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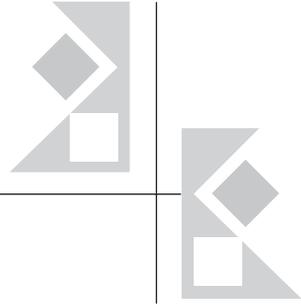
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CHAPTER 10

A Proposed Framework to Understand Civil Society Organizations' Involvement in M&E

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Overview

The aim of this chapter¹ is to increase our understanding of civil society organizations² (CSOs) involvement in monitoring and evaluation (M&E), especially in aid-dependent, developing countries. As a first step, the two main functions of M&E, accountability and feedback/learning, are unpacked relying on a broad and diverse range of literature across disciplines. The most relevant elements discussed in this review are integrated within a conceptual framework proposed at the end of the chapter. This framework not only aims to improve our understanding of CSOs' involvement in M&E, but could also inform future capacity-building initiatives for CSOs.

Introduction: M&E in the Current Aid Architecture

In the late 1990s, a new approach to aid emerged constructed around the principles of ownership, participation, harmonization, alignment, and results-based management (RBM). Important building blocks of this new aid architecture are the International Monetary Fund's Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), the Paris Declaration (OECD/DAC 2005), the Accra Agenda for Action (OECD/DAC 2008), and the more recent Busan Partnership Agreement (OECD/DAC 2011). The shift in thinking, combined with the adoption of new aid modalities, such as general and sector budget support, have had enormous consequences for the M&E systems of both donors and governments. Because donors have been moving away from an ex-ante type of conditionality toward an ex-post type of conditionality, in which aid is based on a proven record of progress and results, country-led M&E systems have been subjected to an ambitious reform agenda (Holvoet and Renard 2007).

To respond to the new challenges, developing countries have been asked to better define and elaborate their national M&E systems, to make them more results-oriented and robust, and to allow participation of nonstate actors, including CSOs. Conversely, donors have been asked to harmonize and align their own M&E systems with each country's M&E system to reduce the country's administrative burden. National M&E systems thus have two main functions:

- To be accountable, particularly at the domestic level, to ensure the implementation of (pro-poor) policies and programs
- To provide feedback to support “the realization of results-oriented, iterative and evidence-based policy-making” (Holvoet and Rombouts 2008, 579).

The initial emphasis on broad-based participation within the M&E systems was motivated by three assumptions: first, that the involvement of CSOs would improve domestic accountability, which refers to the accountability relations between the government and its citizens (Hickey and Mohan 2008); second, that CSOs would have a comparative advantage because, compared with external evaluators, they are closer to the local community and able to monitor over longer periods of time, especially at decentralized levels (Goetz and Jenkins 2001); and last, that CSOs would have sound experience in the use of participatory and qualitative M&E tools, which would complement the quantitative approach that dominates most official M&E systems (Prennushi and others 2002).

In practice, however, the role of CSOs within national M&E systems is not always clear, and their participation takes place through a variety of formal and informal arrangements. Some CSOs participate within working groups, steering committees, and other more formal structures, while others carry out M&E independently. The literature supports the observation that institutionalized participation of CSOs within the official M&E system appears difficult in practice and is not systematically researched (Lucas and others 2004; Eberlei 2007; Eberlei and Siebold 2006). Available literature concentrates primarily on the involvement of CSOs in the monitoring of the first generation of PRSPs, focusing on the obstacles and opportunities they face. Conversely, more CSOs appear to carry out M&E independently and engage with government officials through other channels. This type of independent M&E carried out by CSOs is referred to as *CSO-led M&E*³ in this chapter. Some common tools CSOs are using to carry out this type of M&E are shown in table 10.1.

Independent M&E carried out by CSOs has become increasingly popular in recent years, especially as a demand-side approach to accountability. As the name suggests, CSO-led M&E carried out under the banner of social accountability is more focused on M&E for accountability than M&E for policy/program feedback and learning, although both functions are important. Despite the huge popularity of these initiatives, little is known about their effectiveness and impact. As a first step to understanding the influence of CSO-led M&E, this chapter deconstructs the twin goals of M&E: accountability and feedback/learning. Second, the most important elements discussed are combined in a framework proposed at the end of the chapter.

Table 10.1 M&E Tools Used by CSOs According to Their Place within the Logic Model

	Input	Output	Outcome
Client satisfaction survey		X	X
Citizen report cards		X	X
Community score cards		X	X
Community monitoring	X	X	X
Public expenditure tracking	X	X	
Social audits	X	X	X

Source: Adapted from Verbeke and Holvoet 2006.

Note: CSO = civil society organization, M&E = monitoring and evaluation.

Unpacking the Accountability Function of M&E

This section examines how CSO-led M&E can contribute to accountability. The link between CSO-led M&E and accountability is clearest in the concept of social accountability, in which CSOs use M&E tools combined with other activities, such as advocacy and policy education to demand accountability from public officials and/or service providers. Before examining this link, it is important to deconstruct or unpack the concept of accountability, and to briefly discuss how accountability has been conceptualized in development discourse.

What Is Accountability?

The concept of accountability has become increasingly popular in recent years. More than 100 different definitions and types of accountability have been reported in the literature (Lindberg 2009), which has contributed to a loss of meaning and fuzziness. Despite the conceptual cacophony, the ultimate goal of accountability remains the same: to keep power under control and prevent abuses.

Within the development discourse, accountability has become a buzzword and is often portrayed as the new panacea for failures in service delivery and weak development outcomes. This trend can be witnessed through key publications such as the *World Development Report* on improving public service delivery (World Bank 2004), the importance of accountability in the second generation of PRSPs (Hickey and Mohan 2008), and the increasing emphasis on social accountability (Malena and others 2004; McNeil and Malena 2010). Further, many donor discourses have emphasized the importance of accountability to help realize good governance, public sector reform, and, ultimately, democracy (Lindberg 2009; Newell and Bellour 2002).

To create some clarity, Lindberg (2009, 8) proposed a definition of accountability that captures the core characteristics of any form of accountability:

- An agent or institution who is to give an account (A for agent)
- An area, responsibilities, or domain subject to accountability (D for domain)
- An agent or institution P to whom A is to give account (P for principal)
- The right of P to require A to inform and explain/justify decisions with regard to D
- The right of P to sanction A if A fails to inform and/or explain/justify decisions with regard to D.

The last two characteristics in this definition refer to the two dimensions of accountability, which are answerability and enforceability, as proposed by Schedler (1999). *Answerability* refers to the fact that accounting agents can ask power holders to provide information about their past or future actions and decisions (transparency) and their reasons for doing so (justification). “Accountability thus involves the right to receive information and the corresponding obligation to release all necessary details” (Schedler 1999, 15). *Receiving information* not only refers to obtaining data and evidence, for example, through monitoring, but also to reasoning and argumentation. *Enforceability* refers to the capacity to impose sanctions, or to the act of punishing the powerful if they fail to live up to their promises or if they engage in unlawful activities (Schedler 1999).⁴ The distinction between these dimensions is important because the concept of answerability is often conflated with the concept of accountability. Without the element of enforceability or without the threat of sanction, one cannot talk about full accountability. Enforceability, thus, requires the presence of accounting actors that have enough power and/or autonomy to impose sanctions. As will be discussed, CSOs usually lack the power, legitimacy, and capacity to meet this dimension of accountability.

Although Schedler (1999) mentions that the concept of enforceability refers to both “rewarding” and “punishing,” he and other authors (O’Donnell 1999; Rubenstein 2007) emphasize the element of sanction. If the goal of enforceability and accountability in general is to ensure that public officials and other actors comply with established rules, then the focus should be on creating the right incentive structure rather than on punishment alone. Ackerman (2005, 13) expresses this more nuanced version when he mentions, “The best accountability system is one that includes both punishments and rewards so that public officials have strong incentives both not to break the rules and to perform at their maximum capacity.” In a similar way, Brett (2003) points out that for institutions to be accountable and perform well, both strong incentives and a real threat of sanction need to be present.

Moving away from the definition of accountability toward its typology, a common distinction is made between horizontal and vertical accountability. *Vertical accountability* can be described as the use of external mechanisms by nonstate (external) actors to hold policymakers to account (Goetz and Jenkins 2001). In vertical accountability, the relationship between the accountability holders and the power wielders is unequal. The most conventional mechanism used in vertical accountability is elections, where citizens (less powerful) can sanction or reward the current government for its past performance. Other examples are exposure of public officials’ wrongdoing

in the media and government lobbying. Taking into account the direction of accountability between the more powerful and the less powerful, one can talk about upward (vertical) accountability or downward (vertical) accountability. Within the aid context, upward accountability is used when governments or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are accountable toward donors, while downward accountability, also called domestic accountability, refers to efforts by government to become more accountable to its citizens.

Conversely, *horizontal accountability* occurs between actors with equal power. Because power is not easily measurable, Schedler (1999, 26) proposes to “translate” equal power by looking at the level of autonomy or the degree of mutual independence between the actors in question. O’Donnell (1999, 38) defines horizontal accountability as: “The existence of state agencies that are legally enabled and empowered, and factually willing and able, to take actions that span from routine oversight to criminal sanctions or agencies of the state that may be qualified as unlawful.” His definition implies that within horizontal accountability there is no room for nonstate, external actors to participate directly in accountability initiatives. His narrow definition has given rise to debate among scholars and has ultimately led to the emergence of a new notion, in which CSOs are able to play a more prominent role.

CSO-led M&E and Accountability

Traditionally, the role of civil society in accountability has been located in the vertical axis. Through elections, lobbying, and other mechanisms, CSOs are able to hold governments accountable for their past performance. Nevertheless, several authors (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz 2006; Goetz and Jenkins 2005) have highlighted the weakness of voting as an instrument of accountability because of various imperfections such as information asymmetry and corruption. In addition, horizontal accountability mechanisms are deficient in many developing countries (O’Donnell 1999). New approaches toward accountability that rely on civil society engagement have gained prominence as a way to increase domestic accountability. Called *hybrid or diagonal accountability*, these approaches all “challenge the vertical–horizontal dichotomy on which understandings of accountability have been based” (Goetz and Jenkins 2001, 364). Goetz and Jenkins (2001), for example, point out that some CSOs engage in performance monitoring and financial auditing activities that are traditionally carried out by actors within the horizontal accountability axis (Goetz and Jenkins 2001, 365). Other authors (Newell and Bellour 2002; O’Donnell 1999) have pointed out that the presence of strong CSOs within the vertical accountability axis

can stimulate horizontal accountability agencies to take action. For example, in Latin America, Peruzzotti and Smulovitz (2006, 10) studied how civil society and media organizations are able to “monitor public officials, expose governmental wrongdoing, and [can] activate the operation of horizontal agencies” through the use of both institutional and noninstitutional channels. Following their monitoring activities, these CSOs can apply soft sanctions, such as exposure in the media, or trigger the response of formal horizontal accountability agencies that have the capacity to enforce legal sanctions. This hybrid accountability has been called *societal or social accountability* by these authors.

In more recent years, the concept of social accountability has gained prominence and has been adopted and actively promoted by various donors, including the World Bank (2012) through its Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GSPA). The definition has also broadened over the years, sparking critiques from certain authors about the increasing fuzziness surrounding the concept (for example, Joshi and Houtzager 2012). Originally, Malena and others (2004, 3) defined social accountability as, “an approach towards building accountability that relies on civic engagement, that is, in which it is ordinary citizens and/or civil society organizations who participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability.” It is important to understand that social accountability initiatives encompass a broad range of activities initiated by various actors using various strategies. Examples of social accountability initiatives include CSOs involved in policy advocacy, budget literacy, civic education, and lobbying and coalition building, among others (Malena and McNeil 2010). The U. K. Department for International Development (DFID) proposed a different classification with the various stages of the accountability process at which CSOs can engage (see box 10.1). This chapter particularly addresses CSOs that are involved in the “investigation” phase and that are using M&E tools to “assess” government’s performance and/or compliance with previously established standards.

Although new social accountability initiatives are mushrooming across the globe and funding for these initiatives is growing, little sound evidence of their effectiveness or impact is available. Several small case studies and some impact evaluations on the effect of social accountability initiatives have been done, but large-scale comparative studies are still lacking. An exception is the large-scale research in which McGee and Gaventa (2011) review various studies⁵ on the effectiveness and the impact of such initiatives and try to identify contributing factors. Their results suggest that evidence about effectiveness and impact of such initiatives is uneven and inconclusive, sometimes even contradictory. Most accountability initiatives

Box 10.1 How Civil Society Organizations Can Engage in Social Accountability Initiatives

- Influencing standard-setting (for example, lobbying for legislation on transparency, adherence to international commitments on human rights)
- Carrying out investigations (for example, monitoring and evaluating government programs through participatory expenditure tracking systems)
- Demanding answers from the state (for example, questioning state institutions about progress, Parliamentary public hearings)
- Applying sanctions where the state is found to be lacking (for example, protests, boycotts, strikes or negative publicity)

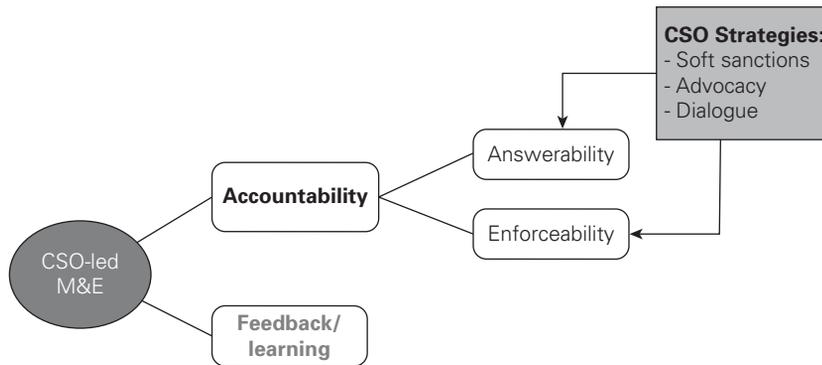
Source: DFID 2007, 5.

are also directed toward strengthening answerability and transparency aspects, whereas less attention has been paid to the link with existing horizontal accountability institutions.

Other, earlier research (for example Eberlei and Siebold 2006; Lucas and others 2004) point to some constraints, opportunities, and strategies CSOs are using to overcome obstacles when they carry out this type of M&E. Some of the obstacles relate to the CSOs' lack of financial resources as well as their lack of time and analytical skills to undertake M&E activities beyond the project level. In addition, many CSOs operate within a legal environment that does not guarantee the right to public information, making access to information challenging (Eberlei and Siebold 2006; Goetz and Jenkins 2001). The most challenging obstacle, however, is the unequal power relations in the accountability relation (Rubenstein 2007) and the perceived lack of legitimacy of CSOs' engagement in M&E activities.

However CSOs are using several strategies to overcome or compensate for these constraints. Some strategies, which have been reported in the literature on social accountability initiatives, include advocacy, networking with media and other organizations, and trying to trigger the response of actors who have the power and legitimacy to impose sanctions. With regard to the enforceability dimension, rather than sanctioning governments, CSOs may try to incentivize governments to take action through the use of informal, "soft" mechanisms such as exposure in the media, mobilization of public opinion, and dialogue and engagement as opposed to "naming and shaming." However, there is a lack of research on the impact of these mechanisms (Malena and others 2004; McNeil and Malena 2010).

Figure 10.1 Conceptual Framework: Accountability Dimension



Note: CSO = civil society organization.

In sum, to understand how CSO-led M&E can contribute to improved accountability, it is important to look at both answerability and enforceability as represented in the first part of the conceptual framework (figure 10.1). Being involved in various M&E activities can provide a springboard for CSOs to hold governments accountable, but the mere act of monitoring (and evaluating) is not sufficient. Too many initiatives that support accountability are directed only toward strengthening the answerability and transparency aspects, while forgetting the enforceability dimension. For CSOs involved in accountability initiatives, additional strategies—such as soft sanctions, advocacy, and dialog—are fundamental to transforming their M&E evidence into a tool of genuine accountability.

The next section will discuss how M&E can be used to provide feedback or to influence programs and policies.

Unpacking the Feedback/Learning Function of M&E

Monitoring and evaluation, like research in general, aims to generate evidence and knowledge about programs and policies to find out what has worked and why, and to inform future decision making. *Evidence-based policy making* and *results-based management* are terms used to express the shift toward a more rational approach to policy making, in which M&E plays a crucial role. The link between research/knowledge and policy/programs has been intensively researched by many academics and practitioners, and the field of evaluation use and influence is one of the biggest

within evaluation research. The theories of *evaluation use and influence*⁶ can be used to understand the influence of M&E by CSOs. In the second part of this section, links between policy and knowledge/research undertaken by researchers and organizations in developing countries will be discussed.

Evaluation Use and Influence

Research on the use of evaluation results emerged during the 1960s and 1970s when many social scientists involved in the evaluation of large-scale social welfare programs in the United States became disappointed that their research/evaluation results were not being used to improve programs and policy making. This frustration gave rise to numerous theories explaining the nonuse of evaluation results and research in general. Some earlier work concentrated on the contextual elements facilitating or inhibiting the use of evaluation results. Other research (for example Shula and Cousins 1997) proposed a classification of different types of use.

The basis for evaluation theory was developed with the definition of three main types of evaluation use: instrumental, conceptual, and political/symbolic (Leviton and Hughes 1981). *Instrumental use* refers to the direct use of evaluation results for decision making; *conceptual use*, also called *enlightenment*, refers to the subtle influence of evaluations or “the percolation of new information, ideas and perspectives into the arenas in which decisions are made” (Weiss 1999, 471). *Political or symbolic use* occurs when evaluation findings are used to legitimate positions or decisions that have already been made (Kirkhart 2000). A fourth type, called *process use*, was described by Patton (1997). Process use refers to the fact that not only evaluation findings, but also the process of participating in an evaluation can have effects or lead to outcomes, such as feelings of empowerment and organizational learning. Thus, there are many ways in which M&E can be used beyond instrumental use. Paradoxically, despite the fact that instrumental use is rather exceptional, the direct use of evaluation findings to improve programs and decision making is still considered one of the main goals of evaluation.

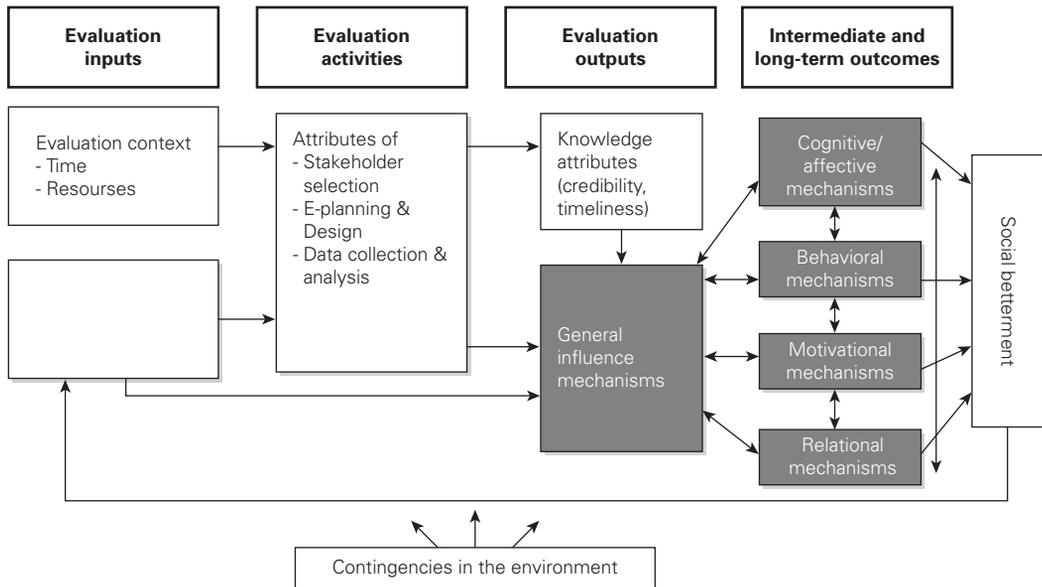
More recently, following an article by Kirkhart (2000), researchers have proposed a shift in terminology from *evaluation use* to *evaluation influence*. The overall argument behind this shift is that the term “use” implicitly has an intentional, instrumental connotation whereas M&E can have effects or consequences in a plethora of ways. The term *evaluation influence* is a broader concept that captures the unintentional, longer-term consequences of M&E. Evaluation consequences can occur as a result of the findings, the process, or a combination of both (Kirkhart 2000). Although there is no

consensus on the proposed switch, some authors have endorsed the concept of evaluation influence and taken it one step further (Henry and Mark 2003, Mark and Henry 2004; Christie 2007).

Mark and Henry (2004, 39), for example, developed a “Comprehensive Theory of Evaluation Influence” (see figure 10.2) that offers a “more specific framework and typology of influence.” They propose a theory of change that explains the link between evaluation inputs (first column) and the long-term desired outcome of evaluation, social betterment (far right column).

Their theory explains how available evaluation inputs (such as resources and time available to carry out the M&E) will influence the type of evaluation activities carried out, and the type of knowledge or M&E evidence produced with its attributes (such as credibility and timeliness). The policy setting in which M&E activities take place and the broader context can facilitate or inhibit certain aspects of the evaluation process. Central to the theory are the different categories of influence mechanisms (dark grey boxes in figure 10.2; see table 10.2 for more details) that occur as a result of the evaluation findings and/or the evaluation process. This menu of possible influence mechanisms⁷ (table 10.2) thus explains the different underlying processes through which evaluations can have an effect (Henry

Figure 10.2 A Comprehensive Theory of Evaluation Influence



Source: Adapted from Mark and Henry 2004 and Mark 2006.

Table 10.2 Model of Alternative Mechanisms That May Mediate Evaluation Influence

Types of process/ outcomes	Level of analysis		
	Individual	Interpersonal	Collective
General Influence	Elaboration Heuristics Priming Skill acquisition	Justification Persuasion Change agent Minority-opinion influence	Ritualism Legislative hearings Coalition formation Drafting legislation Standard setting Policy consideration
Cognitive and affective	Salience Opinion/attitude valence	Local descriptive norms	Agenda setting Policy-oriented learning
Motivational	Personal goals and aspirations	Injunctive norms Social reward exchange	Structural incentives Market forces
Behavioral	New skill performance Individual change in practice	Collaborative change in practice	Program continuation, change, or cessation Policy change Diffusion
Relational	Self-perception of empowerment	Networks shifts in power relations	Democratic forum Learning organizations Social justice

Source: Adapted from Mark and Henry 2004 and Mark 2006.

and Mark 2003). To explain these underlying mechanisms, the authors have relied on established research from social and behavioral sciences, which “can be a powerful source of methods, measures and hypotheses” (Mark and Henry 2004, 51). The framework of mechanisms distinguishes among three levels of analysis—the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels—indicating the locus of the change process, and five mechanisms or types of processes: general influence, cognitive and affective, motivational, behavioral (Mark and Henry 2004, 39), and, more recently, relational (see column and row headings of table 10.2). Entries in table 10.2 can be both *outcomes* of the evaluation and *mechanisms* that stimulate other outcomes: “Because the elements [...] can play the dual roles of an outcome of evaluation and mechanisms that stimulates other outcomes, we often refer to them as processes” (Mark and Henry 2004, 43). A certain combination of different influence mechanisms can then form a pathway toward a longer-term

outcome, such as better education or health, which is captured in the term *social betterment*.

Like any theory, this theory has advantages and disadvantages. One of its limitations, especially for CSO-led M&E, is the lack of attention to external factors that influence the process. External factors are acknowledged, through the concept of contingencies and the decision-making context, but for use in developing countries, more details are necessary, which will be discussed in the next section. Empirical applications of this theoretical framework are also limited (Christie 2007; Weiss and others 2005), especially in a developing-country context. Conversely, because the theory is still a work in progress, it can easily be adapted to provide the foundations for context-specific, local theories of evaluation influence (Henry and Mark 2003). However, the most important contribution of the theoretical framework is the attention it draws to the broad range of ways in which M&E can have an effect at different levels beyond direct, instrumental use. Table 10.2 entries show that program and policy change are only two among many possible influence mechanisms.

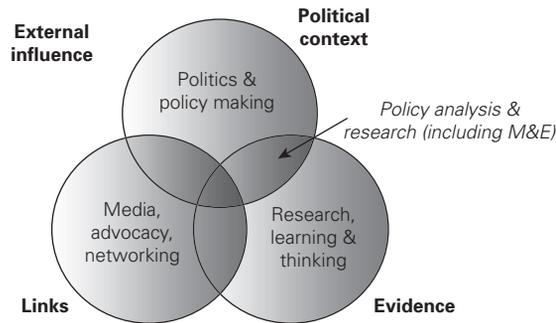
Understanding the Knowledge/Research–Policy Interface in Developing Countries

Because the theories and frameworks discussed above have not yet been studied in the context of developing countries, and to better understand which factors are mediating the relationship between M&E and program/policy, the broader literature on the interface between knowledge/research and policy was consulted. M&E can be considered a type of research because it relies on techniques and methods from social sciences. More specifically, the experience of the Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) group at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the work of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) were examined. The frameworks proposed by both research groups partially overlap but also complement each other. The RAPID framework draws attention to a broad range of factors that are relevant for understanding the relationship between research and policy. The work of IDRC focuses on the specific strategies CSOs and research institutions are adopting to increase the influence of their research on policy.

The RAPID Framework

The RAPID framework (figure 10.3) was developed by ODI to map the four broad areas that play a role in the research–policy link: external influence, political context, the evidence, and the links. M&E research falls at the intersection of the political and evidence “circles” (see arrow in figure 10.3).

Figure 10.3 The RAPID Framework



Source: Adapted from Court and Young 2004, 2.

Note: RAPID = Research and Policy in Development.

The four elements shed light on the link between CSO-Ied M&E and its feedback function. *External influence* (figure 10.3) refers to elements within the broader, international context in which CSOs operate, such as the Paris Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, as well as more general influences, such as the move toward evidence-based policy making and the presence of donors in developing countries. The *political context* refers to national-level political processes, such as the political structure of a country, and/or the way policy making occurs within a certain sector. For most of the factors in this category, data on a range of indicators exists. Examples are the Freedom of Press Index as a proxy for media freedom in a country and the governance indicators published by the World Bank.⁸ With respect to policy making, there are differences in openness across policy domains. Some sectors, such as the education sector, are more open to sources of evidence that are generated by external actors such as CSOs, whereas others, such as macroeconomic policies, are more closed (Jones and others 2009, 16).

The category *evidence* (figure 10.3) relates to both the characteristics of the evidence and the communication strategies employed (Court and Young 2003; Court and Young 2004). Evidence can be generated in many ways beyond academic research, for example, through participatory research and storytelling, but also through M&E (see arrow in figure 10.3). However, there is a hierarchy of different types of evidence. In addition, there is variation in the attributes of evidence, such as credibility, validity, and reliability, which will facilitate or inhibit its uptake within policy making. The way evidence is communicated also plays an important role and will be discussed in more detail when explaining the key elements of the IDRC framework.

The last element of the framework may be the most important and is closely related to the influence of CSO-Ied M&E. To bridge policy and

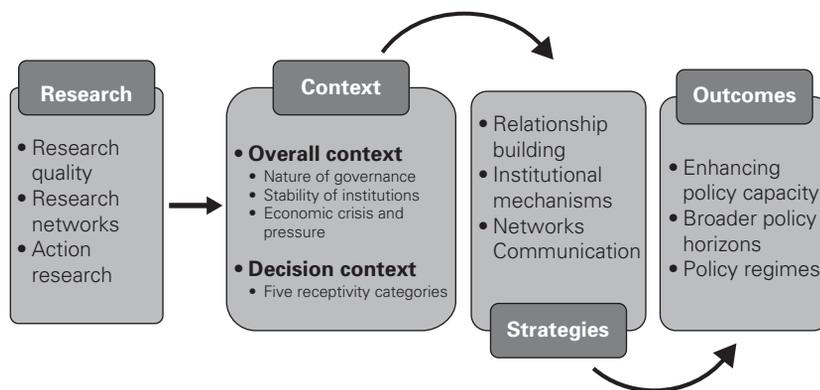
evidence, *links* (figure 10.3) act as a key facilitator and can be created through the development of networks, advocacy, and others. Compared with individual evaluators, CSOs undertaking M&E have an advantage here because they are more experienced in such types of activities. This element reappears in the IDRC framework, described below.

The IDRC Framework

The IDRC developed a framework, referred to as a “realist perspective of policy influence” (figure 10.4), based on an in-depth evaluation of 23 best-practice cases about the influence of research on policy in developing countries (Carden 2004, 2009).

The framework and underlying empirical evidence are discussed extensively in Carden (2009). Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to explain them in detail, key elements relevant to understanding the influence of CSO-led M&E will be highlighted. The framework shows similarities with the RAPID framework regarding research and context (figure 10.4). Under *context*, decision context is emphasized and broken down into five receptivity categories to explain the openness of government/policy makers toward research findings. These decision context categories will influence the strategies researchers and organizations adopt to draw attention to their research. As Carden (2009, 25) explains, “each of these classes of receptivity calls for definable strategies by which researchers and research advocates can maximize their prospects of influencing public policy and development action.” The relationship between an adopted strategy, or combination of strategies, according to the decision

Figure 10.4 Realist Perspective of Policy Influence



Source: Adapted from Carden 2010.

context and the outcome is not linear and predictable, however, because other contextual elements can interfere.

For the purpose of this chapter, the *strategies* (figure 10.4) of relationship building, networks, and communication are especially important. Having a good communication strategy is crucial and goes beyond mere dissemination of results. The establishment of a permanent dialogue forum, for example, has been shown to be conducive for policy influence because it promotes the continuous exchange of information between researchers and policymakers (Carden 2009). As discussed in the previous section, establishing dialogue is also crucial to strengthening domestic accountability. Further, professional mobility, networks, and personal relations are important informal channels of communication that foster the exchange of ideas.

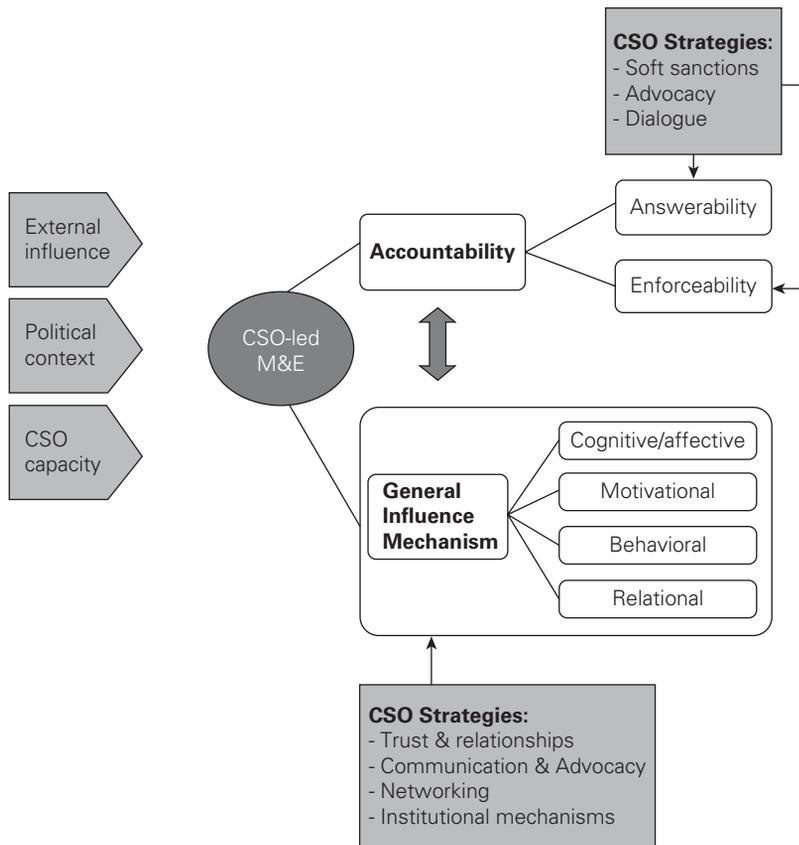
In sum, CSO-Ied M&E has consequences that go beyond the instrumental use of M&E findings. M&E generated by CSOs can exert influence in many ways as suggested by Mark and Henry. In addition, CSOs use a variety of strategies to increase the influence of their work, as visible from the ODI and IDRC literature. Given that both main functions of M&E have been deconstructed and linked, where possible, to CSO-Ied M&E, the most important elements will be combined into a conceptual framework explained in the conclusion of this chapter.

Bringing Everything Together: Toward an Understanding of CSOs' Involvement in M&E

Some of the most important elements discussed in this chapter are summarized below. These elements can be considered the building blocks for a conceptual framework, whose aim is to contribute to a better understanding of CSOs' involvement in M&E.

Following the introduction, the concept of accountability was unpacked, highlighting its two dimensions—answerability and enforceability—and some of its main types—vertical, horizontal, and hybrid/diagonal or social. The concept of social accountability was analyzed because of its usefulness in understanding how CSOs, especially CSOs involved in M&E activities, can strengthen domestic accountability. The literature has highlighted obstacles and opportunities CSOs face when trying to demand answers from government or, more importantly, create the right incentive structure for government to take action. The two dimensions of accountability and the strategies CSOs employ to turn M&E evidence into a tool for domestic accountability are represented in the framework shown in figure 10.5. The figure lists factors related to the broader political context in which the

Figure 10.5 Understanding CSOs' Involvement in M&E



Note: CSO = civil society organization, M&E = monitoring and evaluation.

CSOs operate and factors related to the capacity of CSOs to undertake this type of independent M&E.

The second part of this chapter explained the feedback function of M&E by relying on the literature about evaluation use and influence and the knowledge/research–policy interface discussed in the context of developing countries. The literature broadens the understanding of the concept “evaluation use and influence” beyond instrumental use. Most evaluations do not result in concrete program or policy changes but generate important changes at the conceptual or cognitive level. In addition, the Comprehensive Theory of Evaluation Influence offers a framework to examine the different underlying processes through which evaluation influences broader outcomes at the cognitive, motivational, behavioral, and relational levels,

which should ultimately result in social betterment. The underlying mechanisms of the Comprehensive Theory of Evaluation Influence are also represented in the proposed conceptual framework (see figure 10.5).

Finally, the literature on the knowledge/research–policy interface draws attention to the factors that play a role in the knowledge/research–policy interface, as well as strategies CSOs are using to bring M&E evidence to the attention of policy makers.

In conclusion, the proposed framework takes into account the importance of context to understanding the environment in which CSOs are carrying out M&E activities, the type of M&E they are carrying out, and their capacity to transform the gathered M&E evidence as a tool to increase accountability and to influence (pro-poor) programs and policies. The framework draws its strength from the fact that it reflects elements from a broad range of literature, and takes into account both the accountability and the feedback function of M&E.

The framework is still a work in progress and future research and fieldwork on CSO-led M&E are necessary to fine-tune its elements. For example, this chapter was structured to discuss the two main functions of M&E separately. Nevertheless, as indicated by the dark grey arrow in figure 10.5, dynamics and trade-offs between both functions exist. CSOs that are engaged in expenditure tracking, for example, to ensure the good use of program resources, may be able to introduce improvements in that program through a combination of their M&E evidence, advocacy, and dialogue. Further, some influence mechanisms like “agenda-setting” or “change in practice” (see table 10.2) are indicators of a greater answerability and responsiveness of public officials. Additional research, especially empirical research, is needed to further explore the interaction between both functions. Despite this challenge, the proposed framework is a good starting point to study CSO-led M&E in different settings, and, hopefully, a source of inspiration for further research on the topic.

Notes

1. This chapter is a revised, shorter version of Gildemyn 2011.
2. For the purpose of this chapter, the term *civil society organizations* refers to a wide variety of organizations, beyond nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), such as trade unions, think tanks, community-based organizations, and others.
3. The term CSO-led M&E is adopted here to refer to the array of M&E activities in which CSOs are involved at the program and policy level. These M&E activities go beyond the (internal) M&E activities CSOs are undertaking at the level of their own projects and programs.

4. There is debate among authors regarding the concept of enforceability. Some authors (for example Hickey and Mohan 2008 and Schedler 1999) argue that noncompliance with agreed standards can lead to sanctioning, while others (Lindberg 2009) have argued that sanctions should only be applied if power holders fail to provide answers or justification.
5. Not all studies on social accountability made an explicit distinction between the different types of accountability initiatives. The results discussed here apply to social accountability initiatives as a whole, not only those that have M&E at their core.
6. Evaluation use and influence primarily looks at “the consequences” of evaluation and, implicitly, of monitoring as well. Monitoring and evaluation are two distinct but complementary processes. Although the theory was developed to explain evaluation influence, it has also been applied to performance monitoring (Mark and Henry 2004) and to study the influence of indicators (Lehtonen 2012).
7. For a detailed explanation of the different types of influence mechanisms see Henry and Mark 2003; Mark and Henry 2004; Mark 2006.
8. These indicators are available at : www.govindicators.org

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