



**POLICY REPORT**

# **GRASSROOTS TO GLOBAL**

**Seven Steps to Citizen-Driven  
Accountability for the Sustainable  
Development Goals**



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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** .....2

**INTRODUCTION** .....7

**A SEVEN-STEP ACCOUNTABILITY BLUEPRINT:  
CONNECTING COMMUNITIES TO THE GLOBAL  
DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK** .....9

1. Start Local: Lay grassroots foundations by supporting robust social accountability approaches..... 12
2. Work Together: Support collaboration among accountability actors and aggregate citizen-generated information about the quality of service delivery at the subnational level..... 15
3. Make Space: Create platforms for citizen-generated evidence and dialogue..... 18
4. Work with Champions: Strengthen crucial actors within the accountability system ..... 22
5. Open Up: Nurture a transparent and accountable enabling environment..... 24
6. Sharpen the ‘Teeth’: Strengthen administrative and judicial remedies for accountability ..... 27
7. Report Together: Incorporate citizen voice in national, regional and global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) reporting ..... 29

**CONCLUSION: SEVEN STEPS FOR SDG SUCCESS**.....33

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The success of the post-2015 development framework must be measured by its ability to serve the most disadvantaged communities, particularly reaching the most vulnerable children within these, in the hardest places to live.

But to serve these communities authentically, the Post 2015 development framework must be accountable to them. Who better to measure the success than the people at the centre? After all, it is their lives, and the lives of their children, that depend upon the goals' success. Until a woman from the poorest family in the most crowded slum can be sure that her local clinic will have the medicine and staffing her government has promised, global health will remain uncertain; until a child with disability from the poorest family in the most remote village can be sure that his or her teacher will arrive at school and teach today, a generation's aspirations will be in doubt – as will the hope to end extreme poverty, end preventable deaths of children, end child hunger and end violence against children, among other aspirations.

A firm way to ensure that these women, men, children and young people are reached and remain a priority, is by creating pathways for them to help monitor whether leaders are delivering on promises, whether what is pledged in New York translates into action – from the local level to the global level. In particular, many of the most important pathways will lie at the subnational level, beyond the immediate reach of targets and indicators that governments will commit to at the United Nations. But to equip people to play this important role, significant investments will be needed, especially at the subnational level. World Vision's experience suggests that seven steps hold the key to making this possible for everyone.

### **I. START LOCAL: LAY GRASSROOTS FOUNDATIONS BY SUPPORTING ROBUST SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY APPROACHES**

Services like health care and education are the building blocks for many of the SDGs. Once the global goals have been contextualised in a participatory manner to set local priorities according to local need, then social accountability approaches, like World Vision's Citizen Voice and Action (CVA), equip ordinary citizens, including children and youth, to help monitor and improve the performance of these services. Because of its citizen participation, simplicity, effectiveness and emphasis on evidence, social accountability can create a grassroots foundation for accountability for the global development framework. Clear commitments by governments, designed to operationalise global goals and targets, and defined in participatory ways, can help social accountability succeed.

#### **Key messages**

- Governments should be accountable to the people the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are meant to serve – particularly children and their families in the most disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.
- Stakeholders should create pathways for citizens to monitor progress towards the SDGs from local to global levels.
- Greater investment will be needed, especially at the subnational level, in order to equip and connect citizens effectively to support SDG accountability.

**What needs to happen to make this possible**

- Governments engage citizens in the translation of global goals into context-appropriate national and subnational targets.
- Stakeholders support civil society–driven social accountability programmes that combine people’s access to relevant information and an enabling environment for collective action.
- Marginalised groups are involved throughout the accountability processes.
- Meaningful, inclusive, accessible, collaborative and responsive opportunities are available for children and young people to present evidence that can help drive effective decision making.

**2. WORK TOGETHER: SUPPORT COLLABORATION AMONG ACCOUNTABILITY ACTORS, AND AGGREGATE CITIZEN-GENERATED INFORMATION ABOUT THE QUALITY OF SERVICE DELIVERY AT THE SUBNATIONAL LEVEL**

By working collaboratively, civil society can gather information about service delivery across broad geographic regions and begin to identify patterns. Social accountability approaches can provide easy-to-aggregate, citizen-generated evidence for this purpose. Such evidence illustrates the ‘lived experience’ of the people at the centre of the SDGs that can complement official statistics bureau data. This critical information about service quality can help governments understand why policy targets were achieved or missed. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has a key role to play in accelerating this aggregation process.

**What needs to happen to make this possible**

- Civil society and other pro-accountability actors at local, subnational and national levels intentionally collaborate around social accountability processes that promote local delivery of the SDGs.
- Stakeholders work to aggregate citizen-generated data and information about peoples ‘lived experience’ of the SDGs to complement official statistical data, using ICT as appropriate.
- Donors align funding strategies to promote linkages among civil society partners.

### 3. MAKE SPACE: CREATE PLATFORMS FOR CITIZEN-GENERATED EVIDENCE AND DIALOGUE

Citizen-generated data is useful only if it leads to action that improves people's lives. In World Vision's experience action tends to flow from constructive, evidence-based dialogue between citizens and government. The avenue for this type of dialogue can take many forms, including both 'created' or 'invited' spaces. World Vision has seen some success when town-hall style dialogues at the local level are extended and replicated, so that community representatives, including children and young people, can engage civil servants and elected representatives at the local, district, provincial and even national levels. Governments can help encourage dialogue by creating new opportunities or aligning these citizen-driven events to feed official planning and monitoring processes.

#### What needs to happen to make this possible

- Governments create or strengthen platforms for citizen-generated information and interests to be presented.
- Civil society creates or takes advantage of the available platforms at the local, subnational and national levels that allow citizens to report findings from social accountability activities.
- Donors support platforms that encourage citizen participation and enhance local, subnational and national linkages.

### 4. WORK WITH CHAMPIONS: STRENGTHEN CRUCIAL ACTORS WITHIN THE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

At the local level World Vision has seen how faith and traditional leaders, civil society leaders, local government officials, the media, Members of Parliament (MPs) and other trusted actors can nurture cooperation among governments and citizens that advances accountability. Focusing on these 'champions' helps bridge the gap between people and their government.

#### What needs to happen to make this possible

- Stakeholders seek and support accountability 'champions' who can broker trust between citizens and government.
- Governments identify specific ways for parliamentarians to promote accountability for SDG commitments.

## 5. OPEN UP: NURTURE A TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

An effective citizen-driven accountability system must sit within an environment that encourages transparency and accountability. Open budgets, clear commitments to service delivery and longer-term, contextually tailored commitments to open governance can equip people to help their governments meet their objectives.

### What needs to happen to make this possible

- Governments provide access to information, especially clear national, subnational and local policy, plans, budgets and budget expenditures to service delivery.
- Governments should set and deliver contextually tailored commitments to become transparent, responsive and accountable, beyond the bare minimums agreed in the context of the SDGs.
- Special support should be provided to fragile and humanitarian contexts.

## 6. SHARPEN THE 'TEETH': STRENGTHEN ADMINISTRATIVE AND JUDICIAL REMEDIES FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Some of the most effective accountability mechanisms come from within a government itself. Governments can create institutions that supply 'teeth' to complement citizen 'voice'. Working together, these institutions and citizens can help advance the broader system of accountability.

### What needs to happen to make this possible

- Governments and their partners strengthen traditional, bureaucratic accountability mechanisms and make them known to and accessible by all.
- Governments strengthen ombuds offices, auditors and other such structures and promote their direct engagement with people.

## 7. REPORT TOGETHER: INCORPORATE CITIZEN VOICE IN NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL (SDG) REPORTING

Citizen participation can enrich dialogue about the SDGs at every level – even when it comes to national, regional or global reporting. Ensuring citizen participation can help ensure that critical evidence is not missed along the way.

**What needs to happen to make this possible**

- Governments set up national, representative reporting mechanisms for the SDGs, advised by independent experts and civil society.
- Regional forums provide civil society an opportunity to participate and contribute citizen-generated data.
- The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) takes a holistic view of SDG progress and draws not just from country reports but also from existing human rights accountability mechanisms at the global level.
- Top-down and bottom-up information-sharing systems are integrated to ensure that commitments and actions are known beyond key players at the national and international levels.
- Governments ensure that implementation gaps identified through reviews and reporting are translated into remedial actions that are monitored at local, subnational and national levels.

By taking these seven steps, we can help ensure that people are kept at the centre of the post-2015 framework and that the Sustainable Development Goals deliver for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged women, men, children and young people.



## INTRODUCTION

Fifteen years ago, Member States of the United Nations finalised ambitious commitments to the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Today, the world is a better place because of the remarkable progress towards these goals. But some of the goals will not be met, and progress towards other goals has been uneven and inequitable. When MDG progress has been slow, one of the most frequent explanations has been the lack of accountability mechanisms attached to the aspirational goals.<sup>1</sup>

As we seek to incorporate the lessons of the MDGs into the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we should ensure that accountability underpins SDG legitimacy, relevance and effectiveness. Unless the post-2015 development framework is responsive to the men, women and children at its centre, it risks being perceived by them as abstract, distant, irrelevant to their lives and, ultimately, illegitimate. But there are also very practical reasons for supporting citizen-driven accountability in the post-2015 framework; as the consultations over the past years have shown,<sup>2</sup> participatory monitoring and accountability directly enhances development effectiveness.

It is within this context that this paper makes the case for grassroots-to-global, citizen-driven accountability at the heart of SDG implementation. Grassroots-to-global accountability – that is, accountability driven from below that feeds accountability mechanisms at the local, national, regional and global levels – can bridge the gap between people and policy. But greater investments, particularly at the subnational level, will be needed in order to equip citizens, governments and other stakeholders to succeed. Although the recent World We Want participatory monitoring for accountability consultation<sup>3</sup> demonstrated some remarkable examples of accountability mechanisms, the consultation also showed that many mechanisms are limited, localised interventions or campaigns in capital cities.

Accordingly, our ‘blueprint’ focuses on the most important steps that stakeholders – citizens, governments, civil society, Members of Parliament, donors and others – can take to link citizen-driven accountability to the post-2015 framework, with a special focus on actions at the subnational level. This blueprint will not apply everywhere, for everyone, for all SDGs and not necessarily in the sequence presented here. Some environmentally focused SDGs may require a greater emphasis on the role of private-

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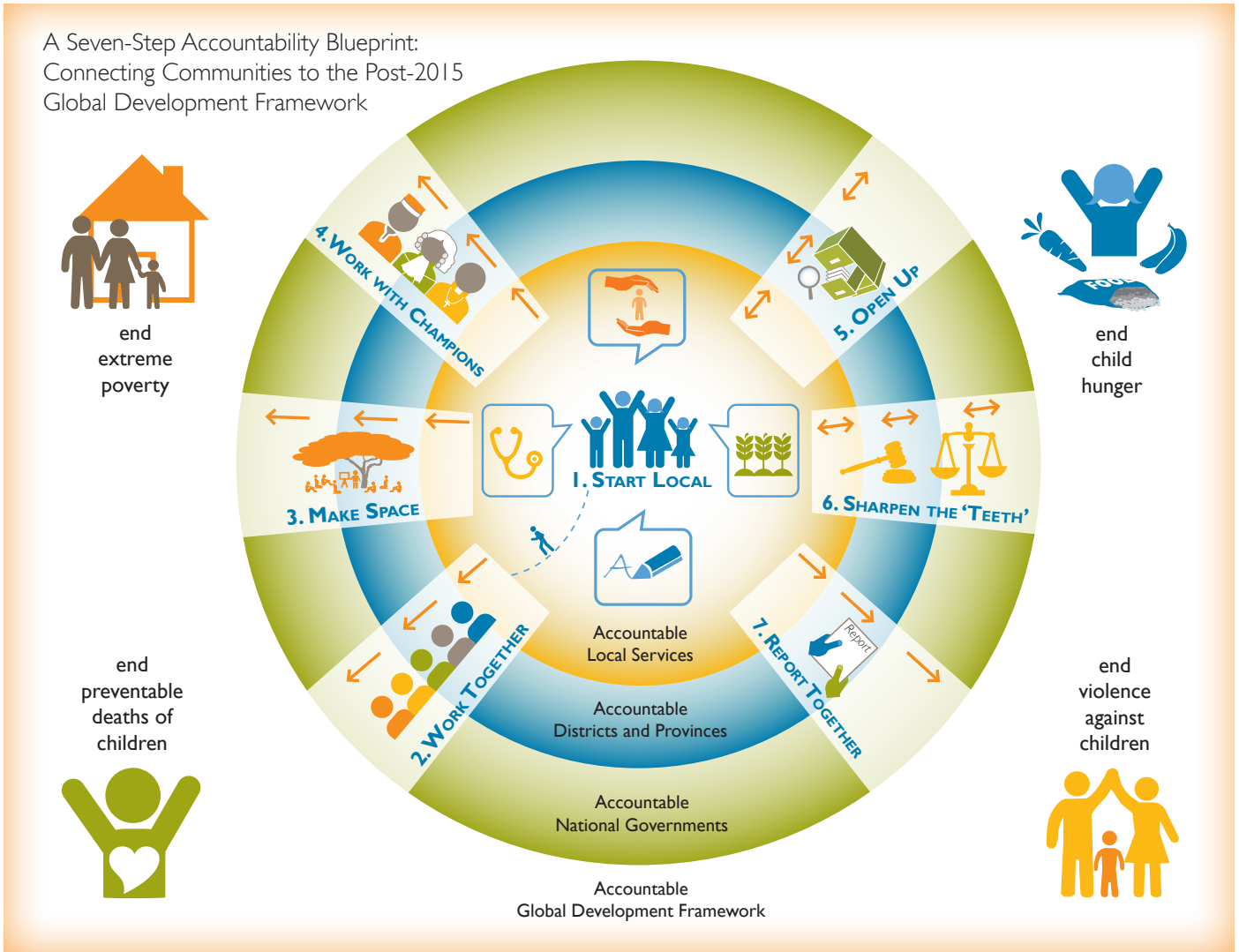
<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the UN Secretary-General himself has noted this shortcoming: ‘But the shortfalls have occurred not because the goals are unreachable, or because time is too short. We are off course because of unmet commitments, inadequate resources and a lack of focus and accountability’, [http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocus/sgspeeches/statements\\_full.asp?statID=750#VOzk6XzF-So](http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocus/sgspeeches/statements_full.asp?statID=750#VOzk6XzF-So).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the World We Want participatory monitoring for accountability consultation, the United Nations Economic and Social Council regional commissions consultations on monitoring and accountability, the work of the Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development and the UN Statistical Division on proposed SDG indicators.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.worldwewant2015.org/accountability2015>.

sector accountability, for example. Fragile and humanitarian contexts will require an approach to accountability that is sensitive to their complex realities. But many of the themes explored here will remain relevant to the post-2015 framework as a whole; by equipping citizens to play a key role in SDG accountability, we can better ensure their success.

A Seven-Step Accountability Blueprint:  
Connecting Communities to the Post-2015  
Global Development Framework



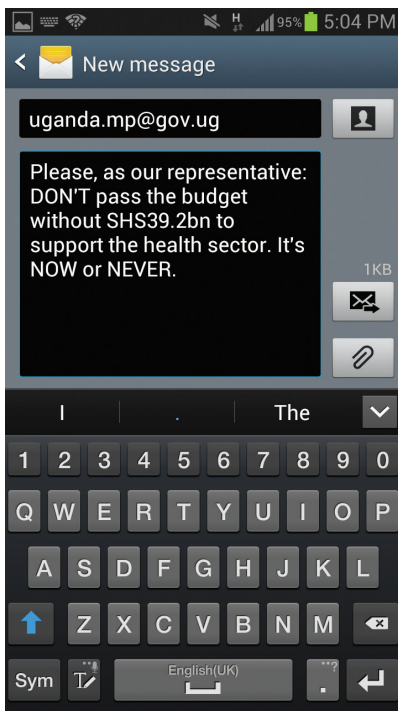
## A SEVEN-STEP ACCOUNTABILITY BLUEPRINT: CONNECTING COMMUNITIES TO THE GLOBAL FRAMEWORK

### **Text Box I. What Does Citizen-Driven Accountability Look Like? Lessons from Uganda**

Naggingo Robinah is a mother of three and a resident of Nnalinya, a village in Kyankwazi district, the poorest in Central Uganda. Like many health facilities in Kyankwazi, Nnalinya clinic was in a poor state for many years. So in 2012, Naggingo and her fellow citizens began applying World Vision's social accountability approach, called Citizen Voice and Action (see text box 2) in order to seek improvements. To begin, citizens used the government-endorsed Patients' Charter<sup>4</sup> and Health Policy to raise awareness about the services that patients in Nnalinya should expect to receive. Next, they used a scorecard and social audit to compare reality to the criteria in the Patients' Charter and to Uganda's commitments under its health policy and globally to the Every Woman Every Child initiative. Through these exercises they documented equipment shortages, illegitimate user fees and, most egregiously, the fact that the facility had lacked a midwife for 10 years.

Equipped with this evidence, the community convened a town-hall style meeting at Nnalinya to examine the findings and discuss what they could do to improve the clinic. At the meeting community members, clinic staff and local government officials contributed to the development of an action plan. Together, they solved some of the clinic's gaps and shortfalls, including some administrative, user-fee and supply problems. But in the action-planning meeting it became clear that the community's highest priority was to ensure that the clinic had a midwife. Because of the lack of a midwife, many women avoided the clinic entirely, and others walked long distances to give birth at the district hospital.

<sup>4</sup> Uganda Ministry of Health, *Patients' Charter*, 2009, <http://www.health.go.ug/Patient.pdf>.



According to clinical officer Sophia Ampire, 'Because so many mothers were going to traditional birth attendants, they were having medical complications, like bleeding. Some of them lost their babies, and others lost their lives'. Unfortunately, budgets for staffing lay beyond the control of the local government.

So Nnalinya residents joined with other communities, including local officials and service providers, and began to document a pattern of understaffing at village health centres to make their case at higher levels of government. Eventually, World Vision and other members of the Coalition for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health<sup>5</sup> helped gather evidence from social accountability activities in more than 120 clinics in 40 districts. The coalition also mobilised people to send thousands of text messages to their parliamentarians asking them to increase the budget for midwives.

Because of their collective pressure, partnership with parliamentary champions and the evidence they wielded, citizens gained a national-level audience with parliamentary committees and ministerial officials, timed to the passage of the budget for the Ministry of Health. Nnalinya's experience became a case study used to illustrate the effect of the health budget deficiency.

In response, key MPs blocked the passage of the annual budget for two weeks until an additional 49.5 million Ugandan Shillings (US\$19.8 million) was added to the budget for the recruitment and retention of approximately 6,172 additional health workers, including 1,014 new midwives.



CVA process in Uganda

<sup>5</sup> The Coalition for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health is a civil society coalition that supports the implementation of Uganda's Every Woman Every Child 'national accountability roadmap'.

Nnalinya's health centre directly benefited from the changes. In late 2013, five new health workers were posted. Subsequently, maternal and child mortality rates dropped from 15 per cent to 11 per cent.<sup>6</sup>

Today, Nnalinya clinic is busy. Naggingo Robinah is one of the women who has directly benefited from the change. She recently gave birth to her third child at the clinic. According to Naggingo, 'The services here are good because whenever we come, midwives are here, and they attend to us'.

In some cases citizens have already succeeded in linking local accountability to global frameworks and have influenced the local delivery of global promises. The experience of Naggingo and her fellow community members in Nnalinya in Uganda illustrates many of the elements of a citizen-driven, grassroots-to-global accountability system (see text box I). The equipment, staff and medicine that keep her family healthy exist because of an accountability system that started and ended with her: Within a broader enabling environment for accountability, she was able to learn about the clear commitments that her government had made to health care under global agreements and domestic law. She and her fellow community members were able to measure Nnalinya clinic's compliance with these commitments using simple social accountability tools and to press for improvements locally. But her fellow citizens also worked together in coalition and deployed aggregated, facility-level evidence at progressively higher platforms brokered by civil society. The combination of evidence and 'people power', deployed at venues designed for constructive dialogue, helped facilitate a political process that ultimately persuaded national-level stakeholders that compliance with domestic law and international agreements required an increased health budget for midwives, five of whom were posted to serve Naggingo, her family and community.

Below we examine how citizens and governments in other places, like Armenia, Peru, Indonesia and elsewhere, have also begun to connect local accountability to policy commitments and change in order to advance development effectiveness. How might these experiences be replicated to advance the SDGs and ensure that we 'leave no one behind' in the post-2015 world? The following seven steps sketch out an accountability blueprint to help this happen.

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<sup>6</sup> In 2012, the child mortality rate in Kyankwazi district was 15 per cent. In 2014, the child mortality rate dropped to 11 per cent. See World Vision International, *Improving Maternal and Child Health, Community Voices Influencing the National Health Agenda* (2014).

## I. START LOCAL: LAY GRASSROOTS FOUNDATIONS BY SUPPORTING ROBUST SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY APPROACHES

Over the past five years the United Nations, in partnership with its Member States, civil society, research institutions and the private sector, has led one of the most extensive global consultations in history.<sup>7</sup> More so than in the years leading up to the MDGs in 2000, the current dialogue has demonstrated genuine attention to the rights and aspirations of the world's most marginalised people, with the principle of leaving no one behind.

Today, as the dialogue about the content of the SDGs shifts to dialogue about their implementation, governments should ensure that ordinary people and civil society groups in their countries play a similarly important role in translating the promise of the goals into contextually appropriate national and subnational level commitments. Information on these local commitments, whether in national policies, strategies, plans or charters, should be accessible by ordinary people.

Many of these commitments will relate to service delivery and local regulations, which serve as the building blocks for many of the SDGs. Social accountability approaches,<sup>8</sup> like World Vision's Citizen Voice and Action, equip people to engage directly with service providers and local government in order to monitor and improve the performance of essential services (see text box 2). Government's human rights commitments, as further reflected in global goals, national policy, plans and budgets, are the foundation of any accountability framework, with services needing to be available, accessible, acceptable and of good quality.

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<sup>7</sup> Consultations include 11 thematic consultations in 88 countries, regional consultations, national consultations and an online consultation, in addition to several civil society-led initiatives in the context of regular UN meetings.

<sup>8</sup> The pedigree of these interventions originates in traditional participatory monitoring and evaluation techniques. In 2004, these approaches gained prominence as the result of the 2004 World Development Report, *Making Services Work for Poor People*, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/5986>.



### **Text Box 2. Citizen Voice and Action: World Vision's Approach to Social Accountability**

CVA is World Vision's flagship approach to social accountability. CVA equips citizens, governments and service providers to work collaboratively in order to improve services at the facility level. First, communities learn about government's commitments to key services under local law. Next, communities work constructively with government and service providers to compare reality against government's own commitments, using a social audit. But communities also have the opportunity to rate government against criteria that they themselves generate, using a community scorecard. Children, in particular, play a critical role in identifying service-delivery gaps at places like schools that others cannot. Finally, communities engage in constructive, local, multi-stakeholder dialogues in which citizens, government and service providers commit to an action plan to improve the service being monitored.

When undertaken strategically, social accountability approaches have a strong impact on development outcomes. For instance, a 2014 review of 25 of the most respected social accountability–impact evaluations found that interventions that combine citizen access to actionable information and an enabling environment for collective action resulted in consistently positive results.<sup>9</sup>

World Vision's experience with these approaches resonates with these findings. In over 600 programmes in 45 countries, CVA practitioners consistently report encouraging results: better service delivery, improved relationships between people and government, and enhanced development outcomes. As government services improve, so does the well-being of children. For example, randomised control trials in 180 Ugandan schools showed that the Citizen Voice and Action approach had led to a 9 per cent increase in test scores after just one year.<sup>10</sup> Studies of a similar approach in 50 Ugandan communities documented a 33 per cent drop in child mortality.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Fox, *Social Accountability: What Does the Evidence Really Say?* Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA) Working Paper No. 1 (September 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Abigail Barr, Frederick Mugisha, Pieter Serneels and Andrew Zeitlin, *Information and Collective Action in Community-based Monitoring of Schools: Field and Lab Experimental Evidence from Uganda* (Forthcoming, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Martina Bjorkman, Damien de Walque and Jakob Svensson, *Information Is Power: Experimental Evidence of the Long Run Impact of Community Based Monitoring*, World Bank, Policy research working paper 7015 (January 2014).



In our school we wanted to have a clinic with health staff to take care of the health of us, the students. We did many actions; we evaluated the situation and how this can be improved. After our demands and the demands of others, too, we have now a health-care facility for us. The students don't need to travel long distances any more to get medical attention.

—Maruba, age 13, Zambia

World Vision and civil society groups are not alone in their experience with social accountability; governments themselves report encouraging results from social accountability interventions. A synthesis of 2 peer-reviewed research papers, 12 evaluations and 27 case studies from 13 countries suggested that social accountability has helped to ease social tensions, improve governmental efficiency and increase democratic legitimacy and moral standing.<sup>12</sup>

Because of their simplicity, effectiveness, citizen involvement and emphasis on evidence, social accountability approaches can play a critical role in the broader accountability system. They can also provide space for those who tend to be left out of development dialogue, such as children and young people, to engage effectively.<sup>13</sup> Not only are children and young people the main stakeholders for the post-2015 agenda, as those who will live the future that is being shaped through it, but they also often have insights about service delivery that adults might miss. For example, Ugandan children helped officials and policymakers understand how the lack of a mid-day meal was affecting attendance.<sup>14</sup> Because of the long distances between their home and school, children would often leave for lunch and never return.

Around the world, social accountability practitioners have reported similar findings – children help to focus accountability interventions on the most critical aspects of service delivery. Accordingly, forums at all levels should provide meaningful, inclusive, accessible, collaborative and responsive<sup>15</sup> opportunities for children to present evidence that can help drive effective decision making.

Although social accountability interventions hold promise, without higher-level budget and policy support they are too often 'stuck' at the local level. As Naggingo and other community members discovered in Uganda, some obstacles to service delivery require budgetary or policy action at the district, provincial and/or national level. In order to influence these processes, accountability actors must become more horizontally and vertically linked.

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<sup>12</sup> Jeff Hall, World Vision International, *How Collective Action Leads to Improved Social Accountability* (2014).

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Anthony Davis, Gina de la Harpe Bergh and Amanda Lundy, *Young People's Engagement in Strengthening Accountability for the Post-2015 Agenda* (2014), <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9165.pdf>; and Children International, Child to Child, Plan International, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages and World Vision International, *Child Sensitive Accountability and the Post-2015 Agenda* (2015), <https://www.worldwewant2015.org/file/485050/download/528556>.

<sup>14</sup> See World Vision International, *Empty Stomachs, Empty Schools* (2012), <https://casestudiescva.crowdmap.com/reports/view/36>.

<sup>15</sup> Children International, Child to Child, Plan International, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages and World Vision International, *Child Sensitive Accountability and the Post-2015 Agenda* (2015).



### What needs to happen to make this possible

- Governments engage citizens in the translation of global goals into context-appropriate national and subnational targets.
- Stakeholders support civil society–driven social accountability programmes that combine people’s access to relevant information and an enabling environment for collective action.<sup>16</sup>
- Marginalised groups are involved throughout the accountability processes.
- Meaningful, inclusive, accessible, collaborative and responsive opportunities are available for children and young people to present evidence that can help drive effective decision making.

## 2. WORK TOGETHER: SUPPORT COLLABORATION AMONG ACCOUNTABILITY ACTORS, AND AGGREGATE CITIZEN-GENERATED INFORMATION ABOUT THE QUALITY OF SERVICE DELIVERY AT THE SUBNATIONAL LEVEL

In order to extend their reach beyond the local level, citizens, civil society, service providers, local government and other pro-accountability stakeholders will need to work together. Strategic partnerships and collaboration among pro-accountability actors bolster local accountability processes in two ways. First, it prevents a ‘squeezing the balloon’ effect by which performance improves in one area at the expense of another.<sup>17</sup> For example, practitioners in World Vision’s programme areas have reported that when empowered communities identify poor-performing or corrupt civil servants, those individuals are sometimes simply transferred to disempowered communities.

Second, by working together civil society actors can create an aggregated evidence base of service delivery that demonstrates the ‘lived experience’ of the people at the centre of the SDGs that transcends statistical evidence. Improved national statistical bureaus must equip governments to measure outcomes and progress towards targets.<sup>18</sup> But statistical bureaus rarely have the tools necessary to measure the extent to which quality inputs and services, such as medical equipment or classroom instruction, are actually being delivered. The actual ‘lived experience’ of the most vulnerable is easily missed in statistical composites.

Collaboration among civil society actors can deploy social accountability processes to feed statistical bureau reports and help fill this gap.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Fox (September 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Fox (September 2014).

<sup>18</sup> World Vision International, *More Than Numbers: Why Better Data Adds Up to Saving the Lives of Women and Children* (2014).

<sup>19</sup> For example, social accountability processes can help measure ‘proportion of population satisfied with the quality of public services, disaggregated by service’, included as an indicator in the list proposed by Policy and Statistical Experts from Specialized Agencies and Entities.

**Text Box 3. Aggregated Scorecards and Social Audits Help Improve Health Systems in Armenia**

In the Lori Region of Armenia, 20 communities came together to monitor systematically the health service provision in the region. They aggregated the results of the scorecards and social audits from the clinic facilities in each of their communities to identify patterns over a two-year period from 2008 to 2010.

The community's CVA-driven research on entitlements had revealed that the doctors were required by law to visit each community each month. Because of the steep mountains and the lack of transportation, the communities were deeply dependent upon these visits. Unfortunately, the community groups identified a failure of family doctors to visit remote communities. World Vision staff, with local community-based organisations and citizens, formed a network to monitor doctor visits in a systematic way.

In 2010, World Vision worked with its partners to call a meeting among key stakeholders, including mayors, regional government representatives, central government representatives, clinic directors, several Ministry of Health representatives and the media. At the meeting an analysis of government policy and citizen-generated data revealed that existing policy structured doctors' pay to compensate them disproportionately for the number of patients seen and thus disincentivised visits to some of the poorest, most sparsely populated rural villages.

The regional representative took action. After the meeting he personally called each doctor and insisted that he or she make the required visits or face administrative action. Second, he restructured doctors' pay to correlate not only to the number of patients seen but also to the distances traveled, providing an incentive to visit the most distant and vulnerable places. Today, community members report better health-care services in the distant villages of Lori region.

Aggregated scorecards and social audits can reveal patterns in service-delivery success that official statistics might hide. For example, aggregated information from scorecards helped illustrate how doctors' pay structure was disincentivising health-care provision in Armenia's poorest region (see text box 3). In short, while census bureau statistics can help stakeholders identify *how much* progress is being made, social accountability processes can drive a richer understanding of *why* progress is being made or lacking.

Information and communication technology has a key role to play in accelerating this aggregation process. As the World We Want participatory monitoring and accountability consultation demonstrated, civil society groups, as well as governments around the world, are experimenting with

ICTs, such as UNICEF's U-Report,<sup>20</sup> that facilitate the flow and aggregation of citizen-driven information. Similarly, with the support of the World Bank, World Vision is experimenting with an SMS ('short message system') or text message-based scorecard and social audit in Indonesia that can help speed the aggregation of service-delivery data.

Citizen-driven data will never replace the important work of statistical bureaus, nor will it be of the same robustness. But social accountability evidence can help encourage evidence-based dialogue about people's actual experience. It can help policymakers quickly identify patterns of service-delivery failure or success. And it can help formulate hypotheses about service performance that can be further tested by government or researchers. Given the complementary character of this type of data, the capacity of census bureaus should be strengthened to include it in official reports.

Donors can also help facilitate aggregation of citizen-generated data. Better alignment and shared strategic plans among donors<sup>21</sup> can encourage coordination and stronger intent among civil society partners. International non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and larger coalitions can support coordination or brokering among smaller groups in order to focus attention on local delivery of the SDGs. In this way, by working together and aggregating data, civil society can contribute critical evidence that helps improve decision making and accelerates SDG progress.

### What needs to happen to make this possible

- Civil society and other pro-accountability actors at local, subnational and national levels intentionally collaborate around social accountability processes that promote local delivery of the SDGs.
- Stakeholders work to aggregate citizen-generated data and information about peoples lived experience of the SDGs to complement official statistical data, using ICT as appropriate.
- Donors align funding strategies to promote linkages among civil society partners.

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<sup>20</sup> See <http://www.ureport.ug/>.

<sup>21</sup> Particularly accountability-focused donors such as Making All Voices Count, The Global Partnership for Social Accountability and the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

### 3. MAKE SPACE: CREATE PLATFORMS FOR CITIZEN-GENERATED EVIDENCE AND DIALOGUE

Once aggregated, social accountability evidence can feed various and higher-level multi-stakeholder dialogues and contribute to SDG reporting and implementation. These dialogues can occur in 'invited' spaces, in which government encourages people's participation, or 'claimed/created' spaces, in which people themselves join together in pursuit of accountability.<sup>22</sup> In a functioning SDG accountability system, 'created' spaces should feed into institutionalised spaces in which government actively 'invites' citizen and CSO participation.

Many governments have created institutionalised spaces for citizen participation. For example, Peru's Roundtable for the Fight Against Poverty<sup>23</sup> has earned the respect of government ministries and civil society groups alike by nurturing multi-stakeholder dialogue at the local, subnational and national levels (see text box 4).

Government planning processes offer similar opportunities. Bangladesh, for example, is seeking to merge SDG reporting with its broader development plan. According to Naquib Bin Mahbub, joint chief of the General Economics Division within the Planning Commission, 'formulating the Government of Bangladesh's 7th Five Year Plan offers a unique opportunity to integrate participatory approaches at the planning stages. The 7th plan will provide the platform for convergence of the national priorities with the Post 2015 Development Agenda of the UN, and the preferred means of implementation'.

Civil society should prepare and feed information into these institutionalised spaces, for example, through convening its own meetings. Studies suggest that organic participation can be much more effective than participation that is 'induced' by government or donors.<sup>24</sup> As part of its social accountability model, World Vision supports multi-stakeholder, evidence-based dialogue at the local level through new created spaces. These local-level platforms begin by focusing on the performance of one facility, government service or regulation – a clinic, a school, a local bylaw, or agricultural extension, for example. The evidence from social accountability tools serves as the basis for constructive dialogue about the performance of the service, regulation or law.

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<sup>22</sup> John Gaventa, 'Finding the Spaces for Change: A Power Analysis', *IDS Bulletin* 37/6 (November 2006), [http://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/finding\\_spaces\\_for\\_change.pdf](http://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/finding_spaces_for_change.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> See also <http://www2.mesadeconcertacion.org.pe/>. Note that civil society groups have called for the Roundtable to be funded autonomously rather than being dependent upon annual state budgets.

<sup>24</sup> Ghazala Mansuri and Vijayendra Rao, *Localizing Development: Does Participation Work?* (Washington DC, World Bank, 2013).



A community gathering in Nepal.

#### **Text Box 4. Participatory Monitoring and Accountability in Peru: The Roundtable for the Fight Against Poverty**

Peru's Roundtable for the Fight Against Poverty was created in 2001 in the context of a democratic transition. The objective of the Roundtable is to institutionalise citizen participation, maximise transparency, improve efficiency and ensure that policies are created from the perspective of human development and gender equity. The Roundtable serves as a platform at the district, provincial, regional and national levels for dialogue among citizens, civil society and ministerial government officials. The roundtable operates in a subsidiary fashion so that concerns at lower levels are raised at progressively higher levels. This dialogue has led to dozens of policy-level changes in the laws relating to citizen participation, access to information, participatory budgeting and decentralisation. Enhanced citizen participation has led, in turn, to strategic budget programmes that reflect citizen-driven priorities and protect annual funding for programmes related to maternal and child health, nutrition, legal identity and access to basic social services.\*

State and civil society members have attested to the Roundtable's value. The state has acquired an outlet for the dissemination of information about new policies and explain changes. Citizens have acquired a forum to voice concerns and seek governmental accountability for policy failures.

\*See Peru's National Dialogue on the Implementation of the post-2015 Development Agenda: Participatory Monitoring for Accountability.

<http://www.worldwewant2015.org/file/459061/download/499874>.

World Vision has begun to see some early success when town-hall style dialogues like these are extended and replicated, so that community representatives, including children and youth, can engage civil servants and elected representatives at the local, district, provincial and even national levels. Each level flows into the next, so that unresolved issues at one level of government are combined with others and delivered to the next level of government. These higher-level forums encourage evidence-based dialogue about the findings from aggregated social accountability processes that can influence policy and administrative action.

They also provide an opportunity to create an accountability ‘sandwich’<sup>25</sup> in which bottom-up pressure by citizens meets top-down pressure by reformists within government. Once aligned, civil society and government reformists can act collectively to influence policy and administrative procedure. For example, in Batnes, Indonesia, a town-hall style forum helped catalyse an alliance among the population and the head of the local clinic. Together, they influenced the district to deliver equipment that was essential to tackling the nutrition problems. ‘Citizen Voice and Action has added value to our government system, especially health care,’ says Thomas Laka, head of the Oeolo clinic. ‘Community input provides a good control mechanism. Now, we have a better idea about what people need and where gaps exist.’

Government officials report that the evidence, stories and energy that people bring to these events equip them with political leverage to pursue accountability. For example, in Cajazeiras, Brazil, youth formed an alliance with their city councillor and deployed social accountability tools to document infrastructure problems at their school. Their political pressure and evidence empowered the city councillor, Marta Rodrigues, to seek changes at the Ministry of Education. According to Rodrigues, ‘Without the youth’s monitoring, the school’s condition would have been lost at the Education Department, because there are a great number of demands being presented there every day. I consider the mobilisation done through the CVA<sup>26</sup> process as significant progress, which has advanced reform and improved the confidence of teachers, students, administrative staff and the community.’

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<sup>25</sup> Fox (September 2014).

<sup>26</sup> In Brazil, youth have contextualised Citizen Voice and Action and renamed it Monitoramento Jovem de Políticas Públicas (Youth Monitoring Public Policies).

**Text Box 5. Citizens Hearings:  
A Platform for Dialogue**

In Indonesia, World Vision worked with local partners to gather evidence from 40 districts and held a National Consultation at which 45 community representatives, including children, and representatives from the National Development Planning Agency participated. The dialogue focused on the government's five-year health and nutrition plan and community-driven evidence. The event generated a report, including recommendations, that were shared with the minister of health, parliamentarians, the National Development Planning Agency and the citizen participants.

One promising example of 'claimed/created' space is Citizens' Hearings<sup>27</sup> multi-stakeholder dialogues, designed by the White Ribbon Alliance, that convene community and government leaders to listen to and act on national priorities for women's, children's and newborns' health (see text box 5). Recently, World Vision has joined the White Ribbon Alliance, Save the Children and the International Planned Parenthood Federation to support national-level forums that encourage local evidence-based dialogue about health-service delivery in marginalised communities. These hearings can serve as a forum to examine information about service-delivery performance generated through social accountability processes. Moreover, these types of citizen-driven spaces can feed and complement spaces that have been created and endorsed by governments themselves.

Taken together, the dialogue that occurs in these spaces can improve decisions about where SDG investments should be made and accelerate development progress.

**What needs to happen to make this possible**

- Governments create or strengthen platforms for citizen-generated information and interests to be presented.
- Civil society creates or takes advantage of already existing platforms at the local, subnational and national levels that allow citizens to report findings from social accountability activities.
- Donors support platforms that encourage citizen participation and enhance local, subnational and national linkages.

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<sup>27</sup> See White Ribbon Alliance, *The Citizens' Hearings: A Toolkit to Aid Speaking Up for Women's, Children's, Adolescents' and Newborns' Health*, 2015, <http://whiteribbonalliance.org/campaigns/citizens-hearings-2015/>.



#### 4. WORK WITH CHAMPIONS: STRENGTHEN CRUCIAL ACTORS WITHIN THE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

Not only is building strong and trusting relationships among stakeholders important to successful accountability, but evidence suggests that accountability also depends upon key institutions and individuals, or ‘interlocutors’<sup>28</sup> that can broker relationships among pro-accountability stakeholders and connect local-level accountability to policy influence. These brokers can help nurture collective action that ultimately leads to development impact.

At the local level, World Vision has seen how faith-based organisations (FBOs), traditional leaders, community-based organisations (CBOs), schools and health committees can play a crucial role in brokering partnerships among service providers and community members. These partnerships can help immediately to improve a local facility, service or regulation.

At the district level these actors tend to broaden their partnerships to include district government actors. For example, districts tend to have sectorial specialists who can help people understand the technical detail of the problem and possible solutions. Elected officials tend to help people understand the procedural hurdles to the problem’s solution. Local coalitions, influential traditional or faith leaders and larger NGOs that have broader geographic scope can help people accumulate political influence.

At the district level and beyond, MPs, in particular, have a key role to play. As citizens’ elected representatives, they can help ensure an accountable civil service. MPs can help connect the realities lived by local communities to political dialogue in Parliament. They have power to influence resource allocations and policy direction, can galvanise additional political pressure and can ensure that local experience is represented in official reports (see text box 6).

As focal persons in their constituencies and in collaboration with district level committees and traditional leadership, Members of Parliament have a key role to play in promoting participatory monitoring.

—Gabriel Mpongwe, chief planner for the Zambian Ministry of Finance

<sup>28</sup> See Fletcher Tembo, *Rethinking Social Accountability in Africa: Lessons from the Mwananchi Programme* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2013).



**Text Box 6. The People's Representatives: Members of Parliament**

Globally, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and its constituents have played a key role in advancing maternal and child health by supporting Every Woman Every Child accountability mechanisms and by intervening directly in order to advance domestic legislation, as has been seen in Uganda and elsewhere.

The IPU is positioned to play a similar role in supporting the SDGs. At the IPU's April 2015 event, parliamentarians publicly pledged, 'Our responsibility is clear: to hold governments accountable for the goals they have subscribed to, and to make sure that enabling laws are passed and budgets adopted.'<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>\*</sup>Hanoi Declaration: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/132/rpt-gendebate.htm>.

At the national and global levels, universities and research institutions can help to generate robust evidence that builds upon citizen-generated information and can broker relationships between technocratic ministerial officials and civil society. INGOs and coalitions can offer convening power and help create spaces for such evidence to be deployed.

Finally, at all levels the media have a critical role to play in helping to investigate and publicise problems and their solutions. But media can also facilitate dialogue among stakeholders. For example, Zodiak, one of the largest radio stations in Malawi, regularly works with Citizen Voice and Action participants to publicise their findings. The station also hosts call-in shows so that citizens and service providers can discuss service-delivery challenges. According to a Zodiak journalist, 'Now, because rural citizens are able to express their views through the CVA programme, the editors accept it – our vision is to speak for the voiceless'.

Given the important role of these individuals and institutions at the local, subnational and national levels, SDG stakeholders should support mechanisms that help to identify and strengthen their capacity to play this role. Some programmes already exist. The UK Department for International Development (DFID)-funded Mwananchi programme focused on supporting local-level interlocutors like faith-based leaders and CBOs. Other support can be directed at specific types of actors. For example, support through the IPU has helped MPs advance legislative action for accountability under the Every Woman Every Child<sup>29</sup> initiative. Similarly, the new Social Accountability Media Initiative seeks to help media tell compelling stories about government accountability.

<sup>29</sup> See <http://www.everywomaneverychild.org/commitments/all-commitments/interparliamentary-union>.

By focusing support on these key actors, SDG stakeholders can help nurture an accountability 'ecosystem' that consolidates gains over time.<sup>30</sup>

### What needs to happen to make this possible

- Stakeholders seek and support accountability 'champions' who can broker trust among citizens and government.
- Governments identify specific ways for parliamentarians to promote accountability for SDG commitments.

## 5. OPEN UP: NURTURE A TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

In keeping with the citizen-centred theme of this blueprint, the previous four steps focus primarily on the contribution that citizens can make to SDG success in their everyday lives. But their work is made easier by governments that actively create an overall enabling environment that nurtures accountability and where women, men, children and youth can exercise their right to information and freedom of expression and association. Goal 16 of the Open Working Group's proposal for SDGs<sup>31</sup> includes several targets directly related to this enabling environment, including targets to develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels; to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making; to ensure public access to information; and to protect fundamental freedoms.<sup>32</sup>

These types of targets and indicators demonstrate that, despite the political sensitivity of 'accountability' and 'governance' issues, it is possible to generate some common criteria to which governments should ascribe if they are to ensure open, accountable systems.<sup>33</sup> But as the evidence about the effectiveness of participatory monitoring continues to accumulate, some states will want to go further and create accountability systems that transcend the narrow indicators of the current proposals.

In order to create these systems, states must design domestic institutions that respond to domestic political reality. Fragile contexts, while generally beyond the scope of this paper, pose a particular challenge (see text box 7).

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<sup>30</sup> For a discussion of this accountability 'ecosystem', see Sarah Mulley, *Donor Aid: New frontiers in Transparency and Accountability*, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (2011), [http://transparencyinitiative.theideabureau.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/donor\\_aid\\_final.pdf](http://transparencyinitiative.theideabureau.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/donor_aid_final.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> Goal 16 promises to 'promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>.

<sup>32</sup> See Targets 16.5, 16.6, 16.7, and 16.10.

<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, the sensitivity of Goal 16 should not be understated.

**Text Box 7. Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts**

Although each context is distinct, fragile contexts like Somalia, Afghanistan and DR Congo, and parts of more stable countries, may experience weak or absent government capacity, high risk of conflict and few protections for ordinary people. In such environments participatory accountability comes with greater risks to personal safety, as well as the likelihood that the layers of government between communities and the central government will be absent. Ironically, these are the contexts most in need of improved governance. Through use of its Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts analysis tool in 22 countries over 10 years, World Vision has identified four common strategic needs in fragile contexts and other challenging environments:

1. good governance
2. increased and more effective civic participation
3. equitable distribution of resources
4. peacebuilding and reconciliation.

Social accountability sits right in the middle of these needs as a driver of good governance, a model of participation, a means for better resource distribution and a vehicle for reconciliation.

See World Vision International, Bridging the Participation Gap: Developing Macro Level Conflict Analysis through Local Perspectives (2013), 18, <http://9bb63f6dda0f744fa444-9471a7fca5768cc513a2e3c4a260910b.r43.cf3.rackcdn.com/files/8513/8008/4706/Bridging-the-participation-gap.pdf>

But in more stable environments, instruments like the Open Government Partnership (OGP) can serve governments that want to create a contextually tailored, enabling environment for accountability. Member countries become eligible by demonstrating at least minimal commitment to key areas of fiscal transparency, access to information, income and asset disclosures, and citizen engagement. Once a country joins the OGP, the government works closely with local civil society to develop and implement a contextually tailored National Action Plan that includes specific, measurable commitments to OGP principles. The OGP includes an Independent Reporting Mechanism designed to monitor progress towards these commitments every 18 months. Reporting is led by a country-level researcher, selected by the OGP Independent Expert Group. Civil society groups are encouraged to contribute to progress reports that are issued by the Independent Reporting Mechanism.

The OGP is not perfect; progress towards action plan commitments has been uneven. But the process of acceding to the OGP, developing a National Action Plan and examining progress through the OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism can help unite civil society and reformists within

government and nurture an environment in which accountability can thrive. Many governments and civil society participants report that the OGP has helped them advance this objective. For example, World Vision Armenia reported that its suggestions for budget transparency in secondary schools were directly incorporated into Armenia's OGP National Action Plan.<sup>34</sup>

One critical component in an enabling environment for accountability is access to information and, in particular, the presence of easily measurable commitments to key services.<sup>35</sup> In order to be measurable by ordinary people, commitments must incorporate specific indicators that can be objectively verified in their daily lives. Commitments for the most essential services, like health care and education, should be communicated in clear terms, with special effort to ensure these messages reach the most vulnerable populations. For example, policy and plans should state clearly and explicitly what people can expect in terms of budget, staffing, services and equipment when they visit a clinic, send their children to school, seek support for their livelihoods or inquire about the protection of a common resource in their communities. A citizens' budget is one way to help prepare people to play a more robust role in monitoring government policy (see text box 8). Successful social accountability processes, in particular, depend upon these types of clear commitments because they take 'accountability' out of the abstract and equip people with information that empowers them to act.

### Text Box 8. Zambia's Citizens' Budget

For an explanation of the budget process, government revenue and expenditure in simple terms, see [http://www.mofnp.gov.zm/jdownloads/National%20Budgets/Citizen%20Budgets/citizens\\_budget\\_2015\\_new\\_reduced\\_size.pdf](http://www.mofnp.gov.zm/jdownloads/National%20Budgets/Citizen%20Budgets/citizens_budget_2015_new_reduced_size.pdf)



<sup>34</sup> See Commitment #9, Armenia National Action Plan, [http://ogp.am/u\\_files/file/Armenia%27s%20OGP%20second%20action%20plan%202014-2016\\_ENG.pdf](http://ogp.am/u_files/file/Armenia%27s%20OGP%20second%20action%20plan%202014-2016_ENG.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Indeed, as noted by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'accountability has been undermined [in the MDGs] by a lack of clarity about who should be responsible for what'. See United Nations, *Who Will Be Accountable? Human Rights and the Post-2015 Development Agenda* (2014), vii.

By making concrete commitments like these to transparency and accountability, governments can nurture an environment that enables citizens to contribute to SDG progress. To be inclusive, particularly the most marginalised and often excluded must be enabled to participate and make their voices heard – including women, girls, persons with disabilities and other minorities.

### What needs to happen to make this possible

- Governments provide access to information, especially clear national, subnational and local policy, plans, budgets and budget expenditures to service delivery.
- Governments should set and deliver contextually tailored commitments to be transparent, responsive and accountable, beyond the bare minimums agreed in the context of the SDGs.
- Special support should be provided to fragile and humanitarian contexts.

## 6. SHARPEN THE ‘TEETH’: STRENGTHEN ADMINISTRATIVE AND JUDICIAL REMEDIES FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Some governments have not only removed obstacles to citizen-driven accountability, but they also have created mechanisms that penalise officials and departments when they fail to be accountable. These state-led accountability mechanisms can supply ‘teeth’ that complement citizen ‘voice’.<sup>36</sup> It is also important to recognise that certain issues cannot be addressed in a collaborative manner – for example, violation of the law – and particularly require strong state-led accountability mechanisms.

At a bare minimum a properly functioning merit-based bureaucracy makes civil servants accountable to their supervisors and, ultimately, to auditors. But states have a variety of other mechanisms that are tailored to context, such as grievance redress mechanisms, hotlines, right-to-information acts and even judicial or administrative remedies. While a full discussion of these state-driven mechanisms is beyond the scope of this paper,<sup>37</sup> some of these mechanisms deserve special mention because of their importance in the context of citizen-driven accountability.

Traditionally, auditors’ primary relationships depended upon parliaments and the executive. But recently, audit institutions from around the world have begun to recognise the value of directly engaging people in order to

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<sup>36</sup> Fox (September 2014).

<sup>37</sup> It is worth noting that national administrative law increasingly converges around principles of neutrality, representativeness, impartiality, justice, equity and responsiveness. See United Nations, *Who Will Be Accountable*, 38; and OECD Principles for Managing Ethics in the Public Service (1998); OECD Guidelines for Managing Conflict of Interest in the Public Sector (2003); the European Union Ethics Framework for the Public Sector (2004); the Charter for the Public Service in Africa (2001); and the Ibero-American Charter for the Public Service (2003).

strengthen their independence, build their capacity, improve communication and fight corruption.<sup>38</sup> In 2014, the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) released a report defining mechanisms for auditors to engage constructively with citizens' groups. For example, INTOSAI recommends that auditors participate in citizen-driven dialogue, help plan social audits, participate in citizen report cards, receive the evidence of community scorecards, support participatory budgeting and join citizen-led procurement monitoring.<sup>39</sup> All of these citizen-driven processes can be substantially strengthened by such a powerful state institution.

Other judicial and administrative institutions, like ombuds offices, may also help people acquire remedies when public officials fail to be accountable or transparent. For example, in Carai, a marginalised Brazilian town in Minas Gerais, youth used information from the Citizen Voice and Action process to document how local clinics were charging user fees in contradiction to local law. The youth contacted the federal ombudsman, who personally visited the area and directed the mayor to ensure that clinics comply with the law.<sup>40</sup> The youth credited their success to their partnership with the ombuds office.

Right-to-information legislation can also provide communities with sharper accountability tools. For example, it is widely accepted that India's Right-to-Information law has helped reduce corruption in many areas of the country. The application procedure also functions as a grievance-redress mechanism by penalising officials who fail to respond to citizen requests. For example, communities have used the evidence from World Vision's Citizen Voice and Action approach in New Delhi to document discrepancies in the prices charged by local Public Distribution System officials for subsidised grain. By including this data in right-to-information requests, community members were able to alert higher authorities, compel the resignation of local authorities and end the corrupt practice.<sup>41</sup>

To ensure that these administrative and judicial mechanisms are maximised, governments should ensure that people not only know their rights but also how to access these key mechanisms. Representatives from audit offices or ombuds offices can play a key role in multi-stakeholder dialogues at the subnational level, and local government and civil society groups should make sure that they are invited. By complementing citizen-driven accountability with these state-led mechanisms, governments can equip citizens to help drive SDG effectiveness.

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<sup>38</sup> United Nations (2014) 11.

<sup>39</sup> International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions, *Citizen Engagement Practices by Supreme Audit Institutions* (2013), 53, [http://www.intosai.org/fileadmin/downloads/downloads/4\\_documents/publications/eng\\_publications/Compendium\\_UNPAN92198.pdf](http://www.intosai.org/fileadmin/downloads/downloads/4_documents/publications/eng_publications/Compendium_UNPAN92198.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> Natana Matos and William Farias, *MJPOP: Making a Difference in Carai* (World Vision International, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> See World Vision International, *Lead Practitioner Case Study: Citizen Voice and Action in India* (2011).

### What needs to happen to make this possible

- Governments and their partners strengthen traditional, bureaucratic accountability mechanisms and make them known to and accessible by all.
- Governments strengthen ombuds offices, auditors and other relevant structures and promote their direct engagement with people.

## 7. REPORT TOGETHER: INCORPORATE CITIZEN VOICE IN NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL (SDG) REPORTING

Finally, citizen-generated evidence should feed SDG reporting. It seems likely that the post-2015 framework will include a mechanism by which Member States report progress into the UN system through the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). Several good, existing proposals exist for this mechanism,<sup>42</sup> but at least a few observations are due inasmuch as they contribute to a citizen-driven accountability cycle. First, SDG reporting mechanisms at the national level should include a representative body comprising domestic institutions and advised by independent experts. These institutions should obviously contribute statistical and research-based evidence. But civil society should also organise and contribute to national-level reporting by aggregating the evidence from subnational accountability processes such as social accountability and ICT initiatives, as well as from platforms such as 'citizens' hearings or subnational planning processes.

The UN Secretary-General's Every Woman Every Child initiative serves as a good example of a thematic accountability mechanism that encourages civil society participation. Every Woman Every Child mobilises and intensifies international and national action by governments, multilaterals, the private sector and civil society to address the major health challenges facing women and children. The initiative operationalises the UN Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health and includes a strong accountability component that offers lessons for post-2015 framework. Under Every Woman Every Child, national governments make objectively verifiable commitments to improve maternal, newborn and child health. The related Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health tracks results and resource flows, defines indicators for women's and children's health, proposes steps to improve health data and identifies ICT solutions to improve access to reliable information. At the national level the commission helps governments develop a Country Accountability Framework by which governments convene donors and civil society to improve accountability for country-level commitments. In

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<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Who Will Be Accountable?* vii; and Center for Reproductive Rights, Amnesty International, Center for Economic and Social Rights, and Human Rights Watch, *Accountability for the Post-2015 Agenda: A Proposal for a Robust Global Review Mechanism* (2015), <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ACT3012132015ENGLISH.PDF>.



several cases World Vision has contributed evidence from community-based monitoring interventions and its global Child Health Now campaign to enhance the Country Accountability Framework. Uganda's Every Woman Every Child commitments, for example, provided a useful hook for civil society efforts to increase the budget for health workers in that country. But the commission's 2014 review noted that more civil society engagement is still needed. As this paper is released, a new global strategy, with an enhanced accountability component is being developed.

In addition to national-level reporting, regional bodies<sup>43</sup> can help monitor SDG progress, incorporate peer review among states and draw evidence from citizen-led processes. Regional forums should provide civil society an opportunity to present evidence from national processes that can help identify regional patterns in SDG progress and facilitate cross-border learning among governments.

At the global level the UN General Assembly has asked that the HLPF serve as the venue to 'follow up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments'. The HLPF should periodically review national reports and focus on global patterns that warrant a shift in SDG strategy. Incorporating citizen participation into this review can advance the HLPF's work.

Along these lines the recent proposal for a global review mechanism by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Center for Economic and Social Rights and the Center for Reproductive Rights calls upon the HLPF to ensure meaningful citizen participation in each layer of review. In the spirit of the global partnership for sustainable development the HLPF should help ensure that civil society has a meaningful opportunity to participate in the dialogues that accompany global review. In particular, the HLPF should take a holistic view of SDG progress and draw not just from country reports but also from existing human rights accountability mechanisms at the global level, most notably the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism and the human rights treaty body system. Mechanisms like the UPR and its associated shadow reports can provide important evidence for monitoring global frameworks like the SDGs (see text box 9).

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<sup>43</sup> Specifically, some UN Regional Economic Commissions, the League of Arab States, and the OECD all include regional mechanisms to monitor MDG progress. Human rights organisations, such as the Africa Peer Review Mechanism and the Inter-American Commission, should also contribute.



**Text Box 9. Global Review Mechanism Gives Children a Voice in Albania**

In 2014, World Vision and Save the Children invited children to lead a submission to the Universal Periodic Review before the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The children learned about the UPR process, collected field-level data, wrote their report and selected representatives to attend the pre-session for the review in Geneva. Three workshops took place, hosting 26 representatives from children's groups across the country. The children built consensus around five key issues, which they highlighted in the report, detailing their concerns and recommendations for each.

Approximately 40 missions in Geneva participated. In addition to presenting particular child rights concerns that emerged from their research, the children raised the need for child participation itself to be better respected as a core child right. They noted that no recommendation about the child's right to participate had been made by a government in any previous UPR precisely because children are often excluded from deliberative processes. Of the 40 recommendations made to Albania, five reflected the children's research. For the first time a UPR recommendation was made about child participation itself, and the Albanian Government delegation focused on child participation specifically in its response.

The children's participation in the UPR process helped to influence national-level policy. In the weeks following the review, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth allocated an increased budget of \$33M to vulnerable children\* and established a regular subnational forum to discuss child rights issues. In addition, the National Agency for the Protection of Child Rights developed a National Action Plan for children living on the street in consultation with civil society. This plan led to the creation of Mobile Help Units, a 24-hour hotline to report children living on the street; as of November 2014, around 40 children had been brought into alternative care.

\*See <http://www.sot.com.al/politike/buxheti-i-mmsr-p%C3%ABr-2015-veliaj-rritje-me-46-nga-viti-i-kaluar-jo-m%C3%AB-vonesa-p%C3%ABr-shtresat-n%C3%AB#sthash.0zYL7k0.dpuf>.

Finally, the HLPF should not limit itself to review, but should seek ways to 'close the feedback loop' and ensure that reviews result in improved implementation of the SDGs and associated targets. As occurred in the context of the MDGs, some targets and goals will be achieved more quickly than others, and some populations will undoubtedly be served before others. The HLPF should help catalyse renewed investment towards targets that lag, and ensure that neglected and vulnerable populations are being reached. Further, citizens must be made aware of the results of the various

reviews. This should be through improved information flow between global and national reporting and back to the community, enabling the communities to experience national progress and encourage future community-led processes.

### What needs to happen to make this possible

- Governments set up national, representative reporting mechanisms for the SDGs, advised by independent experts and civil society.
- Regional forums provide civil society an opportunity to participate and contribute citizen-generated data.
- The HLPF takes a holistic view of SDG progress and draws not just from country reports but also from existing human rights accountability mechanisms at the global level.
- Top-down and bottom-up information-sharing systems are integrated to ensure that commitments and action are known beyond key players at the national and international levels.
- Governments ensure that implementation gaps identified through reviews and reporting are translated into remedial actions that are monitored at local, subnational and national levels.

## CONCLUSION: SEVEN STEPS FOR SDG SUCCESS

Over the past five years civil society, donors and governments have invested heavily in participatory methods to ensure that the SDGs respond to the needs of the world's poorest people. The extraordinary efforts made to include people in the definition of the goals should be matched by efforts to include people in their implementation and monitoring. Who better to measure the success of our efforts than the people at the centre of the SDGs? After all, it is their lives, and the lives of their children, that depend upon the success of the goals; for example, until a woman in sub-Saharan Africa is certain that her local clinic will have the medicine and staffing her government has promised, global health will remain uncertain.

By taking these steps, we can help ensure that the SDGs keep people at the centre and deliver for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people:

- 1. Start Local:** Lay grassroots foundations by supporting robust social accountability approaches.
- 2. Work Together:** Support collaboration among accountability actors, and aggregate citizen-driven information about the quality of service delivery at the subnational level.
- 3. Make Space:** Create platforms for citizen-generated evidence and dialogue.
- 4. Work with Champions:** Strengthen crucial actors within the accountability system.
- 5. Open Up:** Nurture a transparent and accountable enabling environment.
- 6. Sharpen the 'Teeth':** Strengthen administrative and judicial remedies for accountability.
- 7. Report Together:** Incorporate citizen voice in national, regional and global Sustainable Development Goal reporting.

Many countries are already off to a good start. But in order to nurture citizen-driven accountability in the post-2015 world, stakeholders will need to consolidate accountability mechanisms into a cohesive whole, with special attention to subnational accountability processes. By investing in accountability, donors, governments, civil society and citizens themselves can accelerate progress towards a 2030 that is brighter for all, especially the most marginalised and excluded.

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