
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Local Governance (SoLG) forms the cornerstone publication of the Good Governance Learning Network. The publication provides members the valuable opportunity to critically reflect on and share their experiences of working within the field of good governance by writing and publishing stories based on this lived experience and insight, as located within an academic framework.

This year's 2017 theme, *Navigating Accountability and Collaboration in local governance*, recognises the importance of both accountability and collaboration as key values and activities that drive the reclaiming of local democratic space within the field of local democracy. The 2017 edition includes chapters that attempt to unpack the dynamic tension – as previously identified within the 2016 (Re)Claiming Local Democratic Space SoLG publication – which lies both within and (in) between the need for building collaborative relationships between citizens, civil society and the public sector, and the attempt to uphold/inspire/activate active citizenship that supports government transparency and accountability for effective local community building.

Within its contents, the 2017 edition endeavours to engage and wrestle with the complex 'wicked' problems (and opportunities) that are enmeshed within the dynamic relationship spaces within which democratic rights are attempted to be activated. This edition includes 9 chapters comprising of 8 papers and 1 In-Profile, which explore the core challenges and key issues encountered, and present governance-strengthening programmes, as well as methodological and technological approaches that provide opportunities for expanding good governance practice and impact within the good governance field, as exercised by the multiple actors working within and across local community, civil society, and state spheres.

The introduction by the GGLN Secretariat sets out to provide a conceptual framework for the theme, as a means to set the tone for the following chapters. The paper begins by unpacking various understandings of accountability, with an emphasis placed on the importance of public accountability and its relationship to citizen engagement; it explores understandings and applications of collaboration as a practical means to activate accountability, and looks at the various challenges, paradoxes and complexities involved as related to power imbalances and trust, amongst others. The introduction concludes by summarising the papers and In-Profile presented in this year's State of Local Governance Publication.

The paper by Habitat for Humanity and Ubhle Bakha Ubhle kick-starts the publication with a call to action to encourage active citizenry. Speaking to the impact of unequal power distribution between citizens and government, it emphasises the need for 'true collaboration' to be practiced via the building of trust, compromise and the redistribution of power in order to co-create effective solutions through partnerships. Using a lens of collaboration intertwined with accountability, the paper explores the question, 'Who builds the city?', and emphasises that citizens should be capacitated to build their cities alongside government by speaking to the successes and learnings gained from the Sweet Home Farm informal settlement case study.

Moving the discussion to the urban landscape, Development Action Group's (DAG) paper discusses methodological approaches for facilitating community collaboration and relationship building within communities, and between government and civil society. Beginning by unpacking understandings of collaborative practice, DAG utilises learnings gained through its work in Woodstock and Salt River over the past 3 years that is aimed at building collaborative trust relationships between the various organisations and individual change agents, as well as influencing the equitable, inclusive and sustainable regeneration of these neighbourhoods. Acting (and reflecting) as both stakeholder and principle organiser, the paper explores both opportunities, risks, and learnings of the experience, emphasising neighbourhood-level organisation as essential for establishing the basis for effective and sustainable collaboration.

Exploring the importance of partnered collaborations and individual accountability, the Isandla Institute paper provides a reflection on the role of accountability and partnership engagement from the internal perspective of partners accountable to each other while engaged in the Accounting for Basic Services project (ABS). Offering an overview of emergent findings, this paper explores theories related to social justice communication and values of transformation, and describes the ABS project as an example of a collaborative introduction into social accountability methods for the various project partners, particularly by exploring concerns and learnings related to partner accountability, professional accountability, and accountability to one's profession.

The paper by the Socio Economic Research Institute (SERI) outlines the various interwoven methodologies utilised for engaging the state in order to advance accountability in the context where collaborative relationships with the state do not function. The chapter sets out three examples of tools that can be employed to strengthen accountability to improve social and spatial justice through the lens of a 4C – confrontational, complementary, cooperative and co-opted – model. Aiming to illustrate that spatial justice is achievable through methodologies such as targeted policy advocacy, research and litigation, SERI concludes by emphasising the efficacy of the methodologies presented as a means to shift community groups from passive recipients to active citizens, thereby making public accountability a reality.

PDG's paper speaks to promoting formal collaborative processes with(in) government by looking at public evaluation methodologies as a means to promote collaborative processes. The paper argues for the deepening of the role beneficiaries and their representatives in evaluations play in order to encourage greater accountability of government to citizens, while allowing for learning opportunities for programme managers and implementers, and programme improvement. Referencing PDG's experience of the National Evaluation System in practice, three evaluation cases provide examples which speak to the degrees of participation in which various role players engage. These cases include the Urban Settlements Development Grant Evaluation, the Citizen-Based Monitoring Model, and the Western Cape Ward Committee and Public Participation Diagnostic Evaluation.

The paper by Planact elaborates on the role of collaboration in activating social accountability mechanisms, and in particular explores social auditing as an intervention methodology as utilised by active citizens themselves for improving social accountability in local government. Authors explore the case study of Springvalley informal settlement in the eMalaheni District Municipality as a means to investigate the extent to which social audits contribute to local governance accountability. Focusing on two main objectives, the paper aims to examine challenges encountered within the audit process as relate to social accountability, as well as demonstrate how intergovernmental relations affect social accountability led service delivery.

Promoting citizen participation through data and technology, Open Up explores the role of civic technology and its offerings for acting as an enabler of both individual and collective action- promoting accountability initiatives. Using technology innovation as a lens for scaling interventions and narrowing the gap between government and citizens, the paper suggests 3 additional tools that go beyond holding individuals to account. These tools include procedural accountability, which focuses on developing processes and is exemplified by the example of Open Data initiatives. The second emphasises the value of encouraging individual citizen engagement by simplifying public participation by enabling communication. The third tool proposes a marriage between collective action by active citizens and technology, and utilises the example of community-based monitoring.

The publication concludes with an In-Profile by the Democracy Development Program which explores values and practices inspired by accountability and collaborative orientations; to do so, the piece presents the 2016 DDP Youth Desk to illustrate learnings and perspectives on this. Speaking to the various realities of working with youth organisations as partners as a means to 're-think' collaboration, DDP recommends learnings gleaned from their work as related to an emerging mode of partnership amongst youth organisations in terms of transparency, responsibility and shared learning. Challenges and emerging lessons of this work are shared, including the converging of a common vision between collaborators, accountability constraints, power dynamics, and resource constraints.