

Citizen-Led Accountability: Strategies and Tools

Coady International Institute, St. Francis Xavier University
November 2 to 13, 2020

Why this course?

Citizens have the right and responsibility to hold state actors and other power holders (e.g., NGOs, corporations) accountable for decisions and actions that affect their lives. Indeed, the participation of active citizens is key to ensuring good governance, which directly affects people on a daily basis (e.g. access to health care, housing, roads, education, and job opportunities) and to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Yet, around the world, many governance systems lack accountability, leading to problems of poor quality public services, mismanagement of resources, corruption, waste, and social injustice. At a time where many countries are experiencing democratic backsliding and a shrinking civic space, many citizens feel powerless to voice their opinions and concerns, let alone to influence government decisions, push for improved responsiveness and accountability, and effect meaningful change.

Citizen-led accountability – or “social accountability” – refers to a range of approaches and mechanisms that enable citizens (including those who are often excluded or marginalized) to do just that: working with governments in a meaningful, productive, and effective way in pursuit of increased transparency, citizen voice, improved governance systems, and ultimately, a culture of accountability leading to positive changes in people’s lives.

TOWARDS A FULL AND ABUNDANT LIFE FOR ALL

This **10-day certificate** course focuses on developing the knowledge and practical skills participants need to strengthen constructive and inclusive citizen engagement in the oversight of government, and to improve accountability practices at the local, regional, and national levels. The course:

- is designed and facilitated according to adult education principles and uses diverse participatory and action-oriented methodologies;
- explores fundamental concepts related to citizen-led accountability;
- guides participants in conducting a contextual analysis through an intersectional power/gender lens, to ground their thinking in their own realities;
- through case studies from around the world, offers an exploration of diverse social accountability tools and reflections on how to make them inclusive; and,
- equips participants to apply strategic thinking to develop a proposal around how they might apply citizen-led accountability in their own context.



Who should take this course?

This certificate course is designed for practitioners from civil society organizations and social movements, as well as staff from government, development agencies, or the private sector, who are engaged in governance, public services, human rights, advocacy, and/or accountability work. Applicants should be open to sharing their knowledge and skills, and motivated to apply their learning in their own work.

What are the expected learning outcomes?

By the end of the course, participants are able to:

- explain the concept of good governance and its link to citizen-led accountability;
- explain the fundamental principles of citizen-led accountability, why it is important and the potential benefits it can bring;
- apply an inclusion lens (e.g. taking into account factors of power, gender and intersectionality) in their analysis of governance and accountability;
- describe a range of citizen-led accountability practices and tools such as participatory planning, independent budget analysis, gender budgeting, participatory budgeting, social audit, community scorecard, citizen report card, and participatory monitoring and evaluation of public services;
- describe operational lessons learned with regard to these different practices;
- describe ways to ensure that citizen-led accountability initiatives are socially inclusive;
- apply practical skills gained from hands-on experience with at least one social accountability tool;
- identify ways to use citizen-led accountability tools in advocacy to make the case and build momentum for change;
- identify the characteristics of an enabling environment for citizen-led accountability and explore strategies for creating/nurturing enabling conditions;
- describe ways to enhance the accountability of participants' own organizations; and,
- improve their ability to assess government schemes and programs to ensure the quality of public service delivery to all citizens.



The course is structured around three modules:

Module 1. Setting a foundation: Key concepts and contextual analysis

The course begins by establishing a climate for effective co-learning among participants and facilitators. Building on their unique and shared experiences, participants analyze their contexts by exploring the concepts of 'good' governance, power, gender, inclusion, active citizenship, and accountability. They conduct an initial power mapping of key stakeholders and accountability relationships in their context, and apply a gender and social inclusion analysis to ensure equity.

Module 2. Analyzing citizen-led accountability mechanisms and tools

Participants explore the conceptual, practical, and operational dimensions of citizen-led accountability by analyzing mechanisms and tools designed to build accountability into the public governance cycle (policy making, planning, budgeting, public spending, and service delivery). They are given the opportunity to explore one or two of these tools in-depth (e.g., by practicing the community scorecard methodology, and/or through field visits of community or civil society actors leading citizen-led accountability practices on the ground). This module emphasizes skills building (e.g. communication, facilitation, participatory monitoring, data analysis, persuasion) through practical experience, first-hand engagement, and exchange with stakeholders involved in citizen-led accountability.

Module 3. Achieving change through strategic citizen-led accountability

Building on participants' analyses and the citizen-led accountability mechanisms and tools explored, this module focuses on applying the learning in a strategic manner to transform accountability relationships in participants' contexts. Participants revisit their previous analysis, conduct additional research, and are introduced to advocacy as a complementary approach to citizen-led accountability (e.g. through the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships, networks and coalitions). Together, these elements form core portions of the course assignment: a proposal to put strategic citizen-led accountability into practice in participants' contexts (details below), to be presented for feedback and mutual learning at the end of the course.

Course participation: As this course relies heavily on learner engagement, participants are also assessed on their active participation.

"My experience at Coady has been eye-opening as a leader. I have been inspired to step out and voice issues that affect children and women in my country. Through my learning and experience at Coady, I am a better leader to make a significant and lasting change in my country and beyond."

- Mary Katunguah Munyao (Global Change Leaders, 2018)

Who are the facilitators?

Julien Landry

Julien is Senior Program Staff at the Coady International Institute, bringing over 15 years of international experience at the intersection of citizen participation, community development and adult education. He designs and facilitates participatory educational programs for community development practitioners from around the world focused on citizen engagement, advocacy, social accountability, good governance, and accountable democracies. He also leads the Institute's knowledge-building efforts in participatory governance, through the Participedia project. Julien holds a Master's in Community and Regional Planning (University of British Columbia) and has worked with civil society, academic, and public sector organizations in the fields of governance and human rights.

Carmen Malena

Carmen is a specialist in social accountability and participatory governance with more than 25 years' experience in civil society and development organizations. She has worked and studied throughout the world, sharing her expertise in citizen participation, civil society and gender. For several years Carmen served as part-time Director of the global Participatory Governance programme of CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation. Her experience also includes senior assignments on behalf of the World Bank, the African Development Bank, United Nations Development Programme, USAID, The Asia Foundation, the Transparency and Accountability Initiative and numerous international NGOs. She obtained her MPhil with Distinction in International Development at the University of Sussex and holds an Advanced B.A with Double Honours from the University of Saskatchewan and l'Université Laval. Carmen is also a graduate (1988) of Coady International Institute.

How do I apply?

For information on scholarships, detailed admission requirements and how to apply, please visit our website at: coady.stfx.ca

Applications will be reviewed on an ongoing basis until April 30, 2020, and until limited spaces are filled.

What are the fees and what is included?

Total fees for the course are \$3,750.00 CAD with bursaries worth \$1,500.00 CAD available in limited numbers. Remaining fees for individual participants are \$2,250.00 CAD, and cover:

- Tuition;
- All meals and accommodations;
- Emergency health insurance;
- Ground transportation to and from the airport and for learning activities during the course (e.g., field visits);
- All course materials: course manual, handouts, access to all online resources and additional reading materials;
- Access to Coady Connects online network of more than 4,000 graduates.

Participants are responsible for travel and visa costs, and money for incidental expenses while in Canada.