

Buzz: Accountability | Crowdsourcing | Transparency

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Is social accountability the answer?

Shanta Devarajan, the World Bank Chief Economist for Africa, [describes in an important blog post](#) the evolution of development policy in terms of changing ideas about market failures and government failures. Today, he says, many of the most egregious failures have been addressed, but the remaining failures directly hurt poor people. These failures arise from two kinds of imperfection in the public sector:

- Governments have difficulty monitoring and enforcing performance (leading to absentee teachers, clinics without drugs, etc)
- Imperfections in the political system which prevent it from serving the poor.

Shanta says that changes in technology and the rise of civil society can change all this, but will this work? Is social accountability a new model for development? Click [here](#) for more on this discussion.

Ten steps for meaningful aid transparency

Owen Barder [blogs](#) about how we can provide meaningful transparency for citizens in developing countries.

1. Organisations to publish online all the information they have about aid projects and programmes, in a common, reusable format.
2. Any organisations which do not implement IATI voluntarily should be pushed to do so by the organisations and people who fund them.
3. Donors, foundations and NGOs should 'eat their own dogfood' – information should be based on publicly available data infrastructure.
4. Donors' priority should be getting their own house in order.
5. All aid spending should be classified according to the recipient country budget classifications.
6. Aid would clearly be more effective if we had more information about the future plans of donors, foundations and NGOs.
7. A global system of traceability in aid.
8. Start recording and publishing detailed geographical information about aid projects and programmes.
9. An international agreement on a common set of standardised output indicators.
10. Connect feedback from citizens in developing countries to a rich public data infrastructure about aid.

Mobiles for development

UNICEF's new report '[Mobiles for Development: Understanding the Mobile Telephony Landscape](#)', focuses on mobile technology as an area of significant opportunity for advancing social development. The report sheds light on trends and challenges in global mobile telephony. It finds that there is an increasing number of mobile-based projects, with the most common sectors being health, socio-economic development and agriculture. Findings also show that 'mobile tools can provide cost effective interventions, overcome bottlenecks to services, and enable communities to maximise the impact of available resources in the most deprived communities.'

Check out [Mobile Active's blog](#), which provides knowledge and experiences about the use of mobile phones and to accelerating the use of effective strategies and tactics while reducing the learning costs for organizations.

Can biometrics improve development policy?

In the developing world, lack of identification often hampers the flow of benefits from governments to their citizens. Biometric identification could solve this problem. [Alen Gelb discusses](#) how this new technology is used in Nigeria to pay [pensions](#) and [government salaries](#). One pilot program claims to have saved \$80 million over three years by eliminating ghost workers and beneficiaries and streamlining payment systems. While more evaluation is needed of the impact, these new technologies can help deliver great social benefits and development improvements.

e-Atlas of Global Development

The [e-Atlas of Global Development](#) is a free, online, interactive tool, which maps and graphs more than 175 indicators from the World Bank's development database. It allows users to:

- Easily and quickly map and chart economic and social indicators
- Compare country outcomes
- Export customized, professional quality, full color maps and graphs
- Create scalable maps, timeline graphing, and ranking tables
- Import and export data and graphics

[Visit and use](#) the e-Atlas of Global Development. For more information click [here](#).

Financing climate and other global public goods

The global community faces a number of critical challenges ranging from climate change to crossborder health risks to natural-resource scarcities. The prospects for dealing with such global challenges will depend at least in part on new collective financing mechanisms.

Nancy Birdsall and Benjamin Leon's new paper '[Find Me the Money: Financing Climate and Other Global Public Goods](#)' examines four categories of existing resource-mobilization options, including (1) transportation levies; (2) currency and financial transaction taxes; (3) capitalization of IMF Special Drawing Rights (SDRs); and (4) the sale, mobilization, or capitalization of IMF gold.

Food price crisis

Trade restrictions worsen food insecurity. What are the solutions? Join the 24-hour food crisis debate [here](#) at the World Bank Open Forum from April 14-15.

A recent contribution to conversation is IMF's new paper '[Food Prices and Political Instability](#)'. The paper backs up what we assumed, that international food price increases leads to a significant deterioration of democratic institutions and a significant increase in anti-government demonstrations, riots, and civil conflict.

World Development Report 2011

More than 1.5 billion people live in countries affected by violent conflict.

[The World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development](#) examines the changing nature of violence in the 21st century, and underlines the negative impact of repeated cycles of violence on a country or region's development prospects. Preventing violence and building peaceful states that respond to the aspirations of their citizens requires strong leadership and concerted national and international efforts. The Report is based on new research, case studies and extensive consultations with leaders and development practitioners throughout the world.