



Improving accountability at meso levels in NRM sectors: where to go?

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What is accountability?

"Accountability is about civilizing power. It describes a relationship between power-holders and those affected by their actions. Usually, it is thought to consist of two elements:

Answerability – making power-holders explain their actions (or 'the right to make claims and demand a response' - Newell and Wheeler, 2006) and

Enforceability – punishing poor or criminal performance (or 'mechanisms for delivering accountability, for sanctioning on-responsiveness' –

These two elements are often described in 'soft' and 'hard' accountability.

At the base of 'accountability' is a set of moral beliefs that citizens (including poor groups) are entitled have the right to claim accountability. Here concepts like citizenship, voice and rights based approach are important. This moral base of Citizenship, Voice, Empowerment and Rights below any fruitful accountability and 'good governance' effort is crucial. However, is there always a moral base present?

Types of accountability

Ackermann (2004) argues that the opening up of the core activities of the state to societal participation is one of the most effective ways to improve accountability and governance. The principle element that assures good government is the accountability of public officials, both answerability and enforceability.

Accountability exists within public administration - **vertically** (upwards and downwards), but also **horizontally**: structures for checking other units of public administration (see Van Bodegom et al., 2008). But civil society can execute direct accountability efforts like participatory budgeting. Ackermann calls these types of accountability '**social accountability**'.

Our question:

What are examples of mechanisms in the NRM sector to make accountability real? Examples with a proven record are our favorites.

