

ActionAid International View on Accountability



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What is the impact of ActionAid in moving National Governments' accountability process forward?

ActionAid has championed the development and implementation of the rights based approach which has at its heart the simple concept that fighting hunger and poverty can only be done by empowerment of local communities and increased accountability at all governance levels. Our strategy, Rights to End Poverty, says: 'We believe that poor and excluded people are the primary agents of change. Poverty and injustice can be eradicated only when they are able to take charge of their lives and act to claim their rights effecting change'. Translating our strategy in to food rights work has meant focusing on implementation of the "Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food" by facilitating a series of right to food trainings and assessments in number of countries in addition to offering support for mobilization and political organization of grassroots civil society movements such as the National Food Security Networks. Supporting increased participation of civil society actors in national debates on food security, hunger or bio safety laws and policies is one of the many dimensions of increasing national government's accountability. Unfortunately, in many countries, there is still a very limited space for civil society engagement with national food security debates. This is the role that we hope IAAH can play: facilitate such dialogue among donors, civil society, NGOs and government at national level. At international level, we are still hopeful that the reformed Committee on World Food Security will offer increased opportunities for implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food.

How shall CSOs/NGOs feel accountable for the increase of people facing hunger in the world? Is it just Governments' and International Organizations' failure or did CSOs/NGOs also perform poorly in raising public awareness on the issue of accountability for an improved governance of world food security?

The food price crisis of the 2008, followed by the financial crisis, points to decades of neglect of food security. ActionAid together with many other organizations has been trying to raise awareness of the dramatic decrease of ODA levels dedicated to agriculture and to the systematic dismantling of social safety nets throughout 1990's. It has been disappointing that only the shocking data of a billion hungry, by conservative estimates, has seemed to stir world's attention towards food security and sustainable agriculture. NGOs and CSOs have difficult time dividing their scarce resources between program needs and advocacy and they cannot compete with the private sector's resources and influence.

What mechanisms do you employ in your organization to evaluate and monitor your own accountability to beneficiaries? What lessons did you learn from your experience in dealing with this matter?

We have developed a number of participatory methodologies for guiding our work and for increasing organizational accountability towards “rights holders.” We believe that downward accountability to those with whom we work is central to our legitimacy.

We see the views of rights holders as the basis of our work and they are at the core of our Accountability, Learning and Planning System (ALPS) or Participatory Review and Reflection Process (PRRP) which are a central part of every of our project or country program. Furthermore, we use participatory methodologies since they better support communities will to change the structures of power that make them poor and vulnerable.

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