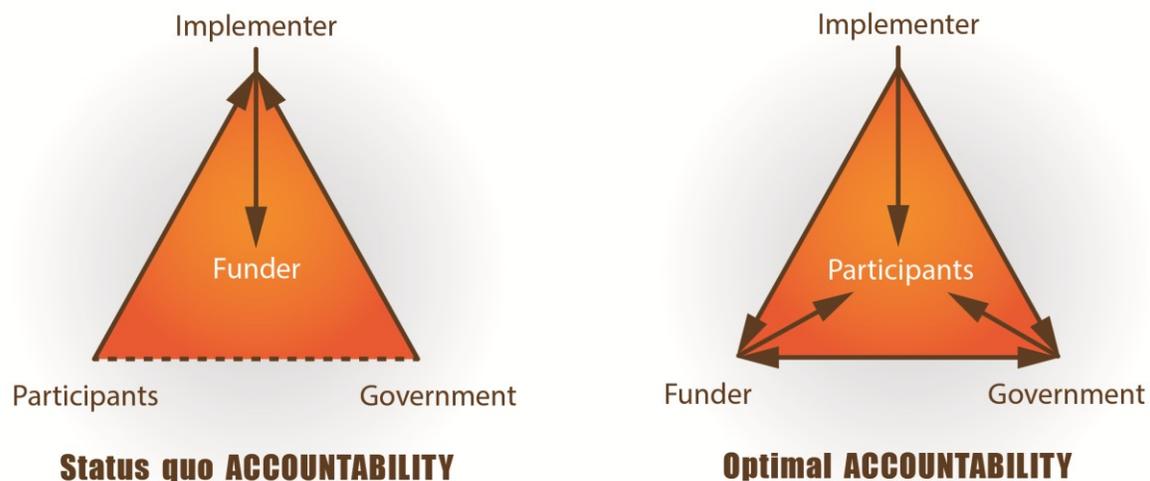


Valuing Voices: The case for accountability to participants

The complex and ambitious agenda for 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is in place to promote improvements in human and environmental well being. [Two thousand initiatives](#) have linked their results to the SDGs to date, with the assumption that fixed-term project outcomes lead to sustained impact. **There is potential and momentum for true country-led development. Yet a healthy reflection on aid mechanisms and accountabilities, including opportunities for doing good in better ways is key.**

Issues of note:

- 1) Accountability and transparency are typically focused on demonstrating projects' resource efficiencies and implementation effectiveness to donors and their taxpayers. This is often done with an eye on future funding. **Accountability to local participants or country learning about effective development is a minor consideration if considered at all.**



Sustainable development starts with local voices, strengthens listening and accountability mechanisms between government and citizens, and holds donors and implementers accountable to them.

- 2) While current aid mechanisms include extensive results monitoring through the project cycle (orange, below), **less than 1% of projects are evaluated post-project** (green). In fact, since 2000, [less than 1% of projects supported by the EU and USAID alone—valued at \\$1.6 trillion](#)—have been evaluated for sustainability of outcomes. This means investors and other interested parties walk away with little evidence about longer-term results.

Not learning from what local stakeholders have self-sustained or how well international aid projects built local and national capacities to continue development efforts represents a gap in stewardship, accountability and excellence.

Such evidence is valuable to inform future design; considerations of follow up, and may be the most powerful indication of success. It can also point to instructive surprises—unintended outcomes that are true indicators of unplanned impact.

3) The voices of participants and partners are critical during the full project cycle.

Projects that ignore or pay lip service to genuine engagement with participants may run aground because of implementation efforts that miss locally held priorities or opportunities or fail to generate local ownership. They may stumble because they have not understood critical contextual realities through the eyes of participants. **Organizational and project effectiveness benefit from monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that enable a diversity of views and continuity of local voices.** Projects need to consult those locally on what fosters sustainability, which may change how implementers and funders conceive technical capacity building, service delivery, knowledge retention and leadership training for long-term country handover.



Valuing Voices advocates for **greater participant voice at all stages of the development process. We offer technical advice and assistance** to boost attention in current monitoring and evaluation initiatives to ensure accountability loops include participant perspectives. We also **carry out ex-post (post-project) evaluations**, using mixed methods that listen carefully to local stakeholders, and include local evaluators on our teams.

For more information on Valuing Voices, please see our [blogs](#) as well as our [team](#). For more details on our evaluation approach, please see [Valuing Voices evaluation capabilities](#).

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