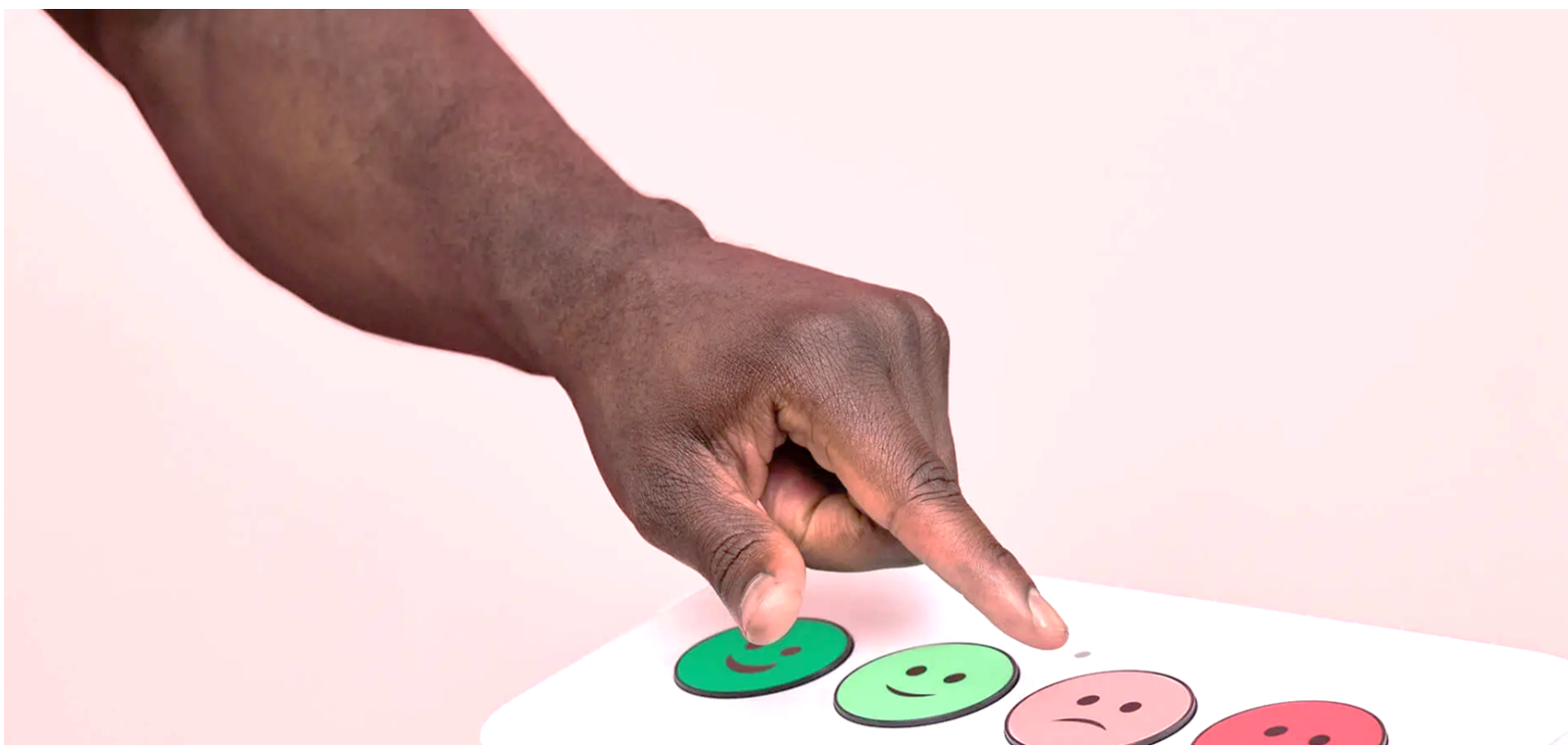




THEORY OF CHANGE QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Glossary of Terms

The Hawthorne Effect: A phenomenon where individuals modify their behavior or improve their performance because they are aware that they are being watched or studied.

Salience: The degree of prominence or attention given to certain things when making decisions, even if they are not objectively the most important or relevant factors to consider.

Bias: The tendency to favor or have a particular preference for something or someone that can influence our judgment or decision.

Locus of control: The extent to which individuals believe they have control over events and outcomes in their lives. It can be internal or external.

Self efficacy: An individual's belief in their own capabilities to successfully accomplish specific tasks, achieve goals, or handle challenging situations.

Compensatory Behavior: The tendency of individuals to adjust their actions or choices in response to changes in external factors, such as incentives, constraints, or interventions. This adjustment is often aimed at counterbalancing the effects of those changes, maintaining a certain level of equilibrium or achieving desired outcomes. For instance, an individual might reward themselves for a healthy behavior (e.g. not smoking for a day) with an unhealthy indulgence (e.g. drinking alcohol).

Gaming: Refers to the strategic behavior individuals might adopt to exploit rules, systems, or incentives to their advantage. This can involve finding ways to achieve desired outcomes within a given framework by manipulating the variables involved. For example, if a performance evaluation system rewards quantity of work rather than quality, employees might "game" the system by focusing on producing a high quantity of work, even if it comes at the cost of quality.

Reverse Hawthorne Effect: The Reverse Hawthorne Effect a phenomenon where individuals being observed or studied alter their behavior in a way that is contrary to the expected positive change, often as a form of resistance or defiance. Unlike the original Hawthorne Effect, where individuals improve their behavior due to the awareness of being observed, the reverse version involves negative or counterproductive changes.

Commitment Devices: This entails ways of locking oneself into following a plan of action that one might not want to do, but which one knows is good for oneself (e.g. pre-booking a ride to the gym on a day you know you will be likely to skip).

Key findings

Below is a summary of the key findings of the study and their implications for the different stages of SEMA's Theory of Change.

Citizens

Inputs & Outputs: Citizens are motivated to use SEMA's feedback devices and believe that it will lead to change. However, there are behavioral and operational challenges which undermine their ability to do so effectively. Experimentation can be used to overcome some of the behavioral barriers.

Citizens have low satisfaction with the quality of public service delivery in the health and security sectors. However, they also have low participation in formal citizen engagement processes to provide feedback which are neither inclusive nor accessible. There is therefore a need for innovative approaches such as feedback mechanisms like SEMA's to channel citizen feedback to decision makers. In this regard, most citizens believe that an average citizen has the ability to influence changes in the quality of service delivery in public health, security or court facilities by providing feedback.

However, citizens' use of feedback mechanisms was also found to be hindered by concerns over confidentiality, accessibility and immediacy of action. Confidentiality in particular is important in order to protect citizens from the perceived fear of being tracked and punished for 'reporting' government officials. Some citizens have an external locus of control, believing that feedback is often disregarded or addressed at the discretion of those in power, which might suppress feedback usage. There were also some operational challenges identified which lowered the usage of SEMA's devices, such as not always being placed in easily visible areas and sometimes not being operational. Some citizens also still struggle understanding how to use the devices (e.g. language/ technological challenges). There is room to experimentally test and optimize for some of the behavioral barriers that curtail citizens' engagement with SEMA's feedback devices, such as language, positioning and design.

Short term outcomes: Citizens' demand improvements in "soft" and "hard" elements of service delivery and believe that their feedback will be acted on but mostly on short term demands.

The poor level of service delivery that citizens have to contend with means that citizens articulate the desire to see improvements in several dimensions of public service delivery, including the overall quality, speed, professionalism, transparency, and friendliness of staff when receiving public services. The most valuable service improvements in the justice/ security sector include: curbing corruption, professionalism, and speed of action on cases. In health, citizens value increasing some "hard" measures like the availability of essential medicines and machinery, and careful monitoring of these medications to reduce incidences of drug theft and unauthorized distribution as the most valuable improvement at public health facilities.

Citizens also believe that articulating their feedback and priorities to relevant bureaucrats can create change in public service delivery, particularly when multiple members of the community have the same feedback to share. Evidence citizens provide to support this claim is mostly through short term changes as a direct result of citizen feedback.

Long term outcomes: Citizens have observed general improvements in public service delivery, but improvements resulting from citizen feedback are not always salient.

Citizens have been able to observe general long term improvements in the quality of public service delivery (e.g. in the security sector, improvements have been observed in terms of increased security, reduced citizen harassment by the police, and an increase in the number of judicial officers at the courts). Changes over time which citizens attribute to feedback include reduced waiting times, improved citizen care, reduced corruption, and staff dismissals.

However, changes made as a result of citizen feedback are not always salient to citizens in the long term. There is therefore a need for more robust change tracking and dissemination targeted towards citizens. Moreover, we also find evidence that changes in public service delivery is partly driven by fear of whistleblowers or being recorded and exposed to the public (particularly in the security sector).

(Super) Impacts: Citizens are yet to claim and exercise their rights. However, recent significant increases in attention on public service delivery has prompted government accountability and responsiveness. SEMA is uniquely positioned to use its evidence to inform future accountability campaigns.

There is limited evidence of citizens attaining the super impacts desired through SEMA's ToC. Citizens' limited participation in formal feedback mechanisms which the government officially sanctions to collate this feedback and limited participation in non-governmental feedback mechanisms like SEMA's mean that most citizens are not exercising their rights as citizens. This is partly because there is still a significant need for citizen education on the importance of citizen feedback.

However, citizens in Uganda have recently taken to social media en masse to demand better service delivery in the roads and public health sectors, which has led to significant responsiveness and accountability from the government. While these have focused on hard measures, they represent significant public interest in better service delivery and we find evidence that bureaucrats are particularly sensitive to being publicly exposed or held accountable for incompetence or unprofessional behavior. It remains to be seen whether this will be sustained or will spill over into other sectors. SEMA may have a key role to play in informing future discussions on the quality of service delivery in the health and security sectors by providing evidence of areas where improvements have happened and informing decision makers on the improvements that have the most impact on improving citizen satisfaction.

Bureaucrats

Inputs & outputs: Strong partnerships with public institutions are key to understanding bureaucrat feedback needs, the best way to package and present it in order to overcome the barriers that bureaucrats currently face utilizing feedback.

Bureaucrats receive feedback from citizens on the quality of public services they provide in various forms, ranging from informal channels like social media to formal customer service complaints. On the whole, citizen feedback on service delivery is well received by bureaucrats and highly appreciated because it motivates them to do better. In addition, the dashboard that SEMA has developed can serve as an important way for bureaucrats to get real-time feedback on the effectiveness of changes they have made in response to citizen feedback. Added to this, most bureaucrats interviewed believe that citizens' voices matter and can influence government decisions through their feedback, therefore placing weight on citizen feedback. SEMA's feedback mechanism has a key strength in developing strong positive relationships with most of the facilities it has worked with, leading to sustained commitment to using citizen feedback from SEMA. This is crucial in the development of potential future partnerships which may enable SEMA to significantly scale the reach of its services (such as through NITA-U).

However, not all citizen feedback is appreciated. This is particularly the case when feedback is unstructured, phrased in a way that may be demoralizing or that may be seen as 'lugezigezi'. In order to have sustained utilization of feedback, it needs to be unbiased and comprehensive enough for bureaucrats to act on. Finally, some bureaucrats have reservations about the feedback that is collected or may not understand how the feedback is collected and disseminated. SEMA's feedback mechanism plays a key role in overcoming several of these challenges to the utilization of citizen feedback by bureaucrats.

Short term outcomes: Bureaucrats are sensitive to feedback and are driven both extrinsically and intrinsically to act on it. Experimentation can be conducted on feedback framing and the effectiveness of interventions to lower defensiveness to negative feedback.

Discussions with bureaucrats revealed that citizen feedback is highly prioritized within their facilities, with it often being discussed in meetings and directly used to make services better. Feedback in itself also serves as a motivator for bureaucrats and it encourages them to even do better. This is particularly the case when citizen feedback is received concurrently with initiatives to improve service delivery. For this reason, most bureaucrats prefer feedback mechanisms that provide timely feedback to enable them to act on it quickly.

Short term changes in bureaucrat behavior was found to be driven by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Extrinsically, the Hawthorne effect, either through the presence of SEMA's staff at facilities or simply through the knowledge that citizens are paying attention to their work and providing feedback, was a powerful motivator. In addition, bureaucrats are also highly motivated to improve by financial (e.g. performance appraisals) and non-financial incentives (e.g. competition).

However, not all feedback leads to improvements in the performance of bureaucrats to meet the needs of citizens. As mentioned above, some bureaucrats are defensive when they receive negative feedback, while others feel that citizens are so demanding and expect more than they can give them. There is room here to design and test behavioral experiments to identify interventions that lower defensiveness/ increase open-mindedness to negative feedback.

Long term outcomes: While bureaucrats may improve their performance to meet the needs of citizens, these changes may be driven by factors which may not be translating into increased integrity. Research may be needed to determine how widespread these challenges might be.

As mentioned above, citizens have noted several long term improvements in the quality of services provided by bureaucrats (e.g. increased security, reduced citizen harassment by the police, and an increase in the number of judicial officers at the courts), though they are not able to directly tie these to feedback they have provided in many cases.

From the bureaucrats' side, the motivation for these improvements in service delivery is likely intrinsically driven. A key motivating factor is the fact that most bureaucrat respondents had an internal locus of control believing that success in their job is a matter of hard work with luck having little to do with it. Feedback therefore plays a key role in providing actionable insights to enable bureaucrats to be successful in their jobs.

Our research reveals that changes in public service delivery is at least partly driven by fear of whistleblowers and being recorded and exposed to the public (particularly in the security sector). Moreover, the Hawthorne effect can lead to bureaucrats 'gaming' their service delivery to be above average when data collection is taking place, while being mediocre or below standard during other points of the year. These point towards improvements in measured bureaucrat behavior potentially not being driven by factors that would be considered as resulting in improved integrity of bureaucrats. There may be room for additional research to identify how widespread these might be by conducting mystery shopping exercises.

(Super) impacts: Bureaucrats are uniquely placed to build greater levels of legitimacy, social trust and support by facilitating the development of new policies/ protocols/ manuals that better meet the needs of citizens based on the feedback they receive and to go the extra mile to support citizens who are underserved by current policies.

Our research reveals that the discretion that bureaucrats have can be a powerful tool for citizens to be able to respond to emergent needs of citizens which may help to build greater legitimacy, social trust and support among citizens. This is particularly the case when bureaucrats go the extra mile to help a client when existing systems/ structures do not enable them to effectively address their needs. Moreover, as the interface between citizens and decision makers in government, bureaucrats have a key role to play in influencing the enactment of new policies/ protocols/ manuals that better meet the needs of citizens based on the feedback they receive.

A summary of these findings is available in the [Annex](#).



Introduction

Background

Effective feedback mechanisms support accountability, transparency, empowerment, monitoring and evaluation, programming and to provide early warning of impending problems.¹ However, there is limited evidence on the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms on improving outcome measures in the health and security sectors. What makes feedback mechanisms effective remains an area of emerging research and practice.

Citizen participation in service delivery processes, through feedback, is a legal right in Uganda that has implications on the quality of life of all citizens. Article 38 on civic rights and activities of the Ugandan Constitution guarantees citizen participation by providing that every Ugandan has the right to participate in the affairs of government, and to influence government policies.² However, collecting feedback does not necessarily

mean that feedback is used.³ Feedback mechanisms are only effective if they go beyond the collection and acknowledgement of feedback and actually support analysis and response to the feedback received.⁴ Herringshaw notes that it's only where citizens are willing and able to give their voice, where government's willingness to respond already exists, and where the social and institutional design of both the citizen-voice and government-response mechanisms match, improvements to public services will likely take effect.⁵

A study by Mirzoev on examining the causal pathways in theories of change of feedback mechanisms to achieve positive change in the health sector found that awareness of the right to provide feedback, and the perception that they

¹ Bonino F. and Warner A. (2014). What makes humanitarian feedback mechanisms work? Literature review to support an ALNAP-CDA action research into humanitarian feedback mechanisms. ALNAP Working Paper. London: ALNAP/ODI.

²<https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/44038/90491/F206329993/UGA44038.pdf>

³ Twersky, F., Buchanan, P., & Threlfall, V. (2013). Listening to those who matter most, the beneficiaries. Leland Stanford Jr. University.

⁴ Bonino, F. with Jean, I. and Knox Clarke, P. (2014) Humanitarian feedback mechanisms: research, evidence and guidance. ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI.

⁵ Herringshaw, V. (2018) Increasing citizen voice and government responsiveness: What does success really look like, and who decides?, Making All Voices Count Programme Learning Report, Brighton: Retrieved from. <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/13472> .

will be heard and not penalized, led to trust and confidence in the system amongst citizens which translated into agency for greater use for the feedback mechanism.⁶ On the other hand, feedback mechanisms must also meet the needs of decision makers in order to influence programmatic changes that influence real world outcomes. For example, a field experiment on the use of citizen reporting through SMS on improving solid waste management services by Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) was terminated because it was considered to be very expensive in terms of data analysis and the information it collected didn't match the information needs of the management team.⁷

Civic tech solutions, like SEMA's, can be effective in translating large volumes of citizen feedback into actionable recommendations to enhance intervention design that have tangible effects on real-world outcomes.⁸ However, there is limited empirical evidence available regarding the impact on such solutions, emphasizing the need for SEMA to demonstrate the real world impact of its feedback mechanism. Deeper investigations into SEMA's Theory of Change can serve as a useful approach to formulate hypotheses to test the mechanisms through which

feedback mechanisms positively impact health and security sector outcomes.

Objectives of the study

This study aims to;

- Strengthen the evidence base on the key assumptions of SEMA's Theory of Change in order to demonstrate that change happens through the causal pathways identified
- Provide potential outcome measures that are important in the development space as a result of improved service delivery.

In order to fill these gaps in the evidence base, Busara conducted a qualitative study that specifically focused on the following key research questions in order to better understand specific improvements that have been achieved through citizen feedback. By understanding citizens' perspectives and priorities and bureaucrat's attitudes, SEMA can effectively advocate for the necessary improvements that address citizen's needs and contribute to positive changes in public service delivery in Uganda.

- What kind of service delivery improvements are considered valuable to citizens?
- What meaningful improvements to citizens' lives can be made to public service delivery as a result of SEMA's feedback mechanism?
- How can these improvements be done?

The findings are presented in accordance with the key assumptions of SEMA's ToC (refer to [Annex](#)).

⁶ Mirzoev T, Kane S, Al Azdi Z, et al (2021). How do patient feedback systems work in low-income and middle-income countries? Insights from a realist evaluation in Bangladesh. *BMJ Global Health* 2021;6:e004357. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2020-004357.

⁷ Buntaine, M. T., Hunnicutt, P., & Komakech, P. (2021). The Challenges of Using Citizen Reporting to Improve Public Services: A Field Experiment on Solid Waste Services in Uganda. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 31 (1); 108–127, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muaa026>.

⁸ Noveck, B. S. (2017). Five hacks for digital democracy. *Nature*, 544(7650), 287–289.

Methodology

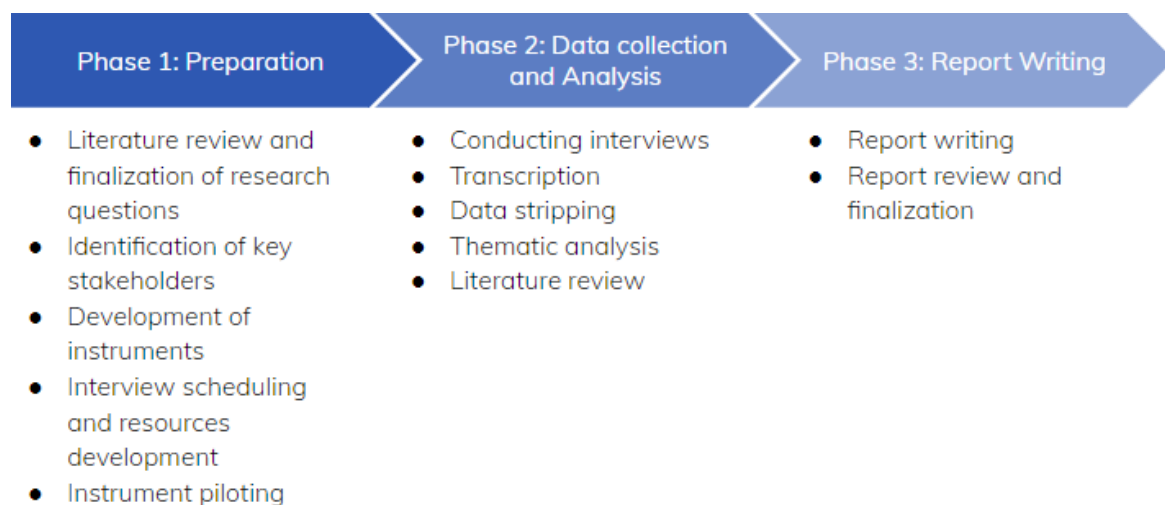


Figure 1: Summary of study methodology

Phase 1: Preparation

In this phase, we sought to set the groundwork for the data collection exercise. This entailed the following activities:

- **Scoping literature review and finalization of research questions:** We conducted a scoping into the existing literature in order to understand best practices in qualitative research and the existing evidence on the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms on improving outcome measures of interest in the health and security sectors.
- **Identification of key stakeholders:** The literature review, finalized research questions and recommendations from SEMA were used to identify the key stakeholders to be interviewed for the study. Broadly, these stakeholders included citizens, bureaucrats and donors/ development agencies/ NGOs.
- **Development of instruments:** For each of the stakeholder groups identified, a qualitative instrument was developed that sought to answer the agreed upon key research questions. The instrument contained open ended questions which enabled interviewers to probe into responses to different questions.
- **Interview scheduling:** Introductory letters, emails, and calls were made in order to introduce the work we were doing, and to request for interviews from the respective stakeholders (physically or virtually). In order to ensure this process ran smoothly, we developed an Introductory letter, script and an interview tracker.
- **Instrument Piloting:** For each of the instruments developed, a pilot interview was conducted with a key stakeholder in order to check whether the instruments were

helpful at answering the key research questions and whether there were any key changes that needed to be made.

Phase 2: Data collection and analysis

Interviews with citizens and bureaucrats were conducted in-person, while some interviews with NGOs were conducted remotely via phone calls. Interviews were conducted in respondents' preferred language (either English, Luganda, Acholi, Lusoga or Runyankole). Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was conducted by Busara's trained Field Officers. Observation checklists were used as a data quality check tool and field officers shared their field experiences in the project meetings. These included the general atmosphere during the interview (body language, distractions, etc), problems encountered, the questions that respondents struggled/comfortable answering and some recommendations for future interviews.

Study locations

In order to capture perspectives of those directly impacted by SEMA's feedback mechanisms, the research was undertaken in districts where SEMA's feedback mechanisms are deployed. The pilot study was conducted in Kampala district while the main study was conducted across all locations where SEMA operates, namely Kampala, Wakiso, Central Entebbe, Eastern Jinja, Northern Gulu and Western Mbarara in Uganda.

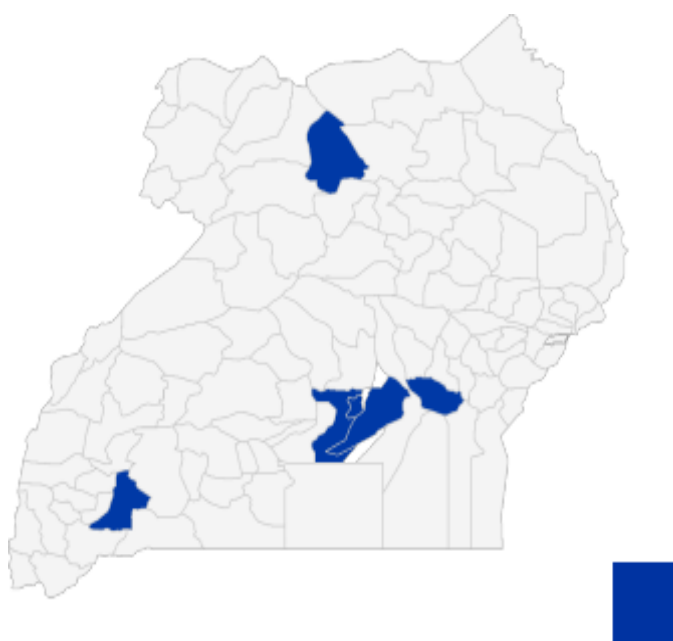


Figure 2: Map of study project areas

Sampling

A total of 58 individuals were interviewed for this study categorized into three groups: citizens, bureaucrats, and donors/NGOs/development partners.

- **Citizens:** A combination of purposive and stratified sampling methods were used to select participants. The stratified sampling focused on individuals from districts where SEMA operates, while a purposive sampling approach identified respondents near public facilities where SEMA devices had been placed.
- **Bureaucrats:** Purposive sampling was used to select individuals from institutions and facilities where SEMA feedback devices are installed. Preference was given to long-serving individuals who hold decision-making positions within these institutions and possess a good understanding of SEMA's work.
- **Donors/NGOs/Development partners:** The selection of participants from this group was purposive and targeted those organizations that have collaborated with SEMA and are actively involved in citizen empowerment initiatives.

Data analysis

The data analysis process involved thematic analysis, supported by the use of a data stripping sheet. The analysis followed several steps, including becoming familiar with the transcribed data, generating initial codes and subcodes, identifying themes within and across the codes, refining and defining the themes, and finally, writing the report. In addition, a literature review was conducted to provide further support for the findings of the study.

Phase 3: Report writing

Following the data analysis, a report outline was created and the findings were organized according to the themes and patterns that emerged from the data analysis. The report draft underwent rounds of internal review and editing to ensure that it presents a cohesive narrative.

Limitations

Underrepresentation: We acknowledge that underrepresentation is a risk and we tried to mitigate this through our stratified sampling strategy where we sought to recruit people who were demographically and geographically diverse. A breakdown of the demographics of our sample is available in the [Annex](#).

SEMA had not been operating at some facilities for a while: Due to expiry of SEMA service contracts at these facilities, SEMA had not been working with some facilities for some time. As a result, several respondents had to rely on memory, which was a limitation to the quality of data we collected depending on how long SEMA had not been operating at the facility for. A valuable lesson learned during the study was the impact of routine reshuffles that occur as part of Government policy at public institutions such as Police, Judiciary, DCIC, and NIRA. These reshuffles posed challenges in capturing critical information on the impact of SEMA's feedback mechanisms, as some of the respondents were newly appointed to the facilities. Additionally, the reshuffles resulted in the

redistribution of SEMA champions, creating difficulties in maintaining continuity and prioritization of the project by the newly assigned personnel. This draws attention to the importance of considering organizational dynamics and transitions when implementing feedback mechanisms in public institutions, emphasizing the need for strategies to ensure smooth knowledge transfer and sustained project prioritization during periods of staff changes.

Most citizens had not used both health and security facilities recently, making comparisons in service delivery quality at the individual level difficult. As a result of only visiting a health or security facility recently, most respondents were only able to answer questions comprehensively on the quality received at one type of facility. As a result, we were unable to analyze whether individuals subjectively perceive a difference in the quality of public service delivery between public health and security facilities.

Limited literature on the impact of feedback mechanisms in Uganda: The review of existing literature revealed that there are few studies that have been conducted in Uganda on feedback mechanisms and their impact, making it difficult to compare findings across studies.

Findings

Citizens' experiences related to SEMA's feedback mechanism and improvements related to public service delivery



Citizen experiences when receiving public services

Public health sector

Most citizens reported negative experiences with public health facilities, highlighting issues like overcrowding, slow and disrespectful attitudes from health workers, instances of bribery, inadequate availability of drugs and essential supplies in some instances resulting from drug theft within health facilities. As a result of these shortages, many patients are compelled to purchase medication from private pharmacies, placing a financial burden on those relying on public hospitals. These challenges stem from various factors including low salaries, delayed payments, staff shortages, absenteeism, insufficient government funding, limited performance monitoring, all contributing to subpar service delivery at public health centers.

“They were not good because they are usually crowded with lots of people. I usually go to Health Centre V and they don’t treat us well because we don’t pay.” - Female, 29, Mutungo

“Not having medicine, so a friend may tell the other that you are going there but there are no medicines so you going there is a waste of time. Also, corruption, you may go there but do you have some 1,000 shillings with you because there is a health worker X who will not attend to you easily if you don’t have money thus making services poor.” - Male, 30, Jinja

“First is the attention I’m given by the health worker and this is in relation of how they talk to me, the way of communication because the kind of experience I have had with public health centers is even if it’s morning, the health workers behave like as if they are tired, they don’t want to see you, they talk as if they did not come to do their job. So even when you are sick, you are more worried whether you will get the right treatment. Secondly is the lavatory where in most cases you find when the toilets are so dirty. Thirdly is the unavailability of medicine. For example, one day we had a sick relative and we had to suffer moving up and down to buy medicine.” - Female, 30, Entebbe

Justice/Security Sector

Most citizens expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of services experienced at the court/police facilities as well. Common issues raised include corruption and bribery, lack of trust where outcomes are influenced by personal connections and financial capabilities, poor service delivery caused by inefficiency and delayed justice, unprofessional conduct and poor handling of cases by police and lack of access to justice for those who cannot afford legal representation. Citizens attribute these challenges to factors such as low salaries, delays in payment, staff shortages, and systemic corruption.

“They served me faster because I gave them some money so they were nice to me and so you walk away happy despite having been extorted and that is the way to go now in Uganda for public services to be fast.” - Female, 36, Walukuba

“Most of the time their bosses let them down and they lose morale. For example they don’t pay them well and they overwork them and this results in poor service delivery.” - Male, 25, Mbarara

While negative sentiments were prevalent, a few individuals acknowledged positive experiences with the police and courts, particularly in situations where they received assistance or support. However, these positive experiences remain in the minority.

These challenges clearly demonstrate the significant need for improvements in the public health and security sectors from the citizens' perspective. However, the evidence we have collected and from research conducted by others indicates that citizens are mostly not involved in improving the quality of public service delivery in Uganda. Formal channels such as Health Unit Management Committees (HUMCs), suggestion boxes and emails fail to attract sufficient participation.^{9,10} Studies have identified that these channels are impeded by inadequate and inaccessible information. In a study on Public participation on service delivery in Buikwe, Participants observed that citizens are hardly able to access information on service delivery, or for planning and monitoring government projects and programmes.¹¹ Moreover, studies show that citizen's negative experiences can create a negative bias towards public service delivery which may outweigh positive experiences especially for citizens that prefer private services.^{12,13} This may invariably lead to a significant negative skew in the sentiment of feedback of those who do participate.

There is certainly a need for innovative approaches to enhance citizen engagement on public service delivery, and feedback mechanisms, such as SEMA's, therefore can have a key role in channeling these perspectives to people in decision making roles.

Service delivery improvements that are valuable to citizens

Public health sector

Citizens highly value the availability of affordable, essential medicines and careful monitoring to prevent theft and unauthorized distribution as the most valuable improvements in public health facilities.

Since most users of public health facilities are not wealthy, availability of free or subsidized medication is highly valued. They also emphasize the importance of sanitation, professionalism, friendliness, and timeliness of staff. Aghogho's study revealed that the principles of professionalism must be embodied and exhibited by employees to ensure that public service delivery systems are efficient.¹⁴ Additionally, citizens highlight the need for

⁹ Jjemba, E. (2018). Citizen Participation in Local Government Service Delivery Processes in Uganda. Initiative for Social and Economic rights (ISER). https://iser-uganda.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Citizen_Participation_in_Local_Government_Service_Delivery_Processes_in_Uganda.pdf

¹⁰ Turrell, M. (2002). Idea Management and the Suggestion Box. White Paper - 0802- 1© Imaginatik. www.imaginatik.com.

¹¹ Sylvester, K. et al. (2015). Public participation in services delivery projects in Buikwe District Local Government Uganda. Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance., <https://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/cjlg/article/view/4846/5213>

¹² Van den Bekerom et al. (2021). Are Citizens More Negative about Failing Service Delivery by Public Than Private Organizations? Evidence from a Large-Scale Survey Experiment, Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 31 (1): 128–149, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muaa027>

¹³ Hvidman, U. (2019). Citizens' evaluations of the public sector: Evidence from two large-scale experiments. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 29 (2): 255–267.

¹⁴ Aghogho, V, I. (2021). Professionalism and Public Service Delivery Efficiency in Nigeria: An Empirical Analysis. World Scientific News, An international Journal. <http://www.worldscientificnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/WSN-156-2021-102-118-1.pdf>

well-equipped facilities, sufficient staffing, fair remuneration, training, and strict supervision of staff. Low and delayed payments have a negative impact on staff behavior (professionalism) towards patients. “Arrogant” “tired”, “angry”, “rude”, “late” are some of the words that have been used to describe staff behavior. The quality of services received, including language of communication, cleanliness, and availability of specialists, also significantly influences their experiences and decisions.

These key points highlight the significance of factors such as **cost-effectiveness, professionalism, quality, accessibility and availability** of resources in shaping individuals' experiences and decisions regarding public health services.

“... they should supply enough drugs and they should make sure that the drugs that have been supplied there are well secured not to be stolen because in most hospitals of the government drugs are always stolen by the seniors. And they have their own small clinics and they go and sell drugs which are stolen from the government, so the government should ensure better security for those drugs” - Female, 21, Gulu.

“Hmmm, professionalism should be conducted, they should ask for people's consent before they do whatever they want to do, then they should have good reception. I don't know whether those people are usually tired or not I the mood to work so they usually give a very bad reception, they are angry, they come very late then they make sit for so long, so they should maybe give them time breaks so that they can work on us when they are happy and ready to give better services.” - Female, 25, Nkonkojeru

“First of all it is cheap, secondly their departments are active for instance their laboratories are fully equipped and they also have oxygen and that is what pulls us to go there. ” - Male, 32, Jinja

Despite these mostly negative perceptions of the areas where public health facilities need to improve, there were some noted improvements in sanitation and the presence of competent staff.

Justice/Security Sector

The most valuable service improvements in the justice/security sector include curbing corruption and bribery, transparency and trustworthiness, speed of action on cases, fair judgment and settlement of grievances.

Other priorities for citizens are the availability and accessibility of services, professionalism, friendly communication and listening skills by police, safety and security and affordability.

“The most important factor as far as receiving services in those two facilities is

when I need the services, I need my issue to be handled at a convenient time. For example, when I used to study my political education teacher used to tell me that delayed justice is denied justice. For example, if I have stolen a goat then it should be presented to the court, and they should get my statement other than first keeping me in the police like for 2 or 3 weeks for no good reason.” - Male, 36, Gulu

Feedback mechanisms have a key role to play in ensuring that citizen priorities identified above are clearly articulated to those in decision making positions. SEMA's feedback mechanism, though its mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, partnerships and collaboration with decision makers is uniquely placed to fill this gap.

Over the years, notable improvements have been observed in terms of increased security, reduced citizen harassment by the police, and an increase in the number of judicial officers at the courts. These improvements provide evidence that the government is responsive to the needs of citizens and that changes are being made in order to improve citizen public service delivery experiences.

“Due to the influence of social media and fear of being recorded, most police officers changed the way they treat people. - Female, 32, Kampala

However, a significant gap does still exist in determining what changes were made as a result of citizen feedback. SEMA's feedback mechanism can certainly benefit from having a more robust change tracking and public dissemination feature that can help to make the impact of feedback more salient to citizens.

“If they can show some level of transparency, we will develop some trust in the system.” - Female, 29, Mutungo

Citizens' opinions on impact of feedback

There is a growing appreciation among researchers that feedback systems are critical in the development process.¹⁵ Existing literature maintains that feedback mechanisms are essential for citizen empowerment, monitoring and improving development initiatives, provide valuable insights and enhance accountability.¹⁶

"Feedback is critical because you need to assess the situation and then you need to respond based on what you have found so you use data." - Social Behavioural Change Officer, NGO1

¹⁵ Wynn, D.C., & Maier, A.M. (2022) Feedback systems in the design and development process. Res Eng Design 33, 273–306. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00163-022-00386-z>

¹⁶ UN Migration (IOM), European Union (EU), Action for Fundamental Change and Development (AFFCAD), (n.d.) Report on Community Scorecard conducted in Bwaise, Kabalagala, Kisenyi And Katwe. <https://uganda.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11376/files/SSCoS%20Community%20Score%20Card%20Report.pdf>

“We do have it (Feedback) embedded in our structure. Feedback informs very many things, either the strategy within which we intend to do in that community and what needs to be done or what policy improvement has to be taken on because we don’t imburse whatever we do, we get it from communities and we just facilitate the project.” - Programs officer & Community liaison officer, NGO2

We do also find evidence from citizens that they do see positive impacts from providing feedback on service delivery in the health and security sectors:

“... I gave an example of a midwife who was always harassing expectant mothers. Actually these people used to complain a lot. And I think her transfer gave a clear indication that there was a feedback which was taken to the authorities” - Male, 36, Gulu

“Yes, there was a certain time we complained about a certain police officer as a community and a police officer was transferred to another police station.” - Female, 23, Kisaasi

“Yes, I can give an example of Naguru hospital. There were issues that were at the hospital and when feedback was given things changed especially on the speed and the way staff were treating the patients.” - Female, 32, Kampala

“Yes, at Ruharo hospital feedback was given about workers who would extract money from the patients and they were immediately terminated.” - Female, 25, Nkonkonjeru

Despite these positive anecdotes, there is still a sizable proportion of citizens who don’t see any change linked to feedback provided and say ‘it’s just talk’.

This points towards the salience of citizen feedback mechanisms leading to positive changes primarily being in the short term, with direct causal relationships on specific issues. It therefore points towards citizens not perceiving long-term changes (e.g. greater oversight on bureaucrats behavior) as being attributed to citizen feedback. There is also an element of a certain level of community oversight into the feedback, with respondents using phrases like “we complained” and “there were issues” to signal that feedback came from multiple individuals. Citizens therefore struggle to attribute longer term changes to citizen feedback, particularly when it comes from a single person

There still remain several challenges that negatively impact the accessibility and inclusion of citizens participation in feedback mechanisms. These include confidentiality, which is important in order to protect citizens from the fear of being tracked and punished for ‘reporting’ government officials. Feedback mechanisms need to give people anonymity to question and demand better services from people in leadership who have structural power that they can’t challenge otherwise. Confidentiality of SEMA’s feedback mechanism

encourages more citizens to provide feedback.

“Confidentiality whereby if someone gives feedback, just go and monitor and see how to change it without mentioning the person who brought the feedback.” - Female, 32, Kampala

Other suggestions aimed at increasing citizen engagement with feedback mechanisms include providing education/sensitization on the importance and availability of feedback mechanisms. This is in line with existing literature which points to the need to sensitize communities on providing feedback and making them aware that they have the right to do so even when receiving free services or goods.¹⁷ A study by Mirzoev on examining the causal pathways in theories of change of feedback mechanisms to achieve positive change in the health sector found that awareness of the right to provide feedback, and the perception that they will be heard and not penalized, led to trust and confidence in the system amongst citizens which translated into agency for greater use for the feedback mechanism.¹⁸

“Where it is placed in an isolated place, people didn't know what this machine was, the challenge is also that people are not trained, there's no training for people to know why the machine is there. Some of our colleagues also didn't know where the machine was. And as staff, if the machine was there and then you hear someone say this machine is here to assess service, feel free to go there and press your concern. So nobody was there to guide people.” - Judiciary, Gulu

In addition, there were also recommendations on seeking immediate action from public officials, and utilizing various data collection tools such as focus group discussions, village meetings, questionnaires, house to house feedback surveys and digital platforms.

“First of all make people aware that feedback is a prerequisite, make them aware that you have to give feedback, what is feedback, when do you give feedback, how do you give feedback and then when it is given and after they have understood all that, when it is given, address their concerns and go back to them and dialog with them so that they see that where we said ABCD, they have worked on DEFG and then they have not worked on X or Z because of this this and that, so that improves communication. It will improve the response and even the trust and beliefs that people have in these systems.” - Male, 36, Mbarara

Mass citizen participation in providing feedback on the quality of public services in Uganda has only been witnessed recently through social media. These platforms serve as a key

¹⁷ Bainbridge, D. (2011) 'Community feedback and complaints mechanisms: early lessons from Tearfund's experience', in Mitchell, J. and Knox-Clarke, P. (eds), Humanitarian accountability [special feature] Humanitarian Exchange 52.

¹⁸ Mirzoev T, Kane S, Al Azdi Z, et al (2021). How do patient feedback systems work in low-income and middle-income countries? Insights from a realist evaluation in Bangladesh. *BMJ Global Health* 2021;6:e004357. doi:10.1136/ bmjgh-2020-004357.

public forum for creating a record of government responses, actions and commitments, which can be used to hold officials accountable for their decisions. All of these points have been put to good use in the recent #potholechallenge where Ugandans publically shared their outrage over the state of roads in the country which prompted action from the government to fix some roads and commit to improve others.¹⁹ It remains to be seen whether the viral success of this campaign will be replicated in other sectors and whether these will translate into longer term engagement and oversight as envisioned in the (super) impacts of SEMA's ToC.

Self efficacy and Locus of Control

Most citizens believe that people in their community possess a sense of self efficacy, believing that an average citizen has the ability to influence changes in the quality of service delivery in public health, security or court facilities by providing feedback.

Some citizens have an external locus of control, believing that the world is governed by a select few individuals in positions of power. They feel that the actions and decisions of these powerful figures determine the fate of the majority, and there is little the average person can do to influence change. This perception is reinforced by the belief that feedback is often disregarded or addressed at the discretion of those in power.

"Definitely the latter (the world is run by a few people in power and there is nothing the little guy can do about it)... the little guy keeps suffering which is a myth to a certain extent but it is culture that is there, unfortunately for us." - Male, 36, Mbarara.

"The latter believe that the average person cannot influence public service delivery because for many years we have written our feedback and they have not acted on it." - Female, 23, Kisasi.

Therefore, **while most citizens believe that people in their community have the ability to influence changes in the quality of public service delivery by providing feedback, most believe that whether feedback is addressed or disregarded is dependent on the discretion of those in decision making positions.** Therefore, while they do believe citizens have power, they believe that it is up to public servants to improve their performance to meet the needs of citizens.

¹⁹ Patience, A. (2023). Ugandans rage over roads: 'Not a pothole but a pond'. BBC News, Kampala. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-65311847>

Bureaucrats' experiences related to SEMA's feedback mechanism and improvements related to public service delivery



Reactions to citizen feedback on service delivery

A foundational finding is that bureaucrats are motivated intrinsically (by a personal desire to serve citizens better) to improve the quality of services they provide. Evidence shows that bureaucrats do actually want to serve the public better and gladly receive feedback.²⁰ Citizen feedback on service delivery is on the whole well received and highly appreciated because it motivates bureaucrats to do better. This feedback has been received in several forms, including via social media, call centers, customer service desks, sharing videos, and emails.

²⁰ Gauri et al (2021). Motivating bureaucrats through social recognition: External validity—A tale of two states, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*. 163; 117-131. ISSN 0749-5978, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2019.05.005>.

All respondents mentioned that citizen feedback is highly prioritized at their facilities as it is used to make services better. Both positive and negative feedback is discussed at team meetings and the positives are applauded while the negatives are worked on.

"It helps us to do our best and improve our services and offer the best to our citizens. It's actually the first priority because clients are the most important to a greater extent." - Health Center, Kampala

Additionally, citizen feedback after service improvements has been motivating to the bureaucrats and it encourages them to even do better.

"It plays an important role because when you work without feedback then you are not even motivated yet feedback is a motivator; when citizens have in their mind what they are saying about the kind of service you provide, you even think of how to improve on what has been done already." - Health center, Jinja

However, not all citizen feedback is positively received, particularly when it is presented in a way that may be demoralizing. For instance, some bureaucrats are defensive when they receive negative feedback and some think it's 'lugezigezi', meaning citizens want to show off that they are wise. Some bureaucrats think that citizens are too demanding and expect more than they can give them, making the services they can provide feel inadequate. Evidence shows that feedback mechanisms have more impact on service delivery when public officials have direct control of resources to take prompt action.²¹ The reaction to feedback is dependent on how it is packaged and the personality traits of those receiving it. Psychology studies emphasize the importance of personality traits in the efficacy of feedback and delivering proper service.²² Conscientious and neurotic individuals may not react well to negative feedback.²³

"To a bigger percentage, the perception is really good though of course not all of us take feedback as being positive, some may feel uncomfortable but majority are okay and also it depends on how this feedback is brought, it should not be brought as criticism as it will disgust the person listening." - Health Centre, Jinja

"Of course, most of us don't like to be corrected so they feel bad as they feel you are interfering with their work, how can you be supervised by a civilian or a village councilor e.g., sub county councilor so the reaction is bitter." - Police, Jinja

An additional systemic challenge around the framing of feedback is that studies show that citizen's negative experiences can create a negative bias towards public service delivery

²¹ Iddawela, Y. (2021) Bureaucratic insulation vs accountability: interventions to improve service delivery in Kampala. <https://talktosema.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Bureaucratic-insulation-vs-accountability-interventions-.pdf>

²² Lee, S., Park, J., Back, K. J., Hyun, H. & Lee, S. H. (2020). The Role of Personality Traits Toward Organizational Commitments and Service Quality Commitments. *Front. Psychol.* 11:631. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00631

²³ Swift, V., & Peterson, J. B. (2018). Improving the effectiveness of performance feedback by considering personality traits and task demands. *PLoS one*, 13(5), e0197810. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0197810>

which may outweigh positive experiences especially for citizens that prefer private services, which invariably means that the majority of feedback that citizens share with bureaucrats will likely be negative.^{24, 25}

Bureaucrats are sensitive to citizen feedback and are open to taking onboard feedback that can help them to serve citizens better and it is prioritized but is highly dependent on how it is packaged because they are averse to feedback that is demoralizing. This points towards the commitment to sustained use of citizen feedback being conditional on how it is packaged and framed.

Major changes in service delivery as a result of citizen feedback

There have been quite a number of changes in public service delivery as a result of citizen feedback on service delays, extortion by public servants, staff conduct, facilities, has led to improvement in public service delivery. Despite bureaucrats indicating that they are intrinsically driven, a significant cause of behavior change is extrinsically motivated. These include fear of being recorded and exposed for taking bribes (in the security sector in particular) as well as the prospect of financial rewards through staff appraisals.

“Of course, changes are there because of very many whistleblowers which has reduced extortion. Because of evidence from citizens coming in and people fear to be recorded, as they are in the middle of town most people have cameras so they can take your picture receiving a bribe, so it has tackled corruption on the scale of 1-10 we are halfway. They report us to our bosses at the professional standards unit, we have our supervisors, political leaders so because people fear to be charged or suspended, you end up doing good things to keep your name.” - Police, Jinja

“To a larger extent because it affects staff’s performance because here at KCCA we have appraisals which depend on how you have been performing and how you have been providing your services to the citizens. So if you are in that report of feedback and you don’t provide a service in a correct form, you can’t be outstanding, at the level of average it affects your performance when they are doing appraisals.” - KCCA, Kampala

This sentiment on the fear of being publicly exposed for incompetence or improper conduct should be viewed within the lens of the recent social media campaigns in Uganda which highlighted the poor state of public service delivery. The viral success of the #potholechallenge campaign may have caused concern among frontline bureaucrats that

²⁴ Van den Bekerom et al. (2021). Are Citizens More Negative about Failing Service Delivery by Public Than Private Organizations? Evidence from a Large-Scale Survey Experiment, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 31 (1): 128–149, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muaa027>

²⁵ Hvidman, U. (2019). Citizens’ evaluations of the public sector: Evidence from two large-scale experiments. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 29 (2): 255–267.

a similar campaign in their respective sector would lead to greater scrutiny of their performance and more political pressure to improve performance which comes with added risks of transfers or dismissals.

Specific to feedback mechanisms, respondents mentioned that they improve the discipline of officers, encourage people to work hard, enable innovation in order to deliver services that are user friendly more efficiently, and help stakeholders to monitor service delivery and make informed decisions.

Major service delivery changes in the last few months have taken several forms, including improved customer care service and professionalism by staff especially in courts and immigration (DCIC), reduced waiting time at police, health centers and immigration, decentralization of services to reduce crowds at NIRA headquarters, reduced corruption in police offices, and has led to efficient online service delivery at URSB.

“The staff have improved in their customer care service delivery and professionalism.” - Magistrates Court, Mbarara

Bureaucrats identified several improvements in service delivery as a result of citizen feedback which have reduced customer complaints, social media attacks and has led citizens to appreciate public servants and make recommendations about public facilities. This has led to an increased number of clients, especially in the health sector and immigration.

Bureaucrats have observed many changes in public service delivery as a result of SEMA's feedback reports. SEMA's feedback mechanism has empowered citizens to speak up, acted as a watchdog on public service delivery, improved bureaucrats' attitudes and handling of citizens, and raised competition between public facilities which has improved service delivery. It has also helped bureaucrats identify areas of improvement, led to reduction in waiting time, punctuality of staff especially in health centers, and lower extortion of citizens at NIRA and Police offices.

“Like how services are being rendered has really changed a lot, previously the patients used to spend long times here but now by the time they come, health workers are already available and are working there and then.” - Health center, Kampala

“First of all, like I said it means you are being observed and the idea of another station being on top also brings competition and that will pamper the clients which is called customer massage.” - DCIC, Jinja

Feedback mechanisms are a key intervention to extrinsically motivate bureaucrats to improve the quality of services they deliver. Bureaucrats provide evidence of where they have used feedback to improve service delivery and also provide insights on the tangible benefits that this has to their work, improving the levels of integrity of public sector workers as well.

Factors for successful citizen feedback mechanism

The study identified several factors which bureaucrats feel are important in order to sustain their commitment to using citizen feedback. Most believe that citizen feedback mechanisms should be accessible to all citizens, transparent, unbiased, reliable, timely, specific, ensure confidentiality of the respondents and provide both qualitative and quantitative feedback. Specific to timeliness, research shows that more timely information can help to correct shortcomings while preventing frequent bureaucratic opacity to ex-post audits.²⁶ In addition, citizens need to be aware of the feedback mechanism across public offices and how to use them.

“First of all, how it is being collected, it shouldn’t be biased, it should allow whoever is giving feedback to explain what they mean because sometimes you may hear a word and your interpretation is different.” - Midwife, health center, Jinja

“... it should be convenient to give an ordinary person out there a voice especially those that normally don’t have a voice to air out their experience.” - Technical Advisor, Judiciary, Kampala

“It has to be timely and then someone has to have a reason for their feedback otherwise we are going to have people doing it for malicious reasons or to just be negative even for no reason; when you tell them there is no network, they will go making noise yet the network is something beyond us.” - URSB, Kampala

The most important types of citizen feedback to bureaucrats are customer care experiences, quality of service received, waiting time, level of satisfaction with the service, and specific areas of improvement. These are important change motivators from the bureaucrats' side and could be prioritized in SEMA's feedback reports in order to improve public service delivery, particularly, specific areas of improvement.

“The experience as they access our service is the most important feedback.” - URSB, Kampala

The best way to present citizen feedback to bureaucrats is in writing via citizen feedback reports, emails, suggestion boxes (for those who want to be anonymous) and social media, so as to track its source. It can also be presented by citizens jointly through dialogues, workshops and meetings with bureaucrats. When presented verbally, in person, citizen feedback should be well packaged so as not to demoralize workers. Citizen feedback should be delivered to frontline staff first through their supervisors before taking it to the executives. With increased training and uptake of the dashboard, there is

²⁶ Gelb, A., Mittal, N. & Mukherjee, A. (2019). Towards Real-Time Governance: Using Digital Feedback to Improve Service, Voice, and Accountability. Center for Global Development.

significant potential for SEMA to integrate some of the suggestions for how bureaucrats would like citizen feedback to be presented.

“It should be presented positively because I don’t know whether it is an attitude problem/ culture more especially us as Africans but it is not common for clients / citizens about health workers thus their feedback should be packaged in a way that it does not demoralize health workers but motivates them.” - health center, Jinja

Partnerships with bureaucrats are key in order to ensure that feedback collected is useful and actionable to bureaucrats and presented in a way that is constructive and not demotivating. Partnerships are also key to ensuring that there is adequate buy-in from different levels of the bureaucracy. Collaboration with bureaucrats can also be key to improving the design of SEMA's dashboard to increase the uptake of citizen feedback. Studies show that feedback systems will have little impact in cases where there is no high-level commitment to improve service delivery or inadequate resources and capacity to respond.²⁷ Partnerships are a key part of SEMA's model, and are key to how it may potentially achieve scale through other organizations like NITA-U.

These are key strengths of SEMA's feedback mechanism and a key to continued utilization of the feedback it provides. Generally, the attitudes of public officers towards SEMA seem to be positive. This could be out of previous positive engagements that some of the officers have had with SEMA, in addition to a genuine feeling that officers value SEMA's work to help them improve the quality of their service.

“We enjoyed it because we got friends from SEMA people and we were always motivated seeing them coming to check on us, even our clients were very appreciative they loved the system.”- health center, Kampala

“SEMA was good in that it helped me so much in my role as a supervisor where I had relaxed a bit on how my people are behaving because I know the report also helps me directly so to me it was a positive thing, I loved it and I wish for it to come back.” DCIC, Kampala

SEMA's feedback mechanism enables citizen empowerment by encouraging citizens to give feedback which helps to monitor and improve services delivered to citizens. The citizen feedback reports compiled by SEMA could also serve an important role of monitoring the level of satisfaction citizens have with services supported by development agencies.

²⁷ Gelb, A., Mittal, N. & Mukherjee, A. (2019). Towards Real-Time Governance: Using Digital Feedback to Improve Service, Voice, and Accountability. Center for Global Development.

Hawthorne effect

As mentioned above, extrinsic motivations are a significant part of why bureaucrats change their behavior. A key finding is that most bureaucrats are willing to change behavior and how they provide services based on citizen feedback because they know that they are being watched. However, the duration of change depends on the kind of feedback that is received and the institution. Some feedback is easier to work on and some institutions are more bureaucratic.

"It is a priority because it is a check on us especially during weekly meeting, they get to know that SEMA is around so double your efforts, don't be rude to clients and don't talk on phone when serving clients, don't ask unnecessary question, don't delay or lousily open the passport, have some life as there is no harm in saying hello to your clients." - DCIC, Kampala

"They are likely to change because feedback comes in different ways and lately citizens have gone to social media. I don't think anyone would want to see their name on social media as being rude or being a loser so people are more cautious on what they say and the way they react." - URSB, Kampala

While the Hawthorne effect can be powerful, its effectiveness can be short lived and costly to sustain over long periods of time. The over reliance on the Hawthorne effect also runs the risk of facilities "gaming" service delivery to only perform well when data collection is ongoing and to be average or below average when they are no longer being monitored. This poses the risk of compensatory behavior as well where bureaucrats might believe that the negative consequences of poor service delivery throughout the year can be compensated with exceptional service delivery when SEMA is conducting data collection. Therefore, while the Hawthorne effect may encourage behavior change, it does not result in increased integrity among bureaucrats. Existing literature shows that the principles of professionalism must be embodied and exhibited by staff to ensure that public service delivery systems are efficient.²⁸

Peer influence & self-efficacy

There is a high level of peer influence when frontline bureaucrats are making decisions in their daily work guided by the organization's rules and regulations. This is largely driven by the need to follow laid down protocols and procedures to ensure equitable service delivery to all clients.

"We have our own internal rules and regulations that we follow so it's not about this one saying this. As a bureau there are certain expectations for different service points. So, you have to follow the agreed steps. We have our

²⁸ Aghogho, V. I. (2021). Professionalism and Public Service Delivery Efficiency in Nigeria: An Empirical Analysis. World Scientific News, An international Journal. <http://www.worldscientificnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/WSN-156-2021-102-118-1.pdf>

service manuals for different services, it's not about opinions of people." -URSB, Kampala

However, most bureaucrats are also comfortable doing things differently from their colleagues and going an extra mile to help a client. This speaks both to the intrinsic motivation that many bureaucrats have and their discretion to adapt and develop solutions where laid down systems are inadequate. These findings are consistent with the study by Young and Tanner that found a more significant influence of bureaucrats' discretion over administrative decision-making compared to citizens' feedback.²⁹ Additionally, Sjoberg et al states that high self efficacy and genuine bureaucratic responsiveness to citizens' feedback increases citizen participation.³⁰

"There are some clients who come here with nothing at all, sometimes they come when they are very hungry; you find a supervisor making tea, buying eats for the clients even the doctors sometimes give transport to the clients who come when they don't have money."- Health Center, Kampala

Bureaucrats interviewed also expressed a strong sense of collective self efficacy. Most respondents believe that they can jointly influence the enactment of new policies/ protocols/ manuals to a larger extent through the representatives they have on various committees and through reports and feedback shared in meetings.

"To a larger extent I believe it can be done jointly because the opinions of many always look better and right."- Judiciary, Mbarara

Where internal rules and procedures are in place, peer effects are key to ensuring that all bureaucrats act in accordance with them. However, they have the discretion to act differently from their peers in order to meet the needs of clients when laid down procedures are not adequate. This balance means that peer effects act to uphold their integrity, but at the same time they have discretion to make decisions driven by their intrinsic motivation to serve clients better. Moreover, collective self efficacy is key for bureaucrats to push for changes that they believe will be beneficial for clients and themselves.

Locus of control

Most respondents believe that citizens' voices matter and can influence government decisions through their feedback while a few believe that the world is run by a few powerful people and there is nothing the average citizen can do about it because they make programs without consulting the citizens.

²⁹ Young, S. L. & Tanner, J. (2022). Citizen participation matters. Bureaucratic discretion matters more. Public Administration. John Wiley & Sons Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12867>

³⁰ Sjoberg F. M., Mellon, J. & Peixoto, T. (2017). The Effect of Bureaucratic Responsiveness on Citizen Participation. Public Administration Review, 77 (3); 340–351. The American Society for Public Administration. DOI: 10.1111/puar.12697.

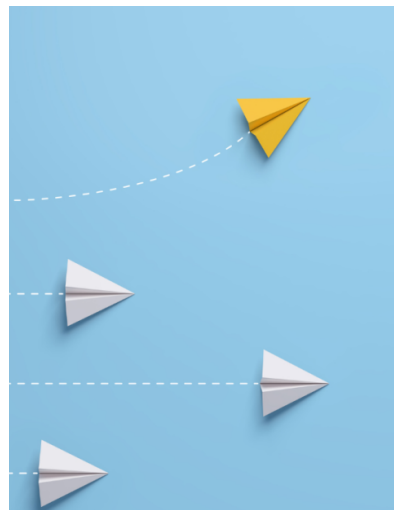
“Ahhh...the average citizen is powerful, yes, they are powerful. Someone can make a phone call which can turn things around depending on what he has observed.”- DCIC, Mbarara

Most respondents mentioned that their colleagues are most likely to believe that “success in this job is a matter of hard work, luck has little to do with it” because all things need commitment.

“They will believe that being successful in this job depends on being lucky. Because they work very hard but in meetings they are given negative comments yet all need some encouragement at some point.” - DCIC, Kampala

The belief that bureaucrats have that the average citizen’s voice can influence government decisions is a key indicator for how much bureaucrats value citizen feedback. Moreover, their intrinsic locus of control when it comes to success in their job indicates that most believe that they need to continuously improve in the quality of service delivery in order to be successful in their work. Feedback mechanisms play a key role in facilitating the views of average citizens to bureaucrats who are motivated to improve their service delivery in order to be successful in their roles.

Discussion of findings and recommendations



SEMA's ToC includes several key pathways for change through which the organization hypothesizes that increasing citizen feedback on the quality of public services will lead to better outcome measures. A foundational assumption is that by making feedback systems inclusive and accessible more citizens will be willing to provide their feedback while effective partnerships with bureaucrats will ensure that citizen feedback is used. Our findings extensively support these assumptions, with the current challenges that citizens face in accessing good quality services serving as a motivator for change while bureaucrats do value citizen feedback. SEMA's model is effective at overcoming several key barriers here, including the lack of citizen participation in formal feedback mechanisms, challenges of institutional buy-in from bureaucrats and the often unstructured formats that citizens provide feedback which make it difficult for bureaucrats to take action. There still remain operational and behavioral barriers to utilization of feedback systems from both the citizen and bureaucrats side. The behavioral barriers to citizens using SEMA's feedback devices does lend itself to design experimentation, where variables such as placement, design and wording can be randomized and tested at different facilities to identify the optimal combinations to increase citizen engagement measured by the number of entries.

SEMA's ToC posits that in the short term citizens' use of their feedback system will enable them to articulate their needs and priorities to influence public service delivery and bureaucrats improve their performance to meet citizen needs. We do find evidence that SEMA's feedback mechanism does enable more coherent feedback which is actionable,

and we do also find that bureaucrats are responsive to this feedback and do indeed act on it. Importantly, citizens are also able to identify where feedback has been acted on in the short term. From the bureaucrats' side, short term changes are driven by a number of factors, including the Hawthorne effect, competition and the potential financial benefits of performance appraisals. However, not all bureaucrats appreciate the feedback, particularly when it is critical. While SEMA has done a lot of design and testing around the feedback reports, there may be room for additional behavioral experimentation around the framing of the citizen feedback reports to bureaucrats. This could potentially take 2 forms, namely randomizing different report framings or in the form of randomized training to bureaucrats on emotional regulation when receiving feedback from citizens to reduce defensiveness/increase open-mindedness to negative feedback.

In the long-term, SEMA's ToC envisions use of its system as leading public servants improve their performance to meet the needs of citizens with enhanced public sector integrity. While we find evidence of improvements in public service delivery that have been driven by citizen feedback, we find mixed evidence on whether this has resulted in improved public sector integrity. We find that bureaucrats are intrinsically motivated to improve their performance and also use their discretion to go the extra mile for clients. However, we also find evidence that the main extrinsic motivator for behavior change (the Hawthorne effect) can also be detrimental through gaming their performance and compensation behavior. There may be room for additional research to identify how widespread these might be by conducting mystery shopping exercises. In addition, SEMA can also use the data it collects to identify where the Hawthorne effect might be present (e.g. where there have been sudden but short lived improvements in performance scores) and conducting research to see how familiar bureaucrats are with citizen specific feedback on areas of improvement compared to generic improvements that might increase scores and addressing these as 'misalignments' of the motivations behind changes. SEMA should be careful to avoid Reverse Hawthorne Effects (where bureaucrats might purposefully lower performance once they know they are being watched) in how it frames this misalignment of motivations. Moreover, peer-effects and self efficacy might be a more sustainable extrinsic motivator for sustained performance improvement by creating more (context appropriate) collaborative problem solving opportunities for bureaucrats at facility level to jointly respond to citizen feedback and using commitment devices (e.g. signing or making public declarations to act on specific areas of citizen feedback).

The (super) impact that SEMA's ToC aims to achieve is for citizens to claim and exercise their rights as citizens and to be empowered to influence the public service delivery processes. In addition, the ToC also aims to increase legitimacy, maintain social trust and support of public institutions and be more inclusive. Citizen participation in formal structures to influence public service delivery is wanting, but there has recently been significant citizen participation in social media based campaigns which have had success in improving service delivery in Uganda. With the data that SEMA has collected from different facilities, it may have a key role to play in informing future discussions on the quality of service delivery in the health and security sectors by providing evidence of areas where improvements have happened and informing decision makers on the improvements that have the most impact on improving citizen satisfaction.

The research proposed can seek to measure the impact of these interventions on several indicators which may provide useful insights into “soft” measures which in turn can have positive impacts on “hard” outcome measures. These soft measures from the bureaucrats’ side can include openness to negative feedback, salience of the Hawthorne effect and prevalence of compensatory behavior. From the citizens’ side, these can include willingness to provide feedback, importance providing feedback and salience of changes resulting from citizen feedback. Additionally, satisfaction data can serve as a form of proxy for on the ground monitoring of some hard measures. For instance, if SEMA were to collect satisfaction data from a large and geographically spread sample, it could be able to provide insight into how widespread the problem of the lack of medication is and how influential it is in lowering citizen satisfaction with service delivery in the health sector in Uganda. It would serve as a form of monitorial advocacy, and possibly supplement the data-to-action strategy. SEMA could also look into comparing citizen satisfaction scores before and after the disbursement of medication to facilities to see if or to what extent the availability of medication in health facilities influences citizen satisfaction scores.

The salience of improvements made as a result of SEMA feedback on the citizen side can be enhanced by several ways. Firstly, SEMA can document and share best practices in different formats (e.g. video, audio, print, etc.) and shared through mediums that citizens use frequently (e.g. radio or WhatsApp). audio case studies can be sent through WhatsApp or played via radio/loudspeakers). Secondly, these case studies can be used as call to action to encourage citizens to engage in formal feedback avenues (such as Barazas) to encourage citizens to engage directly with SEMA and bureaucrats. In addition, SEMA can continue to engage Champions as focal points for citizens to approach with questions on what has been done with their feedback.

Annexes

Summary of findings table

Inputs & Outputs		Short term outcomes
Citizens	<p>Increase citizen's participation and voice in public service delivery through inclusive and accessible feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and deploy real-time feedback at public institutions Conduct exit interviews of public institutions Develop and deploy on-distance mobile feedback collection tools Train and empower youth to collect and give feedback at public institutions (through the traineeship programme) Develop service standards based on citizen needs. 	<p>Citizens can articulate their priorities and needs to influence public service improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizens give increasingly more feedback to public institutions Citizens see the results and impact of the feedback implemented at public offices Citizens articulate their needs and expectations from public services, and advocate (through CSOs) for improvements or budget allocations
Levers	<p>Citizen feedback is received in several forms ranging from social media to formal customer service complaints</p> <p>Most respondents believe that citizens' voices matter and can influence government decisions through their feedback</p> <p>SEMA has strong positive relationships with most of the facilities it was worked with, enabling more citizen feedback to be gathered</p>	<p>Citizen feedback is highly prioritized at public facilities as it is used to make services better</p> <p>Citizen feedback after service improvements has been motivating to the bureaucrats and it encourages them to even do better.</p> <p>Feedback needs to be timely to enable bureaucrats to act on it.</p> <p>Most bureaucrats are willing to change behavior and how they provide services based on citizen feedback because they know that they are being watched.</p> <p>Bureaucrats are also motivated to improve by non-financial incentives (i.e. competition and performance appraisals)</p>
Barriers	<p>Not all citizen feedback is appreciated, and some is seen as 'lugezigezi'</p> <p>Feedback should be unbiased and comprehensive enough to act on</p> <p>Feedback should be packaged in a way</p>	<p>Some bureaucrats are defensive when they receive negative feedback</p> <p>Some bureaucrats think that citizens are over-demanding and expect more than they can give them</p>

	that is not demoralizing	
	Some bureaucrats have reservations about/ don't understand how the feedback is collected and disseminated	

Inputs & Outputs		Short term outcomes
Public Service	Engage public institutions to build partnerships and sustain their commitment to using citizen feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage government entities about the importance of citizen feedback and embracing feedback tools Disseminate feedback patterns, trends and insights through data reports to public institutions Publish feedback results and feedback for citizens to see changes made Build links between providers and citizens to track public service responsiveness at different levels 	Public servants improve their performance to meet the needs of citizens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data and evidence from feedback mechanisms inform decision-making Frontline workers change their behavior to deliver faster and higher quality services Managers encourage and incentivise their employees to perform better Managers improve their office or services Policy makers implement changes that can improve services systematically
Levers	<p>SEMA has strong positive relationships with most of the facilities it was worked with, enabling more citizen feedback to be gathered</p> <p>Citizen feedback on service delivery is well received and highly appreciated because it motivates bureaucrats to do better.</p> <p>Citizen feedback is received in several forms ranging from social media to formal customer service complaints</p> <p>Most respondents believe that citizens' voices matter and can influence government decisions through their feedback</p>	<p>Most bureaucrats want to serve citizens better.</p> <p>Citizen feedback is highly prioritized at their facilities as it is used to make services better</p> <p>Citizen feedback after service improvements has been motivating to the bureaucrats and it encourages them to even do better.</p> <p>Feedback needs to be timely to enable bureaucrats to act on it.</p> <p>Most bureaucrats are willing to change behavior and how they provide services based on citizen feedback because they know that they are being watched.</p> <p>Bureaucrats are also motivated to improve by non-financial incentives (i.e. competition and performance appraisals)</p>

Barriers	<p>Not all citizen feedback is appreciated, and some is seen as ‘lugezigezi’</p> <p>Feedback should be unbiased and comprehensive enough to act on</p> <p>Feedback should be packaged in a way that is not demoralizing</p> <p>Some bureaucrats have reservations about/ don’t understand how the feedback is collected and disseminated</p>	<p>Some bureaucrats are defensive when they receive negative feedback.</p> <p>Some bureaucrats think that citizens are too demanding and expect more than they can give them</p>
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Long Term Outcomes		(Super) Impacts
	<p>Increased reliability and quality of service delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased commitment of resources to public service improvements Public institutions deliver services to national service standards 	<p>Informed and empowered citizens influence public service delivery processes</p> <p>Public institutions have greater legitimacy and increased trust in the eyes of its citizens</p>
Levers	<p>Changes over time which citizens attribute to feedback time include reduced waiting times, improved citizen care, reduced corruption, and staff dismissals</p> <p>In the security sector, improvements have been observed in terms of increased security, reduced citizen harassment by the police, and an increase in the number of judicial officers at the courts.</p> <p>Respondents mentioned that feedback mechanisms devices improve the discipline of officers, encourage people to work hard, and enable innovation</p> <p>There is a high level of peer influence when frontline bureaucrats are making decisions in their daily work guided by the organization’s rules and regulations</p> <p>Most respondents have an internal locus of control believing that success in their job is a matter of hard work,</p>	<p>Mass citizen engagement to provide feedback on the quality of service delivery has recently manifested through social media with significant success, but not translating into formal engagement pathways</p> <p>Most bureaucrats are comfortable doing things differently from their colleagues and going an extra mile to help a client.</p> <p>Most respondents believe that they can jointly influence the enactment of new policies/ protocols/ manuals.</p> <p>Citizen views and satisfaction data can be used to design and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives supported by development agencies.</p> <p>Citizen feedback data can supplement other initiatives by development agencies such as community score cards</p>

	luck has little to do with it	
Barriers	<p>Changes made as a result of citizen feedback is not always salient in the long term.</p> <p>Evidence that changes in public service delivery is partly driven by fear of whistleblowers/ being recorded and exposed to the public (particularly in security sector)</p>	

Demographics

A total of 23 citizens, 22 Bureaucrats (Police, Ministry of DCIC, NIRA, Judiciary, and public health facilities) and 5 NGOs were interviewed for the study. They represented a broad section of the Ugandan population, as illustrated below:

Graph 1: Citizen Demographics

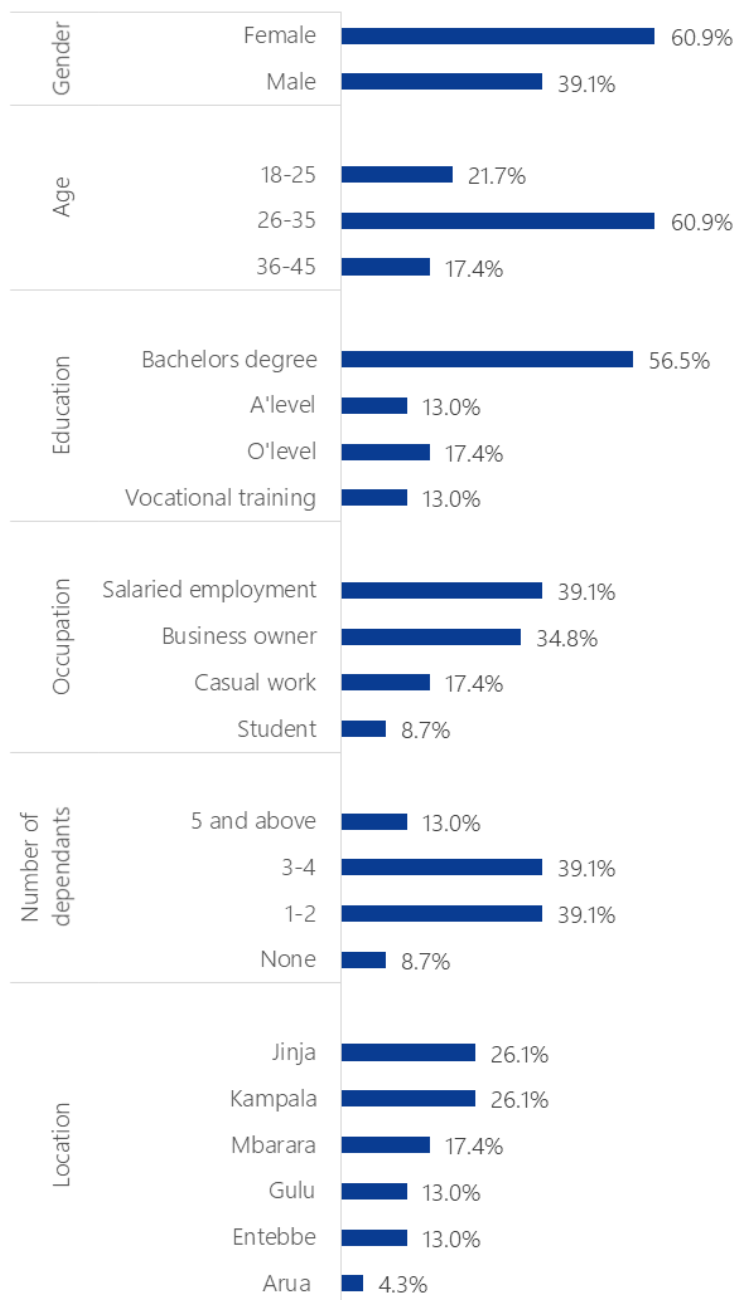


Table 1: Bureaucrats demographics

Institution	Gulu	Jinja	Kampala	Mbarara	Total
DCIC		1	1	2	4
Health Centre		1	5		6
Judiciary	1	1	2	1	5
NIRA	1		1		2

Police	1	1	1		3
URSB			2		2
Total	3	4	12	3	22

Table 2: Bureaucrats roles

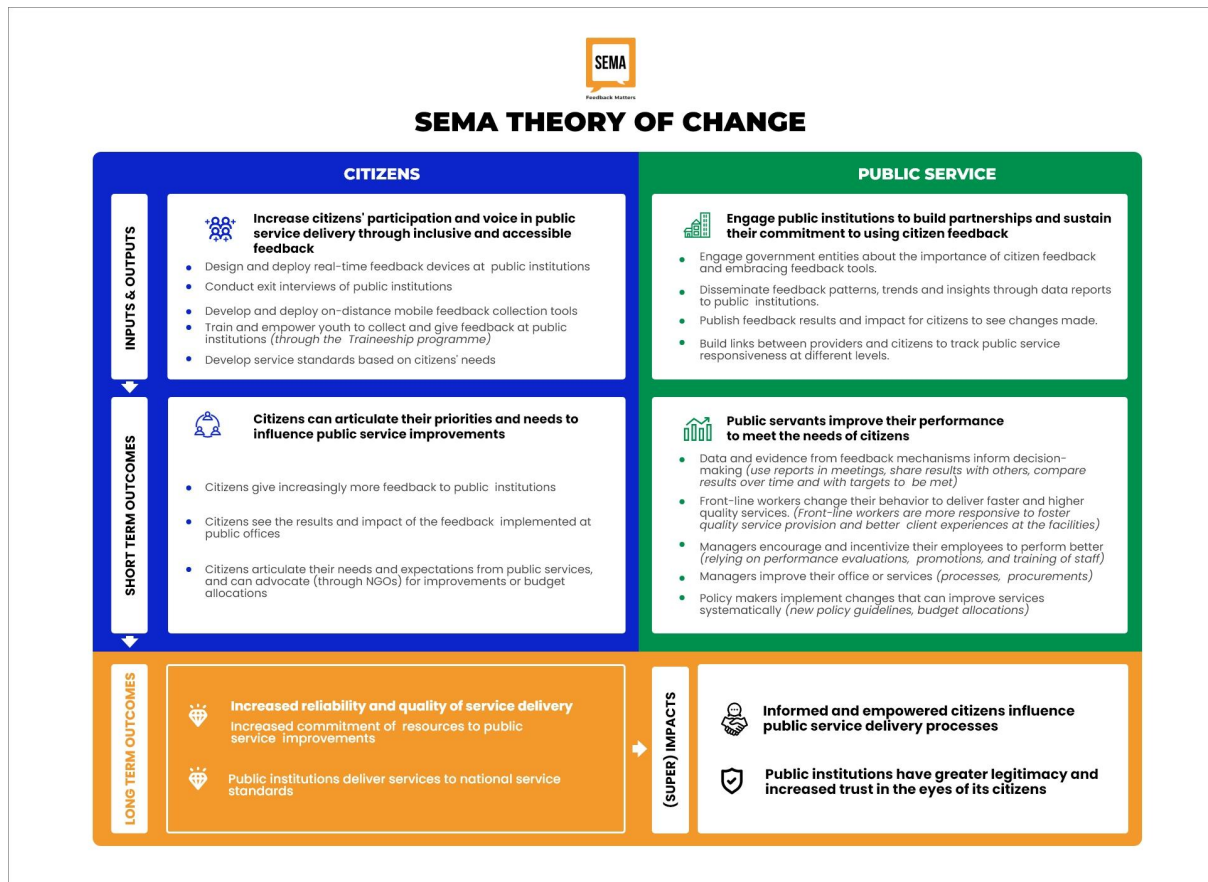
DCIC	Health Centre	Judiciary	NIRA	Police	URSB
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigration Officer • PRO • Regional Immigration Officer • Senior Immigration Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asst Incharge • Client Care Nurse • IT Administrator • Midwife. • PRO • Senior Nurse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Magistrate • Data Assistant • Records Supervisor. • Supervisor • Technical Advisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ass. DRO • Registrations Officer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O.C Station • OC Operations • Police Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caretaker • Manager

Understanding SEMA's Theory of Change

SEMA began working in Uganda in 2018 with the objective of piloting innovative feedback mechanisms that empower citizens and service users to directly provide feedback to local authorities and public servants regarding service quality and accessibility, with a goal of upholding service delivery standards. SEMA's work seeks to support government facilities to accelerate the use of citizens' feedback to inform decisions that improve service quality and outcomes for service users while enhancing service responsiveness and accountability of service providers to the public.

SEMA's Theory of Change revolves around improving public service delivery through citizen feedback and engagement. It encompasses various components such as real-time feedback devices, mobile feedback collection tools, youth empowerment, and fostering partnerships with public institutions. It aims to promote accountability, inclusivity, and integrity in public service delivery, leading to better outcomes for communities and empowered citizens.

Table 2: SEMA's Theory of Change





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