

Consumer Voice & Client Power

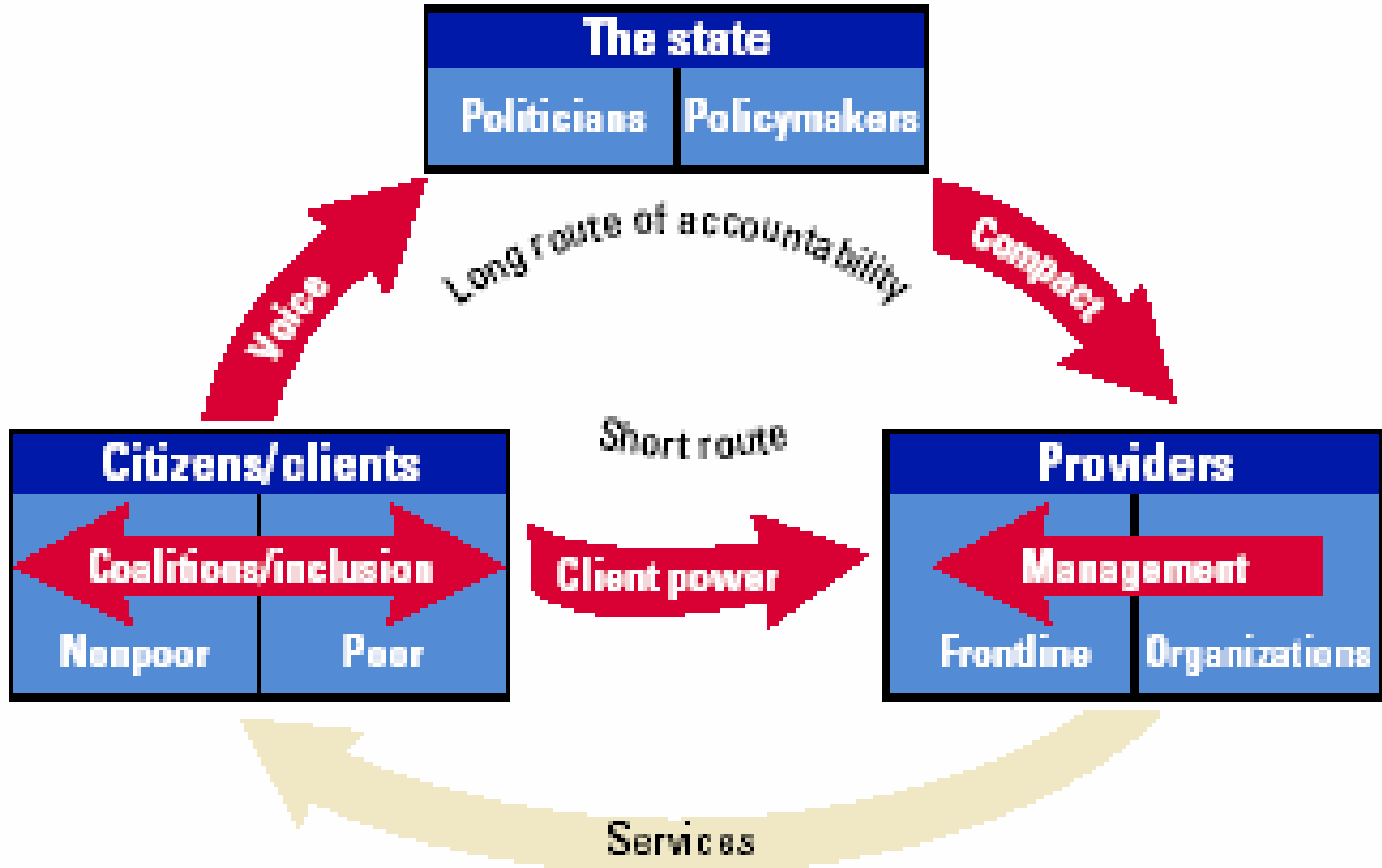
***New Directions to Improve
Accountability of Providers?***

*Dr. Gopakumar Thampi, Accelerating Water Supply & Sanitation for the Urban Poor,
Nairobi, 29-30 May 2006*

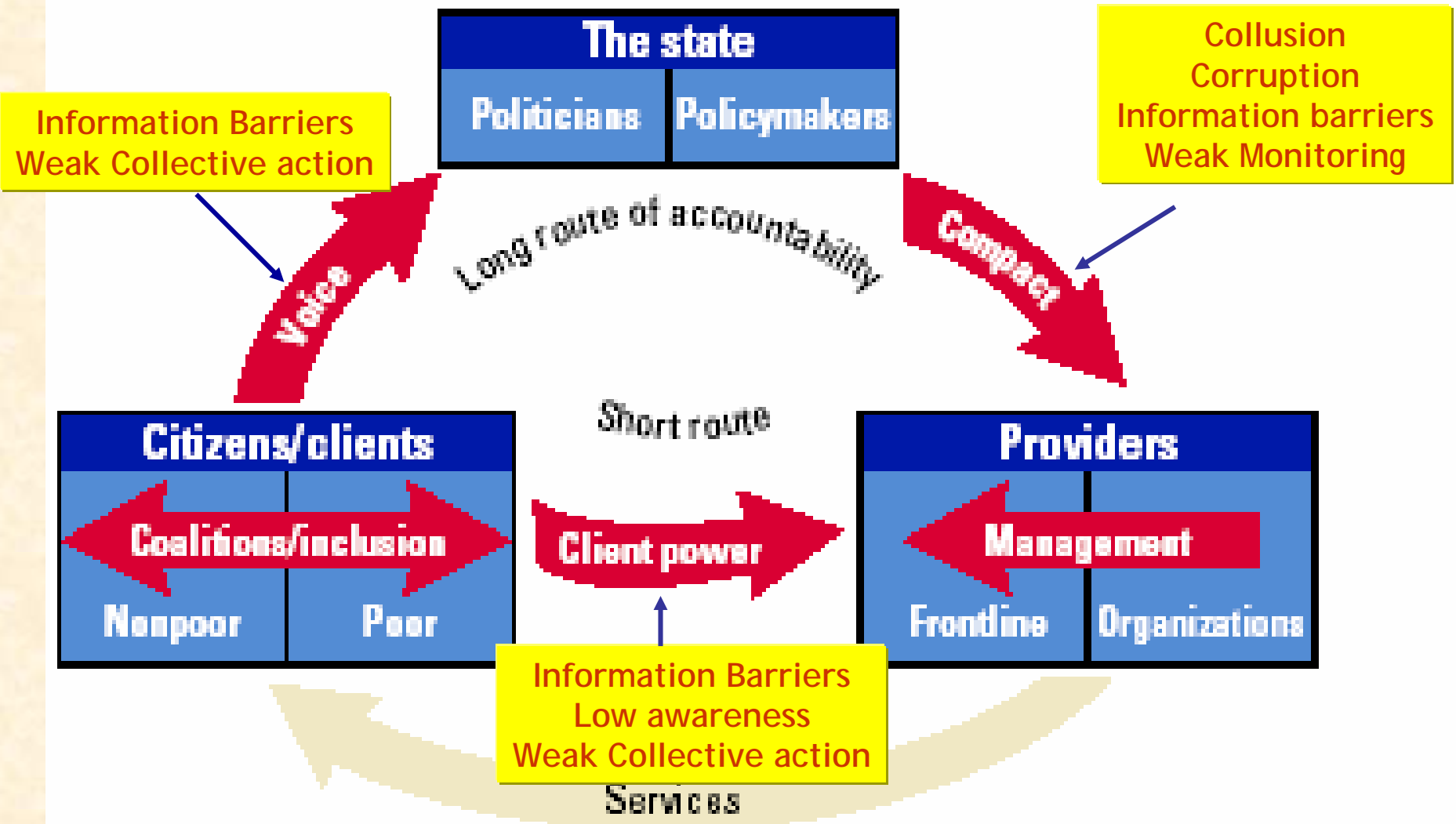
WHY THE DEBATE?

- **Deficit of Participation**: No meaningful space for consumers to engage in reform processes; Lack of exit options and weak collective actions
- **Deficit of Information**– low awareness on rights & entitlements, standards/norms; nature & implications of contracts/compacts
- **Deficit of Accountability**– Weak Monitoring & Regulation; SSIPs in the informal & unregulated space

WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT FRAMEWORK



THE FRAMEWORK in PRACTICE



The Way Out..

Linking Reforms (supply side
“**RESPONSIVENESS**”) to demand side
Consumer “**VOICE**” initiatives.

Provider Responsiveness

- **Consultations on Consumer Needs**
e.g. *People's Panel* (UK)
- **Publicizing Standards & Norms for service**
e.g. *Consumer Charters*
- **Improving access of disadvantaged groups to grievance redress mechanisms**
e.g. *Toll Free Helplines*
- **Giving institutional space for Consumer Voices in regulatory agencies**
e.g. *Consumer Consultative Councils, People's Advocate*
- **Empowering Policies & New Rights**
e.g. *Water Act (2002) in Kenya, Right to claim financial compensation for non compliance of service provisions*

CONSUMER VOICES

▶▶ Awareness Raising / Information

e.g. *Citizen Education (Zambia), Village Waves – Community Radio (India)*

▶▶ Lobbying to influence Policy

e.g. *Assembly of the Poor (Thailand), Coordinator Civil (Nicaragua)*

▶▶ Watch-Dog Role

e.g. *Public Hearings; Surveys*

▶▶ Mobilization & Protests

▶▶ Litigation

EMERGENT APPLICATIONS

- As a "*Diagnostic Tool*"
- As an "*Accountability Tool*"
- As a "*Benchmarking Tool*"

WHAT SEEMED TO HAVE WORKED..

- Legitimacy of Representation
- Informed Advocacy
- Creative use of Public Forums
- Combining Protest with Engagement
- Recasting Consumer Voice within the broad ambit of Citizen Rights
- Alliances of Influences

KEY TRANSITIONS...

- From Coping to `VOICES' by Citizens
- From `Shouting' to `Counting' by Activists
- From Reaction to Informed Action
- From confrontation to collaboration & partnerships
- Need to Explore the Potency of `VOICE' Mechanisms