Glossary of Social Accountability Tools & Approaches

Advisory Body/Committee is a consultative group that includes a limited number of relevant stakeholders (e.g. citizens, members from academia, private sector, civil society) that provides public input on the project/program during the design and implementation stages of the project.

Budget Literacy Campaigns are efforts—usually by civil society, academics, or research institutes—to build citizen and civil society capacity to understand budgets in order to hold governments accountable for budget commitments and to influence budget priorities.

Citizen Charter is a document that informs citizens about the service entitlements they have as users of a public service, the standards they can expect for a service (timeframe and quality), remedies available for non-adherence to standards, and the procedures, costs and charges of a service. The charters entitle users to an explanation (and in some cases compensation) if the standards are not met.

Citizen Report Card is an assessment of public services by the users (citizens) through client feedback surveys. It goes beyond data collection to being an instrument for exacting public accountability through extensive media coverage and civil society advocacy that accompanies the process.

Citizen's Budget is a simplified, nontechnical summary/presentation of a local or national budget that is designed to reach and be understood by citizens. There are usually two types of CBs: a simplified version of the Executive's Budget Proposal and a simplified version of the Enacted Budget after the legislature has considered the budget and voted on it.

Citizen Satisfaction Surveys provide a quantitative assessment of government performance and service delivery based on citizens' experience. Depending on the objective, the surveys can collect data on a variety of topics ranging from perceptions of jurisdictional services and elected officials, to desires for new capital projects and services.

Citizen Service Centers provide citizens with access to a variety of national, state, and municipal and/ or private sector services in a single location. The CC informs citizens about the service entitlements they have as users of a public service, the standards they can expect for a service (timeframe and quality), remedies available for non-adherence to standards, and the procedures, costs and charges of a service.

Citizen/User membershipin decision-making bodies is a way to ensure accountability by allowing people who can reflect users' interests to sit on committees that make decisions about project activities under implementation (project-level arrangement) or utility boards (sector-level arrangement).

Citizen Jury refers to a group of selected members of a community that make recommendations or action proposals to decision-makers after a period of investigation on the matter. Citizens' juries are a deliberative participatory instrument to supplement conventional democratic processes.

Community Contracting refers to a process where community groups are contracted for the provision of services, or when community groups contract service providers or the construction of infrastructure.

Community Management is a process in which services are fully managed or owned by service users or communities. Consumers own the service directly (each customer owns a share) when they form cooperatives.

Community Scorecard is a community-based monitoring tool that assesses services, projects, and government performance by analyzing qualitative data obtained through focus group discussions with the community. It usually includes interface meetings between service providers and users to formulate an action plan to address any identified problems and shortcomings.

Focus Group Discussions are composed of a small number of stakeholders to discuss and consult in an informal setting project impact and concerns. They are designed to gauge the response to the project's proposed actions and to gain a detailed understanding of stakeholders' perspectives, values and concerns.

Grievance Redress Mechanism (*or a formal* complaints-handling mechanism) is a system by which queries or clarifications about the project are responded to, problems with implementation are resolved, and complaints and grievances are addressed efficiently and effectively.

Independent Budget Analysis is a process where civil society stakeholders research, explain, monitor and disseminate information about public expenditures and investments to influence the allocation of public funds through the budget.

Information Campaigns are processes to provide citizens with information about government plans, projects, laws, activities, services, etc. A variety of approaches can be used such as public meetings, mass media, printed materials, public performances, and information kiosks.

Integrity Pact is an accountability tool that allows participants and public officials to agree on rules to be applied to a specific procurement. It includes an "honesty pledge" by which involved parties promise not to offer or demand bribes. Bidders agree not to collude in order to obtain the contract; and if they do obtain the contract, they must avoid abusive practices while executing it.

Participatory Budgeting is a process through which citizens participate directly in budget formulation, decision-making, and monitoring of budget execution. It creates a channel for citizens to give voice to their budget priorities particularly at the local government level.

Participatory Planning is a process that convenes a broad base of key stakeholders, on an iterative basis, in order to generate a diagnosis of the existing situation and develop appropriate strategies to solve jointly identified problems. Project components, objectives, and strategies are designed in collaboration with stakeholders.

Procurement Monitoring, in the context of Social Accountability, refers to independent, third-party monitoring of procurement activities by citizens, communities, or civil society organizations to ensure there are no leakages or violation of procurement rules.

Public ExpenditureTracking Surveys involve citizen groups tracing the flow of public resources for the provision of public goods or services from origin to destination. It can help to detect bottlenecks, inefficiencies, or corruption.

Public Hearings are formal community-level meetings where local officials and citizens have the opportunity to exchange information and opinions on community affairs. Public hearings are often one element during consultations or in a social audit initiative.

Public Reporting of Revenues and Expenditures refers to the public disclosure and dissemination of information about government revenues and expenditures to enable citizens to track the budget and hold governments accountable.

Social Audit (also called Social Accounting) is a monitoring process through which organizational or project information is collected, analyzed and shared publicly in a participatory fashion. Community members conduct investigative work at the end of which findings are shared and discussed publicly.

Source: How To Note: How, When and Why to Use Demand-side Governance Approached in Projects, Social Development Department, World Bank, 2011.