of Health. To carry out its objective, SoM launched a new SMS (text messaging) tool for citizens to report corruption and irregularities in the publicly funded health system, including among medical personnel and facilities.63 In addition, the organization created a new volunteer-staffed center to help citizens who wanted to go beyond the SMS tool to directly contact the relevant official authorities.

Coalitions with media and other civil society organizations helped empower SoM to change the incentives of policy makers at the Ministry of Health. SoM formed a team of young journalists to investigate the corruption reports generated by citizens. These stories were published through blogs and other social media outlets. In addition, it brought a number of anticorruption, health care, and patients’ rights organizations into a new coalition, which began to meet regularly.64 In tandem, SoM created a new structure to organize citizens, consisting of a national committee and five regional committees composed of volunteers largely drawn from previous projects.

Meanwhile, the organization reached two milestones in terms of its engagement and collaboration with national policy makers. First, it secured the cooperation of the Anticorruption Agency. Second, once citizens began using the SMS tool, the Ministry of Health invited SoM to cooperate with it. It was agreed that SoM would publicize its findings, policy recommendations to the ministry, and independent assessments of subsequent implementation, and that the ministry would publicly announce its measures and accomplishments. These outcomes revealed how SoM’s citizen engagement over the years cumulatively changed elites’ incentives and gained SoM a seat at the bargaining table.

In the first year of the initiative, SoM received 995 SMS reports from citizens, providing a “very good picture of the whole system with all its anomalies and problems as well as healthy parts,” said Babović. The SMS data and investigations were compiled into monthly, quarterly, and annual reports on the public health care system, along with recommendations to the Ministry of Health on how to address the problems and improve the services that received the most complaints. The ministry’s track record was modest, which SoM disclosed publicly. Even so, there were some notable gains in the policy arena. The ministry agreed and implemented SoM’s recommendation to display posters about the SMS service in all public health care facilities in the country. These posters were designed and printed by SoM.

The initiative helped to reveal lesser-known forms of corruption and gain the Ministry of Health’s cooperation in combating them. For example, the initiative shed light on the practice of paying bribes to be hired as technical and medical staff in hospitals. In response, the ministry adopted SoM’s recommendation that new, detailed hiring procedures and qualification requirements be followed by all facilities. In addition, SoM pointed out the illicit practice of paying to move up the waiting list for medical procedures. The ministry then adopted SoM’s proposal that doctors provide in writing the waiting time to reach the top of the list. If the time is not met, patients can choose to go to a private provider and receive reimbursement by the state for the cost.

In addition, 10 investigative stories were published, although there were challenges in convincing the judicial system to prosecute wrongdoers. The volunteer center helped one person receive protected whistleblower status, and the legal team submitted over 60 cases on behalf of citizens to the Public Prosecutor’s Office. Because of fear of reprisals, all requested anonymity, but the judicial body refused to investigate without disclosure of identities. As of March 2017, this shortcoming and other concerns about the judicial system were being discussed by SoM, some civil society groups, and a major donor.

Project: Hospitals without Corruption (2014)

In 2014, five years after its founding, SoM devised a new, multifaceted project to deepen and expand its integrated approach to increasing transparency based on civil society

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62. See the source for a detailed account of the project.
63. The SMS service captured the following data: WHO (name and title), WHEN (date and time), WHERE (city, health care facility, department), and WHAT (corrupt or irregular activity). See UNDP (2013).
64. Among the coalition members were Law Scanner (health care); BIRN (Balkan Investigative Research Network—transparency, corruption); BIRODI (Bureau for Research—corruption, transparency, research); CRTA (Center for Transparency and Accountability—corruption, transparency, activism); and Blue Circle (patients’ rights).
coalition building and cultivating constructive relationships with policy makers. SoM’s core leadership team began by securing one-on-one meetings with key stakeholders, followed by roundtables with representatives of stakeholder groups to develop measures to reduce the perception of and actual corruption in health care facilities. “We wanted everyone’s buy-in,” says Babović. “If we came to them with everything, they would not cooperate, so we wanted to create it [measures] with them.” The stakeholders included the Ministry of Health, Anticorruption Agency, Serbian Medical Chamber, Serbian Medical Society, Serbian Health Council, and various patient organizations.

Three initiatives emerged from these deliberations. The first was an educational program for physicians and nurses on anticorruption. SoM cooperated with the Serbian Health Council and the Anticorruption Agency to develop and conduct accredited workshops for doctors and nurses that are part of what is called Continuing Medical Education and is important for maintaining professional credentials. The content focused on integrity, a code of conduct, and how to protect oneself from corruption. The course was taken by 452 doctors and nurses (or 2 percent of all doctors in the country), and they received credit under the Continuing Medical Education program (USAID 2016). In evaluations, 91.6 percent said the course met their expectations, and 76.8 percent would recommend it to their colleagues.

In the second initiative, through the Voice for Health chapters, volunteer teams worked with patient organizations to conduct citizen workshops. Core topics included recognizing corruption or the potential for it, discerning the difference between corruption and malpractice, using anticorruption mechanisms and steps to report corruption, and understanding how patients can feed corruption—for example, through offering bribes or “gifts.” Around the country, 852 people participated in 62 citizen workshops.

The third initiative was the placement of a representative of a local patient organization or a community member as an observer on five targeted hospital boards around the country (USAID 2016). Observers were chosen for the five boards from applicants—local chapters of the Voice for Health asked patients’ groups to submit candidate applications. After the project ended, three of the facilities continued the practice. In addition, at each of these hospitals SoM displayed a poster on the SMS anticorruption tool, intended to serve as a resource for citizens and a deterrent for medical practitioners (see photo 3.2).

To evaluate the impact of the anticorruption information drive and the presence of citizen observers on the boards, SoM volunteers conducted two surveys of patients (randomly selected) at the five targeted hospitals. The surveys yielded mixed results (table 3.5). The first survey compared patient perceptions about corruption in the targeted hospitals before the onset of the project. The second survey was conducted six months later, after all measures had been implemented. A total of 102 people were interviewed, proportionately selected according to the average number of patients in each medical center. Although bribery was not the norm overall, either before or after the project, its occurrence was relatively unaffected. However, doctors’ direct demands for bribes dropped significantly. In addition, the targeted hospitals saw a large increase in knowledge about patient mechanisms to fight hospital corruption. However, the hospitals also saw a shift from overt forms of corruption (that is, explicit and implicit demands for bribes by doctors) toward more hidden corruption (third-party “gift” requests). Finally, the finding that patients increased their unsolicited offers of gifts pointed to the need and challenge to overcome entrenched norms, which SoM has also endeavored to affect. Overall, the results revealed the adaptability of corruption and the reality that progress is incremental.
Table 3.5: Selected questions and results from patient perception surveys, Hospitals without Corruption project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected questions from survey</th>
<th>Patients surveyed in targeted hospitals before project (average rating)</th>
<th>Patients surveyed in targeted hospitals after project (average rating)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In your opinion, how widespread is corruption in the health care system? (1=lowest rating of corruption; 5=highest rating)</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has anyone during your treatment (stay) in the hospital asked you/requested money for a &quot;present&quot; in order to provide the treatment? (yes/no)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ If you answered yes, has anyone during your treatment (stay) in the hospital directly asked you/requested a &quot;present&quot; in order to provide the treatment? (yes/no)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ If you answered yes, has anyone during your treatment (stay) in the hospital indirectly asked you/requested a &quot;present&quot; in order to provide the treatment? (yes/no)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ If you answered yes, has a third party (nurses, other staff) during your treatment (stay) in the hospital indirectly asked you/requested a &quot;present&quot; for the doctor in order to provide the treatment? (yes/no)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During your treatment (stay), did you offer the doctor an unsolicited &quot;present&quot;? (yes/no)</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you informed (do you have the knowledge) about the mechanisms to report the corruption in health care? (yes/no)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data and translation provided by Predrag Stojičić, co-founder, Serbia on the Move.

Project: Right to Know (2015)

After six years, Serbia on the Move decided to tackle another link in the publicly funded health care transparency-accountability-quality ecosystem: the right to information about physician licenses, malpractice, and corruption charges. Serbia ranks toward the bottom of all European countries in terms of the accessibility of information about patients and hospitals (USAID 2016). The Serbian Medical Chamber is responsible for maintaining records and taking disciplinary measures against physicians in both public and private practice.65 The overall objective of the project was to institute public access to this information, thereby increasing transparency and accountability in the health care system and strengthening patients’ rights to information about their doctors’ professional backgrounds and records.

Through this initiative, SoM hoped to change doctors’ incentives by making information public. SoM’s core leadership team saw this policy as a preventive measure. According to Babović, “If this information is public, it will make everyone [physicians] think twice before they commit a corrupt act because they can lose not only a license, but a job and furthermore their integrity.” On the other hand, SoM once again wanted to support honest professional physicians. Transparency on medical licensing allows patients to check the status of their doctors and also see that only a small minority are wrongdoers. This initiative changed doctors’ incentives by increasing the costs of particular nefarious actions and helped to reshape preferences by creating an alternate positive collective identity about the medical profession.

SoM told the Serbian Medical Chamber about the project at the outset. It conducted a comparative policy analysis of different models of patients’ rights to information on physicians, and it held stakeholder consultations through engagement with the Serbian Medical Chamber and three roundtables (USAID 2015). Participants in the consultations included representatives from the National Health Insurance Fund, Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection, various health councils, patients’ rights organizations, and interested civil society organizations, as well as the Serbian Medical Chamber. Even before SoM began building capacity for citizen action, the chamber agreed to publish and maintain a list of all licensed public and private doctors in the country on its website.66 As a result of this constructive and positive outcome, there was no need to organize street actions to pressure the chamber. Instead, SoM recruited and trained two hundred volunteers in five cities to raise public awareness and encourage citizens to access this vital information about doctors on the chamber’s website. The NGO’s volunteers also convened public workshops on patients’ rights.

The Serbian Medical Chamber’s acquiescence demonstrated how SoM had shifted incentives: the threat of street actions

65. The Serbian Medical Chamber regulation is for “Specifying the Conditions for Issuance, Renewal or Revocation of Licenses.”
**Table 3.6: Application of human rights, Serbia on the Move**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right</th>
<th>Application of right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td>Creating a grassroots group that formally registered as an NGO; creating volunteer-based national and subnational SoM committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly</td>
<td>Conducting public meetings, workshops for citizens and medical professionals, recruitment activities, digital monitoring, and evaluations of medical professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>Publishing citizen-generated medical assessments, reports, and surveys about corruption, irregularities, and health care services; publishing policy recommendations and assessments of the adoption and implementation of policies by the Ministry of Health; providing citizens with the information needed to report corruption and irregularities in public hospitals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Providing access to information about the licenses of medical practitioners and citizen-generated information about medical practitioners and health care facilities; educating patients about their rights and citizens about their rights to health care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in governance</td>
<td>Providing citizen-generated monitoring and evaluation results and policy recommendations to government officials and nonstate professional medical bodies in order to reduce corruption and increase transparency and accountability in the public health care sector and to improve the provision of publicly funded health care services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

raised the anticipated cost of inaction high enough to change the Medical Chamber’s incentives to publish the list. As a result, the relationship between SoM and the Medical Chamber had come full circle: in 2010 the chamber successfully blocked the SoM’s “What’s your doctor like?” online evaluations by pressuring the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection, but over the years the relationship grew more constructive and the balance of power more equalized. The Medical Chamber went from restricting access to citizen-generated information (evaluations) about doctors to providing previously undisclosed information about them (medical licenses). “Such successful cooperation between Serbia on the Move and the Serbian Medical Chamber and the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection is an illustration of not only good cooperation but also a successful public advocacy process initiated by civil society,” says Marijana Trifunović Stefanović, team leader of the government accountability component of USAID’s Judicial Reform and Accountability Project (USAID 2015).

**Conclusion**

**Summary of outcomes**

Over several years, Serbia on the Move’s citizen engagement initiatives have increased transparency and accountability in the public health sector through citizen-generated data about medical personnel and health facilities; support for ethical doctors; professional for-credit anticorruption, transparency, and accountability courses for physicians and nurses; citizen monitoring of hospital boards; and public access to doctors’ licensing records. Meanwhile, over the years SoM has expanded to other issues in society such as reforming the electoral system, increasing the accountability of politicians, maternity benefits, and a free education program for leadership and community organizing.

SoM’s successes demonstrate the importance of adaptability and incrementalism. When tackling entrenched, systemic problems with obscure, complicated lines of authority and accountability, a single citizen engagement initiative cannot remake an entire sector. Rather, such efforts can be likened to building blocks where outcomes or achievements are often partial, progress is incremental, and setbacks are likely. For Serbia on the Move, “each project is a step in making change in the field of corruption in health care,” observes Babović.

In Serbia, international actors were visible players in the public health care policy arena, and they directly interacted with Serbia on the Move, helping to create broader coalitions to effect change. They exerted influence on state actors through policy recommendations, funding, and technical assistance, essentially participating as a stakeholder in the publicly funded health care and transparency-anticorruption-accountability policy arenas. Finally, in some cases they fostered spaces for public deliberation, thereby helping to enhance contestability for civil society groups and influence power asymmetries in these overlapping policy arenas. For example, UNDP pressed state elites for the adoption of anticorruption measures and institutions and cooperation with civil society. Babović reports that it funded Anticorruption Agency projects to initiate dialogue with civil society. SoM was included in some of these efforts.

**Rights begetting rights**

Serbia on the Move does not identify as a human rights organization, but its public manifesto does incorporate human rights and the related principles of equality and diversity. Meanwhile, its citizen engagement projects are anchored in human rights related to citizen participation, governance, and inclusive development. “Although campaigns were not inviting people to fight for their basic rights,” explains Babović, “those were implicitly integrated in the cause, and denial of
SoM contributed to reengaging with elites who previously ignored the NGO. This has elevated thousands of citizen voices in the policy arena. SoM’s focus was on harnessing citizen power through collective action. The NGO has built power through collective action. The NGO has been particularly adept at applying pressure on elites through the power of numbers, such as the massive one-to-one signature drives, often in combination with street actions. They have elevated thousands of citizen voices in the policy arena. Elites who previously ignored the NGO have subsequently reached out to it, called for cooperation, or even met its demands in anticipation of the collective action.

Changing incentives. Serbia on the Move changed elites’ incentives through several initiatives: it used citizen-generated reports to submit criminal corruption cases; it cooperated with the Ministry of Health to present policy recommendations based on citizen reports of corruption and irregularities; and it compelled the Serbian Medical Chamber to maintain an online roster of all licensed doctors in the country. SoM shifted de facto power by publicly exposing corruption among individual doctors and health care facilities and cooperating with the Ministry of Health to display posters for the SMS corruption reporting tool in all public health centers.

This case study illustrates how citizen engagement can change elites’ incentives through positive reinforcement; SoM used carrots and not just sticks. In the Voice for Health initiative, SoM fostered a win-win situation with the Ministry of Health by acknowledging the institution’s progress in adopting policy recommendations based on citizen-generated information and experiences. (The institution faced negative costs, however, when SoM reported policy inaction.) Furthermore, citizen-generated information about ethical professional doctors and positive experiences in hospitals can increase the positive benefits of particular policies and actions aimed at integrity and quality health care services. “We wanted to have contact with the ‘good guys’; we needed to uplift the good doctors,” recalls Babović.

Reshaping preferences and beliefs. SoM contributed to reshaping the preferences and beliefs of actors in the policy arena. Specifically, it contributed to developing a cadre of like-minded medical practitioners and a sense of collective identity through the “I am not on the take, I work for the salary” project and the accredited integrity workshops for doctors and nurses conducted in cooperation with the Serbian Medical Chamber. As a doctor from Vršac General Hospital observed, “As many doctors and health care institutions as possible should be involved in this. A rare chance to hear the details of this important topic” (USAID 2016). However, this case study also demonstrates the difficulty in reshaping preferences and beliefs in the short term when norms of corrupt behavior are deeply entrenched. In the face of entrenched beliefs, SoM used the media and training to more gradually shift preferences throughout society.

Enhancing contestability. SoM focused on harnessing citizen power through collective action to contest in the policy arena. SoM sees community organizing as a form of citizen engagement that involves highly strategic collective action, whereby grassroots power is built and wielded in the policy arena (contestability) to affect outcomes. SoM enhanced de facto contestability through the power of numbers, such as the massive one-to-one signature drives, often in combination with street actions. In doing so, it elevated thousands of
citizen voices in the policy arena. Elites who previously ignored SoW reached out to it, called for cooperation, or even met its demands in anticipation of the collective action.

Citizens are the source of SoM’s power, and, as a volunteer-based organization, its key challenge is therefore overcoming collective action challenges to ensure that volunteers remain committed to the organization’s initiatives. It has done so by focusing on intangible motivators. To ensure volunteer commitment, SoM deemed it essential to cultivate collective responsibility and collective ownership. Collective ownership is embedded in SoM’s organizational structure, manifesto, and operating principles (including obtaining the signatures of 1,000 citizens that are required to launch an initiative). SoM also deliberately took measures to cultivate a sense of collective identity, strategically creating and crafting a narrative toward that end and a sense of agency among citizens.
CHAPTER 4: From analysis to action
The research conducted for this report was designed to explore patterns rather than test hypotheses. It focuses on citizen engagement and collective action across three case studies with differing trajectories, societal and cultural norms, and socioeconomic indicators. And yet, despite these variable contexts, a number of commonalities emerged. This final chapter summarizes the key findings in this report about citizen engagement and how to mainstream these findings into international development practice.

Key messages and takeaways

Now that these three cases have been analyzed through the lens of the World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law (WDR 2017b) framework and a human rights–based approach, this chapter begins by asking how well these two approaches worked and whether they resonated in the case studies. In both approaches, the framing helped dig into the underlying dynamics that explain processes and outcomes in the selected cases. The WDR 2017 approach forced consideration of the power asymmetries that undermine the functional effectiveness required for service delivery, and it pointed to ways in which citizens act collectively and engage strategically with elites and international actors to rebalance power and shape elites’ incentives and preferences. The human rights–based approach helped demonstrate mechanisms through which citizen groups ensure voluntary commitment to their causes, as well as complementary strategic angles whereby citizen groups use the availability of certain rights to help fight for and obtain additional rights.

And what contribution are the case studies making to the WDR 2017 analysis? They are helping to extend that analysis in two major directions by delving deeper into (1) how organic social organizations motivate volunteerism and commitment to a cause to overcome the plethora of obstacles to collective action, and (2) the strategies that social organizations use when engaging with elites. Both of these areas are identified as important elements of the WDR 2017 discussion of change processes, but neither is fleshed out in that report because of space constraints.

WDR 2017 resonance: Power matters

Power is at the heart of citizen engagement initiatives involving collective action. The WDR 2017 framework adds what has been a missing element in development policies and practice by elaborating how citizens in the policy arena are capable of shifting power asymmetries. In doing so, it provides a path for development actors seeking to integrate power analysis into citizen engagement.

In all three case studies, the underlying functional challenges that spur citizen action are driven by power asymmetries: exclusion, capture, and clientelism. In Afghanistan, the high levels of corruption that undermine the access to and quality of education are aggravated by the exclusion of citizens and communities from addressing education-related problems in their communities; teacher quality is undermined by clientelism and patronage. In Paraguay, because of local clientelism and capture, funds are sometimes targeted to politically favored schools rather than the marginalized ones, as intended. Furthermore, the intended recipients are often excluded from the National Public Investment and Development Fund (FONACIDE) process and unaware they should be receiving funds. In Serbia, the effective exclusion of patients from using institutional means of controlling health care corruption and punishing wrongdoers results in doctors possessing asymmetrical power relative to patients. Because of the difficulty in challenging these entrenched power asymmetries, under-the-table bribes in exchange for medical services have become an entrenched norm in Serbian society.

In each case study, citizens effected change by increasing contestability through extratitutional means—citizen collective action itself ameliorated power asymmetries and gave citizens a seat at the table through the power of numbers. A useful typology from the social movement field distinguishes between institutional and extratitutional pressure (Schock 2005; West 2013). Within the WDR 2017 framework, there are four mechanisms through which citizens can engage to produce change. The mechanisms of voting and political organization involve institutional power. Social organization largely harnesses extratitutional power, whereas public deliberation can tap both. Extratitutional pressure is especially needed in the policy arena when elite-led institutional policies are unsupportive of rules and policies for transparency, accountability, and development outcomes. In such settings, policies and rules can hinder reform and change, or they can be weak, inconsistent, nonexistent, and captured by corrupt interests (Beyerle 2014). Social organization, such as the community-based monitoring organized by Integrity
Citizens as Drivers of Change

Human rights and citizen engagement

Citizen-driven engagement initiatives are in effect a way of actively exercising human rights to improve development. Such initiatives tap into grievances and problems experienced in daily life, frame such concerns through context-specific discourse, and underscore and empower voice and collective action in order to enhance outcomes such as transparency, accountability, and vital public services.

All three case studies are examples of the active exercise of human rights for instrumental purposes rather than (or in addition to) their moral and intrinsic worth. Citizen engagement adds a missing dimension to understanding the interdependent and mutually reinforcing relationship between development and human rights, articulated in the 2007 "DAC Action-Oriented Policy Paper on Human Rights and Development" issued by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2007) and the landmark World Bank/OECD report Integrating Human Rights into Development: Donor Approaches, Experiences, and Challenges (World Bank and OECD 2013). These publications emphasize the conceptual, moral, intrinsic, and practical imperatives for integrating human rights into development, as well as the policies, approaches, and experiences of donor agencies. Complementing this body of work, the case studies illustrate how citizens, through grassroots initiatives, can exercise human rights through voice and action to gain human rights related to accountability and development objectives. In other words, citizen engagement can involve the active exercise of human rights, whereby rights beget other rights.

The case studies suggest two main ways in which the active exercise of human rights helped achieve goals. First, the absence of rights served as a focal point for collective action. Human rights are more than abstract aspirations and moral imperatives. Their presence or absence can be tangibly experienced in daily life. For example, citizens could be denied the right to development through the ill effects of corruption, the insufficient and low-quality provision of vital public services, marginalization, poverty, and poor governance. Such experiences are the basis of shared grievances, concerns, or problems in citizen engagement initiatives. Notions about claiming rights informed these civic initiatives: the right to education (IWA, reAcción), health care (SoM), and information (all case studies). This dynamic is captured in IWA's innovative Community-Based Monitoring toolkit (Gupta, Jahangeer, and Zupancic 2015):

[Volunteers] should raise awareness about community rights and responsibilities and raise awareness about corruption and its negative consequences and encourage [citizens] to fight against corruption. . . . Explain the legal basis for the right to monitor for every Afghan citizen. Pass out brochures on the Right to Monitor and other human rights, based on the Afghan constitution and international conventions. Emphasize the moral duty to exercise the right to monitor.

Second, human rights were used to gain other rights. Exercising rights related to citizen voice and action (often articulated through monitoring and evaluating elites and services) was also prominent. The nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) catalyzing citizen engagement educated citizens about such rights—from the general public (Serbia) to youth (Paraguay), communities and educators (Afghanistan), and patients (Serbia). The introduction of right to information laws in Paraguay and Serbia helped citizen groups access the information they needed to expose and combat corruption.

Extending the WDR 2017 framework: Spurring collective action

The World Development Report 2017 highlights the importance of citizen engagement through social organization in which citizen groups must overcome challenges to collective action, but the WDR does not delve into how citizens actually overcome these barriers. The three case studies described in chapter 3 explore this question in much greater depth.

All of these cases of organic citizen engagement highlight the importance of volunteerism and agency in overcoming collective action problems. Highly structured, induced social accountability interventions in which only elites identify the problem, objectives, and desired outcomes, and choose the modes of engagement with elites and nonelites, are not conducive to volunteerism and initiative. By contrast, in these case studies citizens voluntarily contribute their time, energy, effort, and other resources. According to Ganz (2013), this

67. The interdependent and mutually reinforcing relationship between human rights and development was recognized at the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, the 2000 Millennium Summit, and the 2005 and 2010 World Summits (World Bank and OECD 2013).
commitment of resources is what makes collective action possible. Citizens choose to participate in part because they connect to the grievance or problem, share objectives, are able to overcome inhibitions (such as fear and apathy) to act, and begin to feel a collective sense of responsibility, ownership, and identity—that is, the intangible motivators.

Intangible motivators

Sustained citizen engagement and collective action depend on collective responsibility, collective ownership, and collective identity. These motivators foster commitment, cooperation, and coordination; help to overcome fear and apathy; and build participation. They can function in a variety of formats, from structured social accountability programs to ongoing projects and mobilization efforts. Before moving to the action phase of their citizen engagement efforts, all three organizations highlighted in this study crafted narratives about the value of citizens improving their lives and how they could go about it. This process could be considered a form of framing, “a process through which a given situation is defined and experienced” (Oliver, Cadena-Roa, and Strawn 2003).

As a starting point, successful recruitment strategies depended on convincing potential volunteers that all citizens have the duty (and ability) to tackle the problem at hand, thereby creating a sense of collective responsibility. The concept of rights was linked to collective responsibility through narratives. For example, IWA built a narrative around “our” rights to education and how “we [the community] can play a role.” ReAcción built a narrative around peoples’ right to transparency (concerning FONACIDE) and the right to know and the fact that students could improve the administration of FONACIDE and the allocations for their schools. SoM emphasized that the problems and injustices citizens faced could not be solved just by others (elites) and that people themselves were part of bringing forth improvements and changes in governance and society.

All three social organizations described here stressed that participants should have a role in planning and decision making, helping to create a sense of collective ownership. Collective ownership is embedded in SoM’s organizational structure, manifesto, and operating principles (including the requirement for 1,000 citizen signatures of support). In Afghanistan, working with volunteers and building collective ownership based on community engagement helped IWA avoid the problem that previous interventions had faced when school management councils became inactive after funding and attention from international donors shifted, or they were captured by prominent nonstate community elites. Working instead with volunteers helped to nurture sustainability, and collective ownership increased the legitimacy of the communities’ demands.

In the Paraguay and Serbia case studies, generating a sense of collective identity was essential for fostering unity and voluntary commitment. ReAcción’s “ParaguaYOite” initiative was itself designed to foster unity and collective identity through association of the name (“truly Paraguayan”) with the positive values espoused by reAcción (integrity, citizen participation, honesty, and transparency). The logo reAcción designed was laden with familiar symbols associated with Paraguay, and it was emblazoned on T-shirts that members and student volunteers wore to activities. In Serbia, SoM found that citizens avoid civic activities in part because they feel isolated and are fearful of interacting with fellow citizens. To counter this atomization, SoM created a narrative that strengthened a sense of collective identity, of shared stories of “us” and how “we” (collectively) are the hope to change Serbia. This identity was reinforced by the badges and T-shirts that helped people recognize each other and bolstered the sense that they were not alone in wanting to reduce the role of corruption in health care.

Confidence, recognition, and skills—benefits of participation

Citizens can gain direct and indirect benefits from engagement initiatives beyond the stated objectives of social accountability interventions. Such benefits can bolster their participation, cooperation, and commitment. Even though citizen engagement in this research was voluntary in nature, both citizens and elites derived tangible and intangible benefits such as useful skills, confidence, dignity, and social recognition. IWA brings local monitors together for peer-to-peer exchanges, a special event for people who have few opportunities to travel beyond their communities and meet others who share their concerns and commitment to improving the education of their children. Local volunteer monitors and community representatives also gain confidence and social recognition for their roles in improving their communities and interacting with elites such as officials and other formal stakeholders. To increase the status of local monitors, IWA in some instances holds officiation ceremonies and hands out certificates.

Skills are an important benefit of participation. For NGO members, volunteers, journalists, and even state elites, education and ongoing learning are the keystones of effective participation. The concept of rights was linked to collective responsibility through narratives. For example, IWA built a narrative around “our” rights to education and how “we [the community] can play a role.” ReAcción built a narrative around peoples’ right to transparency (concerning FONACIDE) and the right to know and the fact that students could improve the administration of FONACIDE and the allocations for their schools. SoM emphasized that the problems and injustices citizens faced could not be solved just by others (elites) and that people themselves were part of bringing forth improvements and changes in governance and society.

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Skills are an important benefit of participation. For NGO members, volunteers, journalists, and even state elites, education and ongoing learning are the keystones of effective
citizen engagement initiatives. Education of citizens is often a first step in recruiting volunteers and preparing for collective action (Baer Camargo 2013). IWA, reAcción, and SoM educate volunteers to participate in grassroots projects and campaigns. IWA provides local monitors (elected volunteer community representatives) with systematic training in anticorruption, community mobilization, monitoring, and the status of the Afghan education system. ReAcción conducts FONACIDE training for high school and university students. Courses cover the fund’s basics and administrative process, main points about the law regulating the fund, how to use government open data portals and the group’s unique visualization tools, and pressure points for influence. They even conduct role playing to practice interactions with officials. In Serbia, SoM has developed specialized training, including leadership development and community organizing for campaign team leaders and organizing basics for campaign volunteers.

Beyond training, participation itself develops new skills. Often, people who are relatively marginalized learn firsthand about governance as well as useful skills such as negotiating, problem solving, and auditing. Naser Sidiqee, former manager of IWA’s Community-Based Monitoring School (CBM-S) program, summarizes how this translates into practice: “The program must design a multi-faceted strategy to ensure that every group finds something to call their own in the program. For example, community elders are brought face-to-face with higher level officials to express their grievances. People of a younger age are introduced to school managers and community elders, which earns them respect so that they themselves feel fulfilled.”

Role of leadership

Leaders help determine collective outcomes by transforming the beliefs and preferences of followers or by solving coordination challenges (Ahlquist and Levi 2011). If one uses the distinction provided by Burns (1978) of “transformational” versus “transactional” leaders, transforming beliefs and preferences corresponds to the transformational role of leaders, whereas the ability to solve coordination challenges corresponds to their transactional role. Transformational leaders can change preferences or gain a following by shaping preferences. In doing so, they can indelibly alter the nature of the policy arena. Both transformational and transactional leadership can help grassroots efforts to recruit and sustain membership. According to Mansuri and Rao (2013, 32), “Organic participation is driven by self-motivated leaders who work tirelessly, with little compensation, often at a high opportunity cost. They are constantly innovating, networking, and organizing to get the movement to succeed.”

The effectiveness of the social organizations in Paraguay and Serbia has been in large part determined by strong leadership that has sought to balance centralized versus decentralized decision making and planning. Such a balance has been observed in other effective grassroots citizen engagement initiatives and social movements (Beyerle 2014). In Paraguay, David Riveros García founded reAcción when he was only a high school student, and despite his youth he attempted to shape the organization around an overarching vision of a “transparent Paraguay.” He in turn cultivated youth leadership in the ParaguayYOíte and Alliance for Open Government (AIGA) projects. Serbia on the Move was launched and initially driven by the vision of Ana Babović, together with Predag Stojicic. They expanded the leadership circle to a committed core and fostered what can be described as both transformational and transactional leadership not only among this initial group but also among the various project teams that were encouraged to take initiative and make collective decisions based on overall objectives and strategies.

Youth inclusion, voice, and power

Youth make up approximately one-quarter of the world’s population, a demographic noted by development actors (Fernando 2017). Yet, their voices are often not heard in transparency, accountability, and governance efforts, just as in the formal electoral processes (McGee and Greenhalf 2011). McGee and Greenhalf (2011, 32,) find that many initiatives targeting young people have increased their “voice” but not necessarily their “influence.” However, “young people can acquire a set of expectations about their right to participate and their power to bring about change by doing so.” Other qualitative research has found that youth often spur grassroots accountability initiatives, mobilize their peers and other age groups, and take part in collective action (Beyerle 2014; Mills 2013). ReAcción and Serbia on the Move affirm these findings. The reAcción case study demonstrates how even high school students can affect power relations in the policy arena through social organization and collective action. Serbia on the Move was launched by youthful professionals, and a key component of their volunteer base is young people, from university students to the unemployed. Moreover, young people are “learning by doing”—that is, experimenting with how they engage with elites and citizens in order to influence policy and bring forth change—a finding from a 2006–11 youth and governance program funded the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID) and echoed in this research (McGee and Greenhalf 2011, 33).

Use of technology

Information and communications technology (ICT) can help facilitate collective action, though the tools themselves are neutral; their efficacy depends on a variety of contextual factors and the parameters of citizen engagement initiatives. In this research, their efficacy depended on factors that included the overall context, the nature of the citizen engagement ini-
tiative, the suitability of the tool for targeted users (in terms of their access to technology and their capacity to use it), the information or outcomes generated by the tool, who/what organization or institution is accessing information gathered by the tool, and what is being done with the information.

ReAcción’s core team applied themselves to learning, adapting, contextualizing, and applying new technologies in virtually all aspects of their activities. For communication, coordination through online groups, and outreach, they used GoogleMaps, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. In 2016 they adopted a new project management tool, JIRA. It comes with its own messaging app, HipChat, which they use to connect chatting with the progress of monitoring. Even though no members of the core team had a background in computer science, they taught themselves and made use of MOOCs (massive open online courses) to learn how to code and use visualization tools. They now do all of their own digital work, from social media networking to mobile/web app and website development.

For Serbia on the Move, technology enabled mobilization of citizens and physicians in the digital realm. It was used to create user-friendly, easily accessible tools that citizens could use to report corruption, irregularities, and substandard quality in health care facilities. Examples of such tools were the “What’s your doctor like?” platform, the SMS service, and transparency mechanisms (the public roster of licensed physicians). When hundreds or thousands of people used these tools, they engaged in collective action that wielded pressure. Through digital collective action, citizens entered the policy arena and shifted power asymmetries to influence transparency, accountability, and health care service delivery.

Extending the WDR 2017 framework: Effective engagement strategies

When civil society groups challenge a corrupt, inequitable status quo and seek to increase contestability in the policy arena, they can end up challenging the benefits and interests of elites, which can preclude constructive engagement, at least at the outset. A solely confrontational relationship with the elite actors who ultimately are in charge of policy formulation and implementation can be counterproductive. In the case studies described here, social organizations had three general responses and strategies to productively engage with elite actors, combining pressure with positive inducements rather than focusing solely on exposing corrupt behavior. First, these social organizations used positive inducements and collaborative relationships to change the incentives of the elite actors targeted for engagement. Second, when certain elite groups resisted cooperation, these social organizations built coalitions with other actors and institutions and selectively engaged with other sets of elite actors to increase pressure. Third, these social organizations shifted power asymmetries through collective action that wielded pressure and disrupted the corrupt status quo. Thus these approaches helped to change elites’ incentives through both pressure and positive inducements. In addition, these case studies illustrate how successful strategies can change over the course of engagement, necessitating an ability to learn and adapt.

Collaboration and positive inducements

Social organizations are often perceived as antagonistic to government and elite interests. In all three case studies, these NGOs showed that citizen engagement can also benefit elites. Because elites in a sector or institution are not monolithic, those who champion pro-development and anticorruption policies or seek to implement them may need the support of citizens to overcome obstacles or resistance from other elites. SoM’s “I am not on the take, I work for the salary” campaign provided such backing for doctors who wanted to say no to corruption.

This research finds that citizen participation and action can also activate “power with” in conjunction with state elites. Collective action can wield “power over” and “power with,” the latter based on cooperation, common ground, and coalition building (VeneKlasen and Miller 2007). “Power over” is when one group or set of elites can impose its will on others. Serbia on the Move’s collection of 10,000 signatures to achieve an Anticorruption Citizens Charter illustrates citizen-generated “power over” vis-à-vis elites. “Power with” involves building collective strength by finding common ground and shared interests. It entails collaboration and can help build bridges across different interests and stakeholders—that is, actors in the policy arena (VeneKlasen and Miller 2007, 45). It has the potential to reduce social conflict and promote inclusion and equitable relations, the latter a core human rights principle. An example of such “power with” is SoM’s “I am not on the take, I work for the salary” campaign, which turned a negative (corruption among doctors) into a positive through social recognition and support for doctors with integrity.

Citizens can serve as the government’s eyes and ears in identifying corruption, poor-quality public services, and mismanagement, as was evident in all three case studies. The quality information had legitimacy precisely because it came from the grassroots. Citizen-led initiatives can be a source of informed policy recommendations that are practical, user-friendly, resonant with the public, and based on data from grassroots monitoring and evaluation. As well, they can drive governance innovation. ReAcción’s two-tier mapping and data visualizations of FONACIBE were the first of their kind in Paraguay, and they are now being used by government officials and the media.

Training for elites can be a part of changing norms and practices and improving the provision of public services. For example, Serbia on the Move launched a unique course for
doctors and nurses. In cooperation with the Serbian Health Council, a professional body for medical personnel, the course was included among its professional training curricula whereby members earned education credits. ReAcción's training programs are now so well known and regarded that in 2016 some municipalities asked for them in order to access FONACIDE. In 2015 the youth group began to train journalists to utilize the government's open data portal in order to create infographics about the fund. During the course of the CBM-S program, IWA began developing joint capacity-building workshops for stakeholders.

**Selective engagement and coalition building**

Effective elite engagement is strategic; it serves a purpose and is not an end unto itself. Citizen engagement initiatives can map institutions and relationships to identify allies, opponents, and targets. To counter or prevent efforts by elites to delegitimize their efforts, organizers in all three case studies laid extensive groundwork before mobilizing citizens. This groundwork involved building the capacity of the citizen on the street for leadership and civic engagement and cultivating alliances (coalitions in the WDR 2017 framework) with elite state and nonstate actors and institutions, which over time came to perceive them as stakeholders. For example, IWA has developed what it calls a "holistic approach to enhancing stakeholder involvement." It conducts the most intense engagement with elites at the outset, first securing cooperation from the relevant government departments, including at the national level. This strategy enables IW A to reach out to local authorities and gain their support.

Even within a given sector, including education and health care, elites are not monolithic, and it was possible for the three organizations to identify allies, shift positions, and cultivate relationships through persistence, engagement, and collective action. All three sets of organizers made deliberate efforts to map and navigate institutions and elite actors, often at particular points in the trajectory of the citizen engagement projects. For example, the policy and governance landscape in war-torn Afghanistan is particularly confusing because of the complex layers of national, subnational, and local levels of institutions and authorities and the weak rule of law. IWA initially secured a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Education—a seal of approval that gives it credibility to engage with other elites throughout the education system at different stages of the community-based monitoring initiatives. Through its Focal Points (local staff), IWA traverses these channels to identify elite interlocutors at the relevant national, provincial, and local levels, all the way to oversight of individual schools. In Paraguay, elites in multiple institutions and levels are a core target constituency for reAcción because of the involvement of multiple state actors in the FONACIDE sovereign wealth fund and its weak administrative system.

All three case studies exhibited elements of a vertically integrated approach to accountability. IWA's expansion of the Community-Based Monitoring School program is careful and considered because of Afghanistan's situational fragility and violence. It also uses locally generated findings from school monitoring in policy advocacy at the provincial and national levels. In its Voice for Health project, SoM strategically planned at the outset to use citizen-generated information to formulate policy recommendations for the Ministry of Health. It also built a volunteer-based mobilization structure across the country. And reAcción uses social media to broaden horizontal coverage. It combines local collective action in Ciudad del Este through student monitoring with action at the national level such as participation in the Open Government Partnership (OGP), media coverage, and interface with the relevant national institutions and elites.

**Ongoing learning, flexibility, and adaptation**

 Citizen engagement can benefit from reflection and internal assessment because the relationship between citizens and elites shifts over time, and the incentives of actors are not static. For example, the relationship between SoM and the Serbian Medical Chamber came full circle. In 2010 the chamber successfully blocked the online evaluations produced by SoM's "What's your doctor like?" effort. By 2015 the relationship had grown more constructive as the balance of power equalized through collective action. Likewise, the Serbian Medical Chamber went from restricting access to citizens' evaluations of doctors to publicly providing information about their medical licenses.

Recognizing the importance of education and ongoing learning to effective citizen engagement initiatives, the three organizations described here have continually assessed the skills needed for their organization and citizen engagement efforts. For example, IWA called on the expertise and experiences of the international NGO Integrity Action, including its peer-to-peer network; core team members of reAcción taught themselves programming so they could map FONACIDE and compete in national transparency and accountability hackathons; and SoM studied community organizing with Marshall Ganz at Harvard University.

Finally but not least, the three organizations learned from their setbacks, successes, and changing circumstances. IWA launched the CBM-S program relying on provincial monitoring boards for education. This approach was based on the success of this forum in its community-based monitoring of reconstruction and development projects. However, once the
school program was under way, it discovered that there were already many other board-like entities in the education sector. So, rather than sticking to a set formula, it adapted to the situation and replaced its boards with ad hoc meetings with the relevant education officials and stakeholders based on the issues to be addressed. ReAcción has incorporated self-assessments into its planning, resulting in a significant reorganization and formalization of its status as a registered NGO. And at the end of each of its campaigns, Serbia on the Move builds in time to step back, reflect, learn from its experience, and then resume planning the next steps.

To achieve flexibility, the NGOs in the three case studies encouraged a degree of autonomy among members and volunteers in terms of decision making, prioritizing, planning, problem solving, and carrying out activities, from monitoring to engaging with elites (online and offline) and to mobilization and mass actions (online and offline).

Short-term “failures” can provide medium- and long-term lessons and even valuable experience that can subsequently be used. ReAcción missed some of its indicators and commitments during its second year, but that was a turning point because it realized it had to shift from being a “weekend NGO” to being a stable organization that recruited more members from among the student contacts it had made. Serbia on the Move suffered what at the time was a devastating setback when the government forced it to shut down its “What’s your doctor like?” digital assessment tool. However, this closure backfired on the government, and the group gained public attention and support. It salvaged part of the platform and launched a new SMS campaign for reporting corruption in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Anticorruption Commission.

Lessons for international actors

The messages about citizen engagement emerging from these three case studies have important implications for international development organizations. The research implies that international actors should consider taking the following steps:

- **Support citizen engagement in all contexts.** Even in fragile contexts and highly corrupt environments social organizations can be effective. Indeed, especially in these environments grassroots movements may be essential to gaining legitimacy and partnering with the state. International support may be the most effective in the most “difficult” contexts.

- **Build on organic structures and bottom-up solutions.** Organic, bottom-up participation can help enhance participation and is also more effective at generating context-specific, home-grown solutions than induced participation, which is often seen as illegitimate.

- **Create spaces to convene and deliberate.** International actors have an important role to play in financing social organizations, but they may be particularly effective at creating spaces for social groups to convene, both together and with elite actors.

- **Focus on process, not “best practice.”** Rather than replicate a technique, method, tool, or social accountability intervention, international actors should support assistance that scales up processes.

- **Support flexible arrangements and incremental outcomes.** International actors can best support citizen engagement by increasing project horizons or supporting consecutive initiatives that build on one another.

**Support citizen engagement in all contexts**

Context is the baseline situation out of which projects and initiatives develop over time. Context does matter insofar as citizen engagement involves dynamic processes that require constant adaptation and changes in strategy and tactics (Grandvoinnet, Aslam, and Raha 2015; Guerzovich and Rozenzweig 2014; Wajli 2016). As such, context shapes the parameters, strategies, and activities of citizen engagement initiatives. And yet, by shifting power asymmetries citizen engagement also affects context. Taking context into account is part of a strategic (rather than tactical) approach to citizen engagement that could be supported by international actors.

In all of these case studies, organic citizen engagement initiatives emerged in spite of less than ideal settings. The three countries share a recent history of grim starting points and collective trauma. They have endured authoritarian rule, replete with brutal repression of dissent, human rights abuse, and, in Afghanistan and Serbia, violent conflict. They presently face entrenched corruption and social insecurity resulting from this legacy. Overall, IWA, reAcción, and SoM reported similar starting points for their citizen mobilization—principally, minimal engagement with elites, general apathy, cynicism, lack of awareness of entitlements and rights, deficiencies in the rule of law, and a lack of transparency and information, especially about policies and responsibilities related to public welfare and services.

This study adds to the growing body of research challenging the conventional notion that effective citizen engagement and collective action require predefined “favorable” conditions to take root (Beyerle 2014). Leaders and organizers in the case studies faced uphill battles, but they were able to surmount these situational challenges and obstacles (structural determinants)—a finding observed in other qualitative examinations of bottom-up collective action against corruption and nonviolent struggles for democracy, self-determination, land rights, minority rights, and gender equality (Ackerman and DuVall 2001; Ackerman and Kruegler 1994; Beyerle 2014; Beyerle and Olteanu 2016; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011;
Dudouet 2015; Schock 2005, 2015; Sharp 2005). Moreover, they recognized and cultivated among citizens and communities a sense of hope, agency, and collective responsibility, as well as awareness of rights and rules. They also directly provided coaching and training to build the confidence, skills, and capacities needed for activities such as monitoring, policy mapping, mobilizing, and negotiating with officials.

The research described here reveals as well that citizen participation and social accountability can positively influence development outcomes in fragile contexts. Citizens in fragile countries, whether emerging from conflict or in danger of falling into conflict, typically display lower levels of trust in the government (World Bank 2011). Rebuilding trust is central to rebuilding peace. When the state appears unable to provide these, citizens are less likely to trust the elites. Engaging citizens and civil society to pursue social accountability in fragile contexts is valuable because community-based organizations often play an important role where the state falls short (Grandvoinnet, Aslam, and Raha 2015). Such engagement could also reduce the risk of violent action and support the sustainability of peacebuilding efforts. Even in contexts in which a country is divided or levels of institutional legitimacy are low, community-based organizations have the potential to strengthen a sense of citizenship (Gaventa and Barrett 2010). The case study of Integrity Watch Afghanistan demonstrates the unique and fruitful role that a civil society organization engaged in social accountability efforts can play in a context marked by profound divisions and high levels of fragility.

**Build on organic structures and bottom-up solutions**

For international actors, a key lesson is that citizen engagement “projects” can incorporate the strategic analysis and dynamic elements of bottom-up campaigns. International actors can extend support to hybrid NGOs and informal groups beyond the traditional, often technocratic organizations that are removed from the grassroots and operating largely in capital cities. Civil society groups can lose credibility in the eyes of citizens when they appear to be following a foreign agenda and getting paid handsomely for their efforts, including citizen engagement. Volition and agency are central factors in sustaining citizen commitment, participation, and collective action. Highly structured, induced social accountability interventions in which elites identify the problem, objectives, and desired outcomes and choose the modes of engagement with elites and nonelites are not conducive to volunteerism and initiative. However, it is possible to integrate elements of volition and provide space for agency in citizen engagement projects.

The traditional notions of how organized civil society functions within development circles are increasingly outdated when it comes to citizen engagement and collective action. In the social movement field, there is growing interest in understanding the variety of social movement organizations (SMOs), their organizational processes, and the balance between formalization and autonomy in SMOs (Caniglia and Carmin 2005).70 The entities involved in the three case studies—Integrity Watch Afghanistan, reAcción, and Serbia on the Move—defy conventional classifications. On the one hand, all three are now formal, registered NGOs. On the other hand, they have a strong grassroots base that gives them legitimacy, resources (volunteers, in-kind donations, and support), and numbers (people power). Just as important, they combine citizen engagement with informed policy formulation and constructive elite engagement. Development actors thus are now able to look beyond conventional NGOs for engagement and possible cooperation—a lesson also noted in the recent literature in the transparency, accountability, peacebuilding, and nonviolent action realms (Halloran and Flores 2015; Joyce and Walker 2015; Stephan, Lakhani, and Naviwala 2015).

**Create spaces to convene and deliberate**

International actors can increase contestability in the policy arena by providing alternative sites for contestation and deliberation. In the case studies reviewed here, social organizations benefited from financial support from external actors, but they also benefited considerably from international interventions to create spaces for deliberation. For example, in late 2015 reAcción learned that FONACIDE transparency was among the government’s 2014–16 OGP commitments, and it was accepted into Mesa Conjunta, the group composed of civil society organizations that was monitoring the government’s OGP action plan commitments, along with representatives of public institutions responsible for fulfilling those commitments. Through this forum, supported by the Democracy and Governance program within the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), reAcción presented its monitoring system and findings and contributed input on FONACIDE education commitments to the new 2016–18 action plan. ReAcción also benefited from participating in two hackathons run by the Ministry of Education with support from USAID.

SoM invited USAID to participate as a stakeholder in the policy roundtables and public panels it convened in 2014 and 2015. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) also played a conduit role. It had financially supported anti-corruption health care efforts in both the Ministry of Health and Serbia on the Move. In 2015 the Ministry of Health

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70. Although there is no definitive definition, a social movement organization is a nonstate entity that is part of a social movement and can perform multiple functions for the movement such as identity, leadership, strategizing, and planning. However, the movement is not bounded by the SMO, nor are SMOs essential for social movements to flourish (see Beyerle 2014, 293).
approached SoM through UNDP to propose cooperation after SoM launched its SMS tool for citizens to report corruption and irregularities, which was supported by a grant from UNDP. UNDP also pressed state elites for adoption of anticorruption measures and institutions and for cooperation with civil society. Babović reports that it provided the Anticorruption Agency with funding for projects to initiate a dialogue with civil society. SoM was included in some of these efforts.

**Focus on process, not "best practice"**

The conventional view in development is that a technique, method, tool, or social accountability intervention should be widely replicated. The underlying assumption is that what "works" in one context can work in another. The WDR 2017 framework points to the conceptual weakness of this assumption because power asymmetries vary and each policy arena has its own interplay of drivers of policy effectiveness, levers for change, and drivers of change.

The emerging more nuanced notions about scaling up for accountability and development call for scaling up approaches and processes rather than interventions and solutions. The implication for international actors seeking to support citizen engagement is that the question is not “What works?” but “What are the dynamics and pathways towards change?” (Fox 2016, 32). Rather than scaling up induced interventions or solutions, Wajli (2016) proposes scaling up the approaches and processes through which solutions are developed. This form of scale-up is evident in IWA’s community-based school monitoring program. From 2014 to 2016, 180 communities/schools participated voluntarily, and plans are to expand to 270 in 2017. IWA has developed a clear framework with contextually driven interactions and tools, but it reports that each initiative has its own unique characteristics, and it is the communities that drive solutions to the problems identified by the local monitors.

**Support flexible arrangements and incremental outcomes**

Through incremental outcomes, citizen engagement initiatives can contribute to social and developmental change, but the process is nonlinear and builds over time. International actors can best support citizen engagement by expanding project horizons or supporting consecutive initiatives that build on one another.

The three case studies reveal that social change is discontinuous in the medium term (Fox 2016, 32). Outcomes are incremental, building modestly with interim objectives and “small victories.” This pattern can be noted across a variety of social movements and civic campaigns, and it is often part of an overall strategy of movement planners over time (Popovic, Milivojevic, and Djinovic 2006). Increasingly, scholars and practitioners in the fields of transparency, participation, and accountability and development are recognizing that “there is no single route to citizen empowerment or to evoke responsiveness of public officials” (Baez Camargo 2013, 13).

Looking at citizen engagement initiatives in isolation rather than holistically may obscure the longer-term power shifts and outcomes. For example, had this research homed in on one SoM campaign, one year of time in reAcción’s trajectory, or one CRM-S initiative in Afghanistan, the conclusions would be different. Ganz provides a useful definition of a campaign that applies to citizen participation: “A campaign is a streamed set of activities leading to achieving a goal that will bring us one step closer to the change we want to see in the world.” Thus it is the cumulative impact of initiatives over time that can lead to general improvements in governance and development.

It often takes time to build power in the policy arena. Within its first three years of operation, Serbia on the Move launched the “I am not on the take, I work for the salary” campaign and expanded it to five cities. With the support of citizens through a petition of 10,000 signatures, SoM increased the contestability for an Anticorruption Citizens Charter for health care. It engaged with health care elites, organized a stakeholder roundtable, and drafted the charter. Ultimately, the Ministry of Health, with financing from UNDP, decided to create its own charter. Nevertheless, the final content was similar to that prepared by SoM. In terms of the WDR 2017 framework, over time SoM played the rules game. It built power to increase contestability, change incentives to pursue anticorruption goals in health care, and reshape elite preferences concerning graft in this sector.

In operating over the medium term, social organizations must themselves be flexible, and international support should reflect this need. The research revealed both the science and the art of grassroots collective action (Chenoweth 2015). On the one hand, the organizing groups carried out systematic activities (the “science”) such as analysis of their context and problem, planning, education (from awareness to skills building), and strategic deliberations about challenges, strengths, policies, elite actors, and citizen mobilization. On the other hand, the “art” of collective action involved flexibility, creativity, and inspiration. The organizers adapted to changing circumstances or new opportunities, and they encouraged grassroots empowerment, autonomy, and problem solving on the part of volunteers and members. ReAcción and Serbia on the Move deliberately encouraged their colleagues and

volunteers to come up with imaginative, fun, and sometimes humorous ways in which to move forward.

In keeping with this flexibility, international actors should be more judicious in defining success and failure. Fox (2016) cites as an example Mexico’s community food councils, which were launched in the early 1980s when the country was under authoritarian rule. About a third of these accountability bodies managed to maintain their autonomy from the bureaucracy, ruling party, and local elites. For the thousands of marginalized citizens in remote villages served by these autonomous councils, access to food was a tangible and positive outcome even if the majority of councils were captured by elites. Similarly, IWA’s CBM-S project does not have a perfect track record. Communities are not able to solve every problem identified by local volunteer monitors, as indicated by the overall fix rate of 37 percent. But the fact that they are able to collectively spur some improvements in schools is significant, particularly given the severity of common problems such as insufficient, absent, “ghost,” or ill-prepared teachers, and a lack of classrooms, building infrastructure, drinking water, toilets, and equipment.
APPENDIXES
The framework within which Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) conducts its Community-Based Monitoring School (CBM-S) program has eight stages.

**Preparation.** IWA secures a memorandum of understanding from the Ministry of Education that enables it to contact and undertake coordination with the relevant officials within the ministry. The next step involves coordination with the public education sector at the provincial level. After securing letters from these elites, IWA presents them to district and local school officials.

**Recruitment.** IWA's Focal Points (district-level staff working with communities and engaging with subnational and local elites) approach communities by speaking with respected members (such as elders and mullahs), the local school management, and citizens in informal gatherings. If a community is interested in participating in the CBM-S program, IWA's Focal Points contact the local community development councils, which elect a local monitor. The monitors are not paid for their time and receive only a modest monthly stipend (1,000 Afghans) to cover transportation and communication expenses during monitoring.

**Training.** Local monitors undergo training in preparation for their activities. At the outset, they have limited capacities for mobilization and self-organization, monitoring (from budgets to school operations and infrastructure), and interaction with elites, including officials at the subnational and local levels. Training thus includes an introduction to anticorruption, transparency, integrity, and accountability; an overview of corruption and governance challenges in Afghanistan's education sector; and familiarization with the skills and tools needed to monitor education services and carry out surveys. IWA is also experimenting with joint capacity-building workshops for stakeholders to enhance coordination, cooperation, and commitment between citizens and elites. In Herat province, it brought together 30 local monitors, 30 school principals, and officials from the Directorate of Education and Department of Education in Injil district and Herat city. Finally, at the district level it organizes monthly meetings for local monitors. These were instituted to enable peer-to-peer exchange and learning, support network building, and foster unity across communities.

**Baseline survey.** One of the first activities of local monitors is to canvass community members through a baseline survey. They administer a standardized questionnaire developed by IWA to citizens. The questionnaire provides information about the existing situation at the grassroots and captures citizens’ views. Because it involves direct, “door-to-door” interactions, it also serves as a community outreach and mobilization tool for the civic initiative. The data generated can be used as well as a source of bottom-up social pressure on elites because it reflects collective concerns and the observations of communities.

**Monitoring.** The monitoring program focuses on problems at two levels: (1) school administration and operations and (2) state education institutions. The first includes matters such as cleanliness, attendance of teachers and support staff, teacher use of lesson plans, and school infrastructure. The second relates to the Ministry of Education and education departments, including allocations of school resources and funding and official decision making (Sidiquee 2016). Local monitors visit the targeted schools twice a week, filling out weekly monitoring, which are then given to IWA's Focal Points, who enter the information in a database. IWA summarizes in monthly feedback sheets the problems and issues identified during monitoring, and local monitors use this information in following up with the school administration and apprising the community through the school management *shura* (SMS) meetings and monthly community meetings in which local monitors also share achievements and, if necessary, request support from the respective communities.

**Engagement.** Community-based monitoring involves engagement not only with elites but also with citizens, and it assumes a variety of structured and unstructured forms. IWA's strategy has been to build trust and use existing entities as much as possible. Local monitors attend and participate in monthly school management *shuras* meetings, where they update members of the community and local school officials on their findings and seek cooperation to address the problems. At the outset of the monitoring initiative, they ask the SMSs to prepare a meeting schedule for the year. The schedule provides the *shuras* with a structure, and it can be considered a lever to reactivate them (many existed solely on paper or went dormant after donor money dried up), push them to meet regularly, and pressure members to address problems. IWA also facilitates monthly coordination meetings for the community at large. These gatherings help to build accountability and legitimacy into the citizen engagement initiative because
the local monitors report back to their fellow citizens. They are intended to harness grassroots support and encourage collective action to address problems identified by the local monitors. During the third quarter of 2016, for example, 16 coordination meetings were held with communities in Parwan province.

Problem solving. When local monitors detect problems in the targeted schools, responses vary by community. The monitors, often together with respected figures, may seek solutions through the school management shuras, community development councils, or district–level and provincial education bodies. They may receive input from fellow monitors in other communities through the monthly monitor gatherings. As important, they often turn to their fellow citizens to collectively take action. The responses are frequently highly creative and resourceful.

Endline survey. Every year during a CBM-S initiative as well as when it comes to a close IWA’s Focal Points carry out an endline survey in order to take stock and assess the program’s outcomes.
APPENDIX B

Serbia on the move’s manifesto
(English translation)

*The mission of Serbia on the Move (Srbija u Pokretu) is to build a strong and responsible civil society through motivating individuals to take an active part in creating changes that will improve their lives.*

**MANIFESTO**

During the past five years, Serbia on the Move has conducted projects in the areas of fighting against corruption in health care, environmental protection, accessibility, and the labor rights of women, and we have educated citizens in modes of community organizing.

In our work, we stick to three basic principles: (1) citizens’ support, (2) social activism, and (3) transparency.

Serbia on the Move brings together people who are not satisfied with simply talking about problems and criticizing others, but who wish to be active and work on solving those problems.

**WE WISH FOR SERBIA TO BE A COUNTRY WHERE:**

1. We are free to express and organize ourselves, and we do not wait for others to solve our problems.
2. Modern education and science are available to us, and we continuously work on our personal development.
3. We make progress in accordance with how much we are worth and how much we work.
4. We know the rules, and the same law applies to all.
5. Government is a service of citizens, not a restraining force.
6. Health is a right of everyone, not a privilege of individuals.
7. We respect the lives and safety of all.
8. We accept diversity and we are solidary.
9. We live in a society of equal opportunities and accessibility for all.
10. We look after nature and we do not pollute it.
11. We use the media critically and the internet is available to all of us.
12. Art and culture are available to us.
13. We volunteer for the community and that is an honour to us.

To turn such a Serbia into reality, it is necessary that all of us who wish to live in such a country work on realization of the 13 points daily and live in accordance with them.
References


Since 2014, the World Bank Group (WBG) has formally mainstreamed citizen engagement in its strategy to end extreme poverty and share prosperity, building on 25 years of emerging practice and research. In the early 2000s, the WBG issued guidance on multistakeholder engagement to strengthen accountability relationships through citizen participation and ensure that the benefits of development projects reached the poor. Most recently, the development community has acknowledged that development outcomes improve when citizens participate in development, leading to the WBG mandate to mainstream citizen engagement across sectors and countries.

The research described in this report, made possible through the Nordic Trust Fund (NTF), a multidonor knowledge and learning program on human rights for WB staff, aims to deepen understanding of citizen engagement in the development arena through in-depth study of three grassroots initiatives in which empowered citizens played a central role. The research complements existing approaches by explicitly adopting a human rights perspective as well as focusing on organic citizen-led initiatives rather than WBG- or client-initiated projects. In analyzing these cases, this report applies the framework of the World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law (WDR 2017) to understand how citizens effectively disrupted the persistent power asymmetries that undermined development outcomes. This report analyzes citizen engagement to reduce corruption in service delivery in three diverse settings: in Afghanistan, improving education outcomes through community-based monitoring of schools; in Paraguay, monitoring sovereign wealth fund resources allocated to education to improve the infrastructure of marginalized schools; and in Serbia, promoting transparency and the integrity of physicians to reduce corruption in the health sector.