



CARE Ethiopia

A Decade of Program Learning Series

Community Score Card

A Powerful Rights-Based Tool For Improving Accountability And Driving Gender Transformation

Over the last two decades there has been a growing enthusiasm for the potential of social accountability approaches to improve the performance of public services and to empower citizens. The Community Score Card (CSC)—is a social accountability approach CARE developed in Malawi in 2002 and later adapted to its food security, urban and peri-urban programming in Ethiopia. The CSC is a two-way and ongoing participatory tool for assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation of services. It is easy to use and can be adapted into any sector where there is a service delivery scenario. The Community Score Card brings together the demand side (“service user”) and the supply side (“service provider”) of a particular service or program to jointly analyze issues underlying service delivery problems and find a common and shared way of addressing those issues. It is an exciting way to increase participation, accountability and transparency between service users, providers and decision-makers.

How we have been using it

Improving Community and GOE Accountability. CARE Ethiopia has implemented the CSC broadly, demonstrating its versatility across different types of programming to improve government accountability to communities. For example, through its

Adolescent Girl’s Empowerment programming, CARE instituted the CSC by training Government partners and representatives and project staff to ensure understanding and buy-in, and then oriented community members, girls and government service providers. Together priorities were identified – especially in relation to health and education - and both service providers and communities worked together to find solutions and make improvements. Some important examples include religious leaders teaching their congregants about the benefits of sending their daughters to school and banning early marriage proposals. Government ministries also revised some of their plans to address the interests of adolescent girls, such as the Education Office including a goal to improve girls’ school attendance and menstrual health management.

Through its Food Security programming CARE established joint Community/ Government Monitoring Committees and training Development Agents (Kebele level) on the CSC process. Midway through project implementation communities shared their increased satisfaction with the government’s readiness to address community issues related to girls’ education, marriage, sexual and reproductive health, and nutrition.

CARE Ethiopia’s urban HIV and AIDS programming (Getting Ahead and Springboard) focused on reducing the impact of HIV and

CARE's Governance Programming Framework (GPF) guides our CSC work. The GPF outlines three domains necessary to achieve good governance and sustainable and equitable development: (1) empowered citizens; (2) effective, accountable and responsive providers and power-holders; and (3) expanded, inclusive and effective spaces for dialogue and negotiation between the groups. Change needs to take place and be sustained in all three domains to achieve this impact.

Once CSC implementation began, participants started to recognize its utility. With little prodding, girls easily identified the barriers they faced to accessing and utilizing education and health services in their kebeles. Project staff and government officials were amazed by the number of issues the girls identified and their confidence in presenting their concerns.

CARE Ethiopia Abdiboru Project.

AIDS by strengthening livelihood services and other HIV and AIDS-related services, health care providers and safety nets. Through the CSC approach, CARE was able to bring together service users, service providers and local government to identify service access, utilization and provision challenges. Citizens and service providers were able to generate joint solutions and to work in partnership to implement and track the effectiveness of those solutions allowing for an ongoing process of improvement.

The Government of Ethiopia has since adopted the CSC tool into its social accountability program as part of the Promotion of Basic Services Program (BSP), implemented at regional, woreda and kebele levels, to ensure quality and accountability while providing social services to the communities. Both local and International NGOs have also adopted the CSC into their own programming.

A recently published review of CARE's Community Score Card experience, across multiple countries, found that in Ethiopia, projects reported CSC-related improvements in service provider (primarily Government) effectiveness, accountability and responsiveness, as well as openness and transparency. Getting Ahead credited the CSC process with empowering service providers by arming them with improved understanding of users' needs and priorities, which, in turn, gave them increased confidence and credibility to push for improvements within their own organizations and bring attention to gaps.

The Spotlight: What we have learned

A review of CARE's Community Score Card evidence suggests that the CSC prompts a wide range of outcomes and merits further attention as a strategy for not only improving accountability, but in supporting gender transformative behavior and actions.

The CSC is a promising tool that can be incorporated successfully into gender transformative programming efforts. The CSC provides an important opportunity and challenge to accountability efforts – providing a platform to engage and give voice to girls, women and families who are sometimes marginalized or stigmatized within the health and education system as well as their respective communities.





The initial process of securing buy-in for CSC with local leaders and decision makers is crucial. CARE Ethiopia's CSC programming has contributed to strengthening service provision and community-state relations, but requires high levels of engagement with, and working through, different levels of the state apparatus.

Approaches need to go beyond focusing on the demand or supply side alone, instead concentrating on building links and understanding the capacity of the state. CARE's CSC programming emphasized the importance of building collaboration and collective interests between citizens, local leaders, service providers and decision makers, rather than focusing only on citizen voice and empowerment. The importance of continuously and repeatedly working to build trust between all participating groups cannot be understated.

In Ethiopia a country with strong reform-minded centres and hierarchical state structures, the outcomes of CSC programming were broader and more complex – including changes in working practices brought about by information channeled to higher levels of local government and even impacts on policy at the national level.

The CSC is particularly difficult to use in aid-dependent and both food and politically insecure contexts. It requires a significant investment of staff time and materials if the process is to proceed

The CSC contributed to improved understanding of women and adolescent girls needs and promoted their access to critical services such as sexual and reproductive health and education, and improved their nutrition outcomes. It also improved service providers understanding of people living with HIV and AIDS (users') needs and priorities, which, in turn, increased confidence and credibility to push for improvements within their own organizations and bring attention to gaps.

in a timely manner and yield long-term success. It is critical to secure the full participation and commitment of government entities and community members to ensure sustained change.

Strong facilitation is key for CSC to work effectively. Building and retaining trust among the various participants takes skill and patience. Poor facilitation may exacerbate conflicts that arise between participants.

Creating spaces for co-operation and problem solving is crucial, but requires careful framing by context as well as close engagement and compromise. Aligning with the Governments priorities set by the Growth and Transformation Plan (providing much needed assistance towards achieving their targets and so career advancement), CARE Ethiopia was able to secure buy-in from bureaucrats and officials and proactive engagement in the CSC process.



“There is promising evidence that CARE’s CSC contributes to citizen empowerment, service provider and power-holder effectiveness, accountability and responsiveness, and to creating spaces for negotiation between the two that are expanded, effective and inclusive. There is also evidence that the CSC may contribute to improvements in service availability, access, utilization and quality. The CSC seems particularly suited to building trust and strengthening relationships between the community and service providers and to improving the user-centered dimension of quality.”

Findings from a review of CARE’s CSC process, published in Health Policy and Planning 2016.

Want more information?

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CARE’s Community Score Card® visit: https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/media/k2/attachments/CARE_Community_Score_Card_Toolkit.pdf

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