SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

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INTRODUCTION

This session explored how efforts to increase social accountability can create empowerment and positive change. Social accountability includes a broad range of actions and mechanisms that rely on civic engagement, which citizens can use to hold the state and duty bearers accountable. In the Get Up Speak Out (GUSO) programme, youth-led social accountability approaches have increased young people's confidence, strengthened their voice, and improved the response of SRHR service providers, local authorities and decision-makers. This session presented the tools and results from the GUSO programme on social accountability. A panel, including young people from Ghana and Malawi, presented the views on the partnership, the tools that they used, and their insights on what it meant to them.

Further reading:
• The GUSO webpage contains research reports on social accountability

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE DISCUSSION

WHAT ARE CHALLENGES IN THE PARTNERSHIPS RELATED TO THE TOPIC?

• When giving trainings, it was challenging that not all the participating organisations had the same level of knowledge or similar understandings of social accountability. This made the trainings challenging, but at the same time enabled mutual learning. It was furthermore important to also include policy makers in the discussion and make sure everyone knows and understands the applicable laws.

• Sometimes the problem of young people's limited access to health services goes beyond the community health facility. Other stakeholders, such as those at policy level, need to be involved to make the change happen.

• There is increasing attention to social accountability and efforts by various partners, yet not in a systematic way. Social accountability efforts should be better structured and coordinated, e.g. through developing and following guidelines such as this manual published by Simavi.

WHAT ARE THE STRATEGIES USED IN THE PARTNERSHIPS RELATED TO THE TOPIC?

• Tools used in included a checklist or scorecard that young people used when visiting health services to assess the youth-friendliness of services, as well as young people acting as mystery shoppers.

• Efforts were made to increase young people's understanding of SRHR, and to enable them to identify the gaps and challenges in service provision to their own needs.

• Activities included stakeholder engagement. Improving the relationship between young people and stakeholders can address possible negative attitudes or prejudices from either sides, while also improving the sustainability of the efforts.

WHAT ARE BEST PRACTICES/LESSONS LEARNED IN THE PARTNERSHIPS RELATED TO THE TOPIC?

- Empowering young people through social accountability efforts requires encouraging skills to hold others accountable. This includes developing negotiation skills and leadership skills.

- It is not only young people's skills that benefited from social accountability efforts, but it has also improved the collaboration between health workers and young people. Both have expressed feeling able to continue their collaboration after the programme ends.

- Involve policymakers form the start ensures that they are up to date about the efforts, and promotes collaboration between policy makers, health workers, and young people. Involving policymakers also allows young people and health workers to continue holding policymakers accountable after the termination of the programme.

- Principles and mechanisms of social accountability are not embraced overnight. Confidence and trust from the community is gained over the years, and multi-year programmes and efforts can allow for that. Long-term planning and managing expectations are thus also necessary components of planning and promoting social accountability.