

## WHAT IS DOWNWARD ACCOUNTABILITY?

Downward accountability refers to organisations being accountable to their target communities and groups.

### Why use it?

Downward accountability measures have the potential to:



**BALANCE** existing power dynamics.



**REDUCE** corruption and mismanagement.



**INCREASE** participation and the sense ownership of the target groups.



**IMPROVE** an organisation's legitimacy.



**INCREASE** efficiency and effectiveness of programmes.

It is a shift from seeing the affected population simply as beneficiaries to viewing them as key partners and stakeholders in their own path to a thriving life. It aims to ensure that communities are meaningfully and continuously involved in decisions that directly impact their lives.

Downward accountability enables actors to **manage their relationship** with targeted communities by **gaining a deeper understanding** of their needs and demands.

**Downward accountability can include quantitative and qualitative methods such as community consultations, or complaint response mechanisms.**

In order for these methods to be effective, communities must be meaningfully involved and **have the ability to influence the decision making of organisations.**

The aims of downward accountability should be **social justice and inclusion through participation.**

**If** downward accountability fails to incorporate target groups in project planning, management and evaluation, **then** interventions will fail to reflect their needs adequately.

Consider **confidentiality issues, power dynamics** and **vulnerabilities** when developing a downward accountability system.

**Confidentiality** needs to be ensured wherever required. People should be free to give and take account without fearing retaliation.

Unequal **power dynamics** and dependencies between organisations and their target groups and within target groups may impact participation and the degree to which these groups are willing to hold organisations to account.

Powerful actors may not be aware of norms and privileges that determine how they are treated. Less powerful actors are however acutely aware of these norms and privileges. **Formally** (i.e., in protocols) these may be equal for everyone, but **informally** or how they are applied in day-to-day life are often quite different.

**Vulnerabilities** resulting from the level of education, gender, ethnicity, socio-/economic status, can influence an individual's ability to participate. Access barriers such as poverty, cultural traditions, illiteracy, or remote locations are common issues. These vulnerabilities often overlap and require an intersectional approach.

**Tools and mechanisms** should always be **suited to the context** in which they are to be used.