

# ANTI-CORRUPTION HELPDESK

PROVIDING ON-DEMAND RESEARCH TO HELP FIGHT CORRUPTION

## COMMUNITY MONITORING OF HUMANITARIAN AID AND SERVICE DELIVERY

### QUERY

What are the tools, experiences and lessons learnt of community monitoring/social auditing by beneficiaries of the provision of humanitarian aid and basic services (in contexts where access to internet is limited)? To the extent possible, we would like to get an overview of incentives for communities to participate.

### PURPOSE

This paper will inform the next steps of the humanitarian aid programme.

### CONTENT

1. An overview of concepts and tools
2. Lessons-learnt and incentives for participation
3. References



### Author(s)

Sofia Wickberg, Transparency International,  
[tihelpdesk@transparency.org](mailto:tihelpdesk@transparency.org)

### Contributor(s)

Claire Schouten and Alessandro Bozzini, Transparency International

### Reviewer(s)

Craig Fagan, Transparency International

### Date

Submitted: 20 March 2013  
Responded: 15 April 2013

### SUMMARY

Social accountability mechanisms, such as community monitoring, aim to improve the quality and performance of a given service or project, to empower local communities, and to enhance citizen participation through creating a channel for beneficiaries to voice their concerns, provide constructive feedback, and flag wrongdoings and abuses.

A significant number of tools have been developed in the last decades, ranging from the simple suggestion box to social audit schemes and monitoring tools that rely on technology solutions (such as SMS notification and surveys).

Several elements need to be taken into account in order to create a favourable environment for communities to participate, particularly in emergency situations. The choice of the monitoring mechanism needs to be dependent on the service/project monitored as well as on the specific context, including local political and economic power structures, potential risks, and other factors. Community monitoring initiatives ought to have a coherent voice and leadership to mobilise citizens, ensure the proper implementation of the monitoring process and to conduct the necessary advocacy. To enable broad participation, it is essential to build relationships of trust within the community. Trust between citizens and the authorities monitored is also important as it facilitates access to information and follow-up activities.

## 1 AN OVERVIEW OF CONCEPTS AND TOOLS

### Social accountability: what and why?

Social accountability is understood as a form of accountability emerging from individuals' and civil society actions aimed at holding public institutions to account (UNDP 2010). Interest in this type of accountability has gained increasing interest in recent years since it involves non-state actors, namely civil society. There is growing evidence that civil society actors can make a crucial contribution to strengthening public accountability, reducing inefficiencies, improving governance and combating corruption, through mechanisms other than those traditionally used such as elections (vertical accountability) and government oversight bodies (horizontal accountability) (Schouten 2011).

Social accountability can contribute to enhancing development outcomes by strengthening the ties and relationships between individuals and the government (whether at the national or local level), which has positive implications for fortifying democratic governance. By constructing these linkages, social accountability tools can help improve the focus of public service delivery, monitor the performance of the government and promote responsive governance. Social accountability tools can also have the benefit of stressing the needs of and empowering the most vulnerable groups, improving government transparency, and exposing abuses and corruption (UNDP 2010).

In the context of humanitarian assistance, which takes place in fragile states, conflict-afflicted states or regions hit by natural disaster, social accountability mechanisms can also play an important role in ensuring efforts are designed for and reach beneficiaries. In such situations, the often high levels of aid, combined with the weakened traditional accountability channels, can create opportunities for the misappropriation and misuse of funds. Even enforcement-based anti-corruption efforts might be co-opted and politicised (Schouten 2011).

Most importantly, the active participation of citizens and civil society in monitoring humanitarian aid interventions and the delivery of basic services presents a viable short-term solution to lack or

weakness of accountability mechanisms that might prevail and which are symptomatic of countries in the midst of a crisis or conflict (Schouten 2011).

### Current community monitoring tools

#### *Stakeholder surveys*

Stakeholder surveys are a questionnaire-based quantitative tool used to measure the perceptions, knowledge, constraints and experiences of various stakeholders, both internal and external. This tool solicits the feedback and observations of organisations and individuals that affect or are affected by a set service or project, or interact with an organisation. The objective of stakeholder surveys is eventually to make improvements in the delivery of projects or services. Stakeholder surveys are often part of a wider stakeholder engagement process aiming to involve different groups in organisational development to improve the effectiveness of projects or services. This tool is increasingly used in corporate, government and non-government organisations (PG EXCHANGE).

Stakeholder surveys have many advantages. They serve to better inform stakeholders and gives them an opportunity to express their opinions and influence decision-making. Stakeholder surveys allow for enhanced transparency, builds citizens' trust, strengthens accountability and responsiveness of service providers (PG EXCHANGE).

On the down-side, stakeholder surveys are usually quite time-consuming, which may hamper the motivation and interest of communities, and expensive. Service providers, local governments or NGOs may therefore not have the capacity to conduct such initiatives (PG EXCHANGE).

#### Humanitarian Response Index' stakeholder survey

DARA, an independent organisation working to improve humanitarian aid, developed the Humanitarian Response Index (HRI) in 2007 to assess how well donors apply the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) principles with the aim of improving the quality, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of governments' aid. In 2012, the organisation launched a wide stakeholder consultation with key partners to rethink the best way to improve the effectiveness and impact

of humanitarian action. The subject of the survey is the HRI and potential ways to make it a more effective tool for a systemic improvement of humanitarian aid.

Source: DANA, 2012

### *Citizen report cards*

Citizen report cards are a tool to engage citizens in evaluating the quality of basic public services, such as health care, water supply, elementary education or public transport. This tool is a form of participatory output/performance monitoring. These participatory surveys allow users to provide feedback on the performance, quality and attributes of certain services such as availability, access, reliability, transparency and agency responsiveness.

There are multiple objectives to citizen report cards. They are used to identify flaws and wrongdoings (such as bribery) in service delivery, as well as users' dissatisfaction, and if used regularly, they can help benchmark changes over time. Findings from this community monitoring tool are publicised through the media or public meetings to raise awareness and promote transparency, accountability and integrity (PG EXCHANGE).

Citizen report cards represent a significant investment of time, resources and funds, which can be a challenge. In addition, they require a certain degree of openness from the government's side, along with a constructive engagement between those monitored and the communities, so as not to create a feeling of threat or personal attacks. Lastly, the involvement of the media is key for disseminating information and findings, and keeping all stakeholders involved (PG EXCHANGE).

#### Public Affairs Centre

The Public Affairs Centre spearheaded citizen report cards in the 1990s to assess the quality, integrity and availability of basic services in the Indian city of Bangalore. A group of citizens, that would later become the Public Affairs Centre, used the private sector practice of conducting client satisfaction surveys to measure citizens' satisfaction with public services. The citizen report cards were used to raise awareness of service providers' poor performance

and to advocate for improvements. In 1993, the survey showed very low levels of satisfaction and widespread corruption. The exercise was repeated several times, and a decade later satisfaction had increased by 40%.

Source: International Budget Partnership, 2008

### *Community scorecards*

Community scorecards are a qualitative monitoring tool used to assess the performance and quality of basic services, projects or government administrative units. Community scorecards are a type of participatory output/performance monitoring, and experts have distinguished community scorecards as a hybrid of the techniques of social audit and citizen report cards (ANSA-Africa 2010). This tool combines the quantitative data collection technique of the citizen report cards (the focus groups have to score the identified service/unit) with community meetings for citizens to be empowered to provide direct feedback to service providers (UNDP 2010). The service provider/unit conducts a self-evaluation that is discussed with the project facilitators (PG EXCHANGE). The process and recording of scorecard results are then disseminated through the media and the community. The follow-up process should be institutionalised to ensure the implementation of the recommendations.

Similarly to the citizen report cards, the community scorecards help to map inefficient and corruption-prone public services, to raise the awareness of the community about their rights, and to promote responsiveness, transparency and integrity. Moreover, it creates a channel of communication between service providers and the community, facilitating dialogue, and ideally, building trust.

On top of the time-demanding factor, this social accountability tool can trigger reluctance from part of the community in its early stage because it can appear as not providing any practical benefits. Similarly, it can create a feeling of mistrust on the monitored side, with an impression of being "judged"<sup>1</sup>. In addition, service providers or governments might not take the results of such monitoring initiatives and the opinion of "common

<sup>1</sup> Information collected through interviews with practitioners conducted in the framework of this paper.

people” seriously. It is thus important to involve all the stakeholders from the very beginning (PG EXCHANGE).

#### Community scorecards in Rwanda

The Norwegian People’s Aid recently launched the Public Policy Information Monitoring and Advocacy (PPIMA) project in Rwanda, of which community scorecards are an essential element, seen as the tool enabling the most comprehensive community participation and empowerment mechanism for Rwandan citizens to hold their service providers accountable. The pilot phase focussed on 8 villages per district but the project should progressively be extended to the whole country. The project is developing strategic partnerships with key government institution and service providers.

The community scorecard process here includes 4 steps: the Input Tracking Matrix (comparison between official and actual data and statistics); the actual Community Generated Performance Scorecard; the Service Providers Scorecard; and the Interface Meeting between users and providers.

The project looks at 5 service areas (out of which each community could choose which one(s) to focus on): health, education, water and sanitation, agriculture and rural infrastructure. During the pilot phase, a large number of communities identified water and sanitation as the sectors that needed improvement.

Source: Norwegian People’s Aid, no date

#### Suggestion boxes

Suggestion boxes are a simple way to monitor the efficiency, availability, integrity and quality of a service. Suggestion boxes give users and communities the opportunity to voice their concerns and complaints regarding a particular service. This tool is more suited for small-scale monitoring, since it targets a specific user-group of a specific service. Suggestion boxes allow remote or marginalised communities to anonymously play a role in the accountability of service providers, which is a significant asset, especially in authoritarian contexts.

Some of the main challenges with regards to the use

of suggestion boxes are linked to the fact that participation is voluntary and is not controlled; there is therefore no scientifically sound and representative sample and there is a risk of abuse (the boxes can be damaged or “stuffed” by cronies of the officials monitored)<sup>2</sup>.

#### Suggestion boxes in the Masindi District Education Network, in Uganda

The Masindi District Education Network (MADEN) established suggestion boxes, with privacy guarantee, in a number of primary schools. Numerous cases of abuse and general neglect of duty were observed, the drop-out rate was high and facilities insufficient. The MADEN started an advocacy child club to discuss the concerns of children and their families, but many participants did not feel like they could talk openly. The suggestion boxes were introduced to offer an anonymous alternative. The boxes plays the role of a medium of communication between the children and the other stakeholders: once a week, each box is officially opened and the suggestions are read out to the members of the club and representatives of the school management committee. The issues raised are then prioritised and discussed with the management.

Source: ODI, 2012

#### Social Audit

Social audits are a monitoring tool that serve to verify how projects and services are carried out and how resources are allocated with regards to social, environmental and community objectives. Social audits are carried out by the beneficiaries themselves. They bring together users and service providers to examine the impact of a certain project/service, comparing its expected and actual benefits. They have a broader scope than traditional financial audits and should be seen as a supplement. Social audits take many forms and shapes; they can be implemented independently by civil society or in conjunction with the government; they can be a one-time occurrence or be implemented regularly. Social audits need to be shaped according to the nature of

<sup>2</sup> Information collected through interviews with practitioners conducted in the framework of this paper.

the project or service it assesses, and many techniques and methodologies can be used. The first step of a social audit is the definition of the scope of the audit and the formation of the committee of stakeholders, followed by the gathering and analysis of information (both official documents and stakeholders' experiences and perceptions). Once findings have been reached, they need to be disseminated through public meetings and the media. Dialogue is facilitated by holding public meetings bringing together community members and authorities or service providers.

Social audits contribute to raising public awareness about standards and rights. Communities should be empowered to voice their concerns and point to any noticed mismanagement or abuse. Social audits promote transparency through communities' requests for information. This type of monitoring tool can help to create a better understanding between policy-makers and local communities that will further improve the quality of services and policies (PG EXCHANGE).

Social audits require the access to official information and the existence of accurate public records – communities might need technical support to collect and analyse the necessary data, as well as financial support (PG EXCHANGE).

#### Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS)

MKSS is a peasant and workers' union in the Indian state of Rajasthan that has become well-known for pioneering social audits that further fed national mass movements demanding better access to information. In 1994, MKSS wanted to access official documents and financial information but had to rely on informal means to acquire these, since the country did not have a Right to Information Act yet. Once obtained, these documents were scrutinized by local communities and public meetings were held to collectively audit the accounts and reports, in comparison to the actual wages and conditions of the workers. Through these means, communities managed to expose many cases of embezzlement and misuse of public funds.

Source: Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, no date

#### *Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS)*

PETS is a "follow the money" initiative. It is a quantitative tool that tracks the flows of public resources (financial, human and in-kind) to assess if they actually reach the appropriate beneficiaries. The unit of observation is usually a service facility or local government. PETS is a survey measuring the funds received at each stage of the public service delivery chain from a nation's treasury to the service delivery unit, where the resources are supposed to be spent. The survey gathers information on facility characteristics, money flows, services delivered and accountability arrangements, among others. The functioning of this tool is very simple; by comparing the amount of resources allocated by the treasury and the resources that the surveyed service delivery units claim to have received, one can estimate how much money was diverted or leaked. PETS differs from traditional audits because it does not observe all service delivery units of a particular sector, but instead uses statistics and representative samples (Sundet 2008).

PETS is a useful way to strengthen the accountability of basic service providers and to ensure that the allocated resources reach the intended beneficiaries. It is an effective diagnostic tool for the efficiency of service delivery and allows for the tracking of abuses. It is complementary to other more qualitative monitoring tools that measure perceptions and experiences of stakeholders and users.

#### The first Public Expenditure Tracking Survey in Uganda

In 1996, a team of researchers from the World Bank developed a survey to observe whether the resources disbursed for Ugandan primary schools actually reached the beneficiaries. The team decided to track disbursements and receipts of the "capitation grant", a sum of funds planned for school supplies, calculated as a set amount per student. The study concluded that the system of controls was very weak and failed to ensure that the government funds actually reached the schools. It found that, in 1995, only 26% of the resources dedicated to primary schools made it to the final beneficiaries, with some schools not receiving any money at all.

The publication of these findings acted as a wake-up call for the government that launched an information

campaign, made ministries start to publish data on financial transfers, and district headquarters and schools post notices to inform the communities of the receipt of funds. A PETS conducted by the World Bank in 2002 showed that 80% of the transferred funds were received by the schools.

Source: Sundet, 2008

### *Public hearings*

Public hearings are formal meetings at the community level during which local officials and community members get an opportunity to exchange information, views and concerns about the affairs of the community. These meetings generally concern the community's budget and its management. Public hearings are open to the public, as the name of the tool indicates, and represent a useful venue for citizens to voice their opinions and complaints, and for public officials to get a better understanding of the community. It is important for this type of event to be successful in order to conduct a broad advertisement in the community to ensure the best participation and inclusion possible. The discussions need a set of defined ground rules as well as an impartial facilitator to guide the debates. The discussion should be captured in a report to ensure proper follow-up of actions, such as monitoring of implementation of commitments and holding officials to account, among others. (World Bank).

#### Poverty Forums in Liberia

To encourage citizens to play a bigger role in the shaping and monitoring of public services, the Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia (CENTAL) formed Poverty Watch Councils composed of community members with diverse backgrounds, and trained them on corruption and governance issues. These councils are responsible for organising Poverty Forums, which are public hearings bringing together the authorities, service providers and communities for open discussions. Representatives from the health, education, justice and infrastructure sectors give presentations on recent development work and responded to people's concerns.

These public hearings help fill the information gap on a wide range of topics, informing people about their rights, and empower citizens to hold their leaders

accountable.

Source: Transparency International, 2012

### *Community radio*

Community radios are not a social accountability tool per se, but they can play a crucial role as an effective means to disseminate information and facilitate the implementation of other community monitoring initiatives.

A community radio channel differs from other forms of broadcasting as it is a not-for-profit initiative. It is owned and managed by a community (geographical or thematic). A community radio is an interactive means of communication that gives listeners many opportunities to participate. This channel of communication is particularly suited for illiterate individuals and copes with specific local issues in local languages. Programs should reflect the special interests and needs of the community.

#### Community radio in Mozambique

The Center for Public Integrity (CIP) initiated a dialogue with a number of districts in Mozambique to encourage citizens to speak up and hold public officials to account. The organisation worked with locally nominated activists to gather information about abuses and mismanagement of basic services that was then broadcasted via community radio programmes. The activists interviewed people about their perception of corruption in public services and service providers and public officials could respond to these concerns from the radio studio. The community radio followed-up on the pledges made by local officials, leading to better dialogue and service improvements.

Source: Transparency International, 2012

### *Citizen's charter*

Similarly to the community radio, the citizen's charter is not necessarily a social accountability tool but a means for the successful implementation of various accountability initiatives.

A citizen's charter is a document that informs communities about the entitlements they have as

users of a public service; the procedures and costs of the service; the standards to expect for a service (time-frame and quality); and solutions available for non-adherence to standards. A citizen's charter is a way to better inform citizens about their rights, empowering them to hold leaders to account and to pressure service providers to improve their performance. Knowing the standards in place is an essential prerequisite to monitor and assess the quality of a service.

A citizen's charter is not only a document, it is also the process by which information is disseminated and awareness is raised. A citizen's charter can be produced following the sharing of community scorecard results, reflecting state-society collaboration and contributing to improved accountability, buy-in and trust<sup>3</sup>.

### ICT-based monitoring

New Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) are increasingly seen by governments as well as activists and civil society as an important tool to promote transparency and accountability as well as to identify and reduce corruption. ICTs, in the form of websites, mobile phones and applications, among others, have been used to facilitate the access to official information, to monitor the efficiency and integrity of social services, and to render financial information more transparent. ICTs can be used to facilitate the tracking of revenue flows and financing, to map aid and budget data, to report problems and abuses, and to facilitate communication and dissemination of information. ICTs allow for real-time information exchange and collection, and give the opportunity to individuals in remote areas to voice their concerns. However, such technologies can be costly and they rely on internet or mobile phone penetration, which can be low in certain regions.

### Using ICTs to report corruption and mismanagement

#### Reporting on water point breakdowns

The non-for-profit organisation *Daraja* recently initiated a programme called *Maji Matone* ("raising the water pressure") in Tanzania. In this country, only

54% of the water points function properly and this programme aims to enable communities to report on breakdowns of water points directly to the local authorities. The engineers responsible for the repair receive an SMS through the partnership set up by *Maji Matone*, to be able to address the problems in a timely manner. Aggregated monthly reports are produced and disseminated through the media.

This initiative was initially efficient in putting pressure on local authorities and governments to be responsive. The funding to support rural water access has increased by 400% between 2006 and 2012. The government also committed to establish a National Water Infrastructure Monitoring System, based on the *Maji Matone* programme. However, it has been observed that, following the initial successful phase, individuals disengage and only few SMSs were sent. Daraja mentioned citizens' reluctance to report on government abuses and the limited penetration of technology as reasons for lack of sustained success<sup>4</sup>.

Source: Schouten, 2012

#### FrontlineSMS and the flood in Pakistan

The Popular Engagement Policy Lab (PEPL), through FrontlineSMS, used mobile phones, SMS more specifically, to communicate with affected communities during the humanitarian response to the floods in Pakistan in 2011. The established mechanism allowed communities to report on the performance of the humanitarian aid project managed by a Pakistani NGO called Strengthening Participatory Organisation (SPO), sharing their experiences of accessing shelter and food.

Picture cards, a call-back service and a numbering system were developed to respond to the challenge of illiteracy and adaptability of mobile phone coding to Arabic.

Source: FrontlineSMS, 2012

<sup>3</sup> Information collected through interviews with practitioners conducted in the framework of this paper.

<sup>4</sup> Information collected through interviews with practitioners conducted in the framework of this paper.

### Using ICTs for data collection

#### Conducting surveys through mobile phones

In Tanzania, *Twaweza*, a grass-roots organisation in East Africa, launched a data collection initiative called *Sauti za Wananchi*. This project uses mobile phones to regularly collect information from citizens about the implementation of policies and services throughout the country, as an alternative to traditional survey techniques that are often too costly. This initiative gives the opportunity to citizens to express their complaints and offers policy-makers direct access to communities' experiences and citizens' views

*Sauti za Wananchi* uses a standard three stage survey sampling design: in stage one, so-called Enumeration Areas (EAs) – survey areas in rural and urban settings defined by the Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics – were sampled. Then all households in the sampled EAs were listed and 10 were selected randomly. And finally, in the third stage, one respondent was randomly chosen from all adult household members in each selected household.

All the information collected is made available on the *Sauti za Wananchi* website. Moreover, the programme team will aggregate the data and present it in understandable graphs and forms, to be used by the widest audience possible.

Source: Twaweza, 2013

### Using ICTs to map aid and track revenue flows

#### OpenSpending and aid flows

Openspending.org is an Open Knowledge Foundation initiative promoting open knowledge and data, particularly regarding government budgets through a mapping of the money flows. The aim of Openspending.org is to help track every government and corporate financial transaction across the world and present it in user-friendly and engaging forms.

OpenSpending is used by the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) to map and track aid spending in 150 countries.

This mapping and monitoring exercise publishes the amount of aid received annually by each of the observed countries, as well as the sector to which the aid is allocated. It provides details about the origin of the funds, as well as the type of aid (project-based, budget support etc.), the type of financial flows (ODA, private grants etc.) and the type of financing (aid loan, grant etc.). This information is extremely valuable for citizens and communities to monitor the management of international aid and its quality.

Source: OpenSpending, <http://openspending.org/iati>

## 2 LESSONS LERNT AND FOR PARTICIPATION

There has been growing interest, in recent years, in initiatives aimed at involving citizens, communities and beneficiaries in the monitoring and assessment of basic services or development and humanitarian projects. In spite of the assumption that social accountability mechanisms contribute to better performance and quality of basic services and aid-based projects, the evidence of the positive outcomes of community monitoring on the reduction of mismanagement and corruption remain mostly anecdotal due to the conceptual and methodological challenges of such evaluations. Measuring levels of corruption and change overtime presents challenges in itself since it implies using a baseline for comparison and collecting data regularly. Moreover, the issue of attribution adds an additional level of complexity as it is difficult to trace positive developments back to any specific intervention (Chêne 2012).

Studies conducted on social accountability initiatives however increasingly tend to identify lessons learnt and factors of success. Enhancing citizens' knowledge about their rights and commonly accepted standards and practices is an incentive in itself as it empowers individuals to demand the services and assistance they are entitled to, but it is important to note that creating a favourable environment for citizens to participate is essential for community monitoring initiatives to be efficient.

## Cultural sensitivity and confidentiality

As demonstrated in this paper, there are a multitude of community monitoring tools available, and the development of new technologies further widens the palette of possibilities. The first key to success is to pick the appropriate social accountability tool, taking into consideration the local context, the quality of governance and the level of citizen capacity, among others. Schouten (2011) takes the example of public hearings, which might present a number of dangers in a fragile context where confrontation with the authorities can lead to violence.

Social accountability mechanisms ultimately aim to improve the performance and quality of basic services or aid projects. A clear understanding of the purpose, objectives and importance of community monitoring is an incentive. Citizens need to be assured that they can provide feedback in a safe environment; experts sometimes point to the importance of long-term engagement and presence on the ground of facilitators (Collaborative Learning Projects 2011).

## Leadership and coherent voice by communities

Social accountability initiatives need the strong mobilisation of communities and citizens, which in turn requires a coherent voice or leadership (Schouten 2011). To tackle this concern, experts encourage the participation of civil society organisations in community monitoring projects to properly operationalise the process. Civil society organisations should take part in these initiatives in several ways: as part of the monitoring committees, as resource groups providing support, and as entities helping to collect information (National Rural Health Mission India 2013). Community-based organisations are commonly the facilitators of social accountability initiatives at the local level, in charge of managing the operations, following up on actions, mobilising and training citizens, securing funding, and engaging with the authorities – which often presents challenges (Schouten 2011). It is generally accepted that to be efficient, community monitoring mechanisms ought to be anchored in the local context, meaning that they should address context-specific constraints and opportunities and be receptive to local ways and procedures (ODI 2013).

## Resources and capacity

Community monitoring mechanisms should include sufficient resources and time to properly collect and analyse the data. It is important to allow for flexibility, whilst trying to stick to the set deadlines to avoid frustrations. Finding a balance between efficiency and group discussion is important (ALNAP/URD 2009)

Collecting robust evidence and systematic data is the basis for many social accountability initiatives, and communities need to gain the necessary expertise to understand the information and specific obstacles they might face. In addition, access to information is crucial for community monitoring and often represents an issue. A large number of countries have yet to adopt a “right to information” law, and, among the states who legally grant their citizens access to information, many do not properly implement the law. Besides the lack of political will, governments sometimes have limited capacity to disclose official information, which is often the case of local governments (PG Exchange). International transparency initiatives have shown that it is important to support capacities on both the demand and disclosure sides, strengthening both those requesting information and the institutions that ought to be transparent (Schouten 2011).

## Advocacy and communication

In the absence of legal sanctions, community monitoring initiatives should have a clear strategy on how to hold officials to account and how to advocate for change. Initiatives need to be linked to other forms and factors of accountability, such as the media and elections (PG Exchange). The World Bank conducted a stocktaking of social accountability initiatives, which demonstrated that integrated advocacy and communication strategies resulted in greater social accountability achievements (Schouten 2011). According to practitioners, advocacy efforts based on concrete facts coming from the local level has proved to be very powerful<sup>5</sup>.

Moreover, practitioners have noted that the advocacy plan of community monitoring schemes is not only

<sup>5</sup> Information collected through interviews with practitioners conducted in the framework of this paper.

essential to push for improvement but also in giving incentives to citizens to participate. To maintain faith in the mechanisms, it is important that communities see that their concerns are really taken into account and that they receive feedback. Similarly, social accountability mechanisms are generally more successful when the initiative comes from the bottom-up, rather than being a donor requirement (Collaborative Learning Projects 2011).

### Sequencing, participation and trust

UNDP highlights that community monitoring often involves a shift of power away from the groups that traditionally made the decisions without being questioned, which can be sensitive and challenging. Communities and organisations initiating such projects should be aware of the risks involved in strengthening the voice and influence of those who were usually marginalised and excluded from decision-making processes (UNDP 2010). Besides political sensitivity, communities might have strong internal power imbalances that might reflect biased information. Therefore, social accountability initiatives, such as public hearings, should find ways to ensure that all voices are equally heard; experts also advise on the disaggregation of data across age, gender, religion, ethnicity and disability, among others (PG Exchange).

In the context of conflict or fragility, promoting social accountability can even fuel violence. It is thus important to build a relationship of trust with those who are monitored, involving them in the process from its early stage and building channels of communications with them. Ensuring that all stakeholders understand the objectives and potential gains of such initiatives facilitates access and exchange of information, as well as advocacy opportunities (PG Exchange). Building trust between the public officials or service provider and the community reduces the security risks and the perceived threat, and could potentially encourage citizens to take part. Providing communities with a venue to interact with public officials, local leaders and service providers is generally seen as a significant motivation to participate in monitoring activities (ODI 2013). A study conducted on a scorecard programme in Malawi indicated that this mechanism worked particularly well when it facilitated collaborative spaces and forms of collective problem solving involving different stakeholders (ODI 2011).

Moreover, experts affirm that community monitoring initiatives are more successful when they rely on a wide range of partners (UNDP 2010) and should consequently integrate efforts to build trust between various parts of the community to encourage broad participation (PG Exchange). Relationships of trust should ideally be built beyond the community and those monitored to maximise chances for success, reaching aid agencies, local governments and members of parliament, among others. Involving stakeholders beyond those directly affected could offer an opportunity to streamline and integrate social accountability into existing structures (school curricula, farmers' cooperatives, among others) to reduce the opportunity costs<sup>6</sup>.

### Lesson learnt specific to humanitarian aid

Even though many of the monitoring tools are similar, countries in need of humanitarian aid experience unique challenges and constraints.

A central concern regarding community participation in emergency situations is that it takes too much time. Practitioners however report that time pressure does not need to be an obstacle, but that finding the adequate intermediaries and methods to build trust are all the more crucial. The issue of security and safety of the population is particularly important in emergency contexts, and humanitarian organisations need to assess the effect of their presence and activities on the communities and ensure that confidentiality structures are in place to allow for community participation.

Humanitarian crises have a considerable impact in social structures and physical features, and can deeply affect the ability of citizens to participate. People might have been injured or displaced, certain locations can become out of reach, and the psychological trauma or social breakdown might limit the will of citizens to participate in any community exercise.

More detailed information to be found in ALNAP/URD's [Factors Affecting Participation in Humanitarian Responses](#).

<sup>6</sup> Information collected through interviews with practitioners conducted in the framework of this paper.

### 3 REFERENCES

- ALNAP, URD, 2009. *Participation Handbook for Humanitarian Field Workers*.  
(<http://www.urd.org/Participation-Handbook>)
- Asian Development Bank, 2007. *Improving Local Governance and Service Delivery: Citizen Report Card Learning Tool Kit*.  
(<http://www.pacindia.org/uploads/default/files/publications/pdf/6936b12ddfc1ea79bddd8c1d84cfa670.pdf>)
- Chêne, Marie, 2012. *Impact of community monitoring on corruption*. (<http://www.u4.no/publications/impact-of-community-monitoring-on-corruption/>)
- Collaborative Learning Projects, 2011. *Feedback Mechanisms in International Assistance Organizations*.  
([http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/other/lp\\_feedback\\_research\\_report\\_Pdf\\_1.pdf](http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/other/lp_feedback_research_report_Pdf_1.pdf))
- DARA, no date. *Humanitarian Response Index (HRI)*.  
(<http://daraint.org/humanitarian-response-index/humanitarian-response-index-2011/>)
- FrontlineSMS, 2012. *Sending a Message of Accountability: SMS Helps Improve Services After Pakistan Floods*.  
(<http://www.frontlinesms.com/2012/02/22/sending-a-message-of-accountability-sms-helps-improve-services-after-pakistan-floods/>)
- National Rural Health Mission Government of India, 2013. *Role of civil society organisations in facilitating community based monitoring*.  
(<http://www.nrhm.gov.in/communitisation/community-action/role-of-civil-society-organisations-in-facilitating-community-based-monitoring.html>)
- OpenSpending, no date. *International Aid Transparency Initiative (BETA)*.  
(<http://openspending.org/iati>)
- Organisation for social science research in Eastern and Southern Africa Rwanda Chapter, 2006. *Citizen Report and Community Score Cards*.  
([http://www.ansa-africa.net/uploads/documents/publications/Rwanda\\_Citizen\\_Report\\_Community\\_Score\\_Card2006.pdf](http://www.ansa-africa.net/uploads/documents/publications/Rwanda_Citizen_Report_Community_Score_Card2006.pdf))
- Overseas Development Institute, 2013. *Holding Cash Transfers to Account Beneficiary and community perspectives*.  
(<http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8372.pdf>)
- Overseas Development Institute, 2013. *Facilitating development. An arm's length approach to aid*.  
(<http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8330.pdf>)
- Overseas Development Institute, 2011. *The political economy of community scorecards in Malawi*.  
(<http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/7543.pdf>)
- PG Exchange, no date. *Stakeholder survey*.  
([http://www.pgexchange.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=194&Itemid=122](http://www.pgexchange.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=194&Itemid=122))
- PG Exchange, no date. *Citizen Report Cards*.  
([http://www.pgexchange.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=164&Itemid=160](http://www.pgexchange.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=164&Itemid=160))
- PG Exchange, no date. *Social Audits*.  
([http://www.pgexchange.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=142&Itemid=122](http://www.pgexchange.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=142&Itemid=122))
- PG Exchange, no date. *Community Score Cards*.  
([http://www.pgexchange.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=143:community-score-cards&catid=59:monitoring-a-evaluating-public-services&Itemid=137](http://www.pgexchange.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=143:community-score-cards&catid=59:monitoring-a-evaluating-public-services&Itemid=137))
- Schouten, Claire, 2011. *Social accountability in situations of conflict and fragility*.  
(<http://www.u4.no/publications/social-accountability-in-situations-of-conflict-and-fragility/>)
- Schouten, Claire, 2012. *ICT for Open contracting in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States*.  
([http://issuu.com/ngarza/docs/ict4open-contracting\\_fcs](http://issuu.com/ngarza/docs/ict4open-contracting_fcs))
- Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2013. *Listening to Those Who Matter Most, the Beneficiaries*.  
([http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/listening\\_to\\_those\\_who\\_matter\\_most\\_the\\_beneficiaries?utm\\_source=Enews13\\_03\\_14&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=3&utm\\_campaign=twersky\\_buchanan\\_threalfall](http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/listening_to_those_who_matter_most_the_beneficiaries?utm_source=Enews13_03_14&utm_medium=email&utm_content=3&utm_campaign=twersky_buchanan_threalfall))
- Sundet Geir, 2008. *Following the money. Do Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys matter?*  
(<http://www.cmi.no/publications/file/3195-following-the-money.pdf>)
- Transparency International, 2012. *Poverty and Corruption in Africa – Community Voices Break the Cycle*.  
([http://www.transparency.org/files/content/activity/2012\\_PCA\\_brochure\\_EN.pdf](http://www.transparency.org/files/content/activity/2012_PCA_brochure_EN.pdf))
- Twaweza, 2013. *Sauti Za Wananchi Collecting National Data Using Mobile Phones*.

*“Anti-Corruption Helpdesk Answers provide practitioners around the world with rapid on-demand briefings on corruption. Drawing on publicly available information, the briefings present an overview of a particular issue and do not necessarily reflect Transparency International’s official position.”*