Social accountability is being increasingly recognized worldwide for enhancing community participation, empowerment and improving service delivery. With this, a group of CSOs, successfully implementing Community Based Monitoring (CBM) of Health services in Maharashtra (under India’s National Health Mission since 2007), considered child nutrition as an important area to apply similar intervention. Adapting the CBM approach with appropriate modifications to the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), a key public program for addressing child malnutrition, the process has been initiated in six rural and urban areas covering 114 habitations since mid-2013. This process includes developing an operational framework with official mandate, capacity building of CSOs, formation of multi-stakeholder monitoring committees at various levels, periodic community monitoring of ICDS services using data collection tools, preparing public report cards and presenting identified issues in multi-stakeholder forums including providers and officials at different levels, to ensure action.

Within three year’s span, the process has yielded significant positive results. By round four of data collection, there is an improvement in Good rating in Nutrition/health education, food and facilities in childcare centers with 55%, 27% and 25% respectively. Interestingly, the data shows that maximum number of issues (1317) were raised at village level, out of which nearly half (45%) of the issues were resolved locally only. Despite certain challenges, overall, the emerging approach of CBM of ICDS has demonstrated potential to ensure improved and accountable ICDS services, as a key component of a comprehensive approach, which is essential to deal with the issue of child nutrition.