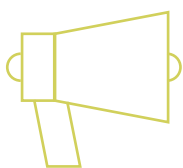


# Open Government Partnership



## Improving Public Services: Guidance for developing OGP commitments

TIM HUGHES (INVOLVE), KAELA SCOTT (INVOLVE),  
AND PAUL MAASSEN (OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP)



# Introduction

Good quality public services are critical to the lives of citizens, and ensuring their provision is an essential function of government. But governments are not alone in this; experience and evidence built up over a number of decades has shown that citizens and civil society also have important roles to play in improving and delivering public services, and achieving social outcomes. Open government reforms have the potential to improve existing services, and unlock the ideas, knowledge and capacity for new solutions to societal challenges.

This is reflected in the Open Government Partnership's first Grand Challenge - set out in its Articles of Governance - of:

**“Improving Public Services** -- Measures that address the full spectrum of citizen services including health, education, criminal justice, water, electricity, telecommunications and any other relevant service areas, by fostering public service improvement or private sector innovation.”

OGP's vision is that more governments become more transparent, more accountable, and more responsive to their own citizens, with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of governance, as well as the quality of services that citizens receive. We want to see more and better quality public service commitments in National Action Plans, and will be encouraging and supporting countries to develop, implement, evaluate and showcase impactful reforms.

**“In the next five years, more commitments need to focus on service delivery and issues covered in the Sustainable Development Goals more broadly (beyond SDG goal 16 - the ‘governance goal’), such as health, education, climate etc.”** - OGP Strategic Refresh

This paper provides guidance on how to develop robust and ambitious public service commitments, setting out:

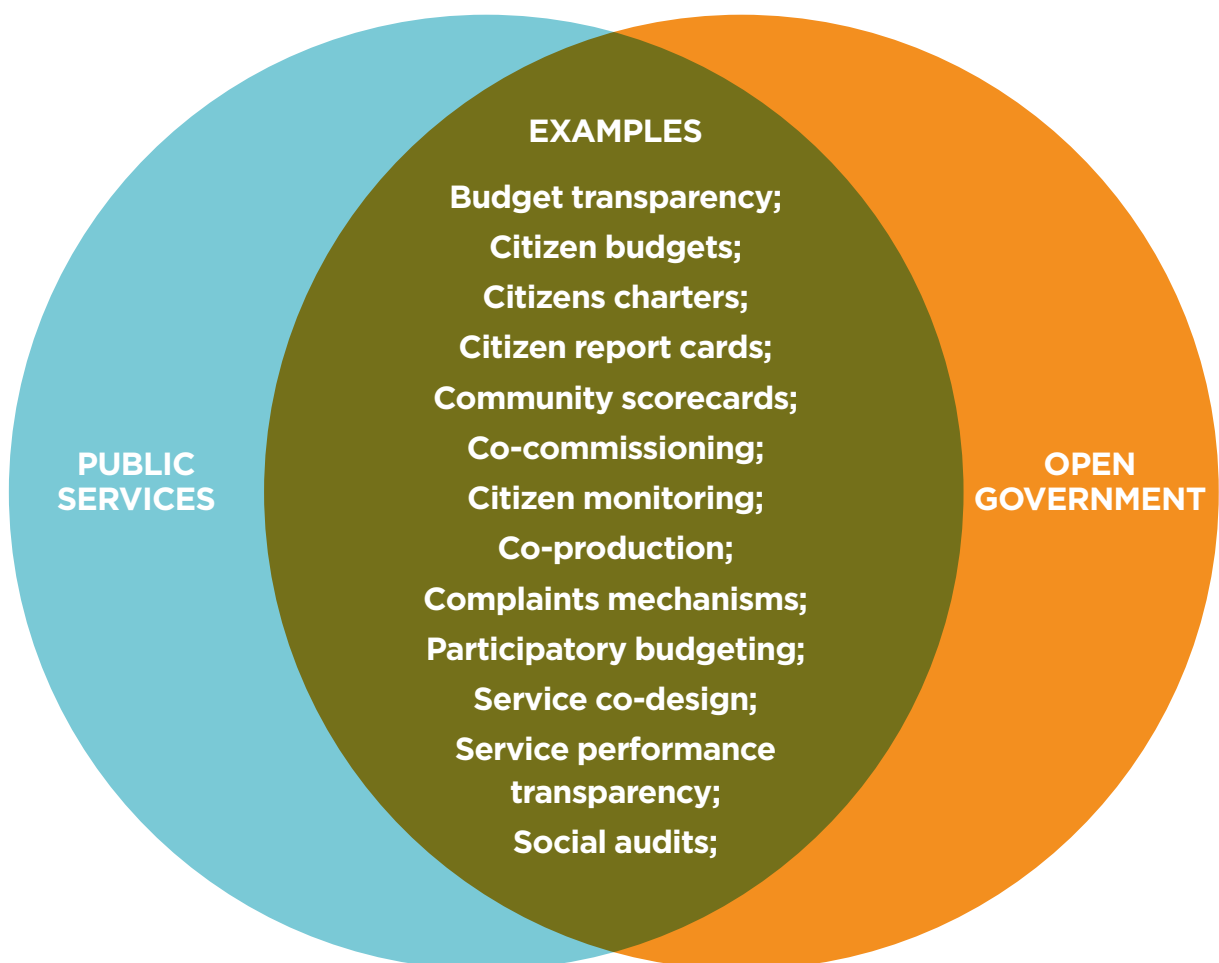
- The case for making open public services reforms
- Guidelines on developing open public service commitments
- The qualities of robust open public service commitments
- Model open public service commitments, including recommendations, resources and case studies

It builds on the public services chapter of the OpenGovGuide, written by Twaweza and Involve in 2013.

# What are open public service reforms?

The overlap between open government reform and public service reform encompasses a wide array of potential initiatives, mechanisms and commitments. The venn diagram provides some examples of approaches that this includes.

There is a wide range of terminology used to refer to such approaches, including social accountability initiatives (SAIs); citizen voice and accountability initiatives; TAP projects (transparency/accountability/participation); TAls (Transparency Accountability Initiatives) and participatory governance. We use open public service reforms as a catch-all term.



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Open public service reforms can be applied to various stages of the policy cycle; for example:



## Priority identification and agenda setting

i.e. commitments to develop mechanisms that bring citizen voice into decisions to prioritise issues and/or allocate resources (e.g. participatory budgeting).



## Policy making and service design

i.e. commitments that bring citizen voice into policy processes related to public services and/or involve citizens in the design of services



## Co-commissioning and co-production

i.e. commitments that involve citizens in making commissioning decisions and/or directly delivering public services



## Monitoring and accountability

i.e. commitments that involve citizens in assessing public service performance and holding providers to account for their delivery

Section 6 outlines a range of example commitments across these four areas.

# Why make open public service reforms?

Good open government reforms have the potential to improve the governance and performance of public services, and empower citizens, civil society and other groups to take collective action to achieve social outcomes. Such approaches will be essential to achieving many of the outcomes agreed in the Sustainable Development Goals:

**“[T]he principles of open government are embedded across numerous SDGs where transparency, public participation, and accountable public institutions are instrumental to achieving a particular target. For example, goals related to income poverty, water, education, energy, and cities all include targets for the provision of public services and universal access to these services. Open government is often an essential element of high quality and universal service provision. Services from education to infrastructure, which are indispensable for poverty eradication, are strengthened by citizen input and oversight. Similarly, professional integrity is essential to public management, and new technologies can help improve transparency and deliver services more efficiently.”**

- Manish Bapta, Alejandra Lagunes, Mark Robinson, and Sonya Suter<sup>1</sup>

## Benefits to citizens

As citizens, we rely on public services being accessible and high in quality - to give us an education, keep us healthy, make our communities a safe place to be, and ensure our basic needs are met, including having access to water, energy, sanitation and shelter. Public services are critical to an individual's wellbeing and life chances, and to the strength and prosperity of societies.

Open public service reforms are based on the simple idea that public services that are more responsive and accountable to people - and benefit from their insights, ideas, energy and scrutiny - will work better for people. Though designing transformative reforms can be anything but simple, there are plenty of examples of open public service reforms achieving a wide range of benefits for citizens<sup>2</sup>.

1. Bapta, M; Lagunes, A; Robinson, M; Suter, S. (2015) How Can the Open Government Partnership Accelerate Implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Washington DC: Open Government Partnership [http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP\\_SDGs\\_ReportV3\\_OnlineVersion.pdf](http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_SDGs_ReportV3_OnlineVersion.pdf)

2. For example, see the case studies in section 6.

# » Introduction

## Benefits to governments

Linked to but distinct from the benefits of open public services reforms to citizens are their potential benefits for governments. Here we outline eight potential rationales for developing public service commitments for governments:

**1. Social contract** - The provision of public services is a key component of the social contract between governments and citizens, and an area where open government reform is likely to have most meaning and impact for citizens.

**2. Public trust** - Citizens come into contact with government through public services more often than any other route, and their delivery shapes people's trust in and expectations of government.

**3. Good governance** - Public services account for a large proportion of public spending and the public should have the right to access information on their budgets, contracts, performance and provision.

**4. Strengthening accountability** - Open public service reforms introduce new forms of accountability, which can supplement conventional approaches to public service reform and help government's achieve their reform initiatives.

**5. New insight** - Open public service reforms create the space for citizens to inform policy makers and service providers of their needs, preferences and expectations. Citizens and civil society can offer new insights into the delivery of public services and ideas for improvement, which can result in better and/or lower cost services.

**6. Constructive engagement** - Open public service reforms can support citizens, public servants and politicians to engage in a more informed, direct and constructive manner.

**7. Collective action** - Social outcomes - such as health and wellbeing, good quality education, and sustainable cities and communities - are not achieved by governments or public service providers working alone. They require citizens, civil society, business and other groups to take action in their pursuit. Open public service reforms can help support citizens and civil society to make even greater contributions towards social development.

**8. Fulfilling international commitments** - Public service commitments and reforms can support progress on both open government and sustainable development.

# How to develop public service commitments

The Open Government Partnership requires country action plans to be developed through a multi stakeholder process, with the active engagement of citizens and civil society. This is particularly important for public services, which directly impact on the lives of citizens and where reform is both complex and contextually dependent. The best reforms will be developed based on multiple sources of expertise, including of existing service provision, citizen priorities, contextual factors, public service systems, open government reform, and governance and accountability systems.

## **We recommend that the following steps are taken:**

- 1.** Engage citizens and civil society in selecting a priority service, and defining the problem, the reform or initiative will tackle.
- 2.** Scope out and understand the context and system in which the reform or initiative will be applied, including the availability and use of resources, relevant state and non-state stakeholders, power relationships, and existing engagement and accountability mechanisms.
- 3.** Engage citizens, sector specialists and social accountability experts - from national civil society, academic, international NGOs and/or multi-lateral organisations - in helping to design the reform or initiative.
- 4.** Engage relevant oversight (inspectorates, etc), audit, ombudsman and/or parliamentary institutions in exploring how the reform or initiative can feed into existing accountability processes.
- 5.** Engage with the media, civil society organisations, social movements and other groups to raise awareness of the reform or initiative, and mobilise citizens to participate.
- 6.** Work with academics and multilateral partners to evaluate the impact of the reform or initiative.

# What makes a strong public service commitment

There is no precise formula for developing successful open public service reforms. However, the following features have been found to be important to the success of a number of initiatives.



## Good design

- **A clear problem** - Defining a priority problem and finding an appropriate entry point through which it can be addressed is essential. For example, in the case of poor health service delivery, entry points could include the performance of local service providers, corruption and/or inefficiency in the system, and/or poorly allocated budgets or resources.
- **Time and opportunity for iteration** - Open public service reforms and initiatives are complex and challenging to implement. While the impacts of participatory budgeting in Brazil are widely known and celebrated, this has come about through a process of trial and error, iteration and expansion over a long period of time with sustained political and institutional support.



## Transparency

- **Access to information** - Open public service reforms require information to be made available to citizens, civil society, the media and others in meaningful and useful ways. For information to play a role in motivating collective action it not only needs to be available but needs to be perceived as actionable. The available information needs to extend beyond data related to budgets, performance and delivery to include credible qualitative information related to perceptions and behaviours.



# >> Introduction



## Participation

- **Co-produced** - Avenues for participation should be jointly owned and defined by government and civil society. When the interest of the state dominates the terms on which citizen input is solicited and responded to, participatory experiences can be deeply frustrating and ultimately dis-empowering experiences for citizens. On the other hand, civil society led initiatives that do not include mechanisms for securing an institutional response can be equally frustrating and disempowering.
- **Spaces for dialogue** - The reform should create opportunities for dialogue between decision makers, service providers and citizens so that each gains a better understanding of the needs and perspectives of the other.
- **Inclusiveness** - There are many barriers which can prevent people - particularly those from deprived groups - from becoming involved in activities that require a high degree of participation: including time, awareness, education, employment conditions, age, language, gender, caring responsibilities, disability and ethnicity, not to mention the general demands of daily life. Open public service reforms should focus attention and resources on ensuring they are inclusive, and be explicit in their choice to give weight to traditionally marginalised and excluded voices.
- **Use of interlocutors** - In many cases, particularly when working with the most vulnerable or disenfranchised communities, citizens' 'voice' needs representation as well as aggregation. Interlocutors can function as the facilitators of two-way communication able to negotiate action/ expectations with policy makers and/or service providers.



## Accountability

- **Feedback loops** - For participation to be meaningful it needs to achieve, and be seen to achieve, concrete outcomes for participants. Information about the process and outcomes should be publically available and accessible to those with a stake in the issue.
- **Incentives** - Incentives are needed for both citizens to mobilise and public officials to respond. The likelihood that citizens' efforts having an impact is in itself an important incentive or disincentive to mobilise.

## >> Introduction

- **Sanctions** - Accountability demands not only answerability – the responsibility of public service providers and decision makers to provide information and justification about their actions to the public and other bodies – but enforceability – the possibility of penalties or consequences for failing to answer accountability claims. The strongest open public service reforms and initiatives are often integrated into formal accountability mechanisms (e.g. audit, ombudsman and/or parliamentary institutions).



### Supporting conditions for public service openness

Open public service reforms cannot survive in isolation; they depend on a range of contextual factors, including:

- **Civic space** - Open public service reforms require a political context and culture in which citizens can be assured that their basic political and civil rights are guaranteed.
- **State capacity** - Open public service reforms need a functioning public administration with the capacity to respond to citizen demands.
- **Existence of an independent media** - A common element of almost all successful social accountability initiatives is the strategic use of both traditional and modern forms of media to raise awareness around public issues, disseminate findings and create a platform for public debate.
- **Civil society capacity** - The success of open public service initiatives often relies heavily on the capacity of civil society organisations to mobilise citizens and to network effectively, both within civil and political society.
- **A social contract premised on social justice** - Open public service reforms are more likely to gain traction when social justice is a fundamental principle of government.
- **State/Civil society synergy** - Progressive social justice reforms are often the result of efforts by reformers from both government and civil society.

# Example commitments

Below we outline a series of example commitments to provide inspiration and guidance for the development of your own country commitments. These examples are not intended to be copied wholesale, but should instead provide the starting place for discussions with citizens and government and civil society stakeholders.

## Summary of example commitments

### Initial

1. Publish and promote information on the public services people are entitled to
2. Publish information on budgets and resources received by public service providers
3. Publish public service performance data
4. Collect feedback on citizens satisfaction with public services

### Intermediate

5. Engage citizens and civil society in defining service provision standards
6. Involve citizens in the assessment and oversight of public service delivery
7. Involve citizens in the commissioning of public services
8. Involve citizens in the design and delivery of public services
9. Systematically track and publish performance indicators across public services
10. Establish feedback mechanisms for public services
11. Provide cooperation to independent monitoring efforts and take action on issues raised

### Advanced

11. Engage citizens in allocating public service budgets
12. Integrate social audits into conventional audit and assessment procedures

# Publish and promote information on the public services people are entitled to

## JUSTIFICATION

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Too often citizens do not know what their basic entitlements and responsibilities are, or what performance they can expect of service providers. This lack of information prevents people accessing services, allows for under-performance of services and makes it easier for local officials and service providers to divert public resources for illicit gain. Many countries have established Service Charters, backed by information campaigns which make clear what services and benefits people are entitled to receive, the performance standards they should expect, and the grievance redress channels they can use when things go wrong (Centre for Good Governance, 2008).

### **Key elements that should form part of a Service Charter include:**

- An explanation to the public on their rights and obligations as users
- Information about the services provided and how to access them
- Information for users about the expected level and quality of services
- Established mechanisms for feedback and complaint
- Information about redress procedures (including reparation) for cases where the service provider does not comply with its commitments

A Charter therefore lets people know about the services and programs available to them and arms them with information that they can use to hold providers accountable for delivering those services. Citizens can use information to have better-informed direct interactions with individual providers, such as doctors, and with provider organizations, such as village education committees, and they can have better-informed indirect interactions with policy makers, including through voting.

# >> Initial



## RECOMMENDATION

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- 1.** Require public sector organisations (ministries, departments, agencies, local government) to publish information on what level of service people are entitled to. This may take the form of a service charter detailing the role of the organisation, services provided to each client group, any user costs involved, details of grievance redress mechanism and how to access it; and expectations from the clients.
- 2.** Develop the Charter not only with senior experts, but with interaction of frontline staff.
- 3.** Disaggregate service commitments to the lowest level (e.g. 'x and y services are free for pregnant women, z dollars per student will be sent to each school, x functioning water points per 1000 population in a ward). The charter does not however have to imply a uniform pattern on every service and can also indicate choices.
- 4.** Communicate the information internally within each public organisation and integrate into internal performance management.
- 5.** Set specific targets for communication: e.g. 'At least 80% of all citizens will be easily able to access this information'.
- 6.** Make this information easily accessible using simple language and visual displays, and deliver it through public noticeboards at public service locations and local government offices, TV, internet and mobile phone platforms. The information should also be published as open data to enable third parties to reuse and disseminate it.
- 7.** Work with civil society organisations and the media to inform citizens of their rights, the services and benefits they are entitled to receive, the performance standards they should expect, and the grievance redress channels they can use when things go wrong. Cooperate with independent monitoring efforts that seek to assess the reach and quality (meaningfulness, value) of the public dissemination of information, and should commit to specify and take swift measures to remedy problems.

# » Initial

## CASE STUDIES

### Programa Cartas Compromiso, or Citizen Charter Program (CCP) in Argentina

The Carta Compromiso is a public management tool where the highest authority of a service-providing agency makes a public commitment to citizens, laying out a number of goals and results to be met within a given timeframe. The CCP seeks a new relationship between public service providers and users by promoting a higher degree of responsiveness and transparency to ensure greater quality of services, increased information and better monitoring and evaluation.

**More information:** [click here](#)

### The Citizens Charter of Naga City in the Philippines

Naga City's Citizens Charter was launched in 2001 to counter concerns of nepotism in public services. Spanning 140 services in 18 categories, the Charter includes performance pledges that specify steps to be followed, delivery times, and logistical information. The Charter is distributed to all households in Naga via a printed leaflet and the city website. The city also offers a service which enables citizens to directly contact the persons responsible for a service through a text messages, with guaranteed replies within 24 hours. This service is used by many citizens to file complaints or advise officials about needed services.

## OGP COMMITMENTS

### Citizens Card in Albania

Albania has committed to develop a Citizens Card which will provide citizens and institutions information on baseline standards for public service delivery.

## RESOURCES

#### Centre for Good Governance

Citizens Charters: A handbook

[click here](#)

#### Governance International

Improving Customer Orientation Through Service Charters

[click here](#)

# Publish information on budgets and resources received by public service providers

## JUSTIFICATION

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Public budgets and expenditures are the means through which public policies are translated into tangible services for citizens. Government decisions about how to allocate and spend financial resources therefore have a direct impact on the well-being of citizens.

Publishing information on public budgeting and the resources allocated to various public service sectors serves to inform citizens about sources and amounts of government revenues as well as how these are managed and used by the government. The public disclosure of such information helps citizens and civil society organisations to understand the amount of financial resources the government has at its disposal and to engage with the government on priority issues for public finance.

Placing this information in the public domain can also enable the flow of public resources for the provision of public goods or services to be traced from origin to destination. This can help to detect bottlenecks, inefficiencies and/or corruption in the transfer of public goods and resources and foster sensible, accountable and equitable resource allocations. As such it is a key tool for both governments and CSOs to guard against corruption and work towards ensuring transparent, accountable and effective public financial management.

Budget transparency activities can and should occur at multiple levels of government—national, provincial, local, and service-delivery facility (e.g., school or health facility).

### **Some of the key benefits of publishing budget information include:**

- That the legislature, media, civil society and the public at large will be better able to hold the executive accountable if they have access to information on how it allocates and uses public resources;
- Increased public influence over decisions on resource allocation
- Enhanced public trust and confidence in the integrity of government authorities and processes and public acceptance of inevitable trade-offs;
- Elected officials and civil servants may act more responsibly if their decisions and actions

# >> Initial

are open to public scrutiny;

- More equitable public spending by restricting the diversion of resources to special interests or lobby groups;
- Enhancing the quality of public debate and the ability of citizen/CSOs to contribute to policy-making and budgeting processes;
- Increased revenue collection from local sources as people may become more willing to pay if they have a better understanding of how and for what purposes their taxes would be used.

## RECOMMENDATION

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- 1.** Create an enabling environment for budget transparency by addressing laws and established bureaucratic procedures that prevent public access to financial information.
- 2.** Improve budget literacy of parliamentarians, government officials, elected representatives, journalists, and civil society representatives.
- 3.** Publish comprehensive government budgets that encompasses all government revenue and expenditure, so that the necessary trade-offs between different policy options can be assessed. Expenditures should be classified by administrative unit (e.g. ministry, agency). The budget, or related documents, should also include a detailed commentary on each revenue and expenditure programme.
- 4.** Provide comparative information on actual revenue and expenditure during the past year alongside a forecast for the current year should be provided for each programme.
- 5.** Efforts to enhance access to budget information will usually need to be accompanied by efforts to improve budget literacy and create demand for information. This will involve developing measures to demystify the complex formats and technical nature of public budgets/ financial documents and processes in ways that actively promote an understanding of the budget process by individual citizens and CSOs.
- 6.** Simplify budget documents to make them citizen-friendly and make this information widely available through electronic and print media as well as online portals and cell phones
- 7.** Publish information in consistent open data formats that allow for independent analysis and modeling of alternative budgets that address the needs of specific groups or key social issues
- 8.** Support a CSO forum on budget transparency to encourage independent budget analysis





## CASE STUDIES

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### Public Expenditure Tracking and Information Campaign in Uganda

Under the suspicion that local governments were misappropriating school resources, the Ugandan government conducted its first Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) in 1996. This found that only 26% of capitation grant funding for primary schools was reaching its intended destination, with many schools receiving none and being unaware of their entitlement. As a result, the government conducted a public information campaign, including publishing data on capitation grants in national and local language newspapers and requiring district headquarters and schools to post public notices when they received funds from central government. A follow up PETS found a dramatic improvement, with more than 80% of funds from central government reaching their intended destination in schools.

**More information:** [click here](#)

## RESOURCES

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### CIVICUS

Guide to Public Budgets and Expenditure [click here](#)

### OECD

Best Practices for Budget Transparency: [click here](#)



# Systematically track and publish performance indicators across public services

## JUSTIFICATION

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Different countries manage their public services in different ways, in particular with regards to the degree to which services are centralised or decentralised, the involvement of private and voluntary sector delivery partners, and the extent to which users have choice between different providers. Whichever way services are delivered, the state has a key role in defining outcomes, setting standards for public services and ensuring that all public service users are able to access the services they are entitled to.

Increasing focus is being put on transparency over how services are performing, both as a means for enabling service users to effectively exercise choice, and to allow them to influence the services they rely on and hold government accountable. At the heart of this are moves to systematically publish information on performance and user satisfaction.

Research into the impact of publishing performance information is limited, but it appears likely that publishing performance data encourages greater efficiency and effectiveness in public services. Beneficial effects are often due in the first instance to information by those professionally involved in providing the service than to feedback from the general public. However to be effective and gain the attention of providers, information should be meaningful and relevant and have the potential to arouse the interest of stakeholders (Mulgan, 2012).

Assessments of performance involve judgments about social value and political priorities. This must be taken into account both in the design of public service performance indicators and their interpretation. The simplest measures of the outcomes of a provider such as exam pass rates, or hospital mortality rates may need to be presented as value-added indicators to take into account factors such as the health and wealth of users. Composite indicators such as 'star ratings' can be easy to communicate, but opaque in what they assess. Any indicator can lead to gaming, for example with providers closing waiting lists to reduce the numbers waiting, or excluding children at risk of failure to increase average test scores.



## RECOMMENDATION

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- 1.** Develop performance indicators in close consultation between politicians, users, officials and professionals involved in service delivery
- 2.** Take care in developing indicators to guard against distortion by providers seeking to improve their score without improving underlying performance. Relying on a number of separate measures, rather than just one indicator
- 3.** Develop public performance indicators as part of a broader performance management regime where data is taken into account by decision makers but is subject to discussion and open judgement.
- 4.** Sponsor research to assess the 'before-and-after' effects before embarking on a new performance indicators framework .
- 5.** Publish information to the lowest disaggregated facility or community level(e.g. school, health facility, village) so as to be meaningful and relevant to citizens, without undermining the privacy of service users.
- 6.** Present information about the same services and agencies from different sources (e.g. administrative data, survey data, reports of the auditor general, reports of the public procurement authorities) side by side and using common institutional boundaries, geographies and standardized names.
- 7.** Make available the information on user-friendly interactive online platforms that allow users to tailor searches and queries, and in particular make comparisons across time, geographies, sectors and against policy commitments.
- 8.** Communicate indicators in the media, through public displays, booklets and letters to parents and patients as well as online.
- 9.** Publish information in an open data format to allow others to analyse and reuse it.

## CASE STUDIES



### Seoul City's Oasis Project

Seoul's Metropolitan Government began publishing accurate and up-to-date information about the quality of water being supplied to their house by establishing an on-line water assessment system. This has resulted in increased citizens' trust in public water supply and has contributed to an increase in tap water consumption of 20%, as well as in greater conservation of groundwater.

**More Information:** [click here](#)

## OGP COMMITMENTS



### Chile

Chile has committed to developing a user-friendly web application that to locate and monitor requests for water use rights and complaints regarding breaches of the Water Code submitted to the water authority. Through it, citizens will have access to updated and relevant information regarding the demand for water resources, allowing for greater citizen monitoring of water



service management.

### Mexico

Mexico has committed to the participatory development of a centralized, open platform to provide easy access to updated information on access to water and to facilitate citizen monitoring in order to improve water management. This is in response to the geographic distribution of the population not coinciding with the distribution of water, which favors heavy consumers (e.g. tourism, industrial and business sectors) and negatively affects the quality and quantity of access to water in rural areas.

## RESOURCES

### Civicus

Participatory  
Governance Toolkit:  
[click here](#)

### OECD

Together for Better Public  
Services – Partnering with  
citizens and civil society:  
[click here](#)

### World Bank

Citizens and service  
delivery: [click here](#)

# Collect feedback on citizens satisfaction with public services

## JUSTIFICATION

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Experience around the world has demonstrated that generating and using information on the availability and quality of public services from citizens' perspectives can lead to substantial enhancements in public transparency and accountability, which in turn fosters adherence to higher quality standards in service delivery.

**Some of the key benefits of this approach are:**

- Generating direct and objective user feedback for service providers;
- Encouraging local stakeholders to become active participants and not mere sources of information;
- Increased awareness of rights and entitlements amongst community members;
- That when, furnished with objectively generated knowledge and quantified information, communities/citizen become more empowered to hold governments and service providers accountable.

Stakeholder Surveys are a valuable tool to increase an organization's understanding of the knowledge, attitudes, and opinions of their users. Technologies such as SMS, apps, social media, online forums and websites are already making it easier for service users to submit feedback and there are multiple examples of how these technologies are being used to generate evidence of user experiences in systematic ways. For example in Tanzania Twaweza, set up a national mobile phone panel of 2,000 randomly selected residents invited to participate for two years. Participants receive mobile phones and agree to participate in monthly surveys on topics such as schools and health clinics.

Methods such as Citizen Report Cards and Community Score Cards are also being increasingly used to involve citizens in providing feedback on their local public services and assessing and benchmarking the quality of the services they receive. Unlike conventional approaches that rely on external experts measuring quality and performance against a pre-determined set of indicators, these participatory monitoring and evaluation tools provide systematic mechanisms for citizens and service users to assess the quality of the services they receive and highlight areas of sub-standard delivery and concern. They can also highlight areas of discrepancy between public service providers' own assessments of the service they provide and user expectations and experiences.

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Some mechanisms however are more participatory than others. Citizen Report Cards for example, tend to use a standard public survey methodology covering larger samples which allow for wider generalization of findings. Citizens Scorecards by contrast allow for the more active involvement of a small group in all stages of the planning and implementation of the assessment, including identifying indicators and measures of performance. This helps to build the capacity of local people to analyze, reflect and take action.

When used well, such approaches can generate high quality quantitative and qualitative data on public service delivery, and enable government decision makers to prioritise budgets and scrutiny. Well designed processes, when integrated into decision making systems, can also enable partnerships to develop between government, citizens and CSOs, establishing trust and building a foundation for co-productive approaches to delivery challenges.

## RECOMMENDATION

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1. Identify the intended purpose, scope and the type of participation required
2. Select an appropriate method that fits these considerations
3. Secure the participation of the service providers in the process from the very outset
4. Identify where (or with whom) the responsibility for acting upon the the information generated will lie
5. Collaborate with civil society organisations to reach a diverse range of citizens and enable independent oversight of the process
6. Design the questionnaire with stakeholders and consider collecting input on:
  - a. Availability of services;
  - b. Access to services;
  - c. Use of services;
  - d. Quality of services;
  - e. Users' satisfaction;
  - f. Problems encountered by service users;
  - g. Recommendations for improvement
7. Define a sample frame and engage with a wide range of users, working through CSOs or recruiting a statistically modeled sample to ensure that marginalised and disadvantaged groups are included within the process.
8. Disseminate the findings widely, including through newspapers, public meetings and online
9. Establish and implement monitoring processes to ensure that the information generated informs improvements in service delivery and communicate this widely to stakeholders and communities.



## CASE STUDIES

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### Citizen Report Card on Public Health Services in Kon Kum City, Vietnam

Kon Tum Provincial People's Committee (PPC) led an initiative to survey 400 mothers with small children on healthcare provision - with particular focus on sampling the poor (53.75%), ethnic minorities (73.25%) and women with no education (17.75%). The objective was to gather feedback and satisfaction levels on the health services provided at commune level in order to improve service delivery and input into the development, implementation and monitoring of the Kon Kum provincial health sector and local socio-economic development plans.

**More information:** [click here](#)

## RESOURCES

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### CIVICUS

Participatory Governance  
Toolkit  
[click here](#)

Steps in a Community  
Scorecard Process  
[click here](#)



# Engage citizens and civil society in defining service provision standards

## JUSTIFICATION

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Involving citizens and CSOs in defining service provision standards builds on the process of establishing Service Charters, as described earlier, by involving the end users of public services in the process.

A co-defined statement of service provision standards, sometimes called a Citizen's Charter, is the expression of an understanding between the citizen and the public service provider about the quantity and quality of services citizens receive. It is essentially a statement about the rights of the public and the obligations of the public servants that takes into account the expectations of citizens.

When public services and citizens work together to define service provision standards the outcomes can be more readily acceptable to all parties. The process allows public service actors to better understand users needs and expectations and become more responsive to these in their service delivery plans. It also gives services users a greater understanding of the context and constraints that service providers are operating within and can help identify, and diffuse, unreasonable expectations on behalf of service users.

## RECOMMENDATION

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1. Identify a clear problem, or entry point, where there may be different understandings and expectations of service provision standards and requirements
2. Work with service users, CSOs and service providers (including frontline staff) to establish their understandings of what would define 'quality' service provision, including identifying existing barriers to delivery.
3. Convene opportunities for dialogue between service users and service providers that can find common ground between potentially differing expectations and assessments and identify areas for change/improvement.
4. Agree mutually acceptable, and achievable statements of rights and responsibilities and how these are translated into realistic and implementable service provision standards.
5. Establish meaningful guarantees, standards, redress policies and complaint systems that all parties can use to address failures in service delivery standards or breaches of their rights.



## >> Intermediate

6. Consult widely with service users, staff and other stakeholders before agreeing the Charter.
7. Promote the Charter widely, ensuring that the information is easily accessible through the use of simple language and visual displays, and deliver it through public noticeboards at public service locations and local government offices, TV, internet and mobile phone platforms.

### RESOURCES

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#### **Centre for Good Governance**

Citizens Charters: A  
handbook: [click here](#)

#### **Governance International**

Improving Customer  
Orientation Through  
Service Charters: [click here](#)

# Involve citizens in the assessment and oversight of public service delivery

## JUSTIFICATION

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There is growing recognition that in order to improve public service delivery there is a need for service users and citizens to not only understand their rights and entitlements but have the opportunity to exercise their rights by assessing and monitoring the quality of public services they receive and the capacity to hold government and service providers accountable for effective and efficient delivery. Creating serious and practical opportunities for citizen involvement can provide a huge untapped reservoir of knowledge and good will, align incentives effectively and create greater trust, all of which are essential to solve service delivery challenges.

Involving citizens in the monitoring and evaluation of service is a process through which communities are able to measure the quantity and quality of public services. It is not however simply a process of collecting feedback about the government's performance. Rather, to be effective, it is a process that should strengthen the relationship between citizens and the state by involving citizens directly in assessing the quality of delivery, identifying problems, developing solutions and monitoring progress.

There are a number of established ways of involving citizens in these types of activities including the use of:

- **Community Score Cards** - a participatory, community based monitoring and evaluation tool that enabling citizens to assess the quality of public services through defining the criteria by which success should be measured;
- **Citizen Report Cards** - survey-based quantitative assessments of public services that rely on direct user feedback;
- **Participatory Outputs Tracking** - a mechanism for monitoring the transfer of goods or services from the government to citizens.

These can be used on a one-off basis to enables citizens to assess the quality of public services such as a health centre, school, public transport, waste disposal, but - like many other tools for participatory engagement - they become most effective when they become a regular feature of planning and evaluation, allowing citizens to monitor ongoing developments and improvements to services.

## » Intermediate

A more ambitious approach is to involve citizens actively in the governance of public services, for example on school boards and health councils and in monitoring public-private-partnerships delivering public services. It is however important to note that simply creating forums for citizens to become involved in shaping services will not guarantee that a representative sample of users or citizens take part. Evidence shows that, without specific effort being made to embed an inclusive approach irrespective of socio-economic status, gender, race and religion etc, that these spaces can easily become dominated by powerful sections of society who may not be responsive to the needs of more vulnerable or disenfranchised users.

New technologies and decreasing costs of communication, particularly mobile phone and fast-growing social media platforms such as Facebook, are also enabling unprecedented avenues for information sharing and demand-driven, contingent collaboration. Open government data approaches also offer the potential for users to become involved in developing new interfaces to public services.

Governments can take specific actions here, setting up innovation units, grants, awards and new governance mechanisms, but also important are changes in internal culture of public sector organisations to encourage easier exchange and critique, to take feedback seriously and respond to it reliably, and to set incentives to tap into new ideas, solve problems through experimentation and rigorously evaluate and adopt them at scale.



### RECOMMENDATION

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- 1.** Work with citizens and civil society groups to identify the areas of public service delivery that matters most to them, and any areas of concern.
- 2.** Promote and support the monitoring and evaluation of public services by civil society and citizens independently of and in collaboration with policy makers (however generally the effectiveness of participatory monitoring and evaluation tools is contingent upon participation of the service providers in the process from the very outset);
- 3.** Develop monitoring objectives and indicators in a participatory manner to ensure they resonate with the community needs, priorities and aspirations.
- 4.** Build relationships of trust with the community by demonstrating openness to respond to the issues raised in community based assessments to secure citizens ongoing involvement and commitment, something that is necessary to ensure the sustainability and rigour of monitoring work.
- 5.** Ensure that the participation of citizens is inclusive and does not exclude the less powerful, and provide support for them to participate on equal terms.
- 6.** Promote open government data as a tool for public service innovation
- 7.** Document and share research and stories of how change has happened

# » Intermediate

## CASE STUDIES

### Community Based Monitoring and Planning in Maharashtra, India

This community monitoring and oversight initiative took place within the context of India's National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) which aimed to improve the quality of health care through implementation of a health systems strengthening approach. It was conceptualized as being more than a data gathering exercise, becoming rather a key strategy for ensuring that health services reach the people who need them (through community inputs to local level planning), and for ensuring public accountability for service delivery failures.

**More Information:** [click here](#)

### Textbook Count in Philippines

To overcome corruption in textbook procurement, the education ministry established a textbook count program to involve civil society in monitoring the full textbook procurement cycle. This included observing the pre-bidding, bidding and post-qualification process; inspecting the quality of textbooks in warehouses and printing presses, and monitoring their delivery to schools. The program is reported to have cut the price of textbooks by 40%, led to the replacement of more than 60,000 defective textbooks, and seen the supervision of over 750,000 textbooks by volunteers.

**More information:** [click here](#)

## OGP COMMITMENTS

### Honduras

Honduras has committed to implement transparency and public participation initiatives aimed at verifying the delivery and distribution of medicines and supplies, allowing the monitoring of supply levels in major hospitals.

### South Africa

South Africa has committed to support three service delivery departments to strengthen citizen voice in monitoring service delivery by hosting workshops and discussions with government and civil society partners aimed at strengthening the voice of citizens in monitoring and planning.

## RESOURCES

### OECD

Together for Better Public Services – Partnering with citizens and civil society: [click here](#)

### IBP

Monitoring government policies: A toolkit for African civil society: [click here](#)

# Involve citizens in the design and delivery of public services

## JUSTIFICATION

The constituency most affected by and often most knowledgeable about the realities, constraints and opportunities regarding service delivery are citizens and local CSOs (including local faith and business groupings), and yet this constituency is often the least consulted or involved in solving persistent service delivery challenges.

One approach to harnessing this knowledge and experience is to involve citizens in the co-production of public services. This is a collaborative approach wherein citizens and users work together with professionals to design and deliver public services in new ways. Here service users are seen not simply as passive recipients of services but as a potential resource: as individuals with skills and a mutual responsibility to solve service delivery challenges. This may also involve citizens taking on some of the roles previously delivered by professionals and/or working alongside them.

While still at a developmental stage in many areas of public service delivery, co-production has started to be mainstreamed in a few areas, such as health and social care. Examples include parent-run nurseries, community-led justice, peer-education and medical self-help groups<sup>3</sup>.

## RECOMMENDATION

1. Promote and support the involvement of citizens and civil society in collaboration with policy makers and service providers to identify persistent public service challenges
2. Consider opportunities to involve citizens at all stages of the development and delivery of public services or government programmes through co-productive approaches
3. Ensure that the participation of citizens is inclusive and does not exclude the less powerful, and provide support for them to participate on equal terms.
4. Promote open government data as a tool for public service innovation
5. Document and share research and stories of how change has happened

3. OECD (2011) Together for Better Public Services: Partnering with citizens and civil society, [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/together-for-better-public-services-partnering-with-citizens-and-civil-society\\_9789264118843-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/together-for-better-public-services-partnering-with-citizens-and-civil-society_9789264118843-en)

# » Intermediate

## CASE STUDIES



### Expert Patients in the UK

This scheme involves training patients living with a long-term illness to take more control over their own healthcare by understanding and monitoring their own condition. Training as an Expert Patient also enables them to become a source of information and support for others with the same condition. This not only builds community support networks but has resulting in an overall reduction of professional service utilisation without adverse effects on patient health.

**More information on this and other examples of Co-production of Health Service**

**Interventions:** [click here](#)



### “Sem Dengue”, or “Without Dengue”, in Sao Paulo, Brazil

In their effort to combat the Zika virus, the government of Sao Paulo introduced an app through which users could notify the government of stagnant water that provide a breeding ground for mosquitos. Once an alert had been received the area would be cleared by government officials within 72 hours. The app has since spread to 30 Brazilian cities and has over 100,000 registered users.

**More information:** [click here](#)

## OGP COMMITMENTS



### Uruguay

Uruguay has committed to engage teachers, students, parents and neighbors in the development of Building Maintenance Plans, which are required for schools that are five years or older, in recognition that a school's condition is correlated with the level of engagement of the community it serves. As part of this commitment, a pilot plan to develop these plans will be implemented.

## RESOURCES

### OECD

Together for Better Public Services - Partnering with citizens and civil society:

[click here](#)

# Involve citizens in the commissioning of public services

## JUSTIFICATION

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A 'one size fits all approach' to public service delivery does not account for the inevitable variation in needs and demands across delivery sites ( e.g. rural / urban locations, affluent / disadvantaged areas, established / transient communities). People with the lived experience of service delivery problems, and grounded civil society organisations, can be a valuable source of intelligence for assessing local needs, smarter analysis of alternatives and ultimately better solutions to public service delivery problems.

Involving citizens in the commissioning of public services goes a step further than ensuring that public contract data is open and transparent and is at the heart of the Open Contracting Global Principles: principles underpinned by the belief that increased disclosure and participation in public contracting will have the effects of making contracting more competitive and fair, improving contract performance, and securing development outcomes<sup>4</sup>.

Involving citizens directly in commissioning processes, from defining the specification of requirements to assessing tender and awarding, is about being open to ideas, new perspectives and to sharing power. Evidence shows that public participation can result in public service delivery models that are not only cost effective but also more directly responsive to the requirements of service users. Public participation can also help define better contracting terms, manage expectations of everyone engaged, and provide oversight and feedback to ensure ongoing improvements in the delivery of good and services.

## RECOMMENDATION

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1. Collaborate with civil society and citizens in defining the problem that needs to be addressed through a service commission
2. Encourage dialogue and consultations between contracting parties and civil society organizations in order to improve the quality of contracting outcomes
3. Consider opportunities to involve citizens at all stages of public service commissioning (i.e. in the formation, award, execution, performance, and completion of public contracts).
4. Foster an enabling environment, which may include legislation, to promote and create opportunities for public involvement in public contracting, from the planning stage to the

4. <http://www.open-contracting.org/get-started/global-principles/>

## » Intermediate

completion of contractual obligations.

5. Ensure that the participation of citizens is inclusive and focusses on the needs of specific service users
6. Ensure that public service commissioning approaches enable user driven and innovative service approaches to be funded.
7. Document and share research and stories of how change has happened

### CASE STUDIES



#### Citizens' oversight organizations in Colombia

In Colombia, Law 850 of 2003 allows citizens' oversight organizations to supervise the entire public contracting process, from resource allocation to the oversight of the execution and technical quality of the contracted good or service.

The Law states that citizens have the right to constitute "veedurias ciudadanas" or citizen oversight committees, which can be temporary mechanisms for CSOs to control public administration, procurement, processes, etc. The veedurias enable citizens and/or CSOs to oversee public management and the performance of administrative, judicial, electoral and political authorities, public and private entities, or non-governmental organizations. They are responsible for executing programs, contracts, or public services.

One of the main objectives of the "veedurias ciudadanas" is to strengthen mechanisms to control corruption in public procurement and public management. The Law 489 of 1998 states that the public administration is obliged to provide support to citizens when they constitute a veedurías. This Law also establishes that controlling authorities and the judiciary should support the veedurías in order to investigate and respond to their denunciations.

**More information:** [click here](#)



#### Social witnesses in Mexico

In Mexico, since 2004, the federal government of Mexico has required the involvement of "social witnesses" in public bidding for goods, works, and services over a certain threshold value. Since 2009, participation of a social witness has been mandatory in procurements valued at more than \$23 million for goods and services and US \$43 million for public works. Non-government organizations and individuals may be selected as social witnesses by the Ministry of Public Administration. Their function is to propose strategies for improving transparency, impartiality and compliance with the legal framework, and must issue an alert if they detect any irregularities in the course of the procurement. At the conclusion of the procurement proceedings, the social witness issues a publicly available statement including observations and, as appropriate, recommendations. The statement is posted on the government's central procurement website and in the file of the tender.

The "Social Witness" program is the result of an initiative of the NGO Transparencia Mexicana



## » Intermediate

to facilitate the participation by civil society as external observers in public procurements. Originally, social witnesses participated as a result of guidelines issued by Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) in 2004. The guidelines stipulated that MPA keep a registry of individuals and non-governmental organizations which may participate in all stages of a procurement conducted by any institution of the Federal Public Administration.

According to Transparencia Mexicana, the Social Witness program has significantly reduced the costs of public contracts and has increased the number of bidders participating in the procurement process in Mexico.

**More information:** [click here](#)



### Citizen participation in the procurement process in the Philippines

The Philippines Procurement Law mandates citizen participation in all stages of the procurement process, from pre-bid conference, opening of bids, bid evaluation, post-qualification and award of contract. Under this system, procuring entities are required to invite outside organizations to sit in on meetings of their Bid and Awards Committees (BACs). Observers may also observe contract implementation, and citizens are able to file complaints with the local ombudsman if they suspect irregularities.

In the extractives sector, although there is currently a moratorium on new mining operations, the Philippines Mining Law requires a “multi-partite monitoring team” to be operational before the mining project can receive an environmental compliance certificate. This body is to be composed of representatives of the national government, affected communities, indigenous communities, an environmental civil society organization, and the project proponent. In addition Philippine agencies have entered into memoranda of understanding with civil society groups to monitor their public contracting.

However the system has struggled to respond to the volume of procurements, because of resource limitations for the CSOs involved and the lack of trained staff. According to some estimates civil sector oversees less than 1 percent of procurement proceedings and are not likely to see the misconduct, since they are not present during the pre-bidding parts of the process where misconduct most likely occurs. The degree to which CSO observers are granted a meaningful and participatory role varies greatly depending on the procuring entity.

To date the civil sector observer system has been separate from the ICT enabled e-procurement of PhilGEPS. ICTs can enable asynchronous and remote observation, which can significantly ease the resource burden of observation and allow for more targeted risk assessment.

**More information:** [click here](#)

## >> Intermediate



### The Uist and Barra Public Bus Service Redesign project in Scotland

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council) devolved the commissioning of public transport contracts worth £500,000 to local residents. This project aimed to improve service outcomes for rural communities by fully involving them in the design and procurement of their bus services.

**More Information:** [click here](#)



#### RESOURCES

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Open Contracting  
Partnership - [click here](#)

# Establish a feedback mechanism for public services

## JUSTIFICATION

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User feedback can play an important role in improving public services by:

- identifying areas of public concern and dissatisfaction
- helping service providers to improve their efficiency and effectiveness
- providing a source of innovative ideas for the improvement of services
- helping commissioners and policy makers to identify issues with policy and/or delivery
- ensuring that public resources are spent effectively
- uncovering instances of negligence or corruption

One mechanism for embedding ongoing opportunities for feedback and complaints in public service settings, which is growing in popularity, is the use of web-based citizen reporting initiatives such as FixMyStreet in the UK and I Paid a Bribe in India. In these cases, each individual report of very specific service issues needing attention is expected to trigger a governmental response.

While sites like these may provide effective and accessible tools for collecting feedback and identifying service issues, without publically monitorable procedures in place for using this information there is no guarantee that public interaction will lead to governmental action. The establishment of feedback loops therefore, with visible expectations of response and enforceable consequences for inaction, are important to ensure that public services respond, and are seen to respond to public requests or complaints.

Uruguay's PorMiBarrio, for example, achieves this by, operating not just as a portal through which citizens to report problems like vandalism and breakdowns of public infrastructure, but also as a tool for tracking actions taken in response. Here the problems reported, and the actions taken in response by government (e.g. repaired, or not), are aggregated and displayed on a map on the public website. Not only therefore is the government able to act on citizen reports, this publication makes it possible for them to demonstrate their responsiveness and for citizens to hold governments accountable if persistent problem areas in delivery are identified.

Regardless of whether public feedback is collected through on-line channels, via intermediary organisations, or directly by the service provider (and good practice suggests multiple avenues for feedback should be available to meet the needs of all users) it is vital for government accountability that response procedures and requirements are in place, and enforced, in order to ensure that citizens feedback is acted upon by service providers and policy makers.

# » Intermediate



## RECOMMENDATION

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Governments should:

1. Require that public service providers put feedback and complaints mechanisms in place that providing choice in the way feedback can be given and issues raised, and ensuring they are tailored to the needs of users, including disadvantaged groups;
2. Make it easy for the public and service users to give feedback and make complaints, for example using use new technology such as SMS messages and websites, as well as through intermediary organisations;
3. Ensure that suitable processes and requirements are in place that citizens feedback is acted upon by service providers and policy makers;
4. Ensure that the result of user feedback is reported back to users individually (where possible) and collectively;
5. Report publically on complaints and feedback received and the action taken to redress issues;
6. Conduct comparisons across services, both in relation to feedback received and response rates;
7. Aggregate public feedback on services to inform policy and/or commissioning decisions
8. Support the development of channels operated independently of service providers and government by civil society, and respond to feedback gathered through mechanisms developed independently.

## CASE STUDIES

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### LAPOR! complaints and feedback portal in Indonesia

LAPOR! (meaning “to report” in Indonesian) enables the public to submit complaints about development programs and public services through the website, short message services to 1708 (Indonesia’s independence day) and mobile applications for BlackBerry and Android. LAPOR! then transfers validated complaints to the relevant institutions to be featured and responded to on the website. LAPOR! Is integrated with 67 government institutions and allows multiple institutions to respond across sectoral issues. The public can also give comments, likes or share them through Facebook and Twitter to have a discussion and to ensure the completeness of the reports.

**Find out more:** [click here](#)

### Friends and Family Test in the UK

The Friends and Family Test (FFT) is a feedback tool established in the National Health Service (NHS) in April 2013 that asks people if they would recommend the services they

## » Intermediate

have used, and collects feedback to identify both good and poor patient experience. The FFT has produced around 25 million pieces of feedback so far – and the total rises by over a million a month – making it the biggest source of patient opinion in the world. The feedback gathered through the FFT is used in NHS organisations to improve patient care and facilitate patient choice. The results of the FFT are published every month.

**More information:** [click here](#)



### OGP COMMITMENTS

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#### Macedonia

Macedonia has committed to introduce a monitoring and evaluation system in all 81 local governments, and conduct annual research into citizens satisfaction with services provided by local governments.



#### Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has committed to appoint an advisory board to the national medicinal drug regulatory authority (NMDRA) with representation from CSOs/Health Activists; establish a monitoring system to ensure essential drug availability with provision for public feedback; and establish a rating system for private pharmacies that will be based on availability of essential medicines at affordable pricing and make that information public through a web portal.

# Provide cooperation to independent monitoring efforts and take action on issues raised

## JUSTIFICATION

Because the quality and integrity of underlying data used by governments can be uneven, independent monitoring can help to provide additional means to collect feedback and provide data, through community monitoring of public works and public services. In many countries civil society groups have pioneered the development of feedback approaches such as public service report cards, social audits and community monitoring.

Social audits, for example, allow citizens receiving a specific service to examine and cross-check (ie audit) the information the service provider makes available against information collected from users of the service. This form of monitoring can cover all aspects of the service delivery process, such as funds allocated, materials procured, and people enrolled. The aim is to assess how well programs and services are being delivered carried out, with the goal of making them better and more reflective of social, environmental, and community objectives.

Monitoring activities like this have often begun as civil society initiatives, however it is increasingly common to see them being undertaken jointly with governments service providers, as their benefits to service delivery and planning are recognised. When both service users and service providers are directly involved audit activities can help assess the strengths and weaknesses of a programme or a public service: using service records and user generated data to examine the impact of the project or service in a systematic way, comparing the real benefits that have accrued with the expected benefits and collectively agree avenues for improvement that can/will be implemented.

Initiatives like this tend to be most effective, and deliver the greatest impacts on service improvements when they are designed and delivered collaboratively, and undertaken at regular intervals as part of an ongoing monitoring and evaluation process.

### **Institutionalised community monitoring processes can:**

- Promotes citizen empowerment and strengthens community voice by allowing community members, particularly traditionally marginalized or disadvantaged groups, to provide feedback, gather evidence, interpret findings and develop solutions;
- Enhances policy-makers' understanding of stakeholder concerns and encourages them to take steps to address the same, leading to improved design and delivery of programs

## » Intermediate

and services;

- Enhance the legitimacy of state actors and build greater trust and cooperation between the citizens/CSOs and the government;
- Promotes local democracy and collective decision-making: promoting transparency and public accountability, and instilling a sense of responsibility among all those involved.

### RECOMMENDATION

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Governments should:

- 1.** Promote and support the monitoring and evaluation of public services by civil society and citizens
- 2.** Provide service delivery data in clear and accessible ways to support civil society monitoring and evaluation.
- 3.** Support the sharing of the results of citizen monitoring activities with service providers and the wider public, including with the media.
- 4.** Ensure that suitable processes and requirements are in place that issues raised by independent monitoring are acted upon by service providers and policy makers.
- 5.** Where possible, work in partnership with citizen monitoring initiatives to develop collaborative solutions to the problems identified
- 6.** Ensure that the action taken and impact is reported publically
- 7.** Consider how citizen monitoring activity can be institutionalised within ongoing service evaluation and planning.
- 8.** Integrate citizen monitoring initiatives with existing oversight and state accountability mechanisms.

# » Intermediate



## CASE STUDIES

### Citizen Report Cards in Bangalore, India

In 2000, the Public Affairs Center (PAC) - a not-for-profit think tank - developed a report card to measure health care services serving the urban poor in Bangalore, India. They found low patient satisfaction with services, caused by issues such as poorly maintained facilities and widespread corruption. Less than 40% of patients, for example, had access to the free medicines to which they were entitled. PAC worked with the Bangalore Municipal Corporation to make improvements, including replacing untrained staff with qualified nurses, creating an oversight board with elected councillors and citizens, and establishing a citizen charter defining patients' rights. As a result, a 2004 evaluation found that services had significantly improved.

**More information:** [click here](#)

### Check My School in the Philippines

In January 2011, the Department of Education agreed to cooperate with the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in the East Asia Pacific region (ANSA-EAP) on the "Check My School" project to improve public schooling in the Philippines. The project aims to do so by increasing the accuracy of school data, increasing community involvement in monitoring and problem solving, and giving the public access to accessible information on the school system.

**More information:** [click here](#)

### Check My Service in Mongolia

This initiative aims to assess the transparency and delivery of public services through a Community Score Card (CSC) tool. Individual service feedback portals include Check My University, Check My School, Check My Clinic, Check My Hospital, Check My Kindergarten etc.

**More Information:** [click here](#)



## RESOURCES

### CIVICUS

Monitoring and Evaluation  
of Public Services

[click here](#)

Steps in a Community  
Scorecard Process

[click here](#)



# Engage citizens in allocating public service budgets

## JUSTIFICATION

Involving taxpayers in working with Government to make budget decisions on public services is a different and participatory way to manage public money, and to engage people in addressing local needs.

Being involved in budget decisions directly empowers communities by enabling them to have a clear and measurable influence over the budget decisions that affect their lives (i.e. what happens to them, their families and their communities). When people are engaged in this way it can help individuals feel greater connections to each other and to their communities, resulting in positive health and life outcomes. It can also help instil a sense of ownership, trust and reciprocity within communities, becoming a powerful tool for redressing the inequalities that exist within society.

Mechanisms to involve citizens in allocating public service budgets range from public consultations on service or municipal budgets, to devolving a section of a service budget to user groups (e.g. to school boards or local health committees), through to participatory budgeting activities wherein ordinary citizens directly decide how to allocated public finances.

Participatory Budgeting, in particular, is growing in popularity worldwide as a way of delivering on this objective. While there are many different ways, and scales, to deliver Participatory Budgeting (from city wide initiatives in Porto Alegre involving over 50,000 people each year in allocating as much as 20% of the city budget to small community grant giving initiatives) the defining feature of a Participatory Budgeting approach is that it involves a robust and replicable decision-making process whereby citizens deliberate publicly over the distribution of limited public resources, to arrive at decisions which are then implemented.

Though each experience is different, most Participatory Budgeting projects will involve the following basic steps:

- The opportunity for the public to identify projects or spending priorities
- Community representatives and experts working together to developing these ideas into viable proposals identify spending priorities and select budget delegates
- The opportunity for community members to discuss and learn more about the proposals that are put forward
- A public vote on which proposals to fund

## >> Advanced

- Implements the top proposals (either directly by the government or budget holder or through a grant making process)



### RECOMMENDATION

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Governments or institutions seeking to engage citizens in allocating public funds should:

- 1.** Identify a discretionary budget (or a portion of a discretionary budget) that is open to public input
- 2.** Decide on the level of engagement they wish to pursue - from consultation to devolving decision making authority
- 3.** Identify who should have input into the decision eg.all residents, service users, young people,depending on who the decision will ultimately affect
- 4.** Choose a methodology
- 5.** Create an enabling environment that encourages traditionally under-represented groups to participate fully
- 6.** Promote the opportunity for participation widely through a variety of media outlets and civil society organisations
- 7.** Establish a clear timetable for decision-making
- 8.** Publically monitor and feedback on the implementation and impacts of how funding has been allocated.

# >> Advanced



## CASE STUDIES

### High School Participatory Budgeting in Poitou-Charentes, France

The Poitou-Charentes' participatory budgeting process gives the community decision-making authority on 10% of the total budget line dedicated to High Schools in the area. All the pupils, parents, teachers and employees in each school are invited to discuss and vote the projects they consider to be priorities "in order to live and work better at school". In 5 years, the participatory budget led to the funding of almost 1400 projects, directly proposed and decided by the participants themselves.

**More Information** [click here](#)



## OGP COMMITMENTS

### Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire has committed to train five subnational governments in participatory budgeting practice, build the capacity of civil society organisations to engage, and particularly to strengthen the capacities of women's groups to participate in planning and budgeting processes at the local level.



## RESOURCES

### CIVICUS

Involving Citizens in Public Budgets and Expenditure  
- [click here](#)

Participatory Budgeting  
- [click here](#) and [click here](#)

# Integrate social audits into conventional audit and assessment procedures

## JUSTIFICATION

Social audits and other forms of social accountability are powerful supplements to well-resources audit institutions, but they are not a replacement. Social accountability mechanisms are most effective when they are integrated into formal audit and accountability systems that ensure there are suitable sanctions imposed and/or lessons learnt when corruption, wrongdoing or inefficiencies are uncovered.

GPSA identified the following benefits to Accountability Institutions (AIs) and Civil Society Organisations<sup>5</sup>:

### **Benefits to Accountability Institutions:**

- ‘Citizens and CSOs can help AIs identify areas of inefficient management or alleged corruption in government, as well as provide valuable information that can inform oversight processes and enhance reporting’;
- ‘CSOs can strengthen the work undertaken by AIs by monitoring compliance with the recommendations made in AI reports and exerting pressure on the executive and legislative branches to adopt and act upon them’;
- ‘CSOs and citizens can contribute their time and knowledge to monitoring processes’; and,
- ‘CSOs can (re-)use the information generated by AIs and thus expand the scope and visibility of AI reports’.

### **Benefits to Civil Society Organisations:**

- ‘CSOs working to promote rights, transparency, and better governance can bolster their own evidence-based advocacy campaigns’;
- ‘Engaging with AIs can help CSOs scale up their work’;
- ‘CSOs benefit from using AIs as interlocutors’; and,
- ‘CSOs and citizens alike benefit from AIs’ capacity to amplify the voice of citizens’.

5. GPSA (2015) Does Collaboration with Civil Society Strengthen Accountability Institutions? An exploration. Washington DC: GPSA



## RECOMMENDATION

1. If necessary, put in place a legal framework giving relevant accountability institutions the mandate to engage with civil society and other stakeholders.
2. Work with civil society and other stakeholders to agree the purpose and scope for a social accountability mechanism
3. Collaborate with the audit institution or similar body to set standards for the mechanism
4. Review what information is held by the audit institution that could be used by civil society, and consider how to publish in open and accessible formats
5. Establish a program of capacity building for civil society and citizens to adopt the mechanism
6. Put in place clear processes for receiving grievances, complaints and suggestions from citizens and civil society, and establish feedback mechanisms that keep them updated on how an issue is being addressed
7. Develop a communications campaign to raise awareness of the mechanism
8. Publicly report results through a range of media channels
9. Create spaces for dialogue between public service providers, citizen, civil society, auditors and other stakeholders



## CASE STUDIES

### Rural Employment Guarantee social audits in India

India's 2005 Rural Employment Act - which guarantees rural workers a minimum of 100 days paid employment a year - included an innovative provision mandating the use of social audits to hold local governments to scrutinise the implementation of the guarantee by local governments.

More recently, India's Supreme Audit Institution has audited and endorsed the social audits, and will be supporting their institutionalisation.

**More information:** [click here](#) and [click here](#)



## OGP COMMITMENTS

### The Philippines

Following public outcry over the misuse of priority development assistance funds, and faced with the daunting task of monitoring the transactions of over 161,000 government units with fewer than 7,000 state auditors, the Philippines Commission on Audit (COA) pioneered the Citizen Participatory Audit (CPA) project. CPA brings together civil society organizations (CSOs), ordinary citizens, and COA auditors to monitor progress on government-funded development projects and participate in a joint audit process. The Philippines' first OGP National Action Plan

## >> Advanced

(NAP) included a commitment to develop four pilot CPA projects for flood control, health facilities, solid waste management and building schools. The country's second NAP included activities to institutionalize the CPA process and release findings from the four pilot CPA projects.

**More information:** [click here](#)

### RESOURCES

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Citizen Engagement Practices by Supreme Audit Institutions: [click here](#)

Supreme Audit Institutions and Stakeholder Engagement Practices: [click here](#)

When Supreme Audit Institutions engage with civil society: Exploring lessons from the Latin American Transparency Participation and Accountability Initiative: [click here](#)