Supporting Local Governance in Yemen
Steps to Improving Relationships between Citizens and Government

Manual for Local Councilors, Civil Society Organizations and Citizens

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Supporting Local Governance in Yemen: Steps to Improving Relationships between Citizens and Their Government
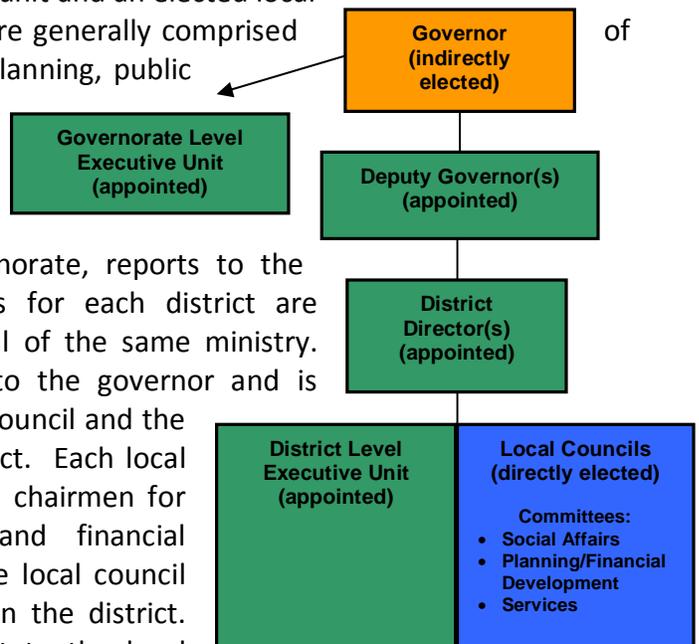
There are a number of challenges facing local governance in Yemen. Local councilors and citizens alike do not understand the role of local authorities, citizens are unaware of the limitations placed on elected and appointed officials and local authorities do not know how to communicate the challenges they face to those they seek to serve. This manual provides information on the implementation of Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys, along with other steps that may be used to strengthen relationships between citizens and government, to combat these common challenges.

Roles and Responsibilities

Individuals, organizations, and elected and appointed officials in Yemen each have a distinct and important role to play in assuring that local governance is transparent and accountable to its citizens.

Local Authority in Yemen

The current system of local governance is comprised of an appointed executive unit at the governorate level, and an appointed executive unit and an elected local council in each district. The executive units are generally comprised of representatives of the ministries of finance, planning, public works and local authority and are paid civil servants. Local councilors are directly elected by their communities and are unpaid volunteers. The governor, who is indirectly elected by the local councils in each governorate, reports to the Ministry of Local Administration. Directors for each district are appointed by the governor with the approval of the same ministry. Each director is, by mandate, accountable to the governor and is responsible for oversight of the elected local council and the appointed executive unit in his assigned district. Each local council elects a chairman for the council and chairmen for each of three committees: planning and financial development, social affairs, and services. The local council chairman reports to the appointed director in the district. The local council committee chairmen report to the local council chairman.

Governor (indirectly elected)

Governorate Level Executive Unit (appointed)

Deputy Governor(s) (appointed)

District Director(s) (appointed)

District Level Executive Unit (appointed)

Local Councils (directly elected)

Committees:
- Social Affairs
- Planning/Financial Development
- Services

Facts and Figures

- 21 Governorates (including Capital Sana'a)
- 333 Local Districts
- 5,600 Local Councilors
- 18 Local Councilors/district if population is below 35,000
- 20 Local Councilors/district if population is 35,000-75,000
- 26 Local Councilors/district if population is 75,000-150,000
- 30 Local Councilors/district if population exceeds 150,000

Role of Elected Local Councilors

A comprehensive description of the role of local councilors can be found in the Local Authority Law of 2000. For the purposes of this manual and for simplicity, local councilors are responsible for the following:

1) Proposing economic and social development plans for their district;
2) Monitoring the work of the appointed executive unit in their district;
3) Proposing annual plans and budgets;
4) Examining information to determine development priorities for their district;
5) Reviewing the source, amount and type of district revenues collected and distributed;
6) Reviewing security conditions in their district;
7) Promoting investment in their district; and
8) Reviewing the supply of basic commodities and services in their district and proposing solutions to shortages.

Role of Civil Society Organizations

Civil society fills a number of gaps locally and nationally. Charities, non-governmental organizations, religious groups, associations and trade unions, social movements, business organizations, coalitions and advocacy groups all fall under the umbrella of civil society as it is generally defined. Locally, in Yemen, CSOs may: organize and advocate for development or service projects; research and work to raise awareness of an important issue; monitor service delivery and government performance; and/or provide humanitarian services directly to the community.

Working Together

Local elected officials and civil society organizations often view one another as adversaries. Local governments may feel that CSOs only concentrate on the failures of authorities to provide for their citizens, and CSOs may often view local governments as unapproachable and therefore ineffective. However, when the two sides come together and work toward common goals, the result can be a more effective system of local governance, better service delivery and improved citizen perception of government and CSOs.

Participatory Local Governance and Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS)
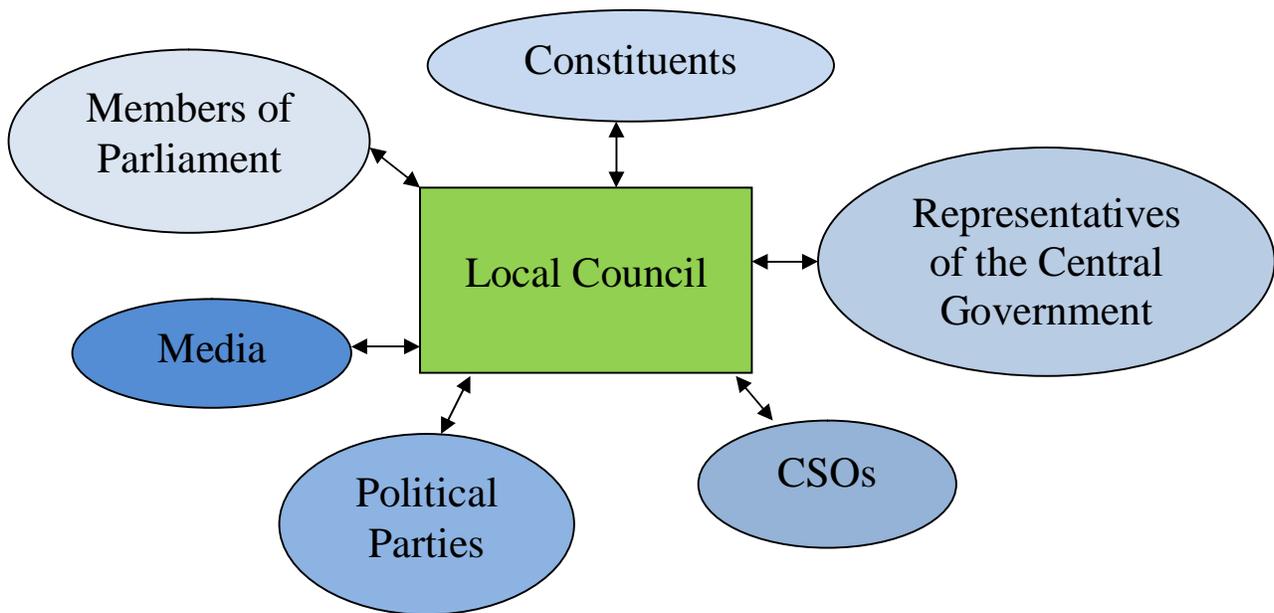
Joint monitoring of local expenditures is just one of the many ways that communities can work collaboratively with government to ensure that service delivery, development projects and other local initiatives are implemented and managed effectively. This manual seeks to guide local stakeholders through the process of implementing public expenditure tracking surveys as a tool to improve relationships between government and citizens, promote transparency and accountability at the local level and to educate citizens on the roles they might play to improve their communities. The exercises below may be completed by local officials, CSOs or citizens as they work toward a mutual aim of strengthening local governance.

Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS)
PETS is a method of gathering information that encourages all stakeholders to understand and discuss where public money originates, how it is spent and whether the money spent has met local priorities and added value to the community. This system focuses on real expenditures and attempts to track the flow of money from the central government down to the district where it is actually spent. Implementing PETS requires a strong, long-term commitment from participating CSOs and local government officials. PETS is not a one-time endeavor but an ongoing process for monitoring expenditures. This process can be driven by civil society or by the local government, but it must have the active support of both in order to be successful.

The right to exercise PETS can be found in Article IV of the Yemen Constitution which states "the people are the owner and main source of authority. They may exercise that authority directly or indirectly through representation."

Citizens in Yemen are often frustrated and complain that they do not know who is responsible for addressing an issue of interest to them or that they do not have access to decision makers. PETS is a method that can help establish or strengthen communication links in the community and will clarify which individual or government institution is responsible for specific public provisions and services. When functioning properly, communication at the local level in Yemen should flow through elected local councils.

Effective communication throughout the PETS process will be a critical contributor to its success, and it is highly recommended that the community support its local council as the central communication hub because they are the directly elected representatives of the district. If it is determined that the local council will not serve as the focal communication point, then an alternative institution must be agreed upon prior to beginning the PETS process.

The Process

Step One-Accessing and Understanding the Budget

A citizen or elected official does not need to be a mathematician in order to analyze and track basic expenditures. However, people do need to know how to access government budget figures. In Yemen, budgets are provided to the local governments in each district. A citizen can access budget information for every district through the Ministry of Finance website at http://www.mof.gov.ye.budget. Citizens can also obtain budgets by visiting a member of parliament in their constituency or by visiting their elected local councilors and requesting a copy.

Once a copy of the budget is obtained, it is possible to develop tables of proposed expenditures by district. When possible, separate fixed expenses (operational costs to run the government) and variable expenses (development projects). It is advisable, when starting, to focus on one or two specific sectors such as health, education, water and sanitation or transportation (roads). Look at the amount allocated for the targeted sector and try to complete the following table:

> Pay close attention to the last quarter of the annual budget. This is where most discretionary or wasteful spending is found.

Sector	Budgeted	Received	Spent by Local Authority	Transferred to Neighborhoods	Balance
Health					
Education					
TOTAL					

Stakeholders may decide to focus specifically on a sector and conduct a more robust analysis to include where funds originated. If that is the case, a table may include more details:

Sector	Budgeted	Received	Spent by Local Authority	Transferred to Neighborhoods	Balance
Education					
Central Government					
Capacity Building Grant					
Development Grant					
Local Revenue					
TOTAL					

While not required, it may be useful to engage an expert to assist in this process. Experts on budgets are plentiful in Yemen and can be found at universities, businesses or within the local authority.

Step Two-Accessing and Understanding Local Development Priorities

Local development plans currently come from the central government. They contain information about the economic, social, health and education goals for the country but are not specific to individual local district development needs. The national plan for local development can be obtained by visiting the Ministry of Local Administration or district local councilors and requesting a copy.

It may be useful to compare what is known about locally identified priorities with national plans for local development in the district. For example, if local discussions have centered on construction of water pipelines to a neighborhood, is the identified priority in the budget allocated by the central government? If not, citizens and their local authority can plan for funding this project locally or advocating more strongly to the central government that this is an important priority for the district and needs funding.

Local Priority	Budgeted	Not Budgeted
Construction of five additional classrooms at Al Yemen School		
Building sanitation infrastructure for Al Watan Ward		
Establishing water pipelines to Selema Precinct		
Building roads to a water source in Al Kaoor Village		

Step Three-Community Mapping

By reviewing the budget and local development plan, citizens can understand what priorities have been outlined for a community. However, it is also important to map the targeted district or neighborhood to gain a clear understanding of existing groups, services and infrastructure. In order to map the community for this process the following key questions must be answered:

1) What is the population and gender distribution of the district?
2) How many and where are health facilities?
3) How many and where are educational institutions?
4) How many school age children live in the district and how many are enrolled?
5) How many active CSOs are in the district?
6) What types of CSOs are located in the district: charity, women's groups, youth groups, human rights organizations, legal assistance, health care, eradicating illiteracy?
7) What types of government services are provided to the community and where can citizens go to gain more information about those services?
8) Are there any parks located in the district?
9) Are there any historic sites in the district?
10) How many farms are located in the district and what type of products do those farms primarily produce?
11) Where are water sources located?
12) How many roads are located in the district?
13) How many religious institutions (mosques, schools, etc) are in the district?

Tables can be developed to map the community or to compare it with data gathered from central government statistics.

Employment Sector

Type	Number Male	Number Female	Remarks
Professional (accountant, lawyer, banker)			
Business Owner			
Public Servant or Government Employee			
Service Industry (restaurant or hotel worker)			
Agriculture			
Education (teacher, professor, school administrator)			
Construction			
Skilled Trades (electrician, plumber, welder)			
Military			
Fisheries			

Active NGOs

NGO Name	Number of Staff	Number of Volunteers	Scope of Activities	Remarks
1.				

Health Care Infrastructure

Facility	Number of Staff	Number of Doctors	Number of Beds	Number of Rooms	Gender Served	Specialization (maternity care, heart specialists, cancer treatment, etc)	Hours of Operation
1.							

Basic Demographics

Age	Male	Female	Total
Under 6			
6-14			
15-24			
25-40			
41-65			
Over 65			

There may be other questions that need to be answered as well. The more that is known about the district, the better informed decision makers will be in determining priorities for their communities. For example, if the development plan for the district focuses on education, but the community consists mainly of people over the age of 50, then the development plan may need to be adjusted to reflect a greater need for health care.

Step Four-Engaging Stakeholders

Civil society organizations and local government will need to discuss the PETS process with stakeholders to gain acceptance and support for active participation in the process. Some community groups choose to implement this step first, while others implement it after data gathering and initial analysis are complete. Participants in an initial meeting should include local elected and appointed officials; CSOs active in the district; community, tribal and religious leaders; and individual citizens who are active in the community. The PETS process should be explained as a tool of assistance rather than an auditing mechanism. It is also important to assure local government representatives that the process is meant to enhance the relationship between citizens and their government. By monitoring how money is spent, CSOs and citizens can support government efforts to ensure that public funds are spent efficiently and effectively. As identified problems or weaknesses are reported, the government has an opportunity to respond to those weaknesses. If the government can respond effectively, then its credibility among citizens begins to increase.

Stakeholders can work together to identify which neighborhood projects, service delivery mechanisms or issues to monitor. To identify these issues, stakeholders may want to conduct a simple *SWOT* analysis for district development. *SWOT* stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Strengths and weaknesses require stakeholders to look at themselves, and opportunities and threats require them to look at external issues that may impact their goals. The community mapping exercise will serve as a strong foundation for this exercise. An example of a community *SWOT* analysis might look like this:

Strengths	Weaknesses
1) Strong education system	1) Poor communication between local government, civil society and citizens
2) Qualified, active appointed and elected officials	2) Insufficient budget for development needs
3) Strong civil society	3) Insufficient health care system
4) Clear vision for the district	4) Lack of business association
5) Secure and stable for development	5) Limited natural resources
6) Historic sites	6) Water shortages
7) Strong agricultural area	
Opportunities	Threats
1) Local or foreign investment	1) Potential reduction in budget allocation from central government (economic deterioration)
2) Decentralization	2) Regulatory restrictions on local investment or development
3) Building relationships with international donors for community development, health, education, agriculture.	3) Deterioration of security or stability
4) Promotion of girls' education	4) Tribal conflict

By analyzing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, citizens can better understand how to proceed with PETS. For example, the simple analysis cited above shows that there is a need to increase discussions with the community to inform them that there is not enough money in the budget to cover all community needs and to engage them in helping identify the most critical priorities. It also highlights a need to prioritize health services.

From the *SWOT* analysis and the community mapping exercise, citizens can then develop simple reporting cards to establish a benchmark, analyze needs in the community and track progress. Below are some examples of reporting cards to track various programs and issues:

Monitoring Expenditures

Have any health care facilities been built or refurbished in the district in the last 12 months?				
Health care facility built or refurbished.	Location	Cost*	Gender Treated	Type of Facility
1.				
2.				

*May require a visit to local construction firms to determine comparable costs for the project described to determine if the amount originally budgeted and spent was in line with actual costs for construction.

Tracking Trends

How many people in your household are school-age children? Do they go to school?	
District	
Number of School Age Girls in Household	
Number Girls who Attend School	
Number of School Age Boys in Household	
Number of Boys who attend School	
Reason for non-attendance-Girls	
Reason for non-attendance-Boys	

Tracking Service Delivery

Have you received any advice, service or capacity building assistance from the government in the last 12 months? How satisfied are you with these services?				
Health Care-Doctors and Nurses	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Very Satisfied	Not at all Satisfied
Medical Training				
Journals or Publications				
Medical Supplies				

Measuring Sector Quality

How would you rate the quality of education in the district?				
Education	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Very Satisfied	Not at all Satisfied
General Quality				
School Safety				
Number of Classrooms				
Number of Schools				
Opportunities for Girls				
Teacher Quality				
Curriculum Quality				

Once issues have been defined and reporting cards developed, 12-15 volunteers should be sent out into the community to collect the required information by filling out the reporting cards. The more volunteers available, the more data can be collected. Meetings with local government officials should be held quarterly to discuss the progress of the PETS process. These meetings should be public meetings.

Step Five-Analyze Data
An analysis of the data will help establish a benchmark for future tracking of expenditures and will help identify weaknesses or problems in development, priorities and/or distribution of funds at the local level. It will also help citizens and local governments advocate for priority expenditures. For example, if a district has substantial funding for agriculture but limited funding for health care, communities may choose to advocate for a shift in spending priorities to focus more on health care. A development effort for a new school may target an area where there are not many school-age children, but an old school in another neighborhood may need additional classrooms to accommodate an increase in the number of students. Or there may be a need for more teachers <u>and</u> a need for more classrooms but there is only enough money in the budget to cover one of those priorities.

Determining priorities requires very difficult decisions. There is never enough money to satisfy every community need, but by conducting a thorough analysis of current expenditures, communities have a factual basis on which to make decisions.

An analysis of the collected data attempts to identify the following:
1) The need;
2) Existing capacity that serves the need;
3) The shortage or surplus that exists between the need and the existing capacity; and
4) What is required to fill the shortage or what can be removed to reduce a surplus.

Step Six-Convene a Public Meeting
Once an analysis of the data gathered is complete, local councilors in the district can convene a public meeting to review the results and facilitate a discussion among citizens about community priorities. If the government does not have space to convene a meeting with the public, then the meeting can be held in a school, a park, a CSO or other neutral location.

Public meetings are important for local governments. They demonstrate to citizens that officials (both elected and appointed) care about citizen priorities. They also provide an opportunity for local governments to show citizens that there are budget limitations and that difficult decisions must be made to determine the highest priority needs for the district. The more citizens know and understand about budget allocations, the less critical they may be toward local government.

Public meetings are also helpful to local governments. Citizens often have resources that they may be willing to provide in support of community development. For example, if a local council is considering the construction of a park but is facing budget shortages, they may learn at a

public meeting that the local business association is willing to build a fence around the park, that a group of farmers would volunteer to plant trees or flowers in the park, that students would be interested in volunteering to keep the park clean or that parents may be willing to volunteer their time to supervise the park to make sure that children who play there are safe. On the other hand, the local authorities may learn that there is no community support for a park and that the community may wish to see that money spent on something that is a higher priority for citizens, such as more garbage removal services or the refurbishment of existing parks. Public meetings are a vital forum for communication between citizens and their government.

When convening a public meeting, high attendance must be a priority. To ensure a well-attended meeting, local councils need to inform the public and to provide information about the content of the meeting. If a meeting is called to discuss the budget, then public interest may be low. However, if a meeting is called to discuss education or water supply or how a piece of public land will be used, more citizens may be interested in talking about and hearing what others have to say on the issue. Meetings should be limited to one or two topics so that the discussion does not go off track.

To put it simply:
1) Identify a subject for the meeting;
2) Select an appropriate day and time so that all citizens can attend (women, youth, etc);
3) Define the amount of time for the meeting (no more than 90 minutes);
4) Choose a neutral place - school or community center (ensure accessibility for women, youth, disabled);
5) Prepare copies of any relevant documents so that citizens have an opportunity to review them before the meeting; and
6) Two weeks prior to the selected date, begin advertising the meeting through flyers posted in markets, announcements in mosques, radio and newspapers (make it clear that all citizens are welcome).

PUBLIC MEETING
Al Buriqah District Local Council Invites all Citizens
To Discuss Funding to Build a Park in the District
Tuesday, April 6, 2010
4:00 pm
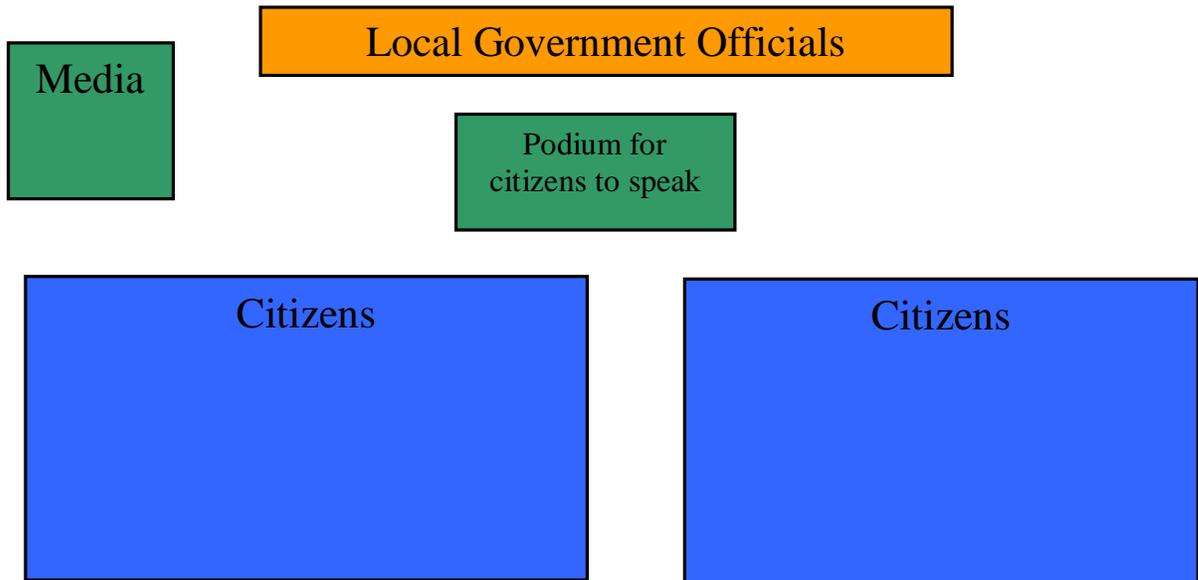At Al Buriqah Community School
Discussion topics will include: the location of the park; cost to construct the park; what should be included as park amenities; and funding for maintenance and care of the park.

All citizens are welcome and encouraged to attend.

The public meeting:

1) Prepare copies of any materials that citizens may want to review during the meeting. An agenda should also be prepared so that participants know the schedule of the meeting. Those presiding over the meeting should follow the agenda as closely as possible.

2) Determine who will preside over the meeting - local council chairman, district director, sector chairman of the local council, etc. This person should not take sides during the meeting. All local officials should be neutral on issues during a public meeting.

3) Determine who will be responsible for taking notes or minutes during the meeting and how those minutes will be distributed to the public after the meeting. For example, minutes may only need to be posted outside a common marketplace or government building, or a decision may be made to publish them in a newspaper.

4) Visit the meeting room in advance and make sure that it is set up for a community discussion. It should be an intimate setting, with the podium, table or designated area for citizens to speak located close to where local officials will be seated. Be sure to keep media confined to one area where they can observe and photograph the proceedings without disrupting the event.

5) Try to start the meeting on time. If council members or the appointed officials show up late, this sends a message to citizens that local government does not value citizens' time.

Example of a Room Set-up for Public Meeting

	Local Government Officials	
Media		
	Podium for citizens to speak	
Citizens		Citizens

6) Remember that the meeting is to hear what citizens have to say. If this is the first public meeting held in a district or neighborhood, regardless of the subject, there are likely to be several individuals with specific or general grievances against the government. Be prepared for this and be patient. Listen to their grievances. If an issue can be solved immediately, then solve it. If it cannot be solved, be sure to let the complainant know that they have been heard and understood, and either refer them to an authority that can address the issue, include the complaint as a topic for future discussion or simply thank the citizen for

their input. The most important job for local government during this session is to listen, and often times, this is all that citizens want - to be heard. Always be respectful.

7) A pre-selected individual should be given the first 20 minutes to summarize the discussion topic and provide relevant information for citizens to consider. This should be simplified; providing too much detail will only confuse people and make it more difficult to facilitate discussion.

8) Rules should be established for citizen comment. Some rules to consider:
   a. All citizens who wish to speak should identify who they are and where they are from (they should be from the district or neighborhood).
   b. Limitations on citizen speaking time, 2-3 minutes for each person to speak.
   c. Citizens must stay on topic. Those presiding over the meeting may want to circulate a form for citizens to list other topics they wish to discuss at subsequent meetings.
   d. If a point is made by one citizen, then others should not bring up the same point. If this rule is implemented, however, then there should be a mechanism put in place to allow for others to voice their agreement with the comment.

9) The meeting should have a specific conclusion. Local officials may want to spend five minutes closing the meeting by discussing what they have accomplished so far on the issue or how they intend to work toward solving a problem. Citizens should leave the meeting with the understanding that there will be subsequent action on the issue discussed and if there is a role to play for them, what role that is.

Example of a Public Meeting Schedule

2:00 pm Meeting Starts-Those presiding over the meeting give a brief introduction, thank citizens for coming, verbally review the agenda and remind participants of the rules for speaking.

2:10 pm Presenters or speakers-Individuals who were pre-selected to present information to the public on a specific issue are asked to begin their presentations. For example, volunteers who conducted PETS may present their findings. This may include one or more individuals but the total time for all presenters for one meeting should not exceed 20 minutes.

2:30 pm Public comment-Provide citizens an opportunity to comment on the presentation or generally on the subject of the meeting. Each comment should be limited to two minutes. Citizens should state their name and what part of the district/ neighborhood they are from.

2:55 pm Closing Comments-Those presiding over the meeting reiterate or summarize comments heard and make a decision on next steps to be taken regarding the meeting subject. This may include holding another meeting, taking a final decision on the topic, assigning individuals to analyze a topic further to report back to the presidium or other action.

3:00 pm Meeting Ends

As was mentioned at the beginning of this manual, this process can be driven by civil society or by local authorities but must have the support and active engagement of both in order to be successful. PETS outlines a way to develop opportunities for citizens and their government to work together in developing and promoting accountability and transparency but, more importantly, highlights the importance of community ownership in driving decisions. Some districts may implement every step outlined in this manual. Others may choose to limit implementation to only one or two steps. Either way, it is important to recognize that this method, like other methods for strengthening relationships at the local level, requires hard work, consistent communication and a long-term commitment to the process from all stakeholders.