

Citizen Report Cards

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Tool summary

Citizen Report Cards (CRC) are participatory surveys that solicit user feedback on the quality and performance of public services in order to raise citizen awareness and ultimately bring about reforms in the public service delivery system. A key feature of the CRC method is that survey findings are placed in the public domain through the use of media and public meetings thus making it an effective instrument to promote transparency, responsiveness and public accountability.

What is it?

CRC is a tool to engage citizens in assessing the quality of public services such as primary health care, water supply, public transport, elementary education etc. The survey can be used for an overall assessment of the performance of a public agency based on the customer/client/citizens' experience captured in terms of their satisfaction in relation to specific attributes of services such as access, availability, quality and reliability, along with agency responsiveness and transparency of the service provider. When CRCs are applied over regular intervals of time, they can also help benchmark the changes over a period of time. On several occasions, CRCs have even revealed hidden costs incurred by users/citizens in the form of bribes while seeking access to or using a particular service.

CRC was pioneered in the early 90s by [Public Affairs Centre](#) (PAC) in India. Since then CRC has grown as a widely applied tool by CSOs, multilateral donor agencies and the governments across the globe. According to PAC, the guiding principle behind CRC is to introduce market-type incentives to the functioning of public services. Unlike private sector companies that have to ensure customer satisfaction in a competitive environment to survive, public agencies are often monopolies facing almost no competition and consequently lack incentive to be responsive to clients' needs. CRC is not just another public opinion survey; rather, it is a collective reflection of citizens' feedback on the performance of a service provider, shaped by their experience of having actually used a particular service for a length of time. Its strength is its ability to quantify the user feedback using a representative sample. By systematically gathering and disseminating user feedback, the CRC provides the information needed to goad public service providers towards initiating reforms.



CRCs are often used in instances where important data such as user perceptions on quality and satisfaction with services, is scant or absent. Local and national newspapers and the electronic media are very often important allies in the CRC process. Undertaking a credible CRC initiative requires training in survey methodology including statistical analysis.

The [World Bank](#) cites the following as crucial requirements for an effective CRC initiative:

- A commitment to gather credible data on clients' perceptions;
- Constructive and solution-oriented approach on the part of CSOs rather than confrontational advocacy;
- Competence, professionalism and credibility of the group that undertakes the CRC exercise;
- Commitment by the public agency to engage in the process, listen to critical analysis and initiate reformative action based on the findings; and
- Active involvement of the mass media to ensure that the findings are widely disseminated and debated.

How to do it?

Key steps in implementing a CRC are:

1. *Identify scope, actors and purpose*

- Determine the type (s) of service and the unit of service delivery that would be assessed using CRC.
- Recruit credible partners such as NGOs, policy institutes, academic institutions, specialist polling firms who have the technical capacity to undertake/assist with the exercise.
- Determine which segments of the population will be sampled.

2. *Design the questionnaire*

- Hold Focus Group Discussions involving both users and service providers to identify issues to be assessed.
- Determine the structure and size of the questionnaire(s). Some CRC initiatives have questionnaires tailored for different respondent groups like citizens, service providers, state officials, etc.
- Pre-test or pilot test the questionnaire (survey instrument) to assess if it captures what it is intended to.

3. *Sampling*



- Decide on an appropriate sampling design, size and scope.

4. *Execution of the survey*

- Select and train field investigators to administer the survey and organize a field demonstration for the trained investigators to familiarize them to the methodology
- It is crucial to do a random on-the-spot check or back-check of interviews and completed questionnaires to ensure the due process is followed and the data collected from respondents and recorded is accurate..

5. *Data entry and analysis*

- CRC data analysis is usually done using SPSS (Statistical Programme for Social Sciences) or some other statistical software.
- Ensure that the transfer of raw data from the questionnaires into the computer programme is accurate
- Analyse the survey findings to assess the citizens' feedback along the established parameters of quality, access, reliability, problem incidence, problem resolution, instances of bribery etc.

6. *Dissemination of findings*

- Formulate a report of the CRC findings. Ensure wide dissemination of the findings through newspapers, public meetings, electronic media including the internet etc.
- There are a variety of strategies to reach out to the media such as press kits, press-releases, press conferences, and the translation of the main report into local languages.
- Organize a joint meeting between users and service providers to allow constructive dialogue to take place and put pressure on service providers to improve their performance.

7. *Institutionalisation of CRC*

- Take steps to institutionalize CRCs as a source of regular feedback on the performance of service providers. In Bangalore (India), for instance, the Public Affairs Centre conducted three CRCs covering a wide range of public services over a period of ten years and was able to measure considerable improvements in the quality of service provision during this period.

Benefits

- CRCs generate experience driven, scientifically analyzed and quantified knowledge that makes it difficult for the service providers to ignore it.
- CRCs enhance public awareness on issues of service quality. They encourage citizens to pro-actively demand greater accountability, accessibility and responsiveness from service providers;
- The CRC process facilitates open and proactive discussion on the performance of public agencies. In many cases, it has led to enhanced responsiveness and reforms to improve the quality of services.
- Enables federal ministries and planning departments to prioritize budget allocations and monitor implementation.
- Facilitates partnerships by bringing together citizens, CSOs and government and civil society organizations in face-to-face meetings.
- Expands “social capital” by uniting communities around issues of shared concern.

Challenges and lessons

- Conducting a large survey of service users can be costly and time consuming. In addition to skilled human resources and a dedicated organisation to sustain the process, it may require external financial support.
- CRCs require country contexts that are open to civil society/citizen advocacy and external pressure to engender public service improvements. Even in the context of relatively open and democratic societies, policy makers and service providers may feel threatened by the CRC exercise. It is therefore important from the very outset to try and engage public institutions in a constructive and solution-oriented manner. Involving key government actors in training events and preparatory sessions can help garner their support and ease fears.
- It is also very crucial that meetings between users and service providers do not become forums for hurling personal attacks on service providers. Instead, they must remain constructive and focussed on the problem at hand while making concrete recommendations to improve the provision of services.
- There can be institutional resistance/lack of will to act on CRC findings and implement reforms. Sustained follow-up and pressure may be required to translate CRC findings into actual reforms.
- CRCs require support from the media who need to be engaged from the very outset. In countries where the media is censored or otherwise controlled, it maybe harder to disseminate information but CSOs can still hold public meetings and post information boards.
- The CRC process can lead to citizen disillusionment if there is no perceptible improvement in the quality of services. It is important that the public remain

informed through meetings and seminars about the constraints public agencies face and cautioned against expecting too much and too soon.

Key resources

Ackerman, J.M. *Human Rights and Social Accountability*. Social Development Department, World Bank (2005)

<http://zunia.org/uploads/media/knowledge/Human%20Rights%20and%20Social%20Accountability%20FINAL.pdf>

- ☞ This article describes the application of CRC methodology in Bangalore and the lessons learnt.

Asian Development Bank (ADB), Manila: *E-Learning Toolkit on the Citizen Report Card (CRC) methodology*,

<http://www.citizenreportcard.com>

- ☞ This online tool-kit is a comprehensive guide for self learning on CRC methodology

Public Affairs Centre (PAC), Bangalore – India

<http://www.pacindia.org>

- ☞ PAC is the pioneer in CRCs. Along with its sister concern, Public Affairs Foundation (PAF), PAC has conducted several CRCs over the last 16 years on a wide range of services/ sectors/agencies. PAC and PAF have also undertaken local, national and international capacity building programmes on CRC. Their website contains numerous CRC reports.

Ramkumar,V. *Our Money Our Responsibility: A Citizen Guide to Monitoring Government Expenditure*. International Budget Partnership (2008)

<http://www.internationalbudget.org/resources/expenditure/IBP-Expenditure-Monitoring-Guide.pdf>

- ☞ Amongst other PG tools, the Guide provides a useful description of CRC methodology and application

South Asia Social Accountability Net (SASANet)

<http://www.sasanet.org/aboutsasa.do>

- ☞ SasaNet aims to enable networking among different stakeholders and exchange and cross-fertilization of ideas/ best practices. SasaNet acts as a key tool in capacity building and communication efforts of institutions and individuals interested in social accountability. SASANet contains description of a variety of participatory tools and case studies including CRCs.

Transparency International, Berlin (2001): *Corruption Fighters Toolkit - Civil society experiences and emerging strategies*

http://www.transparency.org/tools/e_toolkit/corruption_fighters_tool_kit_2001

- ☞ This tool kit provides a description of applied CRC methodology along with case studies

Water & Sanitation Programme, African Region & Kenya Ministry of Water & Irrigation (2007): *Citizens' report card on urban water, sanitation and solid waste services in Kenya – Summary of results from Nairobi, Kisumu and Mombasa*

http://www.wsp.org/UserFiles/file/712200745708_Citizens_Report_Card_-_Summary_Kenya.pdf

Summary_Kenya.pdf

- ☞ This report on CRCs is a comprehensive description of applying CRC in water and sanitation sector

World Bank, Washington D.C

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/EXTPCENG/0,,contentMDK:20507680~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:410306,00.html>

- ☞ The World Bank has been one of the key supporters in globalizing the application of CRCs. This html page provides a description of differences between the Community Score Card and the CRC and offers several links to useful CRC studies from different parts of the world.

Case studies

[Public Affairs Centre](#), Bangalore, India

CRCs originated in 1993 in the South Indian city of Bangalore where they were used to assess the deteriorating standards in the city's public services. The results showed very low ratings by citizens for all the major service providers in the city. The exercise was repeated in 1999 and 2003 to provide comparative assessment of the progress. In addition to improvements in service delivery, the exercise resulted in the increase of "social capital" within the local community. The initiative led to the formation of over 100 community based organizations and a unique state-citizen partnership forum to catalyze and assist the service providers to upgrade their services and responsiveness. PAC has conducted several CRCs at various levels such as cities, states and the country as a whole, and specific agencies and services. Key sources of information are:

- Citizens Report Cards: A Case Study
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPCENG/1143141-1116501474243/20507527/CRC_Case.doc
- Making Voice Work: The Report Card on Bangalore's Public Services. The World Bank (2004)
<http://go.worldbank.org/8BWVVK7N0>
- Citizen Report Cards on Public Services, Bangalore, India: Public Affairs Centre (2003)
http://www.pafglobal.org/publications/Bangalore_CRC_background_and_history.pdf
- Local Governance and Pro Poor Service Delivery: Holding the State to Account: Citizens Voice through Report Cards in Bangalore. Balakrishnan, S & Shekar, S. UNDP (2004)
http://cfapp1-docs-public.undp.org/eo/evaldocs1/eo_doc_408022222.pdf
- An Assessment of the Impact of Bangalore Citizen Report Cards on the Performance of Public Agencies, Ravindra, A. The World Bank (2004)
[http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/oed/oeddoclib.nsf/b57456d58aba40e585256ad400736404/d241684df81fce2785256ead0062de10/\\$FILE/ecd_wp_12.pdf](http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/oed/oeddoclib.nsf/b57456d58aba40e585256ad400736404/d241684df81fce2785256ead0062de10/$FILE/ecd_wp_12.pdf)
- Civic Engagement in Public Expenditure Management Case Studies India: A Citizen's Report Card on Karnataka's Governance. The World Bank
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPCENG/1143333-1116505690049/20509270/karnataka.pdf>

CRC by Sirajganj Local Governance Development Fund (SLGDF), Bangladesh



A CRC methodology was used by SLGDF in Bangladesh to assess the space for participatory governance at the local level. The CRC process brought together citizens, local government authorities and civil society organisations in public meetings where citizen assessments of local government performance in areas such as tax collecting, financing and accounting, public participation in budget process and project development were discussed. The report cards showed low levels of government responsiveness to citizen demands and needs. Annual CRCs have now been institutionalised by the local government and have resulted in a greater transparency and accountability, higher levels of citizen participation and improved services.

Source: <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/res11020903.pdf>

Additional Case study resources

Uganda: CRC on health service delivery

CRCs were used to assess national health services delivery in Uganda:
<http://heapol.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/21/2/101#SEC5>

Philippines: CRCs on pro-poor services

In the Philippines, CRCs have been used as a basis for performance-based budget allocations to pro-poor services

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEMPowerment/Resources/14875_FilipinoReportCard-web.pdf; and

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPCENG/1143333-1116505690049/20509283/Filipino+Report+Card+on+Pro-chapter7-report-cards.pdf>

Ukraine People's Voice Project

In Ukraine, the Peoples' Voice Project was set up to support NGOs in the project to assess and improve municipal services delivery:

<http://www.pvp.org.ua/eng/news/chronology/>

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEMPowerment/Resources/14662_Ukr-Ppls-Voice-web.pdf

Ethiopia pilot CRC

In Ethiopia, a pilot CRC was carried out covering water, health, sanitation, education, and agricultural extension services

http://www.capabilityapproach.com/pubs/4_5_Bekele.pdf