Accountable Now 2025 Annual Report

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Message from the Executive Director

Right from the start, 2025 was one of the hardest years civil society has faced in a generation. But civil society does what it does best, it focused on the people and the community. In response, our Members and Partners sought to strengthen collaboration and network collective action. Our network doubled down on key commitments to localization and people-driven work and sought to thoughtfully respond with timely decisions and transitions.

Civic space continued to shrink across the world, with our Member CIVICUS reporting that over 90% of the global population lived in countries where civic space was obstructed, repressed, or closed. An unprecedented part of shrinking civic space included global funding cuts. Early in the year, USAID, the largest funder of global civil society activity, was dismantled almost overnight. Soon after, European and other OECD governments began announcing major cuts to their ODA budget for the years ahead. As a result, thousands of organizations and networks across the sector were left with no choice but to significantly change their programming or close their doors. Although all CSOs weren't impacted directly, the ripple effects of these cuts and closures were felt by civil society at every level.

Some of our longstanding Members and Partners had weathered devastating cuts and democratic retrenchment before. Others experienced these shocks for the first time. And no one could predict the road ahead, especially in isolation. So we brought our community together to trade information and reflect on what might be on the horizon via Member-Only calls, our AGM, projects, and key virtual and in-person events throughout the year. A key event included our virtual Dynamic Accountability Dialogue: Trust in a Trustless World, where we brought together some of the sector's brightest leaders to help situate and emphasize the importance of people-centered accountability in this shifting landscape.

What we heard was consistent across regions and issue areas: reserves drained overnight, programs paused mid-stride, and cuts from the UN and European donors piling on top of an already brutal year. We also heard something we've heard before. The first departments cut in a crisis are almost always the ones focused on accountability, safeguarding, and MEAL, the functions Accountable Now exists to support.

We responded the way we know how: by showing up for our network with as much generosity as possible. We built a public resource tracker to help organizations navigate the fallout in real time. We convened Members over the year to triangulate information and think through what comes next, together. In this year, Accountable Now also had to pivot as an organization. While our flagship Membership program continued to support international, and increasingly more regional and local, organizations, we've also led key projects to support wider transitions and reforms to create a more enabling environment for CSOs.

We participated in many global convenings with roles to support, facilitate, and engage with our Members, partners, and the wider civil society ecosystem. You found AN colleagues at OECD's Civil Society Days, where I moderated the primary panel on civil society accountability and at many other events including International Civil Society Week, United Nations General Assembly, Commission on the Status of Women, and the People Power Conference. We partnered with numerous philanthropies and networks, to support participatory approaches, youth-led networks, confronting shrinking civic space, people-centered funding, civil society ecosystems, and safeguarding standards, all of which, and more, you will read about later. Major themes for the year across our projects, partnerships, and Membership activities were: trust, leadership, decision-making, safeguarding, youth/children, and informal society and social movements.

While still maintaining our scrappy roots and ambitions to grow via partnership not empire-building, we managed to secure our highest revenue year yet and our first surplus in five years. Our team expanded from three full-time staff to a core team of five, working across five countries. Our Independent Review Panel welcomed five new members with an increased mandate beyond individual Member review to provide holistic coaching to civil society practitioners and play a role in the sector's thought leadership on people-centered accountability. We welcomed six new Board members, saying farewell to several longtime Board members. Our new Board, consisting of 55% Member representatives, consists of incredible diversity from age and nationality to sectors and skill sets. Our community continued to grow too, as we welcomed five new Members and deepened our collaboration with our Global Standard Partners (aka our sister accountability networks). Our Members tapped into our team's insights and experience across a range of topics including board diversity, civic space, anti-corruption, change management, and more.

Looking ahead to 2026, we began preparations for Accountable Now's 20th anniversary, where we will celebrate our civil society-founded, funded, and led platform for its contributions to sector shifts and organizational change across hundreds of organizations and practitioners. Across all of these strands of our growing community, we retraced our roots and reconnected with a core part of our original mission: CSOs come to Accountable Now out of their own volition to do good better. This intrinsic motivation as our uniting cause holds us together even as political winds and trends shift around us, acting as a unique and privileged entry point to be a trusted partner to civil society around the world. Reflecting on the full year, and writing this from where we stand today, I'm still taken aback by the generosity and responsiveness of our community. Even in a year like this one, our community showed up for each other and that matters. As you continue to read this report, look out for that red thread. Our community and our intrinsic, uniting motivation to do good better are our greatest strengths, strengths that will prepare and carry us for the work that's ahead.

in solidarity + partnership,
Megan

In 2025, we worked with 42 Members + Partners!

accountabilitylab
actionaid
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
AGNA
Australian Council For International Development
Balkan Civil Society Development Network
CADEF
CDP Center for Disaster Philanthropy
ChildFund Alliance
ChildFund Australia
ChildFund International
ChildFund New Zealand
Children & Young People Living for Peace
ChorogUsan for children
CIVICUS
CCC
គណៈកម្មាធិការសហប្រតិបត្តិការជើម្បីកម្ពុជា
Cooperation Committee for Cambodia
Comité de Coopération Pour le Cambodge
DENIVA
educo
fondation BOTNAR
Funder Safeguarding Collaborative
GLOBAL STANDARD FOR CSO ACCOUNTABILITY
HUMANITY UNITED
International Civil Society Centre
MIO-ECSDE
Open Government Partnership
THE DAVID & LUCILE Packard Foundation
PHE ETHIOPIA consortium
PLAN INTERNATIONAL
re+ connect
RENDIR CUENTAS
RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT THE YOUTH-LED DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
SCOUTS Creating a Better World
SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES INTERNATIONAL
台灣兒童暨家庭扶助基金會
TECHO
Terre des Hommes International Federation
TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL the global coalition against corruption
Viwango Towards Civil Society Excellence
VUKA! COALITION FOR CIVIC ACTION
Warando
WorldYWCA
Youth Path Agency

Our Flagship Offer: Membership Program

Members' Practice: Accountability Scrubs and Reporting

Accountability Scrubs

We conducted Board and Governance Scrubs on our Full Members, taking a close look at their bylaws, governance structures, and related documents. We drew primarily on publicly available records, and also reached out to Members to receive additional sources, to understand how organizations ensure accountability at the leadership and governance level. Some key insights include:

- Across the 12 governance categories examined, documentation was fully in place about 75% of the time, with election processes and term limits fully documented across all Members scrubbed.
- Board transparency was strong, with over 90% of organizations publicly publishing individual board member names, biographies, and/or photos.
- The most common gap was clarity on how organizations handle complaints.
- In each Scrub, the AN team provided recommendations tailored to each Member. The most frequent recommendation was to make board meeting minutes or high-level summaries available publicly or upon request.

Member Reporting

Four Members submitted Accountability Reports and Action Plans: ChildFund Australia, Educo, TFCF, and CIVICUS. From the Reports reviewed, we see that our Members are innovating on their accountability practices and staying true to their values even while reflecting on the challenges that they encountered, from bad faith whistleblowing, to financial constraints, to having to make difficult decisions to ensure sustainability.

Support Requests from Members

Members turned to Accountable Now for a variety of support requests. As we continued to roll out and promote our different services, we also saw a slow but steady upwards uptake. In 2025, we fulfilled dozens of support requests from Members.
Staff favorites include:

- Helpdesk on 'Building a Remote Work Culture'
- Presentation on AI use in qualitative research and analysis
- Co-created Case Study on Safeguarding
- Workshop on how to carry out skill mapping
- Support from our Independent Review Panel in reviewing a Governance Manual

Welcome New Members!

Children & Young People Living for Peace

CADEF

re+ connect

Warando

Youth Path Agency

Spaces for Members

Every quarter, we held **Global Funding Cuts Network Calls** and scenario-planning sessions, creating a trusted space for Members to make sense of the USAID/ODA funding crisis together and think through what resilience actually looks like in practice.

We held our **Annual General Meeting** on June 25, 2025, bringing together AN Members, AN Trustees, Independent Review Panelists, and the AN Secretariat. In addition to standing agenda items (including organizational updates and financial overview), we held three key discussions for collective scenario analysis: Dynamic Accountability in a changing landscape; Bridging formal and informal civil society; and Intrinsic motivation and champions incentivizing and mobilizing civil society today. *Read more in our 2025 AGM Report!*

At our 2025 AGM, we reported back on our 2024 priorities:

- Raising AN's profile among funders: In 2024 we said we would ensure more funders know about AN and the value of our network, commitments, and approaches. Since then, we have ongoing projects with Packard Civil Society Leadership Team, the Funder Safeguarding Collaborative, Fondation Botnar, and Humanity United. We have also led meetings with South African philanthropies. In the future, we will leverage recognition for further advocacy for Dynamic Accountability practices and recognition of Membership in AN.
- Sharpening our data and analysis skills: In 2024 we said that we would be working on a safeguarding tool mapping, and consider how we can review localization/locally-led metric review and commentary. Since then, we have ongoing deep dives into commitments on responsible leadership and responsive decision-making, mapping of safeguarding practices, and technical support provided to Members. In the future, we will begin research into localization metrics and finish off our deep dives and safeguarding practice mapping.

Office Visits!

Megan and Katie visiting the World YWCA Team in Geneva!





Katie and Board Member Mary at the SOS CVI Office in Vienna!

Dynamic Accountability: Webinars + Resources

We expanded our reach and presence beyond our core Membership this year, with workshops, dialogues, and resources for our Members' networks and collaborators and other key partners in our work. These included:

Global Accountability Month: In October, the typical Global Accountability Week extended into a month-long celebration. With AGNA (CIVICUS), RACI, RC, and OECD, we curated activities and resources for a virtual global campaign. The month included 3 participatory online activities, 10+ tools and good practices on DA, and many opportunities for engagement. The conversation continued at International Civil Society Week in Bangkok, *more in the next section!*

Dynamic Accountability Dialogue: Trust in a Trustless World:
In our keynote event of the year, we brought together experts from the Atlantic Institute, CHS Alliance, Rendir Cuentas (co-host), and Warande. With an audience of over 70, the panelists shared from their experiences on practical ways CSOs can rebuild trust, hitting on themes of taking positions, upholding principles of collaboration and mutual accountability, and centering truth.

> *"Now, more than ever, it is important to connect with our primary constituents and the people we claim to represent. It is vital to tell them the truth. If we are going to rebuild trust, we must rebuild truth." – Anabel Cruz, Rendir Cuentas*

Central American Dynamic Accountability Dialogue:
Co-hosted by IRP Member Brendan Halloran and Global Standard Partner, Rendir Cuentas, this space was open for Central American organizations to intimately discuss how the global funding cuts were uniquely impacting their work.

Community-Centered Design Workshop:
Board Member Sarah Rita Kattan hosted this workshop, diving into how the methodology can strengthen accountability to stakeholders.

Safeguarding Case Study: Working in a co-creation process with SOS Children's Villages International, this case study documented steps in their safeguarding journey. It was a key piece in acknowledging past failures, addressing root causes, and fostering lasting change through a dynamic approach to accountability.

We also hosted a panel event to complement the work of the Safeguarding Case Study. With over 80 participants in this webinar, our Members SOS CVI and Educo, as well as Partner Funder Safeguarding Collaborative, joined on the panel, moderated by Marlen Mondaca, chair of our Independent Review Panel.

Crisis Communications Webinar:
Three experts in the crisis communications field and friends of AN volunteered their time to guide our network through tools for building trust and accountability in uncertain times.

Manual de los 12 Compromisos de rendición de cuentas:
We published our 12 Commitments Handbook in Spanish!

In-Person Events + Influence

International Civil Society Week

Bangkok, Thailand

Megan, Bao Han, and Yomna attended the ICSW 2025. With Global Standard Partners Rendir Cuentas and BCSDN, alongside AGNA, AN co-led a session to wrap up Global Accountability Month — From Principles to Action: Advancing Dynamic Accountability across regions. A highly practical session where participants broke into various groups to learn about the Global Standard for CSO Accountability and how people-centered accountability is a major tool in the fight against civic space.



OECD Civil Society Days

Paris, France

Megan moderated a keynote panel at the OECD's Civil Society Days, which included participation from longtime partner and friend Fredrick Olinga, Executive Director of DENIVA (a fellow co-host of the Global Standard). The panel focused on accountability as the third pillar of the OECD DAC's development assistance framework, and the one with the least progress and commitment from donor governments.

Discussion turned to CSO self-regulation, the Global Standard, and the relationship between accountability and shrinking civic space; several speakers made the case that cross-border relationships between organizations, backed by people-centered, stakeholder-driven accountability, offer real protection where civic space is closing. Leaders from other Global Standard Partner networks, including Warande and Rendir Cuentas, helped to keep people-centered accountability as a high priority on the agenda throughout the two days.



ActionAid People Powered Conference

Copenhagen, Denmark

Bao Han, Megan, and Zipporah attended the People Powered Conference with the Collective Action Assistance Fund. The conference, “Towards a People’s Peace,” brought together activists, peacebuilders, civil society organizations, academics, donors, and government representatives to discuss the role of social movements, activists, and civil society in advancing peace, justice, and democratic participation.

AN ASIDE ON UNGA

United Nations General Assembly High-Level Week + Climate Week

New York City, USA

At UNGA and Climate Week in New York, we heard a lot of familiar talking points and not much genuine reflection from the UN on reform, a gap that felt hard to ignore given everything UN80 forced these institutions to confront. The absence of US engagement was a real barrier across civil society conversations that week, especially where the US was expected to take up the mantle of leadership in key spaces (e.g., the G20). In a landscape of wishy-washy events and dancing around the elephants in the room, one event stood out: a gathering hosted by the Big 6 (an alliance of leading international youth-serving organizations including our Members World YWCA and World Scouting). The event drew more than 300 people, many of them young, with a strong focus on collective action and community-based initiatives. At the event, the WHO's Director General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, accepted an award that night as, by some accounts, was presented with the Global Youth Mobilizer Award for his foundational role and early investments in a major youth network that aimed to empower young leaders during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.







During UNGA, Megan met up with many Members, including World YWCA (left), re+connect (middle), and World Scouting (left and right).

"After more than a decade of steady attendance, I'm often uninspired by events at UNGA, and frankly, by UN leaders who are convening the General Assembly. I had hoped to see the crushing realities of 2025 motivate more sincere reflections and dialogues, especially amidst the UN's major funding crisis which prompted massive layoffs and restructuring of the 80-year-old institution. But these hopes were all but dashed, until I heard Dr. Tedros' remarks at the Big 6 event. He spoke plainly to a large mixed audience, comprised significantly of young people, about the crises facing the WHO and the UN as a whole. He noted how hard it was to say goodbye to nearly 30% of the WHO's staff within weeks of UNGA. In a speech full of plain language and humility, he shared the stakes with participants and made a direct appeal to the room to help him and his remaining team make the case for why the WHO still matters. These remarks, and especially his humility, have stayed with me for a long time. In my view, this was a perfect example of the kind of courageous, bold, and also humble leadership that our sector requires today."

- Megan Colnar

Projects + Partnerships

Research on Philanthropic Funding, *with the Center for Disaster Philanthropy*

We partnered with CDP to conduct a study: Understanding Philanthropic Funding in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies. The work explores why funding remains limited despite escalating global needs and what could unlock new or expanded engagement.

Practice-Focused Research on Funders' Safeguarding Policies and Approaches, *with the Funder Safeguarding Collaborative*

We collaborated with the Funder Safeguarding Collaborative to deliver the most in-depth research to date on funders' safeguarding approaches in grantmaking. Our report, Safeguarding in Philanthropy: Safer Grant-Making for Greater Impact, explores how funders can create safer, more equitable practices that protect people and communities while strengthening organizations and maximizing impact. This work will continue into 2026, to co-create a standard for funders and ensure it is clear, relevant, and useful.

- Key findings from the report include:
  - A trust-based relationship between funders and their grantee partners contributes to promoting safer practices — through encouraging grantee partners to share more about realities on the ground, why practices have been implemented, and report openly when incidents occur.
  - Clarity remains much needed from funders since grantee partners are often unsure about requirements and expectations at all stages, from due diligence, monitoring, resourcing, through to incident reporting.
  - Safeguarding remains under-resourced, and that organizations in the UK — where safeguarding actions are mandated by law — are actually receiving less funding for their safeguarding work in comparison to their counterparts elsewhere.

Inducting the New European Scout Committee, with the European Scout Bureau

Megan and Katie hit the road to support our Member World Scouting, with the World Scouting European Scout Committee Induction in Geneva. They worked alongside the European Scout Bureau to induct the seven-person board. As all but one of the members were new, activities ranged from team building and deciphering the role of the board to skills mapping and good governance in shifting tides.



Leadership and Steering Group Session,

with the Vuka! Coalition

Accountable Now supported the Vuka! Steering Group, with Bao Han facilitating its learning session around what leadership looks like for networks and coalitions today, and how the Coalition can use these lessons to strengthen its work. It was a key milestone for a recently transitioned Steering Group and a coalition keen to continue evolving as the sector transforms around us. We also helped the Steering Group explore and test a consent-based decision-making framework to more rapidly understand perspectives and make collective decisions.



Collective Action Assistance Fund (CAAF),

with Humanity United

We continued to accompany the CAAF incubated by Humanity United. This year, we supported the Grantmaking Review Panel (GRP) in their decision-making process on grant awards, first in Copenhagen in April, and later in Nairobi in December. Midyear in July, we also supported their learning and strategy review session held in-person in Cape Town. As a result of our partnerships, the fund was running smoothly by the launch of its first round of funding, especially by emphasizing some of the features that we heavily prioritized in the early design stages — for instance, limited funder interference and decision-making, deferring instead to a highly competent, diverse panel of social movement leaders and supporters.

Social Movement Accountability Learning and Leadership (SMALL) Project

In 2025 we kicked off the SMALL Project, with support from Humanity United. Yomna Ahmed led this project, which included desk research and listening sessions. Learning from movement leaders and activists, this phase gathered data to examine accountability needs of social movements across twenty countries.

City Shapers Facilitation,

with Fondation Botnar

In 2024, we supported Fondation Botnar to bring together a group of young people from across their grantees working on Cities and Urban Development to gather at the World Urban Forum in Cairo. After connecting and seeing the opportunity for continued peer exchange across the WUF cohort, Fondation Botnar asked AN to support the design and enabling conditions for a virtual community for this youth cohort and their peers. We facilitated the co-creation of community guidelines and collective agenda-setting, while creating workshops and supporting independent hubs for further learning and creating. In 2025, this community's priority was on collective projects and exchange.
Watch one of their projects – a campaign for World Cities Day! →



Organizational Updates

Meet our 2025 Team

The Accountable Now Secretariat was vibrant and growing in 2025. We were supported by stellar part-time staff (Joci, Shalom, Mika, Ayo, Yomna) and fabulous undergraduate interns (Mirjam, Anne, Olivier, Patricia). The Secretariat team grew from three full-time staff to a core team of five:



Megan Colnar
Executive Director
Based in: NYC, USA



Zipporah Ongwenyi
Senior Director of Community, Learning, and Strategic Initiatives
Based in: Nairobi, Kenya



Bao Han Tran Le
Head of Accountability Practices and Reporting
Based in: Berlin, Germany



Onesimus John Waino
Associate Chief of Staff and Administration
Based in: Abuja, Nigeria



Katie McCarthy
Communications and Community Engagement Coordinator
Based in: The Randstad, Netherlands

Enhancing the Direction of the Independent Review Panel

In 2025, our Independent Review Panel welcomed five new members: Matthew, Sean, Carlo, Zack, and Tina. The new Panel members were recruited as part of a plan to expand the IRP's mandate beyond reviewing and supporting Members on their accountability practices. In 2026, the IRP will continue to strengthen its work on thought leadership on civil society accountability across the sector. Our current IRP members include the following experts:

- **Afërdita Pustina** (Independent)
- **Angela Crack** (University of Portsmouth)
- **Brendan Halloran** (Independent)
- **Carlo Merla** (Niras Consulting)
- **Marlen Mondaca, chair** (Kinvia)
- **Marina Kobzeva** (MapAction)
- **Matthew Cruse** (Global Communities)
- **Muhammad Taher** (South Asian Disaster Management Committee)
- **Sean Mulkerne** (Independent)
- **Tina Ajuonuma** (the Better Org)
- **Zack Braustein** (Climate Connector)

Governance

The Accountable Now Board of Trustees consists of 11 members, with the six new trustees appointed at the June AGM (designated by an asterisk below). Two new committees were also established: Governance and Membership.

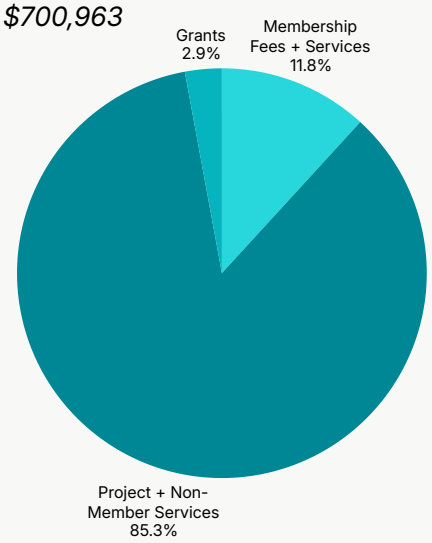
- **Babacar Ndong** (Educo)
- **Caleb Jamal Masusu*** (Restless Development)
- **Javier Gonzalez Gomez*** (Independent)
- **Jean Scrimgeour** (Accountability Lab)
- **Jesselina Rana*** (CIVICUS)
- **Mary Brezovich** (SOS Children's Villages International)
- **Patricia Lerner*** (Independent)
- **Rachel Smith, chair** (Independent)
- **Sarah Rita Kattan*** (World Scouting)
- **Vanessa Goas, treasurer** (Independent)
- **Violet Tsagka*** (Independent)

Operations

- In 2025, AN collected nearly $701k USD in revenue (74% increase from 2024), which was its strongest financial year with significant increases in contracting revenue and smaller grants. The year ended with a surplus for the first time in many years, totaling nearly $38k with ~$147k in reserves or the equivalent of 2.7 months of operating capital.
- It was the first year of AN's finances totally in dollars, making the production of figures and reporting much simpler. Over the course of the year, AN also worked closely with the Accountability Lab team to streamline financial monitoring and reporting to simplify and automate these processes wherever possible. Records preserved in both QuickBooks and Google Drive have been reviewed by Accountability Lab (fiscal spnosor) and DRW (AN's external finance partner). AN's books will be audited as part of Accountability Lab's upcoming audit (scheduled for March - April 2026).
- AN continued winding down its operations in Germany, expected to be completed in 2026. It also registered a nonprofit charitable entity in the US, which is still awaiting its own 501(c)(3) status (deadline: December 2026); in the meantime, AN operates under the 501(c)(3) status of its fiscal sponsor, Accountability Lab (AL).

2025 Revenue

Total: $700,963



2025 Expenditures

Total: $663,394

