

COMMUNITY SCORE CARDS¹

Summary

The community score card (CSC) process (also sometimes known as a community voice card) is a community-based monitoring tool that enables citizens to voice their assessment of a priority public service. The CSC is an instrument to elicit social and public accountability and increase the responsiveness of service providers.

What is it?

The community score card (CSC) is a participatory, community-based monitoring and evaluation tool that enables citizens to assess the quality of public services (such as a health centre, school, public transport, water or waste disposal system). It is used to inform community members about available services and their entitlements and to solicit their opinions about the accessibility and quality of these services. In addition, by providing an opportunity for direct dialogue between service providers and the community, the process empowers the public to voice their opinion and demand improved service delivery.

How is it done?

Key steps in implementing a CSC are:

1. Preparatory groundwork and research
 - Identify the subject and scope of the assessment (e.g. health provision for pregnant women in a specific district).
 - Carry out preliminary research regarding current inputs, entitlements, degree of usage etc.
 - Identify people or groups within the sample area who can help to facilitate the implementation of the CSC process, such as traditional leaders, NGO staff, members of local governments.
 - Conduct an awareness-raising campaign to inform people about the purpose and benefits of the CSC.
 - Train facilitators.
2. Help community members generate a scorecard
 - Convene community members into one or more focus groups.
 - Ask the (or each) group to identify performance/quality indicators for the public service in question.
 - Ask the group to score each indicator and give reasons for the scores.
 - Ask the group to develop their own suggestions on how to improve the service, based on the performance criteria they have identified.

Table 1: Sample Community Generated Scorecard for a Health Centre

	Indicators (in order of importance)	Score out of 100	Scores after 12 months
1	Attitude of staff	20	
2	Affordability of services	50	
3	Availability of medicine	40	
4	Distance to health centre	35	
5	Equal access to the health	25	

¹ Written by Anu Pekkonen, with edits by Carmen Malena and Glenn Wanamaker, 2009.

	services for all community members		
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3. Help service providers to generate a self-evaluation scorecard
 - Hold a brainstorming session with service providers (management and staff) to develop self-evaluation indicators.
 - Ask the service providers to score each indicator and give reasons for the scores.
 - Invite service providers to discuss and propose possible solutions.
4. Convene an interface meeting between community and service provider
 - Each focus group presents its scores, aided by the facilitators.
 - Reasons for scores are discussed.
 - Service providers react and give feedback.
 - All participants discuss and potentially agree possible solutions.
5. Advocacy and follow-up
 - Document the process and record scorecard results (in a brief, clear and easily understandable format).
 - Disseminate results through the media and communities.
 - Feed scorecard results into other policy and advocacy processes.
 - Ensure the implementation and follow-through of the solutions.
 - Take steps to institutionalise the process - for example, by supporting community-based organisations and/or service providers to repeat the exercise on an annual (or semi-annual) basis.

Benefits

- Relatively easy to use and flexible in application.
- Strengthens citizen voice and community empowerment.
- Promotes dialogue and consensus building as well as information gathering.
- Establishes mechanisms of direct feedback between users and service providers.
- Enhances confidence in the service provider particularly when the score is high and/or solutions to identified problems are implemented effectively.
- Builds local capacity to hold public sector accountable and to engage effectively in public deliberations on priority issues.
- Generates benchmark performance criteria that can subsequently be used by community members or the government for ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Challenges and lessons

- Service providers and policy makers may feel threatened by the CSC undertaking and it is therefore important to engage them from the outset, underlining the value and practical benefits of people's participation in service delivery assessment. It can also be useful to invite service providers and/or local officials to participate in training workshops and learning sessions about the CSC process.
- It is not guaranteed that service providers/government officials will be receptive to the problems identified by 'common' people and their suggestions for change. A strategy for mitigating this problem is to highlight both strengths and weaknesses emerging from score card findings and, through preparation and facilitation, to ensure that interface meetings are constructive (v. confrontational) and focus on solutions and proposals (not just problems).

- Service providers at local level do not always have the capacity or leverage to make decisions or implement change. It is therefore important that senior officials and decision makers are also involved in feed-back and interface.
- It is important to help community members develop an understanding of the constraints faced by service providers, so as to avoid creating unrealistically high expectations.
- There is a risk that the CSC process could result in disillusionment, on the part of community members and service providers, if proposed solutions are not implemented or if subsequent assessments do not find any positive change.
- The effective implementation of a CSC requires a combination of: an understanding of the local socio-political governance context; a technically competent intermediary to facilitate the process; a strong public awareness-raising and information dissemination campaign to ensure effective community participation; participation/buy-in of the service provider, and coordinated follow up.

CASE STUDIES

Using community scorecards to assess rural health centres in Malawi

(http://pqdl.care.org/pv_obj_cache/pv_obj_id_6BC6F7A91037B12141EC87C038894738523D0400).

The central objective of the project by CARE Malawi (www.caremalawi.org) was to improve the provision of health services to the rural poor through the empowerment of user communities. Evidence shows significant improvement attributable to the implementation of the CSC process.

Monitoring the Gambia PRS

(<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPCENG/Resources/CSC+Gambia.pdf>)

In the Gambia, community score cards have been used by the World Bank and its partners to monitor the effectiveness of the national poverty reduction strategy. The CSC process was carried out in two priority sectors – health (which received an overall satisfaction rating of less than 30 %) and education (where teachers received more than 70% approval ratings in all regions but school facilities received only 40% approval ratings). Both processes created awareness of the situation, promoted better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service providers and ultimately empowered the community to give more input into local-level service delivery processes.

Andhra Pradesh, India: Improving Health Services through Community Score Cards

(http://www.sasanet.org/documents/Newreport/AP/Case1_Andhra%20Pradesh_SAc_CSC%20Health_August%202007.pdf)

Rwanda Pilot Projects on Citizen Report & Community Score Cards on Health & Education Services, Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern & Southern Africa – Rwanda Branch

http://www.ansa-africa.net/uploads/documents/publications/Rwanda_Citizen_Report_Community_Score_Card_2006.pdf

Holding service providers to account: community scorecards and district-level forums in Ghana, by Akasiba and Robinson (2007)

<http://openurl.ingenta.com/content?genre=article&issn=1357-938X&volume=56&issue=1&spage=21&epage=27>

Describes lessons learned from using community score cards in northern Ghana.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Social Audit of Local Governance

(http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSOCACCDEMSSIDE/GOV/Resources/Prism_SocialAuditofLGinBiH_QualitativeReport.pdf)

While Community Score Cards are typically used to assess a specific public service, this report describes how the CSC methodology was used to evaluate and compare four local governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Johannesburg City Scorecards

(<http://www.joburg-archive.co.za/2004/budget/ch6.pdf>)

Community score cards have predominantly been used in rural areas. However, CSCs have also been successfully carried out in urban settings, as shown by this example from Johannesburg, South Africa.

RESOURCES

- Community Scorecard Process: A Note on Methodology
(<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPCENG/1143333-1116505690049/20509286/comscorecardsnote.pdf>)
- Community score card & citizen report card resources/World Bank
<http://go.worldbank.org/QFAVL64790>
- Steps in a Community Scorecard Process
(<http://www.roboroz.ca/scorecard/steps.html>)
- The Community Scorecard Approach for Performance Assessment: A WaterAid Ghana briefing Paper, 2004
(http://www.wateraid.org/documents/plugin_documents/communityscorecarding.pdf)