



GUIDELINES for developing a social audit questionnaire





How will this guide help you?

This guide provides guidelines to help you to develop a social audit questionnaire that will collect evidence or information that will be easy to capture and analyse, and will provide accurate and representative findings and recommendations that can be used to engage with government.

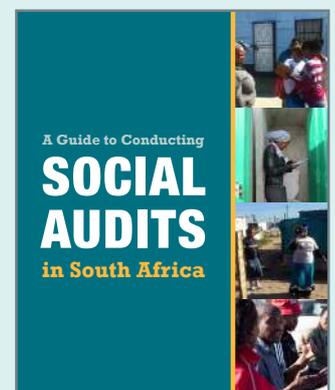
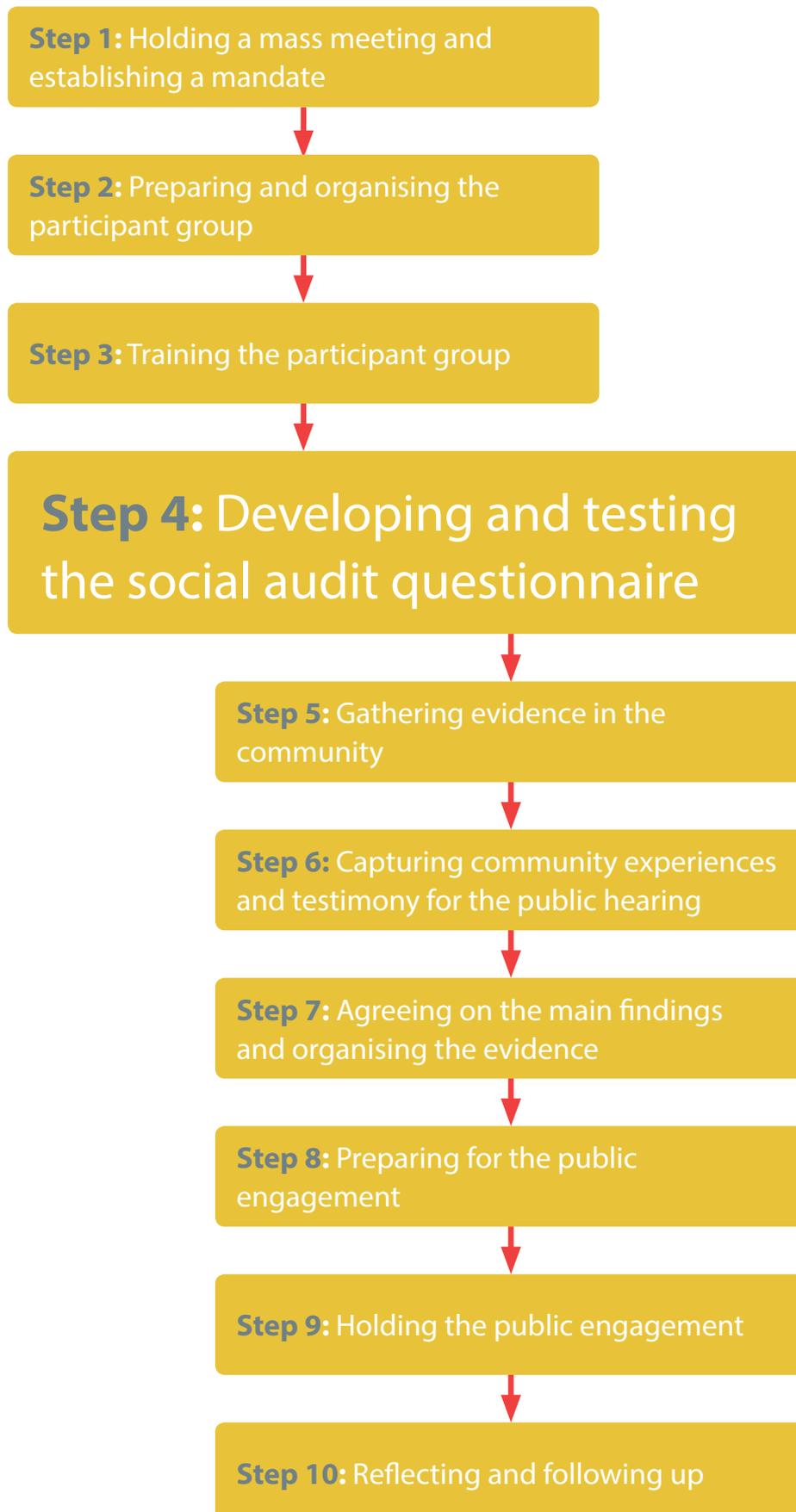
What is a social audit?

A social audit is a community-led process where residents compare the service they receive against what is stated in official government documents such as bid specifications, contracts and service delivery schedules. Evidence and experiences are collected, presented and then discussed with government officials.



10 Steps to conducting a social audit

The diagram below shows the 10 steps in conducting a social audit



See our guide for more information about social audits. <https://socialaudits.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/social-audit-epdf-july-2016.pdf>

Why is the social audit questionnaire so important?

One of the most important steps in the process of conducting a social audit is developing the social audit questionnaire as it informs many of the next steps in the process:

Step 4: Developing and testing the social audit questionnaire

Step 5: Gathering evidence in the community

- The questionnaire is used to collect evidence in the community about what government is delivering, to see whether that matches what the documents say they should deliver (**Step 5 and Step 6**).

Step 6: Capturing community experiences and testimony for the public hearing

- The questionnaire ensures that the same kind of information is collected from each resident interviewed to make sure that the findings can be representative of the whole community's experiences (**Step 5 and Step 6**).

Step 7: Agreeing on the main findings and organising the evidence

- The information is used to develop findings on how the service is being delivered as well as recommendations for how the service can be improved (**Step 7**).

Step 8: Preparing for the public engagement

- When you develop the social audit questionnaire you should always keep in mind that you are going to use the evidence collected by the questionnaire to engage with government to improve the delivery of the service (**Step 9**).

Step 9: Holding the public engagement

- Or, in the case of the social audit of an infrastructure project, you will use the evidence to convince government to rectify problems with a project that is underway or has been completed (**Step 9**).
- This means that the questions you include in the questionnaire should be able to collect all the evidence you are going to need to engage with government in a meaningful way (**Step 8 and Step 9**).

How do you ask good questions in a questionnaire?

How you ask the questions is just as important as *what* you ask:

- Your questions must be short, simple and clear so that you do not confuse the residents. If they are confused they might not answer the questions.
- How you ask the questions also plays an important role in how easy or difficult it is going to be to capture the data or information, analyse the data and present your findings in a useful way. For example, if you have many questions where residents can provide lengthy answers or opinions, it is going to be very difficult to summarise the evidence and compile accurate and representative findings.



Outline of the guide

- **Section 1** provides guidelines on how to prepare for developing the questionnaire, by reading all the government documents and developing draft questions.
- **Section 2** provides some guidelines on how you can structure the questionnaire in a logical way.
- **Section 3** describes the different styles of questions you can use and provides guidelines on which styles might be more appropriate for a social audit questionnaire.
- **Sections 4 and 5** provide guidelines for the layout of the questions and how to consider language when you design a social audit questionnaire.

Most of these guidelines are based on social audit facilitators' and participants' experiences of collecting, capturing and analysing data. (including the data capturers, analysts and report writers). References are included for the external sources consulted.

Different types of social audit questionnaires:

Most social audits use more than one type of questionnaire to collect evidence. The most commonly used kinds of questionnaires are listed below. The tips in this guide can help you to develop most types of social audit questionnaires, for example:



1. Resident questionnaire:

This type of questionnaire is used to collect information about the residents' experiences of the delivery of the service. The questions will specifically ask if the service is being delivered as described in the government documents, for example, if it is being done as often as required in the documents. This questionnaire can also be used to ask residents about their opinion of the service, for example if they are satisfied or dissatisfied with the service.



2. Physical verification questionnaire:

This kind of questionnaire is used to verify whether a unit or a structure has been built or delivered according to the specifications in the documents. The questions usually require social auditors to verify if something is in place or in working order.



3. Worker questionnaire:

In certain cases, the service includes the cleaning of a structure or unit, usually done by workers employed by either the municipality or service provider. A worker questionnaire is used to collect information on the experiences of the workers appointed to do the cleaning.

USEFUL TIP: Social audits of social and labour plans

When a mining company applies to government for the right to operate a mine in an area, the law requires the company to submit a social and labour plan (SLP) as part of its application for mining rights¹. The SLP should set out what the company will do to benefit communities near the mine and the workers it employs, as well as how and when the company will do this. For example, the SLP might include a commitment by the company to build a community service centre. A social audit can be used by communities to verify whether a mining company has delivered everything it has promised in its SLP. The guidelines in this guide can also help you to develop a questionnaire for a social audit of a SLP.

¹ Centre for Applied Legal Studies. Social and Labour Plan Mining Community Toolkit. Available online <https://www.wits.ac.za/media/wits-university/faculties-and-schools/commerce-law-and-management/research-entities/cals/documents/programmes/environment/resources/SLP%20Community%20Toolkit%20%20March%202017.pdf>. Accessed 8 November 2018.

Section 1: Read all the government documents and develop draft questions

First, we have a few guidelines to help you prepare for developing a social audit questionnaire.

1. Before you design the questionnaire, **familiarise yourself with the information in the official government documents**. Depending on the service or project that is the focus of the social audit, these documents can include tender documents² (specifically the bid specifications), contracts, service delivery schedules or agreements, or even drawings in the case of infrastructure projects.
2. When going through the documents, **identify all the tender or bid specifications you can ask questions about** to make sure that the service or project is being delivered according to these requirements and develop a list of draft questions. The level of detail differs across contracts, but the specifications will generally tell you exactly what should be delivered, to which specific areas in a municipality, and when (or how often) you can expect the service to be delivered. For example, the bid specifications might tell you a Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) toilet should be desludged, how many days a week this should happen or even specify which days of the week desludging should take place.
3. The bid specifications might also tell you **how the service will be monitored, and what mechanisms have been put in place that you can use to report any problems** with the service. For example, the bid specifications might require the winning contractor to put a 24-hour toll free helpline in place to report any problems with the delivery of a service.
4. The information in the documents will also help you to decide what **type of questionnaire** and if **different types** of questionnaires will be appropriate. For example, if the delivery of the service also includes the delivery of structure of a unit upfront and the specifications include requirements for how this unit should look, you might decide that it would be best to develop a questionnaire for the residents as well as a physical verification questionnaire. If the specifications, for example, require the unit to have a transparent roof to allow for light inside the unit, the physical verification questionnaire can be used to verify this.
5. While most of the questions will be based on the information in the official documents, you might also want to **gather more general information**. This can help you to analyse the evidence you gather in a better way or it might provide some background information or context that you can use to strengthen your findings and recommendations. For example, you can include a question asking for residents to indicate how many years they have been using the service. If residents have been using this service and experiencing challenges for many years, you can use the evidence collected with this question to strengthen your argument for improvements to the delivery of that service. Develop draft questions for this purpose, based on what you have already learned about a community and the challenges they are experiencing with the delivery of the service.

² Most of the social audits we have conducted have used the bid specifications in the tender documents to compare the delivery of the service against. Please see our "A Guide to finding information about municipal contracted services in your community" to help you find the tender and other documents you will need to conduct a social audit: <https://www.internationalbudget.org/publications/south-africa-guide-to-finding-information-about-municipal-contracted-services/>

Section 2: Decide on the structure of the questionnaire

Once you have gone through all the information in the government documents, you will have a list of draft questions based on both the bid specifications and the background information you want to collect. Now you should think about how to structure your questionnaire.

USEFUL TIP: Who should you interview?

The objective of a social audit is to compare the evidence of the delivery of a service on the ground to what is being stated (information or specifications) in the official government documents. This means you will want to gather evidence from residents who are the beneficiaries of the service. It is a good idea to first ask a resident if he or she is using the service that is being audited. Only complete a resident questionnaire for people who indicate that they are using the service.

Structure your questionnaire by grouping your questions according to the information in the government documents, as well as any background information you want to collect. For example, if the delivery of a service includes more than one aspect such as the removal of human waste from a portable toilet, as well as the actual cleaning of the parts of the toilet unit, you will want to group together the questions about each of these different aspects. Grouping your questions will make it easier for the respondents to answer as they will be focusing on one topic at a time. It will also help you make sure that you include questions on all the topics you want to gather evidence on.

USEFUL TIP: Numbering the forms:

It is important to keep track of the number of forms you are completing during the social audit. Add a space for the form number in this first part of the questionnaire. In addition, it is a good idea to number the forms by hand immediately after you have printed the number of questionnaires you have decided you are going to complete during the social audit. This will help you keep track of how many forms you have printed and how many of those forms you have eventually completed.

You might want to use the numbers to also distinguish between different areas or settlements that are part of the social audit. You can do that by adding letters to the form numbers. We have found that when you enter the data collected into a computer some programmes struggle to order the forms when the form number starts with a letter and we suggest that you add the letter after the form number, for example "1A, 2A, 3A, ..." where the letter "A" here refers to the specific area or settlement.

Below are some guidelines for the structure of your social audit questionnaire and how you can go about grouping your questions.

2.1 Practical information

Use the first section of the questionnaire to record important practical information that will help you organise the questionnaires and that will also help you keep track of the questionnaires that have been completed. In some cases, you will be collecting evidence for more than one area or settlement and you will also use this section of the questionnaire to record the name of the area or settlement.

- a) Questionnaire number: _____
- b) Date: _____
- c) Name of settlement: _____
- d) Name of the auditor: _____
- e) Name of the resident (optional): _____
- f) Gender of the resident: _____
- g) Is the resident disabled? Yes No

- a) Questionnaire number:** This number should ideally be filled in before you use the questionnaire to gather information
- b) Date:** This is the date on which the social auditor is completing the questionnaire
- c) Name of the settlement:** This will help you identify the specific area for which the evidence is collected. It might be an address, a settlement name or the name of a specific area within a settlement. Keep in mind that you might want to use this information to organise the responses, after you have collected the evidence to be able to compare the findings for different areas in one informal settlement or for different informal settlements in one municipality.
- d) Name of the auditor:** If at any point during the capturing and analysis of the data, questions come up about specific answers it is always helpful to know who completed the questionnaire so that you can ask them for clarification or an explanation.
- e) Name of the resident:** The name of the resident is helpful if you have specific questions about a response or want to make sure the same resident was not interviewed more than once. But indicate on the questionnaire and when you are gathering evidence that this question is optional – which means that resident can choose to not give his/her name when interviewed.
- f) Gender of the resident:** This information can be used to organise responses by gender when you are doing the analysis.
- g) Is the resident disabled:** This information can be used to show in the analysis if disabled residents' responses are different from able bodied residents. If this is the case, it might suggest that disabled residents are experiencing different challenges.

2.2 Background information

Use the next group of questions to gather some general information about the residents or the beneficiaries of the service. These questions are not specifically based on the specifications for the delivery of the service, but the information you collect will provide an important picture of the communities who are participating in the social audit. For example, when you are conducting a social audit of the delivery of a temporary basic service, information on how long residents have lived in the area might strengthen your argument for an improvement in the delivery of the service.

Below are examples of such questions for a social audit of the *hiring, delivery and maintenance of chemical toilets*.

How many years have you lived in this area? Years

How many years have you been using a portable toilet? Years

Is the portable toilet in your yard? (tick one)

Yes No

If no, is the toilet in your street? (tick one)

Yes No

2.3 Questions about the delivery of the service

In this group of questions, ask residents questions based on the information in the government documents about the delivery of the service. For example, if the service entails the removal of human waste from a portable toilet, you will ask how often a week this happens. Always make sure that you include what the specifications require as one of the options. For example, if the specifications say that the human waste must be removed from the toilet twice a week by vacuum truck, make sure that this is included as one of the answer options.

Below is an example of such a question from the social audit of the *hiring, delivery and maintenance of chemical toilets*.

How many times a week is the human waste removed from the toilet by the vacuum truck? (tick one)

- Twice a week
- Once a week
- Less than once a week
- Not sure
- Never

If the specifications include requirements regarding the monitoring of the service, you will also ask questions about that in this section.

Below is an example of such a question from the social audit of the *hiring, delivery and maintenance of chemical toilets*.

Does someone monitor if the toilet is being cleaned and the human waste is being removed properly? (tick one)

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

You can also ask residents to provide information about their experiences or opinions of the service. These questions do not have to be based directly on the bid specifications, but the evidence collected by these questions can be used for recommendations for improvements to the specifications for the delivery of the service. For example, if the findings indicate that residents feel that a specific service is not accessible to people with disabilities or children, it can be used to recommend specific changes to the bid specifications to make the service accessible to everyone.

Below is an example of such a question from the social audit of the *hiring, delivery and maintenance of chemical toilets*.

Is a disabled person able to use the portable toilet? (tick one)

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

USEFUL TIP: Ask the name of the contractor

In some cases, the service that is the focus of social audit will be delivered by more than one contractor. In such a case it will be a good idea to include a question asking the name of the contractor. This question can be included in all the questionnaires you are using in the social audit.

Section 3: Decide on the style of your questions

How you ask the question – also called the style of the question – plays a big role in whether you will get a clear answer or an answer that is confusing or not giving you useful information. Clear answers will make it easier to capture the data, easier to analyse the data, and also easier to develop accurate and strong findings and recommendations.

Below we show a few of the most commonly used styles or types of questions³. We start with the styles that we have found generally get the clearest answers, which then provide information that is easy to capture and analyse.

Closed or closed-ended questions are used when you provide the person answering the question with a limited number of specific answers to choose from. There are a number of different styles of closed-ended questions. A **Yes/No question** is the simplest kind of closed-ended question. This type of question is the best to use if, for example, you want to verify if a specific requirement in the bid specification for a service has been delivered, or if yes or no are the only possible answers.

Below is an example of a Yes/No question from the social audit of the *desludging of pits and Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) toilets*.

Is there a lid on the seat of the toilet? (tick one)

- Yes No

Multiple choice questions are closed-ended questions that allow the person answering the question to select one or more options from a list of answers that you have provided. When you use multiple choice questions it is important to provide an instruction to the person answering the question if they should tick only one option or should tick all the options that apply.

Below are two examples of multiple choice questions from the social audit of the *hiring, delivery and maintenance of chemical toilets*.

Who cleans the toilet? (tick one)

- Cleaner
 Resident
 No-one

What type of toilet do you use? (tick all that apply)

- Flushing toilet
 Portable toilet
 PIT latrine

³ Spreckley, F. 2008. Social Audit Toolkit. Fourth Edition. Available online http://www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk/files/9013/2325/3606/Social_Audit_Toolkit.pdf. Accessed 9 July 2018

One disadvantage of using multiple choice questions is that they force the person answering the question to limit their response to the list of options. There might be cases where you think that there are people who will not know the answer to a question or will not be sure about the answer. In those cases, include a “Not sure” option in the list of answers.

Below is an example of such a question from the social audit of the *hiring, delivery and maintenance of chemical toilets*.

Is the toilet cleaned immediately after the human waste has been removed by the vacuum truck? (tick one)

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Another specific type of closed-ended question can be used to record residents’ opinions about a service. This type of question typically asks the respondent to select the option that best reflects his or her opinion. For example, this question can be used to allow residents to reflect how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with the delivery of a service.

Below is an example of such a question from the social audit of the *hiring, delivery and maintenance of portable toilets* (community leaders’ questionnaire).

In your opinion, how satisfied is the community with the services provided by the service provider? (tick one)

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neutral (No opinion)
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

Open or open-ended questions are used when you ask a question without offering any specific answers for the person answering to select. Below is an example of such a question:

Can you please share some of the complaints from the community regarding the provision of sanitation to your community?

Since open-ended questions can potentially have an unlimited number of answers, it can be very difficult to analyse the responses and produce useful results, especially if you are using your questionnaire to interview a large number of people. This means that you should generally try to avoid including this style of questions if you are going to collect evidence from many people. This type of question is most useful if you are going to interview only a few people with the objective of using the information that you have gathered in this way to provide background information or context to your findings. An example of this is when you interview a small number of community leaders or community members as part of your social audit.

A special type of open-ended question that can collect very useful information in a social audit, is one where you specify how you want the respondent to answer, for example in weeks, months or years. The example below collects evidence on how long residents have been living in the area, which will provide background information on the settlement which is both easy to analyse and to present.

When using this type of open-ended question make sure that you indicate in the question if you want the person to answer in for example year, months, or days, etc. In addition, repeat this in the space for the answer.

1. How many **years** have you lived in this area?

Years



Section 4: Decide on the layout of the questions

Questions should be short, clear and easy to read. Social auditors have found that when using a questionnaire to collect evidence for a social audit, the questionnaire itself should not be longer than two pages. Always remember to include an instruction at the bottom of the first page to turn the page over for the remainder of the questions.

For closed ended questions (Yes/No as well as multiple choice questions) you can use either circles or boxes next to the options for people to tick when they choose their answer. It makes it easier to select answers from multiple choice options if the options and circles or boxes are listed below each other. This also makes it easier for the social auditor to check if all the questions have been answered, as well as whether the correct number of options have been selected according to the instructions.

Section 5: Think about language

It is a good idea to translate your questionnaire from English to the language most commonly spoken in the communities where you are conducting your social audit. If you choose to do that, also leave the question in English. The question in English can help to clear up any misunderstanding of the translated question and can also be used to collect evidence from residents who are not comfortable speaking the local language.

Make sure that you use words or language that the residents themselves use when they refer to the service. For example, the government documents for the hiring, delivery and maintenance of chemical toilets refer to these toilets both as “chemical” or “portable”, but the residents who are beneficiaries of the service usually call them “portable” toilets. In another example, official documents refer to the “desludging” of pits and Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) toilets, while residents often refer to the process as “draining”.

BUT, it is very important to make sure that the word the residents use and that you use in the questionnaire, refers to the same structure or service as the word in the government documents. For example, some communities use the word “portapotti” to refer to the small portable toilets that can be used inside a dwelling, and these are not the same as the large portable or chemical toilet units which are used in other communities.

A final tip is to read your questions out loud after you have completed a draft of the questionnaire – this is a handy way to make sure that the questions ask for the information that you really want or need. Do not become discouraged if you have to rewrite a question more than once. As we discussed earlier, developing the questionnaire is one of the most important steps in the social audit process. Spending time on developing the questionnaire, and specifically making sure that you develop questions that will collect information that will be easy to capture, analyse and inform findings and recommendations, will save you a lot of time during those latter parts of the process.

USEFUL TIP: Ask for permission to be interviewed

It is important to make sure that you can show that you have asked the person you are interviewing for their permission to be interviewed, and if the information they provide can be used in reports and other engagements. It is a good idea to provide a space on the questionnaire where they can sign their name to indicate that you have done that and that they have agreed to be interviewed. You can do this at the end of the questionnaire and below is an example of what you can ask from a social audit of the *hiring, delivery and maintenance of chemical toilets*.

CONSENT:

I hereby agree to be interviewed for this social audit and I agree that the information can be used for reports and further engagement about the state of sanitation in my community.

Signed: _____

USEFUL TIP: Physical verification questionnaire

You can choose to develop a separate physical verification questionnaire to be completed by the social auditor while physically inspecting the service or, in the case of the social audit of an infrastructure project, inspecting the project as it is being built or after it has been completed.

In the case of the delivery of a service, the contract or specifications often, in addition to servicing, include the initial delivery of a structure or a unit. For example, a contract can include the delivery of portable toilets which then have to be serviced and cleaned as part of the contract. The questions in the physical verification questionnaire will then, for example, require the social auditor to verify whether the unit or structure meets the requirements in the specifications or contract.

You can use tips from this guide to develop questions for such a physical verification questionnaire.

Below is an example of a Yes/No question from the physical verification questionnaire used in the social audit of the *hiring, delivery and maintenance of chemical toilets*.

Is there a steel frame built inside to support the toilet structure? (tick one)

Yes No

In the case of the social audit of an infrastructure project, the questions in a physical verification questionnaire can simply require the social auditor to verify whether a specific building or facility specified in the contract has been constructed.

Below is an example of such a question from the social audit of *school infrastructure*.

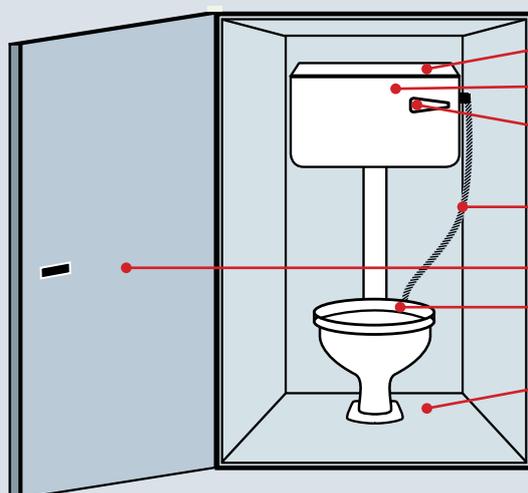
Does the school have a science laboratory? (tick one)

Yes No

You can also include a drawing of a structure or a unit in your physical verification questionnaire and ask people to indicate – using the drawing – which parts are broken or missing.

Below is an example from the social audit of the *provision and servicing of chemical toilets*.

How well is the toilet maintained? (tick all that apply)



- Cistern cover is missing or broken
- Cistern parts are missing or broken
- Toilet handle is missing or broken
- Water pipe is missing or broken
- Door is missing or broken
- Toilet pan is missing or broken
- Water is leaking

Other _____

Example of a Resident Questionnaire

This example questionnaire is partly based on the bid specifications for the hiring, *delivery and maintenance of chemical (portable) toilets*.

Questionnaire number: _____

Date: _____

Name of settlement: _____

Name of the auditor: _____

Name of the resident (optional): _____

Gender of the resident: _____

Is the resident disabled? Yes No

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

1. How many **years** have you lived in this area? **Years**

indicate you want the answers in years

2. How many years have you been using a portable toilet? Years

3. Is the portable toilet in your yard? **(tick one)** *indicate that only one option should be ticked*

Yes No

4. If no, is the toilet in your street? (tick one)

Yes No

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

5. How many times a week is the human waste removed from the toilet by the vacuum truck? (tick one)

Twice a week

Once a week

Less than once a week

Not sure

Never

For multiple choice options list the options below each other

6. Does someone monitor if the toilet is being cleaned and the human waste is being removed properly? (tick one)

Yes

No

Not sure

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DELIVERY OF A SERVICE

Remember to indicate to turn the page over

Please turn over page

7. Who cleans the toilet? **(tick all that apply)**

- Cleaner
 Resident
 No-one
 Not sure

indicate that all options
that apply should be ticked

8. Is the toilet cleaned immediately after the human waste has been removed by the vacuum truck? (tick one)

- Yes
 No
 Not sure

9. Is a disabled person able to use the portable toilet? (tick one)

- Yes
 No
 Not sure

10. In your opinion, how satisfied is the community with the services provided by the service provider? (tick one)

- Very dissatisfied
 Dissatisfied
 Neutral (No opinion)
 Satisfied
 Very satisfied

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DELIVERY OF A SERVICE

CONSENT:

I hereby agree to be interviewed for this social audit and I agree that the information can be used for reports and further engagement about the state of sanitation in my community.

Signed: _____

SPACE FOR
RESIDENTS TO
SIGN TO INDICATE
THAT THEY HAVE
AGREED TO BE
INTERVIEWED



Social Audit Network

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