

## 6. COMMUNITY LEVEL MONITORING OF THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD

Monitoring at community level can be undertaken by extra-community actors and monitors, or by community residents themselves. Joint monitoring efforts are possible as well. The methods that are likely to be applied in the two instances will be different but can also be combined<sup>45</sup>. Extra-community monitors include staff from government institutions such as national planning and line ministries, local government (municipalities, districts, sub-districts), or from non-governmental agencies, academia or other civil society organizations. In some countries staff from human rights institutions may also be involved. Community-based government workers, such as health workers, extension agents, or social mobilisers, are often relied upon to generate community monitoring data. Non-governmental organisations are also likely to involve their community-based staff where they are present in a community.

Community-level monitoring potentially offers a good opportunity for rights-based monitoring, depending on who participates in the monitoring and for what purpose monitoring is undertaken. Rights-based monitoring can be thought of as a continuum, ranging from not rights-based to truly rights-based. The greater the direct involvement of community residents in monitoring (“community monitors” or “grassroots monitors”) the more likely that the monitoring process conforms to human rights principles, as explained in volume I and chapter 1 here. On the other

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*45 When monitoring is undertaken by extra-community monitors, the underlying process is basically an inductive one, meaning that these monitors define the monitoring agenda, i.e. the monitoring questions to be answered are usually based on a pre-established conceptual framework. Monitoring undertaken by community residents involves more a deductive process, i.e. starting from the community's reality as residents understand it to decide what needs to be monitored. In practice community level monitoring usually involves a mixture of inductive and deductive processes.*

hand, the fact that a community group engages in monitoring for the community's purposes does not necessarily mean that it is participatory, inclusive, transparent or/and empowering. So when is community level monitoring truly rights-based? Here are some ideas. For the community level monitoring process to be truly rights-based, it should conform to these norms:

- The monitoring agenda is set by the community and the community may choose to share the information with extra-community monitors and institutions.
- Community residents have equal opportunity to participate in the monitoring process.
- Participation in the monitoring process should empower and strengthen capacity, i.e. provide opportunities to understand realities in the community, learn more about community issues, and acquire new skills.
- Community monitors keep all members of the community fully informed about results.
- Community monitors are accountable to the whole community for the on-time completion and quality of the monitoring work.
- Extra-community monitors may be invited by the community to participate in order to provide technical inputs or skill-building services to community monitors, or in general, assume a facilitating role. By their participation in community monitoring they are accountable to the community for their performance and the quality of the services they provide.

Methods used in generating community-level monitoring information are discussed in more detail in chapter 8. Monitoring *by* the community *for* the community will be looked at here, and then on monitoring outputs that can be used for targeting communities for policy measures or community level decision-making and planning.

## **MONITORING BY THE COMMUNITY FOR THE COMMUNITY**

Why should the community engage in monitoring? The reasons may include the following:

- The community (or a representative group from the community) has decided on specific actions ("*community project*") to be implemented in the community according to a work plan and time schedule with defined inputs.
- The community has decided that it is important to follow how living conditions are changing in the community and how changing living conditions involve the more vulnerable households in the community, perhaps as a basis of

formulating a proposal for assistance to the government or to another extra-community agency.

- Changes are taking place in the region where the community is located, and the community is aware of these changes and wants to understand how these external changes affect the community and particularly the more vulnerable members in order to formulate proposals for community actions to offset any negative impacts.
- The community wants to understand and monitor how public resources are used by local government as a basis of participating in the formulation of annual budgets ("*participatory budgeting*") and in decisions related to budget allocations and the use of public resources.

Monitoring by the community for the community requires organisation. For example, the community may decide to form a monitoring committee from among community members, and may request an extra-community organization to provide training and/or technical guidance to this group. Monitoring tasks can also be assigned to a group that is developing and implementing a community project. The community monitoring group has to decide, and seek inputs from the whole community, with respect to the questions listed in the box below.

#### **BOX 6.1 - Organisation of Monitoring by a Community Group**

- *What are the monitoring questions? These questions can cover implementation as well as outcomes and impacts.*
- *What types of information (and perhaps what indicators) should be generated, and what may be the best way to go about obtaining the information? The group may be guided here by an extra-community monitor.*
- *How best to organize monitoring activities, who has responsibility for what (information gathering, information analysis and interpretation, and sharing the monitoring results with the whole community)?*
- *How best to go about making good use of the monitoring information;*
- *What resources are to be used in monitoring?*
- *Which organization or government institution should be approached to strengthen the group's monitoring capacity, if necessary?*

It is clear that there are no recipes for monitoring by the community for the community. The information gathering methods that may be applied will vary greatly and will tend to be simple, low cost and probably not time-consuming. They are likely depend heavily on inter-person communication, and may include: direct observation,

simple drawings and maps, a simple survey to obtain household or individual level information (mini-survey), community registers, discussions with community leaders and community-based workers, interviews with extra-community key informants etc. Sharing monitoring information often presents a challenge; particularly in dispersed rural communities. One approach has been the so-called “community situation room” where monitoring information is displayed along the walls of a room in a centrally located facility (like a community centre) that can be accessed by all at all times. The information is updated by a monitoring committee, and may be presented in graphical ways, or in short narratives and/or by drawings, that all depict changes in certain conditions. The community situation room has been particularly used in communities that were experiencing emergency conditions, such as droughts in Brazil. Periodic community assemblies are another way of sharing and discussing monitoring information. Communities that want to engage in monitoring can probably learn a great deal from other communities that are engaged in monitoring activities. This community-to-community learning should be encouraged and facilitated, which may go a long way towards capacity strengthening of community monitoring groups. Documentation on specific experiences with community monitoring is not easily available, perhaps such experiences are not documented. By way of illustration, we present three cases of community monitoring for the community. These three cases cover: (i) monitoring of public service delivery (India), (ii) monitoring for community level planning (Tanzania), and (iii) monitoring the procurement of public services (Uganda). None of these cases directly involves the right to adequate food, but nevertheless represent generalisable models for rights-focused monitoring by the community of the right to food. The first case points to an inclusive process involving all households, and the first and second case illustrate the importance of community monitoring directly being linked to action. In all three cases the monitoring information gathering is through simple systems.

### **BOX 6.2 - Community Monitoring of Public Service Delivery in India**

*An innovative community monitoring activity was implemented in India in 2002 as part of the UNICEF-supported Community Monitoring Project covering 201 villages. A village participatory rapid assessment was conducted to establish baselines with respect to water and sanitation, fuel sources, family conditions and characteristics. Communities were organised in groups of 20 households, and the representative of each group formed the village development monitoring committee (VDMC). Communities were asked to monitor local departments of health, education and women and children’s welfare. The community monitoring system consists of a system of 15 red alerts related to health, primary schools and child development centres. Convenors of the VDMC meet monthly with local health, education and child development officers and report on the status on each alert. The respective department sets a specific date when it will respond to the red alert with action. Evidence showed that villagers gained in awareness and confidence and started to demand these services as rights. There were marked improvements over time in the delivery of health and child development services.*

**BOX 6.3 - Village Registers in Tanzania**

*UNICEF assisted villages in a number of designated Child Survival, Protection and Development (CSPD) districts with the systematic recording of village information. The village registers, printed in Kiswahili, were maintained by the village executive officer. Training was provided to the village executive officer and two village health workers in each village, by district officers who had previously been trained. The village registers contain demographic data (population count, age and gender breakdown, number of school-age children, number of able-bodied persons), acreage cultivated and crops, areas destroyed, and nutritional anthropometry data for under-five children (weight for age), which are obtained during quarterly held health days. The information is compiled from hamlet registers, which are maintained by hamlet leaders, who collect information, often in collaboration with ten-cell leaders (who represent the political party), teachers and village extension workers. Each hamlet can consist of between about fifty to several hundred households. Information in the village registers was partially relied upon for the preparation of the village annual development plan.*

**BOX 6.4 - Community Monitoring of Procurement of Public Goods and Services in Uganda**

*Training is provided by the Uganda Debt Network (a NGO) to grassroots monitors on how to monitor the procurement of public goods and services by local authorities. Among other things, it is explained what to monitor during the different phases of the procurement process. For example, monitoring during the process of receiving and closing bids should be guided by questions such as: Was the invitation to bid properly advertised in local newspapers and on public notice boards? Does the bid notice clearly state what is to be procured? Does the bid notice clearly show where bids are to be delivered, and what the closing date and time are? Are bids that are received kept safely and unopened until the official bid opening day and time? Or with respect to the bid opening day: was the bid opening day properly advertised in local newspapers and on public notice boards? Is the actual opening of the bids done in a place where any interested bidder and members of the community can observe? Do the bids contain all the necessary information as stipulated in the statement of requirements? Are all bids treated fairly and equally without discrimination or favouritism? Are only bids submitted by qualified bidders considered? This type of monitoring should contribute to transparency in awarding government contracts for public goods or service provision.*

The hypothetical example 3 in chapter 2 represents a case where the community may decide to monitor advances with the re-settlement plans in order to analyse how these will affect members of the community including the most vulnerable, and make counter proposals to the re-settlement agency. The community may also want to monitor if the government is living up to all the commitments that were

made to the communities in terms of re-settlement assistance. Lastly, when re-settlement actually takes place, conditions including household access to food, in the re-settlement villages may be monitored in order to decide what community actions are needed to offset any negative impact of re-settlement on household food access, especially among the most vulnerable households.

## EXTRA-COMMUNITY MONITORING OF COMMUNITY CONDITIONS

### Secondary data analysis

Secondary data analysis may be able to identify where the most chronically vulnerable people are, as well as provide some characterisation of the reasons why these people suffer from chronic food insecurity. Rarely are secondary data sources sufficient to characterise the food security conditions in specific communities. This means that secondary data analysis needs to be complemented by other methods to reach at community level. At the same time, secondary data are usually not available with the frequency needed for monitoring. A useful tool for community level monitoring that combines different methods in flexible ways is the community food security profile.

### Community food security profile

A *community food security profile* (CFSP) serves to analyse communities that are chronically vulnerable to food insecurity. A CFSP links community food security conditions to national and regional level political, social, economic, institutional and environmental issues that impact at community level and that may interact with community-based actions. (See the vulnerability framework presented in chapter 5). The following information gathering methods should be used in constructing a CFSP. The process should start off with a document review, followed by secondary data analysis and by key informant consultations at national, local and community levels.

Why a CFSP? The CFSP can normally provide more refined geographic targeting information than can usually be obtained from secondary data analysis alone, by identifying areas of vulnerability within the priority areas identified through secondary data analysis. Criteria for beneficiary targeting can be identified through CFSP, which also provide a better understanding of seasonal dynamics in specific areas. By establishing a baseline the CFSP can be used to monitor community-based projects or the impact of national programmes at community level. Three critical steps in designing and implementing CFSP work involve: (a) develop a conceptual framework; (b) decide on a sampling framework; and (c) design the information methodology and prepare the information gathering instruments. A conceptual framework provides structure for developing the CFSP methodology, instruments, and analysis. Existing frameworks may be adapted and modified, or a different framework can be devised. Document reviews and consultations with key informants should be helpful here. Since not every community can be

included, a CFSP is typically only conducted in certain regions of a country, with emphasis on those that are chronically food insecure. Secondary data analysis and key informant consultations should provide necessary information to establish a first level sampling frame.

Next it should be decided how many communities and which ones to include in each food insecure area. Sampling at this level can take many forms ranging from subjective decisions to quantitative spatial analysis. Livelihood zones, which are relatively homogenous areas with respect to the food economy, vulnerability factors, livelihood and strategies and activities, can provide for a second level sampling, usually requiring inclusion of a few communities per livelihood zone. Local level key informants, such as district planning officers, may be helpful in establishing different livelihood zones.

In-community information gathering can consist of a combination of methods that allow for both qualitative and quantitative information collection, ranging from mini surveys, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and direct observations.

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