

## **SDC-IDS Contribution**

### **Providing Support to SDC's Democratization, Decentralization and Local Governance Network**

# WORK IN PROGRESS PAPER

## Outcome measurement in Local Governance Programmes: a power dimension

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April 2013

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# Outcome measurement in Local Governance Programmes: a power dimension

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## Summary

This paper explores how outcome measurement is understood in several SDC local governance programmes, reviewed in a HELVETAS Learning Project. This critical review assesses the extent to which power issues are recognised, understood and tracked within such programmes and suggests ways to enhance this. Some highlights of this review include:

- being clear about what power and empowerment mean in a particular context, and how they are expected to change (e.g. with a theory of change), can lead to better indicators and methods for measurement
- the way power is implicitly understood in local governance programmes and outcome measurement can lead to a focus only on the more formal and visible dimensions of power
- the complexity of power means that a more clearly articulated and power-aware theory of change underpinning the intervention is needed.

For democratic local governance initiatives to contribute to shifting power, programme staff need to (1) explicitly define and include power in the initiative's theory of change at design stage; (2) clarify what shifts in power are intended; and (3) determine how these shifts can be observed.

**Keywords:** outcome measurement, local governance programmes, power,

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# Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

This paper presents the findings of an exploration of how outcome measurement issues are dealt with in a sample of SDC local governance programmes. It was carried out with the objective of assessing the extent to which power issues are recognised, understood and tracked within such programmes and suggesting ways to enhance this.

SDC has developed a significant portfolio of projects and programmes to support decentralization and local governance in its partner countries. These programmes have gained diverse and relevant experience in measuring results and outcomes. In 2012 a learning project was designed between SDC and Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation (hereafter HELVETAS) to learn from experiences of a sample of SDC local governance programmes about the methods, tools and practices they deploy for measuring outcomes. The learning project duly undertook its review of six selected cases. Using a questionnaire to gather information from the programme staff leading each of the selected programmes, it focused on:

- the purposes served by each programme's outcome measurement activities
- methodologies applied
- dimensions addressed
- indicators used
- degree of harmonization and alignment with other donors and national monitoring systems
- contextual preconditions for use of the methodology in question (Arnold et al 2013: 7).

The learning project team compiled a series of six case study documents, and a synthesis document (Arnold et al 2012), in which it identified practices worth learning from. Subsequently, the 'Participation, Power and Social Change team' at the Institute of development Studies (IDS) drew on its specialist expertise in the fields of power and empowerment as well as the assessment of social change processes, to review the same set of cases and HELVETAS's outputs, in 'critical friend' mode. This was done with a view to identifying ways in which the power dimensions of such programmes can be better reflected in the assessment of outcomes and impacts of SDC-supported local governance work. The findings of this IDS review are discussed in this note.

This paper is structured in line with the process that we followed in carrying out the review:

- We critically reviewed documentation from the HELVETAS Learning Project. The findings from this 'critical friend' review are discussed in section 2 of this paper.
- We identified key challenges faced in any attempt to understand whether SDC-supported local governance programmes are managing to shifting power, how, and to what extent. These challenges are presented in section 3.
- We sketched out the basis of an approach for improving understanding within SDC as to whether, how and to what extent local governance programmes are shifting power in favour of deeper democracy within decentralized governance. The broad brushstrokes of this approach are presented in section 4.

Since the focus of this review is power, let us clarify here the understanding of power that underpins our work. Power takes many forms and can be understood and responded to in various ways. Power is often seen as a finite resource that people and institutions can hold,

wield, lose and gain, acting in accordance with their interests. This is the main understanding of power behind Political Economy Analysis, for example.

However, power can also be seen as present in all relationships, institutions, beliefs and values – as part of the way society and culture works. Power thus operates both through ‘formal’ institutions and rules and through ‘informal’ relationships and cultural norms. It arises in the visible actions and official moments of governance (visible power); in the often hidden ways that priorities are set, decisions made and resources allocated (hidden power); and in the much less visible cultural and social norms that shape what people say they want, how people perceive themselves and their rights and capabilities, and how different kinds of people are valued or marginalized in society (invisible power). Furthermore, these forms of power shape the possible spaces and actions of governance and citizen participation.

Our approach here combines these different understandings of power, seeing it as a field of norms, rules and boundaries which can both enable and constrain actors at the intersection of politics, economy and society. As such, power can be explored using both Political Economy Analysis (PEA) and Power Analysis, or a combination of the two.

# 1 Insights from a review of documentation

Our ‘critical friends’ review of documentation from the HELVETAS Learning Project on ‘Outcome Measurement in Local Governance Programmes’ covered the project’s Terms of Reference, the questionnaires formulated by HELVETAS and completed by programme staff involved in the six selected case study programmes, the case study reports in which the HELVETAS team systematized and documented the questionnaire findings, and the synthesis report (Arnold et al 2012). In Table 1.1 we characterise the six cases reviewed, in the programme actors’ own terms.

**Table 1.1: Characterisation of the six programmes reviewed**

Case Study	Description of programme	Programme actors’ description of the design and logic of programme’s monitoring methodology	Sectoral location or focus	Direct partners and indirect stakeholders
LOGOS II Kosovo	Local Governance and Decentralization reforms in municipalities in South Eastern Kosovo are strengthened, thus contributing to democratization and citizen participation in a multiethnic state and society.	The main methodology used for monitoring LOGOS Outcome is a citizens-based survey	Decentralized public administration	Municipal governments in 9 municipalities of South Eastern Kosovo
Municipal Support Programme (MSP) Serbia	MSP partner municipalities show high level of efficiency, accountability and transparency, fully using and strengthening local autonomy and inter-municipal and regional cooperation in the legal and institutional framework.	The objectives of project monitoring were to: 1. Keep programme on track toward achievement of results; 2. Provide a complete and objective assessment of progress toward the	Decentralized public administration	A group of municipalities in Serbia

		<p>achievement of objectives;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Identify relevant lessons learnt on programme design appropriateness and propose change for improvement;</li> <li>4. Enable assessment of changes in Programme context and how they affect programme implementation, propose adequate responses and provide the basis to secure sustainability of the Programme results as well to propose an exit strategy.</li> </ol> <p>The purpose of monitoring is to provide relevant information for Programme activities adjustment, regular planning and potential reorientation.</p>		
<p>Sharique Local Governance Programme (Phase II)</p> <p>Bangladesh</p>	<p>To empower the poor men &amp; women (extreme poor, ethnic minorities, adivasi, disabled) to claim their rights and entitlements, and to benefit from more effective service provision by the local governments in Rajshahi and Sunamganj regions.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Output monitoring: Output is defined in term of 'activity done'. Monitoring in Sharique starts with Output monitoring which is done on a monthly basis at partner NGO level and is reported to HSI (each regional coordinator) on a quarterly basis. There are 102 sub indicators in the 'Output monitoring checklist' which will fulfil 8 intended Outputs that are defined in the project Log Frame. There is also an output wise financial monitoring plan in the system.</li> <li>2. Outcome monitoring: Different outcome changes are expected as a result of these 'activity done' (Outputs delivered). 120 sub indicators are fixed under 17 components in the Outcome monitoring checklist which to fulfil 3 broad Outcomes defined in the project Log Frame. 117 outcome sub indicators are monitored and reported by Partner NGOs on quarterly basis and 3 are monitored by HSI staff annually.</li> </ol>	<p>Decentralized and socially inclusive service delivery</p>	<p>Local Governments and local civil society organisations in the regions of Rajshahi and Sunamganj</p>
<p>SAHA (Rural Development Programme)</p> <p>Madagascar</p>	<p>Contribute to changes in the behaviour of direct partners at the meso level so that they on the one hand support grassroots initiatives in line with their respective aims and generate positive effects on rural households; and on the other, contribute to the economic development of the regions (defined as the geographic areas of influence of these direct partners).</p> <p>Strengthen existing organizations and institutions in their roles of accompanying boundary partners</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Monitoring of changes of (management) capacities, interactions and implementation of activities at the level of the direct partners.</li> <li>2. Supporting and fostering the empowerment of the direct partners in the view of fostering self-responsibility of the population for their social and economical development.</li> </ol> <p>Linking actions and visions through participation, learning and exchange; adjusting practice, tools</p>	<p>Rural development</p>	<p>Local government units at regional, inter-communal and communal levels in three regions; one urban commune and private sector operators</p>



	<p>and of promoting the enabling conditions for the favourable achievement of their missions.</p> <p>Institutionalize programme approaches in the sector strategies and practice of other actors engaged in rural development, notably technical and funding partners and state actors.</p>	and visions.		
<p>Public Service Provision Improvement Programme (PS-ARD)</p> <p>Vietnam</p>	<p>To contribute to the improvement of livelihoods in the upland and ethnic minority areas of Hoa Binh and Cao Bang provinces in terms of food security, income and environmental sustainability.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. End-beneficiaries satisfaction survey on quality of public service delivery in the Agricuturan and Rural Development (ARD) sector and inclusion in local planning.</li> <li>2. Data collected by provincial statistical offices in 400 randomly selected households identified as using one or more of the targeted public services (200 per province, in 6 communes pre-selected based on socio-economic factors).</li> <li>3. Scoring indicators on satisfaction (four grades from 'very satisfied' to 'very dissatisfied')</li> <li>4. Outcome Mapping system complemented by other sources (factual information, other reports).</li> </ol>	Livelihoods	Government of Vietnam
<p>CONCERTAR</p> <p>Bolivia</p>	<p>The CONCERTAR programme aims at the sustainable exploitation of natural resources at the local level. It partners with Associations of Municipalities to implement projects that arise from local (territorial) demand, related to integrated management of water resources, productive development or food security; and which combine three aspects of development: Governance, natural resource management and economic development.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Include citizens' feedbacks/perspectives as a way to measure project outcomes.</li> <li>2. Identify needs for planning purposes.</li> <li>3. Trigger a dialogue with partners.</li> <li>4. Develop and test a methodology to be replicated by national/local authorities as a way to promote results-based management.</li> </ol>	Natural resource management and decentralized territorial public administration	18 Associations of Municipalities

As can be seen from Table 1.1, the sampled programmes differ in terms of their sectoral focus or location, their direct partners and, by extension, those they intend to engage with and benefit. That is to say, while they are all local governance programmes, they aim to support a range of different kinds of change, and to do this via different theories of change.

From the programme documentation we have read, we can infer the general idea of their theories of change. These theories of change clearly have different explicit objectives, and vary in the extent to which they hold or explicitly articulate the shifting of power relations as an aim. At the most general level, all these programmes aim to shift power relations in some way and to some extent, an inherent characteristic of local governance programmes aiming at making local governance work better in some way or another.

In cases where the programme partners are local governments or Ministries or Departments of central Governments, the extent to which they aim to shift power relations will depend on how devolution of power is contemplated (or not) and approached (or not) in the prevailing legal framework – for example, the decentralization policy framework in the cases of Kosovo or Serbia; or the legal framework governing the livelihoods sector in the case of Vietnam. Thus, consistent with our definition of power above, the way these programmes might affect power is by affecting the formal institutions, visible actions and official moments or spaces of local governance. This includes ways that might indirectly help to reshape informal and less visible relationships and cultural norms and the possible spaces and actions of citizen participation in governance. These kinds of programme might be referred to as ‘supply-side’ or ‘state-centred’ technical support programmes.

In cases where the programme partners are civil society organisations or citizen groups, the programme directly supports the agency of citizens and their representatives (local NGOs, or CSOs) to shift power in relations between citizens and the state, between different groups of citizens, and/or between citizens and others such as private sector service providers, service-users or aid agencies, through influencing relationships, norms and local spaces where citizens can participate in governance. They aim to do this, in general, by changing behaviours and attitudes of government actors and citizens or civil society groups. These kinds of programmes might be referred to as ‘demand-side’ or ‘citizen-centred’ empowerment programmes. In comparison to the technical ‘state-centred’ programmes discussed above, these programmes are behavioural in intent rather than technical, and focus more explicitly and centrally on shifting power relations. They do so from a value basis informed by the five good governance principles: participation, accountability, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency, non-discrimination/inclusion..

If we shift our attention from the programmes themselves to the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) instruments they use, we find, again, a diverse range of approaches. In this small sample of SDC local governance programmes just as in governance-focused aid programmes in the world at large, a wide range of MEL approaches are used which have diverse emphases. Some specifically, explicitly aim to empower citizens as agents vis-a-vis the state or other actors such as aid agencies; others do not. Some MEL approaches may empower citizens to different degrees without purposefully aiming to: for instance, a survey applied to service-users is less empowering than inviting citizens to formulate appropriate indicators for assessing the accountability of local government in its role as regulator of service providers. If more were ‘citizen-centred’, these would more likely have citizen empowerment as an explicit objective.

A further important differentiating factor between different MEL approaches is the extent to which they serve accountability purposes (e.g. ‘upwards’ financial accountability to programme funders or tax-paying northern publics), or serve learning purpose, in the sense of generating learning to be fed into programmes so as to improve programme performance and boost programme impact. This distinction is reflected in the HELVETAS learning project on outcome measurement in SDC local governance programmes.

Looked at thus, we can now delineate better what the HELVETAS learning project has achieved and what was beyond its scope and remains work pending, in terms of understanding the impact of SDC local governance programmes and their effects on power. Firstly, the HELVETAS questionnaire has provided a comparative analysis of how ‘outcome measurement’ (to use the learning project’s term) is done in these six programmes with a view to improving the measurement of outcomes within an organisational orientation focused on ‘results’. This is useful

for gaining comparative insights and 'overview' lessons about their contribution to results measurement for SDC's accountability purposes. This provides room for further exploration of case study programmes whose MEL focus is *not* the measurement of outcomes within a results-oriented frame.

Secondly, a standardised comparative analysis of cases can only further to a limited degree our understandings of something so contextual and nuanced as the prospects of demonstrably changing power relations in local governance programmes; other approaches may prove more illuminating. The academic literature on decentralization shows how varied the different models of decentralization are, even on the very specific point of how they address power and the redistribution of power between different levels of government, or between citizens and the state or among different groups of citizens (see for example Gaventa 2006; Blair 2000). The literature also shows that even models designed to substantially redistribute power have to contend with real-life contexts where deeply embedded, longstanding norms and structures militate against the redistribution of power and constrain the degree to which these power-redistributing ideals can be achieved (see for example Crook & Manor 1998 on the problem of elite capture).

In essence, there is a need to first understand the decentralization and local governance context of a specific case, and the place and priority that these assign to changes in power. This is a necessary starting point for propositions about what place *could have* been assigned to power changes, or assessment of *what contribution has been made* by a given programme to changes in power relations.

## 2 How can we know whether power is shifting?

### Key challenges

Like assessing social change outcomes, there are challenges in identifying whether and how power has shifted as a result of local governance initiatives. In general, assessing changes in power relations is complicated by the great variety and contested meanings of power and empowerment. In the six cases reviewed here, we see two specific challenges in bringing a power lens into measuring local governance outcomes (both of which can be illustrated by reference to particular case studies covered by the HELVETAS learning project):

- a) Many local governance programmes do not specifically explain, from the outset, how they understand power, or what changes in power they hope to achieve. Being clear about what power and empowerment mean in a particular context, and how they are expected to change (e.g. with a theory of change), can lead to better indicators and methods for measurement. In the absence of this, it may still be possible to explore (retroactively) what changes in power relations may have occurred alongside other outcomes.
- b) The way power is implicitly understood in local governance programmes and outcome measurement can lead to a focus (in addressing what are considered power relations) only on the more formal and visible dimensions of power (aspects that tend to be the concern of political economy analysis). In the review there are several references to outcome measurement methods which did consider gender, ethnic and other social dimensions of participation and inclusion, but that at the same time did not purport to address power relations.

This would suggest that a broader 'power lens' that recognises social norms, attitudes and behaviours as part of the field of power in which formal actors operate and exercise or contest power would help.

SDC is by no means alone in needing to learn more about how impact can best be explored and understood and power issues engaged with in its programming, nor in finding it hard to demonstrate impact in programmes that aim to shift power relations. Recent development scholarship has focused on this issue, in the contexts of both official aid agencies (Stern et al 2012) and international NGOs (Shutt & McGee 2013).

To sum up key points from these two works mentioned, in a context where institutional donors are applying evermore stringent requirements to demonstrate the impact of the programmes they support, awareness is growing of the need for rigour in assessments of impact, and also of the risks entailed in impact evaluation that smacks of hubris or self-justification. The governance field is regarded as a 'complex' one for both programming and demonstrating impact.

Experimental impact assessment methods imported from the medical sciences have been spreading across the development and aid fields as one response to these; but simultaneously, concerns have been rising that these do not necessarily fit comfortably with a growing proportion of aid agencies' and NGOs' programmes. In particular, they do not provide suitable approaches for assessing the impact of governance programming in such sub-fields as 'strengthening democracy and accountability; accountable and responsive government; security and conflict prevention; combating gender-based violence; citizen empowerment and community action' (from the Terms of Reference of the Stern et al 2012 study). Overall,

... the very nature and complexity of E&A programmes together with the relatively weak evaluation capacity within the international development sector suggests this is going to be a long-term project. Improving the evaluability and assessment of the outcomes of such programmes in large, complex, international organisations trying to decentralise power and work in partnership to shift rather than entrench power inequalities, is an extremely difficult task' (Shutt & McGee 2013: 8).

## 3 Some directions for further exploration

In this section we set out the basis of an approach for improving understanding within SDC as to whether, how and to what extent local governance programmes are shifting power in favour of deeper democracy within decentralized governance.

### 3.1 A word on terminology

As is suggested by our working understanding of power, this is not something that lends itself to *measurement*.

- *Measurement: the assignment of numbers to objects or events.*

From the outset it seems more appropriate to attempt to subject power, and changes in ‘power’ to:

- *Evaluation: determination of its merit, worth and significance*
- *Assessment: estimation of its value*
- *Exploration: investigation, examination (definitions from Wikipedia)*

### 3.2 Who can judge, who should judge?

Two core questions are: Who can judge whether power relations between these actors have changed, and who *should* judge? Should it be the various programme actors themselves, or other observers? The programme actors could be people who relate to the local government as citizens, people who relate to the service providers as service users or people who relate to aid agencies as aid beneficiaries. Other observers might be programme officers, external evaluators, impact assessors or academic researchers.

The first question of who *can* judge relates to question of what methodological approaches to use. The people enmeshed in the power relations that are being affected, might be the best placed to judge whether these relations – and their position within them – have changed. If this route is taken, then the appropriate methods are ones that seek to gather and make sense of people’s perceptions in inductive and open-ended ways, such as life-histories, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, story- and narrative-based methods, e.g. the Most Significant Change technique (see Davies and Dart 2005), or Reality Check approach (see <http://reality-check-approach.com/approach>).

Approaches such as questionnaire surveys, if used in isolation from such open-ended, inductive methods, are relatively ‘closed-ended’ – that is, they tend to predetermine the possible responses by framing questions tightly around the survey designers’ expectations, rather than around the senses and experiences of the people whose position in power relations might, or might not, have been affected. Surveys can be useful if they are designed on the basis of initial open-ended exploration to find out what and how people describe and value the changes that have (or have not) taken place; and if their findings are interpreted hand in hand with qualitative, perception-based data that enriches the interpretative exercise by adding experiential dimensions.

The issue of who *should* judge is a political question about the position assigned to different actors within the aid intervention and its monitoring and evaluation. If an intervening aid agency considers that its prime concern is with poor, marginalised, excluded actors, then it will not only want to know what these actors think of the intervention's impact; it will want to realise the five good governance principles by enabling these actors to *participate*, in a process that does not *discriminate* against their views and knowledge; in such a way that the aid agency is making the intervention *transparent* to them and holding itself and the intervention *accountable* to them, with the aim of achieving greater *effectiveness* in addressing their situations.

Whereas in a questionnaire survey or other closed-ended methods ordinary citizens tend to be engaged with as data-sources or data-points, in an impact assessment approach shaped on a politics of participation and inclusion they would be engaged with as active citizens or change-agents. Engaged with thus, they might be empowered by their involvement. That would represent another shift in power relations that results not (only) from the programme itself but from their involvement in assessing its outcomes or impact. Likewise, a state-centred actor can be empowered by participation in critical, reflective participatory monitoring or evaluation of state-centred governance programmes in which they are 'target' actors ('beneficiaries') (Cornwall, 2000).

The outcome and impact assessment field is alive with debates and dilemmas around these issues. Concluding its learning project on Outcome Measurement in Local Governance Programmes, HELVETAS formulated three questions on which they invited our views as 'critical friends':

- **Question 1:** What are adequate methods and good practices of using qualitative indicators to measure outcomes in local governance programmes, which proved to be accurate but less resource-intensive?
  - **Question 2:** What are innovative, adequate methods and tools to equip programmes to measure and monitor effectively power relations and respective change of behaviors related to local governance practices?
  - **Question 3:** How can qualitative approaches (stakeholder feedback, video testimonials, digital story-telling, participatory video, etc) most valuably be used, be it in combination with quantitative methods, be it on their own? What can be said in response to devalorizing arguments of defenders of "quantitative" reporting?
- (Arnold et al 2013)

By this point it will be clear that, while these questions relate to very topical debates and dilemmas in the development aid field, they might benefit from some reframing for the purposes of SDC' Democratisation, Decentralisation, and Local Governance Network (DLGN). The first and third questions appear to start from the assumption that quantitative indicators, although expensive so not always feasible, are the best, both in general, and in the specific area of assessing changes in power relations. Current accepted wisdom on this topic is that 'the only [methodological] gold standard [in impact evaluation] is appropriateness'<sup>1</sup>. Acceptance of this

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<sup>1</sup> This comment was originally made by Michael Quinn Patton, former President of the American Evaluation Association and promoter of 'developmental evaluation'. It was cited by Robert Picciotto, former Director-General of Evaluation at the

position led the UK's Department for International Development (DfID) in 2012 to commission one of the best available studies on mixed methodological designs for impact evaluation in the development field. In that study's Terms of Reference, DfID recognised that 'a significant proportion of the profile of development spending' is not suitable for experimental and quasi-experimental approaches or purely quantitative methods. They went on:

'... there is a risk that with the concentration on, or assumed superiority of, experimental or quasi-experimental methods in the expanding demand for impact evaluations, those types of development interventions not suitable for these approaches will come to be considered less effective or somehow inferior and therefore less 'value for money'.' (from Terms of Reference for Stern et al, 2012 study)

Instead of trying to respond to the questions directly, therefore, we go on to unpack ways of understanding power, that are conducive to deeper and more contextually-appropriate questions and reflection on how changes in power favouring democratic local governance can best be assessed or explored.

### 3.3 Unpacking power to bring in a power dimension

Bringing a power lens into the monitoring and evaluation of local governance outcomes requires identifying and exploring the multiple dimensions of power at work in that context. Various frameworks have been developed for this multi-dimensional approach, for example the Powercube (<http://www.powercube.net>). However, experience has shown that it can be challenging to use all dimensions of such frameworks simultaneously. A review of recent experience applying the Powercube and related concepts within the programme cycle suggests that it can be more practical to apply one dimension of the framework at a time, according to need, rather than all at once (Pantazidou, 2012).

The Powercube is composed of three discrete lenses of analysis: forms of power; spaces; and levels; and the way power operates in each of these dimensions can be analysed separately:

Power takes different **forms**, for example:

- Visible: observable decision-making mechanisms
- Hidden: shaping or influencing the political agenda behind the scenes
- Invisible: norms and beliefs, socialisation, ideology, internalised behaviours

Power is acted out in different **spaces**, for example:

- Formal: decisions made in formal spaces, closed to wider participation
- Invited: people are asked to participate but within set boundaries
- Created: less powerful actors claim a space where they can set their own agenda

Power occurs at different **levels**, for example:

- Household
- Local
- National
- Global

The elements or criteria within each of these three dimensions are indicative, and experience has also shown that it is best to clearly define which categories are most useful and relevant for a particular context. For example, a study of civil society participation in Colombia identified five categories of spaces and seven levels. The forms of power may also be expanded or changed, for example in contexts of violent conflict or cooptation of the state by organised crime a new category of 'shadow power' has been found to be useful.

Power is often thought of as the wilful domination or control of one actor or group of another ('power over'). However, power can also be defined as a positive source of agency for resistance and change: it can be the ability to do something, strength and capacity gained through forms of collective action, or enhanced self-belief. Power, and specifically empowerment outcomes, can be defined as:

- **Power to:** the capability to decide actions and carry them out.
- **Power with:** collective power, through organisation, solidarity and joint action.
- **Power within:** personal self-confidence often linked to culture, religion or other aspects of identity, which influences the thoughts and actions that appear legitimate or acceptable.

As power is not static, it will often cut across the different forms, spaces and levels, and show itself in more than one way at different moments, and for different actors. These lenses can help to identify these dynamics, and how an intervention may affect, or be affected by, power dynamics in a given context. Having a more complete understanding of these power dynamics can help to identify appropriate strategies and entry points for governance programmes, and in turn point to appropriate criteria and methods of assessment.

The complexity of power means that there is no 'one size fits all' solution to transforming power relations. Often we will need to act at more than one level, and address more than one dimension of power simultaneously to bring about lasting change. This can produce a more nuanced understanding of how power operates in a decentralized local governance context than that offered by PEA alone (e.g. using forms, spaces, levels, expressions) and point to how an intervention can best engage with or influence this. What this points to, in effect, is a more clearly articulated and power-aware theory of change underpinning the intervention.



# Conclusion

In this short paper we have explored how outcome measurement issues are dealt with in a sample of SDC local governance programmes, given a critical assessment of whether and how power issues are recognised, understood and tracked within such programmes and suggesting ways to enhance understanding within SDC's DLGN as to whether, how and to what extent local governance programmes are shifting power in favour of deeper democracy within decentralized governance. We hope that the paper will stimulate critical thought among DLGN members on the way their programmes relate to and address power, understood as a multifarious phenomenon, process and set of relationships that lie at the heart of local governance and citizen-strengthening work.

Looking forwards, this incipient approach will be developed further for the SDC country strategy level. Recent discussions with Laurent Ruedin that have taken place within IDS's Quality Assurance mandate with SDC have pointed to the fact that new country strategy templates and process guidelines have recently been adopted, and need guidance tools and thought-tools to help programme staff implement them. Additionally, under IDS's mandate with the DLGN, work has been done on comparing and combining political economy and power analysis (PEPA). There is a need for guidance to SDC staff on assessing shifts in power within their country strategies, country programme portfolios, programmes and projects. We hope the present paper and parallel work on PEPA will contribute to generating resources and guidance for application at these other levels

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