Think about your community. What functions well? What improvements would you like to see? We know that the government is responsible for providing basic services like education, healthcare and roads, but how do we make sure that these services are really meeting your needs?

LESSON ONE

Accountability and the Basics of Process Monitoring

What is the Role of Government? What is Accountability?

Accountability means that those in government are obliged to take responsibility for their actions vis-a-vis citizens.

A fundamental principle of representative government is that citizens have the right to expect accountability and public officials have an obligation to be accountable.

This means that they should consult with citizens during the lawmaking process to ensure that policies respond to their needs and priorities. It also means that clear procedures should be established for government procurement of goods and services.

These processes should be open to the public as a way of ensuring that the rules are being following.

What Role Do Citizens Play in Holding Government Accountable?

Citizens can inform government about what policies they would like to see enacted, monitor decision making and implementation and report back to government if implementation of policies and service delivery are not responding to their needs and priorities. There are a variety of different strategies that you can employ to monitor government services and encourage improvements from government.

What Role Do Citizens Play in Holding Government Accountable?

The most effective strategies incorporate a few basic building blocks:

Identifying an issue to be addressed: As you move around your community are there things you see that could use some improvement?

Building a base of evidence: You need to fully understand your issue in order to be able to credibly request improvements from the government. This includes conducting research into what laws, policies and budgets impact your issue.

Demonstrating citizen support: In order to build a credible case for the changes you would like to see in local service delivery, it is often useful to demonstrate that you have broad support for your ideas.

Building relationships with public officials: Perhaps the most critical aspect of your work to promote accountability is your engagement with public officials to share what you have learned in your monitoring efforts and to recommend improvements in service delivery.

Educating the public: All citizens have a role to play in monitoring local services, but they can only do so if they are aware of what they are entitled to and what is actually being provided.

What is Process Monitoring? How Does it Help Keep Government Accountable to Citizens?

By getting involved in monitoring the processes of decision makers, you can encourage better service delivery and easier access to government information. At the same time, you may realize that you feel empowered by your ability to encourage improvements in your community.

Process monitoring describes a variety of different strategies, including service delivery monitoring, that citizens can use to hold government accountable.

There are a variety of different strategies that you can consider depending on what you select as your issues and what information you have access to.

Strategy #1: Budget Monitoring, Budget Advocacy and Expenditure Tracking

Budget monitoring is a process by which citizen groups observe meetings and analyze public documents during the budget formulation and approval stages of the budget cycle. They do this type of monitoring in order to determine and raise awareness of how public funding is allocated by the government.

Budget advocacy is when citizen groups campaign to bring about specific changes in a budget or budget process; it is usually also carried out during the budget formulation and approval stages as well.

Expenditure tracking is when citizen groups monitor government resource allocations, spending and publicly-funded projects to ensure that budgeted funds are spent accordingly and used efficiently. This takes place during the budget execution and oversight stage of the budget cycle.

Strategy #2: Legislative Monitoring

Legislative monitoring is a process through which citizen groups or civil society organizations (CSOs) monitor, evaluate and report on the work and performance of legislators, as well as on the effectiveness and efficiency of legislatures in meeting citizen needs.

The primary reason that groups engage in this type of monitoring is to increase legislator accountability to citizens and strengthen the legislative process.

When groups publicize their monitoring findings, this can put additional pressure on legislators because citizens can use that information as the basis for advocacy and organizing campaigns, or simply to inform how they will vote in the next election.

Strategy #3: Shadow Reporting

Shadow reports provide a mechanism for monitoring and raising awareness of government compliance with international treaties, conventions and declarations to which they are signatories.

Often, civic groups will conduct research on how well their respective government is complying with an agreement and will produce a supplement or alternative "shadow report" of the national government's "official" report.

Shadow reports also allow groups to use the international agreement's principles and standards to hold their government accountable for enhancing service delivery and strengthening laws and policies addressing the relevant issue.

Strategy #4: Campaign-Related Monitoring

Campaign-related monitoring is a two-part process that uses electoral periods as an entry point for citizen groups and CSOs to foster the accountability of public officials to the electorate.

In order to address the different types of accountability deficits present at either local or national levels, monitoring groups use a variety of tactics for engaging candidates in the periods leading up to and following an election. There are three main tactics that groups have used successfully:

- voter guides,
- community platforms, and
- pledge campaigns.

All three of these tactics allow citizens to inform candidates and political parties that they have expectations and that they will examine public officials' performances based on those expectations.

Strategy #5: Service Delivery Monitoring

Service delivery monitoring allows citizens to evaluate government services based on their own criteria to determine whether or not the services are meeting their needs. Tools such as citizen report cards and community scorecards can help you do this.

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Service delivery monitoring allows citizens to evaluate government services based on their own criteria to determine whether or not the services are meeting their needs. Tools such as citizen report cards and community scorecards can help you do this.

Why focus on service delivery monitoring?

The reason we are focusing on this kind of monitoring is because it affects people's everyday lives and relies on citizens' direct perceptions and experiences with local services, such as education, health care or sanitation, to evaluate government effectiveness.

There are many ways to go about monitoring local service delivery, which can be adapted to your particular situation and context; we will cover two useful strategies: **citizen report cards** and **community scorecards**.*

*Lesson three and four provide a step-by-step guide on how to develop citizen report cards and community scorecards.

Citizen Report Cards

Citizen Report Cards are participatory surveys that provide quantitative (numbers and data) feedback on user perceptions on the quality, adequacy and efficiency of public services. They go beyond just being a data collection exercise to being an instrument to exact public accountability through the extensive media coverage and advocacy that accompanies the process.

Basic steps:
- Decide on agencies/services to be evaluated.
- Identify target population for survey.
- Design questionnaire.
- Conduct survey.
- Analyze the data and compile report.
- Disseminate findings.
- Repeat survey on a regular basis to maintain monitoring efforts.

Community Scorecards

Community Scorecards are qualitative (descriptions and data that can be observed but not measured) monitoring tools that are used for local level monitoring and performance evaluation of services, projects and government administrative units by the communities themselves. By including an interface meeting between service providers and the community that allows for immediate feedback, the process is also a strong instrument for empowerment.

Basic steps:
- Decide on agencies/services to be evaluated.
- Community Meeting 1: Document Service Delivery Resource Allocation.
- Community Meeting 2: Develop the Service Delivery Performance Scorecard.
- Facilitate service provider input.
- Facilitate engagement between citizens and service providers.

How to Determine which Service Delivery Monitoring Strategy to Use

How do you decide what kind of service delivery monitoring strategy makes sense for your issue? While there are many different considerations, the most important of all is for you to be safe.

It is also important to consider the following:

How to Determine which Service Delivery Monitoring Strategy to Use

Access to Information: In order to conduct an effective monitoring activity, you need to have access to a certain amount of basic information.

Role of the Media: You should evaluate if there are local radio, television, newspaper and online outlets that you can use to raise awareness, disseminate findings, and create a platform for public debate.

Citizen Technical Abilities: Implementation of service delivery monitoring activities often requires a certain amount of technical know-how on the part of citizens such as: conducting research, gathering public opinion data, and facilitation.

Government Capacity: Try to have a good understanding of how capable the government will be to respond to your recommendations given things such as budgets, human resources, national policies and political processes.

Government-Citizen Engagement: Service delivery monitoring efforts are often most effective when citizens and the government are able to work together to find solutions to service delivery challenges.

Key Points to Remember

- ✓ Accountability means that those in government are obliged to take responsibility for their actions vis-a-vis citizens.

- ✓ Some of the key building blocks for an effective processing monitoring strategy include: Identifying an issue; building a base of evidence; demonstrating citizen support; building relationships; and educating the public.

- ✓ Monitoring the processes of decision makers is an ongoing project.

- ✓ Some of the factors to consider when designing your monitoring project are: Access to information; the role of the media; technical ability; government capacity; and government-citizen engagement.

LESSON TWO

Building Support for an Issue and Collecting Data

What Does Your Community Need?

In order to make a strong case to government officials that service delivery improvements are needed, you will need to demonstrate that there is broad community support for your effort and gather evidence to support your claims that the current level of services is below acceptable standards.

A service delivery monitoring effort could be useful in helping to realize the improvements your community needs. Your service delivery monitoring project will be most effective if you are able to demonstrate that many people in the community have similar ideas about what improvements are needed.

Keep in Mind

The best way to find out what the community wants
is to ask them. Different people will see the community
in different ways and will have different kinds of needs,
and success will be more likely if you remain open to
community input and avoid trying to shape the results with your own
biases.
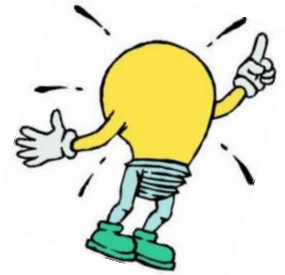
Be sure to reach out to a wide variety of people: men and women, young
and old, rich and poor, as well as ethnic and religious minorities.

Here are some basic questions for you to consider for a variety of different service delivery topics:

EDUCATION
What education opportunities or activities would we like to see? This could include quality of instruction, museums and centers that run programs on nutrition education, tutoring, adult education, etc.

QUALITY OF EXISTING SOCIAL SERVICES
Should there be spaces to accommodate social services? Some examples of social services could include health services, family services, job training centers, etc.

UTILITIES
Are there basic utilities that could work better in our community? Trash collection, electricity, clean water?

ARTS AND CULTURE
Are there specific art or cultural resources that our community needs? Should the neighborhood have a space for cultural events?

INFORMATION
What kind of information do we need in our community? Information about programming and services? Maps? Better signage? Places to post information about community issues?

OPEN SPACES
Do we need big areas to have a picnic, relax, play games, exercise etc.? What about green spaces for community gardening?

SPORTS AND RECREATION
What kinds of sport or recreation activities would you like to do? Jogging/walking, swimming, tennis, etc.? What kinds of facilities does the community need for this?

OTHER
Are there other activities or resources that have not been asked about that you would like to have in your neighborhood?

Tools to Gather Information

There are a variety of tools you can use to gather information from members of your community to understand if they share your ideas about needed service delivery improvements and to try to build support for your monitoring effort.

In order to determine which of these tools will be most useful, consider the following questions:

- How can you better understand the issue? Do you need statistics/numerical data, stories of personal experiences, or both?
- Who are the users of the service you are evaluating? Who has a particular interest in the issue? Who is affected?
- Are there people who rely on this service who may not have the opportunity to provide input?
- Where can you find the stakeholders?
- What safety and security considerations should you keep in mind while conducting this outreach?

Answers to these questions will help you determine which of the following information gathering tools might be most effective for your monitoring effort.

Tool #1: Surveys

Surveys ask specific questions and tend to include short answers. The most effective way to conduct a survey is through an in-person interview so the surveyor can make a personal connection with the respondent, but they can also be done over the phone or online. Surveys are helpful for getting quantitative information.

Here are a few tips you can use to implement a short survey:

Tool #1: Surveys

- Think about 5 to 10 questions that you would like to ask about your issue. Make sure that they can be answered with short responses. For example:
    - How many times a month do you use the health clinic in our community?
    - Do you ever need certain medicines that the clinic does not have in stock?
    - Can you think of one thing that you would suggest to improve services at the clinic?
- Develop a brief script to explain what the survey is for and why you want to talk to the participants.
- Keep the survey sheets organized and mark down answers as they are being given.
- If appropriate, try to get the name and contact information from the respondent so you can follow-up with them or to share information about your monitoring effort. You might want to keep their information separate from their answers to assure them of anonymity.

Tool #2: Discussion Groups

Discussion groups (sometimes called focus groups) are small sessions (around 7-12 people) that are led by a facilitator in order to obtain opinions and knowledge about a topic. Like an interview, discussion groups are good for getting qualitative data, and are an effective way to get people's stories.

Here are a few tips you can use to lead a discussion group:

Tool #2: Discussion Groups

- Consider developing a guide that lays out the questions you want to ask, organized into sections that will help you to lead the discussion and ensure that you are able to collect the needed information. Good focus group questions are:
  - Meant to inspire stories and conversation
  - Conversational sounding
  - Easy to say
  - Clear and simple
  - Short and to the point
- When leading the discussion, pause for a few seconds after you ask a question to give people time to respond. If you receive only yes or no answers, ask a probing question "Can you give me an example?"
- If appropriate, consider recording the focus group discussion so that you can refer back to the conversation and record the important details. Make sure that all participants know that they are being recorded and understand why.

Tool #3: Interviews

Interviews are guided conversations about a specific topic, are often done one-on-one, and tend to use questions that try to draw out in-depth explanations. Interviews are useful when you want to get detailed information and to get deeper into people's personal stories. Interviews can also assist in building support for your monitoring effort because they facilitate one-to-one interaction and raise interest among respondents, but they can be more time intensive than surveys.

Here are a few tips you can use to conduct an interview:

Tool #3: Interviews

- Focus on asking questions that inspire stories and conversation. For example:
    - What are some of your concerns about the community health clinic?
    - In what ways does the staff at the local clinic respond to your needs?
    - How do you feel about your doctor?
- Follow-up with probing questions when your respondent is discussing something important that you want more information about, or when you are unsure of what they are saying and you need clarification:
    - What do you mean by _____?
    - Can you be more specific about _____?
    - When you said ____, what does that look like? Can you give me some examples?
- Avoid questions that lead interviews to a particular response:
    - Don't you think that ____?

Tool #4: Policy Research

In addition to collecting information from citizens themselves, it is valuable to understand the legal, political and financial aspects of your issue.

To start, you should try to answer a few basic questions:

- Who uses the service? How much? How often?
- What is the demographic and income distribution of usage?
- What services are citizens entitled to based on government laws, policies or budgets?
- What services are actually being provided?
- Can you identify the government agency that is responsible for your service/issue?
- Is your issue with this service something that can be changed by local level monitoring?

Tool #4: Policy Research

To find these answers, you might start by inquiring at the local ministry or agency office to see if they have any of the following documents that are relevant to your service delivery monitoring project:

- Laws governing delivery of local services
- Inventories of inputs like medicines, textbooks, furniture, etc.
- Financial records or audits of government services or projects
- Budgets and allocations of government services or projects

Tool #5: Media Review

A media review is a systematic review of a certain number of news articles or clips from a variety of different sources about a specific topic. This can be used as background research and can also provide data about how a specific issue is being presented or framed in the media.

One way to do this is to identify the most relevant news sources and do keyword searches on your issue to see what themes emerge. Also pay attention to what people are saying about your issue on blogs and social media sites. Getting involved in online conversations is a great way to identify allies and new sources of information.

Tool #6: Building Relationships with Government Officials

Another way to gather information from government sources could be to schedule meetings with officials that have responsibility for the issue you are working on. Moreover, it can be beneficial to develop a relationship with these officials.

By getting to know key people in government, you may find that they are:

- Able to make decisions about your issue,
- Able to provide background data and information and,
- Less likely to be an obstacle to your monitoring project if they understand the goals and objectives.

Tool #6: Building Relationships with Government Officials

You will have to do some investigation to determine which government office oversees your monitoring issue. A good place to start might be to get in touch with your local city or village council member or a representatives from local ministry offices.

Request a meeting with the government official or appropriate representative to discuss your monitoring project and share the information that you have already learned about the specific community problem that you are looking to address.

Be sure to highlight the fact that you are interested in being proactive rather than confrontational in finding a solution.

Tool #6: Building Relationships with Government Officials

Here are some suggestions on how to prepare for and conduct a meeting with a government official:

Prepare materials: Bring concise and interesting materials to share. A single page that explains who you are and what you do may be all that you need.

Plan the meeting: Think about including people who have different perspectives on your issue. But don't invite too many people, more than 3-4 may make it difficult to get good information in a brief time.

Timing: Ask for 30 minutes. Arrive early and plan to wait. Try to learn basic information about the official.

Designate a facilitator: Assign a person to be the facilitator at the meeting, introducing the group and stating the purpose of the meeting.

Tool #6: Building Relationships with Government Officials

Get them talking: Once you have described your issue and your planned monitoring work, pivot the focus of the meeting to hear from the official. The more they talk, the more clues you will get about your shared interests—and differences.

Ask for support: Ask for the individual's support on your monitoring project and see if they can point you to other potential allies or sources of information and data. You may also ask them to share any insights they may have regarding barriers to effective delivery of services and which part of government is responsible for the issue you are assessing.

Identify the next step: Wrap up a meeting with a commitment to a specific next step—providing information, setting a meeting, inviting them to participate in a community interface gathering during the monitoring process, or something similar.

Before you leave: Ask each legislator about the best way to communicate with her/him.

Key Points to Remember

- ✓ Service delivery monitoring projects will be more effective if you can demonstrate community support.

- ✓ Surveys ask specific questions and are helpful for gathering quantitative information.

- ✓ Interviews are guided conversations and can build support for your effort because they facilitate one-to-one interaction and raise interest among respondents.

- ✓ Discussion groups are small sessions that are led by a facilitator to obtain knowledge about a topic.

- ✓ A media review is a systematic review of news articles or clips from different sources on a specific topic.

- ✓ A meeting with a government official is another way to conduct background research and collect information on the service you are monitoring.

- ✓ Remember to protect a person's privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality.

LESSON THREE

Citizen Report Cards Step-By-Step

Citizen Report Cards

A more formal or comprehensive approach to monitoring that might go beyond initial research and opinion-gathering is through the development of a citizen report card.

Citizen report cards are surveys that solicit citizen feedback on the performance of public services.

Report cards can enhance accountability through public information campaigns and engagement with government officials. They are useful in situations where information from service users, such as perceptions about quality, is limited or does not exist. By systematically gathering and disseminating public feedback, report cards provide an incentive for government service providers to be more responsive to users' needs.

Strengths and Challenges of Citizen Report Cards

Citizen report cards can provide citizens and government officials with information about how citizens perceive the quality of public services provided. If a citizen report card process is conducted periodically, it is an effective tool to track changes in service quality over time, and identifying where needs still exist.

This service delivery monitoring process involves creating a questionnaire and using it to gather information from citizens, and then sharing that information with service providers and government agencies with hope of initiating improvements.

Here are some of the strengths and challenges of implementing a citizen report project to monitor service delivery:

Strengths and Challenges of Citizen Report Cards

STRENGTHS

Report cards can be used to assess one public service or several services simultaneously.

The feedback can be collected from people on an individual basis.

Perceived improvements in service quality can be compared over time or across various public agencies involved in service provision.

Strengths and Challenges of Citizen Report Cards

CHALLENGES

Undertaking a report card process might be perceived as threatening to some officials and might carry political risks.

Designing the survey tool and sample requires some technical skills that may or may not be available.

Report cards require a well-thought dissemination strategy so that public agencies take note of citizen feedback and take required action to address needs.

STRENGTHS

Report cards can be used to assess one public service or several services simultaneously.

The feedback can be collected from people on an individual basis.

Perceived improvements in service quality can be compared over time or across various public agencies involved in service provision.

Preparation of a Citizen Report Card

The first thing you need to do is to develop a **statement of purpose**. This should draw upon the information you gathered during your research work.

You can use the following questions to guide your work:

- What service or sector do you wish to survey?
- Is there a government policy/program you wish to assess?
- Who in your community has information about or is affected by the services you plan to cover?
- How will the information be used?
- What type of information do you need to gather?
- What aspects of service delivery are important (availability, access, quality of service, etc.)?

When deciding on your goals, consider services or policies that have a direct effect on people's lives. Once you have clarity on what your goals are for your monitoring project and if appropriate, you might try to meet with the service providers that you plan to evaluate.

Keep in Mind

As you prepare your citizen report card be cognizant of the size and scope of your monitoring project. Consider your situation and the service you are trying to monitor. And remember, it is up to you to use your own good judgment to determine whether or not taking on a monitoring project will put your security at risk.

Developing the Survey Questionnaire

The structure and size of the questionnaire should be designed keeping in mind the trade-off between detail and time. The questionnaire should take about 15 to 20 minutes per household. There is no set number of households that you should target, but plan to visit enough so that you have enough data to make some general conclusions about how the service affects a variety of community members.

Step #1: Introduction

The **introduction** is a short script at the start of the interview to deliver key information regarding the survey to the person/people answering the questions (the "respondent").

The interviewer introduces himself/herself, explains the purpose of the interview and begins to create a relationship with the respondent.

At this stage, it also needs to be made clear to the respondent that individual respondent feedback will not be disseminated. Only the aggregated information from all respondents will be shared. The survey findings should share a complete picture – both good and bad – of how an agency provides services.

Step #1: Introduction

The **introduction** is a short script at the start of the interview to deliver key information regarding the survey to the person/people answering the questions (the "respondent").

The interviewer introduces himself/herself, explains the purpose of the interview and begins to create a relationship with the respondent.

Here is an example:

'Hello, I am xxx. I am currently trying to understand the quality of water and sanitation services in our community. Could I please speak with an adult member of this household? Your views are very important to us. Anything you say is entirely confidential; your individual feedback will not be disseminated. Only the aggregated information from all respondents will be shared with the public and the government so that services can be improved. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes. Would you be willing to participate in this survey?'

At this stage, it also needs to be made clear to the respondent that individual respondent feedback will not be disseminated. Only the aggregated information from all respondents will be shared. The survey findings should share a complete picture – both good and bad – of how an agency provides services.

Step #2: Qualifier Questions

Qualifier questions help to decide the respondent's suitability to answer a set of questions and/or the entire survey. The first qualifier decides if the respondent meets the basic conditions to complete the questionnaire. If you are interested in interviewing a specific population, you need to make sure this person fulfills this criterion. A further condition is usually whether the person has used the service(s) of interest in the past 12 months.

For example, a qualifier question for a water and sanitation survey would ask: 'Have you or anyone in your family, used government water and sanitation services in the past one year?'

- Yes [continue with interview]
- No [terminate interview]

Step #3: Demographics

For many citizen report card surveys, households are a common unit of analysis.

Demographic questions gather basic information about the respondent and/or the respondent's household which is of interest in the report card. Gather the household information (head of household, household income, address, etc.) at the beginning of the questionnaire.

Step #4: Body of the Questionnaire

The **body of the questionnaire** captures the key feedback related to the citizen report card objectives. Specific questions can cover ease of access, usage, reliability, quality, staff behavior, corruption and satisfaction. The questionnaire should focus on areas of service delivery as experienced by users instead of internal or technical processes.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when writing questions and answers for the different parts of the questionnaire:

- Clearly word the questions so they are not leading or ambiguous;
- Ensure that service users would be capable of answering the question based on their experiences;
- Avoid questions that make an assumption about the respondent;
- Think carefully about the order in which the questions come;
- To avoid collecting outdated information, include a time frame, when necessary.
- If you are asking a distance-related question or any other question where the unit of information affects the respondent's answer, make sure it is included in the question.

Analysis and Report Writing

The raw data you collect from the surveys now needs to be organized and analyzed so you can make some generalizations and recommendations. The findings should aim to be constructively critical.

Here are some suggestions on how to present your findings:

- Present information in a holistic manner:
  - It is important to highlight good and bad areas of performance. A complete picture of both successes and failures should be shared;
- Provide qualitative explanations of the figures presented instead of a simple good/bad or yes/no;
- Convey findings in a value neutral manner: Let the findings speak for themselves instead of using descriptive adjectives or biased language.

Analysis and Report Writing

Here is an overview of the basic sections to include in your report:

The **executive summary** presents a brief version of the purpose, methodology and major findings of the report card monitoring process. It should contain a list of recommended actions suggested by the findings. This section should be able to stand alone and serve as a summary document for the media, citizens and other interested parties.

The **survey objectives** section conveys the reason for doing the survey and how the findings are expected to inform follow-up planning, decisions or actions by various actors. The statement of purpose for the report card monitoring process provides a good starting point for this section.

The **methodology** section presents a complete, accurate and honest description of the research methods employed. The objective of this section explains how the information was gathered, when the information was collected, and any limitations affecting data collection.

Analysis and Report Writing

The **major findings** section summarizes the results and presents them in order of importance and interest to the audience. You can consider using tables to summarize the key findings. The most interesting results can be highlighted with appropriate charts. Make sure that the findings include areas of good and poor performance.

The **conclusions and recommendations** answer the question 'So what?' and discusses the conclusions that can be drawn from the findings. The conclusions drawn should be based only on the facts obtained through survey research. This section can suggest things such as how changes in processes, the introduction of training or new procedures could improve service delivery.

Key Points to Remember

- ✓ Citizen report cards can provide citizens and government officials with information about how citizens perceive the quality of public services provided and reveal areas where government agencies are not achieving desired standards.

- ✓ As you prepare your citizen report card be cognizant of the size and scope of your monitoring project.

- ✓ There are four parts to a survey questionnaire: introduction, qualifier questions, demographics, and the body.

- ✓ You need to organize the raw data you collect through the survey questionnaire so you can make generalizations and recommendations.

LESSON FOUR

Community Scorecards Step-By-Step

Community Scorecards

Community scorecards provide more direct interaction between providers and community members. The community scorecards monitoring process described here is meant to help you guide your neighbors in a participatory process of documenting specific gaps in service delivery at the local level and making suggestions for improvement.

Ideally, the process will generate not only information and a sense of collective perceptions, but also linkages between service providers and the community, empowering citizens to provide immediate feedback to service providers.

Strengths and Challenges of Community Scorecards

The community scorecard process is a participatory, community-based monitoring and evaluation tool that enables citizens to assess the quality of public services such as a health center, a school, public transport, water, waste disposal and so on. It is used to inform community members about available services and what citizens are entitled to by law (referred to here as "entitlements"), and to solicit their opinions about the accessibility and quality of these services.

By providing an opportunity for direct dialogue between service providers and the community, the scorecard process empowers the public to voice their opinion and demand improved service delivery.

Here are some of the strengths and challenges of implementing a community scorecard to monitor service delivery:

Strengths and Challenges of Citizen Report Cards

STRENGTHS

The scorecard process allows citizens to understand entitlements and discuss community needs together.

This is a community-level process which brings together service providers and users to discuss ways of improving service quality.

The process gives the community members and community leaders a better understanding of the productive role that citizens can play in promoting government accountability.

Strengths and Challenges of Citizen Report Cards

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The process gives the community members and community leaders a better understanding of the productive role that citizens can play in promoting government accountability.

CHALLENGES

Community scorecards monitoring processes rely on good quality facilitators, which may not be available.

It may be challenging or undesirable to organize community meetings.

Service providers or government officials may react defensively if/when presented with the information that citizens feel their performance could be improved.

Preparation

Based on what you have learned through your background research, identify the one or two important services or projects that you would like your monitoring exercise to focus on. This will depend on what services or projects are managed and/or implemented at the local level and what is of importance to the community.

Determine who you would like to include in your monitoring project. It is critical to ensure that you include a variety of people that use the service that you will be monitoring to capture different perspectives from different types of users. Be sure to reach out to marginalized groups as well.

Preparation

Before you can implement the monitoring activities, you need to do some basic planning:

- Identify a meeting venue
- Determine times for three types of meetings:
  - community meetings (twice),
  - provider meeting,
  - interface meeting
- Invite participants
- Develop materials
- Gather supplies: paper, pens, flip charts, markers

Organize Community Meetings

There are two main goals of the community meetings:

1) identify what resources are supposed to be allocated (we'll call these "inputs") to the service provider compared with what resources are actually allocated, and

2) assess the performance of the service provider.

Community Meeting 1:
Document Service Delivery Resource Allocation

The goal of this meeting is to help the community to use official data, physical evidence, observations and anecdotes to document how well the service provider is utilizing resources. Come to the meeting prepared with the information you gathered during the research phase of the project.

You'll want to have as much information about the service delivery sector you are monitoring as you can and make it available in an easy-to-understand and presentable way, including:

- Budget allocations
- Financial and audit reports detailing actual spending
- Inventories of equipment and physical assets
- Laws or policies detailing entitlements (education or health policy)
- Contractor information, including amounts paid and system of contracting

Community Meeting 1:
Document Service Delivery Resource Allocation

At the first community meeting:

- **Provide background information to participants** about what their entitlements are so they can compare what level of services they are supposed to receive versus actual service delivery.

- **Divide participants into discussion groups**. You can choose to group people by demographics (age, gender) or usage type (students, teachers, parents) based on what you think will result in more effective discussion. You should strive to have 10 to 15 people in each group in order to generate a good discussion.

Community Meeting 1:
Document Service Delivery Resource Allocation

- **Ask participants to suggest indicators for how inputs are allocated** (such as the number of textbooks available, the number of drugs available, sources of procurement for government projects). The goal is to develop an indicator for which a variance between actual and entitled/budgeted/accounted data can be compared.

- **Facilitate a discussion with participants on what is supposed to be provided** and what is in fact provided (actual experiences or observation of participants). Back up with evidence or anecdotes, if possible. Record indicators in a chart for easy comparison.

Community Meeting 2:
Develop Service Delivery Performance Scorecard

The goal of this meeting is to help the community to qualify and rate the performance of service providers.

At the second community meeting:

- **Divide participants into discussion groups**. Consider grouping participants based either on demographics or usage of services. You should strive to have 10 to 15 people in each group in order to generate a good discussion.

- **Facilitate a discussion with each group about the service delivery** with a goal of creating a set of criteria with which to evaluate its quality. Facilitators can initiate the discussion using some guiding questions.

- **Decide on a set of performance criteria** for the service being assessed based on suggestions made during the discussions. Ideally, you should strive for about 5 to 8 performance criteria, and they should be framed positively, meaning that a higher score is better. The entire group agrees on the criteria.

Community Meeting 2:
Develop Service Delivery Performance Scorecard

- **Facilitate a discussion that guides the groups to provide a score for each of the criteria.** Two common yet different methods are individual voting and group consensus. In either case, it is important to allow debate among group members on scores and record differences of opinion in the notes. In order to gain a fuller picture of participants' perceptions of the service being evaluated, you should ask for reasons behind the high and low scores for each criterion.

- **Prompt the group to make suggestions about how the service can be improved** based on the performance criteria they came up with, once the group has agreed on a score for each of the criteria. These suggestions should include what the community can do, as well as the service providers.

Facilitate Service Provider Input

Now it is time to allow the service providers to conduct a self-evaluation of their own performance using the scorecard process. The process will be very similar to what you did with the community members, involving facilitated brainstorming of criteria for self-evaluation, and scoring done in small groups.

As with the community meetings, you should begin the meeting with the providers by helping them to understand the objectives of the monitoring project. Make sure to plan this meeting far enough in advance so that managers and other critical staff can attend.

Next, divide the participants into small discussion groups. You should consider keeping senior staff and/or managers in a separate group so subordinates feel more comfortable speaking openly. As with the community, guide the service provider participants through a discussion to determine their own set of performance criteria.

Facilitate Service Provider Input

Next, guide them through the process of suggesting relative scores for each of the criteria and ask them to explain why they gave the scores they did (particularly the high and low scores for each criterion) and to provide evidence and explanation from personal experience.

Finally, ask the service providers to make suggestions about how to improve the quality of services, considering both what they and the community can do.

Engagement Between Citizens and Service Providers

The interface meeting is perhaps the most important aspect of the monitoring project. It is at this meeting where community members and providers can work together to identify improvements. In addition to the community members and service providers, think about inviting elected lawmakers or government officials to observe the discussion, if appropriate.

On the day of the meeting, post all the charts you've created throughout this process (resource tracking, community scorecard, provider self-evaluation) so all participants have access to all the information.

Open the meeting with a plenary session where you invite members of each of the discussion sessions to summarize their scorecards.

Engagement Between Citizens and Service Providers

Next, engage the community and the providers in an analysis of the scorecard results. The focus should be on highlighting common criteria and similar scores. From these, the main problem areas, as well as those on which there is a positive consensus amongst both parties, will be identified and should lead to a discussion of how to make things better.

Reflecting on this analysis, ask the plenary to think more concretely about what are the most needed improvements and what can realistically be achieved. Try to focus on improvements that can be achieved in the short term so as to give credibility to the process and open the door to similar exercises in the future.

Finally, the community members and service providers should agree on follow-up actions that will be undertaken to ensure that the action plans developed are put into practice. This could take the form of repeat meetings, visits by external parties, a report, etc.
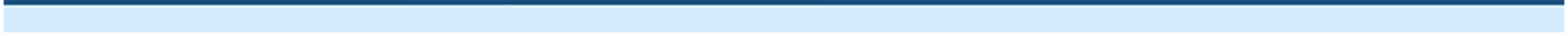
Key Points to Remember

✓ The community scorecard process is a participatory, community-based monitoring and evaluation tool that enables citizens to assess the quality of public services.

✓ The scorecard empowers the public to voice their opinions and demand improved service delivery.

✓ Include a variety of people that use the service you will be monitoring, including marginalized groups.

✓ There are two main goals of the community meetings: to identify what resources are supposed to be allocated (inputs) and to assess the performance of the service provider.

✓ The interface meetings between citizens and the service provider is one of the most important aspects of the monitoring project.

CONCLUSION

Citizens have an important role to play in ensuring that the government is responsive to their needs. Citizens can inform government about what policies they would like to see enacted, monitor decision making and implementation, and report back to government if implementation of policies and service delivery are not responding to needs and priorities.

The important thing to remember about service delivery monitoring is that it is an ongoing project. If you succeed in making improvements in your community, they will only last if you and your fellow citizens remain vigilant in your monitoring efforts.

In addition, you may have found that there are larger policy reasons why certain service challenges exist. Addressing those issues with an advocacy campaign at the local or national level may be the next step.

Here are some ideas for how you can continue working to hold government accountable for local service delivery.

Follow-Up Monitoring

As a result of your service delivery monitoring process, you will have provided a context for communities to address local service delivery challenges and propose solutions.

To ensure that improvements are implemented
you will need to work with community members
and the service providers to conduct some follow-up.
It is likely that specific follow-up steps might emerge
from the discussion at an interface meeting, if you
were able to have one; but you should set up a timetable
for undertaking monitoring visits to the service delivery
facilities that were being monitored.

Public Information

Consider publicizing the results of your monitoring project to raise awareness, increase participation and put some performance pressure on providers.

Be sure to contextualize the results of the monitoring process by incorporating information on the service delivery entitlements you uncovered during the research phase. This will help community members to understand what they should expect from their government.

Be sure you have a clear message and credible messenger speaking from personal experience about the monitoring process and outcomes. Think about the target audience of your campaign and use appropriate communication channels to reach them.

Public Information

Develop a communication strategy to help you make your case most effectively.

- Define the problem. What has caused the problem? Are there facts or statistics from your research or the monitoring process that can help you to quantify and explain the problem?

- Target the right people. Who are the people most affected by the problem? Can you share personal stories from the monitoring process that illustrate the problem?

Policy Advocacy

While you are going through the monitoring process, you may find that some needed improvements may not be able to be implemented at the community level or by the service provider unilaterally; rather they may require policy changes by local or national government.

You may decide that you want to try to promote this policy change by engaging with government officials to inform them of the problems and potential solutions uncovered by the community and service providers.

Policy Advocacy

The data collected through the monitoring process provides a solid foundation for engagement with government officials about needed improvements in service delivery. Using information gathered during your research and the monitoring process, develop and analyze a list of possible alternatives to the current situation that could be introduced to the policy debate as possible solutions:

- What is most likely to solve the problem?
- How much will it cost? Is it worth it? Who will pay?
- What other problems will it solve or create?
- Can it be implemented?
- Which solutions could attract enough political support to be adopted?