Social Accountability in the Delivery of Social Protection

Technical Guidance Note

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Contents

Acronyms

CBO	Community-based organisation
CRC	Community report card
CSC	Community score card
CSO	Civil society organisation
GRM	Grievance redress mechanism
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act, India
MGNREGS	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme
MIS	Management information system (computerised)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PIN	Personal identification number
PSP	Payment service provider
SA	Social accountability
SSAAT	Society for Social Audits, Accountability and Transparency, an autonomous arm of the Department of Rural Development, India

ABOUT THIS GUIDANCE NOTE

> **This note offers guidance to social protection practitioners on how to strengthen social accountability in the delivery of social protection.**

The note relies primarily on the findings of a recent research project on social accountability in social protection (Ayliffe et al., 2018[1]). Key findings from our research are highlighted in green throughout this report.

The focus is on non-contributory long-term social protection programmes, including conditional and unconditional cash transfers, as well as public works[2]. Its intended audience includes DFID advisers and programme managers and the staff of other development partners, NGOs and partner governments; and, in particular, staff working at country level. The guidance is organised as follows (with hyperlinks to relevant sections):

- **Section 1: What is Social Accountability? A Conceptual Framework**
  This section sets out a framework for thinking about social accountability in social protection, which underpins the guidance in subsequent sections.

- **Section 2: Design of Social Protection Programmes to Promote Social Accountability**
  Add-on social accountability mechanisms can mitigate, but not entirely make up for, the challenges posed by a programme design that constrains accountability. In this section we provide brief guidance on how social protection programmes can themselves be designed to promote social accountability. This guidance is intended for those involved in new social protection programme design or the major modification of existing programmes.

- **Section 3: Developing a Social Accountability Strategy for an Existing Social Protection Programme**
  On the other hand, we recognise that many readers will be managing or supporting existing social protection programmes with designs that are largely fixed. So, in subsequent sections, we provide detailed guidance on how to develop effective social accountability strategies around existing programmes. We work through each of the steps involved: step 1, contextual analysis; step 2, strategy development; and step 3, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

- **Annexes: Implementation of Social Accountability Mechanisms**
  Finally, in the annexes we provide summary guidance on the implementation of key social accountability mechanisms, as well as links to further resources.

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[1] Ayliffe, T., Aslam, G., Schjødt, R. (2018). Social Accountability in the Delivery of Social Protection: Final Research Report. Development Pathways.

[2] So it does not cover contributory social protection; social insurance; services (except as complementary to cash transfers); subsidies; or short-term humanitarian cash transfer programmes.

Chapter 1: What is social accountability? A conceptual framework

Social accountability is an approach to building accountability in which citizens are key actors: It refers to "*the extent and capacity of citizens to hold the state and service providers accountable and make them responsive to needs of citizens and beneficiaries*" (Grandvoinnet et al., 2015[3]).

Strengthening social accountability in social protection is important for two reasons: to ensure quality delivery of programmes and to help build better relations between citizens and the state.

- **Ensuring quality delivery of social protection programmes**. Quality programme delivery underpins the impact of and support for social protection. Deficiencies in service delivery not only undermine impact, but also the legitimacy of social protection programmes and potentially the political will to sustain and expand them. Social accountability is well suited to addressing some, but not all, types of social protection programming challenges. We explore which types in later sections.

- **Building better relations between citizens and the state**. Social protection programmes can contribute to strengthening the social contract between state and society, and to building trust, state legitimacy, citizen capacity and citizenship. However, this can only happen if the programmes are well implemented and have mechanisms in place to ensure accountability. Social accountability initiatives can help build citizens' understanding of social protection as an entitlement, as well as their confidence and capacity to take action when things go wrong. By creating interfaces for interaction between citizens and officials and enabling effective state response, they can also build citizen trust in the state.

As a starting point for assessing existing social accountability processes in a given context and identifying priorities for strengthening them, we need some kind of conceptual framework. We borrow and then adapt a framework developed by Grandvoinnet et al. (2015). According to this framework, as described in Box 1, social accountability can be conceptualised as the interplay of citizen and state-action, supported by three elements: civic mobilisation, interface and information.

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[3] Grandvoinnet, H., Aslam, G. and Raha, S. (2015). Opening the black box: The contextual drivers of social accountability. Washington, DC: World Bank Publications.

Box 1: The elements of social accountability

- **Citizen action** (voice) is one of the two key elements of social accountability: it includes all actions taken by citizens to provide feedback, raise concerns and pro-actively interact with service providers.

- **State-action** is the second key element: the actions of state actors and service providers in soliciting and responding to citizen voice. It is just as important as citizen action for social accountability, but has tended to receive less attention.

- **Information** is a key underpinning of citizen and state-action: information should be easily accessible to citizens and service providers and appropriate in content, format and channel.

- An **interface** is a process of interaction between state and citizen actors. It can be collective, or individual, face-to-face or virtual.

- **Civic mobilisation** covers various forms of citizen-to-citizen support that can propel concerned citizens to action, including, for example, training and facilitation by civil society organisations.

In adapting this framework to the social protection sector, we considered the characteristics of the social protection sector included in Box 2, which can be expected to constrain or facilitate social accountability.

Box 2: Characteristics of the social protection sector with implications for social accountability

Constraints in the social protection sector
- Social protection beneficiaries tend to be poorer, more vulnerable and more politically marginalised than the average citizen (constraint).
- The individualised nature of social protection may create particular challenges in terms of mobilising citizens for collective action (constraint).
- Institutional issues and capacities are often particularly weak in the social protection sector, inhibiting state response to citizen voice (constraint).

Enabling Factors
- Certain social protection service delivery failures have important direct effects on citizens (eg. lack of access to cash transfers) and so can be expected to be particularly salient to them, encouraging them to take action (enabling factor).

Taking account of all these issues, our conceptual framework is summarised in Figure 1 below. The text in each box highlights factors essential for effective social accountability in the social protection sector.

Figure 1: Social accountability in social protection – conceptual framework

State Action
Do service providers who hear citizen voice have the incentives, capacities and authorities to respond?

Information
Do all interested citizens and state actors have the information they need to engage constructively around social protection programming?

Citizen-State Interface
Are interfaces for interaction between citizens and service providers accessible and appropriate, including for the most marginalised?

Civic Mobilisation
Does civic mobilization succeed in overcoming constraints to collective citizen action?

Citizen Action
To what extent do citizens (including the most marginalised) act on their concerns? Do they anticipate the benefits of doing so to outweigh the costs and risks?

Chapter 2: Designing social protection programmes to promote social accountability

When a new social protection programme is under development, or major modifications are being made to an existing one, there will be windows of opportunity to mainstream social accountability considerations into programme design. It is primarily for these situations that the brief guidance in this chapter is crafted, though there may be opportunities to incorporate some of the recommendations into ongoing programme improvement.

> **Lesson 1: Add-on social accountability mechanisms can mitigate, but not entirely make up for, the challenges posed by a programme design that constrains accountability.**

The effectiveness of social accountability is strongly influenced by social protection programme design. Our research suggests that the following design features of social protection programmes can facilitate social accountability:

Easily comprehensible targeting criteria, transfer levels and other programme rules

In order for citizens to be able to hold providers to account for the correct application of criteria – both for programme selection and the delivery of correct transfer levels – they must first understand the criteria. Simple eligibility criteria tend to facilitate understanding, whilst complex criteria tend to impede it. For example, categorical criteria (such as age-based ones) are usually easier to understand than a proxy means test, which is based on a complex formula. Complex calculations of transfer levels also appear to impede citizen understanding. Many considerations will, of course, weigh on the choice of targeting approach and benefit levels. In order to promote social accountability, the targeting criteria, benefit levels and all other programme rules should be designed to be as easily comprehensible as possible to intended beneficiaries and other citizens (all other things considered).

Alignment of entitlements and financing

When considering the pros and cons of extending coverage, broadening eligibility or raising transfer levels beyond a level for which there is guaranteed, sustainable financing, social accountability considerations weigh on the side of conservatism. Where citizens observe that, in practice, access to a programme is contingent on the vagaries of stop-start funding, this is inimical to their sense of entitlement to social protection and hence to social accountability. Similarly, where programme quotas are used to control costs, access to transfers is effectively rationed and not provided as an entitlement for all those meeting eligibility criteria, again undermining attempts to build citizens' sense of their right to social protection: in the context of tight budgetary constraints, it would be preferable to

define eligibility criteria more narrowly so that all the eligible can be covered. To promote social accountability, it is strongly advised that transfers to all the eligible be sustainable within the projected financing envelope.

Positive face-to-face interaction between marginalised citizens and programme officials

Evidence from many contexts indicates that vulnerable people living in poverty tend to prefer face-to-face interfaces with service providers over technology-based ones. Given that frontline staff capacities are often over-stretched and new technologies tend to reduce the face-time that occurs automatically in day-to-day programme operations, promoting social accountability is likely to require additional resourcing of frontline capacity (increased staffing levels, transport provision etc). See Box 3 for an example.[4] The nature of the interaction is also important: interfaces between the state and citizens are not automatically empowering and can instead be disempowering. For example, where face-time is spent primarily with officials who are monitoring citizens' compliance with conditionalities, this can serve to reinforce the power imbalance between them and impede accountability to citizens. To promote social accountability, programme design and resourcing should ensure sufficient face-time between citizens and service providers and that the interactions are empowering.

Box 3: Promoting face-time in Zimbabwe's Harmonised Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) programme

> Payments are contracted out to a payment agent, so there is no automatic point of contact between beneficiaries and frontline government social protection staff. However, payments are delivered by the agent in cash. So to address the potential gap in interaction, staff travel round with the payment agent on each pay day to the different pay points, where they establish a help desk. Citizens are invited to bring complaints and concerns to this desk and are able to line up to meet with the staff. This opportunity for face-to-face interaction is highly appreciated by programme beneficiaries. Additional travel costs for staff are incurred and these are financed by development partners.

Incentives, authorities and capacities of service providers to respond to citizen demands

Citizen action will be ineffective if service providers lack the incentives, authorities or capacities to respond to their demands. Programme design features that constrain state response to citizen voice include the *lack of:*

- authority of local officials to respond to citizen demands;
- budget access at local level to respond to the many citizen demands that have budgetary implications;
- incentives for raising citizen demands up the state hierarchy;

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[4] Source: Sabates-Wheeler, R., Ayliffe, T., Roelen, K. (forthcoming). A Report on the Qualitative Survey Results on Exit Possibilities and Complaints and Grievance Procedures for the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) – Zimbabwe, Institute of Development Studies, for UNICEF.

- inclusion of responsiveness to citizens in the criteria used to assess frontline staff performance;
- sufficient staff at local levels and transport provision for staff to regularly travel out to communities; and
- sufficient knowledge by service provider staff of programme rules.

To promote social accountability, it is important to ensure that the design of institutional arrangements for social protection programme delivery takes account of all these issues.

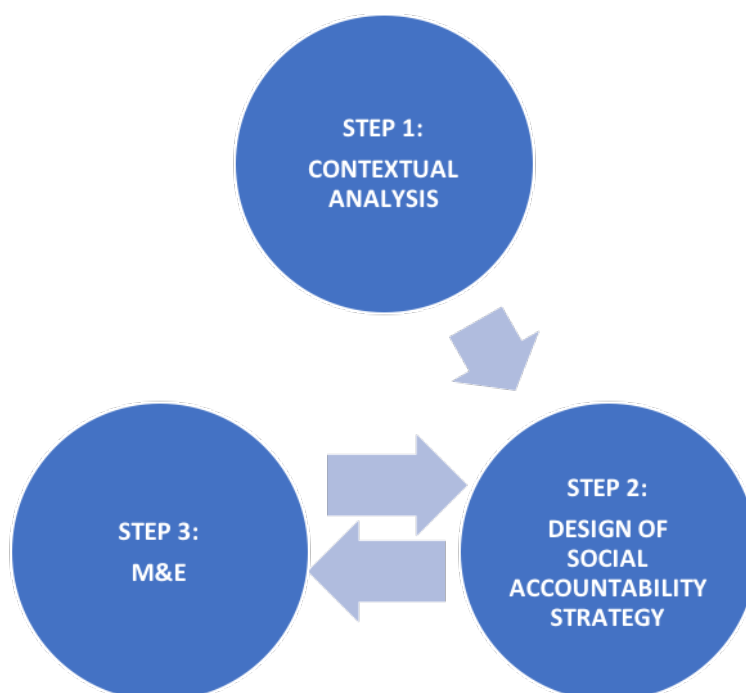# Chapter 3: Developing a social accountability strategy

This section provides guidance on how to design a strategy to strengthen social accountability in the context of an ongoing social protection programme.

Whilst ideally social protection programmes should be designed to maximise social accountability (in line with the principles in Section 2 above), in many situations this is limited by the fact that the programme design is already largely fixed. Nonetheless, there is still much scope to strengthen social accountability through the careful design of a complementary social accountability strategy.

We recognise that social protection practitioners will often not be starting from a blank slate in relation to social accountability interventions. Most social protection programmes have some social accountability mechanism in place, at least on paper. However, whilst discrete social accountability mechanisms exist, they rarely appear to form part of a strategic approach towards addressing accountability. That is to say, there are few social accountability interventions that have been carefully designed both in relation to the context and the key programming challenges to be addressed by the social protection programme. In addition, different existing accountability mechanisms are not necessarily linked.

In the following sections we provide guidance on how to develop such a social accountability strategy. We work through three key steps involved in this – **contextual analysis**, **strategy development** and **M&E** – as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Social Accountability Programme Cycle

3.1 Step 1: Contextual analysis

In this section we provide guidance on how to carry out contextual analysis to inform the development of a social accountability strategy for a social protection programme.

Lesson 2: There is no blueprint for implementing social accountability in social protection, because social accountability is an inherently political process.

In order to conceptualise social accountability not just as a specific tool or mechanism but as a political process, the programme design needs to be grounded in thorough contextual analysis. This should include political economy, patterns of social exclusion, social protection institutional arrangements and programme design.

The approach to contextual analysis that is proposed here is sufficiently flexible to allow for it to be used in two ways: either to underpin the design of a comprehensive social accountability strategy or for elements to be integrated into annual and other rapid reviews in order to incrementally strengthen existing social accountability initiatives. Given the need to give equal attention to state response and citizen action, a team with both social and governance research skills may be best placed to carry out the analysis.

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 1 above should guide contextual analysis. Key proposed research questions derive directly from the conceptual framework and are structured according to the five elements of this framework: **information; interface; civic mobilisation; citizen action; and state-action**. Each element needs to be unpacked and understood from the perspective of different groups of citizens – including the most marginalised – as well as different service providers and officials.

The questions are framed broadly enough for them to be used as a starting point to examine social accountability processes in any context, but, of course, precise question wording and follow ups should be tailored to the context.

Key methodologies useful in addressing these questions include documentary review (including analysis of any relevant surveys and administrative data), key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews with citizens. In addition to these standard methodologies, process tracing can be very useful for understanding relations between citizens, state representatives and state response, as described in Box 4.

Box 4: Process tracing

In process tracing, a sample of cases is systematically followed from when a complaint or concern is first raised (individually or collectively) through to its eventual outcome. It can provide hugely valuable information that is complementary to information obtained through other methods. Whereas in other interviews key informants might tell us what is supposed to happen, in process tracing we find out what has actually happened in a sample of cases and are also able to understand how and why the outcome ended up the way it did.

Process tracing involves: interviewing firstly the citizen(s) who raised the concern; secondly the service provider(s) who heard it; and subsequently anyone else to whom the issue was referred; as well as consulting any relevant database or written record about the issue.

The questions asked in process tracing are very specific and are oriented towards finding out who did what and then probing into why. For example, typical questions to the concerned citizen would be as follows (with follow-ups dependent on the initial responses): *How did you come to realise there was a problem? What was the first thing you did? With whom/where did you raise your concern? Why? What happened? What did s/he say? What did you do next? Why? And then what?...What was the outcome? What feedback did you receive? How did you feel about that?*

Questions to service providers are similarly specific: *How did you first learn about this citizen concern? What was the first thing you did? Why? What did you do next? Who, if anyone, did you refer the issue to? Why (not)? What was the final outcome? Did you face any problem in responding to this concern? What problem? etc*

Key Questions around each Element

Information

Key Question	Do all interested citizens and state actors have the information they need to engage constructively around social protection programming?
Sub-Questions	• Do citizens understand whether or not they are eligible for the programme(s) and why? • Do citizens perceive their transfers as an entitlement or a gift? Why? • To what extent do eligible citizens understand their specific entitlements? • Do citizens know how they can raise a concern if they have one? • What are the most common channels for citizens to obtain information about the social protection programmes? What information channels are preferred and how do these preferences vary? How does information circulate within the community?

Key Question	Do all interested citizens and state actors have the information they need to engage constructively around social protection programming?
	For all questions, how does this vary between sub-groups of citizens, and in particular, according to gender, disability status and other relevant dimension of marginalisation? Which dimensions of marginalisation are most important in the context and how do they intersect? • To what extent do frontline service providers have all the information they need to respond constructively to citizen voice?

In addressing these questions (and also the questions below around interface, civic mobilisation and citizen action), **semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with citizens** are likely to prove useful. In order to obtain opinions from a variety of citizens, the interviews and focus group discussions will need to be held, where relevant, with: women as well as men; people with and without disabilities; people from various ethnic groups or castes; other marginalised groups; and beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of various social protection programmes/programme components. To decide how to unpack the group of citizens and devise context-appropriate questions, prior literature review around gender relations and the patterns and dynamics of social exclusion in the context will be required.

Interface

Key Question	Are interfaces for interaction between citizens and service providers accessible and appropriate, including for the most marginalised citizens?
Sub-questions	• What interfaces are available for citizens to interact with government officials in relation to the social protection programme? Which do citizens prefer and why - and how do these preferences vary between citizens? • Which kinds of issues (if any) do citizens feel (un)comfortable in raising through each type of interface and why? • Do citizens living in poverty usually interact directly with officials, or do they use intermediaries? Which intermediaries? Why? What are the power dynamics between these intermediaries and the citizens they are serving? • Apart from formally created interfaces, what other opportunities does the local political economy context offer to citizens to get their voices heard? How do these opportunities vary between citizens? For all above questions, how does this vary between sub-groups of citizens, and in particular, according to gender, disability status and other relevant dimensions of marginalisation?

To triangulate findings from focus group discussions and interviews with citizens and service providers, various documentary sources may prove useful, including, for example: reports on the functioning of any committees or volunteers established by the social protection programme; literature on traditional community-level institutions; and minutes of complaints committees or of interface meetings associated with social audits or community score card processes.

Civic mobilisation

Key Question	Does civic mobilisation succeed in overcoming constraints to collective citizen action, including for the most marginalised?
Sub-questions	• Where, how and to what extent do programme beneficiaries discuss together the issues they face in relation to social protection? • What community/traditional structures exist? Are issues to do with social protection programmes discussed in these fora? Why (not)? • Are there any community committees or volunteers set up by the project? What roles do they play? What constraints, if any, do they face? What, if any, are the potential conflicts of interest between these intermediaries and the marginalised citizens they are established to serve? • Are there any civil society organisations that support social accountability in social protection? What support do they provide? How credible are these organisations in the eyes of citizens and the service providers they are trying to influence? In relation to all structures and organisations that play a role in relation to mobilisation around social protection: What are the dynamics between men and women and different social groups within the community? Has anything specific been done to enable marginalised groups to voice complaints/take action? What? How effective has this been?

In addition to semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with citizens, **key informant interviews with civil society actors** will be useful for this element. These will contribute to an understanding of the extent and nature of efforts at civic mobilisation, as well as of any mechanisms in place that promote inclusion of the most marginalised or prevent elite capture.

Citizen Action

Key Question	To what extent do citizens act on their concerns? Do they anticipate that the benefits will outweigh costs and risks?
Sub-questions	• What are the key concerns that citizens have about social protection programming? • How do these concerns compare to the key programming challenges from the perspective of service providers and development partners? • What are the main concerns that citizens actually raise with service providers? Which key concerns are *not* being raised and why? • What are the key constraints on citizen action and how does this vary between different groups of citizens? [Is it because citizens feel they do not have the right to complain? Or they fear reprisals, or inaction? Or…?] • Are there differences in the extent to which citizens are able to raise concerns about services that are contracted out/provided directly by the state? • To what extent and how are citizen complaints and concerns recorded and registered?

> For all above questions, how does this vary between sub-groups of citizens, and in particular, according to gender, disability status and other dimensions of marginalisation relevant in the context? Which groups are more/less likely to raise concerns

Many methodologies will be useful in addressing this core element of the framework, including semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with citizens and process tracing (see below). Where good records are kept, data from grievance redress mechanisms (GRMs) and other social accountability mechanisms on the type of concerns raised will be a key input. Programme reports and evaluations will also enable an understanding of priority social protection programming challenges from the perspective of other stakeholders.

State-Action

Key Question	Do service providers who hear citizen voice have the incentives, authorities and capacities to respond?
Sub-questions	**Incentives** • What are the key incentives and disincentives that service providers face in responding to citizen voice? How does this vary between levels of the state hierarchy? Between state providers and private sector service providers? In relation to different groups of citizens? • What factors affect the extent to which service providers see citizen claims as legitimate? How do they manage competing citizen demands? • Where issues cannot be resolved directly by the service providers who interface with citizens, what are the mechanisms and incentives/disincentives for them to refer the concerns up the hierarchy to those who can? **Capacities and Authorities** • In relation to the key concerns of citizens about social protection programming, who has the authority to respond - and at what level in the hierarchy (local/regional/national)? If there are budgetary implications of response, who has budgetary authority? • What resources and capacities do service providers have to respond at each level, and what are the key practical and logistical constraints they face? • To what extent and how can frontline service providers influence others to respond where necessary? **Practical Response** • What do service providers actually do in response to each type of concern raised? What are specific examples of this response? • Do service providers respond more actively or differently to some types of concern than others, or to different citizens than others? Do some issues get resolved more easily than others? Which? Why? • Have service providers ever taken reprisals against active citizens? What type of reprisals? Against whom?

- Are concerns of citizens recorded? What, if any, mechanisms exist for tracking and following up on response?

Feedback to Citizens

- What feedback, if any, has been provided to citizens on the outcome of their complaint/concern? How do citizens feel about the feedback they have received?

For all above questions, how does this vary between sub-groups of citizens, and, in particular, according to gender, disability status and other relevant dimensions of marginalisation?

Understanding the political economy context and institutional arrangements in social protection – both through *literature review* and *key informant interviews* at national and sub-national levels – will be a key starting point for assessing how and why service providers are or are not responding to citizens.

The national and sub-national *political economy context* shapes the incentives and disincentives that service providers face in responding to different citizen voices. This has important implications both for how social accountability plays out and the best way to design initiatives. State response will also be framed by the *specific institutional arrangements* in the social protection sector. This involves the roles, responsibilities and authorities of all key service providers and officials at different levels in the hierarchy, as well as the power relationships and dynamics between them. It also includes – in cases where services are contracted out – the precise terms of the contract in relation to social accountability, including what, if any, requirement there is on the contractor to solicit and respond to citizen voice.

Another methodology that may be of particular value in understanding state response is **process tracing** (see Box 4 above).

Outcomes

Key Question	What have been the outcomes to date of interactions between citizens and service providers?
Sub-questions	• What do citizens and service providers each perceive to have been the effects of citizens raising concerns about the programme? • Any improvements in social protection service delivery? Which ones? How exactly are these perceived to have come about? • Any negative effects of citizens raising concerns? Which ones? • Any shifts in the propensity of citizens to raise concerns in the future? Or of providers to seek out citizen views? Concrete examples? • Any changes in citizen perceptions of or trust in the service provider, or vice versa, or in relationships between the two? What changes? Examples?

Key Question	What have been the outcomes to date of interactions between citizens and service providers?
	For all above questions, how does this vary between sub-groups of citizens, and in particular, according to gender, disability status and other relevant dimensions of marginalisation?

A combination of all the above-mentioned methods may be useful for understanding outcomes.

3.2 Step 2: Developing a social accountability strategy

Following contextual analysis, the next step will be to design the social accountability strategy, and this section provides guidance on strategy development.

Due to the inherently political nature of social accountability, we find that what works well in one context often does not work at all well in another. As such, this note does not attempt to provide a blueprint for success, but rather to flag a series of questions that practitioners can usefully work through as they explore options to promote social accountability in their own country contexts. We suggest four key questions for practitioners to ask themselves:

1) **Does the social accountability strategy respond to the binding constraints identified through contextual analysis?**
2) **Does it join up social accountability across local and national levels, as well as with top-down accountability mechanisms?**
3) **Does it include an appropriate selection of social accountability mechanisms to address the key social protection programming challenges faced?**
4) **Does it incorporate measures to empower the most marginalised citizens?**

In the following sections we explain why these questions are important and work through the practical implications of each in turn.

3.2.1 Responding to the binding constraints to social accountability

In this section we provide guidance on how the contextual analysis can be used to identify binding constraints to social accountability. This can then guide practitioners on what to focus on in the design of their strategy.

> **Lesson 3: Based on contextual analysis, any attempt to strengthen social accountability needs to identify and address the binding constraints in a given context. State response is frequently one of the binding constraints.**

As we saw in the conceptual framework, five elements – information, interface, civic mobilisation, citizen action and state-action – are all important for effective social accountability. But this does not mean that all require equal attention in all contexts. On the contrary, it will be important to prioritise effort and resources by using the contextual analysis to identify, in each particular country, the most important blockages to effective social accountability.

Figure 3 sets out some common scenarios and highlights the implications of these for strategy development. The scenarios are drawn from our research case studies and other countries, and practitioners may find that their country fits one or several of these scenarios.

State-action has tended to receive little attention in social accountability initiatives and, in several of our cases studies, was identified as a binding constraint. For this reason, it appears frequently in Figure 3. Having identified the key binding constraint(s) in their context, practitioners can then make use of the typology in Figure 3 to ensure that their strategy is appropriately focused and that sufficient resources are dedicated towards resolving the binding constraints.

Of course, this should not be taken to imply that the sole purpose of the contextual analysis is to identify and address binding constraints – that would be too reductionist. The analysis will also provide rich and nuanced insights that will be critical in guiding practitioners during the detailed design of their social accountability strategy.

Figure 3: Addressing different binding constraints

Finding: Citizens are generally active, but the most marginalised citizens much less so

Binding Constraint: Information, interface, civic mobilisation

Questions for reflection

Which group of citizens are less active? Why?

a) Lack of information
b) Lack of confidence or skills to engage with service providers
c) Practical constraints in reaching service providers (i.e. transport costs, mobility constraints of people with disabilities and older people)

Implications for strategy

Action to address this has to be informed by contextual analysis. See Section 3.2.4 for some ideas.

Finding: Citizens are well-informed, and providers are accessible, but citizens remain reluctant to raise issues. State is responsive when they do

Binding Constraint: Citizen mobilisation

Questions for reflection

What are the constraints to citizen action?

Are there positive examples of social accountability and citizen mobilisation in other sectors? If so, how have these achieved success?

Implications for strategy

Consider a strategy focus on doing more to support civic mobilisation for a more active citizenry – particularly if there are positive examples from other sectors to draw on. Or, it could introduce social accountability mechanisms that rely less on citizen initiative, and pro-actively seek information from citizens (for example through citizen report cards).

Finding: Citizens raise issues, but these are often seen as irrelevant by service providers

Binding Constraint: Citizen information or state action

Questions for reflection

What is it about the concerns of citizens that leads to them being categorised as irrelevant by service providers?

To what extent are citizens well-informed about the programme and their entitlements, so that they can articulate their concerns in relation to these?

How does this vary between groups of citizens and especially for marginalised groups?

Implications for strategy

Focus on building the credibility of the claims of citizens.

Strengthen communication to citizens about programme rules and policy/legal entitlements.

Support civil society organisations to train and mobilise citizens to articulate common concerns in a more compelling way, as well as advocate on behalf of citizens at other levels.

Encourage service providers to listen more carefully to draw out citizen concerns, even when these are not initially clear.

Finding: Some critical programme delivery challenges are rarely raised by citizens

Binding Constraint: Interface

Questions for reflection

Which types of issues are rarely raised by citizens?

a) Issues that are less salient to citizens (less visible to them, and having little directly effect on them).

b) Issues that are salient to citizens, but most people find them too sensitive to raise.

Implications for strategy

Include other top-down accountability mechanisms to address these key programme challenges (e.g. spot checks, MIS flags, audits monitoring visits etc.)

Other types of interface may be more suitable to raising these issues, e.g. collective, rather than individual mechanism, or a confidential hotline.

Finding: Service providers say issues are resolved, but citizens are unaware of the outcome or do not trust that any action is being taken

Binding Constraint: State Action

Questions for reflection

What are the reasons for the discrepancy in perceptions?

a) Issues have not been resolved to the satisfaction of citizens.

b) Issues have been resolved, but there is no feedback to citizens.

Implications for strategy

Focus on strengthening state responsiveness as well as the communications (interface) between citizens and duty bearers.

Strengthen mechanisms for feedback to citizens. Focus on improving trust between service providers and citizens. Even if service delivery does not improve, improving processes can impact state-society relations positively.

3.2.2 Joined-up social accountability

In this section, we consider the importance of joining up social accountability mechanisms across local and national levels, as well as with other top-down accountability mechanisms; and we provide some examples of how this might be done in practice.

> **Lesson 4: Social accountability is not a panacea in terms of improving service delivery. It should be integrated with other top-down accountability mechanisms within an overall accountability strategy.**

Joining up social accountability and top-down accountability

With regard to service delivery issues, social accountability is most useful when it addresses concerns that are *highly salient to marginalised citizens in poverty*. These issues are ones which are easily visible to these citizens and which have a direct effect on their lives, such as when households fail to receive expected cash transfers. This is because citizens are far more likely to take action to address these kinds of issues.

By addressing issues highly salient to citizens living in poverty, social accountability can make an important contribution to improving service delivery outcomes: some issues are invisible through other mechanisms (such as traditional audits or top-down controls) but are highly visible to citizens. Furthermore, as these are the issues that citizens feel to be the most important, addressing them is likely to have a positive effect on state-society relations.

On the other hand, we should not expect social accountability to address the entire range of potential service delivery failures. For example, social accountability mechanisms are unlikely to be the best way to address high-level corruption issues that have only indirect and diffuse effects on citizens. This is because citizens living in poverty are unlikely to discover such issues and even if they do discover them, may judge them to be of low importance due to the limited direct impacts on their lives. It is also possible that citizens are reluctant to bring attention to the issue as they fear reprisals.

The implication is that social accountability should be conceived as one element of an integrated approach to accountability in the social protection sector. Other elements should include, for example, top-down controls such as traditional audits. Programmes will need to reflect on the appropriate mix of social accountability and traditional accountability mechanisms and, importantly, how they fit together.

> **Lesson 5: Locally-bounded social accountability mechanisms have limited outcomes. National and local levels should be integrated within a social accountability strategy.**

Joining up local and national social accountability mechanisms

A second set of linkages concerns those between local and national social accountability mechanisms. Some citizen concerns about social protection programming are within the authority and capacity of local service providers to address. However, given that social protection programming is often rather centralised, citizen concerns frequently have to do with issues decided at higher levels (national or regional).

This means that an integrated approach that links local and higher levels (regional, national etc., as appropriate) is almost always essential if citizen voice is to influence decisions that are important to them. How such linkages can best be made will depend on context. Options to consider include:

- **Support to multi-level civil society engagement:** facilitation of citizen mobilisation at community level that is explicitly linked to dialogue/advocacy with relevant social protection decision makers at national and intermediate levels (as carried out by HelpAge, see Leutelt, 2012[5]).

- **Structured case management of complaints and appeals**, including: electronic referral mechanisms within grievance redress mechanism (GRMs) to ensure complaints reach the actor with decision making authority; follow-up mechanisms (for example, automated flags in a management information system (MIS) and reminder emails) that track whether and when action is taken; and referral of the response back down to local level for provision of feedback to complainants.

- **Stronger linkages between social accountability and top-down accountability mechanisms.** For example, if MIS data analysis identifies any anomalies in registration, enrollment or payroll, these should be systematically communicated to local staff/volunteers for follow-up investigation. Furthermore, any data on patterns of complaints that are received at the local level should then be systematically used to trigger top-down reviews

- **Promotion of bottom-up learning within the state apparatus, so that citizen voice filters up through local service providers to higher levels of the state.** For example, this could be supported through learning workshops that involve higher-level officials hearing from frontline workers about the lessons they have learned from interacting with citizens, along with debating and agreeing relevant changes to programme policies and guidelines.

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[5] Leutelt, M. (2012). HelpAge's Involvement in Spreading Social Pensions in the Global South: Slow and Steady Wins the Race?, Financial Assistance, Land Policy and Global Social Rights, Working Paper no 16.

3.2.3. Selection of mechanisms

In this section we provide guidance on the appropriateness of different tools to address various programming challenges that commonly arise in social protection programmes.

> **Lesson 6: There is no one best social accountability mechanism for social protection: an effective social accountability strategy will include a suite of mechanisms each adapted to addressing a particular set of issues.**

Different social accountability mechanisms are suited to addressing different types of service delivery challenges. The optimal social accountability mechanism also depends on the design of the social protection programme, institutional set up and political economy context.

We classify social accountability mechanisms into the following three categories, whilst recognising that there are important variations within each:

Grievance redress mechanisms. These enable individual citizens both to lodge complaints about programme delivery and appeal programming decisions, such as about who is and is not eligible for the programme. Feedback is received from individuals and responses are given to individuals. GRMs are generally suitable for resolving issues that can be decided by the application of simple rules, but not for issues that are subject to debate and require the exercise of high levels of discretion (issues that we define below as 'complex'). They have tended to be the default social accountability mechanism for social protection programmes, but, as we shall see below, are poorly suited to addressing some common social protection programming challenges.

Community committees and similar mechanisms. Here we group a range of mechanisms that have social accountability as either a main or subsidiary objective, such as beneficiary monitoring committees and community volunteers in the social protection sector. Their focus is often on raising citizen awareness and/or creating opportunities for engagement between state and citizens, and they may have an important outreach role for the most vulnerable citizens. They are generally not a complete stand-alone social accountability mechanism, but may be used in conjunction with, and to support, GRMs. Targeting verification committees are a special case with a very specific purpose: they are tasked with double-checking draft targeting lists established through either a proxy-means test or community-based targeting process.

Structured collective social accountability mechanisms: These include community score cards, citizen report cards, and social audits. To date, these tools have been little used in the social protection sector. They promote collective citizen feedback on service delivery (in a meeting or collated from a survey) and as such, the response is to a group of citizens and is aimed at addressing common concerns. Awareness-raising, civic mobilisation and

interfaces between state and citizens are an integral part of all these tools, but they differ in terms of how issues and priorities are identified and in the nature of the interface:

a) **Citizen report cards** use a survey to collect citizen feedback and then aggregate survey findings, which may be debated face-to-face and/or through media channels. This makes them suitable for use at either local or national scale, and sampling can ensure that findings are representative of all beneficiaries and sub-groups. As the survey findings are used as an entry point for discussion in community meetings, this tool is more suitable for use with citizens who have some numeracy/literacy skills or by skilled facilitators who can present findings in a format suitable to those without these skills. For more detail on citizen report cards see Annex 4.

b) **Community score cards** use a community-based qualitative process of problem and priority definition, followed by face-to-face meetings between citizens and service providers to discuss priorities and jointly develop action plans. Whilst this tool may prove more suitable for use with citizens with limited numeracy/literacy skills, the community-based nature of the entire process means that it can only be used at local level. For more detail on community score cards see Annex 3.

c) **Social audits**, like community score cards, involve community-level interface meetings. However, prior to these meetings, quite extensive community-led investigative work is carried out, including a careful examination of programme financial management. The findings are then presented in the community meeting. For more detail on social audits see Annex 2.

In addition to the issue of saliency that we discuss in Section 3.2.2 above, we identified three further key issues that affect the appropriateness of social accountability mechanisms to address a particular programming challenge. These are: the extent to which the problem is individual or collective, its complexity and its sensitivity.

a) **Individual or collective problem.** Challenges that affect large groups of citizens simultaneously (such as not being selected for a poverty-targeted programme, or delays in payments) tend to be better suited to collective social accountability mechanisms than individual ones (such as a GRM). If all citizens affected by a collective problem were to simultaneously raise their complaints individually through a GRM, the system would simply be overwhelmed.

b) **Complexity**. Here, 'complexity' is defined as the extent to which a problem is amenable to a rules-based solution, for example as offered by a GRM, without the need for the exercise of discretion or creative decision making. Examples of issues that are *not* complex include: an eligible household that does not receive the payment to which it is entitled due to a payroll error; an individual who is wrongly excluded from a categorically targeted programme; or an official who requests a bribe. Complex issues are those that require the exercise of discretion for resolution, such as appeals regarding community-based poverty targeting or feedback on the design of the social protection programme itself. These are much less amenable to a simple rules-based solution through a GRM.

c) **Sensitivity.** Citizens are often hesitant to raise issues around inclusion error or local corruption even if the contravention of rules is clear, due to perceived sensitivity and/or fear of reprisals. Depending on context and programme design, sensitivity might extend to a range of other issues. Where citizens are more comfortable collectively raising sensitive issues, this might be the best approach, even for addressing individual problems. Alternatively, some citizens, particularly those with literacy skills and/or access to a mobile phone, might find a confidential GRM appropriate.

Figure 4 proposes how the different types of social accountability mechanism might be combined into a strategy to address common social protection programming challenges. As part of the contextual analysis, practitioners would have identified key social protection programming challenges from the perspective of both citizens and other stakeholders. Armed with this information, Figure 4 can be used as a quick check to assess whether the existing or proposed mix of social accountability mechanisms seems appropriate to the priority challenges faced by a particular programme.

Table 1 below presents more detailed information and analysis to underpin Figure 4. Given the limitations of the evidence, the guidance in Figure 4 and Table 1 should be understood as a starting point for an exploratory approach and is subject to country-specific analysis. Contextual analysis will provide complementary evidence on what is and is not currently working in the particular country and will enable recommendations to be adapted accordingly.

Figure 4: Utility of different social accountability mechanisms for solving different issues

OTHER ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

Corruption

Inclusion error

Late payments

Failures in registration, enrolment and payroll

STRUCTURED COLLECTIVE SA MECHANISMS

Design issues (targeting systems, transfer levels etc.)

Operational challenges (paypoints too distant, payment agents not available etc.)

Abuse by service providers

Problems in registration, enrolment or payroll

GRMs

Exclusion error (categorical programmes)

COMMUNITY COMMITTEES

Abuse within the household or community

Inclusion and exclusion error (poverty targeted programmes)

Table 1: Social protection programming issues and appropriate social protection mechanisms

Issue	Saliency to Citizens in poverty?	Collective or Individual?	Sensitive or Complex?	Local or National Issue?	Mechanisms to Consider
TARGETING					
Targeting inclusion error: ineligible people are included within the programme in error. May be the result of simple error, or abuse by either households or service providers.	**Low**: There are disadvantages due to reduced funds available for the eligible and the problem risks undermining the credibility of the programme as a whole. But effects are diffuse. There is no substantial direct effect on any individual citizen.	**Collective issue**: This issue affects beneficiaries collectively – not individually.	**Sensitive:** Citizens are often reluctant to identify other community members who have been wrongly included for fear of reprisals. Therefore, there is a high risk that cases do not come to light through social accountability mechanisms. **Complexity depends on targeting approach**: Error in categorical targeting is relatively simple to identify; poverty targeting generally relies on a much more complex judgement.	**Local**: Should generally be resolvable at local level, as there are no budgetary implications.	**Do not rely primarily on social accountability mechanisms.** Also use other mechanisms, such as spot-checks of samples of households, and/or regular re-certification. As for social accountability mechanisms, post-targeting **community verification** of targeting by community committees has sometimes proven useful in identifying inclusion errors, even in contexts where citizens are reluctant to raise this individually. Good practice suggests that there should be a **confidential GRM** available to citizens to raise cases of abuse adapted to the context (for example a hotline, complaints box, or confidential face-to-face mechanism). But, given sensitivities, we do not necessarily expect all (or many) cases to be raised in this way.
Targeting exclusion error: eligible people are not included in the programme, usually as the result of error, rather than abuse.	**High**: There are direct and substantial disadvantages to the affected citizens.	**Collective**: This issue potentially affects large numbers of citizens who (rightly or wrongly) believe themselves to have been wrongly excluded.	**Not generally sensitive**. However, might be sensitive in the context of quotas where the only way that one household can be included is by excluding another. **Complexity depends on targeting approach**. Error in categorical targeting is relatively simple to identify; poverty targeting generally relies on a much more complex judgement.	**Depends**. There are budgetary implications of adding in wrongly excluded households. Local authorities may or may not have the authority to increase spending in this way, depending on the context.	In the case of a categorically targeted programme, **consider a GRM**. The case would be independently reviewed and the targeting rules re-applied. For a poverty-targeted programme, consider collective social accountability mechanisms, in particular post-targeting **community verification** processes. If local officials lack budgetary authority, then the social accountability mechanism needs effective linkages to the level that approves the increased spend. See Section 3.2.2.

Issue	Saliency to Citizens in poverty?	Collective or Individual?	Sensitive or Complex?	Local or National Issue?	Mechanisms to Consider
REGISTRATION, ENROLMENT OR PAYROLL ERRORS					
Eligible households are not registered/enrolled on the programme, or lack payment cards (where required)	**High**: Individual eligible citizens lose access to the programme.	**Individual**: High impact on a generally low number of individual citizens.	**Not sensitive** **Not complex:** whether or not a household is registered/enrolled and has a card is a straightforward issue amenable to a rules-bound resolution.	**National/intermediate**: In many countries these issues will not be resolvable at local level, but will require action at higher levels to integrate a household/individual in an MIS, print a client card etc.	MIS cross-checks should help identify such issues. Also consider a **GRM**. These issues are highly salient to individual beneficiaries, and are neither sensitive nor complex. Local-national linkages are critical. It is imperative that the GRM effectively escalates the citizen's complaint to the appropriate level, and that the relevant actors have both the incentives and capacities to respond. (See Annex 1 on GRMs)
Payroll problems. Enrolled households are missing from the payroll or receive incorrect amounts.	**High**: Individual citizens are losing out on cash.	**Individual**: High impact on a generally low number of individual citizens.	**Not generally sensitive**, unless the reason for the missing cash is due to corruption. **Not complex:** whether or not an enrolled citizen receives the amounts to which they are entitled is a straightforward question.	**National/intermediate**: In many countries these issues will not be resolvable at local level, but will require action at national or intermediate level, for example to make corrections in the MIS.	Again, consider **combining top-down MIS checks with a GRM**. Same issues as above regarding need to escalate to higher levels. May be complicated by the use of a payment service provider (PSP) responsible for some parts of the payment process, as it will not always be clear whether the issue is the responsibility of the PSP or the state. In this case need to i) consider whether the payment service provider or the state should hear complaints, or both, and ii) establish mechanisms to transfer complaints to the relevant entity, follow up and hold them to account for resolution (see Annex 1 on GRMs).
Conditionalities are wrongly applied and households lose payments	**High**: Individual citizens are losing out on cash.	**Individual**: High impact on a generally low number of individual citizens.	**Not sensitive** **Not complex:** whether or not an enrolled citizen has complied with conditionalities is amenable to a rules-based investigation.	**National/intermediate**: In many countries these issues will not be resolvable at local level, but will require action at national or intermediate level, for example to make corrections in the MIS.	As above. Consider a **GRM**, with local-national linkages.

Issue	Saliency to Citizens in poverty?	Collective or Individual?	Sensitive or Complex?	Local or National Issue?	Mechanisms to Consider
PAYMENTS					
Late Payments	**Medium**: Late payments reduce the benefits derived from transfers. entitlement)	**Collective**: When payments are late they are generally late for all households in a locality.	**Not sensitive** **Not complex:** Rules can be applied to determine whether payments arrived when they should have done.	**National/intermediate:** Often late payments are due to a problem at national or regional level, rather than local level.	**Do not rely <u>primarily</u> on social accountability mechanisms**. Concerns about late payments might emerge through collective social accountability mechanisms. However, payment processes can be easily tracked through financial records and these kinds of check are likely to be the most useful. As for GRMs, evidence suggests that citizens tend not to raise late payments as a complaint either because: i) they feel the transfer is a gift not an entitlement and they have no right to complain about its timing/predictability; or ii) they are aware everyone is affected in the same way so do not see the point of complaining; or iii) they realise the issue relates to a higher level of the state hierarchy over which the local service providers to whom they complain have no control.
Other payment problems: for example, pay points too distant or payment agents unavailable.	**Medium:** These issues result in costs to citizens (in lost time, transport costs etc.)	**Collective**: Generally, groups of citizens will be affected, but some will suffer more than others, for example, people with mobility-related disabilities incur greater costs when pay points are distant.	**Not sensitive** **Not complex**: rules can be applied.	**Local**	Consider **collective social accountability mechanisms**. These kinds of issues are amenable to discussion in community groups and may emerge through score cards, citizen report cards and similar exercises. They are often amenable to local solution, though there may be minor budgetary implications, for example in establishing additional pay points, so consider extent of local budgetary control.
ABUSE / CORRUPTION					
Abuse by Programme Staff or Volunteers: Requests for bribes or other exploitation that directly affects beneficiaries	**High**: Affected citizens lose cash	**Mixed**: Depending on the nature and extent of the abuse, it may affect isolated individuals or larger groups in a locality.	**Sensitive:** Beneficiaries may be reluctant to raise their concerns for fear of reprisals. **Not complex**	**National/intermediate:** Will often require the involvement of higher levels to sanction frontline staff and prevent recurrence.	Depending on context, citizens may prefer to either report these issues through a **confidential GRM** or a **collective social accountability mechanism**. Contextual analysis should help determine preferences.

Issue	Saliency to Citizens in poverty?	Collective or Individual?	Sensitive or Complex?	Local or National Issue?	Mechanisms to Consider
Corruption: that does not directly affect beneficiaries e.g. materials fraud in public works or misappropriation through ghost beneficiaries	**Low:** No direct effects on citizens	**Collective**	**Sensitive** **Not complex**	**National/intermediate:** Will almost always require action from higher levels to address.	**Do not rely mainly on social accountability**, because these issues tend to have low salience and high sensitivity. Primarily use other top-down accountability mechanisms, though also consider making a confidential helpline available to citizens.
Abuse within the Household or Community	**High:** Highly vulnerable citizens may lose their transfers to unscrupulous family or community members.	**Individual**	**Sensitive:** This involves internal dynamics of communities and families that citizens may be reluctant to discuss. **Complex:** Involves disentangling household and community dynamics.	**Local**	Likely to require a pro-active outreach approach to identify such abuses as the most vulnerable citizens are least likely to raise complaints or participate in structured community processes. **Community committees and volunteers** may have a key role.
Disrespectful Treatment	**Low:** Testimony suggests that citizens rarely consider such issues worth raising as a complaint.	**Mixed:** Could affect either individual citizens or larger groups.	**Sensitive:** Citizens may fear complaining about disrespectful treatment by frontline service providers for fear of reprisals. **Complex:** Requires the exercise of judgement in determining whether or not behaviour was disrespectful.	**Local/national:** Depending on the perpetrator, this may be resolvable at local level or require sanctions/incentives to be applied higher up.	Consider **collective social accountability mechanisms**. These issues seem more likely to be raised collectively than through a GRM.
DESIGN ISSUES					
Payment Amounts too Low Other Programme Design Issues	Medium/Variable	Collective: Will affect all beneficiaries	**Not sensitive** **Complex**: not about whether programme rules were followed, but questioning the rules themselves	**National:** Design usually decided at national level, so any concerns will need to be raised up the hierarchy.	Consider **collective social accountability** mechanisms. Ensure effective linkages up the hierarchy to the level at which these decisions are taken.

3.2.4. Empowering the most marginalised citizens

Lesson 7: Awareness and engagement vary substantially between citizens and even between social protection programme beneficiaries. Empowering the most marginalised requires context-specific special measures.

Marginalised citizens tend to prefer face-to-face interfaces with service providers, but this preference is often coupled with severe time, logistical and economic constraints. As a result, many of the most marginalised citizens, living in the worst poverty, depend on other citizens both to access information about social protection programmes and to get their feedback heard. We refer to the citizens who play this role as 'intermediaries'.

Intermediaries tend to be better placed socially and economically in the community than the marginalised citizens they serve, but otherwise come in many forms, including: committee members and volunteers established by social protection programmes; local professionals, small business people, or better-off farmers; and traditional or religious leaders.

Despite the often important roles that such intermediaries play, a number of challenges have been identified:
- access to them is often gendered and also lower for marginalised groups;
- sometimes intermediaries end up representing the service providers rather than the citizens;
- in some contexts (and depending on social protection programme design), there may be conflicts of interest between marginalised citizens and intermediaries in relation to access to social protection programme benefits; and
- the capacity and incentives of intermediaries may be compromised by the generally voluntary nature of their role.

Therefore, it should not be automatically assumed that intermediaries will be able and/or incentivised enough to represent the most marginalised and promote the accountability of service providers. Rather, the dynamics between the various intermediaries and marginalised citizens in a particular context need to be investigated. Contextual analysis will involve unpacking these issues, and relevant questions are included in the contextual analysis section (section 2 above).

Appropriate actions to address any identified challenges will be highly context specific and dependent on the outcome of this analysis. They might include:

- **Awareness-raising activities specially tailored to reaching the hardest-to-reach citizens**, for which a portion of any communications budget would be reserved.

  This might, for example, involve partnerships with civil society organisations working with the hardest-to-reach citizens (including, for example, people with disabilities, older people, marginalised ethnic groups or castes etc.).

- **Establishment of new forms of intermediation** when the existing forms are found to be exploitative or exclusionary.

  This could involve setting up programme-specific community committees and volunteers, or it might involve training traditional leaders if they are well-respected and trusted by marginalised citizens.

- **Modification of interfaces so that they work better for the excluded citizens**

  In some cases, this might be as simple as changing the location or timing of meetings to better fit with the availability of the most marginalised citizens.

- **Ensuring that community committees and volunteers established by social protection programmes actually represent marginalised citizens**:

  For example, this could mean:

  - ensuring that training emphasises the role that volunteers and committee members have in representing citizens and that they are equipped to to effectively engage the most marginalised;

  - ensuring that they are adequately compensated for the time and costs involved in representing the most marginalised; and

  - establishing mechanisms to hold these intermediaries to account.

3.3 Step 3: Monitoring and evaluation

Lesson 8: Improved basic monitoring and documentation of social accountability initiatives will be key to enhanced learning about what works; and social accountability should be integrated within social protection evaluations.

There is scope to do much more in terms of integrating social accountability within social protection programme evaluations. Rigorous evaluations of social accountability in social protection are currently very limited, even though social protection programmes are one of the most evaluated types of development interventions. The nature of social accountability means that the most appropriate evaluation approaches will involve learning about **how and why these interventions work**, not just whether they work. Qualitative and mixed method evaluations will be important to unpack how social accountability initiatives work and how likely they are to be sustained. Theory-based approaches may also be useful to include.

Improving the quality of evaluation and learning will depend on better basic monitoring and documentation of social accountability processes, outputs and intermediate outcomes. For example, better data from GRMs – using more consistent definitions of 'complaint' and what it means for a complaint to be 'resolved' – will enable programme implementers to see how many and which types of complaints are received and which are resolved/not resolved, for whom and where, and to start to identify patterns. Close monitoring of implementation of the action plans resulting from structured collective mechanisms will enable practitioners to understand when and why service providers do and do not respond to citizen voice. In order to strengthen social accountability for marginalised citizens, it will be important to disaggregate all this data by gender, disability status and other context-specific dimensions of social exclusion.

Indicators for monitoring of social accountability in social protection could be inspired by the conceptual framework in Figure 1 and the contextual analysis that highlights the binding constraints in a particular context. Table 2 provides some example indicators that relate to each of the elements of social accountability. Some are measurable through administrative data. Others would require specific questions to be integrated into a regular survey.

> **For guidance on monitoring and evaluation of social accountability initiatives more generally, see also the World Bank Social Accountability E-Guide.**

Table 2: Suggested social accountability indicators

Social Accountability Element	Possible Indicators – all disaggregated by gender and disability status, and other criteria as relevant to context
Information and Awareness	% community members aware of programme targeting criteria % of programme beneficiaries aware of key programme entitlements (defined in relation to specific programme) % of programme beneficiaries who state that social protection is an entitlement (not a gift)
Interface	% of beneficiaries who say they know where to go if they have a concern % of beneficiaries who can accurately name at least x channels for raising a concern % of beneficiaries who agree with the statement 'programme staff are usually available if I want to speak to them'
Civic mobilisation	% of beneficiaries who have attended citizen meetings in which social protection has been discussed Number of community-based organisations (CBOs) engaging with citizens around their social protection entitlements
Citizen action	Number of complaints registered in the GRM in the past x period Number of collective issues raised, recorded and actively followed up through a collective social accountability mechanism % of citizens having a concern who have ever raised it % of citizens stating that they fear reprisals if they raise a concern

Social Accountability Element	Possible Indicators – all disaggregated by gender and disability status, and other criteria as relevant to context
State-action	Number and % of complaints resolved, broken down by category of complaint
	Number and % of complaints in respect of which feedback is provided to complainant – broken down by category of complaint
	Number of concerns resolved through collective social accountability processes, broken down by type of concern
	% of complainants/participants in collective processes who feel their priority concerns have been satisfactorily resolved.
	% of local officials who report that higher levels of the state hierarchy listen and respond to concerns they bring up from the field
Service delivery outcomes	Number of targeting exclusion errors corrected through social accountability processes
	Number of targeting inclusion errors corrected through social accountability processes
	Number of payment errors corrected following complaints
	Number of cases of fraud or corruption detected as a result of social accountability.
	Total number of service improvements effected as a result of social accountability processes
	% of programme beneficiaries reporting that service delivery has improved in the past x period
Outcomes relating to state-society relations	% of citizens who report feeling confident to address a service provider
	% of citizens reporting that they trust the service provider
	% of citizens reporting that service providers are responsive to their concerns
	% of local officials reporting that citizens raise useful issues that help service delivery

Annex 1: Guidance on grievance redress mechanisms

Grievance redress mechanisms (GRMs) play an important role in social protection programmes, both for monitoring programme performance and addressing issues experienced by citizens. The key dimensions of a grievance handling process are set out in Table 3.

Table 3: Key dimensions of an effective grievance handling mechanism

1. Information: Citizens are aware of how to complain and are willing to do so
1.1 Beneficiaries understand social protection as a right and know their specific entitlements. Non-beneficiaries understand why they are not part of the programme.
1.2 Citizens are willing to complain and are aware of how and to whom to complain.

2. Interface and Citizen Action: Complaints are received and recorded
2.1 Appropriate, accessible mechanisms exist to receive complaints. These are in line with preferences of potential complainants and are accessible to all at no cost. Multiple mechanisms exist – at least one of which is independent from programme implementers.
2.2 Beneficiaries are protected from potential negative repercussions of complaining, including through the confidential handling of sensitive complaints.
2.3 Complaints are registered. (Non-complaints, such as information requests, are re-directed and receive an appropriate response.)

3. State response: Complaints addressed and feedback provided
3.1 Complaints are referred and investigated. Action is taken to resolve the issues as appropriate. Agreed timelines for each stage of the process are adhered to.
3.2 Progress in addressing complaints is tracked. System monitors complaints received, referrals made, actions taken. Follow-up action is taken to address any delays.
3.3 Feedback is provided to complainants in line with agreed standards and timelines.

4. Supporting systems and civic mobilisation
4.1 There is a written grievance procedure with clearly defined responsibilities
4.2 Systems are in place to manage complaints (MIS module or other, complaints books etc.)
4.3 There are sufficient staff dedicated to complaints handling. They have received appropriate training and work within a framework of performance targets and standards.
4.4 Citizens are supported and encouraged to use the system by community volunteers, civil society organisations (CSOs) or other community institutions

Process of a grievance redress mechanism

Complaints mechanisms should include multiple tiers so that the complainant, if denied at the first level of complaint, is offered at least one more opportunity to complain. This increases the likelihood of the correct decision being made and also enhances confidence in the grievance mechanism itself.

1) **The first tier** should be an entity close to the citizens, in order to facilitate access. In cases where payments are outsourced, the first tier for payment related complaints is likely to be an internal complaints mechanism within the private service provider.

2) **The second tier** should either enable complaints about the operator of the first tier or enable the first tier operator to escalate complaints that are beyond their mandate to address. In relation to private service providers, the second tier may be programme managers, local governments or an independent agency. It may also include higher-level local governments or devolved agencies who can oversee the frontline government service providers.

3) Ideally, **a third tier** should be in place that is independent of the scheme.[6] This may include institutions such as a Human Rights Commission, an Ombudsman or the justice system.[7]

Increasingly, social protection systems use an MIS to support programme management and, wherever such a system exists, it can support the process through the following steps:[8]

- Once complaints are collected, they are entered into the MIS complaints module using a standard form (including complaint type, case details, complainant details etc.);
- Each case is assigned (via the MIS) to a specific officer who is responsible for investigating, escalating, if necessary, and then resolving the individual complaint according to the standard procedures for each complaint type;
- The MIS is programmed to generate reminders to officers that follow-up action is required. Red flags are generated if an agreed deadline for a step in the process is exceeded;
- After an agreed time, the MIS is used to generate a standardized letter informing the complainant of the outcome of the complaint (or that the complaint is still ongoing and when it will be resolved). The letter will also inform the complainant what to do if they are not satisfied with the outcome.
- The MIS is used to generate key statistics on: number and types of complaint received; number and percentage of each type resolved; time taken to resolve; characteristics of complainants (beneficiary/non-beneficiary, gender, age, other relevant characteristics depending on context.)

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[6] Kidd, Stephen (2015). Options for the design of a Grievance and Complaints Mechanism for Zambia's Social Cash Transfer Programme. Unpublished draft, October 2015

[7] Barrett, Stephen and Kidd, Stephen (2015). The design and management of cash transfer programmes: an overview. KfW Materials on Development Financing, No. 3, March 2015.

[8] Kidd, Stephen (2015). Options for the design of a Grievance and Complaints Mechanism for Zambia's Social Cash Transfer Programme. Unpublished draft, October 2015

Figure 5: Example of a grievance mechanism process[9]
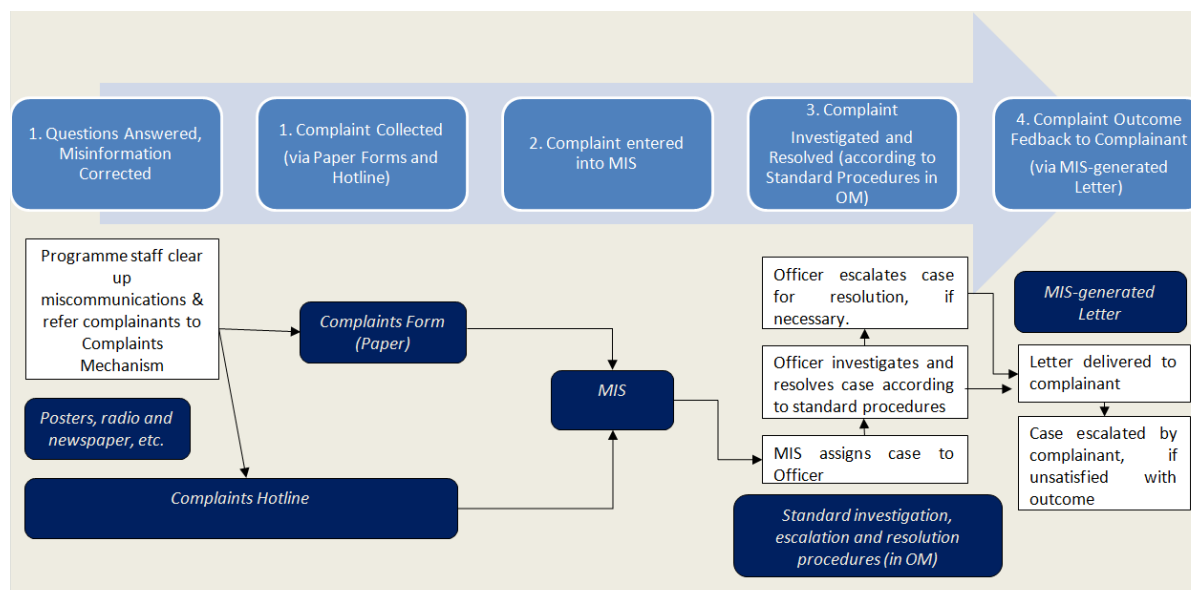
Implementation recommendations

- It is more effective to resolve complaints at the point of service delivery. This both improves cost and accessibility for citizens (Barca 2015).[10]
- Complaints mechanisms should offer several different channels for lodging complaints, possibly building on existing systems (Barca 2015). Our research shows that many people prefer face-to-face interaction, however, an anonymous hotline may be necessary to lodge complaints about more sensitive issues.
- A core principle of a grievance mechanism is that those involved in the original decision should not be involved in addressing the complaint.
- Many complaints are caused by lack of information. Investing in good public communications and information campaigns can therefore potentially save a lot of time and resources. This includes information about programme objectives, eligibility criteria, payments mechanisms and registration, as well as how to lodge complaints. Information campaigns need to be tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups (Barca 2015).
- Grievance mechanisms need dedicated staffing and standard operating procedures for different types of grievances. It is important to adequately train staff and set performance standards and targets to handle grievances in advance (Barca 2015).
- It is important that complaints are tagged with a unique ID, are recorded and tracked through a programme MIS, and that feedback is provided to citizens. Care has to be taken in designing the MIS to ensure that the data clearly shows the relevant categories of complaints and whether they are being addressed or not.

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[9] Kidd, Stephen (2015). Options for the design of a Grievance and Complaints Mechanism for Zambia's Social Cash Transfer Programme. Unpublished draft, October 2015

[10] Barca, V. (2015). Grievance mechanisms for social protection programmes: stumbling blocks and best practice, The International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, One-Pager 320, UNDP.

- When payments are outsourced to private service providers, great care needs to be taken when drafting the contracts with the service provider (see Box 5)

Box 5: Complaints and grievance mechanisms when payment are outsourced to private service providers

It is common for social protection programmes to outsource payments to private service providers. This can be a way to free up government officials from spending time delivering payments to beneficiaries. It is critical that the contract sets out the responsibilities of the private service provider to address payment complaints for which it is responsible. Complaints and requests that are likely to arise from beneficiaries include the replacement of bank-issued cards or tokens required to access funds, the issuance of new PINS and malpractice by agents etc. It is recommended that, if existing regulations do not clearly outline resolution processes and timeframes for these complaints and requests, then minimum requirements should be agreed, in binding terms, between the government and the service provider.

A number of issues should be included in the agreement between the programme and the service provider, either in the contract or a service level agreement. Some basic questions that should be clarified prior to the finalization of the agreement include:

- Does the service provider have an existing complaints or customer service mechanism through which common complaints can be resolved?
- Will programme beneficiaries have the same rights as all other service provider clients and be able to make use of the regular complaint system?
- Will services carried out through service provider agents be subject to the same regulations as that carried out through branches?

Complaints which require investigation and resolution actions by both the programme and the service provider will need to be shared back and forth in a timely manner. Data sharing protocols need to be developed that allow for this and which also provide the government access to all complaints.

Sources: Kidd, Stephen (2015). Options for the design of a Grievance and Complaints Mechanism for Zambia's Social Cash Transfer Programme. Unpublished draft, October 2015

World Bank (2014) Case Study: Grievance Redress System of the Conditional Cash Transfer Program in the Philippines.

Further resources

- Barca, Valentina (2015). Grievance mechanisms for social protection programmes: stumbling blocks and best practice. International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, One Pager.
- Asian Development Bank (2010). Designing and Implementing Grievance Redress Mechanisms: A Guide for Implementors of Transport Projects in Sri Lanka. ADB.
- The Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO) Grievance Mechanism Tool-Kit provides a range of detailed tools for establishing a grievance mechanism.
- Transparency International (2016). Complaints Mechanisms: Reference Guide for Good Practice. Transparency International.
- UNDP (2017). Guidance Note, UNDP Social and Environmental Standards (SES): Stakeholder Engagement, Supplemental Guidance: Grievance Redress Mechanisms
- World Bank, Social Accountability E-guide: Formal Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM)

Annex 2: Guidance on social audits

Social Audits have not been widely used in social protection programmes. However, they have been implemented to a large-scale in the Indian public works programme Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), in particular in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Here, we provide some guidance based on the Andhra Pradesh experience, followed by references to more general cross-sectoral guidelines.

The social audits in MGNREGA have had two direct objectives. First, to create a space where citizens can meet agents of the state to question and monitor them. Second, to minimise the leakage of funds and improve service delivery.[11] More broadly, it can be argued that social audits perform three functions central to democracy: they inform citizens; they encourage participation; and, they create a sense of civic responsibility by bringing people together to address issues collectively.[12]

The social audit process

The Andhra Pradesh model of social audits includes the following steps[13]:

1) Notification to local authorities, requesting unrestricted access to beneficiary lists, including the number of days worked and wages paid to each citizen, along with other relevant documents.

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[11] Aiyar, Y. and Mehta, S. K. (2013). Spectators or Participants? Examining the Effects of Social Audits on Citizen-State Relations and the Local Politics of Corruption in Andhra Pradesh. Accountability Initiative Working Paper

[12] Aiyar, Y. and Mehta, S. K. (2013). Spectators or Participants? Examining the Effects of Social Audits on Citizen-State Relations and the Local Politics of Corruption in Andhra Pradesh. Accountability Initiative Working Paper

[13] Aiyar, Y; Mehta, S.K and Samji, S. (2013). India: Implementing Social Audits. Chapter 11 in Subbarao, Kalanidhi; Carlo del Ninno; Colin Andrews and Claudia Rodriguez-Alas (2013). Public Works as a Safety Net: Design, Evidence, and Implementation. Directions in Development, World Bank.

2) A team comprising auditors, who are higher-level officials, travel to the area and recruit and train village social auditors. The training covers rights and regulations, how to conduct the social audits, and how to obtain information (under a Right to Information Act in India). These local auditors are beneficiaries and residents of the local area.

3) Over a period of about a week, social audit teams organise social audits. In each local administrative area, the official expenses are verified by visiting citizens listed in beneficiary lists and comparing the data registered in their workbooks with the official data. Any complaints encountered are recorded and attested using a standardised audit report template. The team is also mandated to carry out worksite inspections to verify material expenditure.

4) Once audits are completed, a public hearing at the local level is organised with mandatory attendance for all the implementing officials. Those present typically include workers, the social audit team, the local postmaster in case of payments through the post office, key implementing officials, elected representatives and a district-level ombudsman. At a public hearing, complaints are read out, testimonies verified and accused officials given an opportunity to defend themselves.

5) Following the public hearing, a Decision Taken Report is created by the officer presiding over the hearing. The report attributes responsibility for any misconduct to specific officials.

6) An independent organisation (in Andra Pradesh, a 'Vigilance Cell' in the Department of Rural Development) has a mandate to ensure independent follow-up and enforcement of the social audit findings.

Social audits, if implemented well, can be an effective way of increasing awareness among disadvantaged groups because audit teams spend significant time – at least three to four days – in the villages interacting with beneficiaries and discussing various aspects of the scheme with them. At the end of the process, village meetings are organised and information about the programme is disseminated.[14] The social audit, therefore, is a very intensive type of awareness-raising campaign.

Social audits are intended to facilitate access for citizens to government records and provide opportunities to question and confront officials directly.[15] Despite their intensity, it is worth noting that the cost of implementing the social audits in Andhra Pradesh has been quite low, amounting to between 0.5 and 1 per cent of the annual MGNREGS expenditure in the state.

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[14] Aiyar, Yamini (2010). Invited Spaces, Invited Participation: Effects of Greater Participation on Accountability in Service Delivery. India Review, vol. 9, no. 2, April-June, 2010, pp. 204-229.

[15] Aiyar, Yamini and Mehta, Soumya Kapoor (2013). Spectators or Participants? Examining the Effects of Social Audits on Citizen-State Relations and the Local Politics of Corruption in Andhra Pradesh. Accountability Initiative Working Paper.

Implementation recommendations

- Build on existing civil society organisations. A strong civil society, with widespread membership of community based organisations, seems to have played a role in the success of the social audits in Andhra Pradesh.
- To successfully achieve a large-scale social audit, it need to be institutionalised in the bureaucracy, with an independent and properly resourced state institution given responsibility for facilitating the audits, alongside participation from citizens. In addition, the social audit process is complex and citizens require adequate support to carry them out.
- The facilitation of social audits needs to be properly resourced. However, social audits do not have to be expensive.
- Regular feedback and real-time grievance redressal is important for demonstrating to citizens that the social audit process is worth engaging in.

Potential challenges

- Social audits depend heavily on the relevant information being available. There may be both legal and practical barriers to accessing information. Easily available information has been a key factor in the success of social audits in Andhra Pradesh.
- Social audits, like other social accountability mechanisms, cannot compensate for a programme design that constricts accountability. One of the reasons that social audits have had mixed results, is that a public works programme is enormously complex, with multiple ways for officials to siphon off funds. Many of these issues are not immediately visible to citizens.
- It is important to consider accountability relationships. The state entity responsible for facilitating the audits must also have the ability to sanction errant officials. If it doesn't, there must at least be an effective process for doing so elsewhere.
- As social audits can be a very confrontational form of social accountability, it is important to consider how this type of action will affect relationships between citizens and power holders at the local level, and whether there are incentives for local power holders to participate. It is also extremely important to have a good understanding of the risks of reprisal that participants may face and take action to mitigate them.
- If the objective is to build trust and improve interactions between citizens and the state, social audits may not be the most appropriate tool.
- Research from India indicates that social accountability mechanisms are unlikely to be effectively implemented in contexts of high inequality. In these contexts it may be a more effective strategy to design social protection programmes that are less vulnerable to elite capture.

Further resources

Short notes

- International Budget Partnership (2012). Social Audits as a budget monitoring tool. International Budget Partnership.
- Pekkonen, Anu and Sadashiva, Manjunath (nd). Monitoring and Evaluation Tools: Social Audits. CIVICUS.

Comprehensive guides

- Berthin, Gerardo (2011). A Practical Guide to Social Audit as a Participatory Tool to Strengthen Democratic Governance, Transparency, and Accountability. Transparency and Accountability in Local Governments (TRAALOG), UNDP Regional Centre, Panama.
- Open Society Foundations (2008). The CDF Social Audit Guide: A Handbook for Communities. Open Society Foundations.
- UNESCO (2007). Social Audits for Strengthening Accountability: Building Blocks for Human Rights-Based Programming. UNESCO, Bangkok.
- PRIA (2013). Participatory Social Audit: A Tool for Social Accountability. PRIA International Academy.
    - Module 1: Introduction to Social Audits
    - Module 2: Social Audits and Its Steps
    - Module 3: Social Audits and Local Governments
    - Module 4: Emerging Issues in Social Audit

Annex 3: Guidance on community score cards

A community score card (CSC) is a community-based monitoring tool that assesses services, projects and government performance by analysing qualitative data obtained through focus group discussions with the community. It is usually followed by interface meetings between service providers and users to formulate an action plan to address any identified problems and shortcomings. Community score cards are generally used at the micro level (e.g. local/village level) and mostly in rural settings.

Community score cards have so far mostly been used on a pilot basis in social protection programmes. Cases include the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia, the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) and the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme in the Philippines. The only case that we identified of the use of community score cards at a large-scale is in the Solidaridad programme in the Dominican Republic.

The purpose of community score cards is to gather feedback from service users, encourage local problem solving and empower beneficiaries to express their needs and opinions about social protection services. The process also helps service providers have a better understanding about what aspects of their services and programmes are working well and where the gaps exist, thereby improving service delivery by responding to the needs and feedback of beneficiaries. Another important objective of score cards is to improve communication between communities, service providers and government officials.

The community score card process

The community score card process consists of four key stages:

1) **Preparatory groundwork**
   In the first stage, preparatory groundwork needs to be undertaken. This includes:
   1.1 Identifying the scope of CSC coverage.
   1.2 Identifying partners who can help implement the CSCs.
   1.3 Carrying out initial scoping of the community/communities. The aim of the scoping exercise is both to have an understanding of who the primary actors are in the community (e.g. local leaders) and to identify marginalised groups.
   1.4 Carrying out an advocacy and awareness campaign to get buy-in from both citizens, government officials and service providers. Convincing service providers to participate in the CSC process, as well as fostering their meaningful engagement, is challenging but necessary for the CSC's success. This can be done by helping service providers understand the possible benefits they can gain from participation in the CSC process.

2) **Developing the score card or input tracking matrix**
   The focal point of the CSC intervention is the score card, which consists of a number of indicators regarding the quality of service. This is often generated after

discussions with the community, which can in itself be a very valuable exercise. The score card is often prepared in a matrix form called an input tracking matrix that compares the actual service levels with entitlements.

3) **Community scoring of performance**
   After indicators have been identified, the next step is to administer the score card with the help of facilitators.
   - The feedback is solicited through focus groups with community members. Often, multiple focus groups are held, for example, separately with men and women and with different age groups. These sub-groups include about 15 to 20 people.
   - As part of the scoring process, the facilitators ask the focus groups to give scores for each of the indicators on a predefined scale of 1 to 5. Each group is encouraged to reach consensus on which score to give each indicator.
   - An overall assessment to determine why a particular indicator was assigned a particular score is then undertaken.
   - The debate and discussion that surrounds the generation of the community score card becomes the basis for inviting suggestions from the community on what reforms can be made to improve the situation. These suggestions include not only what the service providers should do, but also what the community can do to make things better.

   At this stage, service providers can also be asked to self-evaluate their performance using the same process as described above for beneficiaries.

4) **Interface meeting between service users and providers**
   Focus groups and community discussions are followed by an interface meeting between service users and providers—this is the most significant component of the process. The meeting is usually facilitated by a civil society organisation (CSO) and is preceded by significant planning and preparation.

   In this meeting, the outcomes of the score cards are discussed. The focus is on highlighting the main problem areas, as well as those in which there is a positive consensus amongst both parties.

   This discussion usually leads to the discussion of how to make things better through a joint action plan. This meeting also acts as a platform where citizens can directly question government officials about lapses in service delivery. It is often useful to bring in higher-levels of government at this stage.

Implementation recommendations
- Find a champion who is committed to supporting the activities of the community monitoring teams. This person should be an effective propeller and a mobilizing figure in the community initiative (e.g., the principal of the school, a religious leader, a social activist, etc.).

- For the score card process to be successful, it is important that all parties (citizens, government officials, service providers) believe in the collaborative nature of the process. Otherwise it can become an opportunity for preparing a list of complaints or a confrontation, or tokenism.
- This issue also points to the importance of choosing and training facilitators who can foster an honest and collaborative dialogue. They should ensure that everyone is able to participate, including women as well as men, and marginalised as well as more influential citizens. Facilitators should be selected who have knowledge of the given community, an ability to mobilise the community to participate, an ability to communicate effectively, a mastery of the local dialect, calculation skills, and report writing skills.
- To help increase community interest and facilitate community mobilisation/participation, invest in advertising well in advance of the intervention. Outline its methodology (e.g., through radio, visits to communes, posters and flyers) to ensure thorough community awareness in all the target communes. All actors need to be oriented toward the process and may require capacity building and significant social mobilisation.
- Widely publicise the monitoring results using various media outlets (e.g., radio, leaflets, public meetings and community outreach activities).
- Programme design should be flexible enough to be able to incorporate suggestions, or service providers should have the authority to be able to respond to citizens' concerns raised as a result of the process.
- Repeat the CSC exercise at least 2 or 3 times to monitor progress over time

Potential challenges

There is less emphasis on obtaining rigorous quantitative data about the beneficiaries' satisfaction rates. Sometimes there is a mismatch between the focus and purpose of the CSC process and the expectations of the CSC process. Outcomes of the CSC action plan may also not be in line with the changes that the CSC participants expected at the beginning of the process. The needs of the community may not match what can be addressed through the CSC process. Therefore, it is important to take steps to manage these expectations.

Furthermore, as in any other community process, there are risks that the voices of the most marginalised citizens are not heard or that there is elite capture at the community level. If focus groups are held with only selected community representatives then it is important to assess the extent to which these representatives truly represent the priorities of all citizens, including the most marginalised.

Further resources

- Leni Wild, Joseph Wales with Victoria Chambers (2015). CARE's experience with community score cards: what works and why. Overseas Development Institute,
- World Bank (n.d). Community Score Card Process: A short note on the General Methodology for Implementation. World Bank
- CARE (2013). The Community Score Card (CSC): A generic guide for implementing CARE's CSC process to improve quality of services. CARE International.

Annex 4: Guidance on citizen report cards

A Citizen Report Card (CRC) is an assessment of public services by users through client feedback surveys. It goes beyond data collection to being an instrument for exacting public accountability through extensive media coverage and civil society advocacy that accompanies the process. CRC provides a rigorous basis for civil society organizations, citizen groups, government officials and service providers to engage in a dialogue to improve delivery of public services.

A CRC is generally used at the macro-level (i.e. city/state/national) and where important data such as user perceptions on quality and satisfaction with services is scant or absent. Local and national newspapers and the electronic media are very often important allies in the CRC process.

Undertaking a credible CRC initiative requires training in survey methodology, which should include statistical analysis.

In order to improve performance and service delivery, CRC can establish benchmarks to assess whether programmes are achieving desired objectives. Citizens become informed on norms and standards for service delivery. They obtain information that can be used to hold service providers to account for delivery results. This can then be used to generate public support for change.

The Citizen Report Card Process

1) *Pre-survey preparation and questionnaire*
   - The first step is to identify key service delivery challenges, which is usually done by holding focus group discussions with beneficiaries and service providers.
   - Once the challenges are identified, a preliminary questionnaire is prepared. The questionnaire focuses on different issues regarding service delivery including citizens' perception of the adequacy and quality of service provision, the adequacy and barriers to access, and reasons for lapses in service delivery.
   - In addition, questions in the survey will also seek to collect information on potential marginalisation of vulnerable groups.

2) *Administering the survey*
   - The second key step in the CRC process is administering the survey.
   - However, before the survey can be administered, sampling design and size has to be determined and fieldwork procedures have to be put in place.
   - At this point in the process, it is important to identify sub-groups in the population – which should include marginalised and vulnerable groups – so that the sample is adequately representative of all sub-groups.

- The surveyors who are to carry out the survey process also need to be properly trained. This is to make certain that there is minimal bias on who is selected for interviews and that marginalised groups are properly represented. Proper training also ensures that the survey is applied uniformly.
- Surveyors should also be trained to respect the local etiquettes and norms.

3) *Data entry and analysis*
- After the required information has been collected, it has to be entered into a database, analysed and then interpreted in order to translate the survey responses into the CRC findings.
- There are several categories of findings that can be calculated including estimates on aspects of service delivery (exclusion/inclusion errors etc.), comparison across localities, and comparison across time.
- This information can be used to identify systematic service delivery issues.
- In interpreting the data, both the audience and purpose of CRC should be considered.
- A number of outputs can be produced including a report, policy papers and videos.

4) *Dissemination of findings and advocacy*
- Data analysis should be followed by dissemination and advocacy. This step is critical to derive maximum benefits from the effort. The usefulness of CRC will be quite limited if findings are not shared and used to bring about improvements in public service delivery.
- A comprehensive dissemination strategy is required that includes the identification of key stakeholders and the best channels of communication to reach each of them. A stakeholder analysis at this stage can help assess their interest in the proposed actions and whether they are likely to support or challenge these actions.
- It is only through the process of dissemination and advocacy that CRC can pave the path to reform. The CRC findings can be used to shift the focus from individual issues of concern to collective issues of importance.
- CRC findings also provide a credible database of information that citizens can use to lobby for changes in policy and planning, and which can also be used to monitor quality and access of services.
- The CRC and the ensuing advocacy process can also bring a variety of stakeholders together to increase citizen participation in planning.

Implementation recommendations

- Develop an understanding of the socio-political context in which the CRC is being implemented. This should include an assessment of the logistical, cultural and political barriers to CRC implementation and the creation of an inventory of potential mitigating measures.

- Generate strong media and civil society support for publicising the findings, engage with citizens, and ultimately generate a constituency for change in the long-run.
- Repeat surveys on a regular basis, as a one-off survey may have little effect on service provision and may further increase the dissatisfaction of users.

Potential challenges

The costs of implementing citizen report cards tend to be high when compared, for example, to community score cards. The process requires considerable human resources, as well as experience with statistical approaches. A reliable, independent and local institution is required to lead the effort. CRC should not be seen as a social science survey that ends with a written report; findings need to be publicly distributed and followed up.

Further resources

- Asian Development Bank (2007). Improving Local Governance and Pro-poor service delivery: Citizen Report Card Learning Toolkit. Asian Development Bank.
- World Bank (n.d). Citizen Report Cards: Monitoring Citizen Perspectives to improve service delivery. World Bank.
- WSP (2007). Citizens' Report Card on urban water, sanitation and solid waste services in Kenya: Summary of results from Nairobi, Kisumu and Mombasa.
- WSP (2010). Water and Sewerage Services in Karachi – Citizen Report Card: Sustainable Service Delivery Improvements.