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

Presentation by

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Existing Challenges of implementing Citizen-led Oversight mechanisms in Primary Health care and Primary Education 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

Structural challenges

- Resistance: Political, bureaucratic, administrative authorities
- Resource/capacity limitations for citizen engagement
- Power imbalance – Elite Capture
- Uneven representation
- Retaliation risks
- Weak enforcement
- Geographic and Infrastructural Barriers
- Data accessibility
- Sustainability

Community challenges

- Lack of awareness
- Language barriers
- Economic Constraints and Poverty
- Conflict of interest
- Lack of Trained and Inclusive Workforce

Inherent challenges

- Cultural and social barriers
- Climate Vulnerability
- High power distance
- Lack of trust in government institutions and public service providers
- Knowledge gaps (for example, what healthcare means).

Functional Model for enhancing citizen-led oversight

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.
  - Budget allocation should provide more detailed information on resource distribution
  - Utilize the Right to Information Act for proactive disclosure policies and practices.
- **Formation of Oversight Committees**
  - 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, Communication, negotiation, and data collection skills.
  - Legal rights and responsibilities regarding health and education

Core Mechanisms

- **Monitoring and Feedback Tools**
- policies, documents, and announcements in dialects/languages spoken by stakeholders.
  - Comparable Evaluate performance metrics
- **Social Audits**
  - Review expenditures, budgets, and outcomes
  - Engage stakeholders in public
- **Digital Platforms**:
  - Mobile and web-based tools
  - Platforms integration
- **Public Hearings**
  - Publish and publicize reports on voiced concerns and decisions taken to address these concerns.

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.

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

Challenges	Mitigation Strategy
Political Resistance	Introduce External pressure to mainstream citizen-led oversight of marginalized communities into political agenda, such as through mainstream media, intergovernmental organizations
Lack of consequence management	Introduce Repercussions for consistent poor performance in service delivery
Corruption	Oversight initiatives and accountability mechanism
Poor community relations	Community trust-building exercises
Elite capture	Empower local communities
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.

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