



World Vision and the United Nations Population Fund

Friday 13 December 2013 - 1:15-2:30 P.M.

UN Headquarters conference room 9 (CB) New York

“Citizen’s Voices: How Citizen Participation and Social Accountability Can Drive Development Effectiveness”

Summary

Panelists:

Ms. Kate Gilmore, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA.

Mr. Robert Sendewitsch, Program Manager of Global Partnership for Social Accountability of the World Bank.

Mr. James Kintu, Associate Director for Advocacy of World Vision Uganda.

Professor Lynn Freedman, Columbia University.

Moderated by:

Mr. Charles Badenoch, Vice-President for Global Advocacy, World Vision International.

On 13 December 2013, World Vision in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) held a well-attended side event at the UN headquarters—“Citizen’s Voices: How Citizen Participation and Social Accountability Can Drive Development Effectiveness”.

The event was moderated by **Mr. Charles Badenoch**, Vice-President for Global Advocacy, World Vision International. Panelists included the Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of the UNFPA—**Ms. Kate Gilmore**, Program Manager of Global Partnership for Social Accountability of the World Bank—**Mr. Robert Sendewitsch**, the Associate Director for Advocacy of World Vision Uganda—**Mr. James Kintu** and **Professor Lynn Freedman** from Columbia University.

Mr. Charles Badenoch – World Vision opened the discussion, introduced the panelists and shared with the audience that “Citizen Voice and Action” (CVA) is World Vision’s approach to social accountability, which is based on models developed by the World Bank and CARE. World Vision is currently implementing CVA in 300 programmes across 34 countries.

Ms. Kate Gilmore - UNFPA highlighted the importance of personal resilience and the need for citizens to be in the center at the post-2015 development agenda. Ms. Gilmore argued that it is crucial to put the agency of a person, rather than putting his/her vulnerability at the center of development. The development dialogue cannot exclude its beneficiaries in the process, as citizen's voice and the agency of private citizens are crucial to global development and the alleviation of human suffering. Hence, the freedom of information is just as crucial to an individual's well-being as his/her right to health. Ms. Gilmore shared an example of the rising teenage pregnancy in Trinidad and Tobago (1.3 million girls pregnant under the age of 18), she shared a story of a teenage mother who couldn't get her baby treated in the hospital, as the doctors and nurses deemed her as too young and inexperienced and instead of treating the baby, they asked her to take him home. Ms. Gilmore pointed out this is a prime example of discrimination and the lack of access to information. She expressed her support to World Vision's work in Citizen Voice in Action and advised organizations to speak to and work with World Vision, as CVA helps to put the agency of citizens at the center of global development, which in Ms. Gilmore's opinion is extremely relevant to the post-2015 development agenda, as she succinctly summed up— "tomorrow is a girl aged 10."

Mr. Robert Sendeowitsch - World Bank opened his presentation by arguing that global development is about problem solving, and CVA is an effective problem solving tool that could be used in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. He explained that timely information and incentives for change are key to affecting change. In his opinion, CVA could help to align incentives for change with the information channels. To address these issues, the World Bank developed the *Global Partnership for Social Accountability* (GPSA) initiative to promote social accountability practices in development programmes. The initiative promotes knowledge sharing and provides the necessary funding to civil society organizations in countries where the government has opted-in (so far 34 countries have signed on). When asked about GPSA and how it relates to data revolution, Mr. Sendeowitsch explained that an open data policy is in alignment with the GPSA initiative, as the use of information technology to enable social mobilization lies at the heart of knowledge sharing, for instance, the use of social media was critical to the social movement of the Arab Springs.

Mr. James Kintu - World Vision Uganda gave a presentation on WV's CVA initiatives in Uganda. WV Uganda has followed a four step process in the implementation of CVA led by citizens: (1) Citizens learn about basic human rights and how they are articulated under domestic law; (2) Citizens work collaboratively with government and service providers to compare reality against government's own commitments; (3) Citizens rate government performance against government standards and also against criteria they generate themselves; and (4) Citizens work with other stakeholders to influence decision-makers to improve services. An example of the strength of the CVA initiative is the improvement in the quality of care health provide in Uganda. After the roll-out of the initiative—World Vision measured a 33 per cent drop in under-5 mortality, 20 per cent increase in the utilization of outpatient services and a 58 per cent increase in the number of deliveries by skilled birth attendants. When asked about the supposed confrontational nature of CVA, Mr. Kintu explained that the demand for accountability doesn't always have to be confrontational; rather, WV takes a collaborative approach that focuses on relationship building between various stakeholders.

Professor Lynn Freedman - Columbia University believes there is a huge disconnect between the global development structure and the national/local level in many areas, such as infant and maternal health. In her opinion, there has been a major failure in performance implementation, as at the heart of performance problems is not about intervention, but the delivery of services that are embedded in social, economic and cultural dynamics. Professor Freedman argued that traditionally, accountability exposes and denounces human rights violations perpetrated by governments, but accountability in the context of the post-2015 development agenda must include the monitoring and evaluation of social and health services. Professor Freedman believes CVA may provide an alternative—the creation of a space to pursue accountability in a constructive manner. Professor Freedman asked everyone to think about how the Social Accountability movement can be funded globally and be introduced to all countries, as currently, World Bank's GPSA initiative only works with opt-in countries. Professor Freedman also encourages the UN and governments to look at ways to support the development of civil society movements to create real social accountability.

During the open discussion, the Islamic Relief Worldwide asked the panelists to address the role of faith-based values within the practice of Social Accountability. *Mr. Sendeowitsch* from the World Bank responded by saying that there's a level of naïvetés that all local cultural values are pure and without corruption. He gave the example of cultural values that are used to lobby against the reproductive rights of minorities and women; he believes the key is to find ways to combine ideas from the West with local religions values when implementing Social Accountability initiatives. *Ms. Gilmore* from the UNFPA expressed her dislikes for the juxtaposition of western and eastern values; she believes human rights and the ideal of personhood belong to many traditions that can be found in the east and the west. She asserted that any religion that is worthy of validation should not require the destruction of a key part of the society, such as girls being deprived of their rights, if so, then these cultural or religious norms should come to an end.

In response to the question from the audience as to why should one support Social Accountability initiatives, *Professor Freedman* from Columbia University argued that SA is about the collective aspirations of people, it's about harnessing their capacity to aspire to a better life for all. *Mr. Sendeowitsch* from the World Bank argued that SA is about enhancing community's collective capacity for problem solving, so that one can take a multi-sectoral approach to address development issues. *Ms. Gilmore* from UNFPA asserted that SA builds inclusiveness and social resilience, which is vital to the long-term successes of development aid. She encouraged development partners to talk to WV about CVA practices, and invites governments and UN agencies alike to resource the structures to support SA initiatives.

In response to comments from the floor on the challenges faced by governments' capacities to provide feedback, *Mr. Kintu* from WV Uganda, drawing from his own experiences, highlighted that in Uganda, WV and partners face a decentralized system of governance. In general, the government officials do have the capacity to respond. However, as you move up the ranks, the issue of data availability, policy directions and budget limitations may affect the officials' capacities to respond immediately and effectively. As a result, WV Uganda emphasizes the constant engagement of citizens at all levels of government to enhance relationship building and information sharing.