

Social Accountability in Challenging Environments: Case Studies from Egypt

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Abstract

Through deploying the 2015 World Bank framework of contextual drivers for social accountability, this article seeks to examine three recent social accountability initiatives (SAIs) in the agriculture, health and local development sectors in Egypt and identify the contextual drivers and success factors of SAIs operating in challenging environments. The article aims to answer the following questions: what roles do recent SAIs in Egypt play on the ground? what are the challenges which SAIs encounter? and how do SAIs cope with such challenging situations? The article finds that in challenging environments, where invited spaces are controlled, citizens' collective action is limited, and commitment by state-officials is not guaranteed, the role of interlocutors becomes key in boosting the effectiveness of SAIs. It plays the role of a mediator, mobilizer to citizen and state action, and information intermediary, which generates, simplifies and disseminates information. In this sense, this article draws on the critical missing link in SAIs through in-depth analysis of the role of interlocutors in overcoming challenging or constraining circumstances.

Keywords: Egypt; social accountability; interlocutor; contextual drivers; challenging environments.