



act:onaid

**STRENGTHENING CITIZEN ACTIONS FOR
IMPROVED PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY
AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

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Project Background



Shibah Namulindwa,
Programme Officer Pallisa LRP

Pallisa and Kibuuku districts in eastern Uganda are some of the poorest districts mainly because of poor governance that has adversely affected service delivery in the key sectors of infrastructure, education, health among others. In recent years however service delivery is slowly improving because of deliberate interventions of ActionAid and other partners.

ActionAid Uganda with funding from Democratic Governance Facility, Hills and Cookes families, and Open Society Foundation from Spain supports communities in Pallisa and Kibuuku districts to fully participate in the planning, budgeting and monitoring processes and hold their leaders accountable for the delivery of timely, quality and gender responsive public services

ActionAid Uganda is currently implementing the fifth strategy paper called strengthening struggles for social justice that is running from 2018 – 2022 which is focusing on improving conditions of people living in extreme poverty and the vulnerable people within the communities of Pallisa and Kibuuku districts. What ActionAid does is to help/ empower communities to mobilise and claim their rights.

The major aim of the project is to ensure that resources are equally distributed to ensure that we build resilience of people/communities and also to ensure that community rights are protected, fulfilled and promoted by the government.

Our work is around supporting these communities; through solidarity we work with these communities in their organized groups in their movements to make sure that they demand for accountability from the leaders/ duty bearers.

To achieve good governance, we work around the three Rs – Rights, Redistribution and Resilience. People have rights and if these are guaranteed then there must be equity in the distribution of resources and power – people should have the power to demand. To redistribute these (resources and power) there is need to strengthen the resilience of the people to be able to demand and challenge negative power.

Besides this, ActionAid is also using the theory of change to cause transformational growth within communities. This is around how rights are guaranteed, how power can be espoused and how people can work together to bring about much desired change. First in theory of change, people have rights and they have to be supported to understand that they have rights and have the power to demand for their rights and we believe that people should be empowered to demand for these rights on their own. As ActionAid we create the space and environment, build power and confidence of the people to hold their leaders accountable because they pay taxes. The people should be able to understand the direct relationship between taxes paid and public services rendered.

**What ActionAid does
is to help/ empower
communities to
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their rights.**



Pupils display a placard with information demandig for better health services.



Implementation

Stakeholders holding a budget and accountability meeting at Pallisa District headquarters

ActionAid has empowered community monitors, community activists to demand social justice, and responsive public services in their communities. These include services targeting women, girls and people with disabilities. The role of the community monitors is to follow these resources that have been disbursed from the central government to the local governments to ensure that they are fully utilized in provision of quality services. They follow up, identify and report cases of corruption to ensure that their rights and needs are fully met by the public services offered. Our major focus is to ensure that public services are:

1. Publically funded;

- With a fair Share of budgets to key services
- With good Size of overall budget (a progressive tax base / macroeconomic policies)
- With Sensitivity of budget allocations (driven by a focus on equity)
- With effective Scrutiny of spending (so fund arrive and are well spent)

2. Publicly delivered and universal

- Truly accountable
- Decentralised – but with a strong redistributive centre
- Not privatised or commercialised

3. Gender equitable and inclusive

- Free from discrimination and sexism
- Safe for all users
- Developed and monitored through inclusive participatory processes

4. Quality in line with human rights frameworks (addressing 4 As)

- Accessible, Available, Adaptable, Acceptable

At the beginning of 2019, ActionAid trained 80 community monitors from 8 sub counties in Pallisa and Kibuuku district and distributed them in teams. They work on quarterly basis and conduct community score cards where they score different sectors especially for the critical sectors like health, education, agriculture and roads.

They do these using participatory approaches; they set their performance indicators and targets which they use to assess service providers/duty bearers. They identify performance gaps and best practices that can be replicated by other sub counties. This feedback is also what they use for advocacy involving all the stakeholders.

We use these approaches at different levels, village, parish and sub county dialogues and engagements to identify gaps and the best practices that need to be maintained.

At the district we use this same information collected using the score card to engage the district leadership on the critical sectors that need improvement this has improved the planning priorities of the sub county and the district leading to community needs being met.

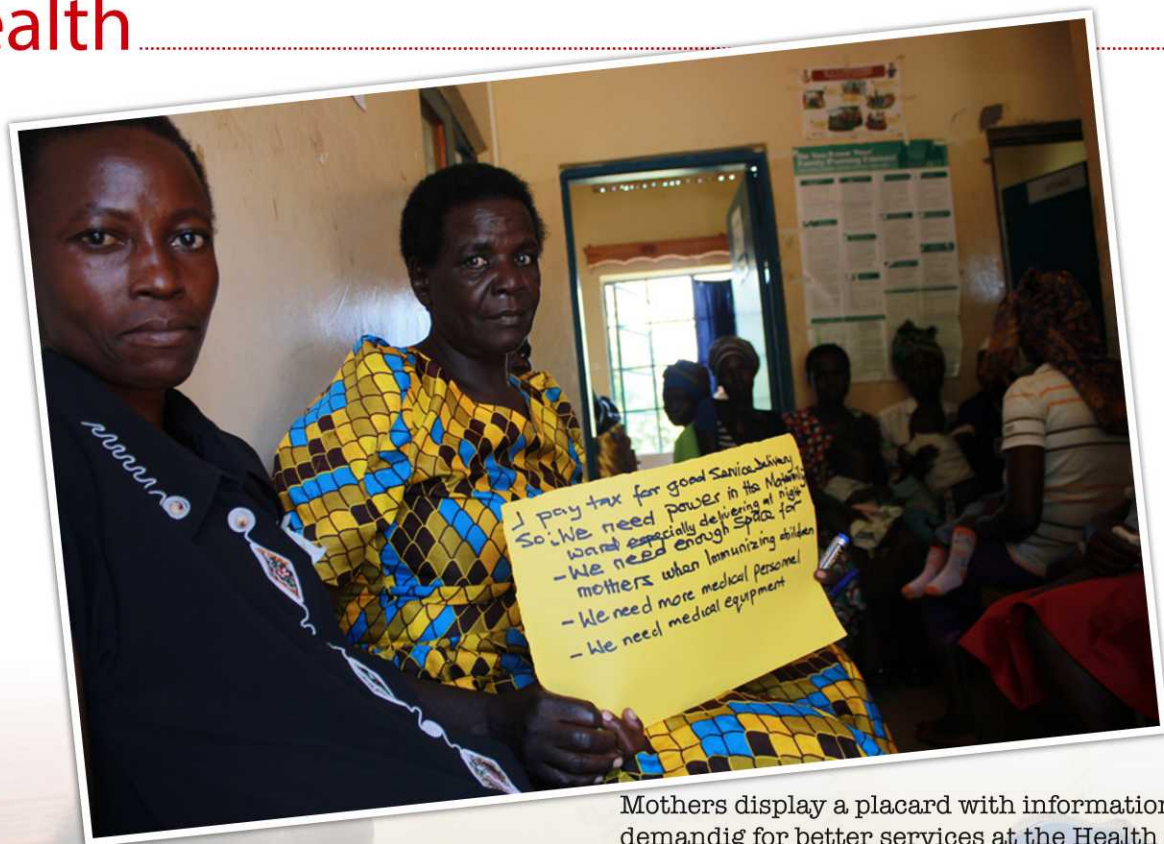
“The role of the community monitors is to follow these resources that have been disbursed from the central government to the local governments to ensure that they are fully utilized in provision of quality services”.

Community Monitors making leaders account

Since the beginning of 2019, ActionAid has trained 80 community monitors and Activista from 8 sub counties in Pallisa and Kibuuku districts to use participatory tools like community score cards to track the performance of different government sectors, identify gaps and recommend alternatives and create spaces for communities to hold their leaders accountable.

The selfless efforts of these community monitors coupled with an empowered population ready to fight for their rights has led to a significant improvement in the quality of service delivery in key sectors like education, health, works and agriculture.

Health



Mothers display a placard with information demandig for better services at the Health Centre and below a nurse attends to a mother at Apopong Health Centre III in Pallisa





Apopong Health Centre III in Pallisa offers several services

Akoboi Stanley is a team leader of the community monitors in Apopong sub county Pallisa district.

As a team leader, I am responsible for coordinating ActionAid activities on behalf of my team in the sub county.

Before ActionAid came to our sub county we had lots of gaps in service delivery and I believe some of the gaps have been addressed especially in education and health sector. We have registered some achievements despite challenges.

ActionAid equipped us with the knowledge that we are now using to demand for better public service delivery. We got these skills and knowledge participating in several workshops and trainings facilitated by ActionAid;

After the trainings, we identified Apopong health centre III because of the many challenges it had. We conducted a score card exercise through the score card, we were able to identify challenges which included lack of enough staff quarters, pit latrine for staff, there was no power in the Out Patient Department and the maternity wing. Besides this, the latrine at the maternity ward was poorly constructed posing a risk to the users. When we brought this to the attention of ActionAid, they facilitated a dialogue meeting with the staff of the health facility together with the sub county leadership. After we followed up with the sub county chief and LC3 to see if they could handle any of the identified gaps but we realized none of them was willing to take up the responsibility. This forced us to have a district dialogue meeting that brought together different stakeholders. After this dialogue meeting we have started seeing changes at the health facility because of our efforts as community monitors.

As we speak, the OPD has been connected with power which has greatly improved the lighting conditions of the unit. There is also increased staff attendance at the facility because of introduction of a register and increased

supervision and monitoring of staff by the in-charge.

Furthermore the Sub County has put in its budget for this financial year money for constructing a staff latrine.

It is because of our efforts as community monitors that we have been in position to identify gaps and get solutions for them. Much as we work as volunteers, we need some support like transport facilitation to enable us empower more local people to be able to demand for better public services. We also hope to continue engaging the duty bearers to ensure that action is taken in case we identify service delivery gaps within the area.

The people in my area have seriously embraced this advocacy movement because when they hear about community meetings and dialogues being organized by ActionAid, they come in large numbers and fully participate by presenting their issues.



Stanley Akoboi, Community Monitor, Pallisa

Timothy, the In-charge, Apopong Health Centre III says that "In a day we see an average of 50 – 70 patients and in month we see an average of 700 – 1000 patients in Out Patient Department and 20 mothers per day for antenatal.

Whenever we have challenges, we get in touch with the community mobilisers and together look at the potential solutions and leaders who would help us because they are good at lobbying. We had an issue of a staff lacking a latrine but when I tried on my own to lobby, I failed but when we involved them, now the sub county has promised to construct the latrine for us because it has been included in the sub county work plans.



A nurse at Apopong Health Centre III attends to patients.

We didn't have any power at the health facility but now the entire health centre has been connected and we also have a standby solar. All these have been possible because of the efforts and lobbying skills of the community monitors. Whenever we have challenges with the community the community monitors act as intermediaries in bridging the gap. They take the feedback to the community and they defend us because they know what's actually going on. Their efforts have also brought client satisfaction because the people see us working well. Patients and health workers are now free with one another and now patients wanting services have increased. Before we were having between 20 – 30 deliveries every month but now deliveries are 50 – 60 which is double. We have also noticed a big difference in immunization coverage; it has increased from 60 – 85 percent.

However the biggest challenge we face is inadequate number of staff because for example we have only one enrolled nurse instead of three.

In my view, I think this community monitors representing the voices of community members by holding us accountable, has helped us provide better services and correct our mistakes and inefficiencies.



Timothy Omubulga, the In-charge Apopong Health Centre III in Pallisa District

Before we were having between 20 – 30 deliveries every month but now deliveries are 50 – 60 which is double. We have also noticed a big difference in immunization coverage; it has increased from 60 – 85 percent.



A maternity ward at Apopong Health Centre II fully connected with power



Obutet Health Centre II, On the right is the shade that was constructed to provide shelter to mothers

Okeny Nasir is a community monitor: As a community monitor, I monitor all public sectors like, health, education and government programmes like the Youth Livelihood Programme and Operation Wealth Creation. I work with a team of six community monitors, four men and two women. We faced a lot of resistance at first from leaders but we have been relentless in the quest for accountability and improved service delivery.

Mothers in our sub county had a big challenge because when they would bring their children to Obutet Health Centre II for immunization, there was nowhere to sit as they waited for the service. As community monitors with support from ActionAid, we raised our voice and the sub county budgeted for one to be constructed.



Mothers hold a message demanding for immunization shade

In April 2019, the sub county allocated six million shillings for the construction of an immunization shade but as community monitors, when we checked the materials to be used for construction, we found that they were half baked bricks. Together with the community, we immediately stopped them demanding that they use good quality bricks. We also realized that there was a problem with the foundation. All these were corrected by the contractor and now we have a standard immunization shade. Mothers can now wait comfortably for immunization of their children from the shade whether it is shining hot or raining.

The Out Patient Department of Obutet Health Centre II also had crumbled ceiling and a leaking roof which we alerted the sub county leadership and they allocated four million shillings for renovation. Now a new ceiling board has been put in place. The health centre also did not have power so phones would be used as touches at night. The health centre now has a solar system which is providing reliable power to the health centre. Twelve mattresses and beds were also procured by the district. We are now hoping to get delivery beds that friendly to mothers with disability.



Okeny Nasir, one of the Community Monitors

Obutet Health Centre II serves a population of 14,000 with some people travelling between 4-6 kms to access health services at the facility.

Some of the challenges we face include; lack of space for the patients during peak hours and rainy seasons, the patients crowd inside the health centre which interferes with our work. Besides this we also face the problem of inadequate staff and frequent drug shortages.

Community monitors have been working with us for some time; they come and administer a score card to find out what problems we are facing, after we share with them to come up with solutions. They lobby and advocate for support for the health centre from the sub county and district leadership. During the construction of the immunization shade for example, the community monitors helped us ensure quality work. They even stopped construction of the shade temporarily when they realized the constructor did not have BOQs.

Because of working together with the community monitors we have been able to get the shade properly constructed after overcoming several challenges. This has also fostered good working relationship between the health workers and the community because it reduced misconception especially in case of shortage of drugs they used to think we were taking out medicine. Dialogue meetings organized by ActionAid helped to clarify this.

We now use the community monitors to pass on information to the community to bring the children for immunization and to come for drugs when we have.



Isaac Olupot, Clinical Officer attending to a patient at the Health facility

We now use the community monitors to pass on information to the community to bring the children for immunization and to come for drugs when we have.



Isaac Olupot, Clinical Officer at Obutet Health Centre II,-Pallisa District

Because of working together with the community monitors we have been able to get the shade properly constructed after overcoming several challenges



Nasir, a community monitor interacts with Isaac the Clinical Officer at Obutet Health Centre II.

Education



Happy faces of pupils at Kachango Primary School at breaktime and below a primay six class in session



When I joined the school, I found the school implementing one of the ideas of the school monitors, fencing the school to stop encroachers. The community welcomed the idea because of the cry of the school management about trespassing and using money from the development fund, work started. Some desks were also brought to try and solve the problem of sitting on the floor.



Anthony a teacher, Pallisa Township Primary School.

Constant lobbying by the community monitors led to the construction of new pit latrine stanzas for boys and girls. We have been liaising as schools with the community monitors because they bring constructive ideas, educate staff and we work together for the betterment of the school. The school follows the advice of the community monitors. Because of this good working relationship, a lot has changed which includes;

- Improved relations between teachers, pupils and the community because of working together
- When we experience challenges, we sit and dialogue with the community members and share views affecting the school and as a result we have been able to witness all these changes.



Children drink water from the borehole that was constructed at the school



The school is also well fenced to help keep children safe at school

“We have been liaising as schools with the community monitors because they bring constructive ideas”.



Main entrance of Omalutan Primary School, Pallisa District

Construction of the two classroom block at Omalutan Primary School started in May 2018, but immediately we faced problems with the contractors who were not co-operative with the school administration and the community around. Materials like bricks were substandard, we rejected some of the bricks but they went ahead with the construction. We noticed that the building was substandard and one corner was not straight.

Teaming up with the community monitors, we forced them to break the corners and ensured that the engineer was on site to supervise the work. But when they started roofing, the wall also started developing cracks and we told them to mend the cracks. They hated our supervision claiming they were only answerable to the district that contracted them. However when we insisted with the community monitors they had no choice but to mend the cracks.

We have also written letters to the engineer that unless they put glasses we are not going to allow the building to be commissioned so up to now the block has not yet been handed to the community.

When we were facing the challenges of poor quality of works on the building, we teamed up with the community monitors and ActionAid facilitated dialogues – they assisted us to write a report which we provided to the sub county and the district.

This building when completed will add two extra classroom blocks to the school thereby reducing congestion.

However, the school still faces the problem of lack of enough latrines, those that are there have so many cracks and the school does not have staff quarters.

These community monitors are doing very good work helping people in the villages; they help us raise our voices to reach the upper offices. I also thank ActionAid for helping people down by teaching them about their rights that has helped them to come up.



Odeke Constant, Former Chairperson School Management Committee Omalutan Pri. School.

We are seven community monitors in Askin sub county, we learnt that Omalutan Primary School had cracks in the building under construction so we engaged the community through the use of a score card exercise which we used to generate the community complaints. We raised these complaints to the responsible authorities/duty bearers at sub county level who agreed that the building was not constructed well.

The district engineer was called and he summoned the constructor to fix the cracks and add another coat of paint.

When we engaged the constructor he admitted that he had done shoddy work and he re-did the work. As community monitors we are glad that our efforts were recognized and the constructor admitted that he did shoddy work in the school. He reconstructed the building by breaking the cracked points and re-doing it. The building now is repainted and okay waiting for a few corrections before it's commissioned for use.

As Community monitors we are supposed to be observant of government projects being implemented in our area of jurisdiction and ensuring the quality is not compromised.

The training we underwent with support from ActionAid prepared us to monitor government programmes. We underwent several trainings including on accountability, gender responsive services, good governance and accountability. With this training I have acquired several skills; I have gained communication skills, skills on report writing and monitoring government programmes.

I now follow up on all the government projects in my area. The Community appreciates our work and many are all eager to join the work of community monitors. However we are requesting ActionAid to increase the number of community monitors that are passionate about monitoring government projects.

One of the challenges we face as community monitors is that whenever we are monitoring government programmes, duty bearers/leaders think we are witch hunting them, so they go around discrediting us while others threaten our lives.

What enables me to continue with this work despite these challenges is that I am passionate about my work as a community monitor and I ignore all the intimidations and threats.



Sam Opolot, Community Monitor



A two classroom block that was constructed at Omalutan Primary School.



Katiryo Primary School has an enrollment of over 1,000 pupils.

Katiryo Primary School has an enrolment of 1,029 pupils but it faces several challenges which include lack of enough pit latrines. This has necessitated the male teachers to share with boys and female teachers with girls. "We have also the problems of classroom blocks which collapsed due to the heavy downpour. As a school we communicated to the community monitors as they visited us. We gave them reports and they moved to relevant offices for support. They specifically lobbied the sub county and now we have a five stanza pit latrine constructed specifically for the boys".



Steven Kiyind, the Deputy Headteacher, Katiryo P/S. In the background is the new pit latrine

However we still need more pit latrines because currently we have 13 stanzas which cater for boys and girls which are not enough. The teachers have no pit latrines within the school so they have to go up to the staff quarters. We are also liaising with the community monitors to

have a new classroom block to replace the one which collapsed due to heavy rains and the district has promised to do something about it. Enock Busita – sub county community monitor.w

Mr. Enock, a community monitor says that "In this school there was the problem of lack of enough pit latrines to sustain the pupil population which forced the pupils to do open defecation in nearby gardens. When we heard of this problem we rushed to ActionAid and we organize a community dialogue, issues were raised, we moved up to sub county level targeting relevant target bearers and we continued to the district and there was an immediate response and a new five stanza pit latrine was constructed which has reduced the problem".



Enock Pader, Community Monitor Buseta Subcounty



The Community Monitors are now lobbying for the reconstruction of this classroom at Katiry Primary School block which collapsed due to heavy rains

There has been a very good trend in terms of education financing because government has been increasing funding to the sector every financial year. In 2018 -2019 and the financial year before has seen an increase funding for Universal Primary Education and development grants. The funding increased from 12 billion shillings to 13 billion this financial year which has been very welcome news to the sector.

This increase in funding can be partly attributed to increased advocacy and lobbying efforts of the people for better public services because of the taxes they pay.

In terms infrastructure development we have tried our level best but resources are still inadequate because the schools are many. We can only afford two classroom blocks per school in each financial year but this is watered down by the ever increasing number of enrollment.

Looking at latrine stanzas, we used to have a ratio of 1:70 but now it is 1:50 and in terms of class room blocks, the last financial year we were able to build about two class room blocks in four schools. This financial year we are focusing on classrooms that require renovation. We have 76 primary schools in Pallisa district

We use pupil classroom ratio to inform our interventions for construction of new classroom blocks. However to meet the requirement of enough classroom blocks, we would need almost a billion shillings only for this for five years to meet this ever increasing enrollment.

We have had engagements with the communities and issues of few classroom blocks and other challenges are often raised. We listen to the pleas of the people and try

to ensure that we meet some of their expectations.

I have noticed that areas with trained community monitors, the local people have increased and better lobbying and advocacy skills for quality public services and demand for accountability compared to other areas. For example when a classroom block is blown off by wind; they quickly alert the authorities and keep following up until the building is roofed again.

I commend ActionAid for promoting good governance in Pallisa district through empowering the people about their rights, importance of paying taxes and following up their leaders demanding accountability. This has greatly improved the delivery of public services and its efficiency. There is need to increase the number of community members and the areas of operation so that more rights holders can hold the duty bearers accountable in the provision of public health services.



Mukesi Robert- District planner, Pallisa district

Achievements

Through these engagements, using community monitors and young people we have been able to register some achievements mainly in the education and health sectors.

- Most of the health centers have greatly improved most of them didn't have electricity but now they have solar panels, the hygiene and sanitation situation was really bad but now they have running tap water, pit latrines and staff houses have been constructed improving access to services.
- Issue of poor attitude of health workers and absenteeism has been solved in some health facilities by installing the biometric meter machine and in some places register books are being used. All these have improved attendance by up to 60%.
- Improvement overall in service delivery and in education attendance, retention and school completion has greatly improved because of better facilities like washrooms and pit latrines for girls have been put in place leading to improved menstrual hygiene.
- Improvement in recruitment of teachers on a replacement basis which reduced on the pupil teacher ratio – This practice can be used as a benchmark for the neighboring districts to adopt because of the challenges of recruiting new teachers.
- Improvement in the enrolment of the girl child because of better facilities and recruitment of senior women teachers and also performance has also improved and target areas have started registering pupils getting division one Primary Leaving Examinations. This has been made possible with support from community monitors, dialogues involving different stakeholders.

Central to these successes is the empowerment of the people and they have been at the forefront of demanding for their rights, accountability and improved public service delivery. As ActionAid, we have been facilitating the process. The young people we work with are really passionate about their work, they know the situation and how it affects them and they are passionate in advocating for improved service delivery and they do all these voluntarily.

Challenges

The shrinking engagement space has been proving a big challenge for advocacy work to flourish. Because of our constant demand for accountability, we have been tagged as witch hunters and enemies by the duty bearers. However we are overcoming these through constant dialogues with the duty bearers and they are beginning to understand that we are allies.

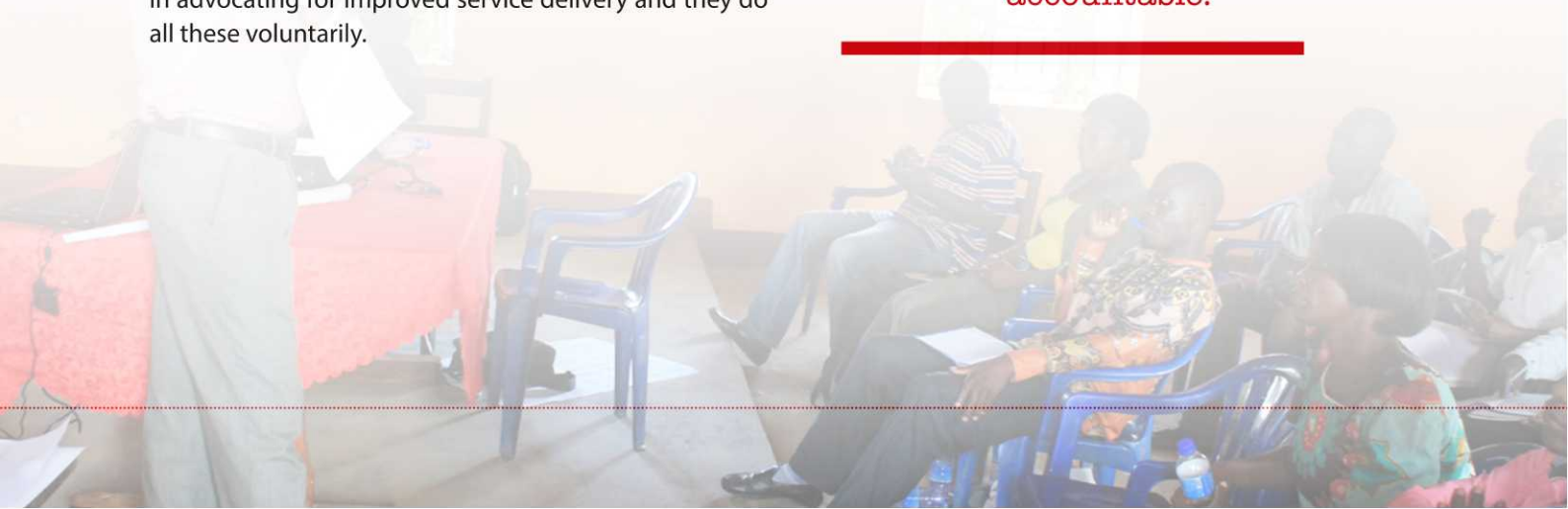
Low commitment by leaders to fulfill their promises and pledges is also another challenge.

Young people who are at the core of the advocacy movement are highly mobile which has negatively affected our work because we have to keep on training more youth every time one leaves.

Way Forward

There is need to hold everyone accountable including the rights holders but while it is easy to hold the duty bearers accountable. Until we have a policy framework that can support good governance and public service delivery and efficient resource allocation then we will continue having challenges in our public service delivery and accountability.

ActionAid will continue with empowerment, capacity building, mobilization of the people to demand and challenge power. ActionAid will continue advocating for improved resource allocation from the centre to lower local governments where it is needed the most. This will ensure quality public services because now the people can hold the leaders accountable.





Women Empowered by ActionAid speak up with confidence during dialogue meeting organised by ActionAid in Pallisa.



Some of the trained Community monitors



Stakeholder meeting





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