Social Accountability Tools
Performance Monitoring
Citizen Report Cards: Presentation Script

Slide 1: Introduction

In this presentation, we introduce you to one of the most commonly-used performance monitoring tools: the Citizen Report Card, or "CRC." We describe basic techniques for planning and implementing a CRC, identify key success factors, and illustrate some of the tool's strengths and limitations.

Slide 2: Definition

CRCs collect citizen feedback on the performance of a given service based on their experience as users of such services. Information is collected through household and individual surveys in which citizens grade the overall quality of a service or facility. The findings present a quantitative measure of user satisfaction. Results are disseminated through the media and civil society. By monitoring services and providing feedback, citizens can exact greater accountability and efficiency.

Slide 3: What Does It Tell Us?

Citizen Report Cards address critical themes in the realm of service delivery, such as access, quality, and reliability. They also highlight problems encountered by users of services and the responsiveness of service providers in addressing these problems. A CRC reveals the degree of transparency in service provision by documenting information such as the disclosure of service standards, and the costs incurred in using a service, including bribes. Finally, CRCs identify gaps in service delivery coverage and can form the basis of recommendations for action.

Slide 4: Seven Key Stages

There are seven key stages of a Citizen Report Card: scoping and planning, the selection of implementing partners, survey design, survey execution, data collection, analysis and findings, dissemination of results, and institutionalization. CRC methodology may vary depending on the local context or the capacity of the implementing agency.

Slide 5: Stage 1 – Scoping and Planning

Before carrying out a Citizen Report Card, it is important to determine the scope of the exercise. One key issue that should be resolved in this phase is the identification of the appropriate unit of analysis. For example, are you looking into a particular service, or are you comparing different services? And who are the service users or potential beneficiaries? Other issues that should be examined include the resources needed, and the expected outcomes.

Slide 6: Stage 2 – Selection of Implementing Partners

Intermediary agencies plan, implement, and disseminate information gathered through a Citizen Report Card exercise. Agencies must possess not only the necessary technical expertise, but also should be neutral on the issues to be addressed. Different agencies can be selected to act as implementing

partners at different stages of the process based on their areas of expertise. For example, different partner organizations can: design and implement the survey; raise citizen awareness of the survey; analyze data, and write reports. Often, the best approach is one that involves coalition-building, bringing together organizations with different skills.

Slide 7: Stage 3 – Survey Design

The next stage in a Citizen Report Card is designing the survey that will generate data. There are three main steps in survey design: the organization of focus groups with service providers and users, creating a sampling plan, and, when necessary, tailoring surveys for different types of users. For example, urban and rural residents may have different expectations for service standards, and disaggregating data in this way can allow for useful insights.

Slide 8: Stage 3 – Example of Performance Criteria and Scoring Matrix

Once a survey is designed, the next step is to create a performance scoring matrix. Using information from the focus groups, indicators are developed to measure different aspects of performance such as quality, performance and impact of services. Indicators should be able to clearly express measurement and answer questions such as "How much" and "to what extent." Wherever possible, numeric scales should be used.

The performance matrix shown here measures the performance of the health sector in Malaysia using variables such as: number of hospital beds, number of health service workers, and availability of health care service.

Slide 9: Stage 4 – Execution of Survey

Once the survey has been designed, the next stage in the Citizen Report Card process is to select and train survey execution personnel. Preference should be given to individuals or organizations familiar with: the subject matter, project purpose, and local cultural context. Survey implementation should be pre-tested, with preliminary feedback used to modify questions. Spot monitoring of interviews should be done to ensure that information is accurately recorded.

Slide 10: Stage 5 – Data Collection, Analysis, and Findings

Data collected during survey execution is then recorded into standardized tables for consolidation and analysis. Typically, respondents rate aspects of public services on a numeric scale, ranging from 1 to 7 or negative one (-1) to 1. These ratings are then aggregated and averaged, and a percentage score is produced. A structured summary of these ratings is called the Citizen Report Card. Report card findings should be identify specific opportunities for improvement. It can be helpful to share preliminary findings with service providers to provide them with an opportunity to respond to criticism. The service providers' response should be integrated into the final Citizen Report Card.

Slide 11: Stage 6 – Dissemination of Results

To have a meaningful impact, the results of the Citizen Report Card must be disseminated widely. For this reason, media is a powerful ally in report card initiatives. Beyond a high-profile press conference, coverage should be widely dispersed through means such as the preparation of simple press kits, press releases, and the translation of the main report into local languages. Following the press release, meetings between service users and providers allow the two parties to discuss ways to improve operations. Interface meetings can also be held before the press release for the two parties to come together and openly discuss challenges. Using these types of public dissemination techniques can put pressure on service providers to improve their performance and, can foster a sense of healthy competition among service providers.

Slide 12: Stage 7 – Institutionalization

Ideally, the final stage of a Citizen Report Card initiative is the institutionalization of the process, or making it a permanent feature of service delivery. Regular monitoring of progress should be undertaken to assess commitments by service providers and to track variations in service quality over time. Finally, report card findings can be institutionalized by linking findings to government management and incentive systems. Governments can use report cards for performance-based budgeting and link public opinion with public spending.

Slide 13: Applications

Citizen Report Cards have been used around the world to monitor and improve performance in service delivery. For instance, in Bangalore, India, CRCs have resulted in public service agencies regularly discussing performance with citizens in open forums. CRCs have also been used for cross-state comparisons on public service access, reliability, and quality. For example, in the Philippines, CRC findings were used to streamline and prioritize budget allocations. In Mumbai, India, CRC findings were used by government officials as justification for increased resources. In Kenya, CRCs are being used in the water sector to strengthen the voice of the consumer.

Slide 14: Key Outcomes

There are several different types of outcomes generated by Citizen Report Cards. CRCs help identify gaps and inequalities in service delivery. They can also improve citizens' awareness of their rights and responsibilities. The exercise empowers citizens to play a watchdog role and to monitor public service agencies. When CRC results are linked with government, they can enable departments to better prioritize budget allocations and to monitor implementation. Perhaps most importantly, the CRC provides valuable information to service providers and can help them identify areas for improvement.

Slide 15: Challenges

Implementing Citizen Report Cards involves some important challenges. First, it can be challenging to craft a dissemination strategy that is effective in getting public agencies to take note of and respond to citizen feedback. Second, where technical capacity is lacking, CRCs may be difficult to design and implement. On a related note, survey design errors can lead to inaccurate conclusions on the quality of services. A final challenge can be securing a receptive political environment and commitment from service providers to make good use of the findings.

Slide 16: Review

This presentation began with a definition of a widely practiced social accountability tool: the Citizen Report Card. We learned about the CRC's uses and the seven key stages for implementing this type of initiative. Lastly, we briefly surveyed some of the outcomes and challenges involved with this tool.