Social audits, community score cards and citizen report cards

By localizing SDG 16 oversight mechanisms and creating pathways for citizens to monitor progress towards the SDGs from local to global levels, stakeholders can obtain more reflective data to measure progress in reaching marginalized communities while fostering ownership and promoting local delivery of the SDGs in the process

Overview

In order to realize peaceful, just and inclusive societies and ensure that no one is left behind, it is crucial that all SDG16+ processes, particularly effective accountability processes, are inclusive, developing from the ground up. In other words, accountability for SDG16+ must be "localized" at the subnational and local level for a meaningful and inclusive realization of the 2030 Agenda.[131] By localizing SDG 16 oversight mechanisms and creating pathways for citizens to monitor progress towards the SDGs from local to global levels, stakeholders can obtain more reflective data to measure progress in reaching marginalized communities while fostering ownership and promoting local delivery of the SDGs in the process. [132]

CSOs should engage with communities and facilitate their direct connection to local authorities to ensure that the SDGs actually deliver for communities. Informal or "claimed" spaces are opportunities for dialogue that are brokered by civil society or communities rather than government. There are several powerful tools for social accountability that CSOs and other actors can initiate at the grassroots level. These approaches typically serve to gather crucial evidence about local-level service delivery and mobilize the political power of local communities to press local authorities for improvements.[133]

131 *Localization in this context refers to the "process of taking into account subnational contexts in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, from the setting of goals and targets, to determining the means of implementation and using dictators to measure and monitor progress."*
Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (2016): Roadmap for Localizing the SDGs: Implementation and Monitoring at the Subnational Level. p, 6.
132 World Vision (2015). Policy Report, Grassroots to Global: Seven Steps to Citizen-Driven Accountability for the Sustainable Development Goals. https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Grassroots%20to%20Global_Report_FINAL.pdf
133 TAP Network (2019), SDG Accountability Handbook p, 30-31

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Putting it into practice

These tools and mechanisms include:

- **Conduct social audits – This is a means by which communities and CSOs measure the degree to which services and local development projects have the staff and inputs required under local law**.[134] Public or social audits help measure the effectiveness of local development projects and their degree of inclusive participation. [135] Given the politicized nature of SDG 16 targets, social audits are particularly effective for SDG 16 initiatives and help increase accountability for actors in promoting transparency and developing a culture of a right to information. They also can contain potential corruption and encourage local CSOs to present their grievances.[136]

- **Facilitate community score cards** – **This is a mechanism through which citizens monitor the quality of community-based public services through focus groups – particularly marginalized groups**–to measure the degree to which services are meeting the criteria defined by communities themselves. [137] Communities and CSOs might measure their satisfaction or investigate how a service is performing for a particularly marginalized group. These results correspond directly to SDG indicator 16.6.2 (Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services).[138] A community score card aims to advance the quality, efficiency and accountability of services at the micro and local levels through mutual dialogue that engages both service users and service providers.[139] It helps "both sides to come together, identify the reasons for feeble services and find out solutions for the problems identified."[140]

- **Conduct citizen report cards – These participatory local-level surveys are designed to help clarify community opinions about certain types of service delivery.** A citizen report card provides a channel to provide feedback to government offices after evaluating citizens' direct experiences, observations, and feelings through a participatory survey method.[141] Citizen report cards play a critical role in making sure that information is received about the services being delivered and are citizen- and result-oriented. Policy makers can listen to citizens' demands to influence policy and budgets, transforming personal grievances and problems into collective action.

When deployed strategically, social accountability approaches to evaluate initiatives for peaceful, just and inclusive societies can lead to important impacts on development outcomes at the local level. [142] Social accountability evidence facilitates constructive and evidence-based dialogue about citizens' experience. CSOs can work within their community and with other organizations to monitor services across whole regions, aggregate evidence, and press for more systemic change. This type of "vertical integration" is particularly important for creating the kind of grassroots-to-global accountability needed in the context of the SDGs.[143]

Rather than replacing official sources, these approaches complement them and reveal patterns in public service and project delivery that official statistics might hide, particularly the perspective of marginalized communities.[144] Given the complementary character of this type of data, the capacity of census bureaus should be strengthened to include it in official reports so that civil society can contribute critical evidence that helps improve decision making and accelerates SDG progress.[145] This requires greater investment from actors at all levels, particularly donors, implementation actors, and public officials, for greater investment at the subnational and grassroots levels to empower communities to support SDG accountability.[146]

134 TAP Network (2019), SDG Accountability Handbook p, 30-31
135   World Vision (2015). Policy Report, Grassroots to Global: Seven Steps to Citizen-Driven Accountability for the Sustainable Development Goals.
136   World Bank (2018): World Bank Sourcebook: 21 Social Accountability Tools http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/513571468059674130/
      pdf/718040WP00PUBL0ebook0English0Final0.pdf
137 World Bank (2018): World Bank Sourcebook: 21 Social Accountability Tools
138 TAP Network (2019), SDG Accountability Handbook p, 30-31
139 Care Community scorecards https://www.care.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/FP-2013-CARE_CommunityScoreCardToolkit.pdf
140 World Bank (2018): World Bank Sourcebook: 21 Social Accountability Tools
141   World Bank (2018): World Bank Sourcebook: 21 Social Accountability Tools
142 TAP Network (2019), SDG Accountability Handbook p, 30-31
143 TAP Network (2019), SDG Accountability Handbook p, 30-31
144   World Vision (2015). Policy Report, Grassroots to Global: Seven Steps to Citizen-Driven Accountability for the Sustainable Development Goals.
145   World Vision (2015). Policy Report, Grassroots to Global: Seven Steps to Citizen-Driven Accountability for the Sustainable Development Goals.
146 World Vision (2015). Policy Report, Grassroots to Global: Seven Steps to Citizen-Driven Accountability for the Sustainable Development Goals.
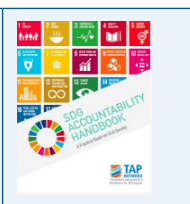
CASE STUDY:

Training Citizen Monitors to Safeguard Community Development

Integrity Action

Integrity Action worked with partner organization Kwale Youth and Governance Consortium to implement their citizen monitoring approach in Kwale, Kenya. Citizens from the community were selected with the approval of the whole community and trained using Integrity Action's resources and approach. Trained monitors were able to gain the tools to oversee the delivery of local projects and services, compare what was promised with what was delivered, report it publicly on Integrity Action's app DevelopmentCheck and then work with those responsible to get the issues addressed for the benefit of the community. The training and skills have allowed the monitors to feel more confident, benefit their community and be proactive to ensure that services and projects are delivered as promised.

To read the full-length version of this case study, visit www.sdg16toolkit.org/case-studies

Key TAP Network resource:

SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society (TAP Network, 2018)	This handbook provides guidance on the different approaches and steps that can be taken by civil society to ensure accountability for the SDGs. For more on localized accountability measures, see the chapter: 'Engaging Local Authorities.' **Available at: https://sdgaccountability.org/**	

Key resources

Grassroots to Global: Seven Steps to Citizen-Driven Accountability for the Sustainable Development Goals, Policy Report (World Vision, 2015)	This publication provides detailed implementation instructions for the use of social accountability tools to engage local authorities. **Available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/513571468059674130/pdf/718040WP00PUBL0ebook0English0Final0.pdf**
Citizen Voice and Action: World Vision's Approach to Social Accountability	Produced by World Vision, this publication contextualizes and applies its social accountability approach in more than 40 countries with positive results. **Available at: https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/CVA_Field_Guide_0.pdf**
World Bank Sourcebook: 21 Social Accountability Tools	The sourcebook provides detailed implementation instructions for the use of social accountability tools to engage local authorities. **Available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/513571468059674130/pdf/718040WP00PUBL0ebook0English0Final0.pdf**

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CARE Community Score Card	The CARE Community Score Card serves as the basis of much of the social accountability work of the past two decades. **Available at: https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/FP-2013-CARE_CommunityScoreCardToolkit.pdf**
Open Knowledge Repository	The World Bank's Open Knowledge Repository provides more information about grievance redress mechanisms. **Available at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/20117**
Social Audits: A Toolkit – A Guide for Performance Improvement and Outcome Measurement (Centre for Good Governance)	Learn more about social audits in the Centre for Good Governance's report, Social Audits: A Toolkit – A Guide for Performance Improvement and Outcome Measurement. **Available at: http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/cgg/unpan023752.pdf**
Rapid Feedback: The Role of Community Scorecards in Improving Service Delivery (GAC)	Learn more about how to develop effective community scorecards in Rapid Feedback: The Role of Community Scorecards in Improving Service Delivery. **Available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/462221468333561977/pdf/884970WP0Rapid00Box385225B00PUBLIC0.pdf**
Making citizen-centered accountability last: time, money, partners, motivation; Integrity Action research report. (McDevitt, A. and Zinnbauer, D., 2021)	This report outlines learning on how different kinds of citizen-centred accountability (CCA) systems – including citizen monitoring, social audits, mobile-based feedback systems and procurement monitoring – can be designed so that they have the greatest chance of being sustained. **Available at: https://integrityaction.org/media/16126/making-citizen-centred-accountability-last-integrity-action-research-report.pdf**