



## Service Delivery Monitoring Sub-Strategy

MARCH 2018 | Pat Scheid

### GOAL

The goal of the Hewlett Foundation's service delivery monitoring sub-strategy is to contribute to more equitable and better quality services in health, education, water, and sanitation, especially for women, girls, lower income groups, and other marginalized sectors of society. The intent is to produce these intermediate outcomes:

- Governments (national and local) and service providers do a better job of implementing service delivery policies and system reforms. This means making clear what governments' responsibilities are, committing budget and other needed resources, and ensuring those resources reach communities in a way that is responsive to citizen feedback, demands, and needs and that is gender-sensitive and equitable.
- Inclusive citizen groups gain confidence, are able to understand and use information, and implement advocacy strategies to affect positive change in the services they receive.
- Citizens' trust and confidence in governments' ability to deliver on their promises increases, especially among those citizens who have been traditionally marginalized or encountered barriers to full participation.

### LINK TO STRATEGY

This sub-strategy focuses on where citizens most frequently expect to receive benefits from their governments: the provision of essential public services. Under this sub-strategy we will support programs that offer inclusive opportunities to learn more about how to increase the motivation and ability of citizens to work together to hold their governments (national and local) and service providers accountable for the delivery of quality public services. These

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programs can take many forms, but are commonly referred to as “social accountability” programs.

We expect that our grantmaking under the Fiscal Transparency sub-strategy will help create the conditions for success for this strategy in three important ways: (a) reinforcing the implementation of global norms and standards related to budget transparency, extractive revenues transparency, and open contracting at the country level will create common expectations among government and nongovernment actors about what information the public has a right to know; (b) service delivery monitoring grantees will benefit from the information produced, analytical tools, approaches, and advocacy efforts of these expert organizations; and (c) opportunities for country- or regional-level collaboration will emerge.

## WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

**Context and the politics of service delivery matter.** In recent research, Fox and Aceron (2016) suggest that social accountability interventions will be more likely to succeed where practitioners are equipped to analyze and effectively navigate their local context — the politics, administrative structures, regulations, oversight bodies (or absence thereof), and stakeholder groups associated with service delivery. One or more of these factors may also differ across public service sectors within a country.

In countries where implementation of decentralization or devolution of public service delivery is still in an early stage, local governments may be hampered by lack of authority, capacity, or budgetary resources to affect change (World Bank, 2017). In their systematic review of community accountability initiatives in the education sector, Westhorp et al. (2016) note that it is important to understand the state of play, but that democratic or political decentralization where adequate power, authority, resources, and accountability is devolved to local governments is the most conducive to successful community accountability.

Some local contexts may appear “open,” but in fact still prove challenging. Government policies that support transparency and expansion of citizen participation may be in place, but not yet aligned with ways for citizens to engage with their government. Important factors include whether there is sufficient space for civil society organizations to play a role beyond direct service provision; whether citizens have trust in their governments or the confidence that their own actions can effect positive change (citizen agency); and whether there are capable NGOs and local grassroots organizations, associations, or a culture of collective citizen action that can be harnessed.

**Constructive engagement can take many forms, and may change over time.** Given a range of contexts, different tactics are required. Constructive engagement exists on a continuum that includes a range of adversarial and cooperative tactics. These may be adapted over time

depending on the types of information, advocacy, alliances, and citizen collective action that ultimately incentivize governments and service providers to respond positively.

**Citizens need information that is meaningful, actionable, and that creates a response.**

The salience of different types of information is not only conditioned by the context. The type of information matters, as does whether citizens, service providers, the media, and government perceive its source as legitimate. The support that local stakeholders receive to take action, often through trusted mediators, also matters. In their recent research, Björkman Nyqvist et al. (2017) find that community-based monitoring in the health sector in Uganda did produce significant long-term impacts on health outcomes when comparative information about health facility performance was provided, and when health providers and community groups agreed on and followed through on actions (or where needed, sanctions) that were both within their local control and could affect service quality. Gullo et al. (2016) and Westhorp et al. (2016) likewise find that community-based monitoring shows promise where local stakeholders (service providers and community groups) are able to exercise sufficient agency and focus on those actions that are most likely to affect health and education service quality and outcomes.

Boydell and Keesbury (2014) identified the following enabling factors for social accountability to lead to improvements in service delivery:

*Enabling Factors*

Citizens have access to relevant information.	Citizens know their entitlements, have the ability to access information about specific commitments and services as well as information about the relevant decision-making processes.
Citizens have the capacity to use information.	Once citizens have accessed the pertinent information, they have the capacity to use information to support their demands.
The state has the capacity to respond to citizens' requests.	Once citizens' demands are made, duty bearers have the interest and capacity (staff, resources, and remittance) to respond to citizens' requests.
Incentives and sanctions are in place to compel decision makers to respond.	Formal and institutionalized incentives and sanctions that compel duty bearers to act upon requests from citizens are in place.

**Power and participation asymmetries often exclude the most marginalized groups.** The World Bank (2017) observed that participatory processes in service delivery governance are easily subject to elite capture. The most marginalized citizens are often the least able to participate in a meaningful way due to such factors as opportunity/time costs as well as social and political norms. Facilitated and structured processes for ensuring equitable participation or other mechanisms that level the playing field and lower these barriers are thus needed if social accountability is to achieve its promise.

## PRIORITY AREAS OF GRANTMAKING

We envision these specific areas of grantmaking under our service delivery monitoring sub-strategy:

- Supporting the work of **exemplar organizations and alliances** that use social accountability approaches in a way that will contribute to the Hewlett Foundation's goal and intermediate outcomes.
- Supporting empirical research, impact evaluations, convenings, and peer learning that will generate and share evidence to better understand whether, how, and under what conditions (local context) these interventions work; their contribution to improve development outcomes; and the extent to which these approaches can be scaled, institutionalized (through legal, policy, or regulatory changes), and sustained over time.
- Creating opportunities to close the knowledge gap and better connect activists, advocates, and sector-focused practitioners of social accountability to the transparency, participation, and accountability field to cultivate more practice-based learning.

As noted, most social accountability tactics depend on citizens using information about their rights, government commitments, spending, and/or service delivery quality to press their case. This information may come from official sources, or be externally generated. To advance and sustain citizen engagement, information must be what users need and care about and must come from a source they consider credible, and in a form they can digest and act on in ways that are likely to make a real difference — concerns that will inform our future grants.

Some of the types of information that we think will be important include the following:

- Information about citizens' rights and the government's responsibilities and commitments in relation to public services provision and reforms; this could also include country-level commitments in response to global agreements (for example, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals related to education, health, water, sanitation, and the United Nations Foundation's Family Planning 2020).
- Information about service delivery quality, service delivery inputs (budgets and expenditures, government contracts, or timely delivery of critical inputs and supplies), facility-level performance indicators, or progress in improving development

outcomes (measures of children’s learning; women’s use of contraceptives; maternal and child health; safe, reliable, and adequate water supply for multiple uses; etc.).

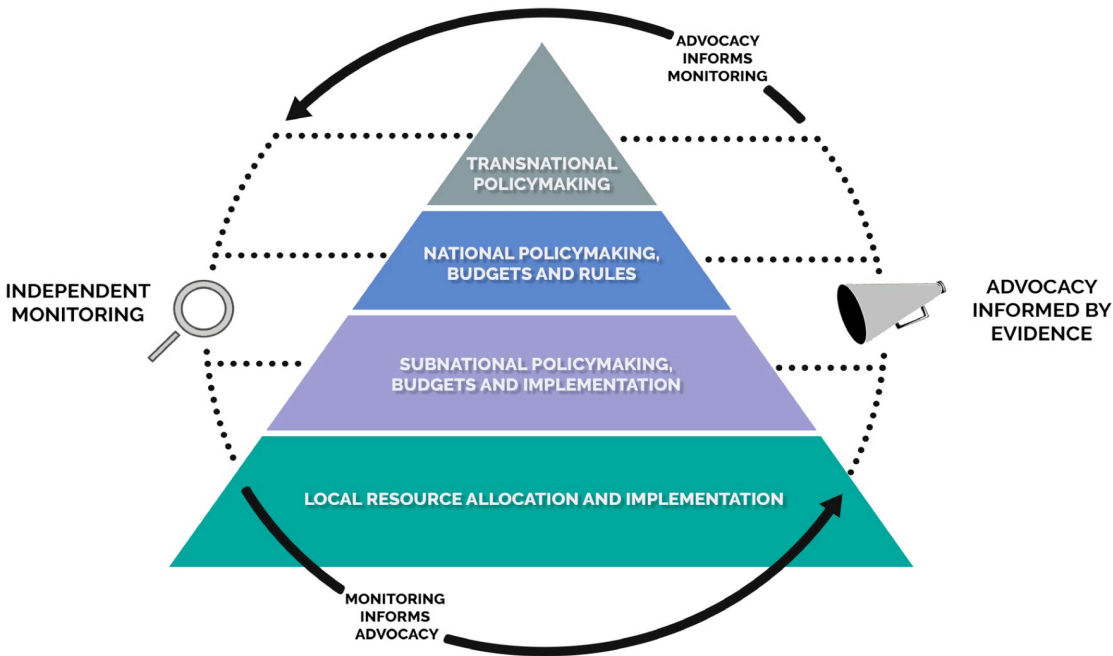
- Information about what citizens should expect in terms of coverage and service delivery standards, prices and fees for services, and what they can do when their experience differs from stated policies.
- Citizen feedback about their satisfaction with service provider performance in specific areas of concern, or on their experiences at health facilities, schools, or other points of service delivery.
- Information about corruption or corrupt practices that affect citizens’ access to quality services, and what citizens can do about them.
- Information about the amount that people are taxed and what they are receiving (or not) in terms of service delivery in return.

Achieving and then translating accountability gains from the subnational level to the national level is often elusive. Therefore, our future grantmaking will also place more attention on a challenging frontier: finding ways for civil society organizations and citizen groups to engage in strategic advocacy or collective action that builds and sustains accountability at the national level.

Given the significant experimentation that has already taken place in social accountability interventions, and the foundation’s limited resources, our grantmaking in service delivery monitoring will be directed toward organizations that have a well-articulated hypothesis about how their program will lead to changes in citizens’ sense of agency and ability to take collective action, government or service provider responsiveness, and more equitable and better quality service delivery. Organizations must also demonstrate a commitment to learning through evaluation, and connecting and sharing with other practitioners, researchers, and donors.

We will strongly prefer programs that can help reveal, and importantly contribute to, closing the gaps between the promises that donors and national governments make and the service delivery realities that people experience in their communities. Thus, we anticipate that many of our service delivery monitoring grantees will also use the results from social accountability interventions as evidence to strengthen and “give teeth” to advocacy campaigns and policy dialogue, as illustrated below (Source: Jonathan Fox and Waad Tammaa in Fox and Halloran (2016), p.6).

**SEEKING SYNERGY**  
**MULTI-LEVEL INDEPENDENT POLICY MONITORING AND ADVOCACY**



Finally, we will strongly prefer organizations that can articulate a vision about how their intervention will lead to normalization, broader uptake, and sustained transparency, as well as more inclusive citizen participation and accountability mechanisms within a country or region. Fox and Aceron (2016) describe this as “taking scale into account,” referring to “how different levels of decision-making interact with each other (from the local level to district, provincial, national and transnational arenas) – both for the public sector and for civil society.”(p. 3)

**WHO WILL WE SUPPORT?**

The field of social accountability has grown over the past decade. More international and national-level nongovernmental organizations have begun to experiment with social accountability approaches that enable citizens to better understand their rights, have a voice in determining local development priorities, and exercise oversight over public service delivery. Some of these organizations identify themselves as practitioners in the “transparency, participation, and accountability” field. Others identify themselves as human rights organizations or development organizations that have adopted a rights-based approach. Still others are sector-specific development organizations that focus on ensuring effective service delivery through system-strengthening work or advocacy, and recognize that citizen engagement is part of a long-term effort for sustained progress. The Hewlett Foundation is interested in what can be learned from a range of effective organizations that apply social accountability approaches in education, health, water, and sanitation.

The most successful service delivery monitoring grantees/organizations will be those that have the knowledge and ability to do the following:

- Deeply understand the context in which they work and have a commitment over the long haul.
- Build capacity of *organized and inclusive citizen groups* to interpret and use information, especially member-based organizations.
- Facilitate citizen *collective action* to use this information to make demands and/or co-create solutions with service providers and governments.
- Leverage existing or create new *channels or platforms for citizen feedback, constructive engagement, or redress actions* with service providers or governments.
- Link these efforts to *well-structured, evidence-based advocacy campaigns and other efforts to institutionalize accountability mechanisms and reforms*.

We hypothesize that these grantees/organizations will be more likely to achieve positive changes in citizen agency, government responsiveness, and service delivery improvements. Positive changes in government responsiveness may in reality exist along a continuum that could range from listening to citizen feedback and taking it into consideration during priority setting, resource allocation, and joint problem-solving that leads to improved problem resolution, to institutionalizing more robust feedback loops and changes that contribute to more effective policy implementation.

We hypothesize that “constructive engagement” also exists on a continuum from more adversarial to more cooperative interactions with government, and could change over time. Similarly, different stakeholders within government or other influential actors may react differently to different types of information. Organizations should choose and continue to adapt their use of information, different forms of engagement (adversarial or cooperative), and advocacy strategies based on their analysis of the local context and their continuous learning about what gets governments and service providers to respond, implement, and sustain positive changes.

By *organized and inclusive citizen groups*<sup>1</sup> we mean local groups with the following conditions:

- Groups that are already constituted/formed and have a history of working together (and which may be informal such as membership organizations, neighborhood associations, local activists groups, etc.).
- Groups that have a direct stake in the problem and are thus motivated to engage in a sustained way in its resolution with intermediaries and government actors.

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1. The Hewlett Foundation is not able to make direct grants to local citizen groups.

- Groups that offer a safe and inclusive space for traditionally marginalized groups to participate and benefit (women, girls, people of low socioeconomic status and/or low literacy, different language groups, etc.).

In summary, the foundation will consider the following selection criteria in our service delivery monitoring grantmaking. We will be seeking international, regional, or national-level NGOs that have:

- Strong, legitimate and trusting relationships with *organized and inclusive citizens' organizations* already in place.
- A track record and a commitment to sustaining their work with these groups over time.
- Constructive and multifaceted relationships with relevant government entities (at the national or local level or both, depending on the theory of change).
- Some experience using and/or knowledge of existing accountability mechanisms (if available).
- The capacity to analyze and understand the politics of service delivery and barriers that need to be overcome in relation to gender, socioeconomic status, and other forms of exclusion.
- A demonstrable interest in learning, adapting, and sharing what they do and how they do it.
- A connection to sector-specific and/or global transparency, participation, and accountability networks and platforms.

We also expect grantees to be curious about and have some ideas about how they will test their assumptions and adapt their theory of change over time. We will look for ways to provide additional support (through Organizational Effectiveness grants, peer learning exchanges, and other technical support) to grantees who need help figuring out how to test their assumptions, learn, and adapt.

## WHAT WE ARE NOT FUNDING

We do not intend to fund the following:

- Thematic, stand-alone global or national advocacy or media campaigns that are neither evidence-based nor connected with social accountability or service delivery monitoring efforts



- Pilot or micro-level social accountability programs, unless they offer exceptional opportunities for answering some of our priority learning questions and ideas for how they will do so.
- Programs outside of the Hewlett Foundation's focus regions or sectors.<sup>2</sup>

## LEARNING QUESTIONS

As the foundation implements this sub-strategy, we will be seeking to answer learning questions related to our theory of change, operational and contextual factors, and related assumptions. Following are the priority areas for learning.

### *Theory of Change — Connection between outcomes and intermediate/ultimate outcomes:*

- **To what extent does service delivery monitoring lead or contribute to improved health, education, water, and sanitation outcomes for citizens?** Are there differences in the outcome improvements across sectors? By gender, socioeconomic status, or among certain marginalized groups?
- **Closing the gap between local and national efforts.** What is required to close the gap between subnational or local social accountability efforts to improve service delivery, and national-level implementation of service delivery commitments and reforms?

We will seek to test these related assumptions:

- Well organized and strategic advocacy campaigns that use evidence and build upon subnational service delivery monitoring programs will create sufficient pressure for national-level service delivery reforms.
- NGOs/CSOs are able to form effective alliances, coordinate, and act collectively on national level advocacy campaigns.

### *Theory of Change — Outcome Level:*

- How can a range of types of information across multiple sectors be made more accessible, credible, and relevant to citizens?
- What ways of presenting information are most likely to encourage citizen action?
- How can this information be used to catalyze local action among organized civic groups, local officials, and other community leaders? Are there differences in the types and sources of information that are most important/motivate certain types of civic

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2. Our focus regions are: West Africa, East Africa, and Mexico; our priority sectors are education, health, water, and sanitation.

groups or people (especially women, youth, the poor, informal workers, and other marginalized groups)?

- What can be coupled with this information to increase the likelihood that action is taken? Are there differences in the types/composition of groups or people that take action?

We will seek to test these related assumptions:

- Local CSOs have capacities and resources to generate reliable, accurate, and accessible information; citizens can understand and are motivated to use information; government accepts information is reliable and accurate.
- Government and/or service providers have the incentive to listen to citizens requests; government has authority, capacity, and incentive to make changes to improve service delivery.
- Government and/or service providers respond positively and deliver improved and equitable services that meet citizens' needs.
- With ability, motivation, and the right conditions (e.g., supportive environment, sufficient time and resources, strategies and practices to overcome gender, class, low literacy, and other barriers), citizens will join together to express their interests and take action.
- Government will listen and respond to citizens who speak and act collectively and this will produce a sustained engagement between citizens and government.

### *Theory of Change — Outcome Level:*

- Which citizen-government interfaces are most effective in building trust, reducing leakages, fixing service delivery problems, or institutionalizing changes that close equity gaps? If there are differences across levels of government or across sectors, why does this occur and how can that gap be closed? Why (and how) do gender, socioeconomic status, low literacy, access to technology, and other barriers affect citizen participation and, if so, how can these barriers be overcome?
- To what extent (and under what conditions) can citizens' demands for information and feedback contribute to improvements in the quality and relevance of the information that governments produce and make available to the public?
- How do service delivery monitoring efforts connect to and leverage accountability ecosystems at the country level, such as offices of inspectors, policy oversight committees, ombudsmen, complaint mechanisms, courts, etc.? When are these effective and when are they not?

We will seek to test these related assumptions:

- Channels for constructive citizen engagement with government can be identified, constructed, and learned; making use of information can be an important part of citizens' constructive engagement.
- Government will listen and respond to citizens who constructively engage with them under the right conditions and these conditions can be identified/learned.

### **Operational and contextual questions:**

- What are the most effective forms and means of support for subnational civic groups such as teachers' and parents' associations, youth groups, women's organizations, school management committees, health committees, water users associations, local development committees, village councils, etc.? How can such groups avoid being captured by elites and how are these groups engaging (or not) in useful ways with national-level civil society organizations?
- What are the synergies between service delivery monitoring, fiscal transparency, and governance channels work, and how do we facilitate those connections?
- How do we know when political economy contexts or other changes suggest that efforts to encourage accountability should be redirected, scaled back, or abandoned?

We will seek to test these related assumptions:

- Grantees/CSOs can build partnerships (trust and respect) with citizens, citizen groups, and other CSOs; can avoid being captured by elites; and not compete with each other for resources.
- Grantees are capable of developing tactics in relation to analysis of context (political/economy/cultural); monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness; and learning and adapting their tactics accordingly over time to increase the chance of success.
- The Hewlett Foundation will be able to identify specific and actionable ways to support our grantees in learning and adapting.

## **WHAT WILL ALL THIS LOOK LIKE IN FIVE YEARS?**

In five years, we hope to have seeded multiple service delivery monitoring/social accountability interventions that have demonstrably increased government responsiveness to citizens' demands and needs for improved service delivery. Through this work, we hope that the evidence base around social accountability is much stronger and more nuanced. We also hope to better understand gender, class, and other barriers, which approaches are more successful at overcoming these, and whether there are differences in the results that can be achieved across different types of services (education, health, water, and sanitation).

Within the next five years, we expect that many of our grantees will have achieved the following intermediate outcomes:

- Sustained participation of a variety of citizens in solving service delivery problems, and increased citizen agency and trust in their government.
- Increased government and service provider responsiveness to citizen feedback and demands – in particular, reducing resource leakages, fixing service delivery problems, and addressing equity gaps.
- A better track record of performance by governments in delivering on their promises (relevant Sustainable Development Goals and other commitments for improving service delivery and people’s social outcomes).

We also expect that through these experiences and our encouragement and support for our grantees’ learning, we will have contributed evidence and knowledge related to the priority learning questions identified in this sub-strategy. Finally, we expect our grantmaking portfolio to have evolved in the following ways:

- We have a better understanding of the role of gender, class, and other differences in service delivery monitoring initiatives.
- We have a cohort of grantees in the health, education, water, and sanitation sectors who are both testing service delivery monitoring interventions and approaches for moving from local to national-level reforms and accountability, as well as sharing what they are learning with others.
- We have examples of effective collaboration and alliances between organizations (CSOs/NGOs and civic groups, advocacy organizations, researchers, etc.) working toward transparency, participation, and accountability goals.
- We have connected those doing social accountability and budget/fiscal openness work in specific sectors to transparency, participation, and accountability field learning platforms and networks, resulting in expanded field learning.

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