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# So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement

John Gaventa and Gregory Barrett  
October 2010



DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE  
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### Summary

Over the last two decades, the idea that citizen engagement and participation can contribute to improved governance and development outcomes has been mainstreamed in development policy and discourse. Yet despite the normative beliefs that underpin this approach, the impact of participation on improved democratic and developmental outcomes has proved difficult to assess. Where previous research studies have attempted to demonstrate impact, they tend to be limited to single interventions, a small number of country contexts or by various conceptual and methodological constraints.

In this paper, we report on a meta-case study analysis of a ten-year research programme on citizenship, participation and accountability which analysed a non-randomised sample of 100 research studies of four types of citizen engagement in 20 countries. By mapping the observable effects of citizen participation through a close reading of these studies, we created a typology of four democratic and developmental outcomes, including (a) the construction of citizenship, (b) the strengthening of practices of participation, (c) the strengthening of responsive and accountable states, and (d) the development of inclusive and cohesive societies.

We find that citizen participation produces positive effects across these outcome types, though in each category there are also examples of negative outcomes of citizen participation. We also find that these outcomes vary according to the type of citizen engagement and to political context. These findings have important implications for the design of and support for participatory programmes meant to improve state responsiveness and effectiveness.

**Keywords:** citizen engagement; participation; governance; accountability; democracy; responsive states; social inclusion.

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# Acronyms

DRC	Development Research Centre
EPPI	Evidence for Policy and Practice Information
IAASTD	International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge Science and Technology for Development
KDP	Kecamatan Development Project
MDG	Millenium Development Goal
NK	Nijera Kori
SJC	Social Justice Committee
TAC	Treatment Action Campaign



# 1 Introduction

As you know, the idea that good governance cannot be achieved without the active involvement of citizens and civil society actors has gained growing consensus in recent years. Many donors and NGOs now support “participatory governance”, “social accountability” or “demand for good governance” programmes aimed at promoting the active involvement of citizens/CSOs in public decision-making and holding government accountable [...] I’m currently involved in a research project to gather evidence of the results and/or impact of such initiatives. If you have been involved in, or can recommend, any studies that document the results or impacts of such initiatives, I would be very grateful to know of them. Evidence of development-related, governance-related or empowerment-related results or impacts are all of interest.  
(E-mail to author from World Bank consultant, August 2009)

We would like to do more to support this approach, but we don’t know how to measure it, and if it can’t show its results, we can’t get it through the system.  
(Response of bilateral agency staff member to a presentation on how citizen engagement can strengthen democracy, November 2008)

Our number one challenge is to demonstrate what difference citizen engagement makes.  
(Representative of large donor agency in a multi-donor meeting on voice and accountability, June 2008)

As these quotes illustrate, understanding what difference citizen participation, voice and engagement make to development and to more accountable and responsive governance has become a key preoccupation in the development field. It is almost a decade since participation moved towards the mainstream in development practice (World Bank 1994), and the strategy of strengthening the demand side has become attractive in good governance strategies (UN 2008). Despite this, a large gap still exists between normative positions promoting citizen engagement and the empirical evidence and understanding of what difference citizen engagement makes (or not) to achieving the stated goals. As a recent review by the Overseas Development Institute (O’Neill *et al.* 2007: 43) reports, ‘the collective knowledge of donors [on voice and accountability initiatives] has much more to say about the types of approach they should be adopting than about the effectiveness of current models’, particularly in terms of broader development outcomes.

The pressures to bridge this gap are strong and growing, driven not only by the results focus of aid agencies, but also by others concerned with the difference between the norms and the realities of citizen engagement. In countries across the world affected by the spread of democratisation, key problems of poverty and inequality remain, prompting some to ask when they will get the ‘democracy dividends’ from their new-found opportunities for political participation. Social change activists and practitioners taking a participatory approach also need to know what difference their work makes over the long term, and how to win and then sustain the gains from their approach. After several decades of experience in promoting citizen engagement – in development projects and governance

processes, through consultations, community associations and social movements – it is important both to ask the question ‘so what difference does it make?’ and to be able to get some authoritative and informative answers.

Over the past decade, the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability (henceforth, Citizenship DRC) has produced 100 in-depth qualitative case studies across twenty counties which explore various strategies, dynamics and outcomes of citizen engagement.<sup>1</sup> A core proposition which underpins the Citizenship DRC’s investigations, often articulated by its Director, is that ‘participatory, rights-bearing forms of citizenship will contribute to more responsive and accountable forms of governance, which in turn will be pro-poor’. Almost 10 years and 100 case studies later, this body of work offers a unique opportunity to explore the evidence that might support or disclaim this proposition.

But the task is not so easy. A quick search of the literature opens a morass of further questions, rather than generating easy answers. What is the theory of change and how does that affect the outcomes one is searching for? What are appropriate indicators, how can we gain attribution, and how can we measure success across contexts? And, consistent with the persistent question of assessing impact in the evaluation field: whose reality counts in deciding which changes are most meaningful?

There are many ways in which the question of what difference citizen engagement makes could be approached. One would be to elaborate a normative theory and then test the extent to which it holds true on the ground through pre-established frameworks or indicators of what constitutes success. To do so, however, would be to go against the grain of the research process used by our network of researchers, who have mostly used empirically grounded case study research to interrogate core questions, and to generate findings ‘upwards’ from these, rather than to test tightly pre-defined hypotheses. While the Citizenship DRC has explored numerous themes related to how citizens participate and mobilise to claim rights, in few of our studies was there an explicit focus on measurable outcomes of such participation. Rather, our approach was shaped by understanding contexts, dynamics and meanings of engagement.

However, embedded throughout our repertoire of case studies and working groups are nuggets of insight about what outcomes did or did not occur, in more than 20 countries, from the local to the national to the global level, in a range of sectors, and through a variety of channels of engagement. In this paper, we argue that further analysis of this large-scale qualitative database will shed light on the range of outcomes produced by citizen engagement as well as where and why divergences in outcomes might occur in different settings. Gleaning these insights through an inductive, meta-case study analysis approach, we argue, brings an

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1 Funded by the Department for International Development (DfID), the Citizenship DRC is a ten-year research programme, based at the Institute of Development Studies with key institutional partners in seven countries. Further information may be found at [www.drc-citizenship.org](http://www.drc-citizenship.org).

important and rare cross-country perspective to the thorny debates on what difference engagement makes.

We will first present a brief review of what the literature tells us about the state of knowledge on the outcomes of citizen engagement, and some of the challenges posed by researching the impact of participatory programmes. In Section Three, we give an overview of the Citizenship DRC and its research programme, explaining the research orientation of each of our working groups and examining some of the normative expectations which we brought into each stage of the research, which might have an impact on the direction of the evidence.

Section Four outlines how, using a meta-case study approach, we created a sample of 100 case studies from previously published Citizenship DRC studies from 20 countries, and extracted from these over 800 outcomes of citizen engagement under study. In Section Five, we present our categorisation of these outcomes, based on the findings from the sample. Taking this approach has given us a map of significant outcomes of citizen engagement in four broad areas:

- the construction of citizenship
- the strengthening of practices of participation
- the strengthening of responsive and accountable states
- the development of inclusive and cohesive societies.

While we find the contribution of citizen engagement to these outcomes to be largely positive in our sample, we also elaborate a typology of negative outcomes, which largely mirror the positive forms.

After describing our findings related to each of these outcomes, we continue in Section Six to analyse further how they might vary according to contextual factors, especially according to what strategy of citizen engagement has produced the outcome, and the nature of the political regime in which it occurs. The results from this analysis challenge a number of assumptions about how and where change occurs. In Section Seven we summarise these core findings and point to implications for current debates on the contributions of citizen engagement to achieving development goals, as well as to building responsive and democratic states.

While our approach will not offer findings that are generalisable across all settings (even if we think such was possible or desirable),<sup>2</sup> we argue that this systematic analysis of case studies will make an important contribution to the debate by going beyond one-off, local-level experiments or evaluations of specific donor initiatives to look at the full spectrum of opportunities for citizen participation in a variety of contexts. It will also counter the absence of frameworks or typologies which help to link models and theories of change with deep understanding of local contexts (O'Neill *et al.* 2007: 44).

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<sup>2</sup> Due to the nature of our data set and data programme, we do not test for statistical significance. Thus, while we can suggest propositions and findings from our analysis, we are cautious about the extent to which they can be generalised without further study.

We also hope that this study will move the debate on citizen engagement beyond the question of ‘does it make a difference?’ Our data responds with a resounding ‘yes’. We argue in the conclusion that the key questions now become: ‘what is the quality and direction of the differences made?’ and ‘how and under what conditions are they attained?’

## 2 The contribution of citizen engagement to development and democratic governance – an overview of the evidence

Reviewing donor logic on the link between voice and accountability and development goals, Rocha Menocal and Sharma outline the core assumption that ‘increasing citizens’ voice will make public institutions more responsive to citizens’ needs and demands and therefore more accountable for their actions’ (2008: ix). This combination of voice and accountability will in turn contribute directly to ‘(i) changes in terms of broader development outcomes, including meta-goals such as poverty reduction, human development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) more generally; and (ii) changes at a more intermediate level involving changes in policy, practice, behaviours and power relations’ (2008: 33). While they go on to critique these assumptions, and to show how local realities are often far more complex, they argue that this overall theory of change on the contribution of citizen engagement to development outcomes continues to guide donor interventions.

Somewhat similar assumptions are also made about how citizen engagement can contribute directly to governance, rights and democratic outcomes. The UN Report *People Matter: Civic Engagement in Public Governance* argues that ‘engagement is regarded as an important governance norm that can strengthen the decision-making arrangements of the state and produce outcomes that favour the poor and the disadvantaged. In this light, engagement emerges as conducive, if not critical, to attaining the MDGs’ (2008: 23). The report goes on to outline over a dozen areas in which UN resolutions and declarations have promoted the importance of civic engagement and participatory processes for achieving both ‘rights’ and ‘development management’. For instance, the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/99, articulated the importance of civic participation when it encouraged ‘Member States to strengthen citizen trust in government by fostering public citizen participation in key processes of public policy development, public service delivery and public accountability.’

While the theory of change reflected in the donor and multilateral expectations may be critiqued, academic studies explore similar arguments. In a paper that emerged from the Citizenship DRC work, Coelho and Favareto (2008: 2) argue that while there is a ‘lack of evidence about the causal nexuses capable of supporting the link between participation and development’, one can make a

logical argument for the link. They develop the ‘institutionalist’ and ‘social mobilisation’ arguments for what this logic might be, arguing that ‘the inclusion of a broad spectrum of citizens with a more intense circulation of information, greater transparency and legitimacy in the political process and an intensification of public debate [...] should contribute towards increasing certain forms of coordination, thereby facilitating development’. For the institutionalist, this is achieved through institutional design; for mobilisation theorists, it occurs as a result of processes ‘that empower the less favoured actors’ (2008: 18–19).

Other studies, cutting across the development and governance spectra, give a range of expectations of what citizen engagement can hope to achieve. Examining five examples of well-designed ‘mini-publics’ or fora through which citizens engage, Fung (2003) argues that we should be able to see improved quantity and quality of participation, which might overcome biases of elite domination; better informed officials and citizens with stronger dispositions and skills; more institutional accountability, with greater ‘justice of policy’ and effectiveness; and increased popular mobilisation in other spheres outside the mini-publics. Arguing similarly, Manor examines a series of reforms designed to make governance more inclusive and participatory at the grassroots level, arguing that ‘when reforms inspire disadvantaged groups to engage in public affairs, their confidence, skills, connections, organisational strength – and thus their capacity to influence their own destinies – grow’. Moreover, this offers a win-win situation for governments and political leaders who need the engagement of citizens to fulfil their goals: ‘The constructive potential of governments increases when the energies of civil society organisations and ordinary people are drawn into the development process. And (not incidentally in the eyes of political leaders) reforms also enhance governments’ legitimacy and popularity – no mean achievement in this era of fiscal constraints’ (2004: 27).

Examining participation in the area of budgeting and public expenditures, Robinson finds that ‘one set of outcomes is associated with the intrinsic benefits of participation, in terms of democratic citizenship and improved accountability and transparency. Another set of outcomes are related to the material benefits of participation for low income groups, reflected in a shift in policy and priorities towards expenditures that directly benefit the poor’ (2004: 8). However, he acknowledges that most of the evidence available refers to the former, and not the latter.

In earlier work, Gaventa examines outcomes of participation for social justice, which were ‘assumed to be both about gaining greater equity and shared power in the local political process, as well as about gaining greater equity in terms of service delivery, and the improvement of material conditions that affect poor groups’ (Gaventa 2006: 8). Drawing upon work by Goetz and Gaventa (2001), this approach argues that one can assess outcomes by looking at those related to access, presence and influence, across both development and democracy building spheres. Influence can then be linked to both:

- Democracy-building outcomes, [which] focus on whether the conditions, skills or policies are created which open new spaces for engagement, change power relations, or create new initiatives for strengthening more inclusive governance in the future.



- Pro-poor developmental outcomes, [which] focus less on political outcomes and more on changes in material conditions amongst affected poor and excluded populations, including a redistribution of priorities or resources to meet their needs.

These two frames obviously are linked. Achievement of greater access and presence of previously excluded social groups over time can become a democracy-building outcome. Similarly, social justice developmental outcomes may reflect the increased influence that these groups obtain. (Gaventa 2006: 9)

The list of desirable outcomes associated with the contribution of citizen engagement to development and democratic governance, and the various frameworks for tracking them, could continue. However, little actual evidence of outcomes exists. Where it does, it fails to establish causal links, or is often contradictory, unsystematic or lacking the views of those directly affected. These themes come up repeatedly in those studies that have attempted to evaluate the strength of the evidence that citizen engagement makes a difference:

- Despite the fact that the World Bank has now spent over US\$7 billion on community-based and -driven development projects, Mansuri and Rao argue that 'not a single study establishes a causal relationship between any outcome and participatory elements of a community-based development project' (2004: 1).
- In an evaluation of over 90 donor programmes, Rocha Menocal and Sharma find that given various limitations in their sample and the data available, 'it is not surprising that all country case studies have been unable to establish a direct causal link between citizen voice and accountability interventions and broader development outcomes' (2008: 34), though they can see contributions to some of the intermediate outcomes which were identified. In general, they argue, the donor assumptions and expectations on what participation can offer to broad goals like the MDGs are too great, and 'there needs to be more effort to establish a middle ground of identifying attitude and behaviour indicators which are a direct outcome of citizen voice and accountability activities' (2008: 34).
- In their review for USAID, Brinkerhoff and Azfar argue that 'the multiple meanings of empowerment and the relative lack of systematic studies across a range of cases limit our ability to make precise conclusive statements regarding the relationship between community empowerment, decentralisation and outcomes relating to democratic deepening and service delivery effectiveness' (2006: 29).

Where studies do exist, they are usually based on one or a handful of cases. In the area of the impact of citizen engagement in local governance, for example, there is a growing body of work, but many of these studies offer different and sometimes contradictory results. For instance, many are sceptical about the results that participation can achieve, arguing that elite capture, lack of civic capacities, or other local factors will predominate in determining the potential gains of citizen participation (Bonfiglioli 2003; Golooba-Mutebi 2004; Crook and Sturla Sverrisson 2001).



On the other hand, other studies are more optimistic. Gaventa's (2006) work with southern researchers in seven countries assessing the outcomes of participation for social justice through local governance found positive impacts related to building confidence and self-esteem of excluded groups, greater political inclusion with linked changes in development priorities, changed attitudes of public officials and intellectual elites, and broader outcomes related civil society capacity, governance arrangements and policy change. Challenging the dominant participation and decentralisation approach, Gaventa argues that 'where combined with processes of empowerment and inclusion in the social as well as the political spheres, greater participation in decentralised governance processes can be achieved and in turn can contribute to social justice goals' (2006: 36). Another study by Baiocchi *et al.* (2006) found that impact of participatory budgeting in Brazil, though somewhat mixed on measures of empowerment, was strongly associated with a reduction in extreme poverty. More recently, a project from the LogoLink research programme examined case studies in six countries and found tangible positive impacts of civic engagement in local governance on the delivery of public services. These were related to political, administrative/public management, and 'material'/ developmental factors (Hossain 2009; Abraham-Talks 2010).

In an attempt to find more definitive results on this subject, some have argued for what they call a 'gold standard' form of external, quantitative evaluation, attempting to isolate the impacts of participation through randomised evaluation studies. However, even when large-scale, many such interventions are limited by their applicability to single-country settings and only small variations in treatment. And still, results produced by experimental methods result in conflicting findings regarding the potential impact of citizen participation.

A recent randomised evaluation of three different interventions designed to promote community monitoring of public education services in Uttar Pradesh suggests no positive effects on the level of parent involvement in educational committees, quality of teaching or educational outcomes in class (Banerjee *et al.* 2010). The authors suggest that the large group action potentially necessary for positive effects is difficult to initiate and sustain, particularly when local people are misinformed about the quality of education and the functioning of village educational committees. However, the research found that information alone was not enough to increase the positive effects of community monitoring, and that of the three interventions, the one had most positive effects was a capacity-building initiative focused on enhancing the individual capacities of village volunteers to support children's learning that had most positive effects.

However, community monitoring of services has been shown to be effective in other contexts. Björkman and Svensson (2009) studied the impact of community-based monitoring on healthcare delivery in Uganda, by tracking the impact of 'citizen report cards' from 55,000 households on local health services. Unlike most randomised evaluations, this study incorporated participatory research methods into the experiment by encouraging communities to tailor the monitoring system according to their concerns. The researchers found that the community monitoring project produced significant effects, including increases

in the quality and quantity of health care provision in treatment communities<sup>3</sup> relative to the control group.

Findings might also differ, or seem to contradict, depending on the type of impact being studied. In separate analyses of the effects of citizen participation in Indonesia's nation-wide Kecamatan (sub-district) Development Project (KDP), Olken (2007) found that citizen-led monitoring was less effective than state-led monitoring in reducing corruption at the local level of KDP implementation. However, looking at individual and group-level outcomes, Gibson and Woolcock (2008) found that citizen participation in KDP was associated with the increased empowerment of marginalised groups and strengthened capacity for conflict resolution.

How does one explain such difference in conclusions, often based on studies in the same countries? Variations depend on whose perspective is privileged, which methodologies are used, how the meaningfulness of changes is determined, and how the contextual and multi-directional nature of change is dealt with. Our own view is that deep qualitative understanding is needed to respond to these challenges. At the same time, we argue, we can use approaches involving the systematic review and meta-analysis of qualitative data in a rigorous way in order to examine key findings and trends beyond any one case. As we argue in the next section, the Citizenship DRC case studies give us a particularly good opportunity to do so.

### 3 The contribution of the Citizenship DRC to the debate

The question of the impact of citizen engagement is an important one not only for broad debates, but also for the culmination of the work of the Citizenship DRC. In 2000, in a draft concept proposal for the launch of this research programme, the programme's principal investigators argued, 'if development assistance is to be effective in meeting the poverty targets, new approaches, which attempt to rebuild the concept of citizenship and the ways in which citizens influence and contribute to more responsive and accountable institutions, are absolutely critical' (IDS 2000a: 1). The case study material from over 20 countries gathered by the programme provides a rich qualitative dataset through which to explore what has been learned about this proposition.

The research approach of the Citizenship DRC had a number of key characteristics which are important for understanding the case studies on which our sample is based. Our researchers did not assume that greater engagement led automatically to pro-poor change, but instead that the way rights are claimed in different contexts

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<sup>3</sup> Based on measures of increased infant weight, decreased child mortality, higher utilisation of services and an improved perception of service quality.

is a key determinant of a positive outcome. The proposal for the establishment of the centre argued that 'while strengthening the participation of the poor is critical, the effects are bounded by institutions. While improving institutional accountability is important, it will falter without new forms of engagement by the poor themselves. To do either, a better understanding is needed of how rights of citizenship are articulated and acted upon in different contexts' (IDS 2000b: 1).

When the Citizenship DRC began, the principal investigators were responding to a 'rights-based' donor agenda, rather than a 'results-based' one. There was a greater focus on *how* rights were achieved and institutions were made accountable, than in current debates on the *results* of achieving rights and accountability. Yet, the question of impact was also present:

While these principles of the rights-based approach are important, there still remains much to be understood, both conceptually and empirically. In the development field, little is yet known of how rights and citizenship are understood by poor people themselves, how they are realised in practice across different conditions and contexts, *and with what impact*.

(Citizenship DRC 2001: 9, our emphasis)

Over the life of the research programme, Citizenship DRC researchers have articulated various key research themes, each pursuing the core concerns of rights and accountability in a different way. Each theme was elaborated through an iterative process of identifying key questions, pursuing these through concrete, empirically grounded case studies, and then using these cases to draw conclusions, interrogate existing assumptions and contribute to broader debates. This approach resulted in the formation of seven working groups directly funded by the Citizenship DRC and one separately funded project.

For this mapping project, we have focused on an analysis of case studies which have been or will be published in the eight volumes of the Zed Books series on Claiming Citizenship and in a related set of IDS Working Papers. While our focus in these research projects was often much more descriptive than evaluative of results and outcomes, in each there are expectations, sometimes embedded and sometimes more explicit, of what citizen engagement might contribute to broad development and governance goals.

- Volume One of the Zed Books series, *Inclusive Citizenship* (Kabeer 2005), sets out to explore how poor people in differing contexts understand and claim citizenship, and the rights they associate with it. While the focus is largely on meanings and understandings and how they might differ from dominant ideas about citizenship, there are also important examples of the outcomes that emerge from struggles for rights. These include dignity in Brazil, the provision of security and services for women in Bangladesh, housing and water in South Africa, and transformational empowerment in Bangladesh.
- Volume Two, *Science and Citizens* (Leach, Scoones and Wynne 2005) explores issues of how citizens engage in scientific and technical debates, and with it issues of whose knowledge is seen as legitimate, the links between local and global processes, and how institutions respond to the multiple and

diverse voices they are meant to serve. It gives important examples of the impact of mobilisation to achieve new rights – whether related to occupational health and safety in India or HIV/AIDS treatment in South Africa – which include the attainment of ‘cognitive justice’.

- Volume Three, *Rights, Resources and the Politics of Accountability* (Newell and Wheeler 2006) examines how citizens mobilise around rights to claim accountability on issues affecting resources, and therefore their livelihoods. Focusing on mobilisation for corporate as well as state accountability, there are examples here of how citizen mobilisation links to accountable provision of water in Mexico, housing in Kenya and decent work in Bangladesh.
- Volume Four, *Spaces for Change?* (Cornwall and Coelho 2007) explores whether and how new ‘invited’ spaces for participation are places for significant change. Looking across such spaces as health councils in Bangladesh and Brazil, local government institutions in India, and large scale infrastructure development projects in Angola, the book argues that these spaces have potential for revitalising democratic institutions, which in turn may contribute to tangible development outcomes. While change is not always immediate, such spaces offer important ‘schools for citizenship’, and ‘when well-drafted institutional spaces for participation come together with champions for change on the inside, and well-organised, mobilised social groups on the outside, positive changes may be seen.’ (2007: xvi).
- Volume Five, *Citizenship and Social Movements* (Thompson and Tapscott 2010), examines the limits of participation through institutionalised forms of engagement and the role of mobilisation and social movements in winning rights and achieving development gains. Rather than seeing social movements as anti-state, it argues that they can also contribute to building more responsive and accountable state formations.
- Volume Six, *Citizen Action and National Policy Reform* (Gaventa and McGee 2010), moves beyond the local level to examine how citizens mobilise to effect pro-poor and pro-justice changes in national policies. The volume brings together cases which illustrate successful and significant examples of policy change that involved citizen engagement, and asks how they happened. In so doing, it provides important examples of both the possibilities and limits of achieving outcomes through citizen engagement alone, arguing that broad-based alliances, political opportunities, and political competition are also important.
- Volume Seven, *Globalising Citizens?* (Gaventa and Tandon 2010), offers some examples of the dynamics and contributions of international citizen engagements, while also asking how they affect understandings, practices and outcomes of citizenship at the local and national levels. In so doing, it also offers important insights to the limits of local citizen engagement in a world of globalising authorities, but conversely of the limits of global action for bringing about concrete change at the grassroots.
- Volume Eight, *Mobilising for Democracy* (Coelho and von Lieres 2010), examines how citizen mobilisation contributes to the strengthening of democratic practices, institutions and cultures, and with it the ability of these institutions to be more responsive to development themes. The group also

examines how mobilisation influences the possibility of building responsive institutions and deepening democracy, and links between various strategies for citizen mobilisation and the different outcomes they produce.

Taken together, these volumes offer a rich set of empirical case studies, each of which is linked to questions of citizen engagement, participation and mobilisation for achieving development and governance outcomes. They examine a range of development sectors, contexts, issues and strategies, and form the basis of our sample.<sup>4</sup>

## 4 Methodology and research design

Our findings are based on the synthesis and analysis of 100 research studies published between 2003 and 2010 as part of the Citizenship DRC. Drawing from current literature on the synthesis of qualitative data, we analysed a non-randomised sample of 100 case studies from 310 Citizenship DRC research products and accompanying grey literature. A range of disciplines and methods – including in-depth interviews, participant observation, surveying and mixed qualitative-quantitative strategies – are represented in the sample.

As best practice for synthesis research continues to be debated in the literature, our approach reflects our commitment to analyse our dataset within a clearly outlined framework that is grounded in the diverse contextual, disciplinary and methodological realities of Citizenship DRC work. As a result, we developed the following strategy for the selection and analysis of cases:

- Phase One: identifying, organising and selecting a sample of cases in a non-randomised yet structured way (EPPI-Centre 2007)
- Phase Two: comparing qualitative research findings across cases employing a grounded theoretical approach and developing a multiple-coding system to group data (Miles and Huberman 1994; Yin 2003)
- Phase Three: translating findings across cases with varied contexts in order to generate a line of argument about the outcomes and pathways of citizen engagement and participation (Noblit and Hare 1988).

The basic premise of any synthesis project is that new research questions can be brought to a body of already existing studies in order to integrate previous findings and contribute new insights to the literature (Cooper and Hedges 1994). Although the meta-analysis of quantitative research has become commonplace in many fields, approaches to qualitative research synthesis are disparate and less codified methodologically (Schofield 2002). For researchers considering a qualitative synthesis like ours, the tension between particularisation and generalisation of findings across multiple studies presents a challenge – how do we compare research variables, units

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4 Publication references for the 100 case studies are included as Annexe 1.

of analysis and results across work undertaken in varied contexts? Furthermore, synthesis-oriented approaches to qualitative research provoke some ambivalence on the part of researchers, as the very notion of 'synthesis' of outcomes could seem at odds with the value added by qualitative methods (Campbell *et al.* 2003).

Based in part on the growing emphasis on evidence-based policy and practice, however, researchers have argued that methods for qualitative synthesis must be tested and elaborated in order to capture and build on knowledge from qualitative findings. Increasingly, the synthesis of qualitative research is being used to test empirical support for theories; to generate new models for theories; and to identify 'significant domains or attributes' for highlighting prototypes or examples of best practice (Siau and Long 2005; Booth 2001, citing Estabrooks *et al.* 1994; Thorne and Paterson 1998; Forte 1998). Particularly for areas of social research where evidence bases are not well-established and which have strong implications for policy, qualitative research synthesis can explore grounded experiences of social phenomena and contribute to a balanced evidence base for policy and future research (McDermott and Graham 2006). However, approaches tend to vary depending on the area of enquiry, the data available and the research designs of both the original and synthesis researchers.

The systematic review,<sup>5</sup> developed by the UK-based Evidence for Policy and Practice Information Centre (EPPI-Centre), is perhaps the best-known approach to qualitative synthesis. It was inspired by the desire to reduce bias and increase reliability across qualitative studies. As such, systematic reviewers are concerned with achieving something akin to the 'robustness' traditionally associated with statistical meta-analysis to produce evidence bases for policy, particularly in the analysis of lay experiences of education and health. The primary components of a systematic review include an explicitly articulated protocol for searching and selecting research studies to form the basis of a sample, which can then be analysed in line with the new research question. An exhaustive, non-purposive search of the literature is required as is a method for assigning weights to findings before 'pooling their results [to draw conclusions] about the direction of the evidence as a whole' (EPPI-Centre, 2007: no page).

Though the systematic review approach did inform the organisation and selection of our cases, we did not embrace it fully for several reasons. First, it assumes that researchers are starting 'from scratch' and need to expand their access to the entire universe of relevant studies in order to establish a sample; but our starting point was a large universe of existing studies. Because of their shared origins, our 100 studies present a relatively high degree of cross-case generalisability, sharing a broad (but not uniform) 'baseline' of shared research concepts and questions developed by Citizenship DRC working groups. This makes weighting the 'quality' of each study less critical to our synthesis, although we did use inclusion criteria such as content relevance and the presence of empirical work. Although the formula-driven nature of the systematic review is useful for articulating methods for case selection, its emphasis on quantifying both the quality of primary studies and the variables therein tends to be less useful for explaining emergent patterns and themes. In particular, findings based on ethnographic research methods can get

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5 Also known as 'thematic synthesis'.



'lost in translation' using an approach that does not retain the original researcher's interpretations (Schofield 2002). As the findings from many of our studies are based on inductive, interpretive approaches, the identification and synthesis of findings requires a much more methodical approach to the analytical phase than we found in the systematic review.

For better direction on the analytical stage of the synthesis, we turned to the literature on multiple case-study analysis. Whilst most multiple case-study analyses emphasise the need for 'data saturation' and tracking patterns across cases, the methods for doing so vary. The most common approach requires software to create multiple codes of relevant findings and synthesised themes. This allows researchers to step back from the data and look at patterns en masse, using the tabulation of frequencies and distributions across the sample (Miles and Huberman 1994; Yin 2003). Once codes have been developed and refined, researchers can undertake the process of extracting the findings from isolated cases – based on themes that emerge in the data – to 'translating' these outcomes across cases (Noblit and Hare 1988). This 'meta-ethnographic' approach is a good alternative to the systematic review for studies which prioritise the qualitative techniques undertaken by the primary researchers as part of the research synthesis, and analyse findings in varied contexts, which can then be developed into a generalised line of argument (Campbell *et al.* 2003; Marston and King 2006). This approach also encourages an iterative approach to the data, allowing returns to the sample to develop different series of codes based on emerging patterns.

We are cognisant of the potential trade-offs inherent to the synthesis of Citizenship DRC work, not the least of which is the risk of decontextualising how and why outcomes occur, for the sake of formulating more generalisable conclusions about citizen engagement. While we also recognise that case studies reflect, in part, what researchers chose to study, these choices were guided by common themes which were identified together by the research teams. Moreover, as most of the researchers were deeply embedded in their own contexts, the research choices themselves reflect something about the significance of the issues studied. While we make observations and propositions based on the distribution and interaction of variables in the cases, we do not test the statistical significance of such findings, due to the format of our primary data sources and the nature of our inductive analysis. In addition, the varied format, methods and presentation of findings in the case from our sample do not always fit neatly within a multiple-coding system. Schofield (2002) alludes to this when discussing the difficulty of extracting 'findings' from qualitative research, as standards for presenting these vary greatly when compared to much quantitative research. This proved particularly true for our sample, for which we coded findings that were not necessarily the focus of the primary research studies – in our case, the outcomes from the varied forms of citizen engagement.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, our approach allowed us to take into consideration any non-conformities in the data by adding new lines of enquiry to our analysis.

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6 As discussed, the majority of case studies in our sample focused on the contexts, dynamics and meanings of citizen participation, though they also contained findings on both positive and negative outcomes. However, eight of the 100 cases in our sample were generated by a working group that initially concentrated on 'success' cases for their research agenda. It should be noted that these cases also demonstrated failures, or 'negative' outcomes, which we incorporated into our analysis.

Though the diversity of findings and non-randomised selection of data challenges traditional guidelines for proving external validity, we propose that the scope of our cases, the presentation of outcome distributions and the basic level of standardisation across cases inherent in a sample produced by a single research programme go some way towards addressing this. To our knowledge, very little research in the international development literature has used a similar approach to the study of developmental gains and improved governance, with the exception of a few evaluations of specific donor programmes and interventions in these areas (O'Neill *et al.* 2007; Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008; Kruse *et al.* 1997). Our data set offers the opportunity to meta-analyse a sample of research studies, each of which is steeped in rich contextual analysis. By working upwards to find commonalities and differences across cases, we would hope to avoid some of the challenges which face studies which start with presumed impacts, and then look for those, regardless of contextual variation.

In keeping with our commitment to be explicit about our methodological choices, we articulate below the various stages of our research design. Prior to case selection and subsequent analysis, we completed two literature reviews on the outcomes of citizen engagement, and methodologies for synthesis research.

First, we created a sample. To select cases from the hundreds of outputs produced by the Citizenship DRC between 2003 and 2010, we organised a database of all research studies and grey literature produced as part of the programme. From this database, we selected case studies if the following questions could be answered affirmatively:

1. Is the case grounded in a setting in which citizen engagement and participation occur, regardless of the type of intervention or context?
2. Does the case present empirical work?
3. Is the case an original research product, rather than a condensed version like a policy briefing?
4. Is the case English-language?

The final sample of 100 case studies covered a wide range of contexts. In addition to the seven countries that were the Citizenship DRC's core research sites – Angola, Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa – our sample includes affiliated research from an additional 13 countries, as well as a number of multi-site, cross-national cases. Most cases are situated in low- and middle-income countries on varied democratic trajectories in the global South, although – as part of Citizenship DRC efforts to promote lesson-learning between South and North – a small number of studies from the global North are also included. Table 4.1 outlines the number of cases in our sample, by country.

Once our sample had been identified, the coding phase began. Each of the 100 cases was imported as a text document into QSR NVivo<sup>7</sup> before being read closely, taking note of emergent themes within and across cases. At first, 'broad-brush'

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7 QSR NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software in which users can import text for the purposes of coding and tracking frequencies and relationships between data.



**Table 4.1 Number of cases, by country**

Country	Number of cases
Brazil	16
South Africa	16
Bangladesh	10
India	10
Mexico	5
Nigeria	4
Kenya	3
UK	3
USA	3
Angola	2
Gambia	2
Argentina	1
Canada	1
Chile	1
Jamaica	1
Morocco	1
New Zealand	1
Philippines	1
Turkey	1
Zimbabwe	1
Multiple	17
Total	100

codes were developed pertaining to observations or results in which the effects of citizen engagement were captured. Gradually and inductively, these developed into a system of hierarchical categories of four broad outcome types, each with various sub-categories and with the possibility of being coded as a 'positive' or 'negative' outcome within each type.<sup>8</sup>

A second stream of coding focused on contextual variables within cases. We were aware that mapping outcomes alone was not sufficient for understanding how changes occurred and why certain outcomes were produced. First, we attempted to capture the type of citizen engagement that produced the outcomes within cases. As our research programme focused on citizen participation outside the formal electoral sphere, we defined citizen engagement using Coelho and von Lieres' (2010) typology: participation through community associations, social

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<sup>8</sup> We recognise that 'positive' and 'negative' are of course normative judgements. However, we have used them in reference to whether an outcome does or does not, respectively, contribute towards development and democracy building goals.

movements, and spaces of formal participatory governance. We also looked at country contexts by grouping cases by political regime type in order to explore the relationship between outcomes of citizen engagement and levels of democratic stability.

Briefly, to give an idea of how this coding worked within each case, we present Ranjita Mohanty's (2010) study on Social Justice Committees (SJs) in community level *panchayats*<sup>9</sup> in Gujarat, India, and their use by *dalit* (low caste) citizens. The type of engagement, then, was coded as 'participatory governance space', because of the focus on the state-mandated SCJs of the *panchayat*. Though Mohanty was primarily concerned with describing the inner workings and understanding the mechanisms of participation in the SJs, her work also touched on tangible outcomes that resulted from *dalit* participation in these institutional spaces. For instance, she observes steadily increasing engagement of *dalit* participants and *dalits'* improved access to material resources as the result of having 'voice' on community development issues proposed in the *panchayat*. We classified these as positive outcomes. However, despite the sustained levels of participation in the SJs, the *dalits* had failed to win greater acceptance by people from higher castes. Tensions, produced in part by increased *dalit* visibility within the *panchayat*, resulted in several instances of violent harassment. We labelled these as negative outcomes as the result of *dalit* participation in these institutional spaces.

Once all 100 cases had been coded by outcome, we scrutinised results by code, in isolation from the body of the case study. This step in the analysis allowed us to look more easily at patterns in the coded variables across our sample. To ensure that findings were not too decontextualised, we tested the relationships between various types of outcomes and contextual variables by running cross-tabulations to understand how these coding streams interacted.<sup>10</sup>

By grounding ourselves in this coded content, we worked upwards to develop a 'line of argument' regarding the types of outcomes that could be identified as a result of citizen engagement as well as their concurrence – or not – with certain types of citizen engagement. We present our findings by providing coded extracts, where appropriate, from the case studies, as well as showing the distributions of outcomes and contextual variables in our sample. Because certain countries are over-represented in our sample, and to understand better the predominance of any variables in our findings, we present distributions using percentages.

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9 *Panchayats* are local governance institutions which were formed in rural areas of India following a constitutional amendment in 1992; they are responsible for ensuring economic development and social justice for rural populations.

10 Here, cross-tabulations show simple distributions or concurrences of frequencies using various combinations of our coding system, rather than being part of statistical significance testing.

## 5 Findings

Based on our coding and analysis of almost 830 examples of outcomes from citizen engagement in our sample of 100 cases, we have categorised four broad areas in which citizen engagement and participation have the potential to influence state-society r-elations in either a positive or a negative direction. These categories are outlined in Table 5.1, and positive and negative examples given for each.

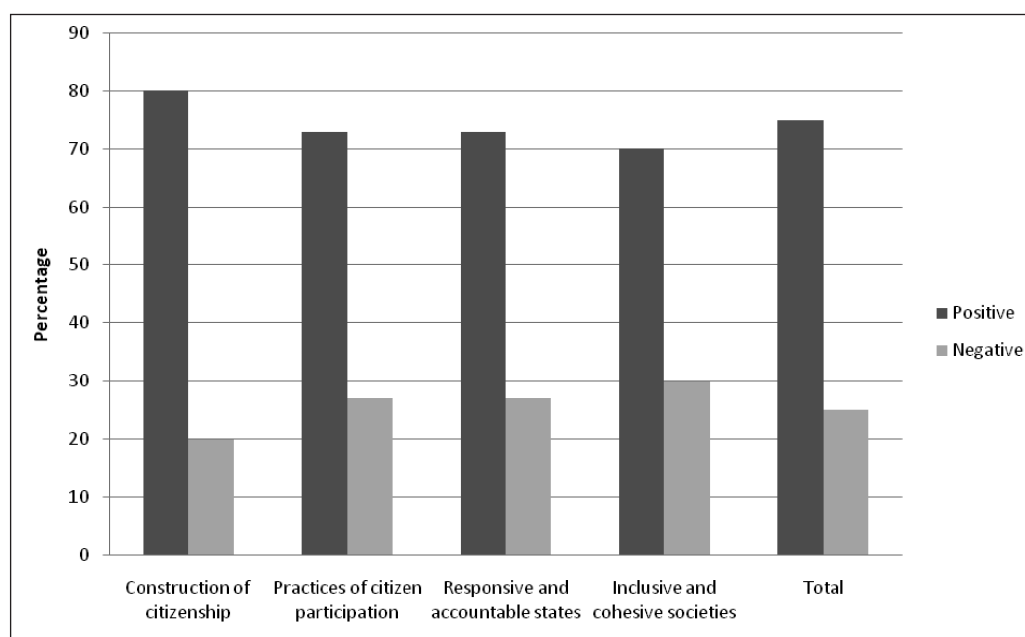
**Table 5.1 Outcomes of citizen engagement**

Positive	Negative
<b>Construction of citizenship</b>	
Increased civic and political knowledge Greater sense of empowerment and agency <sup>11</sup>	Increased knowledge dependencies Disempowerment and reduced sense of agency
<b>Practices of citizen participation</b>	
Increased capacities for collective action New forms of participation Deepening of networks and solidarities	New capacities used for 'negative' purposes Tokenistic or 'captured' forms of participation Lack of accountability and representation in networks
<b>Responsive and accountable states</b>	
Greater access to state services and resources Greater realisation of rights Enhanced state responsiveness and accountability	Denial of state services and resources Social, economic and political reprisals Violent or coercive state response
<b>Inclusive and cohesive societies</b>	
Inclusion of new actors and issues in public spaces Greater social cohesion across groups	Reinforcement of social hierarchies and exclusion Increased horizontal conflict and violence

Figure 5.1 shows the distribution of positive and negative outcomes across the four categories. Overall, 75 per cent of total outcomes were coded positive and, the remaining 25 per cent negative. Turning to the positive-negative split within each outcome category, we see that the division conforms broadly to the overall 75–25 per cent split in total positive and negative outcomes, respectively, in our sample, with the 'construction of citizenship' showing the highest percentage of positive outcomes (80 per cent) and 'inclusive and cohesive societies' the lowest (70 per cent).

<sup>11</sup> These outcomes related to changes in individual or group perceptions of their right to participate, as well as of their capacity to participate.

**Figure 5.1 Distribution of positive and negative within outcome categories**



To shed further light on how the positive and negative outcomes are distributed in the sample, we looked within each set of negative and positive outcome categories to understand where results clustered, shown in Table 5.2. The 35 per cent of positive outcomes which were classified as contributing to the construction of citizenship generally took place at the micro-level, as citizens' awareness, sense of citizenship and positive changes in dispositions and attitudes increased. The next biggest clustering was in the strengthening of responsive, accountable states, as the result of citizens gaining increased access to services, rights and institutional accountability measures from states. The practices of citizenship – including the capacities and sustained commitment to participation – represented the third most common type of positive outcome, representing over one-quarter of total outcomes. Finally, less frequently observed and coded was the development of inclusive and cohesive societies.

**Table 5.2 Distribution of positive and negative outcomes by category**

Outcome categories	Outcomes	
	Positive (n=621)	Negative (n=207)
Construction of citizenship	35%	26%
Practices of citizen participation	26%	28%
Responsive and accountable states	31%	35%
Inclusive and cohesive societies	8%	11%
Total	100%	100%

In terms of negative outcomes, we see a slightly different pattern. Here, negative forms of state responsiveness were the predominant outcome type, representing 35 per cent of all negative outcomes. This was often the result of states' failures to respond to citizens' rights claims or demands for services, as well as including more repressive responses in the form of state-sponsored violence. Following this category, 28 per cent of all negative outcomes occurred in the category practices of citizenship, which tended to include the negative effects that resulted in participatory spaces that were tokenistic, un-representative or manipulated. In contrast with the positive outcomes, here we see a noticeably lower clustering of outcomes for the construction of citizenship, which represented just 26 per cent of the negative outcomes. Finally, the development of inclusive, cohesive societies in the negative outcome category represents a small but slightly higher proportion of outcomes than in the positive category.

We elaborate on the nature and meaning of these results below, discussing how each can contribute in a critical, distinctive way either to positive or negative outcomes. For each outcome category, we present specific examples that have been extracted from our sample to demonstrate how we developed our typology. Though we do focus mostly on the positive outcomes of citizen engagement, as a result of the frequency of incidences in our sample, we also investigate the circumstances under which negative outcomes were produced before turning to our next group of findings on how contextual variables have the potential to impact the types of outcomes resulting from citizen engagement.

## **5.1 Citizen engagement and the construction of citizenship**

Most theories of citizenship and democracy discuss the importance of an informed and aware citizenry who can participate in democratic life, hold the state to account and exercise their rights and responsibilities effectively. For many democratic theorists, such as Mansbridge (1997) and Pateman (1970), one important function of citizen participation is that it helps to create and strengthen citizens themselves, increasing their feelings of political efficacy and their political knowledge. In turn, the assumption is that more informed and efficacious citizens will 'ultimately benefit the larger society by anchoring it in a citizenry clearer about its interests and responsive to the claims of justice and the common weal' (Mansbridge 1997: 423, cited in Merrifield 2001: 10).

Learning or gaining citizenship therefore is not only a legal process of being defined as a citizen, but involves the development of citizens as actors, capable of claiming rights and acting as for themselves – an actor-oriented approach which has been at the heart of Citizenship DRC research from the beginning of our work (Nyamu-Musembi 2002). Yet, as we know, in many of the societies in which we have worked, citizens may be unaware of their rights, lack the knowledge to engage, or not see themselves as citizens with the agency and power to act. In such conditions, our work suggests that an important first-level impact of citizen engagement is the development of a greater sense of awareness of rights and empowered self-identity, which serve as a prerequisite to deepen action and participation.

How does one 'learn' or 'acquire' the sense and efficacies of citizenship? In reviewing the literature, Merrifield writes that learning citizenship involves knowledge, not only of key facts, but also broader understanding and awareness; attributes, especially the 'arts of engagement with others' (2001: 5), and dispositions, meaning 'deeply-held values and attitudes that underpin effective citizenship' (2001: 6).

In our sample, such outcomes are one of the most frequently coded in total, and comprise 35 per cent of all positive outcomes. In particular, while knowledge and awareness are critical, the sense of one's ability and the disposition to act – empowerment and the construction of agency – are equally important. Merrifield's work reminds us that knowledge and awareness are often not built didactically – that is, through top-down training or inscribed status – but are gained through a process of participation itself. A first step of engagement can in fact create the knowledge and disposition for further action.

### **5.1.1 Gaining knowledge and awareness**

There are many examples across our case studies of where some form of citizen participation, often taken initially in response to a felt need, an opportunity to join an association, or an action on an immediate crisis or grievance, in turn creates new knowledge necessary for further action and engagement. Citizen engagement does not occur because people are fully knowledgeable and aware, but rather involves such initial steps towards participation which can serve to create deeper awareness. This awareness may be of one's rights and responsibilities, or of technical issues important to more effective engagement, or of alternatives to the status quo; or, indeed, some combination of all three.

We have seen this iterative growth of knowledge and awareness perhaps most notably in the work in Bangladesh, especially in Kabeer and Haq Kabir's study of the rights awareness of members of Nijera Kori (NK), an NGO which takes a rights-based approach in its work. In a comparative study of NK members and non-members affiliated with microfinance NGOs, Kabeer and Haq Kabir found that NK members 'were far more knowledgeable about their constitutional rights than non-members.' This is illustrated by the words of an NK member:

If we are to talk about the main strength of NK, I would say that in the past, we the poor did not realise many things. My father was a sharecropper, I also became a sharecropper. We thought that we would have to pass our days doing the same things that our forefathers did, that those with assets would stay rich and those without would stay poor. Through NK we came to know that we are not born poor, that the government holds wealth on behalf of the people, that our fundamental rights as citizens of Bangladesh are written into the constitution. Before when I needed help, I went to the *mattabar* [village elite]. Now I go to my organisation.

(2009: 49–50)

While such rights awareness may have come in part from the training by the NGO, it also emerged from simply being able to participate in a public space with others, out of the closed space of one's own household. A member of BRAC told Kabeer and Haq Kabir:

Before becoming members of BRAC, the women of this group had no confidence. They were not even aware of their own rights. Most village women are illiterate. They do not go out of the house, and therefore do not have any solid conception about the world beyond. Although I myself have always had courage, even when I was a child, I did not understand about many issues. I had no idea about the extent of discrimination against women. (2009: 37)

She went on to describe how change had come about: 'People gain knowledge on different subjects through discussions and interactions with other people. As a result, women have slowly started to come out of their world of housework [...] I came to know about women's rights after becoming a member' (2009: 37). She found herself questioning practices she had taken for granted before: 'I now know that women face discrimination in marriage, that it is a crime to give or take dowry. Before, no woman ever got married without giving dowry. Now, through the involvement of group members, a number of marriages have taken place without dowry' (Kabeer and Haq Kabir 2009: 37).

Similar themes of learning coming from group association and action emerge elsewhere. In Mexico, a female health practitioner from Chiapas state interviewed by Cortez Ruiz echoes the theme:

If I go alone, I cannot do anything; nobody will take me into account. But if we are a group of partners, they will have to listen to us because we are many. Our rights as women are important because in this moment it is like waking up from a dream. Before, nobody told us anything about women's rights. But we have learned that we have the right to speak, to demand our rights. Why? Because we are learning that we have the same rights that men have.

(Cortez Ruiz 2005: 139)

This theme is also seen in South Africa, in the mobilisation of people living with HIV/AIDS through the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), written about both by Friedman (2010) and Robins (2005a, 2005b). Robins' work in particular documents how through acting on the problem of HIV/AIDS, people learned rights of citizenship, not the other way around. Friedman quotes a member of TAC who observed that 'participation in TAC makes [our members] aware of what they can do' before narrating how TAC mobilised to change national policy:

TAC's role in fighting the stigma of HIV and AIDS was itself an important contribution to change, one which one activist argued is still a priority. And information on the virus and how to cope with it helped participants take control of a vital aspect of their lives. Crucially, victories – including those in the courts – are said to 'facilitate empowerment' of members, enhancing members' belief that their actions can make a difference. For thousands who would otherwise experience not only voicelessness but also stigmatisation, TAC has been a vehicle not only to secure treatment but also to acquire a voice and a new sense of dignity and political efficacy.

(2010: 63–4)



Such learning occurs not only in the ‘claimed’ spaces of people’s associations and mobilisations, but can also happen in some cases through engagement in the ‘invited’ spaces of formal participatory governance. In Brazil, Cornwall’s work has followed the opening and closing of spaces for participation in Health Councils, especially in the town of Cabo de Santo Agostinho. While the dynamics of power within the Council have changed over time, the learning that has taken place throughout the long process of engagement has been extensive. As Cornwall writes about the experience of health user representatives:

From activists with years of experience to those completely new to this kind of engagement, their own participation was often described in terms of *crescimento* (growing), gaining experiences that they might otherwise never have had: opportunities to travel beyond the borders of the municipality and the state; to mix with new people, hear how things were being done in other parts of the country, to broaden their horizons; to go on courses, to learn things that they hadn’t thought they’d ever understand; to gain knowledge, skills and understanding that they could make use of personally and put to the service of their communities.

(2007: 162)

### **5.1.2 Greater sense of empowerment and agency**

As Merrifield’s (2001) work reminds us, while learning and awareness are one important aspect of learning citizenship, they are not enough by themselves for effective action. Personal skills, attributes and the disposition to use the knowledge are also needed. These themes also emerge in our case studies.

For many, whether in Brazil (Cornwall 2007), Bangladesh (Kabeer 2009) or the UK (Barnes 2007), the act of participation has helped to create in turn a confidence for more engagement in public life, and the confidence to challenge power imbalances. Such confidence-building involves overcoming fear. As Huq writes in her study on Naripokkho, a women’s organisation in Bangladesh, ‘empowerment for these meant the journey from victim to survivor, and then from survivor to activist’ (2005: 174).

Through knowledge, awareness and increased confidence comes an overall identity of citizenship, or the belief in one’s right and ability to participate. This step from silence to citizenship is not taken in one leap, but is often an iterative process, as described by a woman from a cooperative in Mexico:

We joined this organisation because we wanted to have peace in our lives. When we joined this organisation, we found direction. First, we went to the assembly and our forces were growing and growing. Then we began to join with other women partners to inform them about the information that we got in the meetings where we participated. That was the way we began to organise other women. And then we began to understand the importance of being organised [...] We are not isolated in seeking for change. Women have organised to claim their rights, to participate, and now that women are organised, men accept our right to participate. We consolidate our advances, and we have created our own spaces because we were well organised. Then



we began to look for ways to sell our handcrafts and how to demand better payment for our work [...] [At the local level] women now participate in the assembly [...] there are woman that participate in the meetings and take part in public demonstrations.

(Cortez Ruiz 2005: 137–8)

The journey from ‘client to citizen’ is seen again and again, whether through involvement in mobilisation, associations, or governance councils. Drawing from many such examples of women learning rights through their engagement, Cortez Ruiz concludes, ‘This can be interpreted as a process of citizenship construction. Through their participation, indigenous women are promoting change and guaranteeing their social, political and cultural rights. Their struggles are grounded in their conviction of their ‘right to have rights’ (2005: 143–4). Writing about the impact of engagement in struggles against free trade in Latin America, Icaza and colleagues talk about this as the development of political actors, in which ‘participants in the peasant and farmer networks have also come to have a dynamic sense of themselves as political actors, empowered with new knowledge, conceptions of solidarity and tools of struggle (2009: 34, citing Edelman 2003: 214). An NK member in Bangladesh put it more simply,

Before, we were scared to even talk to a guard. Now we know the reasons of our fears and so we can talk to them. Even without having formal education, through participating in NK programs and activities, I have been able to become fully conscious human being.

(Kabeer and Haq Kabir 2009: 44)

Across a number of cases studies, and drawing from a number of continents and contexts, we find examples of the ways in which citizen engagement is important for the construction of citizenship itself, along a number of dimensions, including knowledge, attributes, dispositions and a sense of active citizenship itself. This of course does not always happen. There are examples of the reverse – where forms of engagement may be disempowering, or may be experienced as exclusive rather than inclusive. They may also represent ‘empty’, ‘decorative’ or coerced forms of participation. In both Brazil and India, we found instances in which women participated yet remained silent in new participatory spaces, largely because they were there at the behest of others, or were fearful of reprisal if they spoke out. Their participation is an indicator of dependency not autonomy, and is experienced as humiliation rather than empowerment. Mohanty’s account of an interview with an elected woman *panchayat* member India provides a painful illustration:

We begin talking; she hardly answers the questions. All she has to say is that she never attends the meetings, adding that her husband is quite active. Why did she contest the election then?, I ask. Her voice chokes: “Family members insisted, but you see, it’s so humiliating. All these women make fun of me all the time and tell that I am no more than a peon in the *panchayat*”. I refrain from hurting her sensibilities further, promising that I will see her when I come to her village next time, and leave quietly.

(Mohanty 2007: 86)

Such experiences of disempowerment as the result of participation are not only found at the local level – an accomplished, experienced Nigerian activist talks of her experience participating in a global campaign: ‘I feel like a second class citizen outside Nigeria [...] you are made to feel that, if you come from a developing country’ (Gaventa and Mayo 2010: 156). An environmental activist from Brazil spoke about the tokenistic quality of his participation at a forum in Vancouver: ‘In fact, I did not say anything; there was no place on the agenda for me. Everything had been agreed beforehand [...] and I was called almost to legitimise [...] And I felt very uncomfortable’ (Alonso 2010: 219).

Even where knowledge or awareness is gained, it is sometimes used for ‘performative’ purposes, reflecting positions of powerlessness, rather than with a sense of emerging empowerment. In the Gambia, researchers report that members of local HIV/AIDS support groups learnt very quickly what the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and its intermediaries expected of them. This was especially true of group leaders and those with official positions:

They have learnt the expected procedural expertise, and to enact this effectively. The values involved are sometimes quite alien to prevailing social norms, for instance in their expectations about women representatives, gender and decision-making. They involve talk that people can find alienating, irrelevant or frustrating: for example ‘Yes, I went there [to a meeting] but it was just “stigma and discrimination” “stigma and discrimination” [...] talking about nothing’. Yet people became well aware that speaking the language of funders and intermediary NGOs is the key to having productive engagements with them [...] For instance, one group member showed all the certificates he had for management training. Spreading them out on the floor, he said, ‘They’re all the same. But what’s the point – I can never use what they tell me’. The main function and benefit of these repeated trainings, to this man, was the food provided on the day and the *per diem*.

(Cassidy and Leach 2009: 26–7)

In other cases, members engaging in campaigns may have gained new knowledge, but relied heavily on intermediaries – professional activists, NGO leaders, local elites – to provide it. In other examples – reported repeatedly across settings – increased knowledge was simultaneously a form of empowerment and exclusion. Because people were more aware and confident, they found themselves disinvited or excluded from certain meetings, committees or deliberations.

In sum, within our sample, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that the construction of knowledgeable and empowered citizens is one of the most important sets of outcomes produced by citizen engagement. This is, in part, because it serves as a tool with which other democratic and developmental outcomes can be achieved.

## 5.2 Citizen engagement and the practice of participation

Participation and democracy theorists would argue that engagement is not only important for constructing citizenship, but also has the potential for deepening and expanding possibilities for citizen action. Having a sense of citizenship is one thing;

translating that into effective and sustaining change is another. Here several themes emerge, involving the degree to which initial engagement leads to action, and further action, on new issues or other arenas; the deepening of solidarities and linkages for action; the opening of new spaces for action, and surfacing new issues.

### **5.2.1 From awareness to action**

As we have already seen in the previous section, building awareness and taking action are often an iterative journey – through action, awareness is built of oneself as an actor; through being that actor, one becomes aware and capable of new actions. But does the nature of action change over time? Is it transferable across issues or sectors?

The changing nature of action is illustrated in a number of ways by the case studies. First, because of people's enhanced citizenship, they may be more willing to see and challenge injustice than previously, which in turn begins to change the overall environment of how power is exercised. A person in Bangladesh put this change in the dynamics of power in this way:

Now the difference is that those who are powerful in society, those who have money, they can no longer do things in the same way that they used to. A poor person now has a different understanding of things, of themselves and what they can do. And because of that, the rich cannot put pressure on the poor in the way that they used to. The laws that were there before, they are still the same laws. But we didn't know about them, we didn't understand what they all meant. And because of that, they could easily just force something on us. In my father's day, my father was a farmer, he was not educated [...] but now, I have some education so I understand more about society than he did. And because of that, maybe, if someone tries to trick us, blame us for something or treat us unjustly, we can protest.

(Kabeer 2003: 19–20)

Much of the change in the dynamics of power emerged not only because of the greater awareness developed by citizens, but also the greater skills to use that knowledge effectively. For instance, Mahmud (2010) writes about how worker engagement in the garment factories in Bangladesh has led to greater negotiating skills, arising from their realisation of the need to mobilise and organise, as well as their knowledge of international agreements, such as the International Labour Organisation conventions. Workers in India engaged in campaigns around occupational disease and also acquired technical knowledge which they were able to share with others to challenge the expertise of the medical profession (Murlidhar 2005).

The point is that a sense of citizenship can also be enhanced with new skills and knowledge, which contribute in turn to new forms of action. But can such a sense of empowered participation gained on one issue or in one struggle move to others? In other words, is participation accumulative such that enhanced citizen engagement in one arena strengthens the possibilities in others? We have several examples that this is the case. In Bangladesh, Kabeer's (2009) study suggests that women who participated in the NGO NK were more likely to participate in

decision-making within their households, less likely to vote according to their husband's wishes and more likely to participate in other forms of political mobilisation than those women who were not engaged through the association. In Brazil, Houtzager *et al.*'s (2003) study suggests that participation in protests also contributed to a greater likelihood of participation in more institutionalised participatory budgeting processes, a finding, they point out, that runs counter to notions that protest is somehow only an irrational or anti-democratic action. Friedman (2010) suggests that citizens who learned skills in the anti-apartheid movement were able to use those skills and practices of citizenship in mobilising for new rights around HIV/AIDS in the TAC.

### **5.2.2 The deepening of networks and alliances**

While these examples suggest that engagement, at least in some conditions, leads to new forms of action, and that skills and dispositions of engagement may also may be transferable across issues and arenas, there is also evidence that engagement can create new conditions to strengthen future engagement. One of these is that through engaged citizens benefit from a thickening of alliances and relationships, which in turn can strengthen their participation. For instance, in the United States, a campaign for immigrant workers rights allowed 'supporters around the state to find each other and to begin building longer-term relationships and collaborations' (Ansley 2005: 208). In Nigeria and in the UK, participation in the Global Campaign for Education created a new sense of solidarity with other education campaigners around the world (Gaventa and Mayo 2009). Across countries, the ability of peasant associations to share knowledge through transnational networks was found to have contributed to the erosion of 'the traditional monopoly of the World Bank and other international institutions on access to and control over key information' (Borras and Franco 2009: 35), and had even allowed farmers to challenge the World Bank on several controversial issues. In the Philippines, struggles for land reform caused the thickening of relationships and networks across state and society, illustrated when a network of peasant organisations and NGOs was able to initiate a dialogue with the government agency responsible for land reform, and to form a working committee to implement new reforms (Borras and Franco 2010).

Of course, individual and organisational capacities that expand into new participatory processes or spaces will not always produce positive gains. Just as we saw in the previous section, while the majority of cases in our sample are positive, there are also important examples of negative outcomes mirroring positive gains. Thus, while in some cases the construction of citizenship leads to a greater capacity for action, when that action occurs, it can be experienced as a negative rather than a positive process. Our cases contain a number of examples where participatory action is seen as merely 'cosmetic', decorative, meaningless, or a 'waste of time'. In other cases, participatory action may be seen as 'manufactured' or 'captured' from above by politicians, parties, NGOs or other elites seeking to use it for their own ends. In some cases, participatory action may have occurred, but was seen as simply legitimating decisions perceived to have already been made by state or other powerful actors. In such instances, action may risk reinforcing a sense of disempowerment and contributing to people's reluctance to engage in the future.

Similarly, while we earlier discussed how new skills could be transferred from one arena to another, these skills may not always be used for ‘positive’ purposes. Some cases report examples of how local leaders learn to use their position and capability for their own personal gains, or for competing with other groups, or for entrenching their power as mediators or gatekeepers in the political process. In the case of youth militias in Nigeria, for instance, enhanced capacities for action could be used on the one hand to extract gains from the state or oil companies, and on the other to compete and fight with other ethnic groups, sometimes through violent means (Osaghae 2010).

While we have seen how participatory action can in some cases be used to strengthen solidarities and networks of actors, this too can have a downside. What is experienced as solidarity for some may be experienced as exclusion by others. With the growing role of intermediary networks, organisations, and individuals, issues of accountability and representation also come more strongly to the fore. In the Amazon, questions of who was entitled to represent indigenous people grew as these groups were invited to take part in national consultations on health (Shankland 2010). In the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) process outlined by Scoones, in which NGO representatives and experts and others engaged in a large scale in deliberations on global agriculture,

Everyone recognised that, because of the way the IAASTD was organised, ‘real’ farmers and their organisations did not really get a look in – whether at the early consultation stages in the regions [...] or subsequently. Some regarded this as a fundamental design flaw of the whole process, undermining the legitimacy of the effort as a whole; others saw it as a probably necessary consequence of convening such a process, but one which allowed space for representation by NGOs and other CSOs. For some this mediation role was not a problem: these were people who worked on the ground in different locations and so could reflect the concerns of farmers on the ground. Others saw the processes of intermediation and translation as problematic, as well as the claims made by NGOs to ‘represent’ others.

(2008: 31–2)

As these examples demonstrate, simply having a space for citizen engagement or participation in decision-making or campaigning does not necessarily contribute to positive practices of participation. Where citizens’ knowledge and sense of empowerment and agency have increased, the potential for sustained practices of participation is high. However, though individuals can learn from engagement and use these new capacities for participating in other spaces, the quality of the lesson ‘learnt’ is of the utmost importance – where the participatory process is deemed legitimate and democratic (even if imperfect), positive outcomes are likely, whereas participation in ‘hollow’ spaces can lead to disillusionment and a decreased willingness to engage.

### **5.3 Citizen engagement and building responsive states**

While we have seen numerous examples of how citizen engagement contributes to the construction of citizenship and the strengthening of citizenship practices –

as well as cases where it does not – the question still remains, what difference does citizen engagement mean to longer term outcomes related to development and democracy? Does citizen engagement contribute to more responsive states, which in turn are able to meet development needs, and guarantee and uphold democratic rights? In the case studies there are abundant examples of how engagement helps to create cultures and practices of accountability and responsiveness, which go beyond any particular issue or specific outcome. Though a minority, there are also examples of where this does not occur.

### 5.3.1 Access to development resources

In focusing in particular on how citizens engage with states, a number of case studies in our sample ask whether states in turn become more responsive in terms of delivering services, including in areas of health, education, water, housing and infrastructure, and access to livelihoods. There are some very compelling large scale examples of where citizen mobilisation or engagement contributed to national level policy changes which in turn led to new development outcomes, especially in the volume *Citizen Action and National Policy Change*. This documents, for example, how the urban reform movement in Brazil known as the Right to the City campaign led to access to public goods and housing for the urban poor, as well as to increased state capacity for urban planning (Avritzer 2010). Similarly, the work on the TAC in South Africa demonstrates the role of citizen engagement in securing public recognition of HIV/AIDS as a health issue and access to publicly-supplied anti-retroviral medicines for 60,000 people (Friedman 2010) while the work in Mexico shows how a campaign on maternal mortality contributed to changes in national level budget reforms on the issue (Layton *et al.* 2010). In Chile, citizen action on child rights contributed to a decrease in child poverty (Fuentes 2010), while in Philippines the movement for land reform contributed to access to land and livelihoods for poor farmers (Borras and Franco 2010).

While these cases, which were deliberately chosen as ‘success,’ show how citizen action can change national policy in a pro-poor way, throughout our case studies there are also many examples of change at a much smaller scale. Although the literature often questions whether citizen engagement can lead to positive development outcomes, our case studies still revealed over thirty concrete cases of where it has done so. Citizen engagement in various forms has led to improvements in health, livelihoods and food, water, housing and urban services and education, usually through gaining increased government attention and responsiveness to issues that might have been previously ignored. Moreover, by looking across multiple cases, we see examples across countries and contexts of where these contributions occur.

In the area of health:

- In Brazil, there are examples of how new modes of participatory governance are contributing gradually to improved access to services and quality of care in the health system (Cornwall *et al.* 2006).
- In Mexico, the development of participatory approaches to health care has led to a network of community clinics, as well new collaboration with the state health ministry on dealing with infectious diseases (Cortez Ruiz 2010).



- In Bangladesh, mobilisation by Naripokkho on issues of health related to violence against women has led to new initiatives from the Government and UNICEF to provide support and treatment for survivors of acid attacks (Huq 2005).
- Also in Bangladesh, studies by Kabeer (2003) find that prior participation in the NGO NK increased the confidence of members to go to hospitals and to qualified medical practitioners, as well to command respect and better treatment when they were there.
- In India, mobilisation on occupational health by workers led to the capacity to demand better diagnoses and treatment of occupational disease (Murlidhar 2005).
- Similarly, in South Africa, mobilisation through litigation led to a major legal victory for workers affected by asbestos, and increased access to compensation from the government (Waldman 2010).
- In South Africa, new opportunities for participation in hospital boards led to changes in health approach, 'from being curative in nature to one that is primary and holistic, addressing the impacts of socioeconomic issues such as unemployment and poverty on the well-being of the community' (Williams 2007: 108).
- In the UK, residents successfully mobilised to keep a health centre open, and thus maintain access to health services (Barnes 2007).

In the area of food and livelihoods:

- In Bangladesh, surveys found members of local members of the NGO NK were able gain and protect household livelihoods better than non-members. They were, for instance, more able to resist the 'predatory efforts of local elites', to claim access to government-provided land rights, and in the case of workers, to negotiate around wages and remuneration. Nationally, they were able to mobilise on government policies, such as industrial shrimp farming, which were seen to be destructive of the environment and the livelihoods of the poor (Kabeer 2003).
- In India, mobilisation by Parivartan activists around fraud in ration shops led to improvements in the public distribution system of food (Baviskar 2010).
- In Mexico, mobilisation by indigenous women on their rights led to new initiatives around selling handicrafts and demanding better payment for their work and to creation of local cooperatives focusing on livelihoods and food security (Cortez Ruiz 2005; Cortez Ruiz 2010).
- In the Gambia, engagement in patient support groups has been a route for the very poor to gain economic and social support, not from the government directly, but from the services that well-funded NGO groups provide (Cassidy and Leach 2009).
- In Angola, community associations first involved in dealing with issues of displacement from the many years of civil war are increasingly engaged in production-related activities, to gain access to technical expertise, credit and agricultural inputs from government and other providers (Ferreira and Roque 2010).
- In the US, mobilisation of low-wage workers has led to passage of the 'living-wage' ordinances, leading to increased incomes for the working poor (Luce 2006).

In the provision of water and housing:

- In India, activation of SJs has contributed the redistribution of government-provided development services towards the needs of *dalit* communities, including provision of water and electricity, land and housing, roads and infrastructures, and access to welfare services available for the poorest of the poor (Mohanty 2010).
- Also in India, in the rural area of Chiplun, citizen-organised public hearings on issues of environmental degradation due to industrial pollution led to the industry agreeing to set up an effluent treatment plant (Newell *et al.* 2006).
- Also in India, mobilisation of nomads led to the establishment of 'residential rights', the key to receiving other government services, and to getting clear title to land and housing (Pant 2005).
- In South Africa, social mobilisation led to the courts overturning certain water service practices in Johannesburg as unconstitutional, thus making water more accessible to poor people (Mehta 2005).
- Also in South Africa, mobilisation through the courts on issues of housing led to a major victory known as Grootboom judgment, which upheld the right to housing, water and sanitation for homeless people. While the implementation of the judgement has been inadequate in many ways, the combination of a social movement with action in the courts led to an important victory (Williams 2005).
- In Kenya, Nyamu-Musembi (2006) documents how citizen mobilisation through the courts led to protection of housing in Mombasa.
- In post-war Angola, the formation of associational water committees led to improved water services in urban Luanda, and extension of civic engagement into other aspects of urban development, such as sanitation (Roque and Shankland 2007).
- In Argentina, engagement in participatory budgeting processes by 14,000 local residents led to the identification of 1,000 priorities for action on urban services, 600 of which were incorporated into a development plan (Rodgers 2007).

In the area of education:

- In India and Nigeria, as well as internationally, mobilisation around the 'right to education' has led to concrete changes in state and national policies, which deal with barriers to children entering and staying in school (Gaventa and Mayo 2009).
- Mobilisation of indigenous people in Chiapas led to teaching in indigenous languages and improved education related to local culture and traditions (Cortez Ruiz 2010).
- In Bangladesh, parents with girls attending school mobilised to encourage families in the community to send their children, particularly girls, to school. In addition to providing school fees and supplies to facilitate girls' enrolment, parents also monitored teacher attendance to discourage absenteeism (Kabeer and Haq Kabir 2009).

To say that engagement has the capacity to lead to increased responsiveness in the provisioning of services and development does not mean of course that this



always occurs. There are also examples of reversals of gains, making sustainability an issue; and there are examples of uneven implementation of gains, even if they have appeared to be victories.

The development of South Africa's national anti-retroviral treatment programme is an example of a positive gain in health services that was then undermined by issues of coverage and sustainability. Despite the continued efforts of organisations like the TAC to expand treatment coverage to over five million South African citizens living with HIV/AIDS, there have been ongoing challenges to coverage – including the lack of health infrastructure and access to appropriate levels of treatment – since the programme began. Perhaps even more seriously, the rising prominence of HIV/AIDS denialism amongst many South African public officials in the intervening years has entrenched many of the pre-existing barriers to treatment, including social stigma of testing and treatment; lack of basic awareness about HIV transmission and treatment and the use of traditional medicines and remedies instead of anti retro-viral drugs (Friedman 2010).

More work is needed therefore to understand the enabling conditions of success, what drives sustainability and how change happens as political and social contexts shift, but the starting point from these cases is that the potential for engagement to contribute to concrete development gains, through demands for more responsive state action, should not be ignored.

### **5.3.2 *The achievement of rights***

While there are many examples of citizen engagement linked to increased service delivery through greater state responsiveness, another important area is how engagement can be a pathway for securing and creating rights. An important argument of the Citizenship DRC has been that actor-oriented approaches to rights – those that recognise the agency of citizens to demand their rights – is important. Citizenship is not only about participation in the procedures of democracy, but also about the 'right to have rights', and the right to participation in struggles for the creation of new rights (Dagnino 2005a and b).

What then have we learned about the ways in which citizen engagement contributes to the extension of rights? To some degree, this can be seen in many of the examples of the previous section. A number of cases reported that through increased awareness of rights, they were able to access services to which they were entitled, be those linked to education, health, or water. In some cases, citizen engagement helped to convert a development resource (which can be given or taken away), into a development right (on which people can lay a moral claim). In South Africa especially, which has a strong constitution as regards social and economic rights, mobilisation in the areas of housing, health, HIV/AIDS and water made those rights real, through insisting that the government had responsibilities to provide them in new and more inclusive ways. The enabling legal framework helped make mobilisation possible, but in turn, mobilisation helped deepen the reality and implementation of the law, and of the development resource itself.

Mobilisation to claim access to existing legal and constitutional rights was an important strategy in other cases too, especially for excluded groups. This can be

seen in the case of the nomads and the *dalits* in India (Pant 2005; Mohanty 2010), sex workers in Bangladesh (Huq 2005) and indigenous groups in the Brazilian Amazon (Shankland 2010).

But in other cases mobilisation was a way of changing legal or constitutional frameworks to create new rights, or to extend rights found in international covenants to the national and local levels. Perhaps two of the most far-reaching cases of this are found in the areas of women's rights. In Turkey, an extensive campaign for reform of the Turkish Penal code secured thirty-five amendments towards recognition of women's sexual and bodily rights, despite strong opposition in the country (Ilkcaracan 2010). In Morocco, after decades of feminist and activist mobilisation, in 2004 a new Family Code was passed in Parliament, fundamentally altering the rights of women under family law within an Islamic framework (Pittman and Naciri 2010).

There are also examples found in the movement for the new Right to the City in Brazil, which laid the legal framework for dealing with slum and development issues affecting the urban poor (Avritzer 2010); and in the role of Kenyan NGOs in strengthening the provision of human rights in the Constitution, and establishing in 2002 a National Commission on Human Rights, which in turn led very rapidly to a decrease in the use of torture by the state (Okello 2010). In Nigeria, a declaration of the Ogoni Bill of Rights has opened up highly contested debates over rights to economic resources and to environmental protection (Osaghae 2010). In India, a successful campaign for constitutional reform affirmed the right of every child to receive free and compulsory education up to the age of principal, though much is left to do in terms of putting this into practice (Gaventa and Mayo 2009). And in Chile, children's rights organisations and religious groups pushed the national government to enhance the social protection of children based on the country's international commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Fuentes 2010).

Citizen engagement and mobilisation has been important not only for securing and extending social and economic rights, but also for protecting and deepening political rights. In Nigeria, for instance, civil society mobilisation played an important role in countering a move by the President for an unconstitutional third term, in demanding reforms to the electoral procedures in and in monitoring electoral practices (Ibrahim and Egwu 2010). Similarly in Bangladesh, growing citizen awareness of rights of citizenship also contributed to demands around fair elections (Kabeer 2003).

The case studies also provide some – though limited – evidence of how citizen engagement has led to changes in local judicial and conflict-resolution systems. In Bangladesh, citizens involved in the NGO NK are more likely to be invited to participate in *shalishes*, (local conflict-resolution bodies) and in some cases have set up their own *shalishes* (Kabeer 2003). Over time, these local groups came to be seen not only as more impartial, but also carried enough legitimacy to be listened to by the elites. In turn, achieving justice in this way strengthened the mobilisation of the poor. Kabeer and Haq Kabir write, 'The availability of a justice mechanism that is not loaded in favour of the rich and powerful has played an important role in building organisational support among the poor, particularly those who had direct experience of the unjust treatment that had been meted out to the poor. A number of our respondents told us that they had joined these organisations because of their memory of past injustice' (2009: 38). A local citizen echoed this in his/her own way,

Before, we had no say in the local *shalish*. We had no right to speak about what was fair or unfair. Apart from that we were not allowed to be part of the committees, for school, *madrassa* (Islamic school), graveyard and so on. But now we have established our rights. Nowadays, we are the ones who organise the village court or *shalish*. In different committees, landless people are now also included. When we came to understand about all our rights, we learnt to speak out for them as well. (Kabeer and Haq Kabir 2009: 45)

Case study evidence then gives us three ways in which citizen mobilisation has contributed to the realisation of rights: through the strengthened claim for and implementation in practice of existing legal rights; through extension or creation of new rights; and in at least one instance, through strengthening more impartial local justice processes.

Again, this does not happen in every case. In some cases, the recognition or extension of rights is piecemeal. For example, in Morocco, while the 2004 reforms to the Family Code were welcomed by many, some of those involved in the mobilising campaign that supported the reforms were disappointed by certain omissions from the final product. In particular, accountability concerns have been raised as the result of the creation of new family courts, separate from the central judicial system. In addition, the reforms to the Family Code did not address important matters related to inheritance law (Pittman and Naciri 2010).

Still, the extension of rights in one direction, even if incomplete, provides expanded opportunities for claim-making and the potential for building on previous gains. As the aforementioned cases demonstrate, the map of the possible outcomes which can occur through citizen mobilisation continues to push states to respond to their citizens' claims.

### **5.3.3 State accountability**

To a degree, each of the above two areas are about the strengthening of state or institutional accountability and responsiveness to citizen-led initiatives. But while each is focused on a particular development resource or right, a third area to explore is the extent to which citizen engagement helps to create new forms of institutional accountability more generally. Here there are several examples which involve the creation of greater transparency and right to information, new institutionalised mechanisms for engagement, or changing cultures and attitudes of state-society engagement.

Gaining transparency and the right to information is critical to the ability of citizens to hold states to account. As the work by Newell and Wheeler (2006) suggests, accountability is not only about legal procedures, but also requires an accompanying culture of accountability, or a sense that it can be secured. How is this achieved?

An in-depth account can be found in the Baviskar's (2010) study of the right to information movement in India, and its success in helping contribute to the passage of one of the strongest right to information laws in the world. Through this process, citizens not only gained the law, but a new sense of their right and ability to use it – in turn affecting the culture and sense of accountability more generally. Baviskar describes the importance of this change:

All over India, along dusty rural roads and city streets, one can now see signboards in the local language announcing ongoing construction works. Whether repairing a road, building a school or bridge, or digging a check-dam, the government prominently displays basic information about the work undertaken. The signs make public the purpose and technical specifications of a project, and its cost, source of funding, executing agency, and date of commencement. They declare the government's commitment to transparency in public expenditure, acknowledging a demand that has been vigorously voiced by various social groups in India in the last decade, latterly under the rubric of the National Campaign for the Right to Information. Through the signboards, a major achievement in the struggle for greater accountability in governance is writ large across the Indian landscape [...] Upon payment of a nominal fee and photocopying charges, any citizen can now ask for specific information and the competent government authority is required to respond within a short period. If information is not provided, or if it is inaccurate or incomplete, citizens can complain to a Public Grievance Commissioner. If an officer is found delaying or withholding information or supplying wrong information, they can be fined a fixed amount for each day of delay. (2010: 131).

As this case makes clear, not only is the new law being used by citizens to strengthen their voices for accountability, but the process of struggling for the law taught them many of the skills and competencies necessary to use it effectively. The support of key government officials as allies in the passage and implementation of the act now make it an excellent example of how a citizen-led movement can help create a new framework and culture of accountability practices.

In other cases, citizen engagement led to other forms of institutionalised practices that in turn strengthen the possibilities of further citizen engagement and citizen-led accountability demands. For instance:

- As a result of the campaign against maternal mortality in Mexico, the issue must be taken into consideration every year when the national budget is being considered. In addition, the Health Ministry now requires states report on maternal deaths, opening the way for further citizen monitoring of the issue at the state and local level (Layton *et al.* 2010).
- The Right to the City campaign in Brazil helped to institutionalise the right to citizen participation in urban planning and gave powers to local governments to grant land use rights to poor residents (Avritzer 2010).
- The campaign for the right to education in Nigeria has opened up spaces for participation at the national and regional level for civil society organisations and to monitor education policies. The Civil Society Action Coalition now sits on National Council on Education, the Presidential Advisory Committee on the MDGs, the Universal Basic Education Commission and other state bodies (Gaventa and Mayo 2009).
- In the area of citizen participation on trade, citizen mobilisation helped to bring debate on trade issues into the public arena, and also led mechanisms whereby the regional body, the North American Commission for Environmental Co-operation, was required to receive and respond to citizen complaints around compliance with environmental law, in order to promote exports or investments (Icaza *et al.* 2009).

In these cases, citizen engagement has been accompanied not necessarily by new legal reforms for accountability, but by the creation of new institutional mechanisms whereby citizen voice can be expressed to government institutions.

In other cases, the move towards more accountable government has been driven more by cultural changes than by the law itself. As we have seen in a number of instances earlier, gaining the sense and skills of rights and citizenship can lead to an increased expression of demands from below – which governments and elites over time may not be able to ignore. In Brazil, Cornwall *et al.* write how the municipal health council in one Brazilian city is gradually transforming a ‘culture of clientelism into a culture of accountability’ (2006: 159). In Bangladesh, Naripokkho has set up processes for monitoring state interventions on violence against women, which checks incidences of violence reported to police stations, hospitals and the courts, and which then regularly presents its findings back to the service providers, on a basis of trust and dialogue (Huq 2005). In Angola, local associations, which had originally been formed as committees of displaced people during the conflict period, have continued in the post-war period, and with decentralisation are gradually engaging with local government officials on key issues related to social and economic life in their communities. As they do so, and as Angola moves gradually towards becoming a more democratic country, the relationship between associations and local government is also changing. A local Vice-Administrator reports,

In the past there was no clarity in relation to the work of the associations. The relationship was not good. Currently, the Administration recognises the importance of the associations to the communities. They are involved in actions against poverty and this is a goal of the government. We have the common task of improving the lives of communities.

(Ferreira and Roque 2010)

Where we thus see examples of how participation contributes to development outcomes, the realisation of rights, and to increased responsiveness and accountability of state institutions, as in the other outcome areas, this does not always occur. In fact, the highest percentage of ‘negative’ outcomes we recorded has to do not with citizen practices, but with the state response – just over one third of the negative outcomes were coded in this area.

In many cases, as we have seen, these outcomes are experienced as simple state recalcitrance. Authorities simply refuse to respond to citizen voices or demands. In other cases, they respond, but in a piecemeal or tokenistic fashion; a policy may be declared, but not implemented. In other cases, victories may be short-lived; gains are followed by reversals. In some cases, the loss of key reformers or champions inside the state can affect the sustainability of outcomes. In the Philippines, for instance, reformers in the state played a key role in supporting civil society movements for land reform; yet when the reformers moved on, especially those at the top, the movements were difficult to sustain.

While all of the above mechanisms of institutional recalcitrance are well-documented in literature on state responsiveness and accountability, what was more surprising in our examples were the number of times in which reprisals, force and violence were used by authorities in response to greater citizen voice. In these cases,

states may have been 'responsive', but their responsiveness was in the form of backlash, designed to stifle dissent and crush opposition.

Such reprisals were experienced in a number of ways. In some instances, as we have seen earlier, those who challenged the status quo found themselves 'uninvited' to invited spaces of participation, or labelled and ostracised as 'troublemakers' rather than as representatives of genuine citizen concerns. In other cases, harsher political and economic tactics were used. In Bangladesh and India, workers who spoke out against working conditions risked losing their jobs and were silenced by economic power. In other cases, developmental benefits could be used as political weapons: welfare benefits and land and housing rights could be given by authorities, but also be taken away.

Yet in a striking number of cases, in many regions and localities, state responsiveness appears in the form of heavy-handed security apparatuses employing repressive measures when challenged by citizen mobilisation. Cases from our sample have captured violent attacks and atrocities by police, often infringing civil and political rights, occurring as the result of labour mobilisation in Bangladesh, environmental mobilisation in India and public-service protests in South Africa, amongst other examples (Mahmud 2010; Mohanty 2010; Thompson and Nleya 2010). In these cases, citizen action contributes not necessarily to the realisation of rights, but rather to their violation. In the contexts of these examples, violent responses to citizen mobilisation create a circle of physical conflict, undermining the potential for deepening the democratic dynamic between state and society.

While significant, these confrontations represent only a small number of outcomes in our sample, with most interactions between states and societies producing contestation, not widespread repression. We can see then multiple examples of citizen engagement contributing to the development of state responsiveness, and its capacity to deliver development outcomes; recognise and support rights and develop new forms of citizen-state accountability. These examples are robust enough, and drawn from enough different contexts and sectors, to suggest that the role of citizen engagement should not be ignored, but neither should its outcomes be assumed. While the contributions are great, so too are the risks.

#### **5.4 Citizen engagement and inclusive and cohesive societies: towards greater inclusion**

While much of the work of the Citizenship DRC has focused on the construction and practices of citizenship, and on the relationship of citizens to their states, there are also important outcomes of engagement relating to building an inclusive and cohesive society. We can understand these along two dimensions: a greater sense of inclusion of previously marginalised groups; and a greater sense of social cohesion across groups. This is particularly important in fragile contexts or settings with historically high levels of horizontal inequalities, whether perceived or real.

As most of our cases focused more on society-state relations than on social relations alone, the numbers in this area are relatively small. A common theme in the work is the importance not only of the realisation of services, rights and



accountability, but with it, a sense of recognition, of social identity and dignity which are important for a sense of inclusion. As one respondent said in Wheeler's study of citizenship in the *favelas* (urban slums) of Rio de Janeiro, 'dignity is everything for a citizen – and we have no dignity. We are treated like cattle in the clinics, on the buses and in the shops. Only in rich neighbourhoods are people treated with dignity' (Wheeler 2005: 109).

The theme of how citizen engagement contributes to challenging stigma, and developing dignity, emerges in other places as well. In South Africa, participation in the TAC became a way to challenge the stigma of HIV/AIDS, and for members to gain a new sense of their own dignity and self-worth (Friedman 2010). Robins describes the importance of 'experiential dimensions of belonging' for group members, many of whom are 'often exposed to stigma and rejection from their families and communities' (2005a: 122). Similarly in Morocco and Turkey, the campaigns for women's rights became important not only for changing legal provisions, but also for challenging social norms affecting women in the household and in broader society. Moreover, as Pittman and Naciri point out in the Morocco case, through the alterations to the Family Code, 'religious law was no longer seen as sacred and untouchable, but rather open to re-interpretation based on principles of equality within the *Quran* as well as more universal principles of dignity, freedom and equality' (2010: 188). This was a turning point, they argue, not only for women but 'for the entire society'.

While strengthening a sense of dignity and respect, and overcoming social stigma are important at an individual level, they also are important more broadly, as new voices and issues previously hidden from public spaces come into view. The theme of previously 'invisible' voices emerging on the public stage is a recurring one in our studies. Symbolically, this was seen for instance in the case of Naripokkho, as Huq writes,

We wanted not only to let the survivors find their voices but also bring them into the movement against violence against women. The torchlight procession organised by Naripokkho on the eve of International Women's Day in 1998 was led by Bina, Nurunnahar and Jhorna, victims [of acid attacks] who had made the journey to activists and no longer covered their faces.  
(2005: 174)

At an individual level, the 'uncovering of faces' – the bringing into public eye previously private issues – can be important in the journey to empowerment. But it also can help to overcome social discrimination, and to create possibilities for a more pluralistic and inclusive society.

With new voices, come new issues in the public arena. In Bangladesh, due to the mobilisation of Naripokkho in response to the eviction of sex workers from a complex of brothels,

for the first time in the country's history, a major public debate took place in the newspapers over the meaning of sex work and the status of sex workers [...] All the major dailies carried news and features on the topic for nearly a month after the eviction.  
(Huq 2005: 176)

Or, in an example of a very different kind of issue, the participation of over 150,000 people in consultations over trade issues in Latin America helped to bring negotiations into the public eye. In turn, ‘the ability of governments to lead processes of trade integration without a popular mandate and with low levels of participation from organised civil society has been severely challenged’, also contributing to an opening of spaces for participation more generally (Icaza *et al.* 2009).

Citizen engagement can result not only in greater inclusiveness but also in enhanced forms of social cohesion in communities with embedded inequalities and strained social interrelations between various identity groups. Though gains in this area might be more difficult to track without the benefit of longer-term research analysis, we still observe some instances of this in our sample. In Nigeria, for instance, the use of forum theatre provided a unique opportunity for villagers to express in the public sphere their grievances about divisions arising from traditional community hierarchies and wealth inequality (Abah and Okwori 2005).

However, certain forms of citizen participation which – at least on the surface – seem well-placed to facilitate greater inclusiveness might, in practice, produce little to no effects. Several cases from India were particularly useful in shedding light on this phenomenon, especially those that highlighted state-designed village-level institutions meant to include women and scheduled castes and tribes within local governance procedures. Mohanty, reporting on women’s representation in the various village *panchayat* sub-committees, writes, ‘It is all too obvious that women are recruited to watershed committees to meet procedural requirements. It seems ironic to talk about “choice”, since most women members are not even aware that they have membership in the committee’ (2007: 85). This is a particularly perverse form of exclusion, reinforced by the elusive prospect of inclusion.

In her other work on the situation of the *dalits* in Gujarat, Mohanty (2010) describes a mixed picture. While government-sponsored SJs of the local *panchayat* have proved successful in generating some resource gains to this historically excluded group, *dalits* continue to be socially ostracised within their local communities. The developmental gains they achieved through their participation in the committees had less of an effect on genuine community cohesion, with Mohanty reporting a number of incidences of violent community reprisals against *dalits*, many of which went unsanctioned.

In another example from the Niger Delta, citizen groups have attempted to hold public and private-sector actors to account for the lack of investment in infrastructure and economic development in the region, as well as the environmental degradation as the result of natural resource exploration. However, many of these mobilisations have been sharply divided by ethnicity, limiting the opportunities for a more cohesive, broad-based understanding of citizenship and rights and exacerbating pre-existing inter-ethnic disputes over rents and resources (Osaghae 2010).

The variations in outcomes in this area are particularly important to understand given that many donor-led initiatives do not take local social dynamics into adequate account. Where certain groups have been historically excluded, or in regions with low levels of social cohesion, the promotion of measures for citizen engagement must take into careful consideration the histories of local population groups and the best strategies for promoting genuinely inclusive participatory processes.



## 6 The impact of strategy and context

In previous sections we have reviewed both positive and negative outcomes emerging from our case studies of citizen engagement. From this inductive exploration, we have developed four categories of outcomes, each with several subcomponents. They demonstrate how citizen engagement contributes to the construction of citizenship, the practices of participation, the strengthening of responsive and accountable states and the development of inclusive and cohesive societies. We have also discussed the risks of citizen engagement in each category, highlighting examples where negative outcomes also occur.

While we believe that these descriptive findings are useful in their own right (as shall be explored in the concluding section), we were also cognisant of the potential to explore the variation in outcomes according to a number of contextual factors. In order to get a more nuanced view of the findings, we focus in particular on whether these outcomes, both positive and negative, are affected by the strategies, or forms, of engagement used, and the national political context in which the engagement occurs.

### 6.1 How does engagement strategy effect outcome?

As described earlier, each case is centred on a particular type of citizen engagement, including a range of civil society interventions, various styles of mobilisation and activism, and engagement with state-sponsored participatory governance initiatives. Because the Citizenship DRC prioritised other forms of engagement, citizen participation in formal electoral politics is not a major component of our analysis – although important and also sometimes an outcome of the aforementioned types of engagement. Broadly speaking, our case studies reflect four types of citizen engagement:

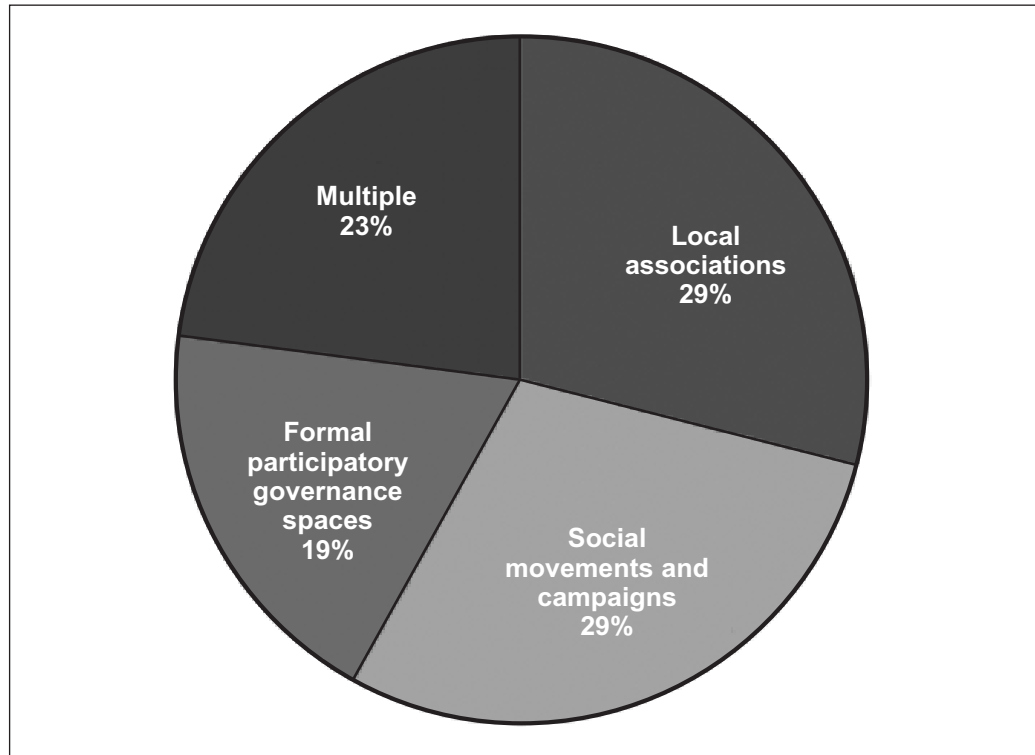
1. Participation in local associations;
2. Participation in social movements and campaigns;
3. Participation in formal participatory governance spaces
4. Multiple approaches, which employ several of these strategies.

The distribution of case studies across these categories is shown in Figure 6.1.

This distribution yields some surprises. For instance, one might have expected more examples of formalised interactions through formal participatory governance spaces in a programme which focused largely on citizen-state relations, but this type of citizen engagement constitutes the smallest proportion of our cases.

This is particularly surprising since many of the cases in our sample emerged from contexts in which reformed legal frameworks have facilitated new formal mechanisms for citizen-state interaction and participatory governance, such as participatory budgeting in Brazil and Argentina, municipal health councils in Brazil, *panchayati raj* institutions and local development programmes in India, and various participatory development programmes in South Africa. Of these types of formal participatory governance spaces, more than two-thirds occurred in middle-income

**Figure 6.1 Distribution of types of citizen engagement across case studies**



Southern countries with emerging democracies. In addition, there were examples from established Northern democracies, such as new innovations in public deliberation in Canada, and government-supported schemes for community participation in the UK. There were also a small minority from very weak democratic contexts, such as health councils in Bangladesh. Much of the early work of the Citizenship DRC focused on such formal processes of participatory governance, and pointed out both their potential weaknesses and the critical importance of complementing them with other strategies of mobilisation. Participation without local collective action to build citizenship and maintain political pressure from the outside was often very weak (Cornwall and Schattan Coelho 2007; Gaventa and McGee 2010).

Meanwhile, other Citizenship DRC work focused on the importance of local associations, as seen for example in local membership groups in Bangladesh, rural associations in Angola, grassroots community organisations in Kenya and neighbourhood groups in Brazil. While the links between associationalism and democracy have long been highlighted in the case of Western democracies (Putnam 2001; de Tocqueville 2002; Warren 2001), relatively little attention has been paid to the role of local associations for building democracy in poorer countries of the South.<sup>12</sup> Case studies showed that not all local associations

<sup>12</sup> An important exception is the work of Houtzager *et al.* (2003) on associationalism in Brazil.

studied were 'virtuous', as work on youth associations, gangs and militias in Nigeria, Jamaica and Brazil revealed. In contrast to the cases of formal participatory governance, which were largely reflected in more stable Southern democracies, some 73 per cent of the cases focusing on associations were found in the least democratic settings. Our research suggests that the importance of local associations as a tool for building citizenship and gaining government responsiveness in these countries is a factor which deserves far more attention.

Another set of studies focused largely on social movements, or orchestrated campaigns which sought to claim rights or challenge policies through mobilisation beyond single communities, through a variety of forms of public action including protests, advocacy and lobbying. These include, for instance, movements for the right to information or against displacement in India, around HIV/AIDS in South Africa, for land reform in the Philippines, on environmental issues in Brazil and on indigenous and ethnic rights in Nigeria and Brazil, amongst others. As our findings show below, social movements can play a very important role in contributing to democratic and developmental outcomes and can be make very effective contributions to creating more responsive states. Their contribution to increasing state accountability has tended to be underplayed in donor agendas on good governance and democracy promotion.

Turning first to the relationship between different types of citizen engagement and positive outcomes, we show in Table 6.1 the contribution each type of engagement has made to each of our four outcome categories. Associational activity accounts for between 43 and 49 per cent of positive outcomes within each category. Put another way, associations in our sample contribute more strongly to each of the outcome areas compared with other forms of engagement. This is not merely an effect produced by an over-representation of associations in our sample, since associations and social movements comprise an equal proportion of cases (see Figure 6.1).

**Table 6.1 Distribution of types of citizen engagement across categories of positive outcomes**

Types of citizen engagement	Positive outcomes (n=620)			
	Construction of citizenship (n=215)	Practices of citizen participation (n=159)	Responsive and accountable states (n=194)	Inclusive and cohesive societies (n=52)
Local associations	49%	48%	43%	48%
Social movements and campaigns	27%	25%	28%	25%
Formal participatory governance spaces	13%	16%	11%	19%
Multiple	11%	11%	18%	8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

We also examined how positive outcomes were distributed across each type of engagement. As can be seen in Table 6.2, there is a pattern similar to the overall distribution of outcomes, with roughly similar proportions for our first three outcome categories, and a smaller proportion for the social inclusion and cohesion category. We do see that the construction of citizenship appears to be a fairly strong outcome of citizen engagements through associations, social movements and formal participatory governance spaces, although social movements also produce particularly strong effects for the construction of accountable and responsive governance.

**Table 6.2 Distribution of positive outcomes across types of citizen engagement**

Positive outcomes sorted by outcome categories	Types of citizen engagement (n=100)			
	Local associations (n=29)	Social movements and campaigns (n=29)	Formal participatory governance spaces (n=19)	Multiple (n=23)
Construction of citizenship	36%	35%	33%	29%
Practices of citizen participation	26%	24%	30%	22%
Responsive and accountable states	29%	33%	25%	44%
Inclusive and cohesive societies	9%	8%	12%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Perhaps what is most striking in Table 6.2 is that 44 per cent of the outcomes produced by multiple strategies were concentrated in the accountable and responsive governance category. This finding resonates with qualitative insights from our cases, which suggest that it is not simply engagement in associations or participatory spaces which contribute to state responsiveness, but rather the relationships between those strategies and broader social mobilisation. For instance, the findings from municipal health councils in Brazil demonstrate that health outcomes can be strengthened when there is civil society mobilisation outside the participatory governance space in addition to political will on the inside (Coelho 2010). Similarly, the cases from *Citizen Action and National Policy Change* show that successful change occurred through broad coalitions using an array of strategies, not through a single set of actors or actions alone (Gaventa and McGee 2010).

The above analysis suggests that while people may engage with the state in a variety of ways, associations and social movements are far more important vehicles for gaining development and democratic outcomes than perhaps has been previously understood. This is at odds with the recent focus in some donor circles on supporting institutionalised fora for participatory governance. Furthermore, in order to gain responsive and accountable governance, our findings point to the importance of multiple strategies of engagement.

These variations also look at the negative outcomes linked to difference strategies of engagement. As we saw in Figure 5.1, while 75 per cent of almost 830 outcomes from our sample were positive, 25 per cent were labelled negative. However, if we look at the differences in positive or negative outcomes by strategy, shown in Table 6.3, we begin to see some variations which shed light on the interaction of contextual variables and negative outcomes. For the outcomes linked to associations, 90 per cent of the outcomes reported were positive and only 10 per cent negative – a much higher positive-negative ratio than in the sample as whole. On the other hand, roughly 45 per cent of outcomes from engagement in formal participatory governance spaces were found to be negative, and 29 per cent of those linked to social movements – higher percentages than in the overall sample.

**Table 6.3 Distribution of positive and negative outcomes across type of citizen engagement**

Outcome type	Outcomes sorted by type of citizen engagement (n=828)			
	Local associations (n=324)	Social movements and campaigns (n=233)	Formal participatory governance spaces (n=153)	Multiple (n=118)
Positive	90%	71%	55%	68%
Negative	10%	29%	45%	32%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Viewed as a percentage of outcomes *within* each positive or negative category, rather than across type of engagement, the story is even stronger. As Table 6.4 shows, while associations and social movements both accounted for the same proportion of the cases studied, associations account for a higher proportion of the positive outcomes (47 per cent), while participatory governance spaces and social movements accounted for higher proportions of the negative outcomes (33 per cent each).

**Table 6.4 Distribution of types of citizen engagement across positive and negative outcomes**

Type of citizen engagement	Positive (n=620)	Negative (n=208)
Local associations	47%	16%
Social movements and campaigns	27%	33%
Formal participatory governance spaces	13%	33%
Multiple	13%	18%
Total	100%	100%

This pattern is consistent with the case study findings, which show that social movements, while often linked to larger scale institutional change, may also be contentious and face serious backlash and reprisals. Participation in formal governance spaces, especially where not backed by collective action, may be linked to a sense of tokenism, or relatively empty forms of participation, which may not contribute by themselves to positive change. Even the multiple forms of engagement, which earlier we said are most responsible for change accountability and responsiveness outcomes, also have a relatively high level (32 per cent) of negative outcomes.

## 6.2 How does political context effect outcome?

How do outcomes and strategies for obtaining them vary across political context? While most previous studies on the effectiveness of citizen participation have pointed to the importance of country context for outcomes, there tends to be little elaboration on the interaction between context, types of engagement and outcomes (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008). The relationship between these three variables is particularly important in order for donor agencies to avoid supporting participatory initiatives that could produce negative outcomes. The impact of (and donor expectations for) various participatory strategies in less stable, fragile states deserves particular attention.

With the Citizenship DRC's focus on the nature and possibilities of citizen engagement, we might expect that contextual differences related to democratic openness would be critical to our results. For example, it would seem likely that the freedoms of association and opportunities for participation within the public sphere will affect how citizen action occurs. We might also expect that in weak democracies, with little experience of positive engagements between citizen and state and shorter histories of democratic participation, the most frequent outcomes might be related to the construction of citizenship and the practice of participation. On the other hand, settings with longer histories of democratic participation might be expected to be the context for systemic institutional gains related to accountability and responsiveness.

In order to explore these assumptions, we looked at a variety of existing approaches to categorising the nature of the political regime for the 20 countries in our sample.<sup>13</sup> We reviewed three of the most frequently cited indices on political regime types, the Polity IV Project, the annual Freedom House survey and the Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy. Each of these is concerned with the characteristics and democratic quality of political regimes, although their indicators and measurements differ.<sup>14</sup> Based on the way our case study countries clustered across these three indices, we classified them according to three tiers of democratic strength:

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13 Cross-national case studies are not included in this discussion of country context. As a result, in the rest of this section our results refer to a sub-sample of 83 cases situated in single countries only.

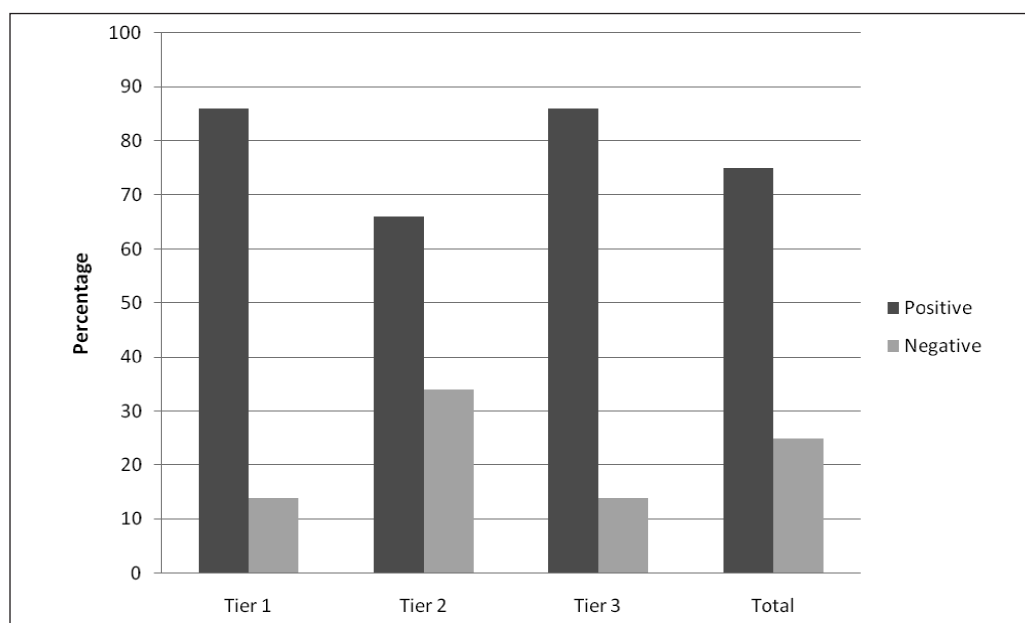
14 This approach builds on that of Coelho and von Lieres (2010) which examines differences in strategies and outcomes across seven developing countries. Polity IV Project data measure the nature of political decision-making and regime transitions within countries; Freedom House survey measures the quality of political rights and civil liberties within countries; and the Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy assesses quality of governance, political participation and political culture.

- Tier One: Canada, Chile, New Zealand, UK, USA.
- Tier Two: Argentina, Brazil, India, Jamaica, Mexico, Philippines, South Africa
- Tier Three: Angola, Bangladesh, the Gambia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Turkey and Zimbabwe.

Of our sub-sample of 83 single-country case studies, 50 are set in Tier Two countries. These are mostly middle-income democracies in the South, and have generally had longer periods of democratic stability compared to Tier Three countries. Twenty-four of the cases in this sub-sample are in weaker, Tier Three democracies, some of which are considered fragile states on various international indices (Marshall *et al.* 2009; World Bank 2010).<sup>15</sup> The remaining nine cases occur in Tier One countries, the majority of which are rich, Northern countries.

One question we sought to explore was whether countries classified as having stronger democratic institutions were more likely to be associated with positive outcomes of participation than those with weaker democratic institutions. The distribution of positive and negative outcomes by political context is shown in Figure 6.2. The highest proportion of positive outcomes come from the most and least democratic settings – over 85 per cent in Tiers One and Three, compared to the overall average of 75 per cent. The lowest proportion of positive outcomes comes from the Tier Two countries, where more than 34 per cent of the outcomes reported are negative, compared to the overall average of 25 per cent. This finding begins to question the idea that positive outcomes of engagement are linked linearly to the level of democratisation in a given setting.

**Figure 6.2 Distribution of positive and negative outcomes across country types**



15 Marshall *et al.* (2009) list Angola, Nigeria and Zimbabwe as being in the two most fragile (of six) state categories in their 2008 state fragility data for Polity IV. The World Bank (2010) harmonised list of 'fragile situations' includes Angola, the Gambia and Zimbabwe. Others, such as Kenya, Bangladesh and Nigeria, are sometimes categorised in this way.



Our initial expectations about distribution of outcomes by regime type also did not hold. As Table 6.5 shows, the proportion of outcomes in each of the four categories varies very little by political context. This is a very important finding, as it implies that even in so-called strong democracies (Tier One), the basic democratic process of developing informed and active citizens is an ongoing task. Conversely, in the emerging democracies of Tier Two, the most common positive outcomes are related to the construction of accountable and responsive forms of governance, suggesting that it is not as if the state must first become strong, and then citizen engagement will follow. On the other hand, the highest incidence of positive outcomes related to social inclusion and cohesion are in the weakest and most fragile democracies, many of which are characterised by recent histories of conflict or violence.

**Table 6.5 Distribution of positive outcomes across country type**

Outcome categories	Positive outcomes sorted by country type		
	Tier One (n=37)	Tier Two (n=214)	Tier Three (n=273)
Construction of citizenship	32%	31%	35%
Practice of citizen participation	30%	25%	24%
Responsive and accountable states	32%	36%	31%
Inclusive and cohesive societies	6%	8%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%

These findings begin to suggest that we cannot consider participation ‘success’ and ‘level of democratisation’ to be linked in a linear or progressive manner. Neither should we assume that citizen engagement will be more likely to increase state responsiveness and accountability in stronger democratic states than in less democratic states. Rather, based on these findings, engagement can make positive differences, even in the least democratic settings – a proposition that challenges the conventional wisdom of an institution- and state-oriented approach that relegates opportunities for citizens to engage in a variety of participatory strategies to a more ‘mature’ democratic phase. In fact, one could propose the counter-argument: it may be in those countries where there have been fewest opportunities for engagement that the most difference can be made.

While the distribution of outcomes across our four categories does not vary enormously by political context, the strategies used to attain these outcomes do. Table 6.6 shows the distribution of strategies for each regime type. In Tier Three countries more than two-thirds of cases of citizen engagement took place through local associations, contrasting with an average of 29 per cent for our overall sub-sample. Perhaps this is not a surprising finding, considering the potential barriers to generating social movements or engaging in formal participatory governance spaces in these weaker democratic states. Tier Two countries demonstrate a more evenly distributed range of mobilisation types, with ‘social movements’ predominating at 38 per cent and both ‘participatory spaces’ and ‘multiple’ counting each for around one-quarter of the total mobilisation types within this tier. In Tier One countries, the most common forms of engagement



were social movements and formal participatory governance spaces, each representing a little less than half of the cases.

**Table 6.6 Distribution of types of citizen engagement across country tiers**

Types of citizen engagement	Tier One (n=9)	Tier Two (n=50)	Tier Three (n=24)
Local associations	0%	12%	67%
Social movements and campaigns	44%	38%	8%
Formal participatory governance spaces	44%	26%	8%
Multiple	12%	24%	17%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Of course, we need to be careful in interpreting these figures. We have warned earlier about the dangers of broad generalisation; for example, the fact that there were no associations studied in the sample in the Tier One countries does not of course mean that they are not present or are not integral to deepening democratic or developmental outcomes there.

Yet the fact that more than two-thirds of the examples of citizen engagement in the weakest democratic settings were linked to associations is important, particularly in conjunction with our findings about the strong effects associations appear to have across all outcome areas. If we look even closer at the distribution of positive outcomes by types of engagement for Tier Three countries only (Table 6.7), between 78 and 92 per cent of each outcome category arose from associational activity, compared to a range between 40 and 50 per cent in the sample as a whole. This finding has implications for donors and activists seeking to build citizenship and governance, who often assume that civil society presence in fragile settings is very weak or has little potential to be effective.

**Table 6.7 Distribution of types of citizen engagement across positive outcome types, Tier Three countries**

Types of citizen engagement	Positive outcomes in Tier Three countries (n=273)			
	Construction of citizenship (n=96)	Practices of citizen participation (n=66)	Responsive and accountable states (n=83)	Inclusive and cohesive societies (n=28)
Local associations	89%	92%	83%	78%
Social movements and campaigns	0%	2%	2%	0%
Formal participatory governance spaces	6%	0%	4%	11%
Multiple	5%	6%	11%	11%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

This review of outcomes by political context and engagement strategy has suggested some counterintuitive propositions about where and how citizen action can make a difference. Though not analysed here, the qualitative case studies also suggest other factors that could affect the outcomes of citizen engagement, including the quality of representation and mediation involved, the nature of the issue, and the style of mobilisation used. Further research is needed both to develop and test the propositions emerging from this paper, as well as to explore these other factors which help to explain the differential outcomes of engagement.

## 7 Implications and next steps

The previous sections have reviewed and analysed a sample of the extensive body of research produced by the Citizenship DRC in order to understand what types of outcomes result from citizen engagement. From our initial, inductive review, we developed four broad sets of outcomes, each with several subcomponents. Of almost 830 outcomes in 100 cases studied, some 75 per cent were positive, in that they contributed to the construction of citizenship, strengthened practices of participation, the building of responsive and accountable states, or more inclusive and cohesive societies (see Figure 5.1).

These findings are important and significant for a number of reasons. First, they run counter to the arguments that no evidence exists for the claims that citizen engagement can contribute to developmental or state-building outcomes. Through systematic review and meta-case study analysis, we argue, we have found examples which suggest evidence contrary to this claim. While most are qualitative in nature, they are more than anecdotal – they emerge from grounded, empirical case studies from multiple sites in 20 countries. Viewed en masse, the qualitative findings from our sample begin to point to types and patterns of outcomes that can be expected from citizen engagement based on observable outcomes, not a normative framework of what outcomes should look like. We argue that the synthesis of a large sample of qualitative research facilitates a degree of generalisability that could not be achieved by the weight of a single research study.

Second, the inductive approach suggests a framework for what types of outcomes are important. While some approaches to the impact of citizen engagement attempt to draw a straight line from individual actions or behaviours (e.g. voice or participation) to policy or developmental outcomes, our evidence suggests that intermediate outcomes may be equally important – engagement is itself a way of strengthening a sense of citizenship, and the knowledge and sense of awareness necessary to achieve it. It can also strengthen the practices and efficacy of participation, through more effective action, the transfer of skills across issues and arenas, and the thickening of alliances and networks. In turn, more aware citizenship, coupled with stronger citizenship practices, can help to contribute to building responsive states, which deliver services, protect and extend rights, and foster a culture of accountability. They can also contribute to a broader sense of inclusion of previously marginalised groups within society and have the potential to increase social cohesion across groups.

This rich tapestry of outcomes of engagement contrasts sharply with more instrumental views, which see citizen engagement only as part of a linear process of achieving developmental goals. It also speaks to those who wish to quantify or measure the state of democracy in different countries by looking primarily at institutional arrangements such as fair elections, the rule of law, and a free and open media – an approach found in various governance indices and democracy barometers. Our findings point to a new and complementary standard, based on the degree to which a democracy fosters a sense of citizenship. An awareness of rights, knowledge of legal and institutional procedures, disposition towards action, organising skills and the thickness of civic networks are all indicators which help to measure the degree to which democratic citizenship is emerging, which in turn will make a difference in how democratic institutions deliver.

Third, while focusing on the positive outcomes of citizen engagement, the study also recognises that participation is not always used for positive purposes. It demonstrates how positive outcomes are often mirrored by parallel negative outcomes (though these were only 25 per cent of all of the outcomes coded in our sample). We have seen multiple examples in the text.

- Where engagement can contribute to construction of active citizenship, in other cases it leads to a sense of disempowerment and a reduced sense of agency, or to new knowledge dependencies, or re-enforced exclusions due to new forms of awareness.
- Where engagement in some instance can contribute to strengthened practices of participation, at other times participation is perceived as meaningless, tokenistic, or manipulated. In other instances, it can contribute to new skills and alliances but these are used for corrupt or non-positive ends, or are captured by elites, or raise new issues of accountability and representation.
- Where sometimes engagement leads to building responsive states and institutions, other times it faces bureaucratic ‘brick walls’; failures to implement or sustain policy gains; and in many cases, reprisals, including violence, from state actors, against those who challenge the status quo.
- Where sometimes engagement can contribute to social inclusion and cohesion, in part by created space for new voices and issues in the public sphere, at other times it can contribute to a greater sense of exclusion, as new spaces can reinforce old hierarchies based on gender, caste or race; and contribute to greater competition and conflict across groups who compete for the recognition and resources in new ways.

While we cannot ignore these negative outcomes, the fact that the vast majority of the outcomes in our sample are positive also means that the contribution of citizen engagements for democracy and development cannot be rejected either.

To contribute further to this new research challenge, in Section Six of this paper, we turned our attention to examining to what extent differences in outcomes in our sample were affected by two broad factors – the type of citizen engagement used and the nature of the political context. Here too, while we need to be very careful about drawing generalisable conclusions from this type of study, some very interesting patterns and propositions emerge which confirm our qualitative findings, while suggesting directions for further study.

As regards these variations across types of citizen engagement, we coded the case studies into four types: those that were about local associations, social movements and campaigns, formal participatory governance spaces and those that employed multiple approaches. In a research programme that was largely centred on how citizens interact with states, we might have expected participation through formal participatory governance spaces to be particularly important. In fact citizen engagement through local associations and social movements emerged as even more important sources of change, with associations showing the highest percentage of positive outcomes in each outcome type. Within the cases that use multiple approaches to change, the outcomes linked to responsive and accountable states reflected the highest percentage, a finding that is supported by qualitative evidence showing the importance of strategies that combine different forms of engagement.

In most cases a range of organisations and actors were involved in the types of citizen engagement that we studied, including community-based organisations, NGOs, local activists, sympathetic officials, but also in some cases the media and the courts. In few of our cases did we examine the role of political parties as change agents. At the same time, as we have observed, citizen engagement does not always lead to change, nor to 'good change', and when it does, it often involves more complex journeys and pathways than we have been able in this initial mapping to capture. From these case studies we learn that change is highly iterative, rarely linear and often uneven. Throughout the sample are many examples of gains and reversals, progress and disjunctures, successes and failures.

When we look at outcomes across contexts, we also find some very interesting patterns and propositions emerging. Using a combination of existing indices of political regime, we were able to cluster our sample by country according to three tiers representing degrees of democratic openness and stability. Here to our surprise, assumptions which tend to link positive democratic and development outcomes to the level of democratisation in a given country do not hold true.

These patterns are particularly striking when looking at the bottom end of the scale – at cases in our study which were ranked as the least democratic and stable. In such cases, there has been a predominant view either that civil society institutions are not likely to exist or that development interventions must develop state institutions first, and then focus on the tasks of citizen engagement. In fact, in our sample we found a very strong presence of associations, in particular, in these least democratic settings. In turn these associations play very important roles across each of the outcomes studied – constructing citizenship, improving practices of participation, strengthening accountability, and contributing to social cohesion. Contrary to the predominant view, this evidence urges approaches to strengthening democracy and development in such settings which recognise and support the role of associations as key actors in the process.

While the type of citizen engagement and the nature of the political regime, as well as their interaction, play an important role in affecting the positive contributions of citizen engagement, these also contribute to the where the risks of engagement might occur. While a common assumption is that citizen engagement can be more risky in weaker political regimes, as it may raise demands that states cannot handle, our data did not support this view. Rather, we were struck by the degree

of state ‘backlash’ – often violent – against increased citizen voice. This held across all settings, including the higher tiers. It often took the form of political violence which threatened fundamental human rights, but sometimes also comprised economic and social reprisals, including the use of access to development resources – land, housing, jobs – as political clubs to maintain the status quo.

While we need to be very careful about the statistical significance of these findings, they do begin to suggest, at least based on our case studies, that we cannot consider participation ‘success’ and ‘level of democratisation’ to be linked in a linear or progressive manner, nor that citizen engagement will be more likely to lead to government response in more democratic than in less democratic states. Rather, they tell us that engagement can make positive differences, even in the least democratic settings – a proposition that again challenges those who would argue for building states or institutions in these settings first and leaving the support of citizen engagement until later.

There are of course a number of implications from these findings for activists and policy-makers as well as for donors and development agencies seeking to foster positive developmental and democratic outcomes through citizen engagements. Six of these are very important.

1. Citizen engagement can be linked positively in a number of instances to achieving both development outcomes – such as those linked to health, water, sanitation and education – and democratic outcomes linked to building accountable institutions and making real national and international human rights frameworks.
2. However, active and effective citizens who can help deliver these development and democratic gains do not emerge automatically. As with the process of building states and institutions, other intermediary measures of change are also very important.
3. While ‘good change’ can happen through citizen engagement, there are also risks. Careful attention must be paid to the quality and direction of change, as well as to its incidence. Positive outcomes of citizen engagement can be mirrored by their opposite.
4. Change happens through multiple types of citizen engagement: not only through formal governance processes, even participatory ones, but also through associations and social movements that are not created by the state. Strengthening these broader social change processes, and their interactions, can in turn create opportunities for state reformers to respond to demands, build external alliances and contribute to state responsiveness.
5. Citizen engagement – especially when citizens are challenging powerful interests in the status quo – gives rise to the risk of reprisals, which can range from state and political violence, to economic and social forms of recrimination against those who speak out. Donors and policy-makers alike can play an important role in protecting and strengthening spaces for citizens to exercise their voice, and can support the enabling conditions for citizen engagement to occur. In particular, they can promote the value of broad

social movements for both democracy and development, support champions of engagement within the state, and monitor state reprisals against increased citizen voice.

6. For those donors and development actors working in fragile and weak settings, the research points to the need to recognise early the role which local associations and other citizen activities can play in the strengthening of cultures of citizenship, which in turn can contribute to building responsive states. Citizen-based strategies can be as important in these settings as those found in stronger democracies.

Finally, on a more general note, this study has argued that outcomes matter, but they can be understood through a variety of approaches. As we have illustrated, systematic reviews of qualitative data over multiple cases and contexts can be as important and insightful as quantitative and controlled evidence-building in a small number of settings. With different approaches and methods, we hope that new understanding has also emerged.

We also believe that it is time to move the debate to a new set of questions. After more than two decades of support in international development for greater citizen participation, the issue is not simply to ask 'what difference does it make?' but to understand further the conditions under which it makes a positive difference. Rather than simply measure the contribution of engagement to development and democracy, we must focus also on the quality and direction of the differences which are made, and how they are attained. Answers to these questions should occupy researchers for many years to come.



## Annexe 1 Case studies included in the sample

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