

Forum Brief

Forum Purpose and Objectives

The Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA) will convene its seventh annual GPSA Global Partners Forum from May 10 to 13, 2021, for the first time online. The Forum is its flagship event for social accountability learning, a gathering of GPSA grant partners, practitioners, policy makers, researchers, funders and thought leaders, to take stock of emerging social accountability lessons, analyze challenges and opportunities for the field, explore new frontiers and set future agendas. The seventh Global Forum will seek to a) to expand knowledge of how social accountability can help make the COVID-19 recovery inclusive, equitable and accountable, b) build consensus on what it would take to harness and make the most of civil society society-led efforts that complement and strengthen the public sector’s own, as a part of whole of society approaches to the COVID-19 response; and, c) underscore the priority of the health dimension, including vaccination, and the role of collaborative social accountability in addressing emerging challenges.

Forum Program

The Forum will commence at 7:30 AM and end at 10:30 AM, Eastern Time on each of the four days. It will address the following five critical themes: a) Social Accountability for Stronger Health Systems; b) Social Accountability and COVID-19 Vaccination; c) Social Accountability and Paths to Scale; and, d) Social Accountability for Integrity in COVID-19 Financing. It will also hear the lessons and experiences of GPSA grant partners in the COVID-19 response, in addition to an update on the GPSA.

| | DAY 1 | DAY 2 | DAY 3 | DAY 4 |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|
| 7:30-8:45 | Welcoming Remarks Forum Overview Keynote Speech | Social Accountability for Stronger Health Systems | GPSA Update and What's Ahead | Global Partners' Experiences and Lessons during COVID-19 |
| 8:45-9:00 | Activity and Break | Activity and Break | Activity and Break | Activity and Break |
| 9:00-10:15 | Social Accountability and COVID-19 Vaccination | Social Accountability and Paths to Scale | Social Accountability for Integrity in COVID-19 Financing | Forum Recap and Closing Remarks |
| 10:15-10:30 | Closing of the Day | Closing of the Day | Closing of the Day | Virtual Reception |

Forum Key Questions

The Forum will therefore put a spotlight on the following questions:

- 1) What does a ‘whole of society’ COVID-19 response really look like and what does it take to develop one? In particular, how can development partners help to coordinate public sector and non-state

interventions and remove barriers to effective joint problem-solving, especially for civil society organizations?

- 2) What is the potential and contribution of collaborative social accountability in addressing the challenges of exclusion and inequality in the public sector responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, so that the recovery responds to the needs of all?
- 3) How can practitioners and development partners use the COVID-19 pandemic recovery to build social accountability practices that can strengthen health delivery systems for all and that are scalable?

Forum Context and Key Themes

COVID-19 is a pandemic with devastating social and economic impacts that call for a whole of society response that places people at its center. Beyond diminished growth prospects and deepening poverty, the pandemic's impacts will span unemployment and food insecurity, and erosion of human capital¹. A meaningful, people-centered response requires intensified partnerships and coordinated approaches that involve all of society.

The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated existing social and economic inequalities and challenges in every region and country. Hardest hit are people already marginalized², for example those living in economic hardship and in fragility, conflict and violence settings, migrants, women, older persons, persons with disabilities, and ethnic and religious minorities³. Addressing inequality should therefore be a high priority of COVID-19 recovery efforts, and social accountability processes have a special role in ensuring accountability of policies and programs for achieving this goal, and that they are monitored.

Civil society organizations (CSO) are a critical part of the pandemic response. CSOs have reacted to the pandemic with a new sense of urgency, deepening their presence in local societies and becoming more attuned to community needs. They bring specific expertise that is salient, inter alia for facilitating collaborative action by individuals who may otherwise fail to act, or act together in ways that enable government responsiveness.

The GPSA's CSO-led collaborative social accountability model has been shown to be especially important in fostering more effective and resilient health systems, by connecting CSO-led and public sector interventions⁴. Prioritizing health in the recovery will require multistakeholder action, collaborative social accountability and engagement of communities. As outlined in its [GPSA Theory of Action](#), the model supports the integration of these society-led processes into public sector health programs to address vulnerabilities and mitigate risks in vaccination and beyond. It promotes iterative processes for bringing health users and groups into specific COVID-19 related problem-solving spaces across the management and service delivery chain.

Through a 4-year GPSA grant, SEND Ghana and its coalition's budget advocacy process was strengthened by building synergies with Ministry of Health actors. Government commitment to allocation to primary health care and lower-level facilities increased, notably to the Community Health Planning Services

¹ [Global Economic Prospects](#)

² [Oxfam](#)

³ [Civicus](#)

⁴ [GPSA Brief](#)



program, while execution via collaborative social accountability processes down the delivery chain improved⁵.

An evaluation of GPSA grant partner Wahana Visi's maternal and child health services project in Indonesia⁶ found that collaborative social accountability processes expanded the reach of the health system by including citizens and local governments that were previously excluded. These processes helped to align the different actors' priorities, resources, information flows, and interests across the system. They fostered relationships and multistakeholder collective action⁷ to ensure improved access and delivery of quality services at the local level.

Taken together, these multistakeholder processes are essential building blocks for responsive health policies and programs, and the strengthening of health systems. Indeed, the key question for policy makers and funders alike is how best to leverage the COVID-19 recovery for reforms that can strengthen health delivery systems for all, including for disease specific programming.⁸ There is scope for building on these examples to support CSO collaboration with public sectors and other stakeholders towards strengthened essential last mile delivery of health that engages communities.

CSOs will also be instrumental in building trust and improving vaccine uptake. They can foster community participation in the vaccine programs and facilitate dialogue between local communities and service providers and healthcare managers, which can help to establish trust. This advantage also enables CSOs to contribute to information and education campaigns about the vaccines, helping to mitigate misinformation, reduce vaccine hesitancy and enable the most vaccine coverage.

CSO-led social accountability practices will be important in ensuring transparent, responsive and accountable COVID-19 expenditure. As governments receive billions for the COVID-19 response, fiduciary risks have increased⁹. Governments are also reallocating national budgets to the COVID-19 response under state of emergency and emergency procurement regulations, increasing the risks and vulnerabilities in public financial management. CSOs implementing social accountability can undertake third party monitoring of COVID-19 operations, expenditure tracking and real time financial and performance audits of the governments' programs. This can help to ensure financial integrity, effectiveness of interventions, and user satisfaction.

Collaborative approaches can support social inclusion in the COVID-19 emergency response and recovery. How to achieve this has become an urgent question, as the COVID-19 response must work for all. The COVID-19 response has already exposed discriminatory practices in the administration of interventions, but also brought to light how structural inequalities get in the way of equitable response and recovery of most marginalized populations.

Inclusion of marginalized and traditionally excluded groups is by no means automatic and requires proactive analysis and targeting of specific groups and/or geographies. Social inclusion adds one more layer to social accountability to ensure that disenfranchised groups have equal access to, and control over, public resources and are represented in governance.¹⁰ One avenue is the integration and

⁵ [GPSA Evaluation](#)

⁶ Maternal, Newborn, Infant, and Child Health Services project in Kupang, Sikka and Timor Tengah Utara; US\$950,000.

⁷ [GPSA Evaluation](#)

⁸ GPSA evaluations map how integrating these processes into health operations may help to address the medium-term challenge- [GPSA Brief](#)

⁹ [Devex 2020](#)

¹⁰ [Counterpart International](#)



operationalization of human rights principles (e.g. non-discrimination, equal participation) in social accountability programming in specific settings, which the GPSA has piloted. The seventh GPSA Global Partners Forum is a timely opportunity to bring these themes and issues into focus, as participants contribute their knowledge, experiences and insights to promote and advance the important role of CSOs and social accountability approaches in ensuring a stronger COVID-19 recovery.

Annexes

About the GPSA

The GPSA was established in 2012 by the World Bank's Board to support civil society-led coalitions to work together with governments to bring solutions to some of the most pressing development challenges that local actors have prioritized. It does this through social accountability grants of between three and five years. These are complemented by sustained implementation and capacity strengthening support by the GPSA's secretariat. This includes facilitation, mentoring and learning-by-doing, and strategic support to apply fit-for-purpose approaches that build links with the public sector to solve jointly identified problems - especially in the delivery of services. The GPSA has funded grants and non-financial support to more than 50 civil society-led projects in 34 countries and the portfolio spans Agriculture, Education, Public financial management, Health, Fragility, Conflict & Violence, Social Protection and Water

Previous GPSA Global Partners Forums

2019: *Social Accountability and the Challenge of Inclusion:*

Partners: Open Society Foundations, Public Service Accountability Monitor-Rhodes University, South Africa; Human Rights, Inclusion and Empowerment Trust Fund.

2018: *Money Matters: Public Finance and Social Accountability for Human Capital* (see [Forum website](#)).

Partners: WBG Human Capital Project; Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency, International Budget Partnership

2017: *Citizen Action for Open, Accountable and Inclusive Societies.*

Partners: Open Government Partnership, Making All Voices Count

2016: *Social Accountability for Development Impact: From Engagement to Co-production; and, Learning for Adaptive Management.*

2015: *Social Accountability for Citizen-Centric Governance: A Changing Paradigm*

2014: *What Works in Social Accountability?*