Accountable Governance, Power and Human Rights Framework

Christian Aid's approach

To achieve accountable governance, just power relations and respect for human rights, we must address structural power imbalances that perpetuate poverty and injustice.

This document articulates how our work addresses power imbalances through accountable governance, empowering poor and marginalised people and equipping them to access justice and claim their rights. It builds on our global strategy, *Standing Together*.

It provides a framework for Christian Aid's development and humanitarian work that focuses on transformational relationships between the state (or powerful actors) and citizens.

Ultimately, we believe that transformed relationships will contribute to a world free from poverty, where resources are equitably and sustainably shared, and the voices and agency of the poor and marginalised are fully realised.

We believe that these relationships can be cultivated when citizens and civil society are empowered to participate in governance processes in ways that allow them to drive development decisions, access justice to realise their rights and hold duty-bearers to account.

But this is not a one-sided transformation: those in positions of power, whether they are governments, faith-based institutions, multilateral institutions, or private sector actors, must respect human rights and exercise their power in ways that are inclusive, non-discriminatory, accountable and transparent.

How are accountable governance, power and human rights relevant to this moment in time?

Basic human rights and accountable, open and inclusive governance are increasingly threatened. In recent years, social and political intolerance has risen, as regressive political attitudes have become common.

This intolerance has led to political manipulation, political polarisation, scepticism towards global norms, and the expansion of elite privilege and power.

This is manifesting itself in different ways:

Poor economic governance

New trends in economic injustice are most clearly illustrated in the illegal distribution of public money. Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) trap developing countries in poverty. Christian Aid estimates that the revenue losses arising from IFFs amount to US $416bn per year. These funds would go a long way towards closing the revenue gap to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially as domestic revenue mobilisation is also on the rise.

Lack of financial transparency

Corrupt practices impact millions of people worldwide, as tax revenue that can support vital public goods and services is diverted. Corruption impacts the poorest and marginalised minorities as well as the business environment. This has led to an unbalanced economic system with social and human capital investment suffering as a result.

Lack of social accountability

It is becoming harder for the poorest people to access essential services; exercising their rights to decent health care and quality education provided as a public service remains a distant possibility for many. Commitments by governments and service providers to social accountability and citizen engagement / scrutiny programmes are often poorly resourced and not rigorously enforced by large donors such as the World Bank.

Christian Aid is committed to Sustainable Development Goal 16: to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

This includes:

16.3 – Rule of law and access to justice

16.4 – Ending illicit financial flows

16.5 – Fighting corruption

16.6 – Effective, accountable and transparent institutions

16.7 – Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making

16.8 – Access to information.

Human rights violations

It has become increasingly difficult for poor communities around the world to organise and stand up for their rights. More than 65 million people have been displaced by conflict, violence and human rights abuses, and are unable to exercise full agency in the decisions that affect their lives. For example, civil society groups in Syria face being shut down and their members and volunteers risk being arrested or imprisoned.

Political exclusion

Discrimination has excluded women, the LGBT+ community, minorities, and other groups from political processes and power in the development of their countries. Increasingly, these groups are the subject of censorship, surveillance, harassment, threats from their governments and restrictive laws.

Closing of civic spaces

Around the world, protests against injustice have been curtailed by an ever-shrinking civic space and retaliation against human rights defenders. Civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations face significant challenges in building effective civil society voice and collective action to address the power imbalances, unequal agency, and exclusion of the poorest and most marginalised from meaningful participation. In the worst cases, increased repression has led to violent consequences. In 2019 304 human rights defenders were killed, with environmental activities being especially vulnerable. Governments' suspension of constitutional checks and balances, using lockdowns and emergency measures to tackle Corona Virus pose significant risks to civil society and human rights.

Theory of change

To achieve accountable governance, just power relations and respect for human rights characterised by:

- citizens able to actively participate in governance,

- laws, policies and institutions providing access to justice and protection of human rights and

- governments becoming more transparent and accountable – and responsive;

Then civil society must become effective, with active citizen participation, which includes:

- people voicing demands and countering closing civic spaces

- informed and empowered citizens who meaningfully shape policy and practice, and hold powerful actors to account

- challenging intolerance and political polarisation by supporting counter-movements that are based on solidarity with traditionally-oppressed groups

- as traditional civic spaces shrink, civil society is supported to protect remaining spaces while claiming and expanding new spaces in neglected institutions and online

- people are connected to decision-makers.

But civil society and active citizens need the protection and power of rights and justice.

So, our Access to Justice and Human Rights work:

- supports citizens and civil society to address problems and blockers in the system that can sanction unaccountable institutions

- supports socio-legal empowerment (courts and legal remedies where safe and possible) to uphold rights and rebalance power relationships

- demands inclusive participation through defence of free speech and media

- protects human rights activists

- demands greater transparency and accountability for the state, duty-bearers and powerful actors.

But effective civil society and active citizens, empowered and protected by rights and justice, can change little without accountable, responsive and transparent institutions.
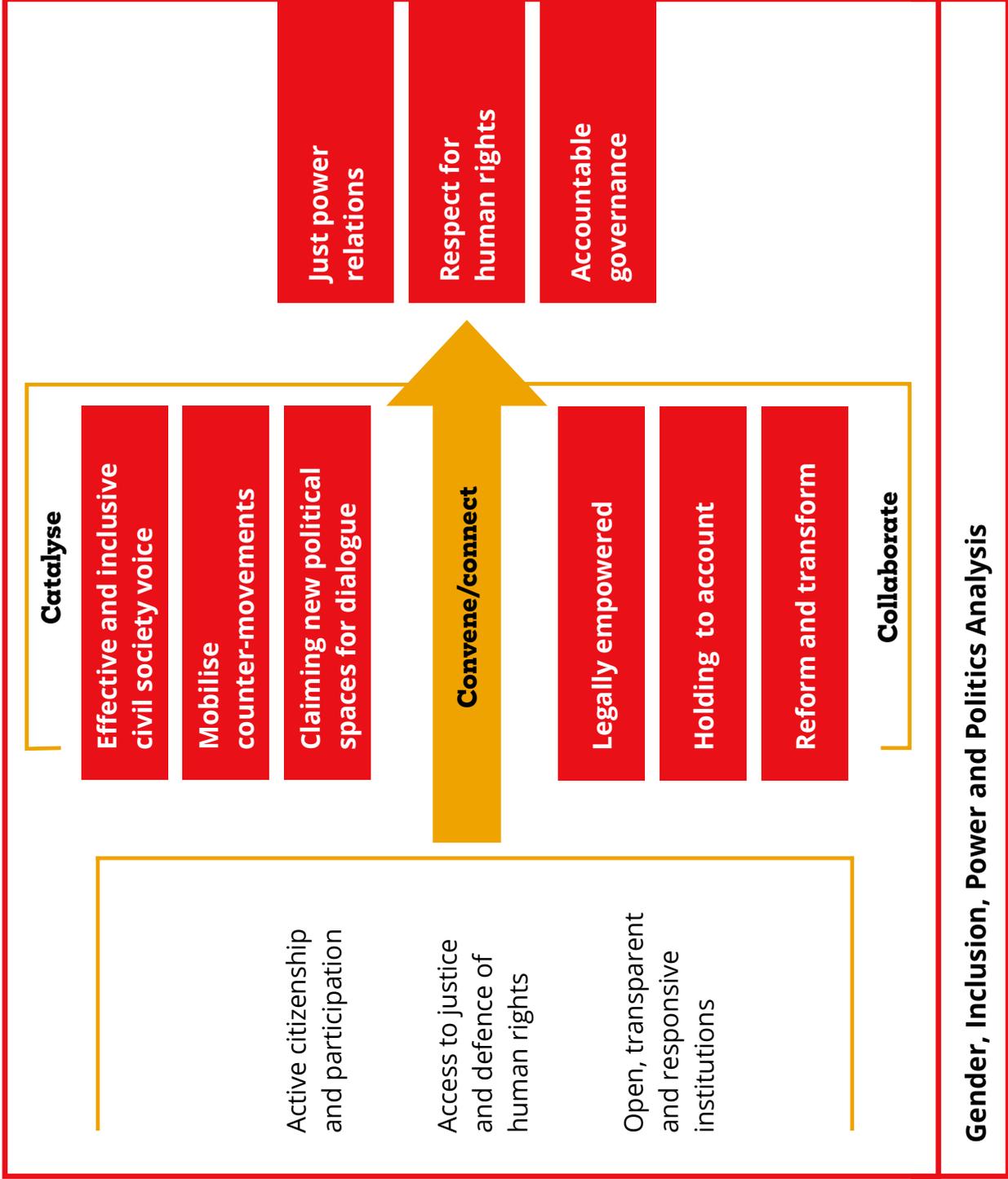
So open, transparent, and inclusive institutions must:

- listen and respond to citizens

- reform and transform the way they govern – governments are not monolithic and even in the most repressive states, with little political will, reformers and champions for justice can exist

- strengthen progressive voices and institutions by convening and coordinating with civil society and communities who share an agenda for reform.

Then institutions can become more responsive and progressive.

In summary: to take advantage of opportunities which contribute to more accountable governments, we support a more empowered citizenry, and institutions that are grounded in human rights.

Governance, Power and Rights – Theory of Change

Catalyse

- **Effective and inclusive civil society voice**
- **Mobilise counter-movements**
- **Claiming new political spaces for dialogue**

Convene/connect

- **Legally empowered**
- **Holding to account**
- **Reform and transform**

Collaborate

Just power relations

Respect for human rights

Accountable governance

Active citizenship and participation

Access to justice and defence of human rights

Open, transparent and responsive institutions

Gender, Inclusion, Power and Politics Analysis

Risks/assumptions:

- Citizens are able to exercise power and agency in open civic space.
- The avenues of legal empowerment, access to justice and defence of human rights must be safely accessed.
- Political context opens space for/incentivises institutional change.

How we go about it

To advance our vision of transformed relationships among citizens and power-holders, we work on three outcomes:

Outcome 1: Active citizenship and participation

In order to contribute to positive changes in the structures of power that perpetuate poverty, we must **catalyse** active citizenship and participation. We believe that when communities are empowered and informed, they can exercise agency and raise their voices to influence government and other power-holders. This active citizenship requires civil society to more widely and effectively **collaborate** and **claim** civic space while **convening** state dialogue.

Possible outputs:

- increased number of traditionally excluded groups, participating in and shaping political processes

- increased influence over policy, plans and budgets between citizens and various levels of government

- budgets and policies that reflect the views of communities

- publicly available reports on the performance of government services and departments

- improved evidence and data with increased civic technology and increased online participation.

Possible activities	Successful approaches and examples	Policy outcomes
Supporting political empowerment, participation and leadership of traditionally excluded groups	• In the '**Power to Women' programme** in Sierra Leone**,** we helped to increase the number of women councillors in Kailahun district from 21% to 41%, and trained many more in leadership skills	SDG 16.7.1: Proportionate representation by sex, age, disability and population group in government, public service and judiciary
Convening citizen-state dialogue, from the local to the national level	• In the **Nigeria V2P programme**, convening power to problem-solve and bridge the gap between civil society and the state or powerful actors by promoting Community Charters of Demand up to Ministry level	Citizens for Financial Justice Open Government SDG 16. 7
Supporting social accountability processes	• In Guatemala, our partner **CONGCOOP**, along with the Social Audit Commission, successfully lodged a complaint in the Health Ministry and municipal authorities, as thousands of families were receiving contaminated drinking water	Accountable and Transparent Institutions SDG 16.6
Ensuring inclusive community voice and participation in policy and budget decisions	• In the **Evidence for Collaboration and Inclusive Development** (ECID) programme, excluded and marginalised communities link up and gain a voice and influence over government and service providers • 'Localisation' projects across country programmes and in humanitarian response	SDG 16.6/7 CHS/Humanitarian Policy Climate Justice: increasing the voice and influence of people affected by climate change
Supporting investigative and progressive media	• The Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness **(STAR) Ghana** programme's Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) and Media project reduced incidents of hate speech to contribute to peaceful elections	SDG 16.6
Enhancing civic technology for accountability	• In the STAR Ghana – campaigning for Right to Information Bill • In Zimbabwe **ECID** established an online citizens' monitoring site	SDG 16.10 and 16.6

Outcome 2: Access to justice and defending human rights

Supporting communities to learn about their rights, monitor the protection of rights, claim rights, and press for changes in laws to ensure better alignment with international human rights and norms. Our approach focuses on seeking justice for communities, as defined by communities themselves.

Possible outputs:

- increased awareness of rights and opportunities to access justice

- reports on the protection and violation of human rights
- increased redress for individuals who have had their rights violated
- changes in domestic legislation that help to better protect human rights.

Possible activities	Programmatic examples:	Policy outcome
Raising awareness of rights and opportunities to access justice	• In India, Christian Aid's **Ekta Parishad** programme helped Dalit groups understand their legal and cultural rights, and it campaigns for legal change to formally recognise Dalit land rights	SDG 16.3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
Monitor human rights	• In Bangladesh, Christian Aid helps Dalit Human Rights Defenders investigate and document cases of minority rights violations • On the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the focus is providing legal support and access to justice to the migrant population (in DR), and deportees and returnees (in Haiti)	SDG 16. 3 and 16.9
Helping communities claim their rights	In Colombia and Sierra Leone, Christian Aid works directly with lawyers, paralegals and community activists to help communities claim their rights in the event of a violation: • Sisma Mujer, a feminist collective in Colombia, supports women survivors of sexual and/ or gender-based violence, to have legal representation and claim justice; • Green Scenery, in Sierra Leone, supports communities to defend their land and labour rights against abuses and large-scale appropriation.	16.3 and 16.10 Climate Justice SGBV Policy
Helping communities reform the law	• In Zimbabwe, the Environmental Lawyers Association supports mining communities to realise their human rights, ensure equitable access to their livelihoods and natural resources. ZELA's policy focus is on the reform of the Mines and Minerals Acts • In South Africa the Economic Justice Network and Benchmarks Foundation support the Alternative Mining Indaba, Land rights movement and lobby for community legal rights to be strengthened	Natural Resources/Mining Rights Business and Human Rights

Outcome 3: Institutional response, transparency and accountability.

Possible outputs:

- increased satisfaction among service users
- improved representation of communities by elected leaders (especially parliamentarians)
- more equitable and peaceful electoral processes
- improved delivery of basic services
- more open and transparent budget and policymaking
- greater harmony among international commitments and domestic legislation

Possible activities	Programmatic examples:	Policy:
Supporting effective and responsive institutions	• Voice to the People Nigeria, we have achieved institutional reform of planning and budgeting process through Citizens Charters of Demands being incorporated –**'Doing Accountability Differently'** • Kenya deepening democracy programme: developing climate monitoring and natural resources governance capacity	SDG 16.6: budget vs expenditure and citizen satisfaction with services
Building the capacity of parliamentarians	• In Democratic Republic of Congo DRC, linking elected representatives and provincial officials with civil society voices on plans and budgets to access important decision-making fora • In Ghana, parliamentary committee capacity strengthening for better scrutiny and reform of legislation and accountability	SDG 16.7.1: Proportions of positions (by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups) in national and local legislatures 16.7.2: Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive
Promoting free, fair, and peaceful electoral processes	• In DRC, Nigeria and Ghana supported peaceful election monitoring	SDG 16.7
Strengthening the capacity of local government	• In Guatemala, we have **supported local authorities** to develop gender-sensitive policies, and have supported the local councillors to champion women's issues	SDG 16.7.2
Supporting open budgeting/ transparency/ anti−corruption	• In Ghana, the **anti-corruption project** tackling corruption in the delivery of public goods and services, supply chains, use of mining royalties, and cultural change • The HondurAction programme fights corruption, increases civic engagement, interface and investigative monitoring; the PFM Sierra Leone programme shines a light on corruption and citizen scrutiny of anti-corruption institutions	Economic Justice Policy on Tax Justice and Illicit Financial Flows
Operationalising international commitments to improved governance	• Improved access to identification papers for expelled people of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic has pressured both governments to hold to international law conventions on forced expulsions	SDG16.5. Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms SDG 16.4. Significantly reduce illicit financial flows

Key references on **caid.org.uk**

Power Programme Practice Paper:
christianaid.org.uk/resources/about–us/power–analysis–programme–practice

Main Governance page and link to key papers and resources for Governance, Power and Rights:
christianaid.org.uk/about–us/what–we–do/voice–and–governance

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