

**GPSA Webinar Series**

**BUILDING CAPACITY FOR CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN  
CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE GOVERNMENT**

May 22, 2014, 10:00 – 11:30 am EST

Presenter: **Robin Griggs**, ActionAid - Denmark

Moderator: **Janet Oropeza**, Fundar, Centre for Analysis and Research

# **Webinar**

## **Building capacity for constructive engagement between civil society and government working from a Human Rights Based Approach**

**Presentation by Robin Griggs**

**ActionAid – Denmark**

**22 May 2014**

## **Working from a human rights based approach involves acknowledging implicit assumptions about governance ...**

**Rights are individual and apply to everybody and the nation state has an obligation to fulfil these rights – concept of equality**

**Equality is impossible without impersonality (i.e. impersonal institutions which apply rules equally)**

**Fulfilling Human Rights will require developing the concept of ‘the social contract’ and impersonal institutions**

**This in turn implies assumptions about the concept of citizenship where the state and citizens have rights and obligations (e.g. state service provision – taxation)**

**Achieving these things will require developing a democratic culture based on the values implicit in Human Rights – amongst other things active citizens**

# Human Rights and Democratic Governance

## Key articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

### Article 19

**(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.**

### Article 20

**(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.**  
**(2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.**



# Human Rights and Democratic Governance

## Article 21

- (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.**
- (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.**
- (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.**



## **What does this tell us ...?**

**The state and its institutions are important**

**Rules and regulations based on democratic principles are important**

**A impartial and fair system of justice is important**

**As organisations supporting social change we will move away from supplying solutions to assisting people living in poverty to seek their own solutions from relevant duty bearers**

**The concept of citizenship is important**

**The development of democratic culture is important**

**Democratic Governance is an integral part of Human Rights**

# OUR THEORY OF CHANGE:

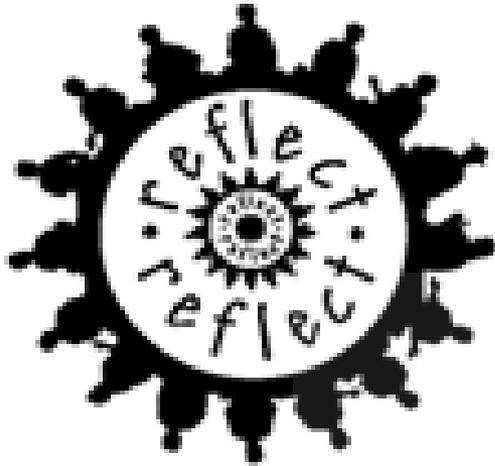
- We believe that an end to poverty and injustice can be achieved through purposeful individual and collective action, led by the **active agency of people** living in poverty and supported by solidarity, credible rights-based alternatives and campaigns that address the structural causes and consequences of poverty.*



# 3 Key Components in ActionAid's HRBA programming approach

- **Empowerment**
- **Solidarity**
- **Campaigns**





# Empowerment

## ActionAid's REFLECT

### Methodology

**Reflect** is an innovative approach to adult learning and social change, which fuses the theories of Brazilian educator [Paulo Freire](#) with [participatory methodologies](#). It was developed in the 1990s through pilot projects in Bangladesh, Uganda and El Salvador and is now used by over 500 organisations in over 70 countries worldwide.

For more see:

<http://www.reflect-action.org/>

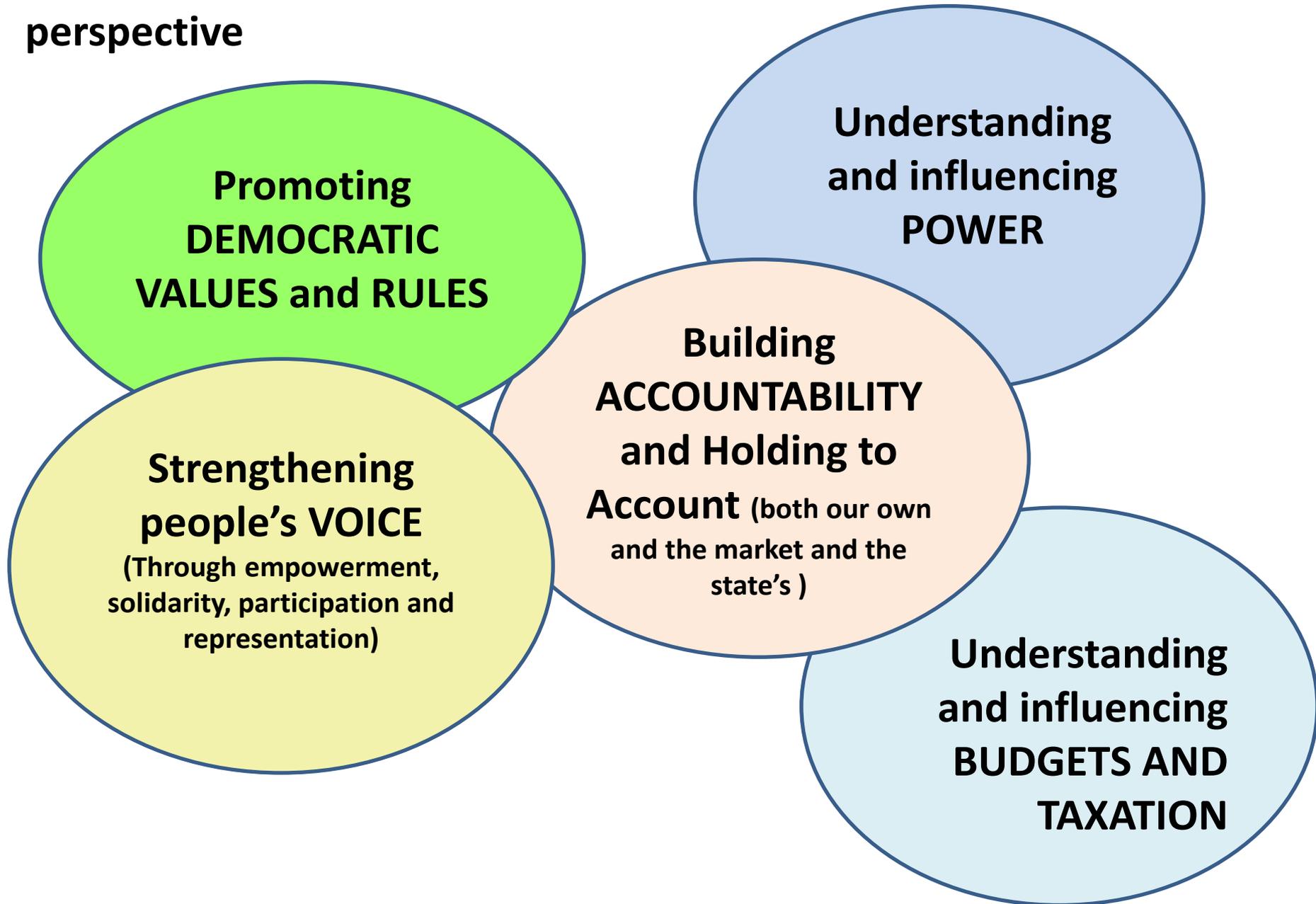
# **Solidarity and Campaigns: ActionAid's Reflection-Action approach**



**Building solidarity among a large number of people at local, national and international levels.**

**Implementing focused campaigns on key issues**

# A Human Rights based action focus and people's agency perspective



**‘Stand alone’ approaches contribute to key governance issues important for all sectors, themes and focus areas:**

**For example, work focused on:**

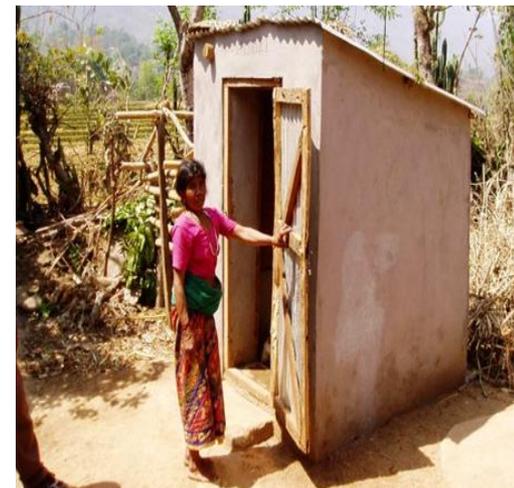
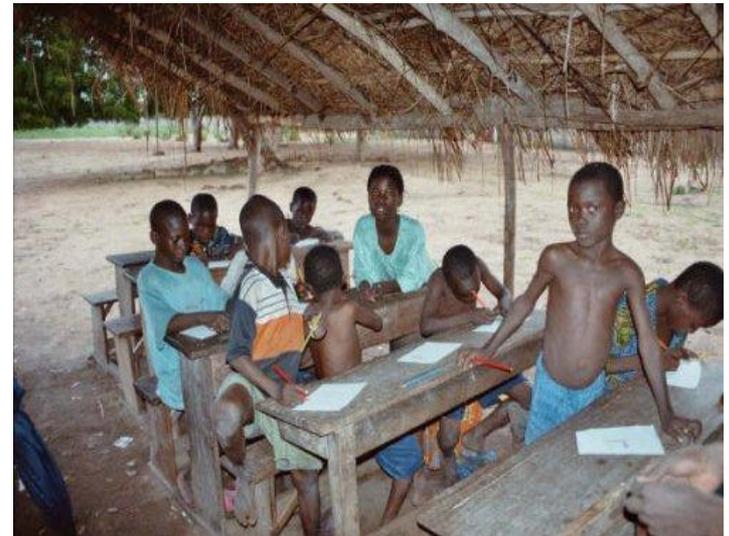
- **The right to information**
- **Accountability of the state**
- **Anti-corruption**
- **Women’s participation in politics**
- **Tax reform**
- **Citizens participation in local decision making**
- **Decentralisation**



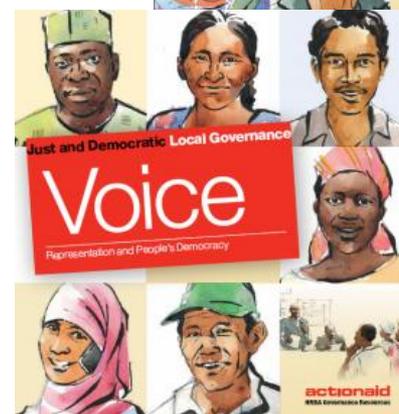
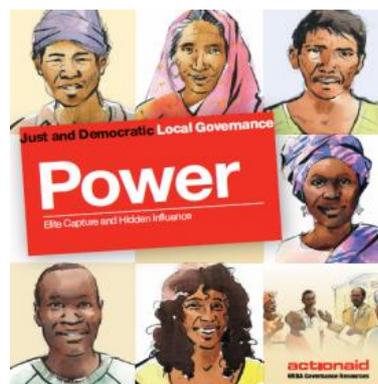
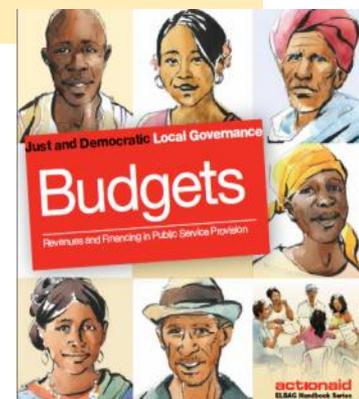
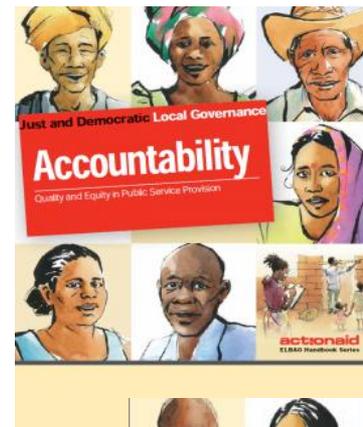
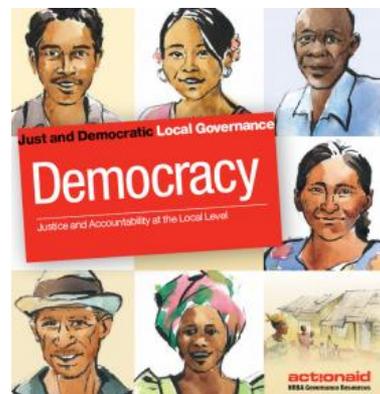
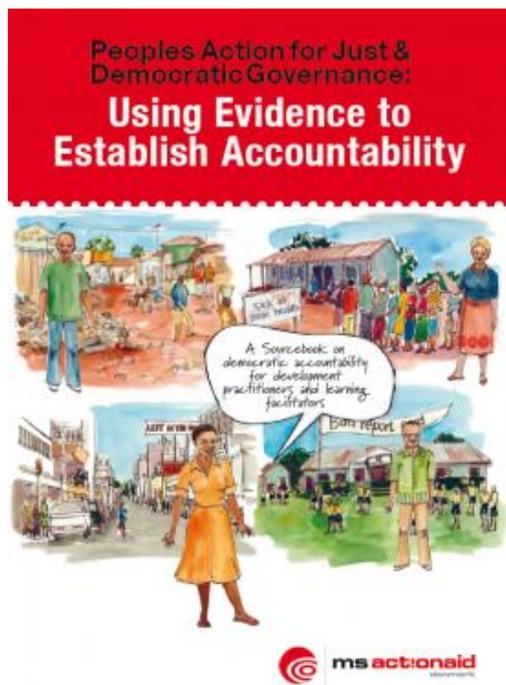
**‘Cross-cutting’ approaches focus on specific governance issues within a particular thematic focus area.**

**For example:**

- **Education**
- **Health**
- **Water and sanitation**
- **Food security**
- **Land rights**
- **Violence against women**
- **Power supply**
- **Sector Accountability and budget monitoring**



# Development of capacity building materials



Focus on  
Concepts and tools

For more on these publications see

<http://www.actionaid.org/what-we-do/democratic-governance>

# Building capacity for greater accountability in service provision

## Conceptual clarity:

**What is democratic accountability?**

**The obligation to be accountable:**  
Who in the state has an obligation?

**Commitments and standards:** Can you have accountability without standards?

**Checking if commitments and standards are met:**  
Vertical accountability lines and watchdogs checking up on the state

**Consequences for misconduct and poor performance:** Formal sanctions and alternative sanctions.

**Factors that undermine accountability**

- Social and cultural bias
- Competing allegiances and patronage
- Weak state institutions
- Weak civil society

**Accountability on four different fronts between:**

- Elected leaders and the public
- Elected leaders and government officials
- Government officials and frontline service providers
- Frontline service providers and the public

**Civil society organisations and the accountability terrain**

- The notion of accountability space
- Accountability work as a means to different ends
- Working on or with government:

# Action Focus - for greater accountability in service provision

## Getting started with accountability work

- Identifying the focus of your accountability work
- What is the change you want to bring about?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- What obligations exist and who is obligated?
- Who has what kind of power?
- Who can support or undermine the desired change?

## Mobilising for accountability work

- Mobilising stakeholders
- Working with gatekeepers
- Raising awareness
- Creating partnerships
- Organising a network
- Building trust, credibility and commitment
- Formalising network partnerships

## Preparing for accountability work

- What do you need evidence about?
- Indicators to monitor commitments and standards
- The challenge of access to information

## Gathering evidence on compliance and performance

- Surveys
- Community Scorecards
- Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys
- Social Audits

## Using Evidence

- Informing
- Media exposure
- Dialogue and negotiation
- Advocacy for sanctions
- Advocacy for policy reform

# Discussion

- **Question from Touré:**

**How does this capacity for constructive engagement work in Denmark?**

There are perhaps two aspects to this question. One is legal/or rights based. Does civil society have a legal basis for engaging, or is this outlawed or not respected. The second aspect is whether civil society has the capacity to do so effectively.

Dealing with the first point, engagement between civil society and government authorities requires duty bearers to acknowledge the values and principles outlined in Articles 19, 20 and 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and devise ways for putting them into practice (i.e. laws, regulations and guidelines etc.). These articles, and the rights contained in them, form the basis for the existence of civil society. Where they are respected by law (as in Denmark), then civil society can engage. In other contexts activists are struggling for these rights to be respected and fulfilled which means that engagement is difficult.

In terms of capacity to engage, this is about the extent to which civil society is 'developed'. This could be considered in terms of coverage (i.e. the extent to which different fields, themes and sectors are represented by civil society organisations, as well as the extent to which civil society organisations are professional in terms of management, administration and subject knowledge. Denmark is fortunate in that the value of civil society organisations is widely appreciated and supported (even by the state – there are subsidies for citizens to form associations) and generally most CSOs are professionally run.

One problem that Denmark, and other northern countries, possibly face is that many people are not very politically or 'association' active (perhaps because basic services provided by the state generally function fairly well and the press/media is an effective watchdog). This can result in civil society becoming rather 'interest based' – i.e. very active CSOs focused on a narrow range of interests that are the concern of a small group. These organisations can become quite influential (taking on the nature of lobbyists) rather than CSOs representing the broad interests of society and communities.

- **Question from Touré:**

**Do rights and equality have some limits? What are they?**

Yes. E.g. To be eligible to 'rights' you generally have to be a citizen of a country or a taxpayer or fulfil other obligations or criteria which impose limits on access to rights. Most services are defined by standards (i.e. you have the right to these forms of free health treatment, but not others).

- **Question from Victoria:**

**What are the best ways to create demand for accountable institutions where there is very little - or none?**

Through empowerment and education, mass mobilisation and campaigning, the formation of strong CSO alliances at local, national and international levels, and thorough dialogues with progressive elements within the state. (It is not possible to do this everywhere of course and generally it takes a long time. Major policy reform takes, on average, 10 years of CSO advocacy)

- **Question from Janet:**

**Can you expand on what the Reflect methodology consists of?**

Check out this link which explains it much better than I can in a few words:

[http://prezi.com/7imlltqie8d9/?utm\\_campaign=share&utm\\_medium=copy&rc=ex0share](http://prezi.com/7imlltqie8d9/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share)

- **Question from Marta:**

**In some of our work, we have seen that social accountability efforts can actually help to overcome weaknesses in vertical accountability chains. So, for example, if there is poor communication/lack of accountability between health facility staff and district officials, then citizens can go directly to the district or put pressure on the health facility staff to approach the district. Do you have any comments on this?**

I agree. Many service delivery systems suffer from basic efficiency and effectiveness problems which can be improved when 'outsiders' (CSOs) take an interest and begin to ask questions. This can solve some of the efficiency and effectiveness problems and result in quick improvements. However, if the problems are structural, (chronic underfunding), or political, (one district favoured over another), then local/district advocacy will not be enough. Issues will have to be taken up at the national level in a much more consolidated type of campaign.

- **Question from Marine:**

**Can you expand on the use of evidence to demand accountability**

Accurate, factual and verifiable evidence is a powerful means of persuading duty bearers to change something (e.g. a policy or practice). However, it has to be accurate, factual and verifiable which can be a challenge. There is nothing worse than having your evidence justifiably discredited and there are a limited number of times you can cry wolf, before people stop listening. The assumption behind CSO evidence building strategies is that duty bearers will listen, believe and care about the evidence. Basically this has to do with how much 'hurt' will happen to them if they do not. If there is little or no 'hurt', they will listen politely, but not act.