Community Monitoring Interventions can reduce corruption and may improve services

Community monitoring interventions can reduce corruption. In some cases, but not all, there are positive effects on health and education outcomes. Further research is needed to understand contexts and designs for effective interventions.

What did the review study?
Corruption and inefficient allocation of resources in service delivery are widespread in low- and middle-income countries. Community monitoring interventions (CMIs) are intended to address this problem. The community is given the opportunity to participate in monitoring service delivery: observing and assessing providers’ performance to provide feedback to providers and politicians.

This review assesses the evidence on the effects of community monitoring interventions on corruption and access and quality of service delivery outcomes. The review also considers the mechanism through which CMIs effect a change in corruption and service delivery outcomes, and possible moderating factors such as geographic region, income level or length of exposure to interventions.

What studies are included?
To assess the effect on corruption included studies had to have either an experimental or a quasi-experimental design. Qualitative studies were included to assess mechanisms and moderators.

The review assesses 15 studies of 23 different programmes’ intervention effects. The studies were conducted in Africa (6), Asia (7) and Latin America (2). Most studies focused on programmes in the education sector (9), followed by health (3), infrastructure (2) and employment promotion (1).

What is the aim of this review?
This Campbell systematic review assesses the effectiveness of community monitoring interventions in reducing corruption. The review summarises findings from 15 studies, of which seven are from Asia, six from Africa and two from Latin America.
What are the main results in this review?
Community monitoring interventions can reduce corruption. They also improve utilization of health services, but no significant effect is found on school enrolments or dropouts. There is no improvement in health service waiting times, but there is an improvement in weight for age, though not child mortality. There are beneficial effects on education outcomes as measured by test scores.

Community monitoring interventions appear to be more effective in improving outcomes when they promote direct contact between citizens and providers or politicians, and when they include tools for citizens to monitor the performance of providers and politicians.

In all cases, findings are based on a small number of studies. There is heterogeneity in the findings with respect to health and education. Hence it is difficult to provide any strong, overall conclusions about intervention effectiveness.

What do the findings in this review mean?
The evidence identifies community monitoring interventions as promising. That is, there is evidence that they are effective. But the evidence base is thin, the interventions do no work in all contexts, and some approaches appear more promising than others.

Future studies should assess the effectiveness of different types of community monitoring interventions in different contexts, sectors and time frames to identify when and how such programmes may be most effective in improving outcomes. There is a need for adequate information and tools to assist citizens in the process of monitoring. Research about these mechanisms and their moderation of the effectiveness of CMIs should be a priority for further research in the area.

How up-to-date is this review?
The review authors searched for studies published until November 2013. This Campbell Systematic Review was published in November 2016.

What is the Campbell Collaboration?
The Campbell Collaboration is an international, voluntary, non-profit research network that publishes systematic reviews. We summarise and evaluate the quality of evidence about programmes in the social and behavioural sciences. We help people make better choices and better policy decisions.

About this summary
This summary was prepared by Howard White (Campbell Collaboration) based on the Campbell Systematic Review 2016:08 “Community Monitoring Interventions to Curb Corruption and Increase Access and Quality of Service Delivery in Low - and Middle-income Countries: A Systematic Review” by Ezequiel Molina, Laura Carella, Ana Pacheco, Guillermo Cruces, and Leonardo Gasparini (DOI: 10.4073/csr.2016.8). The layout was done by Tanya Kristiansen (Campbell Collaboration). Financial support from the American Institutes for Research for the production of this summary is gratefully acknowledged.