

# Lessons on Family Planning Accountability Programming Action 2020 Programme, 2015

*This paper details learning and insights from Action2020's inception phase in 2015. The programme aimed to contribute to the achievement of the global goal of reaching 120 million women and girls with voluntary family planning by the year 2020, ensuring full, free and informed family planning choice for everyone, by holding governments to account for their Family Planning 2020 (FP2020) commitments<sup>1</sup>. These reflections flow from the political economy context analyses and theories of change that were developed by Action2020 in ten countries<sup>2</sup> and lead us to make recommendations for future family planning accountability programming.*

The right to enjoy full, free and informed access to contraceptive information, services and supplies is central to sexual and reproductive health rights. FP2020 commitments are designed to make these rights a reality, but there are a range of barriers and opportunities to enjoying these rights: issues of power, gender, governance, accountability, a lack of voice and leadership for women, as well as issues of agency and structure for the key actors involved. Citizens and civil society must be able and empowered to become active on FP issues and hold their governments and service providers accountable for the commitments made. Those FP2020 commitments present a key opportunity to scale up the number of women accessing FP services.

Significant evidence already shows the value of social accountability in improving services for the poorest and most marginalised<sup>3</sup>, however there is relatively less experience and evidence of FP accountability programmes. The Action2020 programme sought to fill this gap and contribute to understanding multiple levels of accountability, mobilising citizens for change and understanding the complex power and political dynamics within government and amongst service providers<sup>4</sup>. This takes us beyond simple dichotomies which pervade the field (eg. supply and demand, voice and responsiveness) to build new knowledge on how to build cross-cutting accountability coalitions that link civil society actors, media, champions inside government, researchers, and others across boundaries<sup>5</sup>. This programme sought to demonstrate that dual approach.

Action2020 aimed to develop local and national accountability mechanisms that would further open political space for the delivery of FP2020 commitments, working on three key fronts: with citizens to become aware of and empowered to

demand their rights to FP, with governments to respond positively and engage with citizens demands, and with service providers to deliver the quality FP services demanded by service users.

The strategies proposed:



**Figure 1: Key Pathways to Effective FP Accountability**

Action2020 applied political economy analysis (PEA) to develop a multi-sectoral and multi-layered empowerment and accountability approach to family planning. Given the nature of family planning and the sensitivities involved, the PEA paid special attention to socio-cultural attitudes and practices that undermine participation, stimulate political will, and incentivise more systemic change.

PEA in the inception phase sought to identify the problems around FP2020 commitments being delivered in each context and the prevailing political economy for holding governments and

service providers accountable. Each country programme analysed the structural barriers, opportunities, incentives and actors/ agency involved. Finally, potential pathways of change were identified and local theories of change developed with local partners, CSOs, government representatives and service providers. Work plans were agreed and local platforms developed in principle to implement these. This marked the culmination of the inception phase in January 2016. The PEA of FP in each of the ten countries and draft theories of change are available from Christian Aid on request.

### Summary of key learning points and questions for further analysis

#### Political economy and power analysis

**Problem identification:** It is a vital first step to identify specific problems related to FP2020 commitments, using a problem-driven approach that identifies structural and agency issues but also digs down to the *real* issues; for example, a weak link in the commodity supply chain, or the specific actors blocking change in budgets or resources.

**Politically sensitive and smart analysis:** FP accountability analysis must recognise politics and power. FP issues speak to deeply felt cultural and traditional norms, impact on population size/ demographic change and economic growth. This is highly political and is often related to political parties, political power bases, or power relationships between key actors involved (even those with no direct or obvious connection to FP services).

**Changing attitudes, funding and governance contexts for FP** require the regular revisiting of context analysis and an iterative/adaptive approach with ongoing political economy and power analysis to guide strategic and tactical options.

**Political economy analysis related to FP** worked best as a tool for programme staff and partners when it was kept light, short, jargon-free and relatively simple; providing sufficient evidence on the agency and structural features of specific problems; avoiding being drawn into cataloguing

every political or accountability feature; should also be kept up to date to be really useful [see PEA framework detailed below].

#### Citizen engagement and power dynamics

**Opening up and catalysing vibrant spaces for dialogue and engagement:** To do this effectively the strategies in a short-term programme such as Action2020 (3-4 years till 2020) should target the most effective spaces, look for innovative ideas to overcome the tractable obstacles to mobilising people as citizens to access, demand or enjoy services and bring FP issues to the fore (grounded in the socio-cultural realities of each community of people and tailored to their needs – avoiding general assumptions).

**Devolution and decentralisation of government services can open space for dialogue but often local fora can lack energy and resources.** Local dialogue spaces may also be highly controlled, tokenistic and 'captured'. A lack of experience of community participation was evident in some very recent devolution contexts; while in other contexts the political space to engage was closing down (for example in Kenya and Burundi where deep cultural sensitivities acted to exclude FP from the agenda).

**Addressing sense of citizen powerlessness on FP issues:** Increasing citizen voice is important in the power equation, but accountability interventions will require 'teeth' to be able to avoid responses from government and service providers that are tokenistic and involve no real substantive change to the system or actors – the real problem.

**NGOs should ensure that accountability interventions include both 'voice' and 'teeth':** Some context analysis suggested that citizen voice was already established and accepted by government, but the mechanisms held no real power to force change such as service reform or increased budget; the teeth may come in the form of smart power analysis to determine key interlocutors or change champions.

**Advocacy potential to add to success that has resulted in CIPs:** This advocacy now needs the teeth of an accountability process and a vehicle for people's voices.

**Addressing lack of power of governmental departments and agencies:** Governments may be structured well and have appropriate policies but these may be fatally undermined by lack of power over budgets and operational control, therefore there has to be a shift in power within government budget setting and monitoring processes – incentivising that kind of change in systems and with key power holders is key to increased responsiveness.

### Gender issues

A dedicated gender advisor as a support resource on FP analysis ensures identification of key women's rights, power dynamics and related gender issues.

Women's and men's choices are often limited due to cultural norms but, in addition, patriarchal tradition undermines contraceptive use in other, more nuanced ways. For example, chauvinist attitudes in Nepal tend to equate contraceptive use with an absence of masculinity, which deters men from discussing, engaging and getting involved in accountability mechanisms

### Youth

Value in understanding unmet demand among youth, as this defines problems more clearly

Youth-focused and led Citizen Charters can help to clarify responsibilities, but is underutilised, as a mechanism and way of mobilising citizens to participate in monitoring its fulfilment, especially as it relates to youth.

### Media strategy and engagement with public

**Deliberate and separately resourced media analysis** is essential to ensure that the impact of media on FP access and uptake was specifically covered in depth.

In many countries the **media lacked incentives** to engage in investigative and accountability focused journalism on FP. There was an associated pressure for immediate, sensationalist stories that failed to unpack key cultural issues related to FP.

However, there are many **opportunities to leverage accountability** using media, especially social media, and for remote and marginalised groups the spread of information as well as opportunity for dialogue was served by radio shows.

### Target key political and powerful influencers

**Private/voluntary and faith-based sectors may be key to solutions:** They must not be ignored or under-analysed because they sit outside the public services accountability framework, but rather proactively engaged in FP accountability because they control resources, power and are close to their customers and communities' needs. We found, in fact, that there is a hunger on their part to engage with civil society in these issues (perhaps due to government pressure to deliver on FP2020).

**Faith and traditional leaders are vital actors** that must be engaged as they hold great currency and power with local communities, especially the poorest and most marginalised.

**Common points of interest should be exploited:** A great deal of crossover between the interests of SRHR activists, proponents of healthy birthing and those who focus on socio-economic gains from population control. Often these groups were all supportive of increased access to FP. Although they may vary widely in religious belief or have widely different political and social agendas, the common point of policy suits all their interests and enables progress.

**Service providers across public, private and voluntary sectors must be involved in the current environment for reform** - but how should reformers be encouraged and supported? In Kenya, the private sector was looking for a way to organise and come together to respond to the challenges of the FP2020 commitments and what was expected of them.

**Private sector associations can be points of entry:** In Kenya, for example, there was a significant opportunity to inject an accountability angle and link into a key providers association

## Institutional response: FP2020 commitments and policy coherence

**Governments' FP2020 commitments are frequently stalled** with regard to budget allocations, commodities supply, information availability and access, **especially for marginalised groups.**

**Need to support governmental response to identified key bottlenecks and institutional barriers** as their challenge in tackling systemic issues perhaps for the first time in FP provision in response to citizen voice as opposed to internal government reform drives; importance of clearly focusing on tensions between government departments.

**Harmonisation of FP2020 commitments, government policy and budget:** Lack of coherence was a major problem commonly identified across countries.

**'Open data' should be an objective of future FP accountability campaigns:** Reliable and accurate data shows the real picture and arms advocacy with evidence.

**FP and accountability programmes should prioritise adaptive learning:** Given the relative newness of the field, FP and accountability programmes should be given wide latitude to test, adapt, and scale approaches.

**Cultivate national networks of FP reformers,** both inside and outside of government and linking across political parties.

## Models of change

**Future programmes should build on existing pathways of change:** The inception phase mapped out potential pathways of change, based on specific FP problems and taking a broad view of agency and institutional issues around FP accountability. Looking ahead, these pathways should be tested and adapted for application in the broader field.

**Vertical (citizen-led) and horizontal (internal-state) accountability models:** The programme design remains untested as to what aspects will work best and worst for FP accountability. As FP involves many complex variables we should work hard to identify what useful intersectional spaces of engagement and dialogue can be nurtured; where the citizens can genuinely have their voice heard and responded to and where the accountability systems and power structures around FP planning, financing, management of services and quality control can be influenced and incentivised for transformational change.

## Programme design and key principles

### Proposed global theory of change

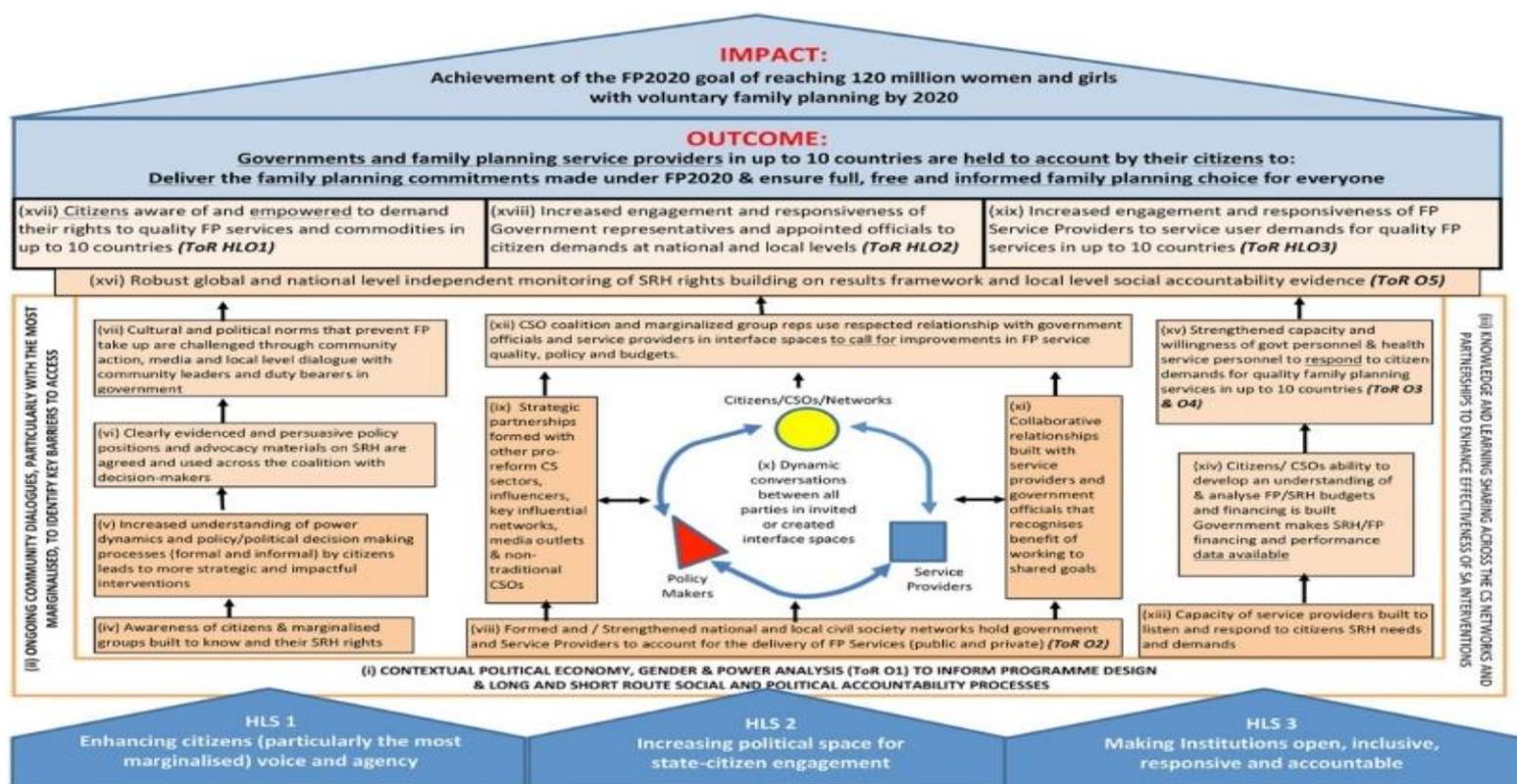
This was designed to fit key DFID required elements of change in the business case. The model was collaboratively developed between Christian Aid, Plan and International HIV/AIDS Alliance (IHAA) and was due to be tested in programme implementation.

During the early stages of the inception phase some programmes and partners struggled to interpret the global theory of change (ToC), which focused largely on advocacy and accountability. Their own most obvious problems were more related to the lack of sensitisation and awareness, resistance from traditional community leaders but also to the low capacity of government departments and service providers, particularly in very challenging 'low-demand' contexts.

After the initial phase of context analysis, however, most country teams and partners were able to work through their own country-level ToCs. These spoke to the three high level strategies and where the most likely successful route to be tried involved leveraging on the benefits of education and awareness programmes of other agencies then that was proposed.

The global ToC was of course untested by the end of inception phase. However, significant questions

Figure 2: Proposed Action 2020 global ToC. Creating dynamic dialogue space through stronger civil society, strategic partnerships, collaborative relationships with service providers that builds a respected relationship with government.



had arisen over the suitability of accountability programmes focused on rights claiming and unmet demand in some countries (eg. Niger and Mali - sitting at the bottom of the league table of TFR and CPR) where awareness and demand are apparently very low or in countries where voice and advocacy would be practically difficult to progress.

**Key principles driving this model**

Action 2020's focus on accountability was deeply influenced by recent work on the value of social accountability in FP programming and some key principles have emerged that guided our analysis and planning.<sup>6</sup> Among these principles are the following:

- working in a politically smart and sensitive way
- based on thorough understanding of power and gender relations
- 'best fit' rather than 'best practice'
- locally owned and driven by context to ensure relevance, effectiveness, buy-in
- driving inclusive change from the ground up to make citizen voice sustainable and legitimate

- focusing on enabling environment and citizen/civil society agency
- working on both supply and demand side/voice and responsiveness etc.
- leave no-one behind: success in social accountability requires the voice of the poorest groups<sup>7</sup>
- FP accountability should work outside the formal accountability relationships of the state, and must take into account the private sector, traditional leaders, and other non-formal structures.

**Crafting a global FP accountability ToC**

The global accountability model of change, based on three high level accountability strategies, was applied to national contexts: using the high level strategies to shape 'nested' theories of change<sup>8</sup> and localised plans that could be owned by local actors and foster political spaces for dialogue at different levels. It emphasised the presence of individuals and groups across all three pillars that are motivated, find opportunity and are able to push reform agendas, transcend narrow political division, win space for discussion and policy or

budgets in key processes, and, like faith or traditional leaders, can be powerful agents to overcome cultural barriers and norms that restrict participation<sup>9</sup>.

### Country-level nested ToCs and pathways

Potential pathways of change were mapped out for each country programme informed by the global ToC<sup>10</sup>: The IHAA led a process of country-level nested ToC development that:

- Mapped out SMART outcomes and indicators;
- Questioned the assumptions mapping at various levels within the pathways of change and led critical thinking in the ToC workshops
- Supported stakeholders to map and analyse their own influence and map the relationships and dynamics across and between the civil society actors, state institutions and the service providers
- Mapped out the high level strategies to realise desired change and questioned the potential pathways of change developed in the CCAs.

### Learning and evidence note

The detailed programme learning summarised in this paper feeds into a fast growing area of empowerment and accountability work, learning topic and evidence gap. The Action2020 consortium were integrating all the recent learning from ODI on problem-driven iterative adaptation and politically smart approaches avoiding standard blueprint approaches to programme design and roll out. The evidence base on how accountability work delivers service delivery improvements at scale is still scant and we believe this programme could have helped to build an evidence base in the sector around this.

### Overall recommendation

We recommend this kind of programme:

- at scale, multi-country (sharing learning and knowledge between governments, civil society and citizens on what works)
- adaptive strategies that are open to risk-taking
- acknowledging that some tactical interventions and activities be less successful than others
- allowing results (eg. successes in reaching those with greatest unmet demands as well as failed attempts at incentivising change in

ministries of health and family planning) to be sources of learning and smartening of approach

- including a diverse set of country FP contexts to enable comparison and rich learning.

***Action2020 was a multi-country governance and accountability programme aiming to ensure accountability for FP2020 commitments through locally rooted, national platforms that promote equity and sustainability. It was not continued in this form into implementation (April 2016) following a review of funding by DFID, however some Christian Aid country programmes continue to work on FP/SRHR in other programmes, Plan remains active in its SRHR programmes and advocacy and IHAA continues, of course, to be a key player in SRHR.***

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Family Planning 2020 commitments made at 2012 London conference – see [www.familyplanning2020.org/](http://www.familyplanning2020.org/) for details and country progress reports

<sup>2</sup> Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nepal and Niger (Bolivia not a signatory to FP2020)

<sup>3</sup> IDS, ODI, World Bank have all published evidence or studies showing evidence gaps

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Fox WB GPSA Working Paper: “Social Accountability what does the evidence really say?”

<sup>5</sup> Gaventa and McGee: TAI:

<http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/IETAExecutivesummaryMcGeGaventaFinal28Oct2010.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> World Bank GPSA, Jonathan Fox’s work, Grandvoinet’s ‘Opening the Black Box’ report for the WB; IDS and the TAI, ODI, DFIDs ‘Doing Development Differently’ agenda; IPPF and HPP, Evidence Project.

<sup>7</sup> “While an emphasis on the need to exercise voice seems essential in terms of enabling the poor(est) to be heard, this in itself does not address the prior fundamental question of whose voice is being heard. The voices of the poor (as well as those of other groups) are far from homogeneous – and these many voices may not necessarily be complementary but may actually compete with one another. The findings from recent studies on VEA interventions has found that only when marginalised and excluded groups are given specific focus, attention and support are these groups ever successful in having their voices heard. Simply providing a platform for all voices, and hoping that greater access will lead to greater voice for the most marginalised does not work.” *Voice, Accountability and Civic engagement - A conceptual overview*, B. Sharma, UNDP 2009

<sup>8</sup> Draft ToCs are available for most of the countries

<sup>9</sup> Action2020 proposed global model of change in proposal document

<sup>10</sup> The Action2020 teams even suggested usefulness of more specific localised ToCs at region or district level (to reflect different groups, different conditions within one country eg. Northern Ghana as opposed to the Ashanti region).