



## Health & Nutrition Technical Brief

# Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) for Health and Nutrition

## THE ISSUES

Supporting citizens to engage with their governments has now become part of mainstream development practice. Known commonly as social accountability, World Vision's Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) project model is designed to empower communities to hold their governments accountable for services promised, including child protection, health care, education, access

to clean water, and other areas that influence the well-being of children and their families. CVA equips communities with tools to help them identify service gaps and effectively advocate with local and national governments to improve quality and meet standards for services, such as student-teacher ratios or nurses per head of population.

## WHAT IS THE CVA FOR HEALTH AND NUTRITION ?

Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) is a local level advocacy and social accountability approach that facilitates dialogue between communities and government in order to improve health service delivery. CVA focuses primarily on citizen monitoring of health sector service delivery against established governance standards. Citizens are then empowered to engage in a dialogue with decision makers to address identified problems and gaps. CVA can contribute to enhanced relationships between healthcare staff and patients, leading to

increased health-seeking behaviour, higher outpatient numbers, and more women giving birth at clinics and using antenatal services, as examples. Further, CVA can be used to identify patterns of government failure that are ripe advocacy targets for systemic reform at the provincial, national, or even global levels. Such systemic issues may include share of national budgets set aside for health sector, national recruitment and deployment of health personnel etc.

## ALIGNMENT TO OUR PROMISE AND THE SDGS

CVA is well aligned to the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specifically, it aligns with the following SDG indicators:

- Target 1.4: By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.
- Target 4.8: Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all
- Target 16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
- Target 16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

- Target 16.10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

CVA contributes to the following CWB Objectives: #6: Increase in children protected from infection and disease, #7: increase in primary student who can read, #5: increase in children are well nourished and #3: increase in boys and girls protected from violence.



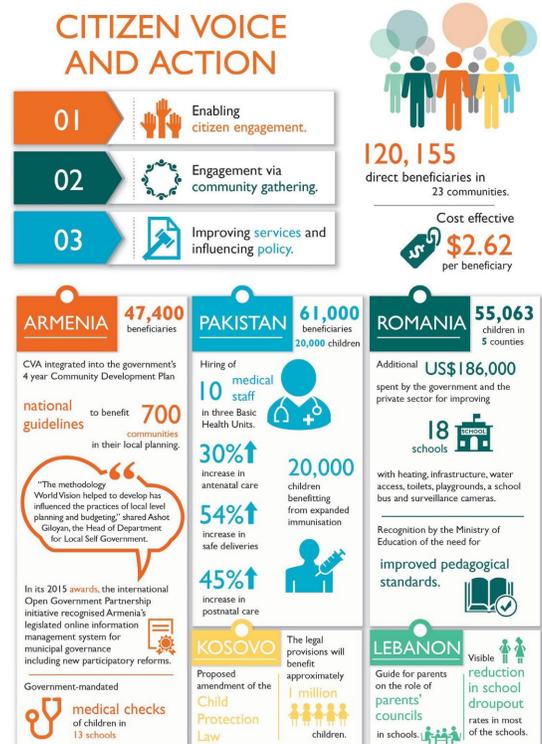
## CORE COMPONENTS OF THE CVA PROJECT MODEL

The CVA approach begins with civic education on people’s rights, entitlements and responsibilities, followed by a social audit that allows the community to assess whether government services meet the existing standards as set by government.

In a separate set of activities, communities use a scorecard to rank their satisfaction with those services.

At a town hall meeting, they discuss their findings and recommendations with government representatives. Together, community members and government representatives agree upon an action plan to improve services.

Communities then continue to work with government and other local partners to ensure that agreed commitments are met.



## WHAT IS NEW IN THE HNSA UPDATE OF THE MODEL?

As part of the new HNSA, new guidance has been developed to better enable the integration of CVA with the COMM (Community Health Committees) project model. The COMM model, in turn, has been updated to incorporate a broad range of health, nutrition and

multi-sectoral issues that COMMs may choose to assess and take action to improve. With this expanded range of issues that COMMs are engaging with, the advocacy-related actions they undertake as part of CVA may also now cover a wider range of issues

## GOALS, OUTCOMES AND EXPECTED IMPACT

The CVA approach has a solid and proven Theory of Change that has been influenced and informed by the many years in which CVA has been utilized in the health sector.

The goal of Citizen Voice and Action depends on context but is usually ‘increased government responsiveness and accountability in the delivery of primary health care,’ ‘To improve the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of local health services’ or simply ‘improved government services and community relationships.’

**Outcomes** may include: Citizens are able to engage with government on the delivery of quality health services. Citizens engage with government on the delivery of

quality health services. Communities demand improved services and influence health policy at local and national level.

**Value Proposition:** CVA is a strategic approach, employing cross-organizational and multi-level lobbying efforts to successfully effect national governance change. To advocate for ongoing national level governance outcomes, World Vision is collaborating with several NGOs to leverage aggregated citizen data. As part of World Vision’s 2016-2030 strategy, Our Promise 2030, there is a commitment to promote social accountability as a driver of sustainability across the organization’s work with communities.

## THE EVIDENCE BASE

Marta Schaaf, Stephanie M. Topp, Moses Ngulube, From favours to entitlements: community voice and action and health service quality in Zambia, Health Policy and Planning, Volume 32, Issue 6, July 2017, Pages 847–859, <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapol/czx024>.

**Quality of Evidence (5):** A theory-driven qualitative study of the context, mechanisms and outcomes of a social accountability program, Citizen Voice and Action (CVA), implemented by World Vision (WV) in Zambia.

**Insights Gained:** CVA positively impacted the state, society, state–society relations and development coordination at the local level. Specifically, sustained improvements in some aspects of health system responsiveness, empowered citizens, the improved provision of public goods (health services) and increased consensus on development issues appeared to flow from CVA.

Westthorp, G, et al, 2019. Citizen Voice and Action for

Government Accountability and Improved Services : Maternal, Newborn, Infant and Child Health Services, Wahani Visi, World Bank. <https://gpsaknowledge.org/wp-content/uploads/GPSA-Indonesia-CVA-Project-Final-Evaluation-Report-2018.pdf>.

### **Quality of Evidence (5): Realist evaluation**

**Insights:** The 2018 Indonesia study includes two important conclusions that point to CVA’s value as a governance approach. Evaluators concluded that:

- CVA works by changing power relations. It does so by using structured and transparent processes to organize collective opinion, which is harder to dismiss than individual opinions, and by making the criteria for judgements transparent. It also does so by empowering women; and by bringing different types and levels of decision-makers into the process, such that different forms of authority are available to address different issues.

- CVA works by strengthening systems. In the Indonesia case, the boundaries of the health system at local level were expanded to include citizens and local government and component elements of the system were strengthened. Relationships were established between various elements of the system; stronger information and resource flows were introduced within the system; and positive feedback loops supported ongoing action to improve system effectiveness.

Report on the Impact of CVA on Child Wellbeing and Transformation of Gender Relations Outreach Department School of Psychology, College of Humanities and Social Sciences Makerere University (2016).

**Quality of Evidence (2):** This was a quasi-experimental design evaluation that compared data in several communities in Uganda where CVA was undertaken to data in communities where WV was not undertaken.

**Insights:** A significant increase in health centre staff, drug availability, and quantity of drugs, in government health centers in the experimental sub counties than the control sub counties as a result of CVA. Reduction in the time spent at the health facilities, improvement in reporting time and change in working behavior by the health center staff as reported by 51.4%, 58.2%, and 60.3% of the experimental sample respectively. Almost half the control sample (49.5%) evaluated their latest visit to the government health facility to be unsatisfactory compared to only 27.6% of the experimental sample. Increased antenatal attendance reduced teenage pregnancies and

child marriages in treatment group.

Social accountability and education revives health sub-centers in India and increases access to family planning services July 2017, Christian Journal for Global Health.

**Quality of Evidence (4):** The research presented in this peer reviewed journal article provides an analysis of how CVA was used in World Vision’s three-and-half year mobilizing plan for maternal and neonatal health through a birth spacing and advocacy project (known as MOMENT). The project was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and was carried out partnering with local organizations in rural HarDOI and urban slums of Lucknow districts in Uttar Pradesh (UP), the most populous state in India.

**Insights:** The study concludes that education using CVA contributed to an increase in the number of government sub-centers, bringing care closer and making it more accessible to women and children.



## RESULTS, KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND SUCCESSES

A few of the many examples include:

- » A 33% increase in the percentage of pregnant women and mothers who reported that nutrition advice was provided at the village maternal and child health center<sup>1</sup>
- » The percentage of respondents who gave services ratings of good or very good almost doubled, from 23% in 2014 to 45% in 2017.<sup>2</sup>
- » 93 new government staff hired over 5 counties in three years in Kenya attributable to CVA<sup>3</sup> “CVA positively impacted the state, society, state–society

relations and development coordination at the local level”<sup>4</sup>

- » “Sustained improvements in some aspects of health system responsiveness, empowered citizens, the improved provision of public goods (health services) and increased consensus on development issues appeared to flow from CVA”<sup>5</sup>

1. Westhorp, G, and Ball, 2018. Citizen Voice and Action for Government Accountability and Improved Services: Maternal, Newborn, Infant and Child Health Services, Wahani Visi, World Bank, January.  
 2. Ibid  
 3. World Vision, 2018. Enhancing Nutrition Surveillance and Resilience (ENSURE) internal evaluation report.

4. Schaaf, M et al. 2017. From favors to entitlements: community voice and action and health service quality in Zambia. Health Policy and Planning, 32, 2017, 847–859.  
 5. Ibid

## EMERGING INNOVATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

The CVA process generates volumes of citizen-generated data through the process of community scorecards and the monitoring of service standards. This data is used to inform dialogue and collective action as part of the CVA process and when aggregated, has helped stakeholders connect local realities to sub national and national dialogue. Citizen generated data is significant to support the measurement of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially indicator 16.6.2, Proportion of the population satisfied with their last experience of public services.

To facilitate the management of this data, a CVA database has been developed, a web-based information system that captures data from the community scorecards, monitoring of service standards and community action plans and enables aggregation and analysis of citizen data.



### LINKS TO KEY DOCUMENTS

1. CVA Key Documents (including Translations):  
<https://www.wvcentral.org/community/SA/Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx>
2. Scaling Social Accountability Evidence from Africa, Asia and the Caucasus:  
<https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/FINAL-Scaling-Social-Accountability-Jan-8-2019-2.pdf>
3. CVA Global Database:  
<https://www.wvcentral.org/community/SA/Pages/CVA-Global-Database.aspx>
4. CVA Project Model:  
<https://www.wvcentral.org/EandL/Pages/CVA.aspx?projectModel=Citizen%20Voice%20and%20Action>
5. CVA DME:  
[https://www.wvcentral.org/community/pe/Key%20Documents/Forms/CVA\\_DME.aspx](https://www.wvcentral.org/community/pe/Key%20Documents/Forms/CVA_DME.aspx)
6. CVA Training of Practitioners:  
<https://www.wvcentral.org/community/pe/Key%20Documents/Forms/CVA%20ToP%20Manual%20FINAL.aspx>
7. CVA in Sectors:  
<https://www.wvcentral.org/community/pe/Key%20Documents/Forms/CVA%20in%20Sectors.aspx>
8. CVA Best Practices:  
<https://www.wvcentral.org/community/pe/Key%20Documents/Forms/CVA%20Best%20Practices.aspx>
9. CVA Field Guides (translated):  
<https://www.wvcentral.org/community/pe/Key%20Documents/Forms/CVA%20Field%20Guide.aspx>
10. CVA Core Competencies:  
<https://www.wvcentral.org/community/pe/Key%20Documents/Forms/CVA%20Core%20Competencies.aspx>



World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Inspired by our Christian values, we are dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. We serve all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

We believe a world without violence against children is possible, and World Vision's global campaign It takes a world to end violence against children is igniting movements of people committed to making this happen. No one person, group or organisation can solve this problem alone, it will take the world to end violence against children.