

UNDP Accountability Ecosystems Analysis



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Literature review

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Introduction

The Accountability Ecosystems in the Pacific research project – a collaboration between UNDP and the Institute for Human Security and Social Change at La Trobe University – is focused on understanding Pacific approaches to accountability and the political economy of how accountability operates across six countries spanning the North and South Pacific. This research will inform UNDP’s ‘Accountable Public Finances to serve Pacific people – Vaka Pasifika’ project, which aims to strengthen the governance mechanisms enabling Pacific countries to deliver public services that are better calibrated to meet the specific needs of the people. This literature review comes at the early stages of the research project and summarises key literature on accountability for responsive governance globally, as well as within the Pacific. It seeks to situate the research project in wider debates, and to provide a consistent baseline understanding of the scope of accountability and accountability ecosystems, and what influences shape its various interpretations, to inform the country studies that are to follow.

Central research questions for the research project overall include:

- How is accountability understood in the Pacific and what shapes these understandings?
- What forms do accountability and oversight mechanisms take in the Pacific? How stable are these expected to remain?
- How do these understandings and forms vary by country, across rural and urban settings and by gender, age and other relevant factors?
- Whose power and interests are served by these approaches to accountability and whose are excluded?
- What opportunities and constraints are there to support, expand and learn from these Pacific understandings of accountability to improve governance responsiveness to citizen interests?

The six countries of focus for the research will be selected in consultation with UNDP from the ten priority countries of the Vaka Pasifika program: Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

This literature review is structured in five sections, which each consider the global literature (often highly Western-centric in focus), followed by Pacific-focused literature. The first section looks at evolutions in understandings of accountability and why accountability matters. The second section considers influences on how accountability is understood. The third section sets out ‘who counts’ as an accountability actor and how they interact. The fourth section details various forms and practices of accountability and the fifth section lays out the outstanding questions we are left with that this research project will explore.

The literature review was undertaken by initial library and journal article searches for literature on accountability, with a focus on governance and international development literatures, given our interest in governance that is accountable to citizen needs. Some of the key authors in this field were already known to the research team, and works by Mark Bovens, Peter Newell, Derick Brinkerhoff, Jonathan Fox and Brendon Halloran were useful starting points, ensuring a critical lens to accountability (although also potentially reinforcing a white male bias that this project hopes to contribute to challenging). This is especially important in light of the political economy lens adopted in this research project, in which the accountability ecosystem is understood not as a technical construct but a deeply political one in which power relationships and other influences mean the ecosystem operates in particular ways that serve some interests over others. In the Pacific, the literature on accountability is significantly smaller, often country-focused and commonly identifies governance weaknesses or challenges with a specific form of externally-imposed accountability implied. There are important gaps in the literature that are highlighted throughout this review and thus information on some of the issues covered in the sections that follow is patchy.

Literature was divided between the authors, with a template used to capture information from the papers reviewed, roughly in line with the headings used in this paper. These summaries were then used to inform the writing of this review, with reference back to the full papers where required. What follows does not aim to be a comprehensive account of what is a wide international (and less wide regional) literature, but rather provides a useful summary of key debates in accountability literatures and offers a touchstone for those involved in this research project, to have a shared understanding of the scope of accountability and accountability ecosystems, as well as the political nature of both.

1. Evolutions in understandings of accountability and why it matters

In the international literature, accountability has been described as ‘the buzzword of modern governance’ (Bovens, et al 2014: 2) and even as ‘the *Über-concept* of the twenty-first century.’ (Matthew Flinders cited in Bovens, et al 2014: 2). It is seen as fundamental to ‘how power and authority are allocated and applied’ in governance and across a variety of public realms (Brinkerhoff 2001: 1). It is considered important both because of its intrinsic value and as an end in itself; as well as because of its instrumental value in achieving a range of other governance and development goals (Combaz and McLoughlin 2014: 1). Most commonly in international development literature, this instrumental value is tied to its focus on ensuring that those with responsibility for governing are answerable to those they govern for, ensuring greater consideration of the interests of ‘the governed’ in governance. Accountability is seen to be particularly important for marginalised groups in society, such as the poor, who are otherwise at risk of being left behind (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008). Accountability is widely considered to be a key component of democratic governance, specifically, with the potential to lead to improved public spending (including through increased social spending), thus improving the prospects for human development – although the empirical support for this is contested (Kumah and Brazys 2016). In short, there is much hype around accountability and a vast literature cutting across multiple disciplines outlining what it is and its potential dividends. Indeed, this breadth of literature and definitions of accountability has led some commentators to describe accountability as a ‘malleable and often nebulous concept,’ that remains ‘loose and under-specific’ (Migliorisi and Wescott 2011). Or, more disparagingly, one commentator has suggested the concept of accountability as become ‘a garbage can filled with good intentions, loosely defined concepts, and vague images of good governance (Bovens cited in Gregory 2017: 3).

The historical roots of book-keeping or accounting, from which accountability derives, are more clear. It has been traced back to medieval times when it referred to counting the possessions of the king (accounting for everything in his realm) (Bovens et al 2014: 3). It was premised on the idea of possessions (money and assets) being verifiable and controllable. Yet the specific focus has shifted over time. Enlightenment thinking, seeking to challenge the absolutist state, argued for individual rights over those of the state, establishing the idea of the social contract, in which citizens consented to be governed by the state (Brinkerhoff 2001: 7). Accountability thus came to refer to how elected leaders and appointed civil servants are answerable to citizens.

Accountability has expanded from here. As states bureaucratized and developed more ‘rationally organised systems of organisational control’, the remit of accountability so too expanded to ensure that these bureaucracies were similarly answerable either to other parts of the government and political leadership or to citizens (Gregory 2017: 3, citing Weber). In the 1980s, new public management became increasingly influential in governance and pushed for stronger outsourcing of governance functions to the private sector and non-government organisations. This outsourcing led to a further increase in the number of actors involved in the process of governance and public administration and thus dramatically increased the lines of accountability (Gregory 2017: 7-8). These changes have made accountability more complex (Peters 2006: 108). Processes of globalisation and

increasing interdependence have further distorted accountabilities as ‘governments become embedded in complex networks of global governance’ and have relationships with a variety of supranational agencies, other states, private sector and non-government actors, etc. (Bray 2009: 42). As Peter Newell notes these ‘blurred lines of authority, competing jurisdictions and shifting social expectations have produced messier and denser webs of accountability between states, market actors and civil society’ (Newell 2006: 45). Accountability has become much more confusing and despite there being ‘more accountability than ever before in the form of laws, standards, audits and targets ... [it is] increasingly unclear about who should be held to account and how’ (Roche 2009: 35). Essentially, as governance has become more complicated, so too has accountability:

More complex, multi-level systems of governance make accountability more difficult. When public policies are the product of difficult collaborations between many agents, private as well as public, it is more difficult to deliver; more difficult to call to account; more difficult even to understand who we should hold accountable. (Bovens, et al 2014: 16).

Partly as a result of these increasingly complicated governance processes, as well as deficiencies seen to characterise electoral participation as the main mode of political accountability, social accountability has become more prevalent, with the aim of citizen voice contributing to improved service provision (see below) (Fischer-Mackey and Fox 2022: 3; Damgaard and Lewis 2014: 9).

Answerability

Despite these evolutions in governance and its impacts on accountability relationships, there remains a reasonably consistent conceptual core to accountability in the literature. Most apparent is the focus on accountability as answerability: who is answerable to who for what (Gregory 2017: 3). Being accountable means being obliged to answer questions regarding decisions or actions (Schedler 1999). In particular, public leaders and officials who exercise power through their elected or appointed roles are a potential liability. As Brinkerhoff states:

What ... assures that public officials will use their power and authority properly and responsibly? The answer lies with systems, procedures, and mechanisms that impose restraints on power and authority and that create incentives for appropriate behaviours and actions. These all fall within the conceptual and operational boundaries of the term, accountability (Brinkerhoff 2001: 1).

Brinkerhoff goes on to explain that there are two types of answerability. The first asks for information – to be informed about budgets, decisions and plans. This type of answerability raises the importance of transparency – with information being provided from the accountable actor in a one-way transmission (Brinkerhoff 2001: 2; Gregory 2017: 2). Transparency is variously thought of as an *instrument to facilitate* accountability, or as a *component of* accountability, given that information is necessary for legitimate challenge or opposition (Kumah and Brazys 2016: 287). It is considered crucial but insufficient on its own, and a limited version of what answerability entails (see also Fox 2015; Pritchett 2018). The second type of answerability ‘moves beyond reporting of facts and figures, and asks for explanations and justifications (reasons); that is, it inquires not just about what was done but why’ (Brinkerhoff 2001: 2). As Bovens, et al explain, accounting has an important dual meaning:

it is about listing and counting important “things”—possessions, debts, agreements, promises — and about providing an account concerning this count. Thus it implies telling a story, based on some obligation and with some consequence in view. Accountability is anchored in the mundane yet important practice of record-keeping and gives rise to story-telling in a context of social (power) relations within which enforcement of standards and the fulfillment of obligations is a reasonable expectation. (Bovens, et al 2014: 3).

This second type of answerability, requiring justification and story-telling is important in revealing the relational nature of accountability – another key topic in the literature (Bovens, et al 2014: 6). This

relational nature – referring to the relationship that accountability creates between the accountable actor and the actor(s) they are accountable too – is what makes possible dialogue and more genuine responsiveness of public officials to citizen need (Brinkerhoff 2001: 2).

Sanction/Enforceability

Yet, ‘answerability without consequences falls short of accountability’ (Fox 2007: 667). In addition, some kind of enforceability is required to sanction an accountable actor if they fail to fulfil their obligations (Kumah and Brazys 2016: 287). The possibility of punishment of accountable actor(s) for failures and transgressions gives “teeth” to accountability (Brinkerhoff 2001: 2). Without these teeth, some commentators would view answerability as too soft and meaningless. As Behn (cited in Bovens, et al 2014: 6) notes: ‘accountability means punishment.’

Such sanctioning may be done by other parts of government, political or state actors (horizontal accountability) or by civil society or the polity itself (vertical) (Kumah and Brazys 2016: 287). Sanctions might be put in place via laws (this is considered the strongest approach), policies and regulations but also by professional codes of conduct, the threat of public exposure or the use of the market to judge performance accountability (Brinkerhoff 2001: 2-3). Thus, in the absence of strong laws or policies that hold accountable actors answerable, governments, people and civil society groups may use weaker sanctions to incentivise political leaders and officials to uphold ethical standards (Brinkerhoff 2001: 3).

Horizontal and vertical accountability

Accountability can apply to different functions – from political accountability of elected leaders to citizens; to financial accountability for proper use of resources; to performance accountability for achievement of expected results to professional accountability for professional related standards or ethics (Bovens et al 2014: 11; Brinkerhoff 2001: 5; Gregory 2017: 3). Here, we are mostly focused on political accountability, although at times this relates to political actors’ accountable performance or use of resources.

All of these forms of accountability can be achieved in different ways – horizontally or vertically. Horizontal accountability refers to state institutions that hold other parts of government or public agencies to account. This requires that these state institutions are autonomous and able to operate unhindered from political interference in order to hold power to account (Brinkerhoff 2001: 3). As O’Donnell notes (1999: 38) this requires that state agencies are ‘legally enabled and empowered, and factually willing and able, to take actions that span from routine oversight to criminal sanctions or impeachment in relation to actions or omissions by other agents or agencies of the state that may be qualified as unlawful.’ Horizontal accountability might include ombudsman, anti-corruption agencies, legislative investigative commissions, audit offices, electoral commissions and administrative courts (Ackerman 2004: 449). Where it works, horizontal accountability is a sign of institutionalisation of accountability within the state.

In practice, of course, horizontal accountability is difficult to achieve and there are many contexts where state agencies fail to hold political leaders and officials to account. In these instances, vertical accountability mechanisms become all the more important. Vertical accountability refers to accountability mechanisms outside of the state, where citizens, civil society, media and the private sector hold government to account. In vertical accountability public officials must appeal ‘downwards’ to the people (Ackerman 2004: 449). Most obviously, this occurs through elections, where citizens can reject political leaders and vote them out of power. But it can also include processes to aggregate and voice citizen demands, investigate and publicise unethical or unlawful behaviour and provide commentary and critique of political leaders (Brinkerhoff 2001: 4).

Social accountability

More recently, dissatisfaction with vertical accountability's reliance on elections to give teeth to accountability has led to exploration of new ways of securing accountability through citizen participation (Damgaard and Lewis 2014: 9). The World Bank's 2004 World Development Report was particularly influential in pushing for stronger accountabilities for service provision that put poor people at the heart (World Bank 2003). This has been termed 'social accountability' and relates to 'strengthening the voice and capacity of citizens to participate in exacting greater accountability and responsiveness from public officials' (Roche 2009: 5). Importantly, however, social accountability aims to move beyond the conventional division of accountability mechanisms into 'supply side' (working with those who are meant to be accountable) and 'demand side' (with the those demanding accountability), to working to build relationships between citizens and government or officials to create trust, dialogue and coalitions for change (Combaz and McLoughlin 2014: 4). As Jonathan Fox, who has written extensively on social accountability explains:

Insofar as social accountability builds citizen power vis-à-vis the state, it is a political process – yet it is distinct from political accountability of elected officials, where citizen voice is usually delegated to representatives in between elections. This distinction makes social accountability an especially relevant approach for societies in which representative government is weak, unresponsive, or non-existent. (Fox 2015: 346).

Intrinsic to Fox's account of social accountability is the idea of countervailing power – whereby inequitable power relations between the state and its citizens are reduced or neutralised, evening the playing field (Fox, 2020: 2). This is key to politicising accountability, as this research project aims to do.

There have thus been important evolutions in thinking on accountability in the global literature, as well as a number of typologies for disaggregating different types of accountability. But how does this overview look different (or not) in the Pacific?

Pacific understandings of accountability

Despite the broad literature on the topic of accountability internationally, in the Pacific, there is limited literature on either the definition of accountability (although this is often implicitly presumed) or on how the concept is translated in different ways into local languages or concepts. There is, however, a wider body of literature on governance, with some relevance to accountability. Several authors writing about accountability internationally define accountability as a relationship (Lawson and Rakner 2005; O' Neill et al. 2007). Bovens (2007: 450) for instance, defines it as the 'systems of management that are put in place to ensure accountability, where accountability is construed as: a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgement, and the actor may face consequences.'

Bovens's definition of accountability as a relationship resonates well in the Pacific. One of the predominant features that influenced ideas of accountability in the south Pacific region is family orientation and community relationships. In a family setting, the composition includes a family unit and extended family which can average fifty to one hundred people. The concept of accountability is often understood first from this sphere of socialisation, where everyone is accustomed to perform transparently and feel accountable for their actions.

Importantly, the practices of accountability differ in each country. In the Melanesian region, the distribution of resources via relationships of reciprocity is a common feature and often happens at the community level in a transparent manner – witnessed by everyone (Duncan, 2011). This is a reciprocal relationship where members of societies have to account for resources distributed to them by their leaders (chiefs) when they call for it in a time of need. Such practices look different in the context of

Polynesian societies and in places where a matrilineal system is observed. However, despite differences in practice, reciprocal relationships are commonly observed in special ceremonies across the Pacific, such as marriages, rank achievements, death and funeral ceremonies, birth celebrations and graduations (Keesing 1982; Jolly 1994). In the case of Vanuatu, pig killing ceremonies and Toka Dance in Tanna are cases in point, where accountability of resources features strongly with each family exchanging resources as a gesture of maintaining relationship and order in society.

From this family basis, the ways that societies organise themselves is understood through relationality and the wider community. This can take different forms in different contexts. In Vanuatu and other parts of Melanesia, this is referred to as *kastom* governance (Nimbtik 2016). According to Regenvanu (2009); Bolton (1999); and Jolly (1992) *kastom* governance is a holistic way of life that encompasses traditional ways of dealing with socio-economic development and political relations in the local communities. Similar modes of relationality can also be observed in other countries in the region, such as “*Fa’amatai* system in Samoa and *mataqali* system in Fiji. These traditional political systems need to be uncovered in order to understand notions of accountability in each respective society and how they intersect or compete (Sanga and Reynolds 2019: 11). The accountability relationship can be demonstrated through a ‘reciprocal relationship’ in the case of Fiji (Finau and Scobie 2022), wantokism in Papua New Guinea, and pig killing ceremonies in Vanuatu (Nimbtik 2016; Walton and Jackson 2020: 1).

Traditional governance is often referred to in the anthropological literature of the Pacific as a way of life that is passed on from one generation to another (Keesing 1982; Jolly 1994; Bolton 1999). This way of life, according to Tonkinson (1982), refers to ‘indigenous languages, pig killing ceremonies; men’s and women’s secret societies; practices associated with marriage, including bride wealth payments; reconciliation, feasting, and funerary traditions.’ Most of these lived cultural practices, it is argued by Ratuva (2008), are rooted in the long-established principles of restorative justice, reciprocal support systems, collective rights, consensual politics, holistic life, kinship systems, respect, communal and family support systems, and subsistence living. These are customary forms of governance that entail a strong emphasis on reciprocal relationships in which one can observe in each country in the Pacific region. Indeed, these practices are an integral part of the social fabric and order of the society in the Pacific, in which they form a foundational basis for their being and doing. To understand how accountability is playing out in the Pacific, it is crucially important to understand traditional governance of each country and analyse how its principles can be woven together with modern accountability perceptions to form a strong accountability in the administration of state’s affairs.

In the Pacific, the term ‘accountability’ is a more recently used term, related to today’s modern administrative vocabulary. Its usage began with the development of post-colonial constitutional architectures, which instituted a new political value based on democratic principles, of which accountability is an integral element (Bamforth and Leyland 2013). Thus, constitution making in the Pacific and the subsequent establishment of various governance institutions, which build on principles of democracy and liberal politics, established new political values that has in some cases challenged local values, social norms, and traditional political structures (Saldanha 2004).

As such, ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ are frequently portrayed in the literature as being in opposition to each other. Beginning with definitions, tradition in its Latin meaning denotes a process of passing knowledge and doctrine from one generation to the next (Gross 1992; Lawson 1996). This definition, as argued by Gross (1992: 8), implies a ‘set of practices, a group of beliefs, or a mode of thinking that exists in the present, but was inherited from the past’. On the other hand, modernity, according to Gillespie (2008) and Gross (1992), is defined as a change from a primitive state of being to an “innovative” and “rational” state of being. According to Lawson (1993), this view invites criticism of

the notion that whatever is 'traditional' in social and political life is, in some normative sense, opposed antithetically to something 'modern'. This antithetical relationship between 'modern' and 'traditional' is not helpful in exploring understandings and practices of accountability in the Pacific, where modern and traditional approaches combine (see Boege, et al. 2008). Instead, a nuanced analysis of local political governance and traditional institutions is required to help understand how each society interprets and applies accountability in their context.

2. Influences on understandings of accountability

Given that accountability is an inherently political concept that makes judgments about how power is exercised and restrained and in whose interests, it is important to understand how it is shaped. This will vary across time and place and encode different power relations and dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. This section considers what some of the key influences that shape notions of accountability are and will inform the country-study research by highlighting issues to pay attention to in understanding country-specific manifestations of accountability. These relate to governance histories and the nature of the political settlement; social and religious norms and values; civic space and media freedom; and independence of the judiciary.

Governance histories and nature of the political settlement

The prevailing political economy of governance imposes limits on what it is possible to achieve in relation to accountability in any given setting (Brinkerhoff 2001: 20; Newell 2006: 38). A country's history of governance will shape this in important ways – for instance, countries with a history of authoritarian governance or colonialism will have inherited 'governance systems that reflect the upward accountability to the colonial metropole and the reinforcement of authoritarian structures' (Brinkerhoff 2001: 7). This means that executive functions of government might have greater power than legislatures and judicial arms, for instance. While there many have been efforts to dismantle some of these historic governance architectures, the political cultures that they encouraged are much harder to shift and political leaders may continue to act and be treated as having largely unchecked power. In some cases, despite new constitutions, laws and processes, political leaders may 'operate with a wide latitude to ignore and break laws intended to enforce accountability, creating what some call a "culture of impunity"' (Brinkerhoff 2001: 8). In other contexts, the bounds of power may have expanded somewhat but still be limited to particular, elite groups that dominate decision-making and operate with little oversight. This can result in government 'capture' by particular interests, with governments only accountable to these narrow elites, to the exclusion of the wider population (Brinkerhoff 2001: 8).

Relatedly, Shabbir Cheema points to the presence of corruption within electoral systems as an important influence on how accountability functions (or does not, as the case may be) (2007: 175). Political parties play a key role here. Where they become 'personal clubs through which politicians gain power rather than arenas for debate on local politics and programs' they risk becoming highly competitive, with money and intimidation more likely to be used to gain access to the spoils of power (Shabbir Cheema 2007: 175). In some places, elections have become incredibly expensive undertakings for those running for public office – essentially buying votes or making commitments than must be paid back once a leader is elected (Shabbir Cheema 2007: 175). Corruption at this level can be an indicator of accountability problems within governance more broadly. Although it is also indicative of different ideas about what constitutes corruption (see for instance Ang 2020).

The legal frameworks that countries abide by – also often an inheritance of colonialism – either common law or civil law, can influence approaches to accountability. Civil law countries 'tend to accord more primacy to the state in the management of public affairs and to place more faith in civil

servants as impartial decision-makers’ (Brinkerhoff 2001: 7). Approaches to accountability in such contexts are often more horizontal between different parts of government, with fewer vertical accountabilities external to government. In common law countries, the focus is more strongly on accountability of the state to individual citizens, and thus approaches to accountability tend to involve more vertical accountabilities to judicial review and bodies external to government itself (although these horizontal accountabilities also exist) (Brinkerhoff 2001: 7).

Social and religious norms and values

Perhaps less discussed in the international literatures on accountability are the cultural, religious and socio-normative values that inform accountability (Pasquino and Pelizzo 2022: 92-93). It may be that these are largely taken for granted. But the way that accountability is thought about in modern governance – as perhaps a technical endeavor, emerges from particularly values about how owes an account of conduct to who and why. The way that accountability is thought about in current governance debates is not simply a natural outcome, but one that is shaped by particular values and social norms. As Brinkerhoff (2001: 7) explains:

Modern notions of accountability owe much to the 18th century Enlightenment political philosophers who argued for the ascendancy of individual rights over those of the state. They posited that state-society relations should be characterized in terms of a “social contract” whereby citizens cede their natural right of self-governance to the state in exchange for the societal benefits derived from state sovereignty. The idea of the social contract shifted the balance of power away from the absolutist state, where the state, embodied in a monarch or authoritarian leader, ruled over citizens as subjects, toward government by consent of the governed.

The focus on individual rights is striking here and raises questions about how accountability approaches might be configured differently in contexts where communal rights are held in higher regard; and where monarchy persists.

Pasquino and Pelizzo explore the cultural determinants of accountability, noting the religious influences on how we think about accountability. They note that in the Judeo-Christian tradition, accountability ‘was a crucial feature to structure the relationship between man and man, man and the state, and man and God’ (2022: 93). Importantly, this religious basis for accountability was more expansive than accountability concepts in the history of accounting for finances, but rather expanded to accountability to God for one’s conduct, with this then informing how citizens and rulers were similarly accountable to societal rules and laws (Pasquino and Pelizzo 2022: 96). Recognising how religious values have also come to inform thinking on accountability is important in highlighting that – again – modern notions of accountability are particular and likely vary depending on the socio-normative and religious influences.

Civic space and media freedom

Levels of civic space and media freedom are not disconnected from the wider political context in a given country. But even where government is nominally open or democratic, restrictions (either formally in law or informally in practice) on freedom of expression or association, access to information and other basic freedoms will strongly influence how accountability is thought about and what actions are possible (Brinkerhoff 2001: 4). The extent to which citizens and the media feel able to organize and voice critical perspectives or dissent also shapes accountability. In contexts where, historically or currently, citizens have been victimized or persecuted for dissent, this may result in low levels of activism for fear of retaliation. Similarly, where independent media outlets have been surveilled or shut down, manifestations of accountability will differ (Newell cited in Bray 2009: 50). With increasing activism and political contestation happening in online spaces, especially on social media, internet and media laws are also increasingly important as aspects of media freedom and civic space.

There also needs to be sufficient investment in and support for active civil society and independent media for these groups to have the capacity to play a strong accountability role. Civil society needs to be able to ‘aggregate demands, exercise voice, take advantage of freedom-of-information and sunshine laws, and be taken seriously by public officials’ (Brinkerhoff 2001: 4). Similarly, media must have sufficient investigative capacity and reporting standards and be viewed as credible or independent.

Judicial independence

Finally, the role of the judiciary and the nature of the relationship between the judiciary and executive influences how accountability is conceived (Mulgan 2003: 75-76). Where there is a strong, independent judiciary that is seen to be proactive and progressively minded, accountability is likely to involve more robust roles for external agencies like the judiciary and notions of the rule of law are likely to have currency. In such contexts, a proactive judiciary may mean following through with corruption exposed by journalists in the process, for instance (Brinkerhoff and Fox, 1999). Where the judiciary is weak or subject to political influence or control, accountability is likely to be thought of as a more internal function of government or other elites and not centred around notions of rule of law. The independence of the judiciary also speaks to how strongly enforced accountability is likely to be. With a strong, independent judiciary capable of enforcing sanctions, accountability might be thought of as having ‘teeth’ and be meaningful in terms of the outcomes it delivers. Where judicial independence does is weaker, accountability is likely to be a weaker concept and a culture of impunity amongst political leaders is more likely (Brinkerhoff 2001: 2-3).

These various influences on understandings of accountability matter because if accountability looks different in different places because it is shaped in unique ways by these (and other) influences, then it follows that standardized approaches to strengthening accountability are unlikely to have uniform outcomes. Recognising that strengthening accountability is a fundamentally political activity that requires a deep understanding of local context, Wild et al. (2010) note that the universal application of an ‘accountability blueprint’ will not work. Rather, as Bray notes, efforts to strengthen accountability ‘will have to be developed imaginatively on the ground in many contexts where “off the shelf” mechanisms may be unworkable’ (cited in Roche 2009: 50).

Global norms and donor narratives

Understandings of and approaches to accountability are also shaped by global norms and donor narratives on accountability. This contributes to what can seem like a universal agreement on what accountability means – when in fact it speaks to the increasingly monolithic ideas of accountability that donors and international organisations have successfully promoted as the global norm. The United Nations, World Bank, bilateral donors and some international non-government organisations often have outsized influence in countries classified as ‘developing’ or ‘low-income’ (Poiohia et al., 2021). This means donors and international organisations’ narratives, concepts and standards contribute to shaping the way accountability is thought about and approached in these countries. As a result, approaches to accountability in seminal reports like the World Bank’s 2004 World Development Report, are especially influential – because they reverberate through the many multilateral and bilateral donors, and international non-government organisations – contributing to what is increasingly understood to be global norms on accountability (Andrews and Okpanachi 2021). Diffusion of such global norms is further sped up by increasingly networked governance (Slaughter 2004). These global norms do not determine what accountability means and how it is understood within countries, but it influences it in particular ways.

Influences on accountability in the Pacific

The role of **traditional values** shape Pacific ideas of accountability. Traditional society in the Pacific region has been built on traditional values of social order, harmony and authority that are quite distinct from that of the legal-rational state values and institutions (Lawson 1996; 2012; Ratuva 2008). These traditional values of social order are embedded in the minds of people, and they have cherished and valued them as an integral part of their lives. These values, among others, include reciprocal relationships, strong family support and respect, traditional politics, restorative justice, and respect for leaders. In particular, reciprocal relations refer to the ways in which social networks are underpinned by reciprocal obligations that link family, friends, colleagues and associates (Walton and Jackson 2020: 1). These traditional values continue to infuse modern life. A recent case study about how Fijians use Facebook to trade with each other demonstrates an inherent societal value of reciprocal relationship, which gives one account of how local accountability is exercised in traditional communities in a modern setting (Finau and Scobie 2022).

An important knowledge gap emerges in reviewing the current governance literature in the region, between legal-rational and traditional societies. Importantly, often the design of legal-rational socio-economic and political institutions is ill-conceived and misguided, in that it can create conflicts of values of social obligation and authority in society (Dinnen 2008; Kabutaulaka 2008; Rio 2010). For instance, taking the example of land tenure systems, in the Pacific land ownership is embedded in collective rights, as distinct from the legal-rational land tenure system of land leasing and individual property rights (VanTrease 1983; 1987). Yet, as legal-rational approaches to land ownership are introduced, challenges to traditional ideas of social order emerge. The 1998 Ombudsman's report on corrupt land dealing in Vanuatu is a case in point, where a state minister abused his ministerial position and power to sell state land to his close relatives (Vanuatu Ombudsman 1998b). This is demonstrative of how social obligation of reciprocal relationships can be skewed by the incentives of legal-rational land rights, with politicians rewarding his/her families that support their election. The conflict between these two systems of land tenure, arguably, can translate into various sources of corruption in the legal-rational sphere. This point is re-enforced by Barcham (2009), based on regional National Integrity Assessments, which found that corrupt activities persist in places where robust formal legislative and policy frameworks on accountability are in place, suggesting that legal-rational approaches on their own are not effective; and that such activities may not even be understood as corruption.

The Pacific region is **culturally and linguistically diverse**, with scattered islands and population and this has greatly impacted on how traditional knowledge, values, and practices and introduced democratic values have combined (or not). In Vanuatu there are total of 110 local languages in addition to English, French, and Bislama. Those languages are spread over 83 inhabited islands (Crowley 1995; 2000; Morgan 2013). In Papua New Guinea, there are over 600 islands with more than 850 local languages. In such contexts the understanding and application of the term accountability differs from one island to the other. Accountability is best understood in the relevant local vernacular or dialect. Reilly (2004) points out that accountability processes are more difficult in South Pacific countries, especially archipelagic states, where islands are dispersed and people are divided on the basis of languages, religions, and traditions. This means that the geographic and linguistic diversity of the Pacific region will itself shape understandings of accountability in important ways.

In addition, **levels of state penetration differ** markedly across the region, with impacts on how accountability is understood. While state penetration (the ability of government to exercise control throughout the country) is reasonably high in Samoa, in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and countries such as Kiribati and the Cook Islanders with large ocean distances separating islands, state

service provision is more limited (Barcham 2009: 252-253). As a result, service delivery functions have often been either devolved to local level authorities or outsourced to civil society and the Church (Barcham 2009; Moloney 2020). In terms of accountability, this weak penetration means that the government and its agencies may be unable to provide oversight and monitoring of governance and financial transactions, providing opportunities for corruption (Barcham 2009: 253) – although other accountability processes almost certainly exist (see for instance McLoughlin et al., 2022).

The **density of social networks** in the Pacific also influences approaches to accountability. As Corbett (2015) notes: ‘In small island-states, it is not difficult for individuals to know about you or to be connected via familial lines. This close proximity between members of countries with small populations means that ‘anonymity and full independence from the state is difficult’ and raises questions about how independent accountability can be, and the extent to which holding individuals to account is challenging when networks are so dense (Moloney 2020: 292).

Finally, as noted above, **international donors and global norms on accountability** have also shaped how accountability is practiced in the Pacific more recently. Accountability is often taken as a proxy for ‘good governance’ (Dubnick 1998). Good governance was popularised by international institutions, such as the World Bank and the United Nations, particularly throughout the 1990s, to guide development and eliminate malfeasance in public finance. But the focus on fiscal responsibility of accountability is older and this has shaped accountability practices in the Pacific. The first discussions of ‘governance and corruption’ were promulgated by modernization theory in the 1960s, which tried to justify the lack of democracy and the presence of corruption in many developing countries (Huntington 1968; Khan 2004). In the Pacific, it was between the 1960s and the 1980s that many countries made the transition to independence and many adopted new institutional values premised on the principles of liberal economics and democracy (Larmour 2002). However, in many instances, new states began to experience serious budget crises and political instability after the first and second decades of working with newly established democratic and market institutions (Fraenkel 2013; Knapman and Saldanha 1999). Rent-seeking behaviours (where individuals or groups sought to obtain financial advantage in the form of monopolies), compounded by issues of political instability, budget crises, and macro-economic instability, impacted detrimentally on the economies of most developing countries, including in the Pacific (Khan 2006).

Later, in the 1980s – 1990s, donors’ focus shifted support to macroeconomic stability, structural adjustment and public sector and governance reforms. For instance, according to Knapman and Saldanha (1999), the Asian Development Bank in the period 1995-1998, supported the development and enactment of the Public Finance and Economic Management Act in Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Cook Islands. And in the 1990s-2000s, the good governance agenda took precedence, with a strongly normative approach to how governance and accountability should be enacted in Pacific countries – informed by Western ideas of accountability.

Currently, International IDEA (2017) notes that accountability is a fundamental cross-cutting dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework. This has seen international organisations again exerting influence on member states to drive reforms aimed at implementing the SDGs, including a focus on accountability under SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies, with a focus on building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions (IDEA 2017). This creates a strong development platform whereby international aid agencies, both multilateral and bilateral, support countries on specific accountability reforms. In the Pacific, the growing attention to climate finance has also renewed a focus on accountability – with concerns about how an influx of new financing is likely to be used and accounted for by governments in the region.

The persistent challenges of accountability in the Pacific and the failure of transplanting Western notions of accountability underlines the importance of adapting international governance principles to local conditions. As Reilly (2004) points out – and as explained above – there are a range of features within the Pacific that mean accountability processes are challenging. This does not mean that there is no opportunity to develop common, coherent accountability mechanisms among different polities; however, changes cannot be imposed without negotiating the meanings for local peoples of such changes and establishing a common understanding of what it means to be well governed. International organisations have influenced approaches to accountability in the Pacific through their evolving approaches to governance, however, there is gap between the theories of accountability that they espouse and the day-to-day practices in Pacific countries, which means that accountability is currently not well-enforced in most institutional frameworks in the Pacific.

3. Accountability actors and how they interact

A wide range of actors can be considered accountability actors, depending on how narrowly or broadly the sector is framed. Most commonly, this includes a range of ‘state agencies of restraint’ (such as anti-corruption agencies, audit institutions, ombuds offices, courts, etc.), alongside citizens, often represented by civil society organisations and the media. To this mix, others would add religious organisations, political parties, the private sector and international actors (Brinkerhoff 2001: 16-17; Shabbir Cheema 2007; Newell and Frynas 2007). Each plays a potentially different function:

- Supreme audit institutions: These take different forms and are independent government entities that play an external audit role, undertaking financial audits of public expenditure and compliance audits to determine due process in accordance with governing authorities (OECD 2016). They commonly include courts of audit or auditor-generals.
- Anti-corruption and integrity commissions: These are independent commissions established by governments to investigate corruption within public office. They take different forms in different contexts, with varying degrees of power to compel witnesses and documents and to enforce decisions (Transparency International 2013).
- Ombuds offices: these create a central point of contact between government agencies and citizens with complaints or problems requiring investigation as a way of improving answerability (Brinkerhoff 2001: 25).
- Courts and the judiciary: Courts play an important, if often small, role in accountability and provide a site for review, sanction and redress (Harlow and Rawlings 2007; Kumah and Brazys 2016: 189). They help to increase transparency by bringing information to light as part of proceedings and putting them into the public domain. And – more invisibly often – the procedures and laws that they stand for are in place to ensure wider due process and restraint of power.
- Citizens: While the public at large is often considered too amorphous and disorganized to be an accountability actor, the growing attention to social accountability puts citizens at the centre in shaping accountability for service standards and performance and setting and applying sanctions (Damgaard and Lewis 2014: 16). More broadly, citizens are the ultimate accountability actor – even if they often struggle to act collectively in coordinated ways.
- Civil society: Civil society here is considered broadly to include Church groups and trade unions. These organisations can provide information and help explain government policies, programs, regulations and responsibilities to increase citizen knowledge, and can also aggregate citizen voice on particular issues to lobby government and raise the profile of particular concerns (Brinkerhoff 2001: 18).
- Media: Media outlets play an important role in educating the public, generating and disseminating information, explain government policies, programs, regulations and

responsibilities and critically engaging with political leaders to encourage them to explain their decisions or behaviour to the public (Brinkerhoff 2001: 18).

- Political parties: Most obviously political parties contribute to democratic accountability via elections but their party structures are also a key way for citizens to voice concerns and lobby their local party representatives (Brinkerhoff 2001: 18).
- Private sector: The private sector plays a critical role in a country's economy, people's livelihoods and, in some contexts, in delivery of services. Given these roles, the private sector must itself be held accountable but may also contribute to strengthening government accountability via both private sector innovations (such as technology-based applications) and through creating accountable relationships with government, especially in procurement processes, for instance.

Without putting any bounds on 'who counts' as an accountability actor, in this project we are equally interested in the question of how the relevant accountability actors interrelate. In this sense, we will explore the 'accountability ecosystem' in understanding the ways in which the full array of accountability actors work together (or work against each other) in producing accountabilities (Halloran, 2021; Nadelman et al. 2022: 3). Accountability ecosystems refer to the 'interrelations between the full array of domestic pro-accountability actors, particularly (but not exclusively) formal accountability institutions, as well as civil society actors, including national and sub-national organizations' (Nadelman et al., 2022: 3, citing Halloran 2021).

Accountability actors and how they interact in the Pacific

In the Pacific, independence constitutions gave birth to a range of **formal accountability actors** in each respective jurisdiction. Many Pacific countries are liberal constitutional democracies and have thus established a suite of institutions that play a role of checks and balances in the administration of state affairs (Lamour 2002). These include Parliamentary oversight bodies such as public accounts committees; judicial oversight, ombudsman, Office of the Auditor General, and various commissions such as public service commissions and judicial service commissions. The particular accountability institutions differ by country. A number of PICs have Ombudsman, and a growing number have set up Independent Corruption Commissions. Fiji and Samoa have stand-alone national human rights institutions, Palau has a Special Prosecutor with a specific anti-corruption mandate and Solomon Islands, PNG and Tuvalu have Leadership Code Commissions.

In addition, there are a range of additional actors that play important accountability roles in the Pacific that are often overlooked. This includes **the Church** and **customary or chiefly institutions**. In the case of Vanuatu, the constitution recognises church, state, and *kastom* as integral pillars of the state's institutions (Nimbtik 2016). Similar approaches to recognising these other actors are apparent in other jurisdictions within the region (Lamour 2002).

Civil society is another important accountability actor and can include the Church and faith-based civil society organisations like the Council of Churches. Civil society or non-government organisation coordinating and peak bodies also play important roles in the Pacific and at a regional level (Moloney 2020: 287). But the particular roles that civil society plays are also specific to the Pacific. For instance, given the focus of many civil society organisations on service delivery, given the challenges of the state undertaking this nationwide in some contexts, civil society has often not played as strong an advocacy or accountability function in the Pacific (Moloney 2020: 292). Indeed, as this service delivery function has become embedded and civil society organisations have become almost 'quasi-state', this can put these organisations in a difficult position to criticise government (Moloney 2020: 292). However, in contrast to this, there are a number of strong regional advocacy initiatives that seek to hold the powerful to account (see, for instance, Brimacombe et al., 2018). Historically limited donor funding of

civil society in the Pacific (particularly to carry out non-service delivery functions) has also fostered, at times, competitive, rather than collaborative relationships between civil society organisations, which limits the sector's ability to play a strong accountability role (Moloney 2020; Fletcher et al., 2016).

Another under-recognised accountability actor in the Pacific is **local government**. Decentralisation reforms in many Pacific countries have meant that significant resources and administrative power reside at the subnational level (Walton and Jackson 2020: 2). As a result, local levels of government are particularly important in ensuring proper use of power and resources. It is also at this local level of government that the intersections between formal, legal-rational state institutions and customary governance are most apparent, reinforcing again the importance of customary actors as well.

Finally, the role of **regional organisations** in the Pacific should not be overlooked. These bodies provide a more context-specific approach that 'are better customised to combat issues that are peculiar to the region with knowledge of '[t]he particular cultural and historical context of the Pacific' (Barcham 2009: 257). They also often act as interlocutors between international and national actors, translating global norms. In addition to the well-known institutions such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), a range of regional professional organisations have come into existence with relevance to accountability. This includes, for instance, the Pacific Network of Ombudsmen, the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO), which consists of 23 customs administrations within the Pacific, the Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference (PIDC), the Pacific Chiefs of Police Conference (PCPC) and the Pacific Islands Law Officers' Meeting (PILOM) (Barcham 2009: 259). There have even been efforts through PIFS' Pacific Plan to establish a regional ombudsman and audit service, although it is not clear whether this is progressing (Barcham 2009: 257).

4. Forms and practices of accountability

Despite the strong emphasis on accountability in governance literature, how to achieve it remains contested with a variety of approaches documented. Broadly speaking, approaches to accountability have focused either on strengthening the 'supply side' governance institutions responsible for budget and finance through capacity development, training and institutional strengthening; or they have focused on the 'demand side' supporting citizen voice to call for transparent information and demand accountability from political leaders. More recently, strategies that seek to overcome the supply and demand side binary by bringing together citizens and governments have been regarded as more effective (Fox 2015; Halloran 2020; Ackerman 2004). Ultimately, what options are most appropriate in a given context will depend on the prevailing political economy and what space there is to work with the state/outside of the state on strengthening answerability and enforceability (Brinkerhoff 2001). Below, common approaches conceived of as supply-side, demand-side and 'sandwich' strategies are set out.

Supply-side accountability practices

Supply-side accountability is focused on state institutions restraining the power and curbing the abuses by public authorities and government (Brinkerhoff 2001: 3). As a result, this can also be termed horizontal accountability, as described above (O'Donnell 1999). There are a range of institutions and roles used to fulfil these accountability functions on the supply-side, set out below. The effectiveness of these depend on their autonomy, as well as their enforcement or sanction capabilities.

Perhaps the most common supply-side approach is **establishing and supporting the operations of accountability actors** within government. This is focused on putting in place the accountability architecture and enabling it to be operational, on the basis that this will deliver more accountable governance. This includes the broad range of horizontal accountability actors mentioned above – such as ombuds offices, anti-corruption bodies, auditor generals, legislative investigative commissions and courts (Ackerman 2004: 449). Putting these institutions in place, establishing their policy frameworks,

strengthening their relationships with other parts of government and wider society and building the capacity of staff working within them has been a large part of support for supply-side accountability.

Relatedly, carrying out **evaluation and audits** provide after-the-fact assessments of performance and use of finances, as well as incentivising future quality performance and financial management. Audits and evaluations need not be undertaken from a supply-side by public agencies but often are, as a part of internal checks and balances of democratic government (Brinkerhoff 2001).

Another set of approaches to supply-side accountability involve **building professional ethics and integrity** amongst civil servants or particular technical specialists. This is believed to increase the esteem of the role and build a professionalised cadre of staff that believe in the value of their jobs and their role in delivering responsible government that serves the interests of citizens. This can include the development of standards or codes of conduct, as well as ethics training, peer support and disciplinary procedures (Shabbir Cheema 2007: 186).

A related more innovative accountability practice is the use of **integrity pacts**. These were used in Seoul City, for instance, to address corruption in procurement. The pact is explained to all bidders for city construction projects, technical services and procurement and anyone bidding is required to sign the pact and take a bidders oath. The pact is also signed by government officials and when finalising a contract, both parties sign a 'special condition for contract'. Violators can face contract termination and a ban from future bids for 6 months – 2 years' (Shabbir Cheema 2007: 180).

The **use of technology to automate governance and financial processes** is increasingly taking place to improve efficiencies, as well as to limit opportunities for corruption or malpractice. This is most apparent in procurement processes, for instance, where electronic publication of notices of information, submission of bids and assessment processes are increasingly done electronically to remove human involvement that might unduly influence who has access to what information at what time (Shabbir Cheema 2007).

Finally, supply-side accountability has often included efforts to **decentralise or devolve power to more local levels**. This is based on the belief that making governance closer to the people will make them better reflective of citizen needs (Kumah and Brazys 2016: 287; Shabbir Cheema 2007: 171). This shifts the locus of decision making and financing to more local levels of government. In theory, this approach provides greater opportunities for citizens to participate in decision-making that affects their lives, as well as to monitor what gets delivered (Shabbir Cheema 2007: 171).

Demand-side accountability practices

Beyond efforts to improve accountability by working with government and public authorities, demand-side approaches focus on how actors outside of government can leverage greater accountability from those that govern them. Demand-side accountability became increasingly popular as the limits of working with state actors was increasingly recognised (Gaventa and McGee 2013: S4; see also the World Bank's 2004 World Development Report). Power holders, rarely willingly restrain their own power in the interests of others and thus – the argument goes – the greater public must demand this of them and use the tools available to them to force compliance. A wide range of approaches have been used with this aim. As Gaventa and McGee argue (2013: S4), 'Variously termed 'social', 'citizen-led' or 'demand-side' accountability, this emerging field combines initiatives designed to improve transparency and access to information with other ways of holding to account the state and its agents.'

Perhaps the starting point for these demand-side approaches is **community consultation**, in which community views are collected and – to varying degrees – are used to inform governance or service

delivery. Often, however, ‘consultation’ provides only a limited role for citizens and leaves the power to shape policies and programming with the state. As Fox (2020: 2) notes these are often ‘limited to controlled consultations whose deliberations can be easily captured or ignored by authorities – and they rarely address multiple forms of “invisible power” that limit the exercise of voice.’

More sustained engagement with communities thus came about under **participatory approaches**. This includes – most commonly – participatory budgeting (where communities participate in allocation of funds), participatory audits (where communities are involved in auditing services). These processes aim to involve citizens in discussions that shape economic policymaking, benefiting from their local knowledge and ensuring budgets are legible to communities (Shabbir Cheema 2007: 181). In such participatory approaches ‘citizens are [engaged] not only “users and choosers” of services, but also as “makers and shapers” who claim the basic right to shape social policy and social provisioning’ (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001, cited in Roche 2009: 45).

Community score cards and **citizen report cards** are also used, often by civil society groups, to provide documented feedback to service providers on citizens perceptions of their services. These can be particularly powerful in putting in one, easily communicated document feedback from communities. Increasingly, the use of online technology has been used to capture a wider range of community feedback. This includes, for instance, photos of services (such as improved sanitation facilities) or text messages and online reporting (such as publish what you pay documenting bribes paid to officials) (Roche 2009: 26).

Instituting **complaints procedures** is another common example of demand-side accountability, providing the opportunity for citizens to provide feedback directly to service providers, although these rarely provide the opportunity for dialogue about how best to address complaints or the issues they raise and have also been subject to critique (see, for instance, Hossain et al., 2023).

Finally, **civil society and media advocacy** plays a strong role in most demand-side accountability. In particular, media play a role in promoting transparency, scrutinising behaviour and decisions of public authorities and act as ‘a catalyst for social debate’ (Shabbir Cheema 2007: 184). Civil society represent the interests of citizens or specific groups within the population, feeding their views into public discourse and demand government consider those interests (Shabbir Cheema 2007: 184). They may vocally oppose government and protest, or they may work collaboratively with government to strengthen the citizen orientation of policy (Kumah and Brazys 2016: 287; Brinkerhoff 2001: 3-4).

‘Sandwich strategies’ or transcending the supply-demand binary

In practice, however, both supply-side and demand-side approaches have fallen short. Efforts focusing on the supply side have found that they run into political incentives that are difficult to shift and need to build countervailing power to overcome (Fox, 2020). On the other hand, demand side approaches tend to over-emphasise the influence of information and citizen demand, which is often short-lived and can result in addressing symptoms of accountability problems without getting to the real causes (Halloran, 2020). Rather, it is now recognised that ‘sandwich strategies’ of bringing ‘voice and teeth’ together in mutually supportive ways to create state-society synergies is critical (Fox, 2015). Moreover, there is not one combination of the above practices that deliver accountability – rather, it ‘may be achieved by a variety of means, suggesting a need for more tolerance of heterogeneous institutional design when considering governance-related development interventions’ (Kumah and Brazys 2016: 287). Groups like Accountability Lab recognise the importance of experimentation and learning, relationships and engaging with complexity in developing contextually-appropriate accountability strategies (Scrimgeour and Erasmus 2021).

In overcoming the supply/demand binary, Ackerman argues for ‘co-governance’ – in which civil society is invited to participate in service delivery and other activities of the state (2004: 447). This, it is argued, builds trust between state and society and can deliver governance outcomes that better meet the needs of the people. On the other hand, Fox argues for voice with teeth and that there is a need to recognise and address the invisible power that prevents demand-side accountability approaches from gaining traction with powerful leaders (2020: 2).

Accountability practices in the Pacific

There is a wide spectrum of accountability practices in the Pacific and their form depends heavily on the capacity of the state and its ability to connect citizens through key infrastructure, such as Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) services, roads, airports and jetties. The unfinished business of the state to bring government closer to the people through decentralisation in many Pacific countries poses major challenges of effectively increasing citizens participation in the democratic process and in key decisions of national development. Furthermore, the challenges of scattered population, island archipelagos and limited infrastructures hinder the state’s effectiveness to create accountability mechanisms that are inclusive and allow greater interaction of citizens with the state.

In many Pacific countries, notions of state and citizenship are under-developed and general levels of education (and literacy) are very low. Furthermore, the failure of some states to deliver basic services undermines citizens’ expectations that they ever will. These features influence what accountability mechanisms are available in the Pacific, and there is in many places a sense of there being no use in demanding accountability given that the state plays so little a role in people’s day-to-day lives. That being said, the following accountability practices are notable.

Accountability practices in the Pacific are largely on the supply-side. Development partners have supported the establishment of Ombuds offices, Anti-Corruption Commissions and various internal accountability mechanisms within government. These take different forms across the region. A number of Pacific Island countries have Ombudsmen and a growing number have set up Independent Commissions Against Corruption. Fiji and Samoa have stand-alone national human rights institutions, Palau has a Special Prosecutor with a specific anti-corruption mandate and Solomon Islands, PNG and Tuvalu have Leadership Code Commissions. All of these institutions are intended to promote accountability for public money and are successful to varying extents.

Strikingly, however, there are fewer social accountability (or demand-side) approaches evident in the Pacific (Menzies, 2011). That being said, a number of international non-governmental organisations have supported the creation of demand-led accountability mechanisms across the Pacific, recognizing that improving accountable governance requires increased attention to issues of demand and better linking supply side and demand side approaches (Haley, 2008). CARE, for instance, has introduced community scorecards to monitor health service delivery in parts of PNG (Menzies, 2011). Citizen monitoring of education delivery in Malaita Province, Solomon Islands. Across several countries in the region, Transparency International, uses civic education programs to educate citizens about their rights and build their knowledge of relevant legislation and state institutions. This provides citizens with a better understanding of their rights and how they can hold leaders to account.

With the increased ICT coverage in most of the countries in the region, social media, particularly Facebook, is also providing a platform where citizens voice their concerns and contribute to shape socio-economic and political agenda through their shared views and opinions. In many places, social media is becoming an effective platform to share information, raise grievances, and provide awareness on different development challenges and issues affecting societies. At times, authorities have acted responsibly following citizen’s concerns raised through social media platforms, as well as

through other media outlets. But this accountability mechanism has little 'enforceability' or 'sanction' component to ensure action and depends upon digital penetration and digital literacy, which varies significantly within populations.

5. Outstanding questions

This literature review has summarized some of the key issues in the literature on accountability as it relates to improving governance for citizen-oriented development. While the literature focused on these issues at the global level is expansive, there is a much sparser literature on accountability in the Pacific, specifically, and within this the North Pacific is much neglected. Our study will contribute to filling these gaps.

Key outstanding questions that have emerged from this literature review, to be considered in the remainder of the project include:

- How do local understandings of power and relationships shape concepts of accountability and how it (or related concepts/ideas) are understood?
- How do features of Pacific countries, such as strong reciprocal relations, afford opportunities for expanding accountability? In the literature available much of the attention is focused on how these relationships can lead to corruption, with favours delivered to in-groups based on social networks, for instance. Much less explored is the positive potential of relationality to act as a check on abuses of power.
- Relatedly, how does the high concentration of personal relationships given small population size, but also vastness of geography and distance across islands, mean for meaningful approaches to accountability?
- How can civil society in the Pacific deliver both a service delivery function and play an advocacy role in holding government to account)? What examples of this balance already exist that could be learnt from?
- How can the institutional forms of accountability that are reasonably well elaborated in the Pacific come to deliver on their intended functions and avoid being simply isomorphic mimicry?
- What role might regional level action play in the Pacific, given its potential for influence and collective action?
- What opportunities does the injection of finance and other support for climate response offer for rethinking/reframing approaches to accountability in the Pacific?
- Who benefits from social/participatory accountability in the Pacific and who is excluded? Are there alternative ways/spaces that marginalised/excluded groups use to enact accountability?
- What role is there for traditional knowledge and customary or religious governance processes to inform efforts to strengthen accountability? How can traditional forms of knowledge and values be reconciled with and brought to bear on legal-rational institutions of 'modern' government?

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