AIDS Accountability Working Papers reflect AAI’s ongoing work to develop ratings in the field of HIV/AIDS and address related accountability issues. The papers present innovative perspectives and highlight areas for follow-up action.

AIDS Accountability International (AAI) was established to increase accountability and inspire bolder leadership in the response to the AIDS epidemic. We do this by rating and comparing the degree to which public, private and civil society actors are fulfilling the formal agreements they have made to respond to the epidemic. For more information about AAI, please visit www.aidsaccountability.org.

Content # 06

Accountability Theory: How can it improve the response to health needs in Africa?

Working Paper #6

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Accountability: What power?

Accountability has been identified as a key factor in improving the response to health development needs in Africa and worldwide. Exactly how accountability functions as a panacea for the gaps in health policy development and health care service delivery is not well understood by many in the field and is seldom implemented in any actionable form.

This paper seeks to lay out how accountability needs to move from rhetoric to actionable steps and how AIDS Accountability International, through years of working in the field, has managed to create a synopsis of what accountability is, how it functions for improved healthcare, what the process is of increasing accountability, and what mechanisms are available to ensure greater accountability. This paper also seeks to address the various role players and how their use of accountability necessarily differs. It also looks at what AAI has termed Personal Accountability and how that can add to the accountability toolbox in improving health delivery.
What's in a commitment?

Fundamental to the discussion on accountability as a tool for improved health in Africa is the need for a “less talk, more action” approach from all stakeholders. As demonstrated by the list below, over 22 various commitments on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) exist in a plethora of declarations, charters, and conventions. Albeit these political commitments play a vital role in determining the forward movement of the health movement, the sheer number of them, in addition to the fact that few governments are held accountable to these promises, results only in these commitments becoming toothless and useless as tools for improving governance.

How these commitments become ineffectual and impotent is a slow and complex issue but suffice to say here that leaders who makes promises and receive kudos for doing so but never roll out policy, programming and implementation, and never monitor or evaluate these programmes and re-adjust for maximum benefit are indeed solely political animals seeking re-election and status and not civil servants in the true sense of the word.

As an example of the extensive commitments made and the increasing speed and frequency in which they are made, the list below includes all African government commitments on SRHR since 1979, but does not include national nor regional commitments. Although it is accurate to say that not all 55 countries have signed all of these commitments, and that fewer yet have ratified them, it would point to a pre-occupation with making promises, from all stakeholders.

1. 1979 The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), UN General Assembly
2. 1986 The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter)
3. 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC or Children's Charter)
4. 1993 The World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna)
5. 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo)
6. 1995 Beijing Declaration, Fifth World Conference on Women
7. 1997 SADC Declaration on Gender & Development
8. 2000 Millennium Development Goals
9. 2001 Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, TB and other related infectious diseases
10. 2001 UNGASS: Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. United Nations General Assembly Special Session
11. 2003 Maseru Declaration on HIV and AIDS/ Maputo Declaration on Gender Mainstreaming/ Maputo Declaration on HIV/AIDS, TB, Malaria
12. 2003 The Protocol Relating to the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (especially around violence)
14. 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA)
17. 2007 High Level Meeting on Sexual and Reproductive Health Policies in Africa (Barcelona)
19. 2008 Southern African Development Community Gender and Development (SADC–GAD)
21. 2009 African Union Gender Policy
22. 2010 UN Secretary-General’s Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health, (New York) General Assembly meeting
23. Various Regional Economic Communities (REC) commitments
24. Various national commitments

Indeed it is not just governments but bi and multi-lateral organisations, civil society organisations, as well as funding partners that have invested significant financial and human resources in developing these commitments. The procedure of each is a long one and requires time, political buy-in, lobbying, and much, much more to arrive at a final document for country representatives to sign.

The question is whether anything happens at country level once the commitment is signed. Usually ratification is the next step, thereby making the commitment a part of national legislation, however as we will see next there are subtleties between signing, ratifying and acceding to these commitments.
The problem with commitments

Over the years, AAI has used quantitative and qualitative approaches to measure the performance of these various stakeholders against their promises and in so doing has developed an expertise in determining how commitments, if they are going to be made, can be improved. These are some of our recommendations in designing commitments.

Many commitments are not sufficiently future forward

By this we mean that they are not liberal and ambitious enough in the long term. For example the progress on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights in Africa is moving rapidly; given that this movement is galvanizing, will the details of commitments being made now with regard to LGBT demands be outdated in five years? Commitments can also often get carried away with current and/or controversial issues and not reflect what is really easily yet desperately important to a country to improve. For example: focussing on abortion, dry sex or other less statistically significant but more headline catching areas of work often outweighs subjects like hypertension, haemorrhage, and pregnancy-related sepsis which together kill more than half of all mothers. Another instance is the tendency to ignoring HIV and STI treatment (10% of South Africans receive correct medication for STIs and the linkages between HIV and STIs is obvious) because it’s just not as “interesting” a topic.

Many commitments do not include a quantitative element

Asking leaders to commit to a reduction in maternal mortality is easy and any reduction can be viewed as being successful. On the other hand, asking leaders to commit to reducing maternal mortality by two thirds (2/3) is a measurable commitment and progress can be determined using statistics.

Commitments do not have time-bound deadlines

Similarly to above, commitments are easy to avoid fulfilling and not pressing on the agenda of leaders if no deadline is promised. Including a deadline improves performance and assists in holding leaders accountable.

Commitments do not mention quality

It is all very well to commit to and achieve putting all girls through primary education but if the standards are so low that they complete with only alphabetization and not numerical literacy we have achieved nothing except the lowering of standards for all. Commitments need to have quality and standards as part-and-parcel of the deal.

Commitments have no teeth without the money to back them up

Many commitments have been made on SRHR (22 global and African commitments to SRHR exist as of 2013) and without money to ensure all players get involved they become toothless instruments. Funding is required by governments in order to roll out commitments. It is also needed by civil society in order to engage with the new commitment and understand how to use it as an advocacy and accountability tool. Other instruments such as regional and continental bodies (for example the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union Commission (AUC)) also require resources to ensure adherence to the commitment through capacity building, advocacy and campaigning.
Commitments can allow leaders (politicians as well as funding partners and civil society) to look good yet do nothing

They are seen to be doing something and given recognition for achieving development when in fact it is just smoke and mirrors but no real action at clinic level is required. We need to ensure that this does not happen and that signing a commitment does not replace real action steps to rolling out development. Defined goals, and active watchdogs (funding partners, civil society and media) help to avoid this happening.

Commitments can be a vacuum for limited resources

As they draw on financial as well as human resources in government, civil society and funding partners and development agencies, new commitments can indeed have adverse effects and take time and efforts away from implementing what has already been committed to in another declaration.

Having commitments with no teeth undermines all other commitment

If a commitment is left unfulfilled and unattained they become toothless, and this has a knock on effect for other commitments. Every commitment that is made and then ignored and not attained undermines the entire process of having commitments. It is better to have one good promise and see it achieved than five unachieved undermining the power that a true commitment is meant to have. Holding leaders accountable to their promises is easier if all promises are valid, important and enforced.

Conditions under which governments sign commitments need to be ideal

Sometimes due to pressure, governments sign on to a commitment but do so “with reservations” (specifying that certain paragraphs or sections do not apply to their governments or country’s commitment). This results in a disempowered commitment and the lost ground is impossible to catch up, and usually in important areas of work such as human rights and LGBT for example. Countries should be encouraged to sign but not forced to do so if it will be with reservations.

Commitments can be misinterpreted

A promise to roll out family planning to all women can be understood to mean sterilize all HIV women if proper guidelines and training at not in place at all levels through the bureaucratic system. Language needs to be clear and careful. Writers need to be wary of how conservative governments, funders, religious and faith-based groups, civil society organizations etc. will interpret the wording and possibly implement it.

We need to be sure that what we are asking for really is the best thing to do!

For example, re-entry of girls into schools post giving birth is not a well-understood area. Do we truly understand what is best yet? Has sufficient research been done? Have we fully and thoroughly investigated what is being done in other regions of the world, and do we thus know without doubt what we want governments to implement or will we regret our recommendations in time to come?

Government needs to be included into the drawing up of the recommendations early in the process

In many countries government still sits with more knowledge of what is really happening on the ground and what can be realistically rolled out than any other group, including civil society and funding partners. They need to be consulted and their political buy-in secured from the early stages of the design of the commitment, if not the start.
The impact and roll out of some commitments cannot be tracked, and progress cannot be ascertained

This renders them useless tools for development may render such commitments as more of burden than a blessing. Using hard data is the best way to objectively track progress and being aware of what data is already available at country, provincial and municipal level is vital to designing a commitment.

Using existing data indicators is vital

Introducing a new indicator into a national demographic health survey can take up to ten years before it is included and the corresponding methodology is robust. Thereafter, several years of data collection and analysis need to happen before a trend can be spotted which tells us how much progress or regress is being made and accountability can be introduced.

Ensuring that the commitment covers budget allocation and expenditure and tracking is also important

Lack of budget is one of the most frequent (and it would seem logically justifiable) reasons for non-delivery (by both government and civil society!).

The roles of implementing partners in the commitment should be clearly spelled out to reflect that government must do their job

Civil society needs to understand that it is the responsibility of an accountable government to provide services whether it is health or education or housing, and that when civil society becomes a service provider and does governments work for them we undermine the long term accountability mechanisms at play. Civil society may need to step in during emergencies and provide support but should always be holding government accountable for what they need to be doing as part of their job. This means that civil society needs to know whether they are requesting a paragraph in a commitment to secure their future funding and jobs or whether it really and honestly is applicable!

We need to treat our elected bureaucrats as they civil servants they are

Too many players (especially civil society) shows too much reverence for African government leaders and do not understand or engage with the very basic idea that these leaders are elected by the populace and need to serve our needs and not their own politics, careers, or financial agendas. Their salaries are paid by the people and “when the people will lead, the leaders will follow”.
What kind of commitment?

Usually when a government representative signs a commitment great media exposure and support for the leader follows. What is seldom revealed is whether the country and the representative have done one of the following:

**Simple signature**
This means that the commitment is not immediately understood to be a part of the country’s national legislation and that it still has to be ratified. The simple signature has historically been used to ensure that government staff did not overstep their powers of authority and often offers good media and political exposure with none of the real implications of having to implement the law once back home. Usually the content of the commitment will go before the national parliament for approval before it has any meaning. Simple signature only shows the good faith of the country to refrain from defeating the objective of the commitment but does not oblige them to actively pursue the objective of the commitment.

**Ratification**
This is the process whereby the national government gets the approval of the national parliamentarians for a commitment it has signed, effectually making it national law, and thus a more effective and implemented commitment. The state is not bound by the content until such time as it is ratified at home.

**Definitive signature**
This form of signing a commitment is becoming increasingly popular but still very few commitments offer this possibility. A definitive signature has the power of both a simple signature and ratification all at the same time, and thus does not require the commitment to be tabled at the national parliament. Few commitments offer this type of signing yet, however there is a move towards this globally.

**Signing with reservation**
This is when a country simple signs a commitment but specifies which precise sections it will not include in its own commitment. Controversial issues such as territory boundaries, financial and time commitments, as well as moral and religious issues are usually the subject of most reservations.

**Accession**
Very few commitments allow for acceding. Accessing is based on the understanding that if a state does not express tacit disagreement within a certain period of time after a commitment comes into effect, it is automatically understood to have simply signed the commitment.
From promises to accountable action

We have looked at the promises and how they can be both effective tools for accountable leaders and yet in other circumstances how they can also be toothless puppets for political players.

As a result of the existing number of commitments on various aspects of health in Africa, AAI strongly pushes for all stakeholders to focus on programming and implementation and consider existing commitments sufficient.

For those existing commitments to have some impact leaders need to be held accountable for the promises they have made, and even when they have made no promises but when it is their role of duty to deliver healthcare. But what is accountability? Who do we get it from and how do we get it?
What is Accountability?

Accountability is a general principle that refers to the relationship between the government and the governed in a democracy.

Accountability is a governance principle that is fundamental to representative democracy, i.e. where politicians are elected into government to take collectively binding decisions on behalf of citizens. It is a fundamental principle because it gives meaning to the notion of ‘limited government’. We elect government to take binding decisions, but it is not allowed to take any kind of decisions in whatever way it chooses because the constitution restricts the scope of its power as well as defines the process for taking legitimate decisions.

But there is also a more political approach to accountability, which is when government is held accountable for not following and realizing the political program on which it was elected. Since we elect government by choosing between parties on the basis of how they promise to improve our society – and we pay them taxes to do so – we have a right to hold them accountable for corruption of those resources and/or for spending them differently. This is the approach to accountability that is most relevant to AAI since, as we say, we identify gaps between commitment and performance and hold them accountable to poor performance.

The origins of accountability

The notion of accountability stems from the argument that Government power is legitimate only if it is limited and conditional. The terms of those limitations and conditions will be detailed in a ‘social contract’ between the ‘sovereign’ and the ‘subjects’. If Government abuses the powers given to it by the ‘contract’ it should be held accountable and sanctioned.

The notion of accountability is thus not unique to democracy. Also dictators and even the King of Swaziland have stakeholders and constituents whose demands and expectations need to be reflected in political decisions or the rulers will be sanctioned in one way or another. But here we focus this discussion on countries that are more or less democratic.

Accountability in democratic governance

Democracy adds three central components to the discussion.

- Firstly, in a democracy each citizen is party to the ‘contract’ with the Government, however powerless that person may be in real terms. This means that also the poor and marginalized have a right to demand accountability from their Government.
- Secondly, democracy introduces an additional set of restrictions on Government power in the form of a Bill of Rights that apply to all citizens. For the most part, these rights specify what the government must not do, i.e. violate citizens’ civil and political rights. The South African constitution is unique in that it also specifies what the Government must do (under certain conditions) in order to realize a better life for the poor by acting on a set of the socio-economic rights. South African activists have successfully held the Government to account for failing to do this on two occasions: the Government was ordered by the Courts to ensure the provision of adequate housing and to launch the roll-out of PMTCT.
- The third component that is unique to discussions on accountability in the context of democratic governance is that a Government is elected to represent the people from competing parties on the basis of a programme for how Government power will be
used. If a party is elected to realize political programme A but instead puts all resources towards realizing programme B, the Government can be held accountable even if it has broken no formal constitutional rules or violated no rights. Demands for accountability can have not only a legal or constitutional basis, but also be based on the fact that Government has not fulfilled stated commitments that were, at least in part, the reasons for a particular party being entrusted with Government power in the first place.
Types of accountability

Accountability is a complex concept with many variations that apply differently to different political contexts. In this section we will expand on the theory somewhat by introducing distinctions between different types of accountability.

Vertical accountability

The notion of ‘vertical accountability’ refers to the political basis for accountability that was referred to above. It captures a power that is held by citizens in order to counter the powers held by Government, a power citizens would use when they are dissatisfied with Government’s performance in realizing the political programme for which it was elected into office. It is the bottom-up version of accountability.

The most common way of using this power is for citizens to vote for another party in the next election, or to not vote at all, so as to force the incumbent party out of Government. This power is not necessarily only expressed through the actual ballot on the day of elections. Through regular opinion polls, Government is often aware of trends in public opinion and can spot an opinion that seems to grow strong enough in the electorate to potentially punish it in the next election. With such information Government can shift its policy according to public opinion. In other words, Government improves its performance so as to avoid an anticipated sanction. Such political shifts represent accountability in action, even if there is no defining moment or public event that will define it as such.

But there are other ways of affecting this form of accountability. In some of countries where Members of Parliament are directly elected by local constituencies, a constituency can withdraw its mandate if a sufficient majority finds that the MP has not been a good representative of local demands. Another form would be when, as is possible in only a few political systems, a minority of voters demand a binding referendum on a particular question.

Horizontal accountability

If vertical accountability is a power-relation between Government and the people, horizontal accountability is a power-relation between different institutions and organs of the State. This form of accountability is largely irrelevant in relation to a Government’s failure to implement a particular political programme; it rather refers to the legal and constitutional basis for accountability that was discussed above.

A more familiar reference to this power-relation is the notion of ‘checks and balances’; the ways in which the powers of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial institutions are set up so as to ensure good governance and avoid the domination of one over the others. The American democracy is structured on this principle, but most other democracies are not; it is more common that Government dominate over Parliament and that the Courts can intervene only in grave cases of abuse of power, and then only if asked to do so. It is important to note though that all democratic systems have some amount of horizontal accountability, even if it is relatively weak. The notion of horizontal accountability applies also to other state institutions; the Office of the Ombudsman is one example.

Top-down accountability
Although vertical and horizontal accountability have very different institutional designs, they both share the fundamental purpose of enforcing limits on Government power. But the notion of accountability in the context of political governance is not only a critical principle for controlling Government; it is also an essential governance principle in order for Government to ensure that its policies and programmes are implemented according to its political directives.

In other words, a lack of accountability in the response to AIDS may not only be reflected in the inability by citizens or Parliament to put sufficient pressure on Government to perform well, but also in the inability of Government to prevent corruption and inefficiencies by the Government Ministries, agencies, companies and civil society organizations that play some role in the implementation of the response. This form of governance dysfunction often undermines responses to AIDS.

When Government holds its bureaucracy to account one can argue that it does so as a representative of citizens. But individual or groups of citizens can also demand accountability for power abuse by bureaucracies through the Office of the Ombudsman.
Getting accountability: Who and how?

The notion ‘accountability jurisdiction’ refers back to the image of a ‘contract’ between the sovereign and the subjects. It identifies the actors that legitimately can demand accountability and in what circumstances this can be done. For instance, the Judiciary cannot claim accountability through the ballot box, and neither can non-citizens since they do not have the vote. And an aggrieved citizen cannot directly demand accountability for having her civil rights trampled on; the courts must do it for her.

Citizens

Each citizen, however ‘powerless’, is part of contract and has some power to hold their government accountable. The Bill of Rights usually forms the central core of this contract. The contract is based not only on formal rules but also on the content of a political programme/manifesto. This contract covers not just Negative rights/Freedoms from (civil & political rights but also Positive rights/Rights to (socio-economic rights).

Although, it is best for citizens themselves to ensure accountability from their own governments and leaders, it has to be acknowledged that bottom-up or citizen based power is often lacking due to a lack of provision of basic socio-economic rights and thus others have to act on behalf of these citizens. The argument is therefore that all concerned stakeholders in the global community should claim the right to legitimately demand accountability on behalf of disempowered citizens: Accountability to the poor is replaced by what may be, for the time being, the second-best solution – accountability for protecting the interests of the poor.

Thus it becomes less about the stakeholder’s legal status and citizenship and more about who is best able to ensure an effective campaign that ensures accountable leadership implements the desired outcome.

All too often this results in national governments rejecting the claims of non-citizens for better leadership; however it is currently internationally recognised as a means to contest political leadership when it does not deliver on its promises and obligations. Thus we can state that accountability jurisdiction has become politically contested and that global accountability activism is based on a human rights and equality argument not on legal constitutionalism.

Civil Society organisations

Civil society organizations too do not hold rights as individuals do, and they cannot vote. It would be part of a ‘political mapping’ analysis to determine whether the constitution in a particular country allows for civil society to make presentations to Parliament and whether CSOs organizations can act as legal entities in relation to the judicial system. If CSOs have few legal/constitutional means for demanding accountability they can of course still act politically.

By this same means additional stakeholders can play a role

- National civil society organizations;
- Regional and global civil society organizations and networks;
- Global agencies (UN or Bretton Woods);
- Other states, through inter-state collaborations (such as the EU or AU).
Globalization
The disrespect for national boundaries as barriers for legitimate activism is seen as a progressive undoing of an unequal and unfair world-system of state power that keeps some countries poor and/or shields corrupt and oppressive Governments from accountability for abusing power against its citizens. The concept of “Glocal” plays an important role in that what happens in one country can trigger the same issue in another, and that what happens at the local level is a global issue.

Global accountability activism insists on and tries to formulate global standards against which to assess government performance and use of power.

Human Rights
Similar to the discussion on jurisdiction, global human rights activism is based on the argument that governments and other can and should be held accountable for delivering basic socio-economic rights. In other words, the global norm is that Government should not only avoid abusing civil or political rights, but actively ensure the realization of a better life for the poor.

The fact that there is no legal/constitutional basis for making such demands in most countries is to some extent countered by any international treaties and declarations that Governments may have signed onto. The fact that most of those commitments have no legal/constitutional standing in the respective countries only highlights the rationale for and importance of global activism.

Loss of political support.

Electoral
Government gets voted out of office. This is the most direct democratic sanction. It can refer to whole Governments or to individual Members of Parliament in systems where MPs are elected on a constituency basis.

Critical public opinion
A considerable loss of support for Government as expressed in surveys in-between elections. Governments cannot govern effectively on an issue if its policy runs counter to a strong and critical public opinion, at least not in political systems that are somewhat competitive. Government would be inclined to shifting its policy so as not to be sanctioned with electoral loss in the next election.

Peer review mechanism
This works as a means to ensuring leaders are held accountable by their peers such as other ministers of health.

Constitutional obstruction.

Legislative criticism
When Parliament refuses to pass Bills that will give effect to Government policy. In all democracies, Parliament has some role in scrutinizing the Executive, but such regular scrutiny should not be understood as ‘sanctioning’ in this context. Sanctions can take two main forms. They can be ‘constitutional’ in the sense that Parliament refuses to pass a proposed Bill unless it is revised according to Parliament’s wishes. Or sanctions can be ‘political’ in that the relevant
Parliamentary Committee, in addition to its ordinary scrutiny of a Bill, demands that the relevant Minister or other high official appear before the Committee to answer a number of critical questions. Both types of sanction can be very costly for Government politically.

**Judicial orders**
When a High Court directs Government to alter either the content of policy or the process with which it is being developed and/or implemented due to a conflict with legal/constitutional provisions.

**Political campaigning.**

**Media criticism**
When investigative journalism exposes poor performance and/or when Government is taken to task on the editorial pages of major newspapers and other news media. This sanction is, in and of itself, unlikely to cause a change in policy or to improve Government performance, but it may mobilize sufficient political pressure to trigger other sanctions.

**Civil activism**
This involves actions and campaigns by civil society organizations that expose poor performance by Government. As in the case of media, most civil activism will not directly affect policy or performance, but their political cost to Government increase with the support and exposure they get. With sufficient pressure they may cause a loss of political support or trigger constitutional obstructions.

**Naming and shaming**
The other novelty is the use of ‘political shaming’ at the regional/international level as a sanction for poor performance. This form of sanction is not used exclusively by civil society but it features also in international politics between states, for example the peer-review process within the African Union. We should note that while the sanction may appear muted in the final report of any inter-state peer-review process, the political shaming may nevertheless have been considerable throughout the process of discussing preliminary findings and negotiating the text of the final report.

**Performance monitoring**
But it is of course globalised civil society that is making the most of political shaming as a sanction for poor Government performance, especially with the use of Internet. Various forms of scorecards and indices are effective in communicating poor performance both in relation to certain absolute targets and relative to the performance by other like states.
The Accountability process

Increasing accountability

In order for accountability to become a constructive governance principle in the response to health needs it cannot be reduced to a simplistic ‘blame game’ between government and stakeholders. AAI explains accountability as a governance ‘mechanism’ in three steps, as depicted in below.

1. Transparency
The dialogue on accountability cannot start unless all stakeholders have access to accurate, comprehensive, up-to-date and methodologically sound data on the status of health provision in their countries, as well as what policy, programming and implementation is being done.

2. Dialogue
The meaningful involvement of civil society and government, supported by regional and continental structures and funding partners, is vital in order to analyse the data and determine whether performance is on-track to achieve relevant commitments, goals and targets.

3. Action
The accountability process does not stop at transparency and dialogue but are steps which in turn need to inform decisions taken by leaders as to which actions need to be taken to improve the health response. These actions again need to be monitored and transparent bringing us full circle.

Figure 1. Three-step process of accountability

1. Access to Data:
Collect data and make it accessible

2. Dialogue on Performance:
Invite stakeholders to review performance in relation to targets

3. Political Action:
Govts must accept the review of performance and action by stakeholders
Conclusion

We can note from this discussion of the role of accountability in the health response in Africa that various components make up a fully accountable system, and that all stakeholders have a role to play.

It begins before the promise, before the commitment by ensuring that the correct commitment is made, that it is signed, and ratified and that elected leaders then ensure that policy, programming and implementation follow. Thereafter transparency, dialogue and action are all necessary to ensure the on-going monitoring and evaluation of existing programmes and that new commitments and policies are correctly rolled out.

International development agencies, funding partners, civil society organisations, government staff, private enterprise and private individuals, both citizens and non-citizens, all have a role and responsibility to ensure that the health needs of all people are realised in all areas of the continent and understanding how accountability can be used is fundamental to our success and sustainability in the area of work.