

GPSA Forum

Social accountability, citizen engagement and the Agenda 2030

The importance of social accountability as an enabler of inclusive and empowered societies is undisputed. Citizens are entitled to expect that states will promote and protect their right of access to basic social services like health and education. States and other non-governmental actors are in a position to initiate collaborative and inclusive civic processes to enhance public participation, ensure that policies favour the most disadvantaged in society and that resources are better used/distributed, and ultimately improve governance and accountability. Investments in social accountability can yield multiple benefits, they not only empower citizens, including the most marginalised, but also improve participatory policy and budget processes.

In February 2016, the World Bank, DSW and World Vision convened a roundtable discussion on citizen's engagement in the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Brussels. The roundtable event involved key EU stakeholders, including EU officials, representatives of Member States, CSOs, foundations and a youth delegate.

Arising from the roundtable, the participating organisations - Care International, Cordaid, Restless Development, DSW and World Vision - developed the following recommendations:

Agenda 2030 & Social Accountability

- Recognise that social accountability approaches are assuming increasing importance and relevance in light of the Agenda 2030 and its pre-conditions of shared responsibility, mutual accountability, and engagement by all.
- Recognise that the Agenda 2030 is not only an agenda for governments alone but for ordinary citizens, CSOs, the private sector, and others. It has universality at its core.
- Meaningfully involve ordinary citizens, particularly the often marginalised including women, children and young people, in process of priority setting, planning, implementation, monitoring, reviewing and accountability processes for the Agenda 2030 as it is central to the success of the framework, its goals and targets.
- Ground the implementation of Agenda 2030 in a rights-based approach that enables amplifying voice, information and participation of vulnerable groups.

Resources for Social Accountability for the Sustainable Development Goals

- Dedicate more resources to scaling out successful social accountability processes, to tracking them, and to measuring their impact.
- Support social accountability approaches specifically involving women, children and young people, in order to ensure the inclusion of all members of a community on issues that have a direct impact on their lives.
- Ensure multi-year funding for social accountability programmes as these processes take time and need to be adapted to and owned by local and national contexts.
- Support CSOs and other actors to empower citizens to engage with governments through social accountability processes around participatory budgeting, and public expenditure tracking for implementation of critical services at local and national levels.

Social Accountability in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Contexts

- In fragile situations, address the root causes of violence, conflict, and fragility, and ensure inclusion and accountability in order to rebuild trust between state and citizens.
- Develop social accountability approaches that contribute to trust building and strengthen multi stakeholder dialogue at country level as well as ownership by local communities.
- Meaningfully involve community members, including women, children and young people, in the creation and planning process, in sectors where social accountability approaches can have a significant and positive impact on their lives, such as health, education and protection.