

Community Scorecard



To help groups assess services, facilities programme or projects run by government, NGOs or other organizations, by grading them according to a range of criteria or agreed upon standards. The findings can be compiled and used to start a dialogue with the authorities or organization, or to launch a campaign.

Steps in the Process

1. Determine your focus - Community scorecards work best when you want to gather evidence about a specific facility, such as a school, hospital or police station. It's better to use them on just one sector at a time (e.g. education or health, not both together).
2. Involve the service providers - It's important to have the participation of frontline service providers and local government politicians as well as community members. Getting government staff to take part in the scorecard process may require support from the government department responsible for employing them.
3. Agree the criteria - A report card contains several different criteria by which each service will be judged, allowing comparisons to be made across services or areas. The criteria should be decided by the group, and many will have arisen from the initial analysis of the issues. They might include: reliability of the service, quality of service, difficulties encountered in dealing with the agency, capacity to respond in emergency situations, hidden costs associated with the service, level of corruption in the service. The exact criteria will depend on the service under consideration. For example, a report card for local schools might look at teacher attendance, quality of infrastructure, availability of texts, class size, the level of costs passed on to parents, the number of children excluded, the effectiveness of the parents' association and so on.

4. Understand rights and expectations - It's important to clarify what commitments and standards exist and to ensure that community members and service providers are all aware of their rights and duties in relation to that service. Community members should also define what they expect from the service provider - are the priorities and standards set by government relevant to the needs of the user?
5. Collect responses - Once the format of the report card has been agreed, the group can use it to collect information from the service users. The card might be used to structure oral interviews with local service users, or copies could be distributed by group members or through the services themselves (e.g. through schools or health centres), to be filled in directly by users. You might hold a community meeting in which participants discuss the questions and agree each score by consensus. In many cases, levels of satisfaction can be represented visually, reducing the need for literacy.
6. Report the results - Once the responses have been collected they should be compiled in a concise, visual way. One powerful way of presenting the material is to use the format schools use to report on individual children. The process of consolidating the responses, and the discussion it evokes, should bring out recommendations for future change, and key areas for action. The key results and recommendations could be put into a press release, and a strategy for dissemination to other target audiences should be decided by the group.

This video shows how Community Scorecards have been used in Nepal: Video unavailable

Suggestions for Use

- The scorecard process can directly inform planning for future service delivery and form the basis of an advocacy strategy.
- The method is relatively simple, inexpensive and can be conducted in a short period of time (for example 3 to 6 weeks with one community). It lends itself to being repeated and institutionalized as regular means for communities to provide feedback to government service providers.
- The scorecard methodology is an effective way to gather evidence because it
 - a. Allows ActionAid to compare results across countries or communities.
 - b. Is a very tangible and visual output which can be used at different levels (local, national and global) to influence change?

In order to ensure that the scorecard can be used as evidence, it is important to:

- a. Record how many people (men or women and their roles) took part in the exercises, and when. Repeating the exercise over time or in different communities allows us to respond to the following type of questions; to what extent have public services improved over time?
- b. To what extent are Government policies having impact in practice? Which countries score better on provision of public services and why?

Challenges

- It's important to take into account power relations within the community when discussing the questions for the scorecard and if agreeing the scores by consensus. Are women and men's opinions given equal weight, for example?
- Frontline service providers usually have very little authority to make changes in service delivery systems and facilities. The process can therefore run into problems if the solutions people come up with can't be implemented - but this can also result in a common appeal to higher authorities, which may be successful.

References

- Accountability: Quality and Equity in Public Service Provision. Just and Democratic Local Governance series, ActionAid, 2011. P. 25-28.
- Communication & Power, ActionAid International, 2003, p. W012.