

GUIDELINES FOR ACCOUNTABILITY:

Based on findings and recommendations from the new report *Engendering Accountability: Upholding Commitments to Maternal and Newborn Health*

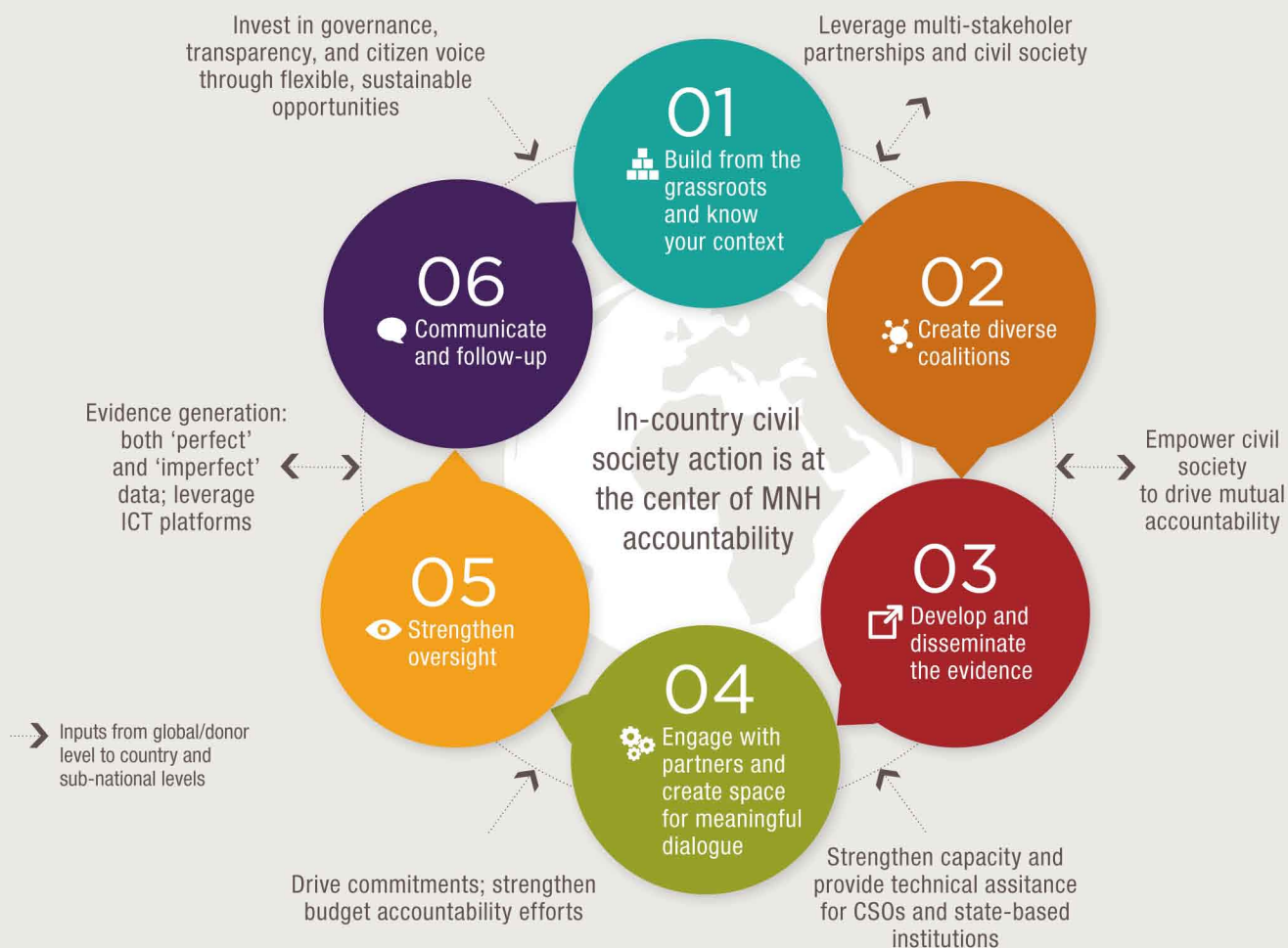
As the world welcomes the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the newly updated Global Strategy for Women's, Children's, and Adolescents' health, the need to engender accountability for commitments to women's and children's health has become a top priority. A recent study commissioned by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, and conducted by Global Health Visions, provides welcome guidance on how to design accountability efforts to maximize impact. In-depth interviews and analysis of global, regional, and country-level accountability efforts yield lessons that will contribute to informed, impactful, and sustainable accountability movements at country level.



1 Build from the grassroots and know your context. Start local, beginning with citizen voice and priorities, connecting local to district to state, and then on to the national and global level. When designing accountability initiatives, a political economy and stakeholder analysis is key for identifying relevant players (both opponents and allies), as well as for assessing accountability and power relations between those players and within society.

2 Create diverse coalitions. Partnerships and alliances can help reinforce internal and external organizational transparency, while also providing 'cover' when adversarial approaches are needed. Identifying state (public officials, parliamentarians), civil society (traditional leaders, journalists), and citizen champions creates the opportunity to hear community voice, while upholding government programs and catalyzing government response.

3 Develop and disseminate the evidence. Gather data that are meaningful to civil society, useable by government and accessible to citizens. Use participatory approaches to create indicators and collect data, keeping the citizen experience at the center. Aggregate data across geographies and ensure data are actionable and that information is communicated to stakeholders in a digestible format. Utilize pre-existing systems or, if necessary, create new feedback loops that communicate findings from citizens to the state and the state to citizens.



4 Engage with partners. Create space for meaningful dialogue. Build off of systems that are already in place for public input into government processes or community-based platforms or create new spaces for citizen engagement and advocacy. Recognize that approaches will likely include both conflict and cooperation between citizens and the state.

5 Strengthen oversight. Rewarding accountable behavior and sanctioning unaccountable behavior can help enforce government recommendations and response to civil society campaigns. Capitalize on pre-existing structures and oversight institutions, such as auditors or human rights bodies, and ensure that these are engaging citizens and civil society. Aggregate recommendations from public hearings to inform state and national level enforcement procedures and use judicial remedies through legal empowerment.

6 Communicate and follow-up. Recognize that accountability is a continual process. Commitments that are monitored and evaluated are more likely to be addressed, but actions have to be tracked to encourage continued progress and government response. Open communication lines across partners and ensure that citizens, civil society and government know not only what is needed at the community and state level, but also what changes are made by governments to address these issues. Both government and citizens must remain informed to remain engaged.