

Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Services

Tool Summary

Public services are services provided by a government to its citizens. Basic services like water, health care and education are considered essential for human survival and hence constitute a fundamental human right. The effective delivery of such services is crucial for war on poverty reduction and development goals. Public services can either be provided by the state directly, or through sub-contracted private service providers.

There is a growing recognition that takes a stance on service delivery stating that, in order to improve public service delivery, it is not enough to concentrate merely on 'supply side' mechanisms. There is also a need to capacitate the 'demand side' of service delivery by ensuring that the users of public services are informed of their rights and entitlements and are enabled to exercise their rights by monitoring the quality of public services and holding the government and service providers accountable.

Experience around the world has demonstrated that generating and using information on the performance of service providers by both government and non-governmental actors can lead to substantial enhancement of public transparency and accountability which in turn fosters adherence to higher quality standards in service delivery.

The tools included in this section are by and large participatory in nature. They are or can be used by citizens groups and communities to assess the performance of service providers and benchmark and monitor the quality of their services. Unlike conventional approaches that rely on external experts measuring quality and performance against a pre-determined set of indicators, participatory monitoring and evaluation tools seek to engage members of the public in not only providing feedback, but also actively participating in the planning and implementation of the assessment. This helps to build the capacity of local people to analyze, reflect and take action. Some mechanisms offer more scope for active participation than others like for e.g. The Community Scorecards. These envisage active involvement of the group and allow participants to identify indicators of quality and performance. On the other hand, tools like Citizen Report Cards are less participatory as it uses a standard public survey methodology covering larger samples thus allowing for wider generalization of findings.

Benefits

Some of the key benefits of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation tools are:

- Direct and objective user feedback to service providers
- local stakeholders become active participants and not mere sources of information;
- Increased awareness of rights and entitlements amongst community members;
- Armed with objectively generated knowledge and quantified information, communities/citizen become empowered to hold governments and service providers accountable; and
- Improved quality of services and public works.

Lessons learnt

Experience of applying participatory monitoring and evaluation of public services has shown that:

- The generation of accurate knowledge on user experiences and perceptions is a crucial prerequisite to demand reforms in the service delivery mechanisms and public accountability of the service providers;
- For such knowledge have a reasonable impact, it needs to be widely disseminated and discussed in the public domain;
- Effectiveness of participatory monitoring and evaluation tools is contingent upon participation of the service providers in the process from the very outset;
- The degree of responsiveness of the service providers to the findings of citizen monitoring and evaluation is the key to success of such initiatives;
- Media plays an important role in disseminating the findings and mobilizing the public opinion for pressurizing the government for reforms;
- Like many other tools, for participatory monitoring and evaluations to be most effective, they must become a regular feature and get institutionalized although one-off interventions can also generate desirable impacts;
- In an ideal scenario, participatory monitoring and evaluation initiatives serve to empower the citizens through their potential to elicit accountability of government agencies. However, their success depends on adopting a predominantly inclusive approach irrespective of class, gender, race and religion. Otherwise, these tools run the risk of getting subverted and dominated by powerful sections of society and further exacerbating the existing social inequalities;

- Cooption of the tool and the CSOs by the government and the resultant resulting tokenism/mechanization and lack of ownership amongst citizens is another risk these tools carry with them.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation tools

There are five participatory monitoring and evaluation tools grouped under 'H' category:

H1: *Stakeholder Surveys* are a valuable tool to increase an organizations' understanding of the knowledge, attitudes, and opinions of their stakeholders. In this context, the organizations are service providers and their major stakeholders are citizens (service users)

H 2: *Community Score Card* is a participatory, community based monitoring and evaluation tool enabling citizens to assess the quality of public services through the method of weights and ranking a set of community generated indicators.

H 3: *Citizen Report Cards* are survey-based quantitative assessments of public services based on user feedback and not opinions and perceptions.

H 4: *Community Based Monitoring and Evaluation* is a general approach to involve citizens in gathering evidence of governmental performance.

H 5: *Participatory Outputs Tracking* refers to methodologies for monitoring the transfer of goods or services from the government to the community/citizens.

H 6: *Social Audits* combine both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the impact of a service or project by all stakeholders. Social audits are also sometimes referred to as one of the social accountability tools.

Resources

“Human Rights and Social Accountability” Social Development Papers, Number 86. John Ackerman (May 2005)

<http://topics.developmentgateway.org/civilsociety/rc/filedownload.do?itemId=1075370>

Exploring the linkages between rights based approaches to development and social accountability initiatives, this paper outlines some of the tools for monitoring and evaluation public services

South Asia Social Accountability Network: Social Accountability Curriculum
http://www.sasanet.org/curriculum_final/conceptofsocialmonitoring_sm.jsp

This site provides a useful overview of the concept and methodologies of social monitoring as well as links to other useful resources.

World Development Report 2004: Making Services Work for Poor People: World Bank (2005)

<http://econ.worldbank.org/external/default/main?menuPK=477704&pagePK=64167702&piPK=64167676&theSitePK=477688>

This influential World Bank report explores the need to improve service delivery through involving users in monitoring the service providers and describes several related best practices