Making Every Voice Count through the Community Score Card Approach
The Community Score Card (CSC) is a powerful tool for the participation of communities in decision-making processes. It has shown its potential for incorporation into formal local planning processes through the Every Voice Counts programme. It has led to the empowerment of excluded groups (in particular women) and to the responsiveness and accountability of local authorities. These changes on both the individual level and on the local authority level pave the way towards inclusive governance.
“CSC is like a calendar to someone. It is a guideline showing where you come from and where you go. Other dialogues are not shaped to help communities to deeply analyze their problems, they simply pass over the issue, but CSC is a journey from one step to another.”

Sylvestre Misigaro, Farmer and member of Village Committee (Rwanda)

The Community Score Card
The CSC, a social accountability approach developed by CARE, is being adopted in the Every Voice Counts programme to create and promote space for dialogue between citizens, service providers such as health workers and (local) government authorities. Community members participate in focus group discussions to provide feedback to service providers and decision-makers on the public services that are important to them. This includes education, health care, and services related to the prevention of and protection from gender-based violence (GBV).

The CSC approach results in the creation of a joint action plan. The action plan includes agreements between citizens and decision-makers on how services will be improved. Community members monitor the progress and recurring meetings are organized to evaluate the changes made by the service-providers. This enhances transparency and accountability from local authorities and service-providers. At the same time, the CSC raises awareness among citizens on what they are entitled to and empowers them to speak out.

Gender-based violence (GBV) in the Kamonyi district (Rwanda)
In the Kamonyi district in Rwanda, the CSC approach was used to address gender-based violence, which remains one of the biggest problems in the country. Fifteen meetings in the district have taken place in 2017 with over 3750 community members participating. These meetings resulted in the implementation of joint action plans which include, among others, the provision of safe rooms in district police stations,
The availability of ambulance services in villages and increased awareness of community members of the different services available for victims of GBV.

An additional effect of the CSC meetings has been the relationship building between community members and government authorities. Community members became more open and rights-aware and felt more comfortable to report cases of gender-based violence.

One of the most important achievements of the EVC programme in Kamonyi is the formal adoption of the Community Score Card model in the five-year District Development Strategy of the Kamonyi District Office. The district authorities recognized the value of the CSC as a social accountability model and budget has been set aside for its implementation. The official use of the CSC model by the district is an important and sustainable step towards including citizens in budgeting and planning processes.

“Through the CSC, community members were mobilized and they play their role in reporting GBV cases. People are becoming more open and we can observe that domestic violence has decreased tremendously, thanks to the CSC approach.”

Innocent Mazuru, Executive Secretary - Social Affairs, Rukoma sector, Kamonyi District Office, Rwanda
Empowered citizens

The CSC approach can be applied in many different settings and with different objectives. Although it is great that the scorecard can result in concrete actions that can improve the situation in a community, the lesser visible effects might be even more important.

By bringing community members together with local authorities and service-providers, community members experience that they have a voice. Women and youth, who are often excluded from decision-making processes, become empowered to voice their concerns and demands. There is increased awareness among these groups of their rights and how to exercise these rights. At the same time, authorities and service-providers who engage in dialogues with community members become more responsive and accountable.

In Burundi, the CSC process helped in making a private issue like GBV publicly discussed and criminalized. Women in the province of Muyinga, who have been trained by COCAFEM (a partner of EVC) on women’s rights, have been participating in the CSC interface meetings involving service providers like judicial police officers and communal planning officials.

Among these women were those who helped Manirakiza, a GBV survivor. These women reported the GBV case to the police and convinced the judicial police officer to resolve the issue. The husband, who was the one who assaulted her, was forced to pay a fine and had to ensure that Manirakiza received medical care.

Meanwhile in Afghanistan, female members of the community advocacy groups set up by the EVC programme advocated for girls’ rights to education. Armed with knowledge about the CSC process and the right of girls to be educated, these women convinced local leaders in Bori Khail village to agree to build classrooms for girls.

“Members of the Community Advocacy Groups are participating with male community members in different advocacy programs, while at the beginning of the EVC project their participation was not very visible or if they were attending the programs they were not very active to voice the problems of their communities, but now in addition to their participation they also discuss and speak about their problems in the CSC interface meeting, events and provincial meetings.”

EVC Implementing Partner in Afghanistan
Responsive Government Authorities

In the Gitega commune in Burundi, where CARE and partners have implemented the Community Score Card, local authorities have become more receptive to the issues in the community. Laws regarding gender-based violence have been increasingly enforced by the police and the council. One example of such an improvement was notified in the village of Bihore. The chief of the village sexually assaulted a woman and her husband was seriously beaten on the order of this chief. Women and girls in the village stood up in solidarity with the assaulted woman and her husband and authorities responded by imprisoning the chief and dismissing him from his position.

In December 2017, the governor of the Southern Province in Rwanda publicly committed to enforce the national Gender Based Violence roadmap and standards in the Southern Province during a national dialogue, which was organized by CARE and partner organization Pro-femmes. The national GBV roadmap and standards prescribe the services victims are entitled to, the roles and responsibilities of every stakeholder and the timeframes for the provision of the services. However, it was observed that some service providers do not comply with those standards. The Governor of the Southern Province made a public pledge to ensure that all gender-based violence service providers in the province completely adhere to the national GBV roadmap and standards.

In the Parwan and Balkh provinces in Afghanistan, the CSC process helped integrate women’s needs and interests in the joint action plans developed by local authorities to improve education and health services.
CARE and Civil Society Partners

All of the changes described above would not have been possible without the efforts of local civil society organizations (CSO). CARE provides training, technical assistance and coaching to these CSO partner organizations. These can be about civic and women rights, gender equality, implementing the Community Score Card model or other topics related to inclusive governance.

The CSOs that CARE has partnered up with engage in lobby and advocacy efforts at different levels. They conduct awareness raising sessions for community members to educate them about their rights and also host trainings for local authorities on inclusive governance.

Through the efforts of local CSOs supported by CARE, community members (especially women) became empowered, authorities were trained to engage in a dialogue with community members, and the implementation of the Community Score Card model was made possible.

“The CSC strengthened my capacities to deal with GBV cases, I have no problem when referring GBV survivors to the police. After the CSC plenary, I appreciate how the police collaborate with the local administration in assisting women and girls.”

Mrs. Ndikumana Spes, Head of Ruzo Colline in Giteranyi (Muyinga province) in Burundi
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Every Voice Counts

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