



Improving Mutual Accountability for Aid Effectiveness

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Overview

Mutual accountability is advocated as a way to improve aid effectiveness.¹ It means that the actors involved in development processes should be accountable to each other and take joint responsibility for the management, implementation and impact of aid. In Afghanistan, mutual accountability is promoted through policies such as the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Afghanistan Compact and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.² These policies tend to focus on mutual accountability between the recipient and donor governments and give less attention to mutual accountability among the other development actors. In Afghanistan numerous actors are involved in development including the Government of Afghanistan (GoA), international donors, international and national NGOs, civil society organisations, the military through the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT), commercial companies and the Afghan public.

Policies also tend to concentrate on technical approaches to achieving and measuring mutual accountability. These require actors, usually those working at the national and international levels, to produce and share reports on their activities. Such an approach to the complex issue of mutual accountability in Afghanistan seems inadequate. There are large numbers of actors and practical challenges, including insecurity, corruption, poor governance and a lack of capacity and resources, that are all impeding mutual accountability. Mutual accountability demands mutual respect and a feeling of moral responsibility among actors to be accountable to each other. This is necessary to overcome the unequal power relations that exist between development actors and to ensure that accountability is meaningful and not merely a technical process.

To develop a broader understanding of how mutual accountability could be practiced to achieve greater aid effectiveness in Afghanistan, staff from local NGOs and students in higher education in Kabul expressed their views on mutual accountability during workshop discussions. Radio Killid also hosted two roundtable discussions and phone-ins on mutual accountability. This paper summarises opinions from the workshops and radio broadcasts about which actors should be accountable to whom, the challenges to mutual accountability, and the opportunities to improve mutual accountability.

¹ This paper is based on research conducted by the following members of the AREU Governance Team from August 2008 - March 2009: Farid Ahmad Bayat, Marieke Denissen, Timor Sharon and Mohammad Hassan Wafaey. AREU would like to extend its thanks to Radio Killid and the organisations that hosted workshops on mutual accountability in support of this research.

² For a discussion on mutual accountability policies see "Mutual Accountability in Afghanistan: Promoting Partnerships in Development Aid?," Marieke Denissen (Kabul: AREU, April 2009). For more information on the application of the Paris Declaration in Afghanistan see "Reflections on the Paris Declaration and Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan," Rebecca Roberts (Kabul: AREU, April 2009).

Who is accountable to whom?

All actors involved in development should be accountable to each other. The following actors were identified as the most important for Afghanistan: the GoA, Parliament, political parties, international community, donors, United Nations, World Bank, national and international NGOs, PRTs, private sector and contractors, civil society, media, unions and the Afghan people. It was concluded that mutual accountability in Afghanistan is weak and that the situation is deteriorating. Other views expressed include:

- All actors should be accountable to each other
- Emphasis was placed on the role of Parliament to call the GoA to account to ensure that it is working on behalf of the Afghan people
- International development efforts do not consider the needs of the people, therefore actors are not accountable to the people
- Coordination between the various actors is weak, therefore they are not accountable to each other or the Afghan people
- Afghan people lack awareness about development processes and their right to information and the ability to call actors to account.

Improving mutual accountability

It was argued that to improve mutual accountability among development actors, mutual accountability in general in Afghanistan needs to be improved. For example the culture of impunity needs to be tackled: there cannot be mutual accountability if individuals break the law and are not called to account. It was also argued that the context in which development processes are being initiated should be addressed. This would involve creating a secure environment and finding ways to reduce the influence of neighbouring countries in Afghanistan. Without security or government sovereignty there can not be accountability: development programmes cannot be implemented or monitored effectively and the GoA cannot be accountable in areas where it lacks control.

The following were identified as areas through which mutual accountability in Afghanistan could be enhanced: security, human rights and rule of law; governance; and development processes.

Security, rule of law and human rights

Continued insecurity impedes development processes; projects and NGO staff are being attacked and areas are controlled by warlords. The failure to

Aid and aid effectiveness: Some key events¹

In January 2002, Afghanistan's interim administration, donors and international organisations came together at the "**Tokyo Conference**" (the first International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan) to show their commitment to reconstructing Afghanistan. Altogether US\$4.5 billion was pledged for reconstruction assistance.

Three years later, at the second International Conference on Afghanistan in Berlin—the so-called "**Berlin Conference**"—donors pledged another \$8.2 billion for further assistance over three years.

At the **International Conference in Support of Afghanistan** in June 2008, the Government of Afghanistan and the international community reaffirmed their commitment to secure and develop Afghanistan. About \$20 billion was pledged to support the implementation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). All parties also expressed their commitment to make aid more effective.

The **2008 Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration** assessed how effective aid has been against the benchmarks in the Declaration. Fifty-four countries participated in the survey which concluded that progress was being made but not fast enough. More effort was needed otherwise the targets for effective aid by 2010 would not be met.²

At the **Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness**, ministers of developed and developing countries, as well as heads of bilateral and multilateral institutions, adopted the Accra Agenda for Action. With this they reinforced earlier commitments to build more effective and inclusive partnerships, to deepen engagement with civil society organisations and to continue to untie aid. Other development actors were also encouraged to use the Paris Declaration principles as guidelines in aid delivery.³

1 List from Marieke Denissen, "Mutual Accountability in Afghanistan: Promoting Partnerships in Development Aid?" (AREU, 2009).

2 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development—Development Assistance Committee, "2008 Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration," http://www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3343,en_2649_3236398_41203264_1_1_1_1,00.html (accessed 31 March 2009).

3 Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, "Accra Agenda for Action," statement adopted on 4 September 2008, <http://site-eresources.worldbank.org/ACCRAEXT/Resources/4700790-1217425866038/AAAFinalDraft-25July2008.pdf> (accessed 31 March 2009).

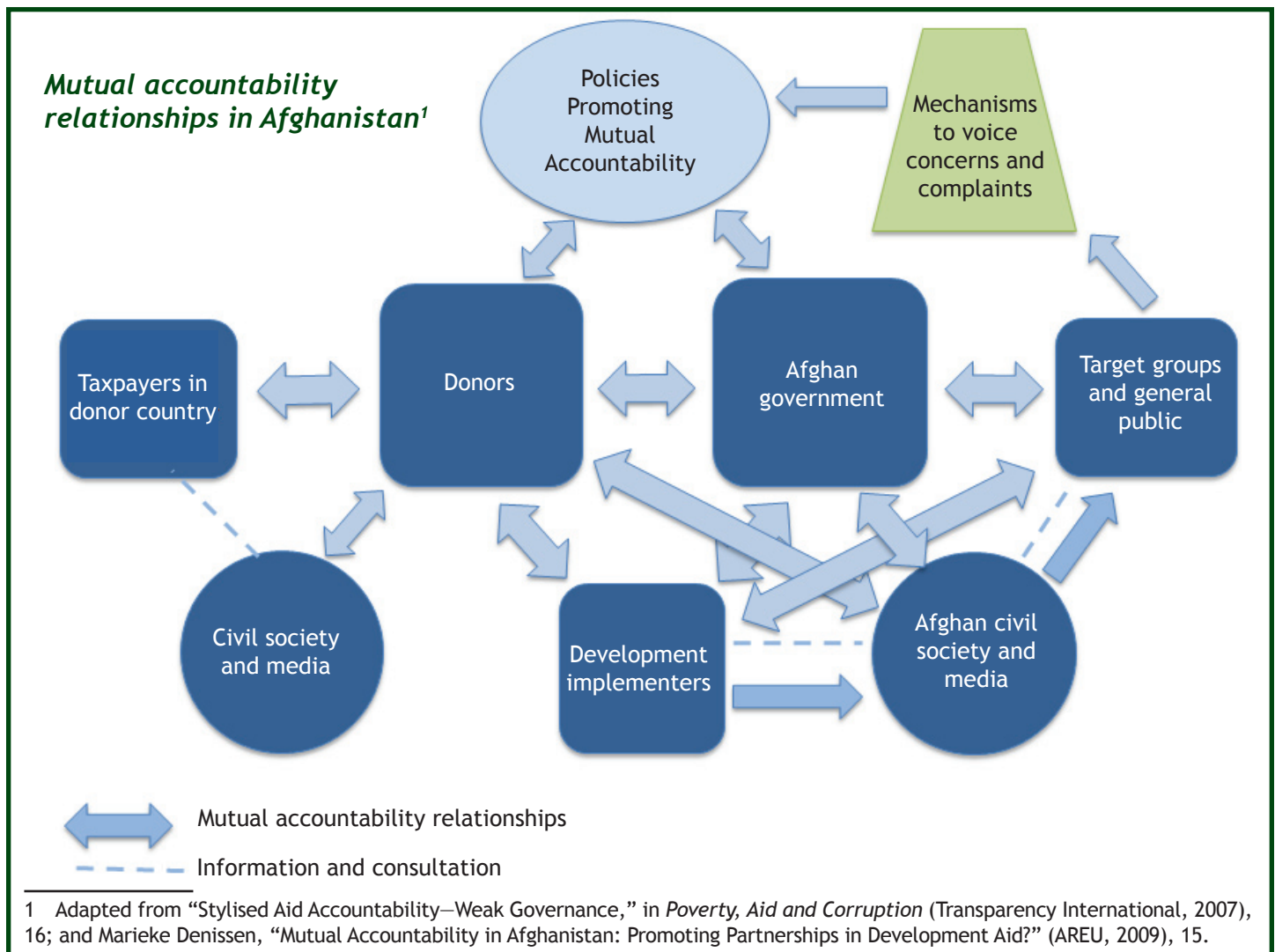
guarantee the rule of law and human rights limits accountability.

- Security and the reach of the GoA and the Afghanistan National Army should be enhanced so that development processes can be initiated and actors held accountable for their activities.
- Rule of law is weak; there is a culture of impunity and widespread corruption. Strengthen the Afghanistan National Police, reform the courts and empower prosecutors so that corruption can be tackled, the rule of law implemented justly and the accused tried fairly.
- Promote respect for human rights and social equality and regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender or socioeconomic status.
- External interference regionally and internationally undermines the control of the Afghan government. International political will and a regional solution for Afghanistan are needed to ensure that stabilisation and development processes are effective and supported by external and internal actors.

Governance

The government is perceived as weak, corrupt, and economically and morally dependent on the international community. Governance structures and processes are unclear and the role of the people and civil society evolving.

- The GoA should behave transparently and develop closer links with the people. The parliament should act as a bridge between the people and the GoA, monitor GoA activities, and call the government to account. The GoA should be obligated to report to Parliament on a regular basis.
- Strengthen subnational governance and clarify its role and structure to improve the links between the government and the people and to raise local issues at the national level.
- Encourage civil society and the Afghan people to take an active interest in development and in calling the government and other development actors to account.



- The people are also responsible for development processes in Afghanistan and should be good citizens, respect resources and the rule of law. People should take an active role in calling the GoA and development actors to account through lobbying and peaceful demonstrations.
- Clear procedures and organisations should be developed through which people can monitor the GoA and development processes, express their views and register complaints.
- The media should monitor the GoA and development process and raise awareness about issues among the people. The GoA should use the media to disseminate information.
- Officials should be elected or appointed based on merit and through transparent processes. Elections should be free and fair and the Afghan people should understand that by voting they are expressing their views and playing a role in governance and democratisation processes.
- Domestic capacity should be enhanced from the grassroots to national level so that the GoA and Afghan people can assume responsibility for development processes. With increased awareness the Afghan people will have greater ability to demand their rights and call the government and other development actors to account.
- Improve national and international financial accountability for development spending so that people know how funding is allocated and whether it is used effectively.
- Draw on international expertise and resources to promote development but always use Afghan expertise when available and work towards reducing dependence on external assistance.

Development processes

The impact of development assistance has been disappointing: there is poor coordination between the different development actors and the people have been excluded from the process.

- Communication between the people, the GoA and other development actors should be improved and people actively involved in decision-making so that assistance meets their needs. There needs to be a clear vision for the future of Afghanistan driven by the GoA and the people.

Conclusion

Mutual accountability in development in Afghanistan can only be achieved with improved accountability in all aspects of life. This involves a holistic approach, which includes enhancing domestic capacity, improving governance, addressing contextual challenges, managing and implementing aid more effectively, and engaging all actors in mutual accountability. The people of Afghanistan must take responsibility for their actions and call other actors to account. Civil society organisations should be supported to provide effective monitoring and complaints mechanisms that are accessible and understood by the people. Through such measures a culture of accountability in Afghanistan can be developed and actors called to account.

Related AREU research and other useful resources

Reflections on the Paris Declaration and Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan, by Rebecca Roberts (AREU, April 2009).

Mutual Accountability in Afghanistan: Promoting Partnerships in Development Aid?, by Marieke Denissen (AREU, April 2009).

Aiding the State? International Assistance and the Statebuilding Paradox in Afghanistan, by Hamish Nixon (AREU, April 2007, available in Pashto and Dari).

All AREU reports are available at www.areu.org.af or free from the AREU office. Transcripts of AREU's discussion of aid effectiveness in Afghanistan with Radio Killid and their listeners are available from the AREU library.

De Renzio, P. "Mutual Accountability: Issues and Challenges." *Democratic Ownership and Mutual Accountability*. Madrid: FRIDE, 2008.

Eyben, R. Power. *Mutual Accountability and Responsibility in the Practice of International Aid: A Relational Approach*. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, 2008.

Torabi, Y. and Delesgues, L. "Afghanistan: Bringing Accountability Back In. From Subjects of Aid to Citizens of the State." Kabul: Integrity Watch Afghanistan, 2008.

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