

DOES CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING CONTRIBUTE TO STRENGTHENING LOCAL PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS? AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS IN NEPAL

Ganesh Prasad Pandeya

ABSTRACT

Citizen participation in local government is usually considered to be an important mechanism for achieving development gains, strengthening local accountability, and empowering citizens. Using exploratory interviews and focused discussions, this study examines qualitatively the role of citizen participation in local government decision-making and its contribution towards strengthening local planning and accountability systems in Nepal. The findings show that participation strengthened local planning and accountability systems, but that it was also linked to some potential negative outcomes. Outcomes varied depending on the participation structures and other factors, for example, local power and politics, incentives for participation, the capacity of citizens and local governments, and the level of support from elected representatives. These findings suggest that the relationship between citizen participation and participation outcomes is rather complex and dynamic, and that effective participation often depends on the building agency of marginalized groups, the mobilization of citizens, and on the establishment of vibrant social networks, all of which produce forces that may have various impacts on the effectiveness of participation.

Keywords – *Accountability, Characteristics of Local Government and Citizens, Citizen Participation, Local Planning, Nepal*

INTRODUCTION

As a society moves from a non-democratic to a democratic regime, its relationship with the state often becomes more deliberative, transparent, participative, and collaborative (Box, 1998; Putnam, 1993; United Nations [UN], 2008). Nepal is no exception. Following a major shift caused by a popular movement in 1990, Nepal's governance system transitioned from one that was heavily controlled by the monarchy to a more democratic system. In this new system, both the decentralization of power and resources and the

Copyright: © 2015 Ganesh Prasad Pandeya. Copyright for this article is retained by the authors, with first publication rights granted to the International Public Management Review (IPMR). All journal content, except where otherwise noted, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. By virtue of their appearance in this open-access journal, articles are free to use, with proper attribution, in educational and other non-commercial settings.

Corresponding Author: gpandeyanp@yahoo.com

promotion of citizen participation in governance have been regarded as crucial for promoting and sustaining democracy and development from the grassroots. The current Interim Constitution of Nepal and the 1999 Local Self-Governance Act (LSGA) focus on ensuring citizen participation in local development and the governance process. In addition, inclusive provisions, such as reserved seats in local governments (LGs) for women and disadvantaged groups (DAGs), have been added to promote and institutionalize inclusive and participatory governance at local level. However, systematic studies on citizen participation and its role in LG performance in Nepal are rare and the characteristics of participation and its outcomes have yet to be clarified. After two decades of participation experiences in LGs, it is quite relevant to explore how participation is working in Nepal.

This study aims to explore both the key characteristics of LGs and citizens in relation to effective participation and the outcomes of citizen participation in strengthening local planning and accountability systems. In addition, this study attempts to answer the following three research questions: First, what are the key characteristics of LGs and citizens in relation to effective participation? Second, what is the role of citizen participation in the strengthening of local planning and accountability systems? Third, what are the key factors involved in making participation effective? In this paper, citizen participation refers to processes through which citizens can have access to, or influence over, the process of local planning and decision-making that affects them. Also, in this study, effective participation refers to participation processes in which the agendas of citizens are incorporated in LG decisions so that decisions undergo a substantive improvement through the participation of citizens (Yang & Pandey, 2011).

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Participation Characteristics and Citizen Participation

Since the early 1980s, many scholars have increasingly focused on citizen participation in administrative decision-making. For example, in the beginning of participatory government, Kweit and Kweit (1981) argued that participation in government improved public service delivery and increased the trust of citizens in government. However, the outcomes of citizen participation depended on: (a) the characteristics of participation mechanisms; (b) the characteristics of the target organization, especially its capacity, structure, and commitment to the process; and (c) environmental characteristics, such as the size of the community, and the forms of government involved. This argument may be valid for certain contexts but it may not apply to all contexts.

Consistent with the findings of Kweit and Kweit (1981), King, Feltey, and Susel (1998) argued in a study based on interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted in Ohio State that there are three major sets of factors relevant to effective participation: (a) participation policies and mechanisms; (b) types of administrative systems and practices; and (c) the nature of contemporary society, such as the characteristics of the citizens and community organizations involved, and the prevailing political culture. How-

ever, because this research was done in a developed country, the findings may not be applicable to other contexts.

In an empirical study about LG budgeting in the U.S., Ebdon and Franklin (2006: 444) argued that participation “can be very useful in educating the public about key trade-offs and gaining valuable input from citizens about their priorities.” However, they suggested that participation outcomes depend on: (a) the participation environment, such as the structure and forms of government, the political culture, and the provisions for participation; (b) the participation process design, such as timing, the participation agenda, and participant selection methods; (c) participation mechanisms; and (d) expected outcomes.

Similarly, the UN (2008) argued that meaningful participation was dependent on various sociopolitical and administrative factors. These factors included the existence of a democratic and decentralized government structure, policy provisions, the availability of, and access to, information, participation mechanisms, staff responsiveness, capacity building programs, political commitments, and other related factors. However, these arguments lacked empirical evidence.

More recently, in a quantitative study conducted in the U.S., Yang and Pandey (2011) found that participation was an important factor for strengthening democratic governance. The authors found that effective participation depended on LG characteristics and citizen characteristics. LG characteristics included a number of factors, including the presence of elected representatives, transformational leadership, and the structures of the target organization. Characteristics of citizens included the competence and representativeness of the citizens involved. The findings of Yang and Pandey (2011) can be used to construct a framework for analysis. However, the findings are also biased because they are based on data gleaned from public managers only. In addition, several empirical studies have described a range of similar factors that are important in determining the effectiveness of participation (e.g., Blair, 2000; Devas & Gant, 2003; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012; Putnam, 1993). For example, Putnam (1993) argued that the role of civil society and the degree of social connectedness are major determinants of the level of the effectiveness of citizen participation in Italy.

To summarize, these studies have suggested some commonalities in the relationship between participation characteristics and effective citizen participation. Some of the common factors include: (a) administrative factors, for example, institutional and policy frameworks, organizational characteristics, bureaucratic responsiveness, and participation mechanisms; (b) factors related to the citizens involved, for example, how representative and competent they are; and (c) civil society factors, for example, community connectedness, capacity, and representativeness. According to a number of studies on these issues, (e.g., Yang & Pandey, 2011) the first two groups of factors are deeply linked to, and can have a substantial impact on, participation outcomes. This study, therefore, focuses on the first two groups of factors and does not include civil society factors, partly because some of the effects of these factors can be captured in the second group of factors, and partly because of the limited scope of the study.

Specifically, previous studies have shown that institutional and policy frameworks are important: They create participation opportunities (World Bank, 2005), set the boundaries within which governments and citizens interface (Box, 1998; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012). Organizational characteristics determine, more or less, the ability of a system to carry out the policies into practice (Farazmand, 2009). A high level of responsiveness may improve an organization's ability to serve the interests of citizens (Zhang & Guo, 2012), to listen to the voices of citizens (Yang & Callahan, 2007), and to promote equitable opportunities and service delivery (Kim & Lee, 2012; Vigoda, 2002). Similarly, participation mechanism is the one which connects citizens with public decision-making (Yang & Pandey, 2011), and the use of multiple mechanisms is likely to be associated with effective participation (Yang & Callahan, 2005) as they help to reach in different groups of people, to address their diverse needs (Julnes & Johnson, 2011).

Moreover, Fung (2006) and Yang and Pandey (2011) found that the level of representativeness of citizens was critical in ensuring inclusive and democratic participation. Higher levels of representativeness promoted increased access to, and influence over, LG decision-making. Citizens' representativeness also increased the confidence of citizens in asserting their rights (Osmani, 2007). John (2009) and McKenna (2011) found that the degree of knowledge and skills of the participants often determined the process and the outcomes of participation. A particular level of competence was needed to understand the often complex discussions and the dynamics involved in participation environment (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

Citizen Participation and Participation Outcomes

Citizen participation and local planning

A number of scholars have suggested that citizen participation plays an important role in the process of development management. Moynihan (2003: 174) stated that participation leads to improved public efficiency by achieving both allocative efficiency "through better resource allocation choices" and managerial efficiency through "improvement of the process of public service provisions." Participation also leads to effective policy implementation. In particular, citizen participation helps better identify and understand citizens' needs (Roberts, 2008), improves local planning and budgeting (Lu & Xue, 2011), enhances rational decision-making (Box, 1998; Neshkova & Guo, 2011; UN, 2008), eases the implementation of decisions (Gerston, 2002; Yang & Pandey, 2011), produces equity-based decision-making and inclusive development (Adams, Bell & Brown, 2002; Mohanty, 2010; Venugopal & Yilmaz, 2009), and helps to deliver better services (UN, 2008; UNDP, 1993). It also produces "outcomes that favor the poor and disadvantaged" (UN, 2008, p. 23). Specifically, Handley and Howell-Moroney (2010) found that a higher degree of participation had a larger impact on the improvement in local planning and budgeting. Kweit and Kweit (1981) claimed that a number of problems related to planning could be resolved when diverse people were involved in the planning process, because different people bring different perspectives, knowledge, and information. According to Batley & Rose (2011), participation contributes to inclusive, equitable, and participatory planning and budgeting, and improved service delivery

(especially to the economically disadvantaged). Citizen participation, then, appears to be an important strategy for strengthening local planning systems.

Citizen participation and local government accountability

A number of studies have suggested that citizen participation improves the accountability of LGs. For example, citizen participation reinforces traditional accountability systems and expands the scope of accountability (Blair, 2000; Devas & Grant, 2003; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012). The participation of citizens is also instrumental in the design of needs-based policies (Rocha-Menocal & Sharma, 2008) and it makes LGs more transparent (Kaufmann & Bellver, 2005), increases levels of trust felt by citizens (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Wang & Wart, 2007), and bolsters the legitimacy of government decisions and actions (Farazmand, 2009; UN, 2008). In fact, participation is an important mechanism that can control the actions of government officials, and it can therefore strengthen local accountability systems (see also Blair, 2000; UN, 2008).

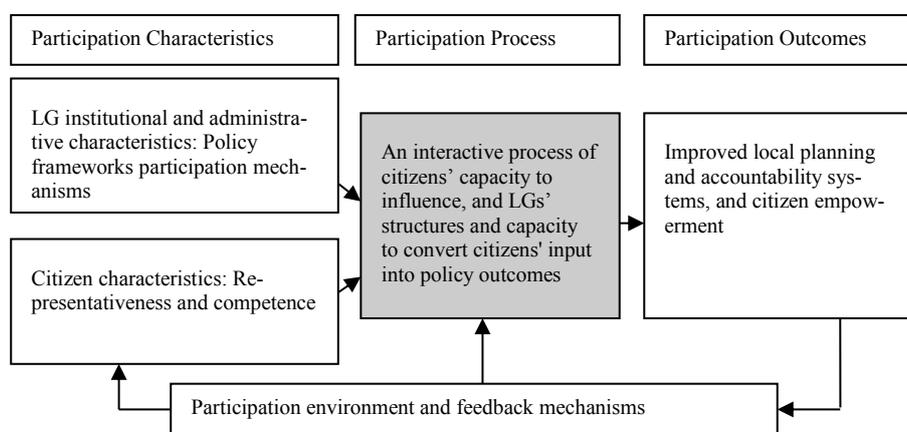
However, it may be misleading to assume that participation always leads to the desired results. They have their own trajectories, and such trajectories depend on the institutional and contextual specificities of the participatory events (Fung & Wright, 2003; Osmani, 2007). Some studies have found that participation can produce negative outcomes (Gaventa & Barrett, 2012; Rocha-Menocal & Sharma, 2008). For instance, Gaventa and Barrett (2012: 5) found that participation may lead “to a sense of disempowerment and a reduced sense of agency, or to new knowledge hierarchies.” It may also be “meaningless, tokenistic, or manipulated. ... [or] can contribute to new skills and alliances which are used for corrupt and non-political ends, or are captured by elites.” Irvin and Stansbury’s (2004) review concluded that participation may involve more time, lead to higher costs, and increase the chances of inappropriate decisions. It may also lead to elite capture and engender the pursuit of personal gains by empowered individuals. Furthermore, participation may even decrease the representativeness of citizens and reduce their power in public decision-making.

To analyze these outcomes, Osmani (2007) has developed a three-gap model, comprising a capacity gap, an incentive gap, and a power gap. These gaps were used to examine factors associated with the negative outcomes of participation. The capacity gap can arise from a lack of certain skills, knowledge, and various resources between the participating citizens and the government, hindering the ability of LGs to fully convert citizen inputs into policy outputs (Farazmand, 2009; Osmani, 2007). A lack of capacity, expressed, for example, in terms of insufficient human and financial resources, can be a critical impediment to successful LG reform and effective citizen participation (Esonu & Kavanamur, 2011). The concept of an incentive gap stems from the fact that participation is not costless (Osmani, 2007; UN, 2008). An incentive gap can be described as a short fall in potential gains desired compared to the various costs that participation entails in terms of finances, time, and opportunity (UN, 2008). A power gap may arise from the systemic asymmetry of power relations that is inherent in unequal societies (Osmani, 2007; Rocha-Menocal & Sharma, 2008).

The literature reviewed above helps us to develop a research framework that explains how the different characteristics of LGs and citizens affect participation outcomes. In

Figure 1, the shaded box indicates that participation outcomes are highly dependent on the process of participation. For example, outcomes are particularly dependent on the capacity of citizens to assert their rights and to influence the decisions of LGs. Outcomes also depend on the structure of LGs, which affects LGs' capacity to respond and incorporate participation input into LG decisions. In turn, these processes are affected by the institutional, administrative, and policy characteristics of LGs, as well as the level of competence and representativeness of the participating citizens. All of these factors are influenced by the participation environment. In this study, instead of separate discussion, participation processes and outcomes are discussed in a combine way in order to better explain how the process affects the outcomes.

Figure 1: Dynamic framework of citizen participation and its outcomes



A BRIEF HISTORY OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN NEPAL

Understanding the context of participation is crucial because participation outcomes are affected by historical, social, political, economic, and geographical circumstances (Julnes & Johnson, 2011; Nabatchi, 2012). Strong local identities are part of the historical legacy of LGs in Nepal. This legacy extends back to the origin of Hinduism and Buddhism (circa 800 BC), when rulers possessed considerable powers over localities. Indigenous institutions, for example, *gosthis* (popular village assemblies), *panchayat* (assemblies of five respected elders elected by a local community), and *manyajan kachahari* (assemblies of elders), held important social and political responsibilities in the governance of their communities (Acharya, 1965). Some local and indigenous community institutions, for example, *guthi* (patriarchal kinship-based social organizations), and *samaj* (community groups), in which communities directly participate in governing themselves, still exist (Acharya, 1965). However, their influence is not substantial, mainly due to their limited size and cultural specific constraints.

It was only after the overthrow of the oligarchic regime in 1950 that Nepal attempted to institutionalize democratic principles in state governance. The institutionalization of such principles was attempted through the creation of strong central institutions and the decentralization of certain functions to district headquarters. LG institutions such as Village Panchayats, Municipalities, Block Panchayats, and District Panchayats were

established. These institutions were granted the authority to function as local units of self-government. However, following a *coup d'état* in 1960, the then King Mahendra declared that a party-less Panchayat system would govern Nepal. This system lasted until 1990. As part of the new system, the king established three layers of LG institutions and granted power and authorities for self-governance. This government, for the first time, officially focused on the importance of citizen participation in the local planning process, pointing out that unless the participation of people is ensured in every stage of programs and at all levels, a true sense of participation in government and further development of the nation could not be achieved (Dhungel, 2004). The purpose of participation was to better manage the development projects. This was to be achieved by obtaining information and mobilizing beneficiaries in project implementation and maintenance and closing the resource gap through the use of voluntary and compulsory contributions of labor and materials. Nevertheless, the system was *de-facto* run by highly centralized institutional structures controlled by the monarchy.

After the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, policies encouraging citizen participation in governance moved to the mainstream of governance and development policy. Nepal made remarkable changes in the field of local governance and citizen participation and recognized participatory values in its constitution and laws. As a result, local citizens have begun to make working connections with LG institutions in many aspects of local governance and development. However, between 1996 and 2006, Nepal again experienced armed conflict. Since the cessation of this conflict in 2007, Nepal has continued to be in political transition. The present Interim Constitution declared Nepal a federal democratic republic. However, Nepalese government is currently run as a unitary system. Also, because the Constituent Assembly has yet to have finished writing the new constitution, no structural changes have been carried out in LGs. Further, there is no national consensus on resolving the current political deadlock regarding state restructuring and the granting of more powers and resources to LGs. Currently, Nepal has a two-tier LG system comprising 75 District Development Committees (DDCs) at the district level as the second tier, and 190 municipalities and 3,276 Village Development Committees (VDCs) at the town and village level as the first tier. Each DDC and VDC varies considerably in terms of population, geography, capacity, and resources. Since 2002, largely resulting from political conflict and transition, there has also been an absence of political representatives in LGs, and their responsibilities have been given to centrally appointed officials.

Nepal's steep social hierarchy and caste-based system based on Hinduism may play an even more important role in participation outcomes than the historical political context of participation. In Nepal, political power is traditionally concentrated among high-caste Brahmins, Chhetries, and Newars. Women, Dalits (untouchables), Janajatis (ethnic groups), Madhesi, and Muslims are often excluded from, or share little power in the governance and development process (UNDP, 2014). Although the overall Human Development Index (HDI) for Nepal improved between 2000 and 2011 from 0.449 to 0.540, its distribution remains unequal. In terms of caste, Brahmins and Chhetries have an HDI of 0.538, followed by Dalits at 0.434. In terms of gender, the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) are extremely low, at

0.534 and 0.568, respectively (UNDP, 2014), suggesting that opportunities for women are severely constrained. Nepal's Corruption Perception Index is 31 for 2012, which may indicate that people have a low level of trust in the government. In addition, Nepalese society remains stratified, as shown by the domination of the landlord class over tenants (UNDP, 2014). Because the degree of cooperation between different sections of society depends on a preexisting set of sociopolitical relations in a given community (Putnam, 1993), such deep-rooted inequality may prevent effective cooperation in the participatory initiatives.

Moreover, the current status of citizen participation is unclear as systematic studies on this subject are rare. In evaluating the impact of decentralization, Koirala (2011) argued that that decentralization has created hope among local people and provided opportunities of participation, but the process mostly lacked inclusiveness, participant-friendly and transparency, with opening the door for corruption, malpractices, and weak or non-performing accountability systems. In evaluating the progress of local governance reform, Freedman and coworkers (2013) concluded that LGs have created more participatory institutions, and that this increased their capacity to deliver basic services in an inclusive and equitable fashion. But Freedman and coworkers (2013: 12) cited only a "few cases where there is more equitable access to services and where authorities are held more accountable." Although both authors concluded with broadly similar findings, the validity of these studies needs to be assessed skeptically for three reasons: First, the authors heavily emphasized negative outcomes and did not produce sufficient evidence to support their arguments. By comparison, some studies have claimed that participation is mostly successful (e.g., Local Governance and Accountability Facility [LGAF], 2012). Second, both reports were grounded largely on descriptive and value-based arguments based on data gleaned from FGDs. These data were obtained mostly from officials and donors, who, in general, cannot represent the views of citizens and their institutions. Third, these findings contradicted theoretically informed arguments derived from contemporary approaches to participation scholarship (e.g., Box, 1998; UN, 2008). It is therefore reasonable to question the validity of the studies conducted by Koirala (2011) and Freedman and coworkers (2013). Thus, despite the significant changes in policies since the 1990s in the areas of participation policies, an examination of the characteristics and outcomes of citizen participation would still be of academic merit and useful to practitioners.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

This study uses exploratory interviews with 35 people who have had at least five years of experience and expertise in the field of local governance and citizen participation. The interviewees, selected through purposive and snowball sampling, were 17 mid-level and high-ranking LG officers (local development officers, joint secretaries and under-secretaries), eight practitioners working in participatory projects, five participation experts, and five activists working for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). An open-ended semi-structured questionnaire was developed on topics that focused on institu-

tional and policy mechanisms that are used to engage citizens, the organizational readiness of LGs for participation, the roles of various actors and factors, and the competencies and levels of the representativeness of citizens. The set also contained questions on the key outcomes of participation for the strengthening of local planning and accountability systems, and the factors associated with these outcomes. Each interview was conducted in a semiformal manner and lasted between 40 and 80 minutes. The results of these interviews were used to develop guidelines for the FGDs.

After these interviews, in order to examine participants' opinions about participation processes and their effects in the field, two sets of FGDs were conducted at Godamchaur and Irkhu VDCs, both of which are located near the capital. Each VDC had more than two decades of participatory planning experience. Godamchaur VDC had about two decades of social mobilization experience, and Irkhu, only five years. The interviewees were identified by contacting local activists. The interviewees included ordinary citizens, political representatives, VDC staff, local activists, and DAGs who had participated in at least two participation meetings during the last two years. In each VDC, 25 people participated in the FGD sessions. In these sessions, they were asked about their role in, and contribution to, LG decision-making; the level of influence they had had; the perceived outcomes of their participation on local planning and accountability systems; and about barriers to their effective participation. Each session lasted approximately three hours. In addition, I also observed two participation events at the same VDCs to verify whether the general patterns described by the participants were consistent with actual practice. Relevant documents such as official records, progress and study reports, and related policies were also analyzed.

Data Analysis

In the first stage, I transcribed each interview and discussion and individually coded them using a qualitative form of content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002). I then clustered the codings into various categories, patterns, trends, and themes. Two experts were asked to verify the accuracy of the categories, and slight modifications were made. While analyzing the data, I paid special attention to both positive and negative findings, which added to the richness of the insights. The research framework developed in this study greatly helped in categorizing responses, inferring the intended meanings, and validating the findings. To validate the conclusions, the findings were compared with established theories as well as previous studies conducted in Nepal.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPATION IN NEPAL

Institutional and Policy Frameworks

The existing participation frameworks in Nepal seem to be highly beneficial for promoting effective participation, because, especially since the restoration of democracy in 1990, the government of Nepal has introduced various principles concerning participation in LG decision-making into Nepal's constitution, statutes, regulations, and guidelines. For example, the 2007 Interim Constitution of Nepal states that LGs will be based on the principles of decentralization and devolution of authority "in order to promote

the participation of people, to the maximum extent possible, in the system of governance of the country...even from the local level” for improved service delivery and institutional development of democracy (Government of Nepal, 2007, p.100). Similarly, the LSGA also embeds these principles. It states that local bodies will operate on the principles of devolution of powers and resources, local self-governance, the highest possible level of participation of the people in the process of governance, subsidiarity, inclusive and participatory governance, and participatory planning and budgeting. The LSGA also emphasizes active participation of local people, civil society organizations (CSOs), and the private sector in local self-governance, as well as in local planning, budgeting, project implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes.

These principles and values have been internalized and institutionalized by subsequent policies, guidelines and directives, with a special focus on promoting inclusive and widespread participation. The guidelines and directives further reinforce these principles by making mandatory provisions for the inclusive representation of women, the marginalized, and DAGs in various structures of LGs, including LG councils, executive committees, consumer’s committees, and integrated planning committees. For example, the Local Bodies Resource Mobilization and Management Guideline (2012) not only provides for inclusive, informed, and empowered participation in all governance and development processes of LGs, but also guarantees to allocate a minimum of 15 percent of the total capital budget of each LG to DAGs, 10 percent to women, and 10 percent to children.

Respondents stated unanimously that the current institutional and policy frameworks for participation were favorable for effective participation and that the frameworks, in many cases, greatly helped in increasing the number of people participating in LGs, particularly from among traditionally excluded groups, securing the agency of those groups, increasing the number of decisions made in their favor, and empowering them to hold LGs accountable. Many respondents described three strategies that they considered effective in promoting participation: the use of the minimum conditions and performance measures (MCPM) system, social mobilization, and partnership with CSOs. They believed that the MCPM—a system in which independent consultants evaluate the compliance of the LSGA and its subsequent guidelines on a yearly basis—reinforced participation provisions, especially in the absence of elected representatives. Respondents said that the MCPM had become a very powerful tool that raised participation effectiveness and enhanced the accountability of LGs because the results of MCPM evaluations have significant effects on receiving the size of grants and rating the LGs in their yearly ranking. One LG official stated, “...[T]he system became a very effective tool for promoting accountability; it greatly promoted citizen participation and LG responsiveness and it made the LGs more disciplined” (for similar claims see also Koirala, 2011; Kelly, 2011).

Further, many respondents reported that social mobilization programs—programs aimed at empowering the weakest sections of the community by creating and strengthening community organizations and providing capacity training—greatly increased the extent of empowered and informed participation by citizens and led to efficient and equitable decision-making and resource allocation (see also the Participatory District Develop-

ment Program, [PDDP], 2000). Many respondents emphasized that these programs succeeded in creating awareness as well as educating and empowering ordinary citizens. More fundamentally, the programs led not only to struggles by citizens to establish entitlements and institutional changes, but also to calls for LG officials to account for their actions and demonstrate financial probity. These findings indicate that mobilization is critical for effective participation. This is consistent with the findings of Freedman and his colleagues (2012) and those of Holland, Ruedin, Scott-Villiers, and Sheppard (2012) for Nepal.

Moreover, many respondents reported that the growing number of CSOs, such as mothers' groups and consumer's groups, and their partnerships with LGs—which are mandated by the LSGA—made a considerable contribution to improving participation, making LGs more responsive and responsible while improving participation outcomes and quality. CSOs have also contributed positively to accelerating and institutionalizing participation in LGs, mainly through organizing and empowering citizens and mobilizing and bringing them into the participation process. Sources reported that CSOs played an active role in meeting the needs of marginalized groups and in enforcing accountability mechanisms, although in a few cases, the relationship between CSOs and LGs remained strained. In fact, the role of CSOs in reinforcing participatory practices at the local level appeared to be fundamental to effective participation. These findings are similar to those of the LGAF (2012), Mallik (2013), and the NGO Federation (2011) for Nepal, and those of Putnam (1993) for Italy, which suggested that partnering with CSOs was critical for effective participation.

Nevertheless, some LG officials and community people also stated that favorable institutional and policy frameworks did not effectively institutionalize a participatory culture in many LGs, and that the degree of success varied among LGs. In addition, various constraints from local institutional, political, and citizenry-related conditions on the ground led to considerable gaps and paradoxes between the policy frameworks and their effective implementation (see also Box 1). For example, one respondent sharply criticized the performance of LGs, commenting that “participation is still constrained by significant institutional, social, and political obstacles in practice; in fact, it is mostly dominated by the local elite and politicians as well as by strong social kinship.” This claim appears to be in accord with similar findings of previous studies conducted in Nepal (Adhikari, 2007; Inlogos, 2009; Koirala, 2011; Mallik, 2013; NGO Federation, 2011).

To summarize, institutional and policy frameworks such as constitutional provisions and laws that encourage participation, a variety of strategies for promoting participation, a focus on social mobilization, and partnerships with CSOs clearly recognize citizen participation in LG decision-making as an integral part of local governance. In particular, frameworks helped to increase both the number of participants and the number of LG decisions made in their favor. However, considerable gaps between policy provisions and their effective implementation existed, mainly because of various institutional, political, and social barriers that inhibited the institutionalization of a participatory culture in LGs. These observations are similar to Wescott's (2003) findings for Vietnam.

Organizational Characteristics

Many respondents reported that organizational characteristics, such as LG structures, the capacity of LGs, and leadership factors, inhibited rather than promoted effective participation. This was seen in a number of ways. First, the administrative structure of LGs was found to be relatively inflexible. Second, accurate reflection of citizens' voices in LG decision-making was constrained by a lack of effective job descriptions, clear delineations of roles and responsibilities, a culture of red-tapism, widespread corruption, and a strong centralizing instinct in central government (for similar claim see also Adhikari, 2007). Respondents unequivocally expressed their feeling that the government's commitment to bottom-up approaches was at odds with the current structure. One expert stated that "the administrative structure of LGs is predominantly hierarchical and centralized, which has blocked putting communities in the driving seat." Because hierarchical and centrally controlled organizations are negatively associated with effective participation (Box, 1998; Yang & Pandey, 2011), the existing structure of LGs may have inhibited the translation of the voices of citizens into policy decisions.

In addition, the role of bureaucratic leaders, who currently assume the responsibility of elected representatives, was found inadequate to promote effective participation. Many respondents felt that leaders were often reluctant to listen to citizens' voices and incorporate those voices into LG decision-making. Such leaders often failed to allocate resources in an equitable way. They also failed to manage programs in a professional and productive manner and to make decisions through a participatory method. Their behavior was found to be constrained by bureaucratic norms and values, a centralized structure of accountability, and influence from political parties. Leaders were more concerned with satisfying certain provisions of rules rather than listening to citizens' voices. This behavior mostly reflects traditional types of leadership rather than transformational—although the behavior varied greatly depending on who was leading an organization—as leaders were more inclined to continue with their regular programs and projects, showing little interest in winning citizens' support or changing the organizational culture. One LG officer expressed the following concern: "If something goes wrong, no one is going to take that responsibility, will you? Therefore, we normally choose safety," instead of taking risks. Such an attitude may inhibit the establishment of a participatory management culture and the inclusion of citizens' voices in LG decision-making.

Moreover, the capacity of LGs was found to be insufficient to manage the complex process of participation and of incorporating citizen opinions into LG decision-making. This finding is consistent with that of Freedman and coworkers (2012) and Mallik (2013) for Nepal. Insufficient human resource capacity—characterized by a high level of political patronage in appointment and promotion decisions, a large number of lower-rank staff, low levels of competence and professionalism, and dual-accountability systems for CEOs—was found to be a barrier to translating citizen voices into LG decisions. Financial capacity was found to be extremely low because LGs' own and shared tax revenues were only 3.9% of the national tax revenue (Freedman et al., 2012). Furthermore, grants from the central government were tied to various conditions, making it difficult to allocate funds to promote participation and participatory projects (for fiscal year 2014/15, central government had put 53 conditions on unconditional block grants).

Additionally, information management and sharing capacity, essential for learning about citizens' preferences, rarely existed in practice, and transparency was generally weak in many LG activities. But some respondents reported that transparency had been improving, as evidenced by increases in the number of community radios and investigative journalists, and the functioning of various mandatory voice mechanisms such as public audits and social audits (see also Mallik, 2013).

To summarize, organizational characteristics appeared to be inhibiting rather than supporting the promotion of effective participation, although these characteristics varied greatly across LGs. This indicates that unless LGs are restructured, these inadequacies may further discourage the creation of a participatory environment, and achieving effective participation in the short run seems quite difficult. Promoting transformational leadership at first may be a part of the solution to overcoming such issues, because leaders are in a position to create an internal and external culture of participation and keep employees moving in the same direction (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010).

Bureaucratic Responsiveness

Bureaucratic responsiveness was found to be minimally conducive to promoting effective participation. Many respondents reported that LG officials placed little value on the opinions of citizens and were concerned only minimally with involving citizens or incorporating citizen voices in LG decision-making. Many emphasized the following point: "Local bureaucrats have little interest in, and priority for, citizens' voices. They still regard citizens as an object and provide limited space for local decision-making, and the relationship with citizens is still vertical, not that of a partnership." An activist added that "...although our voices were often heard, they were also often neglected at the time of making decisions and delivering services." Similar to the findings of the NGO Federation (2011), in this study, bureaucrats were found to be more responsive to local political parties and focused on remaining in compliance with laws and less focused on serving the interests of citizens. One community activist emphasized that "decisions were often made based on political motives and consensus." But all LG officials stressed the importance of citizen participation "as beneficial and desirable" for making LGs more effective, inclusive, and transparent. This indicates that LG officials regard citizen participation as essential, but that their attitude and behavior need to be changed accordingly.

Overall, respondents reported at least three reasons supporting the argument that the behavior of bureaucrats is likely to be characterized by a constrained type of responsiveness as described by Bryer (2007). First, the administrative structure of LGs systematically prevents leaders from being responsive to citizens. For instance, the centrally deputed staff is accountable generally to the central government rather than to LGs and citizens. Second, the responsiveness of locally appointed staff is severely limited by high levels of political clientelism, together with a general lack of competence, both of which inhibit the conversion of citizen input into policy decisions. Third, ironically, LG staff members are inclined to be responsive to more powerful stakeholders, such as politicians and higher echelons of the authorities. This situation indicates that local power

and politics remain predominant factors in determining the outputs of LG decision-making.

Nevertheless, bureaucratic responsiveness was found to have improved over time in some LGs, as indicated by those LGs that had started to pay attention to citizens' opinions in LG decision-making. This may be a result of a heavy focus on social mobilization and an intensive use of downward accountability mechanisms such as civic monitoring and expenditure tracking. Particularly in LGs with a high degree of social networks and sustained social mobilization, respondents unequivocally stated that citizens were increasingly being made aware of their rights. This helped citizens to compel LG staff to undertake fuller deliberations and conduct consensus building among stakeholders before making decisions. This implies that, as suggested by Gaventa and Barrett (2012) and Merrifield (2013), thickening social networks and expanding social mobilization, especially in those places where citizens have low levels of awareness of their rights and/or lack knowledge and skills, can bring a greater sense of civic awareness and self-empowerment, which is vital for improved responsiveness.

To summarize, bureaucratic responsiveness appeared to be minimally favorable in promoting effective participation, although it is on the rise. When making decisions, LG officials were found to be less responsive to the voices of ordinary people than they were to centralized accountability systems, political parties, and salient stakeholders. These findings suggest that adapting strategies for changing the behavior of local bureaucrats may be critical for promoting effective participation.

Participation Mechanisms

Most respondents reported that the use of multiple participation mechanisms greatly helped in increasing the number of participants and the number of participation events by offering distinct opportunities for participation that met the diverse needs of community. A wide range of participation mechanisms, such as consumers' committees, social audits, public audits, public hearings, and civic monitoring were found to be particularly helpful in attracting people who were traditionally excluded and, therefore, improving the legitimacy of LG decisions. These expanded participation opportunities helped to produce some positive externalities, such as increased access, opportunity, and influence in LG decision-making, as well as the empowerment of traditionally excluded people through building their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Some respondents stated, however, that although these mechanisms increased participation opportunities, they did not make a real difference in LG decision-making, as they were often used below a minimum standard just to meet statutory requirements, and that they were often tokenistic. In addition, despite mandatory legal provisions to use various mechanisms, some LGs used only a limited number of mechanisms. Sometimes, some mechanisms were misused to the advantage of the local political elites. Several local people stated that "although we now have more opportunities for participation than in the past, in a real sense, we have no decision-making power. We are told to participate just to meet the legal provisions, not to solve the real problems of the community." Such evidence of tokenistic participation resonates with previous findings for Nepal (e.g., Freedman et al., 2012; Inlogos, 2009; Koirala, 2011), demonstrating that citizens

lacked opportunities for effective participation. A shortage of human and financial resources was reported as a major constraint on the wider use of participation mechanisms. However, in reality, this might not have been a significant problem if LGs had exhibited a greater commitment toward participatory values. Some mechanisms, such as public hearings and public audits, do not normally require a significant budget, and some participation events can be organized—as some LGs were doing—by partnering with volunteering organizations.

To summarize, the findings suggest that the use of multiple mechanisms has greatly widened the scope of participation, reaching different groups of people and meeting their diverse needs, along with providing increased access, opportunity, and influence in LG decision-making. But the effectiveness of such mechanisms, in some cases, remained questionable because of various administrative, social, and economic constraints.

Citizen Representativeness

Several respondents suggested during interviews and in FGDs that citizen representativeness often remained fairly unbalanced, depriving many citizens of their right of participation. In general, participation was often limited to only a small fraction of citizens—those of a particular socioeconomic status, a particular gender, or a particular political affiliation, and many vulnerable and economically disadvantaged people were often excluded, although there were considerable differences across LGs. For instance, sources reported that members of consumer's committees were often selected by dividing up quotas among major political parties based on their respective strength in the community. In fact, there was repeated overrepresentation of particular segments of the community, resulting in the low representation or no representation of larger sections of the community, which was exacerbated by their passivity towards participation in LGs. Similar to the findings of Golooba-Mutebi (1999) for Uganda, in this study, the vast majority of the respondents stated that participation was often manipulated by local power holders and politicians, resulting in an undue favoring of some groups at the cost of others. Some claimed that in socially mobilized communities, or communities with strong social networks, both the level of representativeness and the rate of participation were found to be relatively higher than in other communities.

Groups overrepresented in LGs consisted of members of the local elite and influential classes, including politicians, teachers, affluent citizens, those with high-status or secure employment, elite women, elite-caste people, heads of CSOs and NGOs, social leaders, and people who had sufficient time to participate. Those who were underrepresented, and in many cases excluded, included ordinary women, children, minorities, members of the lower strata of society, those living in remote areas, economically disadvantaged people, vulnerable people, illiterate people, people with disabilities, and Dalits.

Factors responsible for inclusion or exclusion were found to be related to citizens' socioeconomic status, their gender, and the presence, nature, or extent of exclusionary practices, social kinship and networks, cultural diversity, deep-rooted hierarchal structures, a general lack of responsiveness, and a centralized and hierarchical administrative structure in the LGs. These findings are consistent with those of John (2009) for England and

Wales, and Yang and Pandey (2011) for Utah. Other reasons given by the respondents to explain the lack of representativeness included a lack of pro-activity on the part of local bureaucrats, the selection of participants based on political ideology, the existence of an elitist administration dominated by the values of political parties, limited access to information, and a lack of clarity regarding the roles of citizens in the participation process. These factors are consistent with those reported in previous studies (e.g., John, 2009; UN, 2008; Yang & Callahan, 2007). Box (1998) argued that such practices may further diminish the possibility of inclusive participation unless there are substantial changes in socioeconomic and LG administrative structures.

Even with these limitations, LGs could have promoted inclusive participation, as suggested by John (2009), if they had strictly followed the statutory provisions, and effectively implemented the programs aimed at increasing the capacity and awareness of citizens. However, consistent with Narayan, Chambers, Shah, and Petesch's (2000) findings in many countries, particularly in African nations, community people in this study commented that LG officials often invited the people they knew and favored, and that LG officials often felt comfortable with surrogate representatives, such as heads of CSOs and government officials, because the officials found them easier to deal with. By contrast it required more effort, time, and resources to identify and work with the poor and DAGs.

In short, citizen representativeness and inclusiveness in LG decision-making were found to be rather low because of the perceived domination in the participation process of elites, the mass exclusion of ordinary people, and the practice of surrogate participation, although there were signs of improvement, especially in socially mobilized communities or those with high-level social networks. Exclusionary political and socioeconomic structures, low levels of LG responsiveness, and a lack of pro-activity were found to be major constraints for inclusive participation.

Citizen Competence

LG officials felt that citizens who participated in LG decision-making did not have sufficient competence to participate effectively. This was especially true of the economically disadvantaged and those living in rural and remote areas. Most participants, especially economically disadvantaged people, women, and DAGs, who were statutorily required to participate, did not possess even an elementary level of civic knowledge or awareness of their rights and responsibilities in the communities due to mainly low literacy—for 2011, female literacy rate was 57% (UNDP, 2014). In addition, participants did not know how LGs worked, or how final decisions were made. Further, many participants often lacked the minimum acceptable skills required to communicate ideas properly, negotiate with different stakeholders, persuade dissidents, and engage in evidence-based lobbying and advocacy. Supporting this claim of incompetence, one LG official argued that “people having limited knowledge and understanding are often inhibited in LGs meetings. They just come ...attend ...sit in the corner...and raise no issues or demand no clarification.” This indicates that an in-depth discussion rarely takes place in the participation process.

Thus, informants claimed that low levels of civic competence would result in lower political and social awareness, which inhibited the ability of citizens to express their concerns meaningfully, and that elites continued to dominate the decision-making process by sustaining unequal decision-making practices. LG officials argued that, because citizens lacked competence needed to provide valuable input, bringing more people into LG decision-making would just delay decisions, increase costs, and make the process of reaching consensus more complex. But this perception may not be correct, because participation is a fundamental right, and competence can be achieved through greater participation (Box, 1998; Osmani, 2007). One interesting finding was that, over time, people who participated frequently in LGs, and those living in socially mobilized communities, or communities with strong social networks, were observed to have acquired civic skills needed for debating public issues or becoming more engaged in public affairs.

To summarize, citizen participants were found to have insufficient competence needed to make a valuable contribution to decision-making in the participation process. Nevertheless, competence may increase over time, especially in socially mobilized communities and communities with strong social networks. This signifies that government interventions such as enhancing social mobilization and thickening community network programs may enable citizens to increase their levels of competence and become more active participants (see also Osmani, 2007; Yang & Callahan, 2007).

In conclusion, the above discussion suggests a complex picture of participation. This complexity makes it difficult to describe factors that affect participation as unequivocally favorable or unfavorable. Although institutional and policy frameworks and participation mechanisms were found to be somewhat favorable for promoting effective participation, LGs were found to be suffering from multiple administrative and structural problems, including problems with capacity, leadership, and responsiveness. Citizens were found to have a low level of representativeness and competence required to make effective contributions to LG decision-making. This indicates that even though the principles and policies of putting citizens at the heart of local governance are widely recognized by LGs, the effective enforcement of such policies remains a constant challenge, and that this undermines the government commitment to effective participation. Figure 2 summarizes factors related to citizen participation in LG decision-making by ranking them on a continuum from more favorable to less favorable.

Figure 2: Factors Affecting Citizen Participation in LG decision-making in Nepal

| | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| More favorable | Participation Mechanisms | Favorable for reaching different groups of people and meeting their diverse needs |
| | | Providing increased access to, opportunity, and influence in LG decision-making |
| | | Sometimes used just to meet the statutory requirements |
| | Institutional and Policy Frameworks | Somewhat favorable, at least non-obtrusive, for making LGs more participatory and inclusive |
| | | Programs such as social mobilization and partnership with CSOs were very helpful |

| | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Less favorable | Citizen Competence | Minimally favorable; however, signs of improvements were observed in some LGs Effective participation was constrained by citizens' lack of skills, knowledge, and competence |
| | Bureaucratic Responsiveness | Minimally low favorable, but with signs of improvement Citizens' voices were often heard but seldom taken into account in decision-making Constrained by adverse LG structure and an absence of participation-friendly behavior |
| | Organizational Characteristics | Inhibiting rather than favorable and worked as a bottleneck of participation Constrained by low capacity, traditional leadership style, and hierarchical decision-making practices |
| | Representativeness | Particularly inhibiting; constrained by elite domination of LG decision-making Decisions were often lopsided, favoring particular groups of people or political parties |

OUTCOMES OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

What are the outcomes of citizen participation? Do LGs perform better when citizens participate in LG decision-making? This section attempts to answer these questions by showing how participation has affected local planning and accountability systems. Through data coding and analysis, I identified 220 examples of outcomes of citizen participation—both positive and negative—and clustered them into five broad categories, with examples. Overall, as shown in Table 1, data suggest that citizen participation in Nepal has contributed positively but modestly to improving local planning and accountability systems, although it is also linked with potential negative outcomes in each category. Unexpectedly, the perspectives of LG stakeholders in exploratory interviews and community people in FGDs were similar, except on a few issues such as the role of citizens and CSOs in cooperating in the participatory process, and citizens' perceptions on the role of LGs in promoting inclusive, participatory, and accountable government.

Table 1: Positive and Negative Examples Related to the Outcomes of Citizen Participation

| Positive examples | Negative examples |
|---|--|
| Strengthening development management | |
| Addressed citizens' grievances better and increased access to LGs' services and resources | Raised citizens' expectations and ultimately created dissatisfaction in citizens |
| Improved LG decisions, public service delivery, and its quality | Citizens' voices were heard but often neglected in decision-making |
| Allowed citizens to obtain project-specific information and explore local potential, and provided options for solutions | Participation made decision-making more complex and conflicting |
| Enabled better understanding of citizens' needs, more informed policy design, and fairer decisions | Increased conflict between citizens and LGs, which made it hard to reach consensus |
| Provided feedback on, and eased implementation and timely completion of, projects | LG officials often turned a deaf ear to the demands from citizens |

| | |
|--|---|
| Helped obtain voluntary compliance, collective support, and cash, labor, or local material contributions | Experienced the problem of free riders; it was hard to get in-kind or cash contributions from economically disadvantaged people |
| Transparent and accountable LGs | |
| Established a two-way communication channel and enabled citizens to get more information | Free flow of information, particularly about budgets, remained just a slogan |
| Citizens demanded explanations and justifications for LG decisions | Citizens lacked power to demand accountability and failed to enforce LG commitments |
| Participation helped to reduce fiduciary risks and local patronage | Funds were often misused by CSOs and consumer's committees |
| Participation increased citizens' oversight and scrutiny | Local elites captured resources and dominated decision-making |
| Practices of inclusive citizen participation | |
| Increased the events of participation and the number of participants, and included traditionally excluded people | Participation often remained shallow and many poor and marginalized people remained excluded |
| Participation strengthened partnerships with CSOs and citizens | CSOs remained non representative, opaque, and unaccountable |
| Citizen empowerment | |
| Increased a sense of citizenship and empowerment | Citizens often felt alienated, powerless, and distrusted |
| Participation increased civic awareness, knowledge, and skills | Local elites used participation to fulfill their own interests |
| Participants forced LG officials to be responsive to citizens and altered the priorities of local planning and budgeting | Results were the same with or without participation |
| Trust and legitimacy | |
| Citizens realized the realities and difficulties of local planning and LG decision-making | Participation was simply used to legitimize policies and actions that have already been decided |
| Built a sense of cooperation, shared responsibility, and better understanding between LGs and citizens | Local social, economic, and political conditions remained adverse, particularly to the weaker sections of the community |

Outcomes for Strengthening Local Planning

Data obtained in the study support the argument that citizen participation in LG planning contributed greatly to improving local planning systems by making them more rational and efficient. Consistent with Box's (1998: 21) argument that rationality is an important enterprise of decision-making that provides "opportunities for people to express themselves and to be listened to, and to respect for the views of others," many informants in this study said that participation contributed considerably to making LG planning and decision-making more rational, because participation helped LGs to receive more project-specific information, develop better solutions to local problems, and understand citizens' needs and their preferences. These, in turn, helped to secure more informed policy design and fairer decisions. One source cited that "the project-specific information obtained from participation such as local conditions, time, and velocity of water resources, and cultural and social aspects of particular projects was quite useful in improving our decisions on local planning and budgeting." Respondents stressed that many participatory events greatly helped LGs to tackle their information asymmetry problems and enhanced planning rationality.

Table 1 shows that participation also contributed to increasing the practice of collective action, altering the policies and priorities of local planning and budgeting to benefit directly the poor and vulnerable. Participation also led to the exploration and mobilization of local potentials, resources, and various options for solutions. In line with the evidence obtained by Handley and Howell-Moroney (2010) for the U.S. and by PDDP (2000) for Nepal, many informants suggested that such examples contributed considerably to ensuring the efficient allocation of LG resources and thereby reducing the waste. Says a community leader:

We were historically excluded and had never received any services from the Village Development Committee...because the elite captured all the decisions, opportunities, and resources. After becoming aware of our rights through social mobilization, we have gained access to participate in the Village Council, and succeeded in influencing the Council to allocate funds for buying furniture, and other logistics for our nearby school. I think had we not participated, the funds would have again been allocated to places where more elite people live.

Similarly, as Table 1 demonstrates, instances in which citizens provided feedback on, and ensured voluntary compliance with, policies and project implementation could be critical for ensuring the appropriate use of resources, thereby improving managerial efficiency. In fact, these examples indicate that participation has largely contributed to an improvement of local planning and budgeting practices, along with the development of civic skills and social capital, and the empowerment of citizens.

Nevertheless, the existence of negative outcomes indicates that participation does not always lead to rational and efficient planning. There was evidence of risks of lopsided decisions being made that may benefit only particular groups of people. Table 1 shows that participation, in many cases, created dissatisfaction in citizens, raised, but did not meet, their expectations, made local decision-making more complex and conflicting, and led to the misuse of funds by CSOs and consumer's committees. Some community people also claimed that "participation has no meaning in our life as it is simply used to legitimize policies and actions that have already been decided, rather than make participatory decisions." In some cases, "powerful participants like political parties have used participation forum to fulfill their own interests that suit them," a community worker added. This indicates that unless citizens are sufficiently empowered and unless the LG system is sufficiently fair and transparent, participation can also be misused to serve the vested interests of local elites and politicians.

In sum, the above evidence supports the argument that citizen participation contributes to an improvement of local planning systems, and thus supports and extends the previous findings of Adhikari (2007), who found that participatory planning had a role in improving local planning in Nepal. It also suggests that a participatory approach is not risk-free and may lead to negative outcomes such as unmet expectations and dissatisfaction, as well as manipulation of participation to legitimize policies.

Outcomes for Strengthening Accountability

Consistent with Blair's (2000) and Box's (1998) claims, Table 1 shows that citizen participation in Nepal made considerable contributions towards improving the accountability of LGs. Respondents reported that citizens were involved in activities such as reducing both fiduciary risks and the local patronage of LGs, demanding explanations and justifications for LG decisions, and altering the priorities of local planning and budgeting, all of which can be good examples of improved accountability. Supporting this, one expert participant stated that "[P]articipation has at least helped to break the monopoly power of bureaucrats, altered project decisions such as what roads should be constructed, and increased access to, and the number of voices in, LG decision-making. It shifted the mindset of local bureaucrats towards being more responsive to the demands of citizens." Similarly, one indigenous community person stated that "[W]e possess the right to hold government accountable for meeting our needs. Now we have equal access to the resources of local government and have got the projects of community building and primary school construction near our village." These statements support the argument that participation has contributed to an improvement of LG accountability systems, particularly accountability to citizens, which was historically lacking.

In addition, participation appeared to be an important factor for promoting transparency, legitimacy, and trust in LGs, which complemented the process of promoting accountability and deepening democratic practices at the local level. Table 1 shows that participation contributed to establishing two-way communication channels between citizens and LGs, increased access to information about LG activities, and enhanced citizens' access to LG decision-making, while promoting a sense of cooperation, shared responsibility, and better understanding between LGs and citizens. A senior LG officer says:

Local-level institutions have become increasingly transparent ...and an attitude of supply-driven development has been replaced by participatory planning. As the government is increasingly mobilizing communities, citizens are becoming more vocal and critical and more willing to express their concerns and dissatisfaction. As a result, in many cases, decisions have been improved and the voices of the voiceless have started to be heard, particularly in those communities where social mobilization and community-based organizations are widespread. Nevertheless, there has been too little progress in removing the obstacles that are often associated with local power and politics.

This statement, supported by many respondents, has broad implications for the effects of participation because it shows tight linkages between the actions of citizens and LG decisions, as well as changes in the behavior of LG officials and the empowerment of citizens. As suggested by Box (1998), this can be an evidence of improved accountability. In the same line, in the section below, an expert source summarized the overall outcomes of participation as follows:

Citizen participation in local government has at least three implications. First, it has sensitized local government staff about the importance of participation, which could hardly be achieved by any program. Second, it has given citizens more access to local governance, which greatly helps to empower citizens. Finally, it has

drawn the attention of the government to hidden social issues and explored the potential of women and marginalized groups in leadership and management of local problems.

While in the field, I further observed various forms of public outreach regarding LG activities in the communities. Outreach included the display of signboards at construction sites, even in rural areas, announcing the costs of projects and who was responsible; coverage of LG activities, including local planning and budgeting decisions, by local FM radio; and the participation of LG officials in question-and-answer sessions on FM radio. These new practices might be good examples of increased accountability of LGs to citizens resulting from LGs' commitment to transparency.

Nevertheless, Table 1 also shows several negative outcomes, such as the exclusion of economically disadvantaged and vulnerable people, feelings of powerlessness, alienation, and distrust on the part of citizens, evidence showing the domination of LG decision-making by local elites and politicians, and tokenistic participation. Many community people reported that "local government often turns a deaf ear even in cases like the demand for better service delivery and fulfillment of basic needs." Another respondent stated that "many citizens lack essential power and capacity to force public officials to visualize the issues from the citizens' point of view, and there was no difference in the decisions made with or without participation." Such comments could indicate that citizens' ability to contribute to LG decision-making is being underestimated, and that LG officials are often perceived as being largely unresponsive and unaccountable.

To summarize, consistent with Holland and coworkers' (2012) study for Nepal, this discussion suggest that citizen participation increased the accountability of LG officials and the transparency of LGs, which boosted the legitimacy of LG decisions, and led to the empowerment of citizens. Nevertheless, there are drawback, in some cases, such as a lack of responsiveness and accountability. These negative findings alien with the findings of Freedman and coauthors (2012), Koirala (2011), and the NGO Federation (2011), which highlighted mostly negative outcomes of citizen participation in Nepal.

To recap, the evidence above indicates that there are complex dynamics in the role of citizen participation in strengthening local planning and accountability systems—mostly leading to both positive and negative outcomes. Even within one small unit of LG, many participants identified both positive and negative outcomes, depending on contextual specificities such as the dynamics of local power and politics, religious and culture-specific constraints, time and spatial variability, and the leeway given to citizen participation by LG officials. These findings can have three important implications: First, although the positive contributions of participation are modest, they are vital for strengthening local planning and accountability systems (see also Box, 1998; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012). Box (1998: 162, 120) argues that the trajectory of local governance reform is "constructive" and "incremental"; and participation success takes time and skills as well as political will (Dinham, 2005). Thus the achievements made may allow LGs to move forward and provide citizens an increased opportunity to participate effectively. Second, the existence of many negative outcomes may have nothing to do with the practice of participation. Rather, such outcomes could be the consequence of existing problems in the community and administration—even before the efforts to increase partici-

pation—such as poor governance, deficits in local democracy, and political and elite domination, which severely constrain the deliberation process. Third, more and improved participation itself can remediate various problems that participation faces in order to be effective, because improved participation imparts knowledge, increases awareness, and raises the efficacy of participation (Osmani, 2007; UN, 2008). Thus, the challenge is to understand the factors that constrain the participation process and its outcomes.

THE 3+1 GAP ANALYSIS OF EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION

In exploring the underlying causes responsible for the negative outcomes as well as the slow progress of the positive outcomes, I found seven categories of constraints. These constraints can be closely associated with local administrative, political, social, economic, geographical, policy, and capacity factors (Box 1). Indeed, we can understand how these factors affect participation outcomes by using Osmani's (2007) three-gap model of participation, which specifies three barriers to effective participation—the capacity gap, the incentive gap, and the power gap—and adding to it the representation gap, which seems to be specific to Nepal.

Box 1: Key Constraints on Effective Citizen Participation

- *Political*: Specific cultural factors of local politics such as political instability, deficits in local governance and democracy, clientelism, political domination, lack of strong political commitment, absence of elected representatives for more than a decade, and elite-centered local power and politics.
- *Administrative*: Politicization of the bureaucracy, centralistic mindset, upward accountability systems, high turnover of centrally appointed staff, high degrees of impunity and corruption, lack of responsiveness and commitment, and inadequate responses to the demands of citizens.
- *Policy*: Ambiguity in roles and responsibilities about participation, contradictions of the LSGA with sectoral laws, poor implementation or noncompliance with policies and legal provisions, and lack of ownership of the LSGA by sectoral agencies.
- *Capacity*: Lack of capacity of both LGs and citizens, lack of resources, lack of essential civic knowledge, skills, and awareness among citizens, asymmetrical power sharing in communities.
- *Citizenry*: Participants' low levels of representativeness, low enthusiasm and incentives to participate, and poor attendance at participation events, low capacity to contribute to LG projects.
- *Geographical*: Geographical barriers due to difficult topography, monsoon rains, and scattered settlements.
- *Social*: Specific cultural factors in specific localities, such as hierarchical social values and relations, elite domination, class-based barriers for the poor and DAGs, social and economic exclusion and reprisals, self-exclusionary practices, and caste-, gender-, and ethnicity-based discrimination.

The Capacity Gap

As I discussed earlier in this paper, many informants perceived that the capacity of both LGs and citizens was typically low. The capacity gap was found to be particularly large in rural and remote areas, and in poor and backward communities. Such communities

lacked awareness of their rights and duties, as well as essential civic knowledge and skills required for a sufficient understanding of the complex processes of local planning, budgeting, and accountability. According to one CSO activist, “many participants did not put forward their views at all although we encouraged them many times. They just kept silence ...and listened patiently. This may be because many of them have fairly low capacity to express opinions in front of politicians, activists, and interest groups.”

Similarly, the capacity of LGs also remained low due to constraints on financial and human resources and lack of entrepreneurial leadership, as well as low levels of responsiveness and hierarchical social and administrative structures. Building the capacity of both citizens and LGs through fine-tuning the institutional mechanisms, providing them with adequate authority and resources, and mobilizing and empowering citizens through imparting essential knowledge and skills all seem crucial for achieving effective participation.

The Incentive Gap

Many informants reported that a lack of incentives for both citizens and LGs to promote effective participation was a key factor for the existence of negative outcomes. They said that due to a shortfall in enthusiasm to participate among many ordinary citizens and the perceived lack of potential gains resulting from participation created a high level of disincentives in citizens, resulting their poor attendance at participation events. Specifically, a lack of time and willingness to participate, as well as low levels of both trust and competence in many ordinary citizens were reported to be significant disincentives that created widespread disappointment in citizens and their institutions. But additional disincentives were identified for the poor and vulnerable such as the scattered dispersal of settlements and diverse geography, widespread illiteracy and marginal levels of literacy, a society geared toward rewarding the elite, a lack of skills, and, sometimes, self-exclusion practices. These findings are similar to those described by the PDDP (2000) for Nepal. For example, the expectation of marginal or zero benefits resulting from participation accompanied by visible opportunity costs such as the loss of daily wages, distraction from employment and business, and time away from children, all of which created disincentives for citizens.

Similarly, LG officials remained apathetic about promoting participation because they felt that participation created various complexities in the process of local planning and decision-making. In fact, when citizens participated in LG decision-making, officials claimed that accommodating such participation required more funds and time and entailed opportunity costs. In fact, such perceptions created disincentives to them to initiate participatory approach in LG decision-making. Creating a large resource pool in LGs through substantial fiscal devolution, as was done in Brazil (Osmani, 2007) and Kerala (Venugopal & Yilmaz, 2009) and creating direct incentives, for example, by selecting more projects based on citizens' demands (Osmani, 2007), can minimize such disincentives.

The Power Gap

Almost all the respondents reported that differences in power based on social, political, and economic aspects—such as elite-centered local power and politics, elite capture of decisions and resources, and a failure of citizens to enforce LG commitments—had provided opportunities for collusion among local politicians, elites, and bureaucrats; these power differences can be linked to the existence of corruption and malpractice, and the low levels of public trust in LGs. For example, many respondents reported that a high level of political domination in participation process not only damaged the efficiency and performance of LGs, but also seriously undermined the legitimacy of the entire system of local governance and development. Community people reported that many participation events often turned out to be tokenistic, and discussions were held in an exclusionary manner. Respondents reported that citizens were unable to ensure that LG officials made decisions based on the interests of citizens. In other cases, respondents claimed that politicians and local elites often played a dominant role in major decisions of LGs, for example, in decisions about allocating resources and selecting projects. Power differentials between the elites and ordinary people can intimidate the latter, preventing people from strengthening their agency so that they can hold elites to account. As argued by Osmani (2007) and UN (2008), this power gap also indicates that unless local institutions and citizens are empowered, and unless forces are created to counter-vail centuries of domination and subservience to elites, achieving effective participation would be rather difficult.

The Representative Gap

In addition to Osmani's (2007) three gaps, the lack of elected representatives, a condition that existed for more than a decade, appeared to be a major stumbling block toward promoting effective participation in Nepal. Many respondents felt that a long-term political vacuum, which is, in fact, a major obstacle to building local democracy and governance, was one of the major detrimental factors that discouraged many citizens from participation. This vacuum also limited the scope of effective communication between citizens and LG officials. In line with Fung and Right's (2003) and Yang and Pandey's (2011) claims that the presence of elected representatives is critical for effective participation, LG officials in this study also acknowledged that their absence weakened the push for promoting local self-governance and the support for citizens to become more deeply involved in LG decision-making. Their absence also negatively impacted attempts to promote greater transparency and accountability in LGs, the ability of LGs to set policies more broadly, and the ability of LG officials to work as a team with citizens. These findings imply that having elected representatives may be a necessary precondition for the achievement of effective participation.

CONCLUSION

Previous sections have reviewed participation concepts, analyzed the characteristics of LG and citizens, and examined the relationship between citizen participation and local planning and accountability systems. The results drawn from an examination of factors associated with citizen participation in LG decision-making show that institutional and policy frameworks and participation mechanisms are favorable, or at least pose no hindrance, to the promotion of effective participation in Nepal. However, other factors, such as the existence of hierarchal structures, traditional types of leadership, weak institutional capacity, and low responsiveness, as well as low levels of citizens' competence appeared as less favorable to effective participation. The result is a mixed bag. On one hand, participation showed positive impacts on achieving development gains, improving local planning systems, strengthening local accountability, and empowering citizens, because participation imparted more awareness, knowledge, and skills among citizens and encouraged LG officials to be more transparent, legitimate, and inclusive. One interesting finding was that, consistent with Holland and coworkers' (2012) claims for Nepal and Putnam's (1993) claims for Italy, social mobilization and the role of CSOs appeared to be a key factor in promoting effective participation. In comparison to other LGs, there appeared to be fewer negative outcomes in those LGs in which social mobilization was effective and social networks were thick and vibrant.

On the other hand, there were also some negative outcomes, such as political and elite domination, tokenistic participation, socioeconomic exclusion and reprisals, and feelings of alienation and powerlessness. These negative outcomes may have been closely associated with the presence of elite-centered local power and politics, a general lack of capacity in LGs to promote their responsiveness and fulfill their commitments, administrative and structural constraints, and local governance and democracy deficits.

These conclusions are in line with Gaventa and Barrett's (2012) findings obtained from a meta-analysis of multinational case studies, which showed that citizen participation was often associated with largely positive but sometimes negative outcomes, the outcomes which were dependent on the influence of contextual factors. The findings of this study do not also reject the findings of Koirala (2011) and Freedman and coworkers (2013) for Nepal, which generally emphasized the negative parts of outcomes. However, this findings also show that participation is not only negatively associated with local planning and accountability systems, but that it has also made a positive contribution towards strengthening those systems.

Ganesh Prasad Pandeya is Researcher at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), Japan.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Tatsuo Oyama, late Yoichi Okita, and Ikuo Shimomura, Kiyotaka Yokomichi, Hirofumi Takada, Masahiro Horie, Hiroshi Ikawa for their invaluable guidance and support of this research; to Katerina Petchko for editing the manuscript and providing extensive feedback; to Shree Krishna Shrestha, Khemraj Nepal and Chakrapani Acharya for comments on earlier drafts of this paper; and to the two anonymous reviewers for providing detailed feedback on this paper.

Overall, from these findings, it appears that, because the outcomes of participation were not invariably the same, the relationship between participation and its outcomes is highly dynamic and complex. The differences in the participation outcomes can be attributed to the differences in the participation *structures* and *agency* in the participation process. Among many structural features, a collusive nexus that we observed between local power, politics, participation and development seems to be a major feature responsible for negative outcomes. Other structural features included the differences in power relationships among participation actors, the exclusionary political cultures of participation, disincentives for participating in, or influencing, the decision process, low capacity of LGs to respond to citizens' demands, and the lack of broader support from elected representatives. Similarly, a lack of capacity and empowerment of citizens, particularly in marginalized groups, to exercise their agency to influence the LG decision-making process was another key factor for limiting the potentials of achieving positive outcomes. This indicates that the path to effective participation remains mostly unclear. Understanding the role of these such as how power is constituted and operates in participation process should be the main focus of further research.

As suggested by many respondents, success lies in creating a two-prong strategy to promote more effective participation, an approach that demonstrated proven impacts in the context of Porto Alegre and Kerala (Fung & Wright, 2003; Osmani, 2007). The first prong is reconstituting LG structures through revitalizing institutional and organizational settings, for example, by securing commitments from the government, building the capacity of LG institutions, deepening democracy, and closing the representative gap. The second prong is building the agency of marginal groups through improving literacy and public awareness, empowerment programs, social mobilization, and partnerships with—and the thickening of—community associations. Such measures are difficult to achieve in the short run. The improvements suggested in the second prong would create forces that would challenge elite-centered local power and political forces and allow marginalized groups to engage more constructively in local governance and its development.

An important caveat to this study is that it is a qualitative analysis predominantly based on the perceptions of a small group of respondents. Although the findings are consistent with existing theories of participation, more rigorous research comprising both qualitative and quantitative data analysis is needed to substantiate the effects of participation. There is, however, little doubt about the existence of both negative and positive outcomes of participation.

REFERENCES

- Acharya, B. (1965). *Nepalko sanchhhipta vritant*, Vol. 1. Kathmandu: Jor Ganesh Press.
- Adams, C. F., Bell, M. E., & Brown, T. (2002). Building civic infrastructure: Implementing community partnership grant programmes in South Africa. *Public Administration and Development*, 22(4), 293–302.

- Adhikari, D. (2007). *Towards local democracy in Nepal: Power and participation in district development planning*. Dortmund: SPRING Center, Univesrsitat Dortmund.
- Batley, R., & Rose, P. (2011). Analyzing collaboration between non-governmental service providers and governments. *Public Administration and Development*, 31(4), 230-239.
- Blair, H. (2000). Participation and accountability at the periphery: Democratic local government in six countries. *World Development*, 28(1), 21-39.
- Box, R. (1998). *Citizen governance: Leading American communities into the 21st century*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.
- Bryer, T. A. (2007). Toward a relevant agenda for a responsive public administration. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 17(3), 479-500.
- Devas, N., & Grant, U. (2003). Local government decision making—citizen participation and local accountability: Some evidence from Kenya and Uganda. *Public Administration and Development*, 23, 307-316.
- Dhungel, D. N. (2004, December). *Decentralized governance: A perspective for Nepal*. Paper presented at the Seminar on Reforming Governance—Perspectives and Experience in Bangalore, India. Retrieved September 5, 2011 from http://iids.org.np/project_test/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/dn2.pdf
- Dinham, A. (2005). Empowered or over-powered? The real experiences of local participation in the UK's new deal for communities. *Community Development Journal*, 40(3), 301–312.
- Ebdon, C., & Franklin, A. L. (2006). Citizen participation in budgeting theory. *Public Administration Review*, 66(3), 437-447.
- Esonu, B., & Kavanamur, D. (2011). Exploring the relationship between the level of stakeholder participation and local-level government performance in Papua New Guinea: The case of Wampar local level government in Morobe province. *International Public Management Review*, 12(1), 95–111.
- Farazmand, A. (2009). Building administrative capacity for the age of rapid globalization. *Public Administration Review*, 69(6), 1007-1020.
- Freedman, J., Neupane, B. D., Adhikari, A., Thapa, M. M., Thapa, N. S., Pradhan, K. M., Pokharel, S., Bista, K. K., & Raghunandan, T. R. (2012). *Focused evaluation local governance and community development program (LGCDP)*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Government.
- Fung, A., & Wright, E. O. (2003). Thinking about empowered participatory governance. In A. Fung and E. O. Wright (Eds.) *Deepening democracy: Institutional innovations in empowered participatory governance* (pp. 3-44). London: Verso.
- Gaventa, J. (2004). *Strengthening participatory approaches to local governance: Learning the lessons from abroad*. Retrieved January 6, 2014 from www.ids.ac.uk/logolink

- Gaventa, J., & Barrett, G. (2010). So what difference does it make? Mapping the outcomes of citizen engagement. *IDS Working Paper 347*.
- Gaventa, J., & Barrett, G. (2012). Mapping the outcomes of citizen engagement. *World Development, 40*(12), 2399–2410.
- Gerston, L. N. (2002). *Public policy making in a democratic society: A guide to civic engagement*. New York: Center for Civic Education.
- Golooba-Mutebi, F. (1999). *Decentralization, democracy and development administration in Uganda: Limits to popular participation* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). London School of Economics, London.
- Government of Nepal. (2007). *The interim constitution of Nepal, 2063 (2007)*. Kathmandu: Nepal Law Commission.
- Handley, D. M., & Howell-Moroney, M. (2010). Ordering stakeholder relationships and citizen participation: Evidence from the community development block grant program. *Public Administration Review, 70*(4), 601–609.
- Holland, J., Ruedin, L., Scott-Villiers, P., & Sheppard, H. (2012). Tackling the governance of socially inclusive service delivery. *Public Management Review, 14*(2) (Special Issue), 181-196.
- Inlogos. (2009). *Assessment of Village Development Committee governance and the use of block grants, part one findings and part two strategy*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Local Development.
- Irvin, R. A., & Stansbury, J. (2004). Citizen participation in decision making: Is it worth the effort? *Public Administration Review, 64*(1), 55-65.
- John, M. S., & Chathukulam, J. (2003). Measuring decentralization: The case of Kerala (India). *Public Administration and Development, 23*, 347-360.
- John, P. (2009). Can citizen governance redress the representative bias of political participation? *Public Administration Review 69*(3), 494-516.
- Julnes, D. L., & Johnson, D. (2011). Strengthening efforts to engage the Hispanic community in citizen driven governance: An assessment of efforts in Utah. *Public Administration Review 71*(2), 221-231.
- Kaufmann, D., & Bellver, A. (2005). *Transparenting transparency: Initial empirics and policy applications*. Retrieved November 22, 2013 from http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=808664
- King, C. S., Feltey, K. M., & Susel, B. O. (1998). The question of participation: Toward authentic public participation in public administration. *Public Administration Review, 58*(4), 317-326.
- Koirala, B. (2011). *Stock taking of fiscal decentralization policies, expenditure* (Unpublished). Kathmandu: Local Bodies Fiscal Commission Secretariat.
- Kweit, M. B., & Kweit, R. W. (1981). *Implementing citizen participation in a bureaucratic society: A contingency approach*. New York: Praeger.

- Local Governance and Accountability Facility. (2012). *Local governance and accountability facility (final progress report, 2012)*. Kathmandu: Local Governance Accountability Facility Secretariat.
- Lu, Y., & Xue, C. (2011). The power of the purse and budgetary accountability: Experiences from sub-national governments in China. *Public Administration and Development* 31, 351-362.
- Mallik, V. (2013). *Local and community governance for peace and development in Nepal*. Bonn: German Development Institute.
- Mckenna, D. (2011). UK local government and public participation: Using conjecture to explain the relationship. *Public Administration*, 89(3), 1182-1200.
- Merrifield, A. (2013). The urban question under planetary urbanization. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(3), 909-922.
- Mohanty, R. (2010). Contesting development, reinventing democracy: Grassroots social movements in India. In L. Thompson & C. Tapscott (Eds.), *Citizenship and social movements: Perspectives from the global South* (pp 239-260), London: Zed.
- Moynihan, D. P. (2003). Normative and instrumental perspectives on public participation: Citizen summits in Washington, D.C. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 33(2), 164-188.
- Nabatchi, T. (2012). Putting the “public” back in public values research: Designing participation to identify and respond to values. *Public Administration Review*, 72(5), 699-708.
- Narayan, D., Chambers, R., Shah, M. K., & Petesch, P. (2000). *Crying out for change: Voices of the poor*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). *The content analysis guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- NGO Federation. (2011). *Strengthening participation of CSOs to improve economic and public finance governance in Nepal* (A report on baseline study and citizen satisfaction survey). Kathmandu: NGO Federation of Nepal and European Union.
- Osmani, S. R. (2007). Participatory governance: An overview of issues and evidence. In UN, *Building trust through civic engagement* (pp. 9-55). New York: United Nations Publications.
- Paarlberg, L. E., & Lavigna, B. (2010). Transformational leadership and public service motivation: Driving individual and organizational performance. *Public Administration Review*, 70(5), 710-718.
- Participatory District Development Program. (2000). *PDDP, putting people first, 2000 the year in review*. Kathmandu: PDDP.
- Putnam, R. D. (1993). *Making democracy work: Civic tradition in modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Roberts, N. (2008). *The age of direct citizen participation*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

- Rocha Menocal, A., & Sharma, B. (2008). *Joint evaluation of citizens' voice and accountability: Synthesis report*. London: Department for International Development.
- United Nations. (2008). People matter civic engagement in public governance, *World Public Sector Report 2008*. New York: United Nations.
- United Nations Development Program. (2014). *Nepal human report 2014 beyond geography unlocking human potential*. Kathmandu: National Planning Commission.
- Venugopal, V., & Yilmaz, S. (2009). Decentralization in Kerala: Panchayat government discretion and accountability. *Public Administration and Development*, 29(4), 316–329.
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wang, X., & Wart, M. W. (2007). When public participation in administration leads to trust: An empirical assessment of managers' perceptions. *Public Administration Review*, 67(2), 265–278.
- Wescott, C. G. (2003). Hierarchies, networks and local government in Vietnam. *International Public Management Review*, 4(2), 20–40.
- World Bank. (2005). *World development report, 2006, equity and development*. Washington D.C.: World Bank.
- Yang, K. F., & Callahan, K. (2007). Citizen involvement efforts and bureaucratic responsiveness: Participatory values, stakeholder pressure, and administrative practicality. *Public Administration Review*, 67(2), 249–64.
- Yang, K., & Callahan, K. (2005). Assessing citizen involvement efforts by local governments. *Public Performance and Management Review*, 29(2), 191–216.
- Yang, K., & Pandey, S. K. (2011). Further dissecting the black box of citizen participation: When does citizen involvement lead to good outcomes? *Public Administration Review*, 71(6), 880–892.

About IPMR

IPMR The International Public Management Review (IPMR) is the electronic journal of the International Public Management Network (IPMN). All work published in IPMR is double blind reviewed according to standard academic journal procedures.

The purpose of the International Public Management Review is to publish manuscripts reporting original, creative research in the field of public management. Theoretical, empirical and applied work including case studies of individual nations and governments, and comparative studies are given equal weight for publication consideration.

IPMN The mission of the International Public Management Network is to provide a forum for sharing ideas, concepts and results of research and practice in the field of public management, and to stimulate critical thinking about alternative approaches to problem solving and decision making in the public sector.

IPMN includes over 1300 members representing about one hundred different countries, both practitioners and scholars, working in all aspects of public management. IPMN is a voluntary non-profit network and membership is free.

ISSN 1662-1387