

# Citizen-Led Oversight: Empowering Marginalized Communities for Equitable Public Service Delivery

*Presentation by*

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# Background

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The recent youth-led uprising in Bangladesh can be seen, in many ways, as a consequence of a governance failure rooted in a significant lack of democratic accountability.

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The processes and structures through which decisions are made and authority is exercised to manage the country's resources and affairs have consistently ignored the voices of the people.

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This neglect has led to the breakdown of government institutions and the distortion of mechanisms that were originally designed to hold them accountable.

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As a result, even newly established institutions have struggled to function effectively, impeding the nation's progress towards sustainable economic development, social justice, and equity.

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This requires a comprehensive reform agenda involving public, political, cultural, and civic actors, as well as non-state actors (NSAs), to ensure inclusivity and address the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle.

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Without a robust accountability system, governance will continue to erode, preventing meaningful reforms and making desired outcomes unattainable.



# Scope

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Women, low-income households, ethnic minorities, and other marginalized communities often experience systemic exclusion, limited-service availability, and lower-quality provision.

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Empowering citizens to oversee public service delivery through direct participation could bring a more inclusive, accountable approach to governance that prioritizes the needs of these marginalized populations.

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Citizen participation in governance has been identified globally as a cornerstone of democratic development and for improved service outcomes.

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In Bangladesh, a country with an expanding yet resource-limited public sector, citizen-led initiatives can potentially mitigate gaps in governance and improve service delivery across primary healthcare and primary education.

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This study focuses on creating a framework establishing citizen-led oversight and accountability mechanisms in Bangladesh, focusing on the primary education and primary health care sector, to improve services for women and other marginalized groups.



# Study area

## Sectors Covered:

Primary Education: Government primary schools and community schools.

Primary Health Care: Community clinics, union health centers, and upazila health complexes.

## Geographic Focus:

Both urban and rural areas, with emphasis on underserved and marginalized communities.

# Target Stakeholders



## Primary Stakeholders:

Citizens (parents, students, patients, and community leaders).

Service providers (teachers, health workers, and local administrators).

## Secondary Stakeholders:

Government agencies (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare).

Non-governmental organizations and advocacy groups.

Development partners and donors.



# Methodology

## Literature Review

- A comprehensive exploration of policy process theories is conducted to understand their relevance and applicability in the context of Bangladesh. The review examines key theoretical frameworks, including their practical implications, and evaluates how they align with or diverge from the unique socio-political and cultural realities of the country.

## Expert Group Meeting

- A structured discussion with a diverse panel of experts, including academics, policymakers, practitioners, and civil society representatives, has been organized to gain insights.



# Impact of inclusion of marginalized group in citizen oversight mechanism - *Key Impacts*

## **Enhanced Equity and Inclusiveness**

Broader Representation  
Addressing Marginalized Concerns

## **Improved Accountability**

Bottom-Up Pressure  
Increased Responsiveness

## **Better Service Delivery**

Customized Solutions  
Increased Service Utilization

## **Strengthened Social Cohesion**

Fostering Collaboration  
Empowering Marginalized Voices

## **Transparency in Resource Allocation**

Preventing Resource Capture  
Advocating for Fair Distribution





# Citizen-Led Oversight: A Framework for Accountability





# Key Components of the Study

## Assessment of Current Systems:

- Evaluate existing oversight mechanisms for primary education and health care.
- Identify gaps in service delivery, accountability, and citizen engagement.

## Global Best Practices:

- Review citizen-led accountability models from other countries.

## Citizen Engagement Strategies:

- Explore tools for community participation, such as scorecards, feedback forums, and digital platforms.
- Identify barriers to participation, especially for marginalized groups.

## Policy and Institutional Frameworks for Capacity Building:

- Recommend necessary reforms to institutionalize citizen-led oversight.
- Identify training requirements for relevant stakeholders.
- Develop strategies for sustained capacity development.



# Rationale for Citizen-Led Oversight in Bangladesh

- Citizen-led oversight addresses gaps that traditional accountability mechanisms often fail to resolve.
- Key advantages include:
  - **Empowering Marginalized Groups:** Ensuring their voices are heard in decision-making processes.
  - **Enhancing Transparency:** Reducing corruption by increasing public scrutiny.
  - **Promoting Service Responsiveness:** Facilitating real-time feedback on service quality.
  - **Strengthening Social Capital:** Fostering collaboration between citizens, government, and other stakeholders.



# Existing Citizen-led Oversight mechanisms in Bangladesh

## primary health care

- Community Clinics and Community Groups: Community Clinic Management Groups (CCMGs)
- Union Health and Family Welfare Centers (UHFWCs)
- Health Watch Committees: Citizen Monitoring Groups (CMGs)- led by NGOs
- Citizen Charters
- Social Audits and Public Hearings- led by NGOs
- Grievance Redress Mechanisms - Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)

## primary education

- School Management Committees (SMCs)
- Citizen Charters in Schools
- Social Audits and Community Monitoring: Civil Society Initiatives
- Grievance Redress Mechanisms - The Directorate of Primary Education (DPE)
- Hotlines and Digital Platforms
- Local Government Involvement : Union Parishads and Upazila Education Committees, Budget Oversight
- Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS): led by NGOs and Research organizations

# Current Challenges of implementing Citizen-Led Oversight in Bangladesh





# Successful Citizen-Led Accountability Initiatives – Best practices

## **Nepal: The Community Scorecard**

- Local communities, particularly women's groups, evaluate the performance of local public services on criteria such as accessibility, quality, and responsiveness. Citizens then engage with service providers to discuss the scores and demand improvements.
- Impact: The scorecard process has led to increased community participation, particularly among women, in decision-making processes

## **Sri Lanka: Women's Empowerment through Local Government Accountability**

- Women's groups participate in local government councils, budget hearings, and community consultations to monitor the delivery of services
- Impact: This citizen-led approach has resulted in greater transparency in local governance, with more funds allocated to women's health and education

## **Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) Program by World Vision in Uganda:**

- Participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in health service scorecard evaluations revealed challenges in accessing clinics. This led to the construction of wheelchair ramps and the hiring of sign language interpreters.
- Result: Greater trust in health services and higher utilization rates among PWDs

## **Grievance Mechanisms for Women in Rajasthan, India:**

- Women's collectives in rural areas were trained to monitor school midday meal schemes. Their involvement uncovered irregularities such as missing food rations, which were promptly corrected.
- Result: Improved nutrition and attendance rates among children, especially girls.

## **Health Governance Forums in Nepal:**

- Dalit women and other excluded groups participated in health facility management committees. This facilitated open discussions on caste-based discrimination in health care settings.
- Result: Reduced discriminatory practices and better integration of Dalit women into health service systems.

## **Education Quality Monitoring in Kenya:**

- Youth from marginalized slum areas used mobile technology to report issues in public schools (e.g., teacher absenteeism). Their input prompted timely interventions by education authorities.
- Result: Improved teacher accountability and learning outcomes in slum schools.

## **Disability Inclusion in Budget Monitoring, Philippines:**

- Advocacy by disabled persons' organizations led to the inclusion of disability-focused indicators in municipal health and education budgets.
- Result: Sustainable improvements in service delivery for persons with disabilities.

## **Community-Based Monitoring (CBM) by BRAC**

- BRAC involves community members in monitoring maternal and child health services in their local areas.

## **Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) by World Vision Bangladesh**

- A social accountability approach implemented by World Vision to empower communities to improve local health services.

## **Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Social Audits**

- TIB conducts participatory social audits in health service facilities to assess governance and quality of care.

## **Community Scorecards for Schools (Save the Children)**

- Save the Children facilitates scorecard initiatives where citizens rate the quality of education services.

## **Citizen Engagement in Education Governance by CAMPE**

- The Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) works with communities to improve education governance and service delivery.

# Functional Model for enhancing citizen-led oversight



## Objectives of the Model

- Improve access, quality, and equity
- Enhance transparency in resource allocation and service delivery
- Empower communities to identify and address gaps
- Foster inclusive decision-making

## Foundational Components

- **Legal and Policy Frameworks**
  - Enact policies mandating citizen participation in governance at the union, upazila, and district levels.
  - Provide decision making power to local government representatives with legal support
  - Institutionalize roles for community oversight in local health facilities and schools.
- **Formation of Oversight Committees**
  - Establish Local Oversight Committees (LOCs) comprising:
    - Parents, students, and teachers for education oversight.
    - Patients, local health workers, and other community members for health oversight.
    - Representatives from women, youth, and marginalized groups
  - LOCs report findings to higher authorities and collaborate with NGOs and local government and can receive reports of actions taken to address concerns
- **Conduct training programs for LOC members on:**
  - Monitoring tools such as scorecards and audits.
  - Communication, negotiation, and data collection skills.
  - Legal rights and responsibilities regarding health and education

## Core Mechanisms

- **Monitoring and Feedback Tools**
  - Comparable Evaluate performance metrics
- **Social Audits**
  - Review expenditures, budgets, and outcomes
  - Engage stakeholders in public
- **Digital Platforms:**
  - Mobile and web-based tools
  - Platforms integration

## Engagement Forums

- **Public Forums:**
  - Quarterly meetings at the union level where LOCs present findings to service providers and authorities.
  - Citizens, teachers, health workers, and officials collaborate to resolve issues.
- **Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs):**
  - Strengthen PTAs as a parallel mechanism for school-level oversight, complementing LOC efforts.
- **Health Facility User Groups:**
  - Encourage patients and families to participate in monthly reviews of local health services
- **Grievance Redressal Mechanisms**
  - Establish a unified system to handle complaints
  - Assign dedicated officers at upazila levels to address grievances and ensure timely resolution.

## Implementation Structure

- **Stakeholder and Roles**
- **Citizens**
  - Monitor services, provide feedback, and participate in audits and forums.
- **Oversight Committees (LOCs)**
  - Conduct monitoring, report findings, and advocate for changes at the community level. LOCs will also receive reports on actions/initiatives taken to address concerns
- **Local Government**
  - Facilitate committee activities, allocate resources, and act on recommendations.
- **Service Providers**
  - Collaborate with LOCs to address gaps in health care and education services.
- **NGOs and CSOs**
  - Provide training, technical support, and mediation during disputes.
- **Central Government**
  - Formulate policies, ensure funding, and monitor overall implementation of the oversight model.



# Functional Model for enhancing citizen-led oversight- Operational Workflow

## Baseline Assessment:

- Conduct baseline surveys to assess current conditions in primary healthcare facilities and primary schools.



## Regular Monitoring

- LOCs visit facilities monthly to collect data on key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Use scorecards to evaluate quality and satisfaction.



## Data Aggregation and Analysis

- Compile data locally and upload to a central digital platform for analysis.
- Share findings with local government and service providers.



## Accountability Sessions

- Convene public forums quarterly for discussion and action planning.
- Ensure follow-up on unresolved issues.



## Annual Reviews

- Conduct comprehensive annual audits of health and education services.
- Publish findings to promote transparency and inform policy changes.





# Functional Model for enhancing citizen-led oversight-Key Enablers

## Technology Integration

- Use GIS mapping to track facility locations and service coverage.
- Deploy mobile apps for real-time reporting and community engagement.

## Incentives for Participation

- Recognize active LOC members and exemplary facilities with awards or certifications.

## Resource Mobilization

- Secure funding from government budgets, international donors, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.
- Allocate resources for training, infrastructure improvement, and digital tools



# Functional Model for enhancing citizen-led oversight-Challenges and Mitigation Strategy

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Mitigation Strategy</b>
Political Resistance/ Lack of political will	Introduce External pressure to mainstream citizen-led oversight of marginalised communities into political agenda, such as through mainstream media, intergovernmental organisations
Lack of consequence management	Introduce Repercussions for consistent poor performance in service delivery
Corruption	Oversight initiatives
Poor community relations	Community trust-building exercises
Elite capture	Empower local communities
Political Interference	Establish independent bodies to oversee LOC activities and ensure neutrality.
Resistance from Providers	Facilitate trust-building workshops and clarify non-punitive oversight goals.
Lack of Community Awareness	Conduct widespread awareness campaigns using local media and community events.
Sustainability Concerns	Integrate oversight mechanisms into government health and education budgets.



# Functional Model for enhancing citizen-led oversight-Expected Outcome

## For Health Care:

- Improved patient satisfaction and trust in public facilities.
- Enhanced equity in access to health services, particularly for marginalized groups.

## For Education:

- Improved learning outcomes through better teacher accountability and resource allocation.
- Greater community ownership of school governance and inclusivity.



# Conclusion

Citizen-led oversight and accountability mechanisms offer a promising path forward for improving primary health care and primary education in Bangladesh.

By empowering marginalized communities to actively participate in the monitoring and evaluation of services, the government can enhance service delivery, increase transparency, and create a more equitable society.

However, these efforts require concerted action from civil society, local governments, and the private sector, along with the necessary legal and institutional frameworks to sustain citizen engagement.

# Thank You



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