

Purpose of the Note

International Social Accountability and Accreditation Think Tank (ISAAT)

In 2021, the AFMC ISAATT hosted three virtual discussions with over 100 participants from 30 countries. Participants included learners, policy makers, faculty, clinicians, community members, advocates and leaders in social accountability.

This briefing note highlights the discussions as part of the third and final session on April 7, 2021.

The objective of the Think Tank was to create a momentum towards a global initiative to ensure accreditation systems of medical schools are designed and used to better respond to priority health needs and challenges of societies today and in the future.

The session included a message by the IFMSA President, summary of Session 2 (March 24) and breakout groups which explored the following key questions:

- What kinds of actions need to be considered in terms of advocacy, capacity building and action research?
- What will we do to work together?
- What will you do now?

Having a conversation is not the same as writing a summary. We edited the document to make it as succinct as possible. We did not intentionally omit any substantive comments. We underscore that this is a summary of a brief, far-reaching discussion. In sum, our intention was to flag and document some important issues as part of the International Social Accountability and Accreditation Think Tank (ISAATT).

Summary

This briefing note starts by highlighting selected comments and action items drawn from the discussion on April 7, 2021. A consolidated report will be made available to all participants and will include a request to confirm their commitment for implementing actions.

Summary from the Collaborative Dialogue

- We need to re-examine the definition of “social accountability” in our new environment considering the impact of pandemics, climate change, health equity, and the global social justice movement.
- We recognize that accreditation is an important tool to strengthen the effectiveness of social accountability within a medical school.
- We need to create metrics to measure our ability to be effective as socially accountable institutions and health professionals; and commit ourselves to learning and improving as we proceed.
- We need infrastructure to collect and manage equity-based data; we also need to make a deliberate and conscious effort to collect it.
- We need to understand collaboration and how to authentically engage **all** partners within the pentagram.
- We need to acknowledge and respect that each region, country and institution is at different stages and places of engaging with social accountability. As part of the movement, a structure and system of support will be essential to share best practices.
- ABCDE: A commitment to advancing the global social accountability movement was identified: advocacy and awareness; building capacity; collaboration and communication; data collection and action research; and equity

Exploring a Commitment to Social Accountability (ABCDEs)

Advocacy and Awareness

- Engage with key policy actors and the public to raise awareness about social accountability. The goal is to promote strategic, equity-centred and evidence-informed investments in social accountability.
- Ensuring a diversity of social accountability advocates including community and patient representatives while engaging multiple levels of government and stakeholders is key to our work. Social accountability must be interdisciplinary and interprofessional to ensure that we are ultimately understanding and addressing community identified needs.
- Organize and participate in events that bring together social accountability advocates, researchers and key policy actors. Raise awareness of priority social accountability themes such as climate change.

Building Capacity at all Levels

- Strengthening our collective expertise in social accountability will require intentional and focused training particularly in advancing accreditation standards. This training requires guidelines, frameworks and metrics to support accreditation teams and institutions reporting on the standards.
- Accreditation bodies should have a task force to assess implementation and incorporate stakeholder experience into the process.
- Formal structures should be established to enable better collaboration between the health sector, academic institutions and community-based organizations, particularly those representing equity-deserving groups; to date, these relationships have been ad-hoc and informal.

Collaboration and Communication

- Inspire and train the next generation of leadership in social accountability by collaborating with learners to gain insight on their experiences and supporting their advocacy efforts. In addition, creating mentorship opportunities and advancing community engaged learning spaces across the continuum of education.
- Engage with institutional leaders to gain support in advancing social accountability across the institution (not only in undergraduate medical education).
- Engage with the One Health Initiative and other potential partners such as those focusing on the Social Determinants of Health

Data Collection and Action Research

- Data is necessary to gain knowledge and mobilize resources to implement solutions. Moving forward, we need to create a place and space to share social accountability research, resources, metrics and evidence that harmonizes data collection tools; and emphasizes the importance of partnerships that foster equity and outcomes that facilitate knowledge translation.
- Areas of inquiry must be driven by and created together with communities. Moving forward, we need to support the advancement of multi-centre research to learn how medical schools and health partners collaborate and advance a social accountability mandate.

Equity is Central

- Equity considerations in health systems continue to be a focus. Equity-based approaches in an organization are influenced by establishing a culture of collaboration rather than a culture of compliance. Local engagement is key. Ensuring that people feel they are contributing to solutions can be effective, although such an approach can be slower and more resource-intensive.

Looking Forward

While progress has been made in integrating social accountability within accreditation standards, we have not paid enough attention to key issues or sustained enough momentum to address them across the continuum of education. Authentically engaging communities and developing metrics, for example, were identified as key areas for focused attention and consideration in moving forward as part of a local and global social accountability movement.

Much of our effort and attention so far has been on identifying best practices and adopting social accountability accreditation standards, but we will need to plan further ahead by encouraging research on social accountability and influencing funding agencies to develop grants for social accountability.

In addition, advocacy will be a key function of our future work including ensuring social accountability standards are pivotal and central to key stakeholders including the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME) and accreditation agencies.

It has been challenging not only to sustain the necessary momentum to social accountability for institutions, but also to address equity issues impacting our communities, learners and health outcomes. Equity will need to be a core principle in our long-term planning and will require increased effort across systems that are already strained, particularly throughout the pandemic.

The new strategic priorities of AFMC adopting social accountability as part of their strategic plan was identified as a model for national organizations to embed principles of equity, community engagement, advocacy and inclusion across our institutions, the academy and health systems.

There are several organisations, institutions and networks whose contributions will be important to engage and coordinate as we move forward in framing a global plan of action to implement the recommendations made during the ISAATT.

Additional supports were identified to support learners advance their skills, confidence and competency in social accountability

- Establish fellowship programs and postdocs opportunities in social accountability to advance scholarly activity
- Identify funding (i.e. bursaries) focusing on social accountability for learners
- Create social accountability streams within the curriculum for graduate training in health professions (masters and PhD programs)

The ISAATT Summit demonstrated the individual and institutional commitment to supporting a local and global movement for social accountability embedded in advocacy and awareness, building capacity, authentic community engagement, evidence-informed data collection and equity.

Next Step

A consolidated report will be made available to all participants and will include a request to confirm their commitment for implementing actions.