



Dynamic Accountability Dialogues: Accountable Futures

OUTCOMES

In recent years, the interconnection of different challenges faced by societies have increased and thus made inequity more evident around the world. Climate change has been identified as a source of systemic risk. Its direct link to environmental disasters (floods, droughts, fires, famines, pandemic diseases, etc) and its role in recent price increases and volatility seen in energy markets, among others, have meant that it cannot be detached from our current economic crisis.

In this context, the exacerbation of governments and power holders to try to gain more power and control over citizens and national resources are seen as an opportunity for some. While the trust in democratic institutions and processes is decreasing, misinformation and other means are used to discredit the work that civil society is doing. Not only so, the digital divide also poses some challenges in the premise of leaving no one behind, while at the same time holds opportunities.

In this rapidly changing operating environment, CSOs work has been essential to respond to the challenges mentioned but also showed us how vital it is for them to be able to adapt and be prepared to push back when threats come their way. CSOs around the world got together in the **Dynamic Accountability Dialogues** to start reflection on what the future is bringing and how as a sector we can be prepared rather than responsive when challenges surface or another crisis hits.



IMAGE: Results of the wordcloud illustrating what participants identified as the key risk facing the sector now and in the future.



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From our conversation, there are three clear issues that are at the forefront of organisations' minds: the climate, the economy and shrinking civic space. The following chart captures some reflections that came out it:

CHALLENGE	IMPACT ON OUR SECTOR AND CSOS	IMPACTS ON ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES
Climate Crisis	<p>CSOs need to start thinking of climate change as a systemic risk and therefore integrate it into planning and policy-making processes. The effects and consequences of disasters call for additional and different types of CSOs responses and actions.</p> <p>At the same time, civil society needs to focus more in terms of improving access to climate information.</p> <p>CSOs need to be able to adapt and be flexible, working in uncertainty, and responding to continuous crises with unknown consequences. CSOs need to be prepared rather than react because they might not be in the position to do so when a crisis is already there. At the same time, there is also a need to adapt to continuously changing reprioritization within political agendas.</p>	<p>The civil society sector can no longer only focus on social justice but also needs to consider justice to the planet/earth as part and parcel to social justice, while considering the environment as another stakeholder.</p> <p>Climate change has the biggest effects on those who are already most disadvantaged. Accountability should be a priority when addressing climate change. Only in engaging and connecting the different actors can we be able to respond to actual needs of those facing the worst effects of climate change.</p> <p>CSOs therefore must be transparent, responsive and open up spaces for true participation in these types of dialogues and responses. Reinforcing that is CSOs proving that they are legitimate and accountable partners for those who are affected.</p>

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Economic Challenges / Funding	<p>Amidst struggling economies, the needs for CSOs' work and services have increased. Meanwhile, with multiple areas for focus, some donors have signalled cuts for core activities, leading to huge impacts for the sector. These impacts may range from being less competitive in terms of remuneration, loss of institutional stability and growth, higher pressure on service delivery, among others.</p>	<p>In recessions, those who are marginalised are most affected and their voices are less heard. In these situations, they become much more dependent on CSOs' services, and CSOs must continue to support and ensure that they do not get left behind.</p> <p>At the same time, organisations need to be able to continue showcasing and making a stronger case for why our services and work remain much needed. Responsive and transparent accountability mechanisms are a good way to do so!</p> <p>In addition to this, it becomes essential to continue fostering and establishing two-way dialogues with different actors -particularly donors- to reflect on the consequences of shrinking funds, identify ways to be more flexible and thus be able to address challenges together.</p>



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Restricted Civic Space	<p>Shrinking civic space continues to be an issue for many. In the past few years, democratic backsliding, rampant mis/disinformation, and a loss of trust for democratic institutions have only exacerbated the problem.</p> <p>To continue to sustain public trust and operating space, the sector must continue to preserve or expand civic space as it has done before: ensuring that its worth is known and holding governments and those in power to account.</p>	<p>The implication here is multifold. In these moments transparency and accessibility become very important. People need to know, be able to access, and be able to understand the information that organisations are putting online. A step towards this can be to remove jargon and simplify the language of our work.</p> <p>Organisations also need to have accountability at the core of their work to be able to push back when attacks are happening, but also to build trust in their work and actions. Trust is an indispensable currency. Trust is built based on ensuring that the organisation is a reliable partner for the people it works with and for. This means that the organisation carries out actions that take into consideration others' wishes and inputs.</p> <p>At the same time, there is also a need to build stronger coalitions and partnerships to further share the value of civil society's work and impact. What this may look like is a more concerted and coordinated effort to push towards sharing and explaining the role of civil society.</p>



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CHALLENGE	IMPACT ON OUR SECTOR AND CSOS	IMPACTS ON ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES
Restricted Civic Space (continued)		Lastly, it is also about ensuring that CSOs are using mechanisms for self-regulation around the world - these mechanisms support CSOs to prove that they can be accountable while being independent from further government overreach and overregulation.

As we looked at future scenarios, we also saw that equality and an increasingly high-tech world becoming cross-cutting factors throughout. CSOs are having to really address inequality at multiple levels, from addressing the inequalities that exist when it comes to supporting marginalised people through crises to strengthening internal equalities. All the while, they are having to work with a world that is rapidly digitalising, bringing with it new challenges that require innovative solutions.

Through our conversation, it was also undoubted that accountability will be essential to help us deal with current and future challenges mapped out here. CSOs, as everyone else, are having to be very flexible and nimble with the way they work. It is therefore very important to have structures and processes in place that are very much proactive, adaptable and resilient to changes. CSOs need to continue to be listening, learning, reflecting and responding - across their entire operation.

At the same time, there is a need to continue advocacy towards donors to ensure that funding and support remain available for accountability practices. While there is a need to be responding continuously, it is also important to have the space to take stock of what is happening and consider how we are responding to our stakeholders as well.

So if you want to know more about how these things impact our different accountability practices and our work - stay tuned!

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