CONDUCTING SOCIAL AUDIT IN KOSOVO

A Practical Toolkit for Local Civil Society Organizations

May 2020

"Ask not what your country can do for you;
ask what you can do for your country."

John F. Kennedy

Group for Legal and Political Studies is an independent, non-partisan and non-profit public policy organization based in Pristina, Kosovo.

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CONTENTS

WHY THIS TOOLKIT?

1. It enables local civil society organizations in Kosovo to increase their participatory role and influence the municipal decision-making process!

2. It provides detailed information on how social accountability tools – an innovative approach to Kosovo – successfully affect and improve the life of the community!

3. It offers a great overview on fundamental principles of social audit, and practical tips

CONCEPT OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Why local CSOs in Kosovo should embrace the idea?

Social accountability helps to build direct accountability relationships between people and the state, in today's society.

Through social accountability, CSOs and citizens directly engage in the decision-making processes, resulting in major improvement regarding access to public information, a direct assessment of expenditures of public institutions, a wider monitoring of public services delivery, and the investigation process of procurement and monitoring of the implementation of different initiatives, through citizen activism. This form of holding institutions accountable emerges actions of citizens and CSOs aiming to hold the state accountable, while having the support of other actors such as media, and also other government institutions.
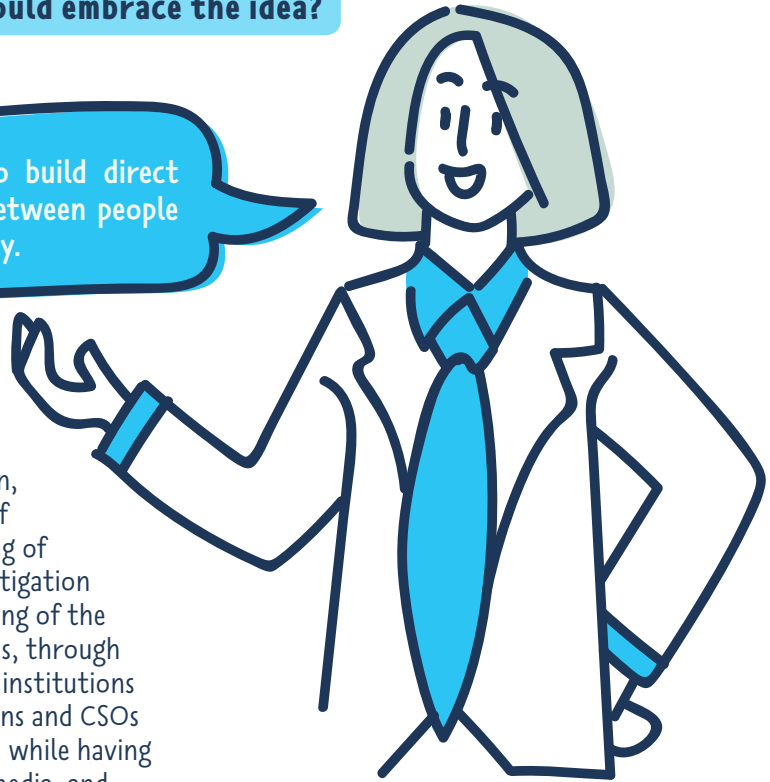
Why institutional authorities should embrace the idea?

MULTIPLE BENEFITS FOR INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITIES

Strengthen cooperation and dialogue with citizens

Enhanced transparency and accountability

Improved quality and effectiveness

Innovative approach to ensure participatory democracy

On the other hand, institutions at municipal level in Kosovo could have a multi-fold benefit when utilizing such tools. More specifically, by employing social accountability tools, municipal stakeholders can further strengthen cooperation with their communities by joining efforts with them in implementing various initiatives that are of a greater good and directly contribute to the wellbeing of citizens at large. In addition, by having citizens directly involved in influencing planning and designing of the municipal initiatives, municipal stakeholders enhance their transparency and inclusivity in the decision-making process, and simultaneously enable the participatory role of citizens in the policy planning and implementation. Most importantly, by engaging citizens during the implementation period, municipalities double their oversight role towards successful bidders, thus, significantly improve the quality of work and services delivered by a third party, while enhancing democratic governance by providing citizens with a more proactive role. It isevident that by empowering citizens through such tools, municipalities can significantly increase their effectiveness, transparency and good governance.

> Social accountability entails direct engagement of civic organizations in expressing demand for better public services and higher accountability by the local authorities, resulting in improved service quality[1]. Citizen activism remains at the core of Social accountability.

Undeniably, accountability tools are being increasingly acknowledged by governmental and non-governmental institutions worldwide, as a democratic form in improving overall service delivery, and in ensuring transparency.

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PUTS CITIZENS AT ITS CORE!

Social accountability, when applied appropriately and according to the context, has proven to be a highly effective method in significantly boosting transparency, good governance practices, as well as the efficiency of the state institutions.

There are different social accountability tools used worldwide. These tools are being increasingly employed by civil society organizations, with the ultimate aim to monitor the use (and misuse) of public funds for quality service provision by local governments[2].

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1   Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances: "Social Accountability Mechanism: a generic frame-work". Available at: https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/Social_Accountability.pdf

2   Group for Legal and Political Studies: Social Accountability Tools as Means to for Accountability Success. Available here: http://www.legalpoliticalstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/GLPS-USAID-TEAM-Monitoring-Report-SA-PETS.pdf

Accountability merges both the obligation of the state to account for its action, as well as the citizen's right to hold the state accountable.

> Social accountability tools are most effective when innovative and rooted in bridging citizens to government
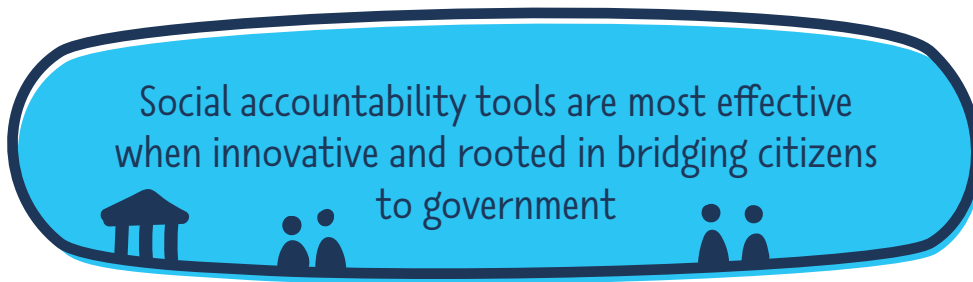
The community is constantly becoming more aware of their rights to engage in monitoring and keeping accountable their elected representatives, and seeking a more transparent and accountable governance. On the other hand, governments are facing a growing civil pressure to become more accountable and transparent during decision-making processes.

WHY SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN KOSOVO?

Social accountability tools are mostly used in developed countries, where transparent governance is commonly questioned at large. They provide means for the community to directly engage in a professional dialogue with their public institutions, in ensuring processes and policies signed in paper are being efficiently implemented in practice. In addition, the diversity of these tools enables civil society organizations, and communities, to enhance their participatory role in the policy-making processes and strengthen cooperation with local authorities. Most importantly, social accountability encourages civic activism in improving the quality of services procured and offered by their governments.

> The overall goal of using social accountability in Kosovo is to improve transparency and effective fairness of the public procurement system by involving citizens in the accountability process.

In Kosovo, the social accountability concept remains largely unacquainted, introduced just recently by a civil society organization, through a pilot project[3]. Furthermore, civic activism remains considerably low, and in most cases is initiated by central and well-established civil society organizations, rather than community itself. This said, introducing the SA Tools remains crucial, and if applied properly, can considerably contribute towards strengthening civic activism in Kosovo, enhancing participatory democracy, and in intensifying cooperation among citizens and decision-makers.

The 2019 country report for Kosovo[4] highlights that some progress was made in the public administration reform, while acknowledging the commitment for more effective lines of accountability. Recommendations of the European Commission were focused in increasing accountability in the public sector by creating a clear framework for managerial accountability and the delegation of responsibilities in public institutions.

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3 Group for Legal and Political Studies: Social Accountability Tools as Means to for Accountability Success. Available here: http://www.legalpoliticalstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/GLPS-USAID-TEAM-Monitoring-Report-SA-PETS.pdf

4 European Commission: Kosovo Report 2019. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-kosovo-report.pdf

Adapting Social accountability tools by the local civil society organizations in Kosovo remains fundamental in ensuring transparency and accountability by the elected politicians. When applying SA tools, local CSOs can benefit in multiple ways, by increasing their capacities, strengthen their role, enhancing cooperation with institutional stakeholders, and promoting participatory democracy and transparent governance in Kosovo.

As argued in the previous sections, local and central governments can significantly benefit by social accountability in multiple ways, resulting in inclusiveness during policy-making process, enhanced transparency, better service delivery, and overall increased performance.

When social accountability tools were used for the first time in Kosovo, they have proved to be a very useful tools in mass gathering. For example, in Vushtrri, the project managed to engage more than 30 citizens in three different social audit teams, working for similar purposes and closely with the municipality. As a result, such tools have proved to gather more citizens in one place, in comparison to any public consultation ever called by municipal authorities. This said, social accountability tools can enable local authorities to ensure satisfactory citizen participation in different aspects of join interest. Finally, engagement through such tools provides municipal authorities with a great platform to present their achievements and positive results, which can be later be positively interpreted during an election process, resulting with more votes.

SOME DETAILS ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN KOSOVO

Over the years, we have witnessed that there has been some significant improvement with regards to public procurement. According to a report, over the past years, the online procurement process in Kosovo has proven to substantially improve the public procurement transparency, by both, central and local institutions in Kosovo[5]. However, the need for an enhanced accountability and transparency remains evident and serves as a precondition for the continual improvement of local governance in Kosovo.

A proper service delivery leads to an enhanced welfare of citizens, and a better image for the country, encouraging economic and social development, as well as potential foreign investments. On the other hand, citizens remain largely uninvolved in monitoring their local authorities, and cooperation among citizens and their municipal representatives is rather non-existent.
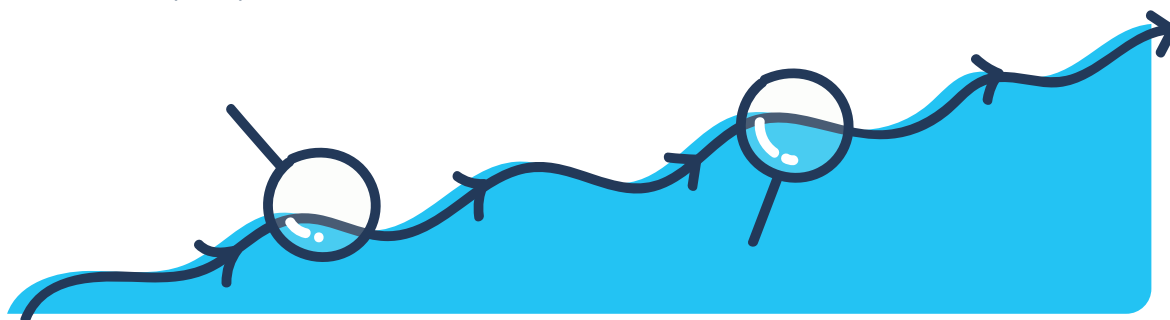
SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY TOOLS

The large variety of SA tools **empowers citizens** to use different methods for holding accountable the government bodies. Most of the tools enable citizens to directly involve in monitoring different aspects and processes, at different stages of implementation. The ultimate goal of these tools is to provide civil society organizations and communities with means to address their concerns, in a more institutionalized and structured manner.

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5   Kosovo Democratic Institute: "Transparency Index in Public Procurement 2018", pg. 9. Available at: http://kdi-koso-va.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/50-Index-Transparency-Index-in-public-procurement-2018-ENG-11.pdf

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY TOOLS

Some of the most innovative social accountability tools include:

SOCIAL AUDIT – Social audit entails monitoring initiatives exclusively led by the community. While other tools involve different methods, citizens remain the crucial aspect when implementing social audit activities. Through Social audit, citizens aim to monitor and improve processes that have raised serious concerns in the community of a certain area. These initiatives are inclusive and tent to raise diverse monitoring groups, in terms of gender, age and professions. At its core, Social audit proves to be a highly motivating tool in empowering civic engagement in claiming their basic right to involve in requesting increased accountability from their public authorities.

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE TRACKING SURVEY (PETS) – PETS is implemented through quantative surveys that are conducted to track how the public funds are being allocated and spent by the central and local authorities. The ultimate goal of PETS is to ensure that the allocated funds have been properly managed and have reached their initial impact in the community they're being used. Using PETS helps in fighting corruption and fund missuses. This tool has shown to be effective for documenting the final delivery of services, because the main analyses are towards the usage of funds. Tracking expenditure is proven to be a powerful improvement of accountability especially in public finance, service delivery and in developing countries this tool is considered a success story against corruption.

CITIZEN'S CHARTER (CC) – Citizen's Charter originates from the British Prime Minister's John Major's administration[6]. Citizen's Charters are public documents issued by government authorities and widely distributed to citizens, entailing detailed information on what services the authorities are planning to provide in a given period of time. The CC's provide substantial information on what citizens are expected to benefit, and what are the concrete services that authorities are responsible to deliver. On the other hand, citizens involve in providing concrete information on services received by their local authorities. While this document does not entail any legal force, it is often understood, as a public agreement between the local governments and its communities[7]. As a tool, it has proven to be very effective in enabling governments to familiarize with expectations and standards required by their societies, and on the other hand, providing citizens with concrete information and timeframes on services delivered by government authorities. If successfully applied, Citizen's Charters prove to be a very effective tool in enhancing citizen trust towards their governments, and strengthen cooperation among both parties, through a transparent approach.

6   Atlas Corps: "Citizen's Charter as a Social Accountability Tool". Available at: https://atlascorps.org/citizens-charter-as-a-social-accountability-tool/

7   Ibid.

CITIZEN'S REPORT CARD — The Citizen Report Card (CRC) is a social accountability tool which has been used in many developed and developing countries around the world. The CRC ensures citizens, as the end beneficiaries, are bridged with the municipal governments by offering feedback on the provision of public goods and services. It is not a mere opinion survey but a tool that relies on clear planning on the collection of the information, the analysis of the data and the communication of the findings to local governments to improve the delivery of public services.
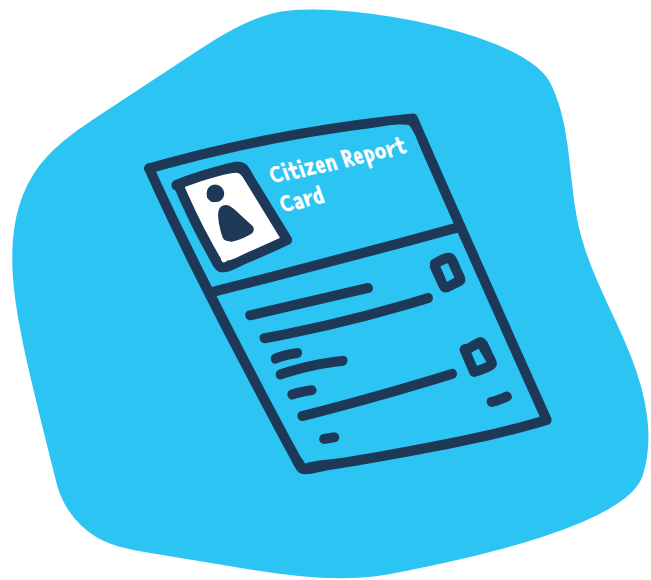
PARTICIPATORY PLANNING AND BUDGETING — The Participatory Budgeting enables citizens to participate during the budgetary planning phase, including the decision-making process, and monitoring of public spending, once a municipal budget is approved. As a process, it enables citizens to channel their needs and become vocal in supporting process and services they prioritize. Although many municipalities in Kosovo do invite citizens to participate during the budget planning phase, the citizen's interest to become part of the process remains very low, almost non-existent.

INTEGRITY PACT — Integrity Pact is a form of social accountability that relies in a mutual agreement among local governments and parties involved in the activity, in order to priory agree on terms and standards that should be applied for a specific procurement process. It loudly stipulates that parties involved in the agreement pledge to avoid any potential misuse or corruptive deed during the implementation of the particular activity.
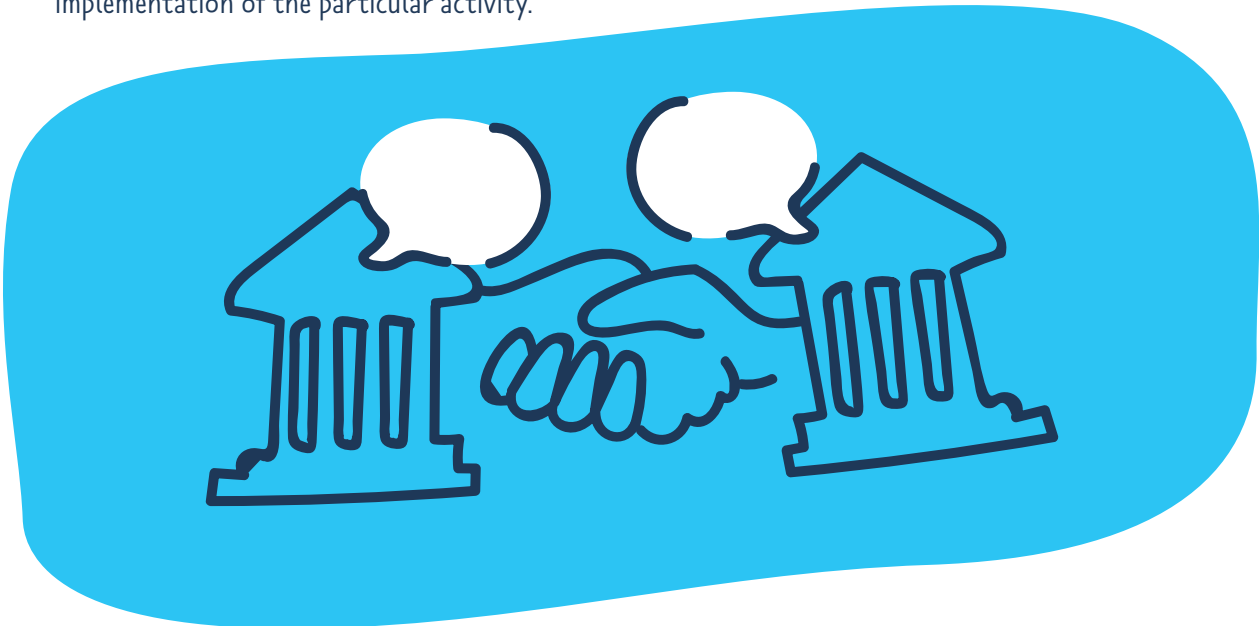
BENEFITS OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY TOOLS

1.
Empowerement of local CSOs and citizens

2.
Engaging CSOs and citizens in direct decision-making processes

3.
Increasing local CSOs capacities and relevance

4.
Broader range of tools at hand to make direct democracy an opportunity and reality

5.
Identifying and fighting against potential lack of transparency and accountability

6.
Develop better and efficient local government institutions

7.
Tackling one of the biggest issues of Kosovo, the implementation of laws in reality

8.
Avoid mismanagement of contracts, delays, and potential corruptive deeds

WHAT IS SOCIAL AUDIT?

How local CSOs can adapt Social audit, as an innovative social accountability tool to increase transparency and accountability.

Kosovo is still facing significant shortcomings in guaranteeing proper and effective service delivery, with special emphasis on the local level. Being a new country, Kosovo institutions are still enduring multiple reforms in ensuring proper service delivery and policy structures[8]. One of the most problematic aspects which is regularly highlighted by civil society and international reports remains the lack of accountability and transparency of the governments. In addition, monitoring activities by the community on local level is very low, and needs considerable improvement.[9]

This said, cooperation between municipal actors and communities is barely existent, while CSOs lack proper capacities in order to properly involve in the decision-making processes. As a result, local governments very often do not provide concrete information on how the public funds are being spent, and whether procurement activities are being implemented, as initially agreed.

While Kosovo's political representatives are full of promises for an enhanced transparency and a better life for their communities, the Social audit ensures that these promises are being kept.

Social audit is a community-based mechanism which helps build a bottom-up check and balance control that evaluates the performance of state services and policies run by the state authorities, being it a municipality, or a central institution.

Social audit is a powerful tool which enables CSOs and citizens to monitor how local governments are utilizing public resources, and whether institutional plans are becoming realities from which citizens can directly benefit.

Social audit is considered one of the most innovative forms of social accountability that contributes towards enhancing institutional transparency, and a better use of public resources.

In developing democracies, Social audit is highly successful in mobilizing communities to demand institutional responsibility, for processes that are managed by local authorities, and that serve the greater good.

The attentive eye of social audit teams' increases awareness over the totality of local services provided, naturally improving the quality of the administration of the municipality.

Through Social audit, local CSOs will become more vocal in preventing potential misuse and corruption, by thoroughly analyzing all available documents and comparing them with the reality through direct monitoring of the implementation of a particular procurement activity at a municipal level.

Ultimately, Social audit strengthens participatory democracy through directly encouraging and empowering civic activism, aiming to claim their constitutional rights for the services and benefits they are entitled to receive.

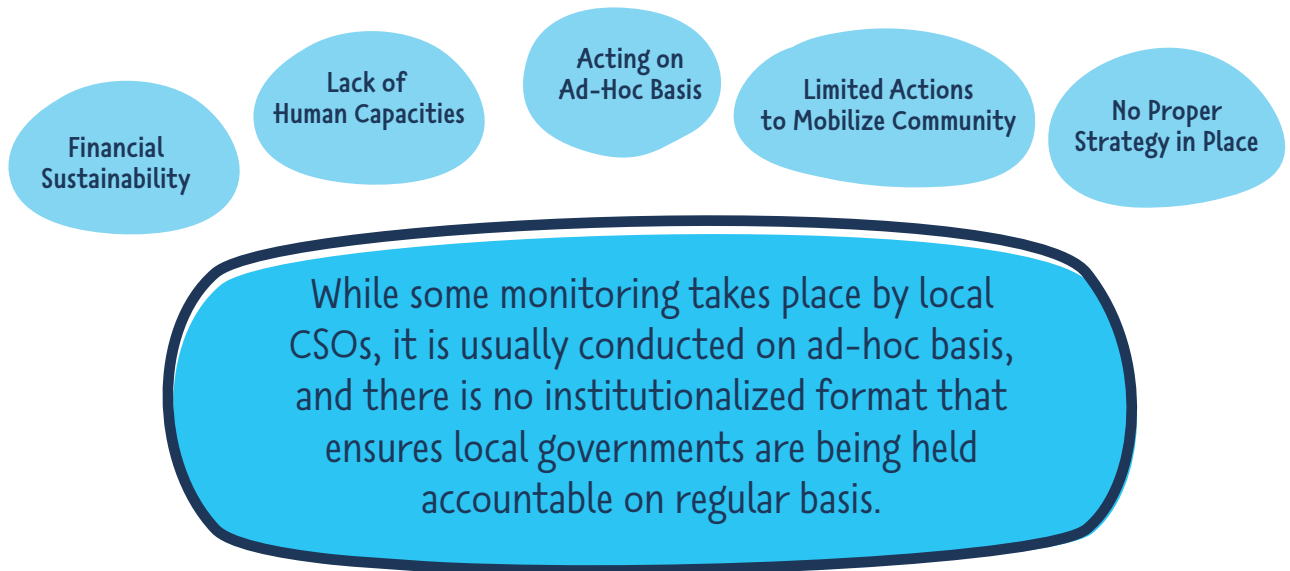8   Europe Commission Kosovo Country Report 2019. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-kosovo-report.pdf (pg. 9)

9   Kërkohet që qytetarët të marrin më shumë pjesë në vendimmarrjen për investimet kapitale. Available at: https://ekonomiaonline.com/uncategorized/kerkohet-qe-qytetaret-te-marrin-shume-pjese-ne-vendimmarrjen-per-investimet-kapitale/

LOCAL CSOS IN KOSOVO vs. SOCIAL AUDIT

According to the EC Country Report 2019 for Kosovo, over the past year, significant progress was reached in enhancing cooperation among civil society and central institutions[10]. Yet, the same progress was not acknowledged for local civil society organization, which remain uneven and less involved in the policy and decision-making processes at the municipal level.

Some of the main challenges majority of local CSOs in Kosovo are facing include the following:

Financial Sustainability

Lack of Human Capacities

Acting on Ad-Hoc Basis

Limited Actions to Mobilize Community

No Proper Strategy in Place

While some monitoring takes place by local CSOs, it is usually conducted on ad-hoc basis, and there is no institutionalized format that ensures local governments are being held accountable on regular basis.

Considering these evident challenges at the local level, monitoring of municipal actions is barely existing and relies deeply on financial and human capacities of local organizations. With some exceptions, majority of local CSOs are confronted with daily constrains in playing their role, as mandated. Most of activities undertaken by local organizations do not produce the desirable impact, mainly due to lack of capacities.

Innovative mechanisms such as the Social accountability remain widely unknown for the local level CSOs in Kosovo. Although some actions take place by mobilizing community, they are usually unstructured and lack concrete results. This said, this practical Toolkit will serve as an excellent starting point for local CSOs to become acquainted with the concept, and eventually put it in practice.

The concept of social accountability was introduced in Kosovo during 2018, for the first time. More specifically, the USAID Transparent, Effective, Accountable Municipalities activity in Kosovo approached the Group for Legal and Political Studies (GLPS), a central level organization, with the purpose to engage with a pilot project where two of the social accountability tools were to be utilized in the municipalities of Pristina and Vushtrri.

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10 European Commission: Kosovo Report 2019. Pg. 9. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-kosovo-report.pdf

In 2019, GLPS tested two social accountability tools in Pristina and Vushtrri: Social audit (SA) and Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS). In a 9-month period, remarkable results were achieved.
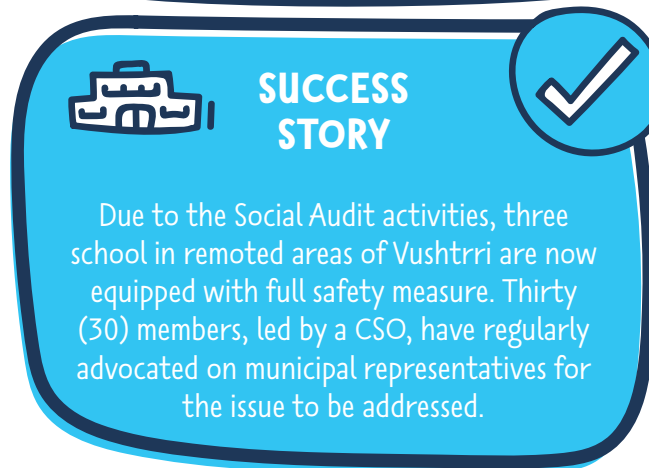
SUCCESS STORY

In the Municipality of Prishtina, the Social Audit Team managed to convince the municipality to change the contracted authority and open a new procurement process due to major delays in executing the final work for a recreational park

SUCCESS STORY

In some villages of Vushtrri, the Social Audit Team managed to agree with the municipality in ensuring the medical visits for dental and health care for students occur once every six months.

SUCCESS STORY

Due to the Social Audit activities, three school in remoted areas of Vushtrri are now equipped with full safety measure. Thirty (30) members, led by a CSO, have regularly advocated on municipal representatives for the issue to be addressed.

SUCCESS STORY

The Social Audit Teams in Vushtrri have managed to successfully increase the monitoring frequency of Healthcare Centres by the municipal authorities.

SUCCESS STORY

In Prishtina, one Social Audit Team agreed with the municipality for a better regulation of all hazardous parts (i.e. removing the skateboard strip angles, strew bolts and all damaged parts) of a recreational park recently functionalized.

WHY SOCIAL AUDIT IS BENEFICIAL FOR LOCAL CSOs?

The benefits from utilizing Social audit in Kosovo are diverse, in specific to strengthening the role of local CSOs, and citizens which remain at the heart of the process.

Social audit, as a social accountability tool, directly contributes in increasing the relevance of local CSOs in Kosovo. Social audit includes actions that are led by the community, while empowers citizens to increase their role by providing them with a tool to hold the electives accountable, not only once in four years when the elections are held, but regularly.

While using Social audit as a tool, citizens tend to unite and mobilize in order to evaluate and monitor the government's performance, their politics and policies and how they affect the polity therefore the community.

If utilized properly by local CSOs, Social audit will provide them with a significantly structured platform to represent their constituencies and increase their role in the community.

Social audit enables local CSOs to directly engage in the decision-making processes at the municipal level. As a result, they will become more active and engaged in improving local governments.

In addition, Social audit provides local CSOs with a broader range of tools at hand to make direct democracy and opportunity and reality. Additionally, it enables CSOs to identify and fight potential lack of transparency and accountability.

Similarly, local CSOs can better identify potential mismanagement of municipal contracts, delays, and potential corruptive deeds. As a result, organizations can become an important factor in developing better and more efficient local government institutions.

Most importantly, through Social audit, local CSOs will be able to tackle one of the most concerning issues in Kosovo, the implementation of laws in practice.

Through Social audit, local CSOs will facilitate the process of giving an opportunity/forum to citizens to question in real time their governors, for policies, projects that are being drafted or implemented helps to build transparency while educating citizens for their role in democracy. Social audits is an efficient social accountability tool because it empowers marginalized social groups which are often wrongfully overlooked.

It helps local CSOs to have an impact, while using the right to get informed about what the government is doing, how it is proceeding and the way they are implementing policies. Since policies are abstract, by using this tool, with the help of local CSOs, people can get involved and informed about how these policies are impacting the society with concrete actions.

Ultimately, Social audit helps local CSOs to act independently, as social audit activities are typically non-partisan, which remains crucial principle of the process. Since through Social audit organizations and communities tend to tackle issues that are of a greater benefit, political influence and affiliation are considered to be improper.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT SOCIAL AUDIT?

PHASES AND STEPS

In order for the Social audit to be successfully conducted, several phases should be considered during the implementation process. For the process to be impactful, local CSOs should also consider the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in order to ensure an inclusive process. **Social audit should have a clear implementation timeframe, as well as planned results at each period. This Toolkit provides thorough explanation for each of the phases during a social audit process.**
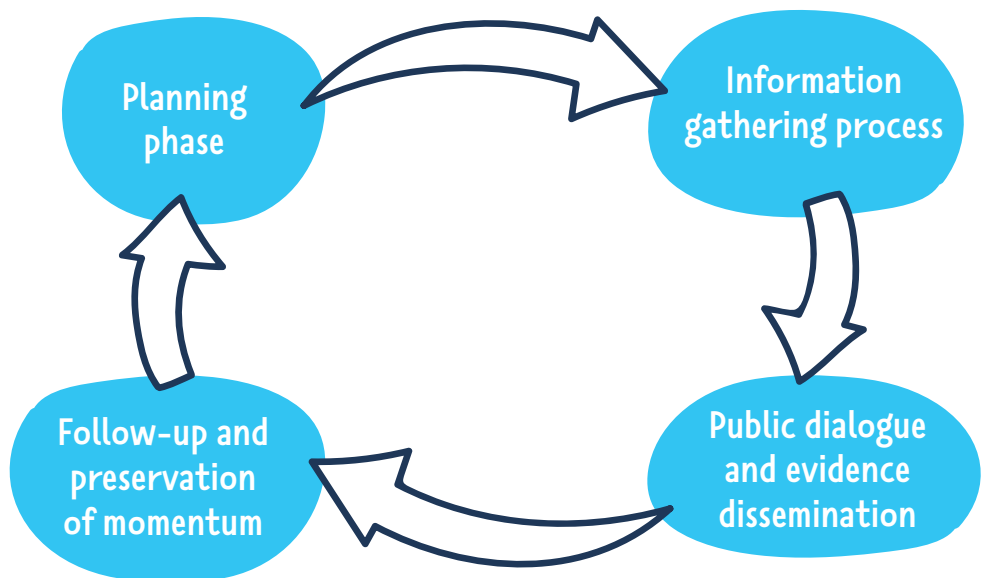
PHASE 1 - Planning Phase

The first phase serves as an inception period towards establishment of the Social audit process. During this period, the organization should focus in identifying the scope of the Social audit, ensure relevant documents are obtained, and potential members to join the SA Team are identified.

The following steps should be undertaken:

STEP 1: Define a concrete scope of audit
(set up operational architecture to efficiently carryout a social audit i.e. procurement activity, service delivery, etc.)

WHAT CRITERIA SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN SELECTION A MUNICIPAL PROJECT?

Municipalities across Kosovo implemented different projects at a given period of time, thus, the selection of the appropriate project to be monitored by a Social audit team remains a very demanding process and should be developed based on accurate criteria for selection. More specifically, the SA team should be able to professionally argue their selection process, and on what principles that selection took place. So, what are some of the main criteria to be considered?
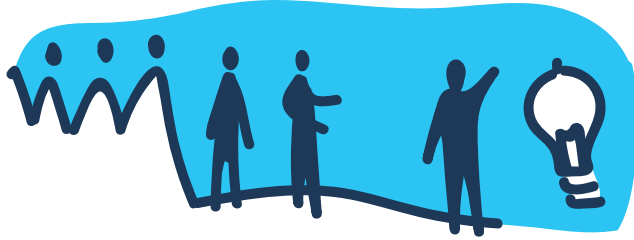
Firstly, and most importantly, when selecting a project to be monitored through Social audit, the CSO consider the party financing the initiative. More specifically, project that are fully-funded by the municipality are highly recommended. Nevertheless, if a project is of a high interest for the community, it can also be a joint initiative (i.e. municipality and a ministry), however majority of funds should be allocated by the municipal level.
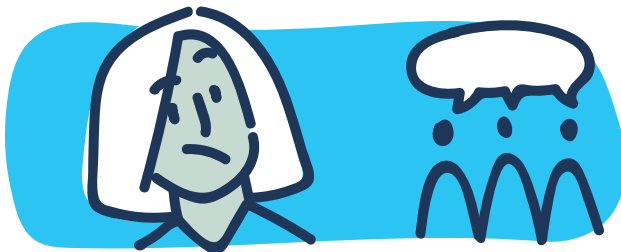
Secondly, the selection of the project to be monitored should reflect upon the needs of the community and should serve the greater good, and overall wellbeing of an entire region, rather than small groups. Usually, social audit activities are implemented in small areas, and in a short period of time. Usually, local CSOs cannot engage in larger scale projects due to limited financial and professional capacities. Thus, starting with small-scale projects is a more realistic approach in the context of Kosovo.

The implementing CSO should ensure the community is thoroughly consulted during the selection process. To do so, the implementing CSO should first identify which are the projects initiated by the municipality during that given period. In addition, the projects should be classified into: a. service delivery, and b. infrastructural projects. Once a list of potential projects is developed, it should be distributed to the community of the areas that could potentially benefit from these projects, aiming to jointly choose and prioritize a certain project that they have put more interest on.

Thirdly, decide on the timing. The implementing CSO should consult the SA Team on whether they are willing to monitor a project that is currently being implemented, or a project that is already concluded. Both options come with benefits. A project that is still in an implementing phase allows the SA Team to push forward potential changes that can be later result with a better end result. While an already concluded project enables the SA Team to thoroughly assess the overall success of the project and the actual impact it is generating for the local community.

The most reliable method is to choose a project that is in the finalizing stage with 70% -80% of work already concluded. However, it is highly dependent on what are the actual projects/initiatives run by a certain municipality during that period of time. But what remains crucial for the CSO is to listen to the community. Sometimes, they may be most willing to monitor a project that is already concluded but citizens remain unsatisfied with the performance and did not bring the desired benefits to the public. Fundamentally, their needs are the most important aspect during the selection phase.

To conclude, the basic criteria for choosing a project should be based on:

- ✓ Community needs
- ✓ Any potential irregularities with public funds, and mismanagement
- ✓ Significant delays harming the overall well-being of a community
- ✓ Whether the project is fully or mostly funded by the municipality

Any projects/services which have not been properly concluded and the community is not grasping its benefits properly

STEP 2: Create legitimacy at the community level
(Make sure scope of work and end results are well elaborated)

In order to create legitimacy at the community level, the implementing CSO should firstly enjoy respect and credibility among its constituents. On the other hand, the CSO should properly inform community members on what is the aim of this initiative and encourage active participation as the crucial means for a successful social auditing process. For the community to seriously engage with the initiative, the implementing CSO should professionally elaborate the scope of work and what the end results will be. Ultimately, they should create a platform that will enable the community to express their concerns, and jointly engage for these concerns to be properly addressed by local governments.

STEP 3: Identify potential member of the social audit team
(Ensure inclusivity and diversity, meet community pioneers and seek recommendations, set up public)

One of the main aspects of the process remains the identification of the potential members of the social audit team. The implementing CSO should ensure that members of the SA Team include pioneers of change, people that well respected among their communities, and most importantly, people that are eager to engage throughout the process to achieve tangible results and better life for their fellows. One of the advantages of having a local CSO engage with social audit activities remains their close relation to their communities due to their daily engagement in that particular area/municipality. This said, the implementing CSO is already aware on whom are some people that can potentially bring more enthusiasm to the SA Team by their regular engagement in other initiatives as well.

So, what's the best way to identify these members that tomorrow can serve as agents of change?

- ✓ Identify the area where the project you will be monitoring will take place (i.e. village, city, smaller area/neighborhood, etc.)

- ✓ If available, always meet the Village Council. Some villages have strong and highly active Council's, which remain greatly involved in similar activities;

- ✓ Identify persons that are most vocal and regularly engage in ensuring better services and benefits for their communities;

- ✓ Organize individual and group meetings with the members of the community directly benefiting from the project.

Always consider:

✓ The SA Team should be diverse, in terms of age, professions, and gender. Women and marginalized groups are highly recommended to become part of the SA teams;

✓ Make sure you always include people that represent the end beneficiary of that certain project (i.e. if you are monitoring the construction of a school, your SA team should also include school teachers, directors, students and parents)

The SA Team members should not be affiliated to any political party by all means but should rather be common citizens willing to become game-changers.

The two remaining steps include the following:

STEP 4: Establish social audit team
(Establish a team of at least 10-15 members who are of different ages and professions)

A constitutive formal meeting is held

STEP 5: Plan the process
(Ensure mobilization and engage with institutional stakeholders during the initial phase)

Meet with municipal stakeholders to inform them for all steps during thisinitial hase

EXTRA TIPS! – PHASE 1

> First things first! Mapping of all institutional and other relevant stakeholders is a crucial aspect!

> Diversity remains crucial. Ensure people are of different ages and professions. Vulnerable groups should also be included, whenever possible

> Make sure all governmental documents are available to the social audit team

> The golden rule "the higher the number, the higher the impact" is relevant. However, quality comes over quantity during social audit!

> Make sure institutional stakeholders and contracting companies are involved from the beginning

> Select processes that are not to be implemented in longer period of times. Projects that are half or almost implemented are recommended

PHASE 2 - Information Gathering Phase

STEP 1: Officially constitute the Social Audit Team

As soon as the planning phase is concluded, the Social audit process is initiated. During this phase, Social audit Team, led by the local CSO, will start the actual monitoring period of the initially selected auditing processes. An official constitutive meeting of the SA Team will symbolize the beginning of the monitoring process. The second phase is the longest and the most intense one. It involved direct monitoring activities, site visits, regular formal and informal meetings, meetings with municipal stakeholders, and most importantly, a lot of research and analysis of the available documents, aiming to examine whether what was agreed on paper is being applied in reality. By the end of this phase, the SA TEAM and the local CSO leading the process will have enough qualitative material to decide whether a process was properly implemented, being it an infrastructural project, service delivery, or any other procurement activity.

During this inaugural meeting, you should clearly explain the mandate of the team, scope of work, as well as the desired results at the end. In addition, you should precisely inform them on each of the steps for a successful implementation of the Social audit, and their role at each stage.

STEP 2: Develop performance indicators for the assessment

One of the essential aspects of a successful Social audit is to have a clear picture of the processes you planning to monitor and assess, and most importantly, HOW. As soon as the inaugural meeting is held, the SA Team should gather and jointly work on developing a clear and measurable Performance Indicator Sheet (PIT) for the particular process to be monitored. The PIT can have as many indicators as applicable to the case, however, the SA Team should ensure that the PIT is implementable and provides realistic means to thoroughly the implementation of the activity (i.e. procurement activity, infrastructural project, service, etc.). The implementing CSO should bear in mind that during the drafting of the PIT, all SA members should be consulted. In addition, it is recommended that prior to finalizing the PIT, the SA Team should conduct site visits (if it is an infrastructural project), or test the services (if it is service delivery). This way, the SA Team will have a better picture of the realities, through direct screening of the situation, and gather evidence.

Although developed at the beginning, the Performance Indicator Sheet can be changed during the monitoring process. As the monitoring is conducted, it happens that some of the indicators are not as relevant as the others, while the dynamics of execution of the monitored activities can also change the indicators, by even adding new ones. When drafting the PIT, the SA TEAM –led by the local CSO – should make sure to analyze all the available documents and data for that particular process. As soon as the PIT is finalized, it should serve as a foundation for future actions during this phase. Ultimately, the PIT is that aspect that ensures the Social audit process is well-structured and based on accurate indicators to measure the performance of municipal actors when executing their activities.

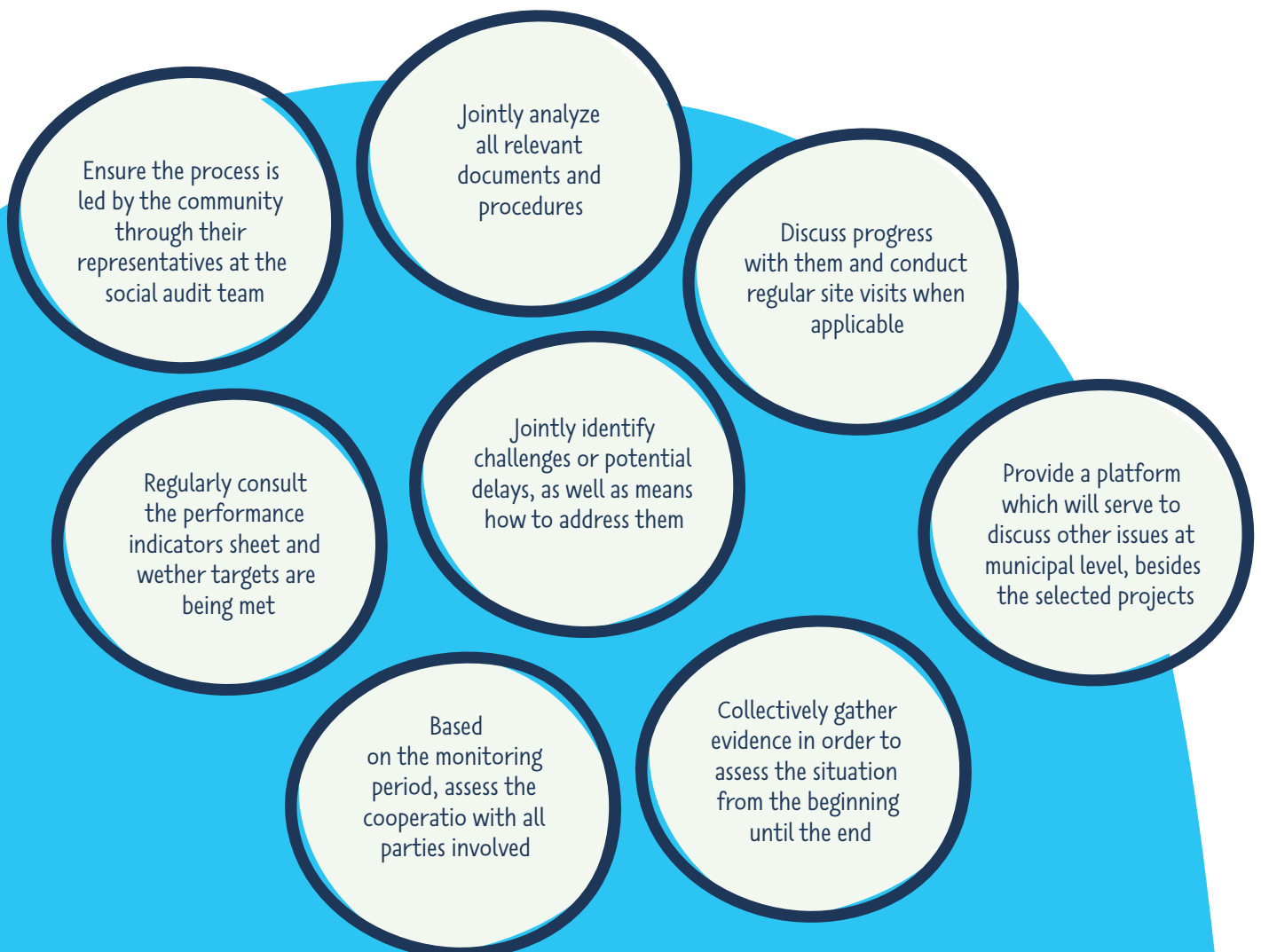An example of an Indicator Performance Sheet:

Indicator 1	Feasibility plan, completed
Indicator 2	Selection of the tender winner for project implementation based on the criteria as defined by law.
Indicator 3	The operating company responsible for the work to be undertaken, selected
Indicator 4	The staff of the construction company responsible for the implementation of the project selected
Indicator 5	Project implemented according to the dynamic plan and deadlines stipulated in the contract
Indicator 6	Budget for the implementation of the project well planned and based on real market prices for this type of project
Indicator 7	Dynamic working capacity increased
Indicator 8	Regular monitoring of project implementation by the Municipality
Indicator 9	Regular monitoring of project implementation by the audit team
Indicator 10	Regular meetings (every six weeks) of members of the audit team regarding the project implementation process
Indicator 11	Regular meetings (4 meetings) of the members of the audit team with the Municipal Assembly regarding the project implementation process starting from June 1st to the end of November 2018
Indicator 12	The efficiency and efforts of the Procurement Department within the municipality in coordinating, communication and improvement of the mission of the Social Audit team.
Indicator 13	At least 500 citizens satisfied with the implementation of the project
Indicator 14	The area "Bllok pas Blloku" fully functional and used by the residents of the area
Indicator 15	The maintenance of the block "Block after block" is carried out regularly

STEP 3: Organize regular meetings and site visits of the social audit team

For the Social audit team to be successful, the implementing CSO should guarantee regular meetings of the SA Team are taking place. Meetings are preferred to be held in the Assembly Hall, whenever possible. Although the number of meetings is agreed in the beginning, the group should adapt a flexible approach. The frequency of meetings is highly dependent on the developments during the monitoring period. Even if all members are not able to participate, the implementing CSO should make sure the discussing points are shared with them. One should understand that participation of citizens in Social audit groups is done on voluntary basis and should not conflict with their professional and personal engagements. One of the biggest challenges during a social auditing process remains keeping the SA Team members inspired and active, considering they are not financially compensated. In Kosovo, this challenge is doubled, considering the significantly low activism rooted amongst citizens. As a result, credibility of the implementing CSO plays an enormous role in ensuring the SA Team is seriously involved and acts responsibly throughout the assessment period. Similarly, the legitimacy the CSO creates during this period also contributes to the success of the process. For the latter to be guaranteed, the implementing CSO should remain regularly in touch with each individual participating in the SA Team, through formal and informal channels, and keep them informed for every aspect on the way. In addition, the implementing CSO should manage to listen carefully to the needs and recommendations of the SA Team, but should not exclude other members of the community affected by the results of the particular activity selected for the assessment. Mapping the community needs and pushing further their recommendations is the ultimate aim of the social audit and should serve as basis at all phases. All in all, the aim of the Social audit is to ensure the process is led by the community and their needs are being fulfilled, as the end beneficiary of the services provided at municipal level.

The purpose of the meetings of the Social Audit Team:

Ensure the process is led by the community through their representatives at the social audit team

Jointly analyze all relevant documents and procedures

Discuss progress with them and conduct regular site visits when applicable

Regularly consult the performance indicators sheet and wether targets are being met

Jointly identify challenges or potential delays, as well as means how to address them

Provide a platform which will serve to discuss other issues at municipal level, besides the selected projects

Based on the monitoring period, assess the cooperatio with all parties involved

Collectively gather evidence in order to assess the situation from the beginning until the end

STEP 4: Mapping institutional stakeholders and organize regular meetings with them

A successful Social audit process should be inclusive. At the end, local governments are the ones carrying out reforms and policies and are responsible for the end results. In order to manage to impact a certain process, institutional stakeholders should be included since the beginning, otherwise the Social audit is destined to fail. The first step towards ensuring inclusivity is for the local CSO to engage in several actions, including:

- ✓ Conduct a comprehensive mapping of all stakeholders, including municipalities, civil society, grass roots and media,

- ✓ Initial meeting with municipal stakeholders, preferably the Mayor, aiming to ensure a steady support by him/her,

- ✓ Identify the respective departments responsible to implement the activities monitored by the Social Audit Team (i.e. Department for Public Services, Department for Health Services, Education, etc.), depending on the nature of the project to be monitored,

- ✓ The Procurement Department should always be involved,

- ✓ Arrange initial meetings with the abovementioned departments with the aim to inform them about the initiative and seek their support throughout the process, and

- ✓ Make sure all relevant stakeholders are regularly informed for the activities undertaken by the Social Audit Team.

Regular meetings with municipal stakeholders directly contribute in enhancing cooperation among citizens and their elected representatives, an aspect lacking in Kosovo. it also enhances the role of citizens in the decision making process

Another important aspect to reach the desired impact remains the involvement of local media. In this regard, the previous cooperation among media and the CSO leading the process is of a high importance, that is why we have elaborated in previous sections that the credibility of the CSO leading the process is significant towards ensuring a successful Social audit process, towards media or municipal stakeholders.

Involving local media throughout the process guarantees the actions undertaken through Social audit, and the overall impact, has reached to a wider number of community members, in specific to remoted areas where conventional media remains the most used. In order for the media to involve, the implementing CSO should regularly inform them for the activities and meetings to be organized by the SA Team, so that they will be able to cover all activities and distribute them widely to citizens of that particular area. To fully capture the impact reached during the process, the implementing CSO should definitely ensure the presence of local media, whenever possible.

STEP 5: Gather evidence and agree on the final results

Gathering all the necessary evidence, analyzing it, and agreeing on the final assessment, remains the core element of the Social audit. As elaborated previously, this second phase is the longest and most of the activities undertaken during this phase contribute towards reaching a final assessment, based on the monitoring period and evidence gathered. The SA Team should ensure complete and thorough analysis of all the collected data, identifying key factors and patterns that undermine the credibility, efficiency and accountability of public procurement activities, if encountered.

Gathering of facts is a complex and highly demanding task. The local CSO leading the process should ensure a smooth process and provide the SA Team with assistance regularly. Compared to the SA Team members, the local CSO is assumed to have an extensive experience in gathering and analyzing data, thus, their representatives should act as mentors for the SA Team, and increase citizens' capacities simultaneously.

The process should include the two following aspects:

ANALYZE AVAILABLE DOCUMENTATIONS – During regular meetings organized for the Social Audit Team, the implementing CSO should ensure all documents related to the selected project are available and are regularly analyzed and compared with the Performance Indicators Sheet drafted at the beginning. In specific, the SA Team should access and analyze public documents of the municipality (i.e. technical projects, managerial records, cash books) in order to assess the level of transparency, efficiency and accountability of the project to be assessed by the team.

What are the relevant documents to be obtained?

In order for the process to be successful and the assessment to be evidence-based, the implementing CSO should make sure all relevant documents are available and regularly consulted throughout the monitoring process. Whether it's an infrastructural project, or a service, the main documents to be obtained include the following:

- ✓ All relevant procurement documents (including the tendering procedure, the open call for procurement purchase, selection criteria etc.)

- ✓ The final contract signed between the municipality and the successful bidder;

- ✓ The timeline agreed for the implementation of the project;

- ✓ Feasibility plan, if available;

- ✓ The detailed budget for the implementation of the project, with all budget lines assigned for each activity;

- ✓ Any sub-contracts, if available;

- ✓ Financial reports available for the project;

- ✓ The project design upon which the contract was awarded.

ORGANIZE SITE VISITS – One of the best aspects to check realities on the ground is conducting regular site visits if the SA Team is monitoring an infrastructural project (i.e. building of a new school, renovation of a healthcare center, revitalization of a park, etc.). In this regard, the CSO representatives should ensure that regular visits are planned with the initial work-plan, as they represent as an equally important tool as gathering evidence of the ongoing consultations. The frequency of the site visits can be changed depending on the intensity of implementation or the challenges encountered during the way. This said, the implementing CSO should remain cautious and arrange side visits as necessary.

Site visits can also be conducted if a service delivery is being monitored with a certain Social audit process. Although members of that particular area are well aware with the quality of the services offered as they obtain them on regular basis, if the local government initiated a procurement activity to improve a certain service, the SA Team should conduct regular visits to the place/institution the service is being offered, and test whether those improvements are evident. Photo or video documentations are also a very efficient method to keep track of the progress reached within the given period.

Overall, the implementing CSO should bear in mind that conducting this type of activities enables the Social audit team to closely inspect the monitored area/project, and consequently, conduct a fair assessment by the end of the monitoring period.

AGREE ON THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT – Once all aspects were closely monitored, and in a longer period of time, the CSO should gather the Social audit team for a final meeting aiming to thoroughly discuss with them all data stemming from the monitoring period. It is crucial for the implementing CSO that prior to this meeting provide the SA Team with a structural approach for this final discussion. More specifically, the CSO should draft detailed discussing points and decisions that should be undertaken during this meeting. The SA Team should be made aware that the decision is not being taken on ad-hoc basis but is rather a result of a long monitoring process. All data and analysis conducted during the monitoring period should be thoroughly discussed during this meeting, and it is very important to make sure that each member of the SA Team is well aware of the assessment and are fully subscribed with the views reflected in the final report which will be the end result of the process.

In order for the data to be well presented, it is recommended to keep the format as simple as possible. This said, once all data is collected, the team should transpose them into positive and negative aspects into a simple table sheet. Once the data is divided, the team should first start discussing and acknowledging the positive aspects, and then dedicate a longer amount of time to the negative aspects, or challenges as such. This structure enables the group to better analyze what is at stake, and how to further proceed advocating in front of their local authorities with the ultimate aim to improve a particular project/initiative that is being monitored.
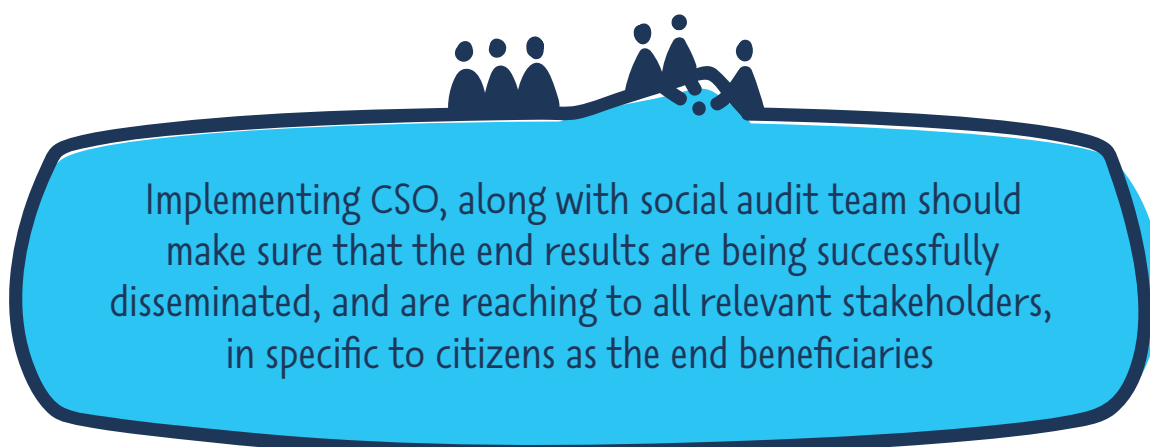
EXTRA TIPS! – Phase 2

> In order for the social audit team to be successful, make sure some of the members of the social audit teams are pioneers in their community, and have strong leadership skills

> Make sure meetings are not postponed or decreased compared to the initial plan! It is very important to organize as many meetings as planned in order to keep the team active

> Social audit team meetings should be well-structured in order for the discussion to produce concrete results

> Bilateral meetings are equally important. It is a precondition for the implementing cso to organize meetings among the social audit team and municipal representatives

> On the way, the CSO should also engage in directly increasing analytic and professional capacities of the members of the audit team by providing them regularly with expertise and a platform to discuss different aspects during the analyzing and assessment period

> Be adaptive! Not all activities can be happening as initially planned. Often, a successful social auditing process entails more commitment than planned

> Always keep in mind that the SA team is doing all this work on voluntary basis, and appreciate that during the process

PHASE 3 - Public Dialogue and Evidence Dissemination

An assessment without a proper public debate does not reach the desired impact at all. The fundamental principle of the Social audit is to encourage civic activism, pinpoint challenges and potential wrongdoings of the local governments, and attribute merits when the elected representatives are regularly improving their services.

Social audit enables a group of community members to become leaders in monitoring their authorities and enables them to empower other members of the community in engaging in similar initiatives, and most importantly, raises awareness among them on their crucial role in claiming their fundamental rights to keep their elected ones accountable.

Implementing CSO, along with social audit team should make sure that the end results are being successfully disseminated, and are reaching to all relevant stakeholders, in specific to citizens as the end beneficiaries

In Kosovo, the need to reach a wider public is even more important. Considering the Social audit to be a largely unfamiliar method to both communities and institutions, successful dissemination of the results remains critical towards increasing awareness among stakeholders on the effectiveness of such an innovative Social accountability tool. This Toolkit provides detailed steps on ensuring successful dissemination of the end results.
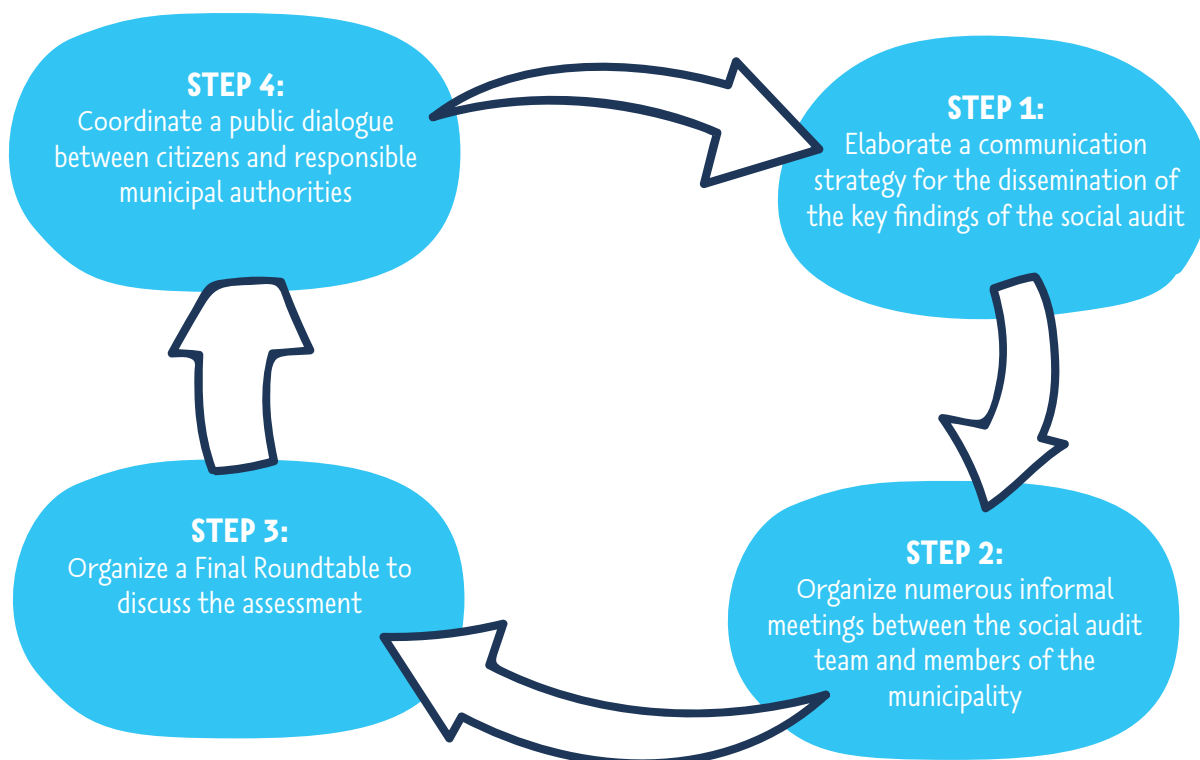
STEP 4: Coordinate a public dialogue between citizens and responsible municipal authorities

STEP 1: Elaborate a communication strategy for the dissemination of the key findings of the social audit

STEP 3: Organize a Final Roundtable to discuss the assessment

STEP 2: Organize numerous informal meetings between the social audit team and members of the municipality

STEP 1: Elaborate a communication strategy for the dissemination of the key findings of the social audit.

Whether a Social audit process is successful remains highly dependent on a proper dissemination strategy of the key findings stemming from the monitoring period. A proper dissemination strategy should consider the following aspects:

Regular updates through social media platforms and other available communication channels for the activities undertaken by the SA team;

Infographics to better visualize the findings and make it more attractive for people to read;

Video and photo documentation of the overall process, which should be widely shared among community and public at large;

Media declarations, whenever possible. Media remains one of the key actors contributing towards spreading the word in mass communities.

STEP 2: Organize numberous coordination meetings between the social audit team and members of the municipality.

Although meetings among the SA team and municipal representatives should be organized on regular basis, towards the end, these meetings should be intensified. As the SA Team has more findings in hand, it is easier for them to argue on the necessary changes and provide the municipal stakeholders with solid arguments to undertake any measures necessary during the final phase. It is recommended that prior to organizing the public event, the SA team organizes a meeting with municipal authorities with the aim of consulting them on the final findings stemming from the monitoring period. It is important for the meetings to be attended by as many participants as possible. In addition, in order to reach to a wider audience, it is recommended for the local media to be invited. If media fails to be present, then the team can issue a press release with the main points discussed during these meetings.

STEP 3: **Consider organizing a final roudtable to discuss the assessment.**

The final roundtable should serve as a closing activity of the long monitoring process undertaken by the Social audit team. Is should serve as a platform to publicly disseminate the key findings to a general public. Although it might impose financial implications, a final roundtable is highly recommended. If the organization lack budgetary means, alternatives are to be considers, such as renting the municipal hall that can be rented for free.

For a final event to be successful, the implementing CSO should undertake the following activities:

1. Ensure the panel is comprehensive. It should include a representative from the municipality (i.e. the mayor or the directors of the relevant departments responsible for the implementation of the project monitored by the SA team). In addition, one to two members of the SA team should also be part of the panel, depending on the scale of the group and the project that was monitored.

2. A good facilitator to moderate the discussion. The discussion during the final event should be structured in order for it to be impactful. At the beginning, the implementing CSO should represent the report entailing an overview of the monitoring process and main findings. A professional facilitator to moderate the discussion is deemed necessary for the event to achieve the desired impact.

3. Ensure solid participation. Apart from the panel and the SA team members, the invitation should be extended to a wider list of potential participants. This said, invitations should be sent to all members of the community, other municipal departments, other local CSOs, civic activists, international community, and field experts.

4. Ensure media coverage. For the event to reach to a larger number of citizens, media coverage remains of utmost importance. As a result, the implementing CSO should send a media invitation a day before the event takes place, and confirm their attendance through phone calls, if need be.

5. Disseminate infographics. If the report includes sets of infographics, it's important that they are separately published during the event and displayed through a monitor as well. A printed version in all local languages is also welcomed.

6. Disseminate short documentaries, if produced. Similar to infographics, short documentaries reflecting the work of the SA team in a chronological manner are highly recommended. If such videos are available, they should be broadcasted during the final event.

7. Send out a press release. After the event, the implementing CSO should send out a press release with the main discussing points and stances held during the roundtable discussion. The press release should be sent to all local and national media, for a wider reach.

8. Use social media during the event. In order to reach out a diverse group of people, the implementing CSO should use the social media, and actively publish panel's stances in real time, during the event.

9. Follow-up with a Thank You Note. After the event, the implementing CSO should follow-up with all those who were present during the roundtable, and send the available publications (report, infographics, video) via a Thank You Note sent out to all.

STEP 4: Coordinate a public dialogue between citizens and responsible municipal authorities.

Social audit exercise should always include a follow-up process. The implementing CSO should ensure that a public dialogue among citizens and municipal authority takes place after the final event, aiming to inspect whether recommendations provided by the SA team are being addressed by the municipality. In addition, it also contributes towards improvement of accountability and transparency of local governments. In this regard, the implementing CSO should organize meetings among citizens and municipal authorities aiming to discuss the extent to which the community needs have been heard by their elected representatives. Pressure to implement such recommendations can also be addressed by other means, such as, media, public forums, emails, social media channels, and other public platforms available.

EXTRA TIPS! – Phase 3

> If there are enough financial means in place, always make sure there are professional photographs engaged, also, short video documentaries are an effective method to document the process

> The implementing cso should have a communication strategy in place throughout the whole process. The strategy should be widely shared and consulted by all members of the social audit

> Use of social media as a platform for both regular and special communication activities between the social audit members and municipalities

> Keep the media informed and request their partnership

PHASE 4 - Follow up and preservation of the momentum

The local CSO and the SA Team members should commit even after the process is concluded. Both parties should use the key findings to further advocate on specific issues, and the support of media and social platforms are an efficient way to reach this.

> The CSO and Social Audit Team should use the opportunity to present the process as a successful story and encourage others to consider utilizing it for enabling a better living environment of their communities!

It is highly recommendable for the Social Audit Team to follow up with municipal representatives on whether their recommendations were taken into consideration and have been adopted. Findings should be concrete and evidence-based.

EXAMPLES OF FINDINGS

Findings
- Non-compliance with contract standards
- Errors in the project
- Dangerous parts of the park
- Lack of a project leader

Findings
- Dangerous parts in the sports field
- Lack of fire escape
- Non-adequate learning conditions for preschool children
- Risk from stray dogs
- Open sewers pose risks for children

The local CSO and the team members should ensure that their impact is not limited to just another report cluttering municipal shelves.

It is most likely to happen in developing countries that a certain institution does not really consider recommendation coming from a small group of peoples, and especially in Kosovo, where civic activism is to be highly encouraged. As a result, a follow-up is mandatory for the citizens to experience the real benefits and ensure proper improvement of a certain process.

It is extremely important to find ways to preserve the momentum and ensure that recommendations deriving from the social audit process are being taken into account by the respective authorities.

PHASE 4 - Follow up and preservation of the momentum

In order to do so, the implementing CSO should take the following measures:

✓ Once the process is concluded, after a given period of time (maximum 6 months), the CSO should invite a small roundtable discussion gathering municipal representatives, Social audit Team, media and other members of community, aiming to discuss all the extent to which every specific recommendation was implemented, after agreed.

✓ If the municipal authorities did not manage to deliver on their promises, the local CSO should find means to 'pressure' the municipality to address this issue, and this could be done through media declarations and use of social media platforms.

✓ If encountered, such concerns should also be widely shared among community so that the pressure is higher and not limited to a local CSO only.

EXTRA TIPS! – Phase 4

> If challenges are encountered, the support of other local and central civil society organizations is highly recommended

> Use the social media platforms, they represent the chepaest and fastest method to address the opinion

> Engage with media regularly

> Make sure you will reflect on the challenges encountered and lessons learned
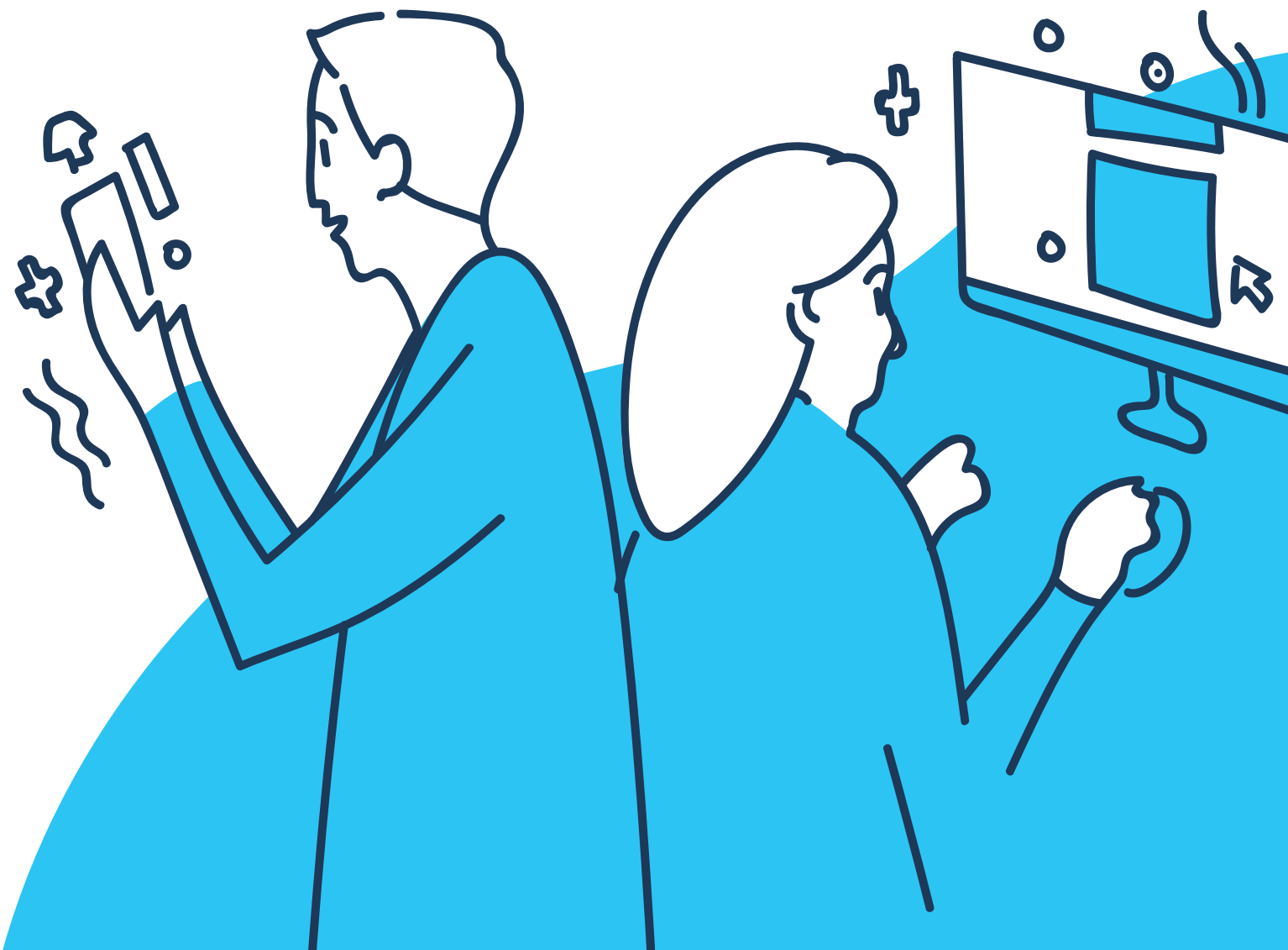
ASSESSING RISKS AND CHALLENGES: What should local CSOs keep in mind?

An organization willing to employ Social audit in Kosovo should consider several aspects that might be imposed as risk and challenges during the implementation phase. This Toolkit provides a number of them that can pose a real threat to the overall success.

RISKS	MITIGATION
Lack of political willingness to engage with the SA Team initiative	– The implementing CSO should continuously commit in enhancing cooperation with local authorities, and acknowledge their role as the leaders of the process – Local authorities should be well aware that improving the life of citizens means prosperity and higher chances for foreign investments and economic development of their region
Lack of citizens' willingness to engage in the Social audit process	– The implementing CSO should inform the community on their significant role to claim their rights entrenched in the Constitution – It should be made clear to them that the impact reached during the process will eventually benefit them and their wellbeing – Citizens should be informed that Social audit puts community at core and legitimizes them
CSOs struggle with accessing necessary documentation	– Access to relevant documents is essential for the process. – CSOs should ensure to use their right on access to public documents, guaranteed with the Law on Access to Public Documents
The interest of Social audit members decreases with time	– In order to mitigate this risk and ensure Social audit Team is representative, the CSO should always have a reserve list for new potential members to join the team, as well as a plan to integrate them at a given phase
Lack of media attention	– Media should be constantly kept informed and educated on the process – Regular invitations and press releases are mandatory
Lack of human capacities	– The implementing CSO should regularly increase capacities of their members, and train them on how Social accountability tools are implemented – Increasing research and advocacy skills is also another important aspect, given many analysis take place during the process
Financial capabilities	Regularly reach out potential donors, and seek funding on two bases: 1. Social accountability tools are innovative means to increase accountability and transparency 2. Social audit empowers organizations and citizens

CONCLUSION

In developing democracies such as Kosovo, citizen activism remains crucial for the institutions to improve their accountability and overall performance. Elsewhere, social accountability tools have proven to produce tremendous results when applied properly. Schools have been re-designed, services were further developed, and infrastructures eased the living of many communities, due to the use of Social accountability tools!

Is it the time for Kosovo CSOs, as well as institutional stakeholders, to embrace this fact and better represent their constituencies?

This Toolkit provides numerous explanations to why CSOs should immediately consider embracing social accountability and empower communities across the regions of Kosovo!

Are Kosovo's local organizations ready to introduce such innovative concepts? Although quite uneven, local civil society is fully capable to employ social accountability tools, with the help of community and international friends.

On the other hand, institutional stakeholders should simultaneously engage in employing social accountability tools in Kosovo, in order to ensure better service delivery, increase their effectiveness and ensure citizens are regularly involved and consulted during policy designing and implementation.

So, what is one of the main aspects that makes a local CS capable to implement such concepts?

This Toolkit argues many reasons, but CREDIBILITY IN THE COMMUNITY remains key. If an organization has a great reputation in their region, mobilization of the community members should not be a concern.

As long as organizations consult this Toolkit, as well as best-practices elsewhere in the world, any social accountability process will be impactful. In conclusion, an organization should never forget that social audit puts citizens first, as it is led by citizens.

Conducting Social Audit in Kosovo