

Understanding Citizen Monitoring

Myths about Monitoring

- Generally associated with specialized skills and tools
- Highly technical in nature
- Practiced by the “experts”
- Citizens are not experienced to handle such technical matter
- A device to exercise “control” from “top”
- Must maintain “objectivity”

Demystifying the Myths (1)

- Doesn't require special skills but interested actors and a relevant issue to collect data, carry out analysis and take appropriate action
- Citizens know their realities and have the capacity to know more by analyzing them
- Citizens have always involved in monitoring which remained unnoticed and unrecognized by the "experts"

Demystifying the Myths (2)

- Deal with “subjectivity” and “multiple realities” as various stakeholders bring “multiple perspectives”
- Focusing on accountability from the vantage point of poor and marginalized

Meaning of Citizen Monitoring (1)

- A system of Measuring, Recording, Collecting, Aggregating, Analyzing, Communicating and Acting with the explicit purpose of improving performance
- A process of inclusion in the governance institutions and processes
- Taking actions on the gaps that might exist for achieving the desired results/ outcomes

Meaning of Citizen Monitoring (2)

- Holding the governance institutions accountable with the purpose to promote effective and robust governance
- Involving apathetic personnel and institutions to be responsive as the response leading to action has to come from these actors
- Involving multiple stakeholders
- Providing continuous feedback the desired results/ outcomes

Meaning of Citizen Monitoring (3)

- A process focused on citizens' rights to ascertain that their interests are not compromised, without jettisoning the larger "public good"
- Focused on citizenship encompassing rights/entitlements and responsibilities/practice dimensions
- Citizen Monitoring devoid of action is merely reporting

Traditional Monitoring vs. Citizen Monitoring (1)

Aspects	Traditional	Citizen Monitoring
Who initiate and control ?	"Managers"	Citizens & stakeholders
Who use the results ?	Professional researchers, policy makers & planners	Citizens & stakeholders
Who decide what is to be monitored ?	"Managers"	Citizens & stakeholders
Who identifies the indicator ?	"Managers"	Citizens & stakeholders

Traditional Monitoring vs. Citizen Monitoring (2)

Who decide which information needs to be collected?	"Managers" Mostly quantitative	Citizens & stakeholders Mostly qualitative
What is the focus?	Scientific objectivity, pretends to be value free	Embracing subjectivity, value based
What is the approach?	Benefit to the 'beneficiary'	Actualizing citizenship
What is the outcome of process?	making judgment, prescriptions, threatening	Learning, ownership, partnership



Steps in Citizen Monitoring

- 1. Planning the Process: Identification of Objectives and Issues**
- 2. Identification of Indicators**
- 3. Identifying Actors and Their Roles in Collecting the Information**
- 4. Data Collection**
- 5. Data Analysis**
- 6. Data Presentation, Documentation and Sharing**
- 7. Taking Appropriate Actions**

Planning the Process: Identification of Objectives and Issues

- ◆ Tread slowly allowing time before people are comfortable in articulating their views or positions
- ◆ Various representative group in the community should be involved, separate meetings can be arranged
- ◆ Distant households or those belonging to marginalized sections should be visited

Planning the Process ...

- ◆ Use participatory method
- ◆ During consultations, ensure that all representative groups bring forth views
- ◆ A small minority should not dominate proceedings

Identification of Indicators

- ◆ Present a picture of a desirable situation and tell about the extent to which one may be falling short
- ◆ Issue being monitored
- ◆ Clear definition of each keyword in the indicator
- ◆ The measure (How much? To what extent?)
- ◆ Consensus building among different stakeholders

Example: Access to Water

- ◆ Half of the households in 5 villages in a block will have access to safe drinking water within a year after the project begins
 - *Access:* each household gets water from a source located not more than 250 meters from the house
 - *Safe drinking water:* means water from a covered well/ hand pump/ piped water system
 - *How much:* 50% of the households
 - *By when:* within one year after project begins
 - *Where:* 5 villages in 1 block

Identification of Indicators

Key Consideration

- ◆ Keep asking people to define key words, e.g., functional, reliable, effective committees, etc. to make relevant indicators
- ◆ Keep a shorter list of indicators in the beginning to avoid over-generation of data; as a thumb-rule , 3-4 indicators make good initiation
- ◆ Help develop a shared understanding on indicators among various actors

Types of Indicators

- ◆ Availability
- ◆ Relevance
- ◆ Access
- ◆ Use
- ◆ Coverage
- ◆ Quality
- ◆ Efforts
- ◆ Skills/Capacity
- ◆ Processes
- ◆ Impact

Identification of Actors and Their Roles in Collecting Information

- ◆ people complain about the issue or problem is the best one to monitor
- ◆ identify those who have high interest and motivation in the issue for getting things right
- ◆ stakeholders involved in the projects should be engaged in collection of information on the indicators identified based on their interests

Identification of Actors ...

- ◆ The process should not be seen as threatening, antagonistic or fault-finding
- ◆ Triangulation for extra checks on collected information can be applied

Data Collection

- ◆ *Methods* refer to the way information is collected
- ◆ *tools* are devices used for the collection of data
- ◆ selection of methods and tools depends on:
 - What kind of information will be required?
 - who will collect it and from whom?
 - who will be using it?
 - how and when will it be used?

Data Analysis

- ◆ The data gathered needs interpretation and analysis
- ◆ Stakeholders' participation in interpretation, processing and analysis is needed
- ◆ Groups engage in critical reflection on the successes, outcomes, achievements problems and constraints occurred as a result of the intervention

Data presentation, Documentation and Sharing

- ◆ Final stage includes documentation, reporting and sharing of information
- ◆ User and purpose determines the presentation of data given the varied needs of different stakeholders
 - e.g. formal report for the use by policy makers and top management only*
- ◆ Criteria for documentation include – simplicity, clarity, use of visuals, brevity, timeliness, familiarity and accessibility

Taking Appropriate Actions

Key Consideration

- ◆ Encourage action first at the lowest level
- ◆ Monitor if actions discussed were carried out or not. If not, analyze reasons. Keep a back up plan ready
- ◆ Go for referrals to next appropriate level, if necessary

Summary (1)

- Enables citizens to engage in improving efficiency and effectiveness
- Learning process which conscientises citizens and makes them aware of forces that affect them
- Empowers people to gain control over their lives
- Aims to make institutions, policies and programmes more responsive and relevant to citizens' needs

Summary (2)

- Recognizes locally relevant processes for gathering, analyzing and using information
- Promotes participation of multiple stakeholders
- Entails dynamics of power since it involves various stakeholder groups
- Takes cognizance of unequal power relationships

Summary (3)

- Recognizes locally relevant processes for gathering, analyzing and using information
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Cornerstone of A "Good" Citizen Monitoring (1)

- Citizen monitoring should be dynamic: as issues and concerns change or new problems emerge, monitoring plans must exhibit flexibility to update and revise
- Instead of creating new structures, existing mechanisms can be explored

Cornerstone ... (2)

- Shared understanding on the purpose and intended outcome
- Relevance of issues to people: those that concern the most would find favour
- Monitoring for the sake of monitoring has no value: informed reflection within and outside the community can enhance citizen empowerment

Cornerstone ... (3)

- Recognition of the inherent capacities of citizens to improve community-based systems and practices
- Oft-repeated: ongoing capacity building holds the key
- Facilitators must also work towards honing their own capacities
- Acceptance of citizens' capacity to investigate, reflect, engage and act

Cornerstone ... (4)

- The idea of a stepping stone: build citizen monitoring systems gradually, beginning with limited concerns or issues
- Ensuring wider participation of diverse groups/institutions to ward off existing power structures