



4. Accountability in action: Strengthening engagement with multilaterals

WHAT TO DO?

- For multilateral agencies, there can be specific accountability gaps as many girls and young women are not directly engaged with or informed about them, so accountability can be more challenging. Therefore, community driven responses, engagement, literacy and sustained advocacy are central to fostering accountability, bridging gaps and building meaningful partnerships. It is most practical for women, girls and communities broadly to assess, identify and action processes to hold their own local or national governments and service providers to account. At the local and national levels, there is a clearer understanding of who is responsible and what they are responsible for. In many cases, direct accountability activities with multilateral agencies can be more challenging for communities to achieve. Multilateral agencies can be supportive of communities and facilitate information and participatory processes, by reaching out to engage the people they aim to serve. #WhatWomenWant can be a vehicle to bridge this gap, by creating spaces for direct conversation between multilateral staff and women.

WHY DO IT?

- Demonstrating collaboration with women – their vision is fed back into programmatic mechanisms.
- Accountability between multilateral agencies and the communities they serve.
- Fostering partnerships.
- Overcoming geographical barriers.
- Improving knowledge about multilaterals amongst women and communities.
- Supporting multilateral agencies and their staff to access realities on the ground.

WHO BENEFITS?

- Women and communities
- Multilateral agencies
- Program developers
- Donors
- Organizations engaged

STEP-BY-STEP

1. Identify a multilateral agency that is actively working in your community, providing services, leading research, or other activities.
2. Determine the topic you want to focus on, based on issues that are emerging in your community. For example, you might focus a discussion with a multilateral agency on their priorities for the coming year. You could also use a similar process to engage with national or international research institutions.
3. Consider who can be consulted for different topics and sessions – they should be knowledgeable about the content and comfortable using digital platforms for engagement. Consider whether you need to engage leaders, decision-makers, funders, implementers, service providers, researchers or others.

4. Contact the multilateral agency you want to engage, by email, phone or social media.
5. Introduce your organization, project or informal group.
6. Share the detail of what you would like to engage on, and invite the leader(s) to take part in a virtual dialogue.
7. Highlight the benefits (accountability, engagement, access, feedback, clarity and others as relevant).
8. Once a key leader(s) confirms, set clear expectations around terms of engagement (medium used, duration, date, time, how data will be captured and/or shared).
9. Design a flyer and share within your community(ies) to recruit participants.
10. Invite participants to prepare questions in advance of the interactive session with the respective key leader.
11. Moderate an interactive session.
 - Keep on topic and steer the dialogue.
 - Allocate plenty of time for Q&A – select moments to pause and open up space for questions at different points in the session.
 - Listen to participants and incorporate their input.
 - Facilitate discussion – what’s important is to facilitate a comfortable, ‘no wrong question’ environment where everyone can have their say, but no one person has too much say.
 - Recap what’s been discussed.
12. Follow-up on unanswered questions, any promised resources and next steps for ongoing partnership within one week post the session.



IN ACTION: UNAIDS ZIMBABWE WHATSAPP CHAT

The #WhatWomenWant Project created platforms for direct accountability with policy and program leads. Fifty six adolescent girls and young women participated in a virtual dialogue with UNAIDS Zimbabwe using a WhatsApp group created for that purpose. Staff members from UNAIDS Zimbabwe participated, providing updates on current and upcoming activities and priorities, and AGYW were invited to comment and feedback on these, ask questions and make recommendations. This allowed the young women to identify their priorities, ask questions and influence strategy and implementation. UNAIDS Zimbabwe staff provided insights into their support to programming and policies at country level, and engaged in the discussion effectively.

This model can easily be replicated in different settings, with policymakers and programmers from government, multinational bodies, NGOs and the private sector.