

Introducing CBM

The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) is working with the Office of the Premier, the South African Police Service, South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), Department of Social Development and Department of Health to develop ways of bringing citizens' experience of service delivery into the planning and management of these government services.

To do this DPME is conducting a national pilot project. Pilots are being conducted in all provinces with the aim of developing capacity so that citizen-based monitoring can be scaled up.

South Africa's National Development Plan says accountability at the point of delivery is a priority and ways should be found "to enable citizens to provide on-going insights into service delivery". South Africa's Public Service Commission has also noted that "Public participation in South Africa is still too much of a public relations exercise – inputs are solicited from the public but there is little evidence of how this influenced public policy or service delivery design. The public participation model in South Africa is still emergent and alternative approaches need to be tested in practice."

A new approach

Citizen-based monitoring (CBM) is an approach to monitoring government performance that focuses on the experiences of ordinary citizens to strengthen public accountability and drive service delivery improvements. It sees citizens as active participants in shaping what is monitored, how monitoring is done and what interpretations and actions are derived from monitoring data.

A range of approaches have been developed and used around the world and in South Africa. These include citizen report cards, social audits, community monitoring and public hearings. Citizen-based monitoring can be initiated by government, done in partnership with civil society and government, or undertaken independently

of government. Methods that have emerged from civil society-led initiatives draw on a rich tradition of participatory methodologies.

Currently much government monitoring sees information sent upwards to central national collection points. This is analysed and presented to senior decision makers

who adjust policy and programmes to influence outcomes on the ground. Citizen-based monitoring shifts the emphasis to a focus on building local level accountability through the co-production of monitoring information by citizens and frontline officials. It is designed to enhance rather than replace government's existing monitoring systems.

Citizen-based monitoring can be initiated by government, done in partnership with civil society and government, or undertaken independently of government.

Why it is needed

The experience of citizens – as the intended beneficiaries of government services – is a critical component of measuring the performance of government and for the delivery of appropriate and quality services. Currently the emphasis of government's monitoring is on internal government processes and the voice of the citizen is largely absent. It is therefore necessary to support and build systematic ways of bringing the experience of citizens into the monitoring of services. Citizen-based monitoring does not duplicate or replace existing public participation structures or processes such as community development workers and ward committees. It offers the potential to strengthen the monitoring capacity of these by providing tools and methods to enhance public participation in monitoring.

CITIZEN-BASED MONITORING

Building monitoring partnerships to improve service delivery



Listen to me, so I can listen to you



For more information visit
www.thepresidency-dpme.gov.za



THE PRESIDENCY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

HOW CITIZEN-BASED MONITORING WORKS

There are three steps in the citizen-based monitoring process:

Step 1

Community and staff survey

Community members administer a short perception survey on the services provided in different government facilities. Between 600 and 800 surveys are conducted using a team of local community members and community members and government staff are surveyed. Feedback from the survey is documented in a report used to come up with ideas and plans to improve the service.

Step 2

Responding to the survey

Presenting the results of the survey and developing responses and plans to address the challenges identified takes place over a week. A focus group for each of the participating facilities is set up with managers, staff and community representatives. The focus group looks at the survey findings and explores the root causes of problems and how to respond to these. This process is facilitated by the CBM team which includes DPME officials and the Seriti Institute, a not-for-profit organisation contracted to support the citizen-based monitoring pilot. The process is as follows:

1. The first focus group meeting discusses the survey findings.
2. The second focus group meeting explores the root causes of the challenges and successes and developing ideas for improvements.
3. A community meeting is held where the survey findings are discussed and plans for improvement agreed. This starts the process of implementing and monitoring the commitments.

1. Survey

- Up to 800 surveys are administered
- Community and staff are surveyed
- Survey feedback informs a report



2. Survey response

- Focus groups established per facility
- Focus groups explore the core reasons for problems and challenges
- Commitment charters are drafted
- Commitment charters are presented to a community meeting
- The community meeting amends and adopts the commitment charter



3. Monitoring commitments

- Collaboration continues between community and staff responsible for service delivery
- Monitoring partnerships are established
- Community members undertake citizen-based monitoring



Step 3

Monitoring the commitments

The third step builds on the previous steps and requires at least one commitment for change from the participating departments.

Citizen-based monitoring assumes there will be monitoring by multiple stakeholders, however the key focus is on building collaboration between government service providers and community members around service delivery improvements.

Citizen-based monitoring aims to catalyse on-going monitoring partnerships. These could include strengthening existing feedback mechanisms such as suggestion boxes, community meetings and information sharing on community radio. Sector departments support the process by including the commitments made in their performance management systems and reporting cycles.

This however is not enough on its own and community involvement is vital.