

CIVIL SOCIETY COALITION FOR QUALITY BASIC EDUCATION CARRIES OUT PUBLIC EXPENDITURE TRACKING SURVEYS IN MALAWI

The Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (CSCQBE), created in 2000, is a network of organizations that have come together in the common pursuit of the right to quality basic education.

The Coalition uses Public Expenditure Tracking System (PETS) to track the flow of resources through various levels of government to the end users and identify leakages. The steps in a PETS process are as follows:

Step 1: Identify the Scope of the PETS Exercise

The organization implementing a PETS exercise should decide which sector(s) (such as education, health, roads, etc.) it wants to survey. It should also decide the scope of the exercise and whether it will track monies from central government levels all the way down to the end user of some intermediate stages.

Step 2: Gain a Clear Understanding of the Management of Programs

Any organization coordinating a PETS exercise should study the administrative structure and systems under which the programs to be surveyed are managed.

Step 3: Develop Questionnaires for the Survey

During its PETS exercises, CSCQBE developed separate questionnaires for head teachers, district commissioners, district education managers and the national supplies unit.

Questionnaires for head teachers sought information on the school's proposed recurring expenditure budget sent to the Finance Ministry, actual funds received from the ministry and actual recurrent expenditures in three sample months. District commissioners were asked about the amount of funding requested from the Finance Ministry for recurrent expenditures, the amounts subsequently allocated to the district and the actual amounts the district received and spent on a monthly basis (including the purposes for which they were spent).

Step 4: Select Sample Size & Identify Units to be Sampled

CSCQBE selects a representative sample of 500 schools (roughly one-tenth of those in the country) for its surveys, including both rural and urban schools.

Step 5: Administer Questionnaires

As part of the PETS process, community-based members of CSCQBE administer a series of standardized questionnaires to teachers and education officials around the country.

Step 6: Create and Analyze Database, and Write a Report

The CSCQBE secretariat collects the questionnaires, enters the data into electronic spreadsheets, and analyzes them to produce its annual report.

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Step 7: Present Report

A draft report is circulated among CSCQBE organizations and discussed at a special meeting for adoption. A final report is then produced. CSCQBE unveils the report during a public meeting with ministry officials, parliamentarians, development partners and the media during the annual parliamentary budget deliberation. It then holds district meetings where district assembly officials, district education officials, non-governmental organizations, and school officials can discuss the results and, if necessary, formulate action plans to address problems. CSCQBE also gives copies of the report to key stakeholders such as ministers, the office of the president, and donors and seeks commitments on how they will respond to the issues it raises. CSCQBE takes note of these commitments and then monitors their implementation.



School pupils in Malawi

CSCQBE has achieved important successes through PETS:

- In 2002, when the government closed teacher training colleges due to a lack of funding, civil society groups mounted a three-month campaign that compelled

the government to reopen them. The coalition argued that closing the colleges violated the government's commitment to train 6,000 new teachers a year.

- In 2003, it was discovered that a number of teachers received their salaries late or not at all. Civil society groups pressed a parliamentary committee to look into the issue. The committee returned a report to the National Assembly.
- In 2004, the government undertook its own expenditure tracking survey after observing CSCQBE's successful work. Civil society was involved in planning and monitoring the survey.
- Civil society groups have also pressured the government into making budget allocations aimed specifically at children with special needs, to purchase specialized materials for teachers who focus on these students.
- In addition, the government is now seeking to address the educational disparities between rural and urban areas. It plans to introduce incentives to attract teachers to rural areas and construct housing for rural teachers.

CSCQBE faces several challenges in implementing the public expenditure tracking surveys.

- Government officials do not always fully release budget and expenditure data, which makes it more difficult to track expenditures and determine the extent to which the government is working to improve the educational system.
- In many instances officials provide information that is incomplete or refuse to provide it, claiming they are still compiling the information.

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- Many coalition members have only limited technical capacity to analyze education budget data.
- Coalition members are busy with multiple commitments and can invest only limited time in the PETS process. This sometimes affects the quality of the reports submitted by those who are collecting information for the survey.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS CENTRE DEVELOPS CITIZEN REPORT CARDS IN INDIA

Inspired by the private sector practice in India of conducting client satisfaction surveys, a group of residents undertook a citizen report card exercise in 1993 to measure citizen satisfaction with public service providers. Subsequently, the group formed the Public Affairs Centre (PAC) to undertake additional surveys.

The report card exercise raises awareness of service providers' poor performance and compels them to take corrective action. The process of developing a citizen report card (CRC) can be divided into six phases, described below.

Phase 1: Identification of Scope, Actors, and Purpose

The first step is to clarify the scope of CRC evaluation by defining what type(s) of public services will be assessed and how the findings will be used. This should provide a basis for building a coalition of like-minded groups since the credibility of survey findings depends to some degree on the initial legitimacy of the group conducting the survey.

Phase 2: Questionnaire Design

Focus group sessions are then held with service providers and service users to inform the questionnaire content. This helps to define the structure and size of the questionnaires. Once designed, questionnaires should be tested on focus

groups.



Focus group discussion in a village in Tumkur

Phase 3: Sampling

Prior to determining the survey sample size, attention should be paid to the geographic region(s) in which the survey will be launched. Attention should also be paid to the budget, time and organizational capacity, which can limit the survey size. Sample respondents need to be selected for the survey. In most CRC surveys, the most likely unit of analysis is the household.

Phase 4: Execution of Survey

Survey personnel should have a good understanding of the purpose of the project and receive training before being sent to conduct the survey. To ensure that the survey's credibility is not compromised by inaccurate recording of household responses, it is useful to perform random spot monitoring of interviews.

Phase 5: Analyzing Data

Once all the data have been consolidated, analysis can begin. Statistical tests should be run on the data to determine whether the survey results can be applied to the greater population and whether differences between sub-groups are statistically significant.

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Phase 6: Dissemination

Instead of using report card results to publicly embarrass service providers, first share the preliminary findings with them so they can respond. Any genuine explanations should then be noted in the final report and factored into the recommendations. The findings from the report card can then be presented at a press conference or similar event. It is often useful to bring together service providers and users after the report cards have been published, to give both parties a chance to discuss their reactions. The CRC report should present the survey results, draw conclusions from them, and recommend steps to fix any problems the survey identified. It should include both the positive and the negative results, and apart from exceptional cases, it should be a catalyst for change rather than a condemnation of service providers.

The CRC process has resulted in some important successes:

- Three agencies – Bangalore Telecom, the Electricity Board, and the Water and Sewerage Board – streamlined their bill collection systems after the 1999 survey.
- With PAC’s assistance, the Bangalore Development Authority developed its own report card, which it used to obtain feedback from customers on corruption and to identify weaknesses in service delivery.
- The Bangalore City Corporation and the Bangalore Development Authority also initiated a joint forum of representatives from NGOs and public officials to identify solutions to high-priority problems.
- Two large public hospitals in the city that had received very poor rankings agreed to support an initiative designed by a non-

governmental organization to set up “help desks” to assist patients and to train their staff to be more responsive to patients’ needs.

The PAC has assisted groups in many other countries seeking to implement its methodology and has developed a list of issues that any group interested in conducting a report card survey should consider.

- *Requirement of a Strong Lead Institution:* The ultimate success of a CRC project depends in large part on the institution that leads it. It should also be experienced in conducting surveys and willing to work with multiple stakeholders drawn from throughout society.
- *Evaluation of the Socio-Political Context:* Governments must be able to respond to feedback in order for a CRC to produce meaningful changes. Citizens must not be too intimidated to respond to survey questions, and the safety of enumerators and respondents should be guaranteed.
- *Development of an Advocacy Strategy:* Advocacy efforts should always be directed to the level of government (local, state, or national) responsible for the service being assessed. Including some survey results that reflect favorably upon the service provider will help the provider feel more comfortable with the process.
- *Requirement of Technical Skills:* The group conducting the CRC survey may need technical assistance from outside groups on such issues as survey techniques, details of local service provision, and survey fieldwork.
- *Consideration of Cost:* The cost of a CRC survey will vary depending on factors such as the sample size, the number of

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personnel needed to conduct the survey and the level of training they will need, communication and information equipment needed (computers, phones, etc.), the cost of printing questionnaires, wages to be paid to interviewers and supervisors, any fees due to outside agencies to which certain tasks have been outsourced, and travel and dissemination costs.

HAKIKAZI CATALYST USES PIMA CARDS IN TANZANIA

Formed in 2000, Hakikazi Catalyst is a Tanzanian economic and social justice advocacy organization that empowers marginalized people both to influence government decisions affecting their lives and to achieve their civil and political rights at the local, national, and international levels.

Hakikazi developed PIMA cards (“pima” means “measure” in Swahili) as a simple, flexible evaluation tool that enables communities to gather qualitative and quantitative information on inputs (what funds did the community receive?), outputs (how were the funds used?), and outcomes (how did the projects affect the community?) of government expenditures on poverty-reduction strategies.

Both local communities and district governments complete the PIMA cards to assess the quality of goods and services provided by the district government to local communities. Based on the results, the district government and local communities decide on the next steps to be taken to address communities’ priorities and to continue information-sharing in a systematic way. The PIMA card process involves eight steps:

Step 1: District-Level Groundwork. Hakikazi selects villages to participate in the exercise, based on relationships developed with them over time. District workshops are held to mobilize stakeholders, explain budget monitoring systems and the PIMA card process, and generate support for the process.

Step 2: Skills Building. Hakikazi organizes workshops to train individuals within a

community (drawn from existing community-based organizations) who will lead the PIMA card process. They provide participants with skills to gather quantitative and qualitative budget information in communities, analyze government budgets and present their results to decision-makers and communities.

Step 3: Community-Level Groundwork. Next, Hakikazi convenes public debates in the participating communities on the government’s poverty reduction strategy. Following discussions in small groups, community members select two sectors they want to monitor, such as education, health, roads, agriculture, or water. Each community also selects seven to 15 people as a village monitoring committee, which will collect information on the selected priority areas using the PIMA cards.

Step 4: Design of Village PIMA Cards. These cards are de-signed to focus on the quality and quantity of expenditures at community level in the sectors under investigation.

ABSTRACT OF VILLAGE PIMA CARD

| Agriculture and Markets | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|
| B1 | Extension Services | | | | |
| | What types of extension advice were provided in your village last year and how satisfied are you with these services? | | | | |
| | | Not received | Poor | Satisfactory | Good |
| | Pest management | | | | |
| | Improved seeds | | | | |
| | Soil conservation | | | | |

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| | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Farmers' support association | | | | | |
| Irrigation techniques | | | | | |
| Crop processing (etc.) | | | | | |

Step 5: Design of District-Level PIMA Cards.

The district-level PIMA Card is called a district self-evaluation and is completed by a district-level government official. The questions in the self-evaluation card mirror the questions asked by the village monitors at the community level.

Step 6: Information Collection with PIMA Cards.

Hakikazi and its facilitators start by training one village monitoring committee on how to collect data using the PIMA card, which is then tested in that committee's community. The village monitoring committees then collect information on allocations received from the district and on expenditures at the community level through analysis of the village government's bank statements, accounting records and receipts.

Step 7: Analysis of Local Government Budgets.

Hakikazi analyzes district budgets to identify budget allocations for the sectors selected for monitoring. Hakikazi compares the results from its budget analysis with the results reported in the PIMA cards completed by the district officials (through the self-evaluation) and by the communities.

Step 8: Analysis and Feedback. A report with information from both the district and communities is drafted, peer-reviewed and shared with the communities and local government. The results of the PIMA card studies are shared at the community level (where the

village government can act upon them), the district and regional levels (where practical decisions that favor poor people can be influenced), and the national level (where policymaking bodies can respond to them).



Budget information on display in Mkonoo village

Hakikazi has twice undertaken PIMA card studies and has already achieved some success in identifying problems in village development expenditures. For example, village monitoring committees and Hakikazi have brought misuse of funds to the attention of village, ward and district governments.

Hakikazi faces these challenges in implementing PIMA cards:

- In the absence of a national right to information law, access to information remains a major obstacle for Hakikazi and the local communities that implement the PIMA card process.
- Hakikazi has also found that variations in the standard of facilitation during the information collection process lead to variations in the completed PIMA cards.
- Analysis of district budgets has often been difficult and time-consuming due to their opaque and inconsistent presentation. It is also frequently questionable whether

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budget documents provide honest representations of what development activities are realistically possible, given the extreme financial constraints.