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## SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN A FRAGILE AND CONFLICT AFFECTED SITUATION

### Afghanistan: Improved Livelihood of Rural Communities (ILRC)

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An Afghan dialogue group

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## List of Abbreviations

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ANDMA	Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority
CDC	Non-State Community Development Councils
DDA	Non-State District Development Assemblies
EIG	Economic Interest Group
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
ILRC	Improved Livelihood of Rural Communities
MoEW	Ministry of Energy and Water
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NABDP	National Area Based Development Program
NSP	Afghan National Solidarity Programme
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation

## 1. Background

The case study focuses on the outcomes and impacts of social audit practices in the framework of the Improved Livelihood of Rural Communities (ILRC) project implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation in Afghanistan. This project aims at improving livelihoods and resilience of the communities in the target districts through economic development and sustainable water and land management for the benefit of both men and women, while strengthening local actors. The ILRC project, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), started in 2006 and completed its second phase at the end of February 2012. In the second phase, ILRC focused on three pillars: a) social development, i.e. education, public health and governance; b) economic development, i.e. food security and farm and non-farm income; and c) Disaster Risk Reduction. SDC's new cooperation strategy for 2012-14 in the livelihood area focuses on fewer partners, geographical regions and themes.

This implies a major change for the orientation of the 3rd phase of ILRC i.e. to reduce the number of provinces, eliminate topics like education and public health, and concentrate instead on water(sheds), land and water management as well as economic development. Even though social audits are not specifically mentioned in the Swiss Cooperation Strategy for Afghanistan in 2012-2014, the activity is embedded in the following domain of intervention: Governance and Human Rights, with the domain goal to contribute at sub-national level to inclusive governance, enhance the availability and accessibility of public services and the promotion of Human Rights, especially of women. Consequently, phase III of ILRC envisages to enhance the self-subsistence and income of rural households by diversifying on-farm activities, reduce the vulnerability of communities to natural hazards and improve their living conditions by enhanced and socially inclusive water and land use management.

The main implementing partners at community and district level are the non-state Community Development Councils (CDCs), non-state District Development Assemblies (DDAs) and Economic Interest Groups (EIGs). At provincial and national level the project works with the provincial and district governments and the line ministries (MAIL, MRRD, ANDMA and MoEW), which - depending on the thematic interventions of the project - are present up to the district level. Given the culturally sensitive and conflictive context, it is crucial that the project constantly consults with all stakeholders and gets the consent of the traditional councils (e.g. Shuras) as well as the mullahs, even though district governors and provincial governors are the formal government representatives in the project area. For information, coordination and monitoring purposes, the project stays in contact with the governors and the line ministries. The project is implemented in Saighan and Kahmard district (Bamyan province), Ruy-e-Doab district (Samagan Province) and Tala-wa-Barfak district (Baghlan Province). Despite the large number of activities of ILRC, this paper will specifically focus on the aspect of social accountability as in the social audit practice, which is part of the ILRC project.

## 2. Context and Power Analysis

The 2003 the Loya Jirga, i.e. grand assembly which debates important national political or emergency matters, discussed and approved a constitution that proposes an inclusive and accountable Afghan government structure. The Afghan constitution foresees a more highly centralised government than what had historically been acceptable for Afghanistan. Nevertheless, initially the direct election of mayors and of district, city, and village councils was foreseen. In practice, the President now appoints most these positions. The sub-national government structure is therefore a mix of appointed officials (such as provincial and district governors), formally elected representatives (provincial councillors), less formal structures such as Community Development Councils which are elected by the community members, and informal structures such as traditional Shuras. Afghanistan's governance system, especially its sub-national entities, is typically

characterised by informality and de facto decentralisation. This has resulted in an total lack of official mechanisms for governmental accountability at the provincial, district or municipal level. Local communities do not have any means of recourse if local officials are corrupt or fall short of delivering.

The main partners of the project for planning and implementing activities are the non-state Community Development Councils (CDCs). These councils were established under the Afghan National Solidarity Programme (NSP/MRRD) and are the only elected body at village level even though they still are informal entities. Similarly the non-state District Development Assemblies (DDAs), were also established under the National Area Based Development Program (NABDP/MRRD) and are composed of representatives from the CDCs. The CDCs are the social and development institution at community level. As such they are responsible for the implementation and supervision of development projects as well as liaising between the communities and government and non-governmental organisations.

The collaboration of the ILRC project with the CDCs is based on a) a Code of Conduct which is discussed, agreed upon and has to be signed by the CDC before the project takes up any activity with a community, and b) a four-party-agreement, which is signed between the respective CDC, the District Development Authority, the District Government and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation. The table below illustrates the government structure and other actors at different levels.

	Government structure	Elected and Traditional Citizen Representation	Other Actors
<b>Central</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• President</li> <li>• Ministries</li> <li>• Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliament</li> <li>• Meshrano Jirgah</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political Parties / Commanders</li> <li>• Armed Opposition Groups (AOG)</li> <li>• UN-Agencies</li> <li>• NGO</li> </ul>
<b>Provincial (Bamyan)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governor</li> <li>• Ministry Departments/Sectors</li> <li>• Afghan National Army (ANA)</li> <li>• Chief of Police</li> <li>• Intelligence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provincial Council</li> <li>• Provincial Development Committees</li> <li>• Sectoral Council</li> <li>• Ulema Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political Parties / Commanders</li> <li>• Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT)</li> <li>• UN-Agencies</li> <li>• NGO</li> </ul>
<b>District (Kahmard)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governor</li> <li>• Ministry Departments (DRRD, DAIL, DoE, DoPH, DoJ, etc.)</li> <li>• Chief of Police</li> <li>• Intelligence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Development Assembly (DDA)</li> <li>• Ulema Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political Parties / Commanders</li> <li>• Armed Opposition Groups (AOG)</li> <li>• Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT)</li> <li>• NGO</li> </ul>
<b>Village</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School and Health Clinics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Development Council (CDC)</li> <li>• Arbab</li> <li>• Imam</li> <li>• Elders</li> <li>• Mirab</li> <li>• Watershed Committees / CBDRM Committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political Parties / Commanders</li> <li>• Armed Opposition Groups (AOG)</li> </ul>

Source: Own illustration

**Effectiveness:** Formally, Afghanistan's current government system remains highly centralised in its decision-making, planning processes and budgetary mechanisms. Despite their local influence, sub-national entities are commonly characterised by their lack of connection up the governance chain to the central government in Kabul. Also there is no political and legal clarity regarding the future structure of the sub-national governance system and the respective mandates of its constituent

institutions, particularly as they relate to the official establishment and roles of representative bodies at various sub-national levels. Also, the process of defining accountability at the district-level has been hindered by the fragmented, inconsistent and often donor-driven nature of the sub-national governance agenda.

**Legitimacy:** President Hamid Karzai directly appoints province and district governors. District level authorities do not have a lot of decision-making power and inclusive decision-making is neither practiced nor institutionalised. Furthermore, at district level de facto mostly NGOs decide because of their role as service deliverers, e.g. in education, health, road construction, etc. At provincial level, the Government leads most of the development activities. It is involved in the establishment of services, including specific services for different ethnic groups - always according to the respective governor's preferences. By and large, remote communities are not provided with access to security and are excluded from service delivery. If disputes or conflicts arise at local level, they are generally resolved through traditional actors (perceived as rather effective and fair). If conflicts cannot be resolved locally, official justice takes over, even though it is perceived as unjust and rampant with corruption. People therefore generally try to avoid involving the government and settle disputes locally. Other local actors that take up grievances are CDCs, DDAs, traditional actors (Mullahs) and the District Government (Attorney Department). In the case of conflict, the District Governor him-/herself frequently acts through traditional channels (elders, Mullah) too. In the case of Taliban presence in the districts, people do not dare to approach the Government on most matters. In these cases conflicts are solved by the Taliban, in worst case by the Quetta Shura in Pakistan.

**Authority:** The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) assumed command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan in August 2003. NATO's main role is to assist the Afghan Government in exercising and extending its authority across the country and creating a secure environment in view of paving the way for reconstruction and effective governance. At its Lisbon summit in November 2010, NATO agreed to gradually hand-over security responsibilities to the Afghan National Security Forces by end of 2014. In addition to the provincial and district governors appointed by President Hamid Karzai, Afghanistan's provinces and districts frequently also have a Taliban "shadow governor" and, in some cases, a shadow government. Unofficially it is said that all provinces have shadow governors, which is for obvious reasons not confirmed by the official Government of Afghanistan. Some also claim that in certain provinces and districts, the Taliban have appointed their own police chiefs and judges who are fully operational and separate from the institutions of the GIRoA. The local shadow governments of the Taliban do not seem to have predefined strategies for operations since commanders adopt strategies based on local circumstances. This operational flexibility allows the Taliban to plan locally and to adjust based upon real-time intelligence gathered by networks and informants. This network like working mode makes it difficult for the GIRoA and foreign forces to undermine the operations of the Taliban by removing a single point in the command structure.

**Power:** As mentioned above official power is highly centralised, which is illustrated by the following. First, the fact that the President himself appoints district and provincial governors. Second, the hybrid sub-national government structure with appointed officials, formally elected representatives (provincial councillors). Third, by the important role of less formal structures such as CDCs and informal structures like traditional Shuras. Also, district governors and provincial governors are the government representatives in the project area. Up to the district level, line ministries are present with their offices. Official and unofficial representatives of Armed Opposition Groups (including Taliban) and political parties are other powerful actors. Local power is therefore characterised by a hybrid mixture of informality and de facto decentralisation with the CDCs being the only elected and representative, yet informal entity.

### Sources of Tensions and positive elements:

The main sources of tensions in the current situation are:

- Individuals (e.g. former commanders) intending to enlarge their influence, based on former power positions;
- Former CDC members who have not been re-elected but still act as representatives of the community;
- CDC / community members who try to draw personal benefits from the activities of the project;
- Activities aiming at the empowerment of women (e.g. access to school for girls and their participation in social audits) contradict with strong cultural / religious beliefs that prevent the participation of women;
- Competing political parties within one CDC;
- People who feel held responsible by the community in the case of inexplicable differences in budgets (dignity);
- Former CDC members that still think they are in power (unclear power structures, traditional systems contradicting with more recent structures).

However there are also opportunities and positive elements enabling participatory local governance processes:

- CDCs are bodies elected by the communities;
- Trust between NGO and communities is greatly enhanced (since the introduction of social audits);

The fact that NGOs are taking over governmental roles because of the absence of a functioning Government at local level, sometimes is a source of tension. This highly exposed and contradictory role is closely monitored by NGOs to assess their impact on the context.

## 3. Mechanisms of Social Accountability in Afghanistan

The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) which created the conditions for social accountability in Afghanistan was established in 2003 by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) to develop the ability of Afghan communities to identify, plan, manage and monitor their own development projects. The key objective of the NSP is to build, strengthen and maintain Community Development Councils (CDCs) as effective institutions for local governance and social-economic development.

The NSP stipulates that all communities undertake a basic form of social audit. Social audit here is defined as a community wide basic audit of all used NSP block grants against approved subprojects, actual expenditure and compliance with the NSP accounting and procurement regulations / forms (not applicable to other public finances). The CDCs are required to share all the essential information with the community to make such audits possible. All community members that are eligible voters for the CDC election are allowed to review the documentation and to question the CDC on all information stated in the documents.

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation takes up the NSP logic in its project and supports the executive committee members of the CDCs. The social audits are organised by the non-formal Community Development Councils as primary accountability mechanism. The aim is to present the financial report to community members and inform them about the overall budget, physical progress and expenditure of SDC / HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation-financed project activities. The CDCs invite all male community members, the DDA, representatives of the district government and the relevant line ministries to participate in the social audits. Social audits are conducted at two specific moments

in time. On the one hand, each time a financial instalment has been spent and before a further instalment is requested. On the other hand, after completion of each project.

Due to cultural and religious issues, women are not allowed to formally participate in the social audits. There is no institutionalised mechanism through which women can have their own social audit or are informed about the one held by the men.

In addition to the social audits, the members of the communities are invited to participate in the planning of their development activities in a Community Development Planning event. The social audits allow them to stay informed regarding defined activities / projects and to control their (physical and financial) progress. The planning and social audit events are open to all members of the community – except women – and participants are encouraged to give their opinion on the information presented to them. The agenda of the social audits is set by the CDC members and if needed supported by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation staff. Since the communities elect the CDCs, they are mainly accountable to the community members, but also to the representatives of the local government and the line ministries. If there are critical issues to be discussed and decided on in the frame of the social audits, final decisions are taken by the CDC members, the elders and the Mullahs (if they are not members of the CDCs). Social audits as such are not spaces for decision-making.

The CDCs are factually Civil Society organisations. Consequently, by strengthening them and thanks to the social audits, the community members are better informed about the projects implemented in their villages, how they are implemented and how the finances are used. The district governors and the relevant sectors are invited to participate in the Community Development Planning of the ILRC project as well as in the social audits conducted by the CDCs. Some of the provincial and district governor's offices conduct Public Hearings themselves, which are also attended by CDC / DDA members and the project staff. Although the government authorises CDCs, the implementation of social audits is based on an agreement between the CDCs, the DDA, the local government and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation. For the implementation of projects financed through the National Solidarity Programme, the implementation of social audits is compulsory. In the case of NGO financed activities, no official specifications exist in terms of Social Audits.

Women, i.e. the least powerful group in the Afghan society, are not able to raise their voices in public. To avoid putting women in dangerous positions, the project stays away from trying to strengthen public voices of women. However, the project tries to provide or support special spaces, like Women Resource Centres, where women can discuss different issues among themselves and subsequently communicate their opinions and ideas through the CDC chairman to the CDC and the community. Existing power relations are not directly changed through social audit practices, but at least personal gains of few individuals can be avoided. Also it has planted the seed of transparent and inclusive decision-making in many communities.

Capacity building for project staff as well as for the CDC members is crucial. In order to introduce social audits, project staff conducted the social audits with the communities instead of just assisting and supporting the CDC members in doing so. In the meantime, CDCs have learned how to conduct a social audit and community members demand the audits from the CDCs if they not conducted on time. To widen common space for local governments and Civil Society Organisations (i.e. CDCs), representatives of local governments are invited to participate in the social audits. Also, the project supports CDC and DDA members so they can participate in the Public Hearings organised by the local government and the line ministries. Genuine participatory agenda-setting is supported through the elaboration of Community Development Plans with the communities, but remains a huge challenge. Two major challenges are the very low level of education and the consequences of the decades of humanitarian aid distributed in the communities. Social audit practices do not facilitate budgeting and are not part of the government structure – the latter being completely absent at the implementation level of the ILRC project. However, CDCs are mostly perceived as legitimate bodies

and any open interaction between them and the communities promotes peoples understanding of responsiveness and creates trust between the communities, CDCs, DDAs. Communities trust mainly the CDCs, DDAs, NGOs, Elders and the mullahs.

As there is almost no service delivery from the official governmental structure, relations with it is limited and trust is weak. As mentioned above, government services rarely reach isolated and marginalised communities. In this context, the social audit is – apart from being an instrument for accountability – also a complaint mechanism where rights (though limited to the implemented activities) can be claimed. For example, watershed workers did not receive their pay for digging trenches as agreed in the contract with the CDC. They mentioned this in the social audit and finally got the payment they were entitled to. Usually, corrective measures are taken once a complaint is expressed in a social audit. During the social audit, every participant has the right to express his opinion and also to complain about any unsatisfactory issue. Since this type of open democratic dialogue is new to the Afghan context, there are certain risks involved. Complaints expressed in public can for example have an impact on the dignity of the accused person. This, in an Afghan context where the upholding of dignity is crucial, can lead to serious problems within the community.

The introduction of social audits has greatly enhanced the accountability of the CDCs, which has a major impact on social accountability at the local level. Even corruption can be discovered and prevented through social audits. Also, by including the DDAs in the local level social audits, the project encourages vertical communication and ultimately accountability on a higher level. At the same time, social audits promote access to information for the members of the community, strengthening the realisation of the Right to Information.

Because of the difficult environment, the project could not yet work on policy changes to enhance accountability on a larger scale or promote the introduction of social audits into the formal structure. CDCs are working on the local level and at present remain rather unaware of national policies, programmes and / or legislation. Similarly, due to the sensitivity of the situation, national advocacy groups have not yet been chosen as partners in the ILRC project.

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#### **4. Analysis and Main Lessons Learnt**

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Even though the environment for development activities in Afghanistan is challenging, the ILRC project was able to achieve numerous outcomes: 64% of the 348 existing CDCs in the 5 target districts and at least 50% of the population of these CDCs have been reached. Farming, livestock and health conditions were improved, 54 CDCs have elaborated disaster management plans and finally 69 protective infrastructure projects have been realised to the benefit of more than 80'000 persons.

Local level government is absent in the Afghan context. Nevertheless, participatory and responsive mechanisms such as the social audits, have significantly enhanced the relationship and communication between the communities, the CDCs, the DDAs and government representatives. At the same time, this mechanism has been instrumental in building trust among local actors and between local actors and NGOs. Social audits have become a precondition for dealing sensitively with the fragile and conflict affected situation. In a context where there are no other response- or complaints mechanisms, the social audits have proven instrumental in preventing conflicts and even serving as platforms for conflict resolution due to their strong notion of inclusion and transparency. Also, traditional power structures are not entirely challenged (as a vacuum of power bears its own dangers), but their responsiveness and inclusiveness is clearly increased. Another very visible effect is the decrease of corruption in local level affairs. One huge challenge which is the inclusion of women, still needs to be addressed. In this very traditional and religious environment, separate social audits for women need to be organised and a mechanism for information sharing between the outputs of male and female social audits needs to be installed.



**Main successes** are the fact that community members are now capable of and interested in actively participating in informed discussions about issues that concern the development of their villages and include a broader range of stakeholders. These discussions are mainly with the CDCs, but vertical links with DDAs and Government representatives are also encouraged and supported. Although the lack of trust between different local stakeholders is still a huge issue and will not be resolved easily, people are now asking for social audits and starting to demand information and answers from the CDCs. Social audits are also creating an environment and an opportunity to share information about ongoing development projects in the villages and districts with local stakeholders and the community. This is slowly creating trust between the different actors – including HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation. The fact that people feel included and receive relevant information through social audits is key to being accepted and able to work in such a tense and conflict prone environment.

**Main challenges:** Culturally acceptable yet creative solutions for gender equity will have to be found to include women in public processes and make their voice be heard. Power issues are another area, where the project is facing huge challenges despite its success in fostering transparency and accountability. Several traditional former commanders still hold a lot of power and are unwilling to share this power. Consequently, they try to disturb the participatory approach and the implementation of social audits. The absence of a local government structure also puts HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (as all NGOs present in the country) in the de facto position of taking over the roles and responsibilities of these structures at local level. Consequently, a parallel, artificial and above all not sustainable system, is the current reality on the ground. With the capacity building of community members (e.g. in social audit) HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation seeks to strengthen Good Governance at the lowest level, expecting that the acquired knowledge will contribute positively to the development of the communities, no matter what the near future will bring.

In the future HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation / ILRC will work towards increasing capacity building of local Community Based Organisations. The latter are expected to take over training and monitoring tasks after a period of being accompanied by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and the partner Ministries. At the same time, soft skills and crosscutting issues such as accountability in social audits will be increasingly included in all types of projects.

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## 5. Concluding Remarks

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Local level accountability has proven to be one of the most important issues for the project implementation (conflict sensitivity, trust) but more importantly it is the pivot of state-society relations in the Afghan context. Consequently, the weakness of the social audit practice lies in the fact that it is limited to blocking grants provided under the NSP. Therefore it does not cover the whole range of public finances and the general issue of accountability in the Afghan governance system.

*“In 2005, I heard an Afghan-American professor speaking in Kabul postulate that this lack of local accountability was the root problem in Afghanistan and the main driver of the insurgency—which was then barely noticeable to the rest of us. As he put it, under this system, “Afghans aren’t citizens; they are subjects.” All the Afghans in the room cheered. Nearly eight years on, we are reaping the fruits of that lack of accountability.” (Foreign Policy in Focus; Institute of Policy Studies. Inge Fryklund, September 5, 2012)<sup>1</sup>*

In the Afghan villages and districts where the projects are working, the concept of Good Governance is completely unknown to most people – even though governance issues represent one of the key driving factors of conflict and a root cause of insurgency. To address this issue, a long-term and strategic approach to prepare citizens for democratic governance is necessary. Conflict prevention and conflict mitigation should be an integral part of this approach. In many instances, hands-on project implementation in the framework of the ILRC has proven the importance of accountability on

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.fpif.org/articles/accountability\\_and\\_insurgency\\_in\\_afghanistan](http://www.fpif.org/articles/accountability_and_insurgency_in_afghanistan)

the ground. Therefore, the social audit practice is highly relevant for development cooperation, local level good governance and conflict prevention. At the same time it remains a starting point when working towards the ultimate goal of social accountability. However, without a clear commitment of the current Afghan government towards decentralising power, fostering accountability, and broadening political and societal spaces at all levels, no durable solution to conflict and insurgency will be found.

## 6. Mirroring Case Studies: Nepal and Bolivia

Two projects in Nepal and Bolivia were asked to mirror the Afghanistan case study, i.e. complement it with their lessons and experiences.

### **Nepal: Public Audit Practice of SDC and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation - by Badri Manandhar**

The decade long “People’s War” and its consequences on development cooperation illustrated the importance of transparency and accountability and have led many organisations including SDC and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation to strive towards better performance in those areas. In fact, only transparency towards all conflict parties allowed HELVETAS to continuously implement its projects even in highly conflict affected areas. Therefore, public audit practices were introduced in all community infrastructure projects in 2004 and have now become mandatory in almost all projects implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal in order to ensure downward accountability. More specifically, public audit practices aim at promoting participation of communities in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of construction schemes, e.g. trail bridges and water points, etc.. Public audits promote access to information, services, resources and opportunities and allow communities to raise their voices, concerns and grievances. Consequently, such practices create social pressure against corruption and manipulation. Initially, public audit practices were classified as a claimed space for discussion, especially since local government staff usually is present. Today, public audits have become a legal obligation for local governments and although implementation is limited in practice, they can be considered invited spaces. Moreover, public audit practices have improved the performance of projects through creating a two way communication channel, thereby contributing to increased ownership of the project by the community and contributing to its sustainability. As a development organisation, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal has enhanced its own credibility through public audit practices. Despite these positive experiences, public audit practices also face some problems and challenges: limited capacity and facilitation skills at local level to organise such events, risk of provocative queries to discredit certain individuals or the organisation, local level tensions and delayed final commissioning of the projects, tendency by line agency / local government officials to avoid such events etc.

### **Bolivia: Lupita, Chuquisaca Commonwealth Centre CONCERTAR (SDC mandate, implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation) - by Martín del Castillo**

Since 1994, a specific law regulates participation and social control in Bolivia (especially at the local level). It recognises the territorial organisations and their traditional participation mechanisms. The law also foresees the inclusion of citizens by allowing them to voice their demands and gives them a role in planning, monitoring and evaluating the results and impact of public management, i.e. by creating feedback loops from citizens to decision makers. However, this breakthrough in accountability was neither coupled with requirements for the governmental institutions to provide clear and timely information, nor with mechanisms to promote better relations between government and civil society.

In the context of fighting corruption, another law was passed in 2010 to combat this problem by stipulating that all state institutions must create a special office to ensure public accountability and

access to information. For local governments, this meant that they had to find specific qualified personnel to meet these new requirements.

In response to these legal requirements and in order to support its partners, the Association of Municipalities of Chuquisaca Center established a regional transparency office called “Lupita” (diminutive of the Spanish *lupa* or *lente*, in English lens). The office is responsible for building the capacity of staff in preparing and sharing information in a clear and timely manner with citizens, preparing public hearings and other social accountability tools. This provides a space for local authorities, social organisations and citizens where the former are accountable for implementation progresses, and where needs and challenges can be discussed. The main challenges are the improvement of monitoring and evaluation tools by overcoming the trade-off of having simple tools understood by the population which at the same time measure changes at output and outcome level. Also, effective complaint mechanisms where civil society can forward their feedback to the local authorities have yet to be established.

This approach is considered to be successful and has been replicated by at least four other regions in the country - with enormous support from the respective Mayors.

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## 7. References

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*Project Document. Improving Livelihoods of Rural Communities in Afghanistan ILRC. Phase III, 03/2012 – 02/2016.* SDC/HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation. Bamyán, Kabul, Bern and Zurich, November 2011