

Annual Workshop 2020

**OUTCOMES, TAKEAWAYS,
HIGHLIGHTS**



**Accountable
Now**

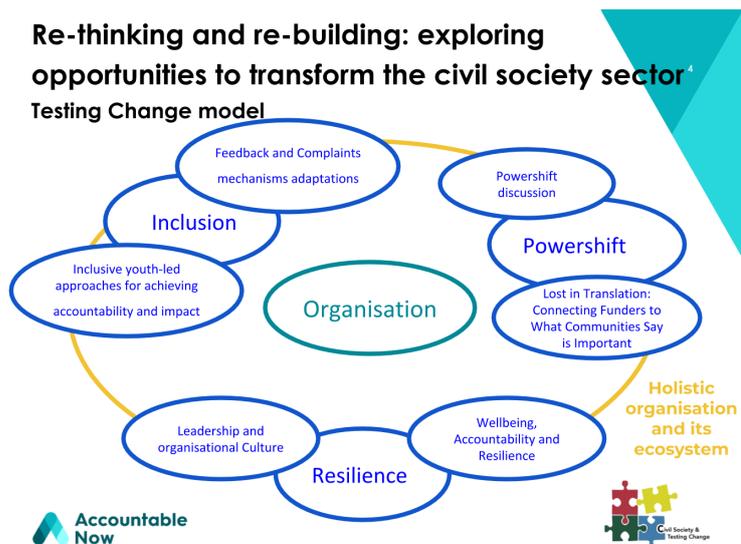
GLOBAL STANDARDS LOCAL TRUST

THE WORKSHOP

In September we shared our Annual Workshop concept note, calling for civil society actors to help us to co-create the workshop. We didn't expect such a great response: more than 20 organisations reached out to us and provided their insights that helped shape our workshop agenda!

From the **17-19 November**, together with [Testing Change](#), we co-hosted our first virtual Annual Workshop. [World YWCA](#), [Restless Development](#), [Global Fund for Children](#), [Global Giving](#), [Global Fund for Community Foundations](#), [Success Capital Africa](#), [Femplatz](#), [World Vision International](#), and Mayumi Fuchi (practitioner-researcher at the University of Birmingham) contributed with their experiences and facilitated sessions addressing three thematic areas pertinent to the civil society sector: **Inclusion**, **Powershift** and **Resilience**.

THE CONTEXT



Civil Society Organisations' (CSOs) internal and external contexts evolved at an unprecedented speed with the crisis provoked by the Covid-19 pandemic. The civil society sector had to: swiftly adapt to a fast-paced and very uncertain environment; operate with limited funding due to the pandemic redirecting a significant portion of resources; deal with persistent closing or shrinking of civic space due to states of emergency and implement more and stronger safeguarding measures, not o-

nly in communities but also for staff.

Whilst the situation seemed overwhelming, it also proved that the sector can dramatically change the way it operates when it faces chaos, uncertainty, and disruption. Throughout the workshop, the linkages among inclusion, powershift and resilience came naturally, as we took a holistic perspective and applied the following approaches:

- Understanding the need for a paradigm shift in ourselves, our organizations and the sector.
- Each session as an integral part of the whole workshop
- It was not about one workshop or meeting – what would be our individual plans and accountability going forward?

DAY 1: INCLUSION

We kicked off the first day with Bonnie Koenig, founder and lead of Testing Change. It was important for us to acknowledge the dramatic change happening at an unprecedented high speed in the sector: the transitions we have had to make during the pandemic, and conversations our organizations are having, have highlighted the importance of basic human values that have traditionally been attributed to different groups.

For example, traits traditionally seen as feminine (sharing of power, humility, listening, compassion, tending to individuals and relationships) have helped many organizations (and countries) to navigate the pandemic in positive ways. Some traits traditionally viewed as being for youth (challenging traditions and being willing to try new things) have also come to the forefront. Thinking of core organizational traits and values as inherently human values, rather than those of a particular group, may help organizations to move away from siloing different groups and creating diversity 'checklists', and instead towards embedding more holistic approaches.

INCLUSIVE YOUTH-LED APPROACHES FOR ACHIEVING ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPACT (RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT)

The first session of our workshop was led by Restless Development colleagues who aimed to demystify inclusive programming. They shared different youth-led approaches and possible entryways towards achieving equitable and inclusive initiatives. The session opened up with a [spoken word by Ben Lacey](#). In groups, workshop participants discussed and identified different approaches for **(1)** Engaging young people with disabilities **(2)** talking about inclusion through a gender lens **(3)** how to open up inclusive accountability pathway for a low-literacy population **(4)** how to practically engage a diverse set of community members with citizen-generated data.

CHECK OUT THE DOCUMENT WHERE PARTICIPANTS CAPTURED DISCUSSIONS.



Thinking further...

How can the civil society sector facilitate adaptation to technology whilst being creative to ensure those often excluded aren't left behind?

FEEDBACK & COMPLAINTS MECHANISM ADAPTATIONS (WVI & MAYUMU FUCHI)

In this session, colleagues from World Vision International and Mayumi Fuchi, a practitioner-researcher at the University of Birmingham, explored the adaptations CSOs have made to their feedback and complaints mechanisms as a result of the pandemic. The session also addressed how those adaptations might point towards new ways of working that might support meaningful dialogues with the people and communities CSOs work for and with.

[Their follow-up blog post](#) summarises the session, highlighting the main takeaways for the different actors in the feedback loop:

Adapting to the pandemic has reinforced the understanding of **CSO staff** managing feedback and complaints mechanisms that to [reach different groups](#) within the community, the mechanisms need to be much more flexible and diverse.

CSO senior management/decision-makers have been presented with new opportunities to strengthen the inclusion of community member perspectives. Covid-19 has brought into sharper focus the digital divide and the need to invest resources to enable marginalised community members to access feedback mechanisms and participate in meaningful dialogue.

Being able to access aggregated feedback and complaints has the potential to enable donors to understand the effectiveness, manage the risks and explore untapped innovations, in the programmes they fund.

HOW CAN THE CIVIL SOCIETY SECTOR ENSURE INCLUSION? SOME KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE DAY:

- Active listening is a key to incorporate different perspectives and feedback
- Inclusion is contextualised and approaches need to be adjusted depending on the situation.
- Let's elevate different approaches. Cater to different communication needs; let's not talk about best practices, but rather good practices - best suggests improvement is no longer needed and the language we choose matters.
- Let's commit to intentional and sustained efforts. Intentional inclusion is a mindset and a practice.
- Reinforcing the need to take a holistic approach as inclusion doesn't happen in isolation.
- Community must be prioritised: engage local organisations from the onset of the programme design process; think about (and plan for) how communities can take ownership over inclusion; redefining the concept of partnership?

DAY 2: POWERSHIFT

On the second day, we introduced the topic of Powershift with another Testing Change project member, Anabel Cruz. Powershifts are aided by changes in mindset around inclusion. Who should have an equal place and role at the (proverbial) table when decisions are being made (at every stage of a project)?

POWERSHIFT DISCUSSION (FEMPLATZ & SUCCESS CAPITAL AFRICA)

At our [2019 Workshop on powershift](#), participants identified consequences of the powershift not happening. These consequences have notably exacerbated during the pandemic. This session, therefore, aimed to explore how participants and their organisations changed the way they work and how this would support or hinder a powershift.

Biljana Janjic from Femplatz brought a feminist perspective to the powershift discussion. She then facilitated a breakout group discussion addressing the new manifestations of the need for the powershift, the practices that worked well for participants, and finally, participants focused inwards: how do we move forward and bring change in our organizations?

- Work **within our own organisations** to be inclusive and provide the right spaces to participate, be diverse!
- **Flexible funding**, creating long-lasting relationships between all stakeholders will prepare us for the next challenges
- **Mutual accountability** between stakeholders, to shift the power we should be accountable to one another creating horizontal partnerships
- **Capacity building?** Or should we say co-developed capacities that organisations detected that are needed to be strengthened be successful at their work?
- **Strategic choices** by cross-functional teams - Shifting the agency to local partners to really have the capacity to adapt - also embrace cross-sector efforts!
- It is all about **participation!** Take advantage of the new tools and use them in the right way...is not all about technology is about how you use it to engage and involve all stakeholders in decision making.
- **Not all resources are material resources**...power comes in different forms and shapes. Breaking down hierarchies and recognize other kinds of powers is not only



Dumiso Gatsha, Accountable Now Board member and Success Capital Africa founder, highlighted some of the issues discussed in last year workshop and reflected on how recent events such as Black Lives Matter, remind us of why we must keep acknowledging the existence of institutionalised racism, and the need for a powershift.

In their breakout session, Dumi led a conversation around the [whole ecosystem of power relations](#) that exist in the sector, and how that links to systemic issues. Solidarity with different actors is a must so that the most unheard voices are taken into account. Participants then [shared what power looks like in their context](#) and what steps they can take towards a powershift.

LOST IN TRANSLATION: CONNECTING FUNDERS TO WHAT COMMUNITIES SAY IS IMPORTANT

GlobalGiving and Global Fund for Community Foundations shared some insights from a [participatory research project on what community-led approaches look like in practice](#). The Covid-19 pandemic context has brought a new way of working relationship between donors and grantees, with more flexibility and more room for communities to drive programs. The aim of the research was to bridge the gap between communities and donors through using common language and terminology understandable at both ends.

They took this opportunity to engage with participants and test how their findings resonated with CSOs and how useful the [community-led assessment tool](#) is. The research identified core characteristics of community-led approaches, which all centered on relationships. But the research also brought to the surface a key problem: funders aren't speaking the same language as CSOs when it comes to funding community-led initiatives. We addressed the following questions:

- How might we strengthen the emergent narratives and give expression to the relationship-focused features of community-led change?
- How might we build shared language that funders understand and feel confident incorporating in their analysis of community-led organizations?

YOU CAN HELP TO FURTHER DEVELOP THEIR RESEARCH FURTHER BY COMPLETING THIS SHORT SURVEY.



WHAT DOES THE CIVIL SOCIETY SECTOR NEED TO DO TO ENSURE A POWERSHIFT IS POSSIBLE? SOME KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM DAY 2:

- Make sure there aren't just 'seats at the table' but also meaningful participation
- It is important to reflect on 'invisible injustices' that exclude people, within our organizations or externally
- Do INGOs truly model what they say they want to accomplish in the world? Governance and structures need to reflect this. Be less risk-averse and push for frank internal discussions
- Identifying local resources (philanthropy) and local accountability (dynamic accountability) may help with the powershift
- Meaningful dialogue between donors and grantees is necessary to develop trust
- We need to understand who has the expertise and knowledge and how is it accessed?
- Let's strive for solidarity and balancing 'Global North' and 'South' relationships
- Develop trust and respect in relationships and make sure organisational as well as individual relationships can survive changes in people/leadership
- Basing community focused actions on community knowledge
- Shift paradigms and identify local needs locally first before aligning resources
- Organisations as well as individuals should be intentional, hold space and fail forward. This may be especially important for those with resources and knowledge. Structures matter.
- From 'single project' to holistic responses - let's define new ways for our organizations to make this transition?)
- Sustain good changes from disruption
- Change starts with us!

DAY 3: RESILIENCE

On the third and last day of the workshop, we dived into the resilience theme. We live in disruptive times but disruption can provide opportunities for organizations to change significantly, going forward. Amy Taylor, Accountable Now Board member, shared her insights and personal take on some traits of resilient organizations we can all practice, such as centering human values (inclusion and wellness), celebrating learning and having agile structures in place that can allow for on-going adaptation.



LEADERSHIP & ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE (WORLD YWCA & RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT)

Casey Harvey from World YWCA and Segun Olowookere from Restless Development explored individual resilience as a foundation of organizational resilience, and ultimately accountability. Post-traumatic growth is the experience of growth that follows from the struggle in the aftermath of trauma. By making meaning of trauma, through experiential learning activities such as storytelling, individuals initiate growth and positive change and to reassert a sense of purpose as they continue to work in a transforming world. The skill of pursuing post-traumatic growth is, for individuals, a resilience practice and a leadership skill. For organizations, it points to an accountability practice, a cultural working norm or approach that can be adopted to become more responsive, to evolve and to increase relevance.

Participants broke out into pairs to share their experiences on a work-related loss and a work-related gain. We individually reflected on the following questions: What are you learning about yourself in the workplace? What would it look like if you applied your learnings going forward? What could be different? What needs to change or stay the same? What might you do differently?

Participants shared their answers on the chat while listening to [music](#). **“Be the warrior and not the worrier”** was one of the most inspiring mantras shared in the chat!

WELLBEING, ACCOUNTABILITY & RESILIENCE (GLOBAL FUND FOR CHILDREN)

Ame Atsu David from Global Fund for Children invited us to reflect on how we as individual change agents committed to resolving emerging social problems, take care of ourselves and build our resilience to tackle these issues in a complex and dynamic world where problems often seem to outrun solutions.



We explored wellbeing across [8 different dimensions](#) of our lives, and how our personal wellbeing and resilience is critical to fostering organizational sustainability and accountability and efforts to shift the power to communities. Ame highlighted that all 8 dimensions are interlinked. When we are not doing well in one dimension, it affects all the other dimensions.

Participants assessed in smaller groups how they were doing in each of the 8 wellbeing dimensions and shared what they might want to improve or change in the dimensions that resonated most. At the end of the session participants shared with the rest what they will change and commit to hold themselves accountable for that change!

WE STROVE TO UNDERSTAND RESILIENCE IN THE SECTOR AND CAPTURED THE FOLLOWING KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Resilient organizations start with resilient leaders
- “Radical” collaboration - how do we make sure we are really doing things differently
- Commitments to ourselves and to our organizations, over cycles of highs and lows, means we have to sustain our own energy and that of our organizations
- Deliberate/intentional leadership should fight for connection. What types of support do staff need? Honor people’s experiences and where they’re at. Human connections are the heart of our work.
- Resilience means being responsive to the situation at hand; informed but not constrained by the past
- Post-traumatic growth is growth that can follow struggle.
- Resilience as a leader is a practice. You need to take care of yourself as well
- Take time to reflect as individuals and organizations.
- Sharing is a gift to those who ask you to share. Prioritise meaningful communication
- Transformation starts with us; then our organizations; and then the ecosystem around us.
- Personal and organizational accountability is a structure that helps to bring about change.



What next...

The workshop is over, but the themes and discussions are alive! We will be delighted to hear how we can continue these conversations with you. As mentioned throughout the workshop, this was not about a single event but about what happens after, and how those discussions contribute to bringing change. Please contact Hector Payo hpayo@accountablenow.org if you have questions, suggestions or ideas on how we can support initiatives that would advance **Inclusion**, **Powershift** and **Resilience**.