



# Youth Engagement Podcast Series

*From the Accountability Pill Podcast - Your Minidose of CSO Accountability*

Part 7 with Prekkshya Bimali (Accountability Lab Nepal) and Mori Cheng (World Organization of the Scout Movement)

Facilitated by Katie McCarthy (Accountable Now)

**Brief Description:** In Part 7 of our Youth Engagement Series, Prekkshya and Mori chat with Katie all about Youth Advisory Positions. They share their own personal experiences in those positions, explaining time commitment, capacity building, and incentives. They also share insights on best practices of Youth Advisory Positions, both from a participant and institutional perspective. They highlight why Youth Advisory Positions are important, and how CSOs can encourage youth to join Youth Advisory Positions.

## Transcript:

### Introduction (00:00):

[theme music starts] Welcome to Accountable Now's Accountability Pill Podcast, your mini dose of CSO accountability. [theme music stops]

### Katie McCarthy (Accountable Now) (00:14):

Hello everyone! Welcome back to another episode of our Youth Engagement Series. This is Part 7 and I am delighted to introduce our guests today: Prekkshya Bimali from Accountability Lab Nepal and Mori Cheng from the World Scout Committee. They both have extensive experience with Youth Advisory Positions and I'm super eager to talk with them about that today. I'm Katie McCarthy, a fellow with Accountable Now, and the facilitator for today's discussion. But enough about me – let's talk about our guests!

Prekkshya Bimali, from Nepal, works as a Programs and Learning Officer at Accountability Lab Nepal. Her areas of interest lie in gender and inclusion, climate action and research. She is responsible for leading youth engagement programs in building and promoting accountability and bringing out the youth voices loud and strong. In this position, she gets to work with the young leaders who, with their innovation and courage, break all kinds of barriers, create humility and collective power to social transformation. Through the youth programs, Accountability Lab Nepal ensures that youth are enabled and empowered with leadership and

advocacy skills so that they can enrich their advocacy efforts in several issues such as gender equality, climate action, and youth engagement in policy making. As a young individual herself, Prekkshya believes that the youth hold immense potential and there should be adequate opportunities and spaces for youth to unleash their potential.

Welcome Prekkshya! We're so happy to have you today.

**Prekkshya Bimali (Accountability Lab Nepal) (01:49):**

Hi! Thank you, thank you Katie! Thanks for having me here.

**Katie McCarthy (Accountable Now) (01:53):**

Also with us is Mori Cheng from Hong Kong. He's currently a member of the World Scout Committee, which oversees the work on workstreams coordination and volunteer support. He is also the World Scout Committee liaison to the Finance Committee. Professionally, Mori is a practicing solicitor in Hong Kong, focusing on corporate governance and corporate transactions. Apart from being one of the youngest members of the World Scout Committee, he served as the Youth Advisor to the World Scout Committee from 2017-2021 and previously in the Asia Pacific Region. As a Scout, Mori believes that youth are the future of the society and there are ample opportunities for young people to create positive changes in the world. "It is crucial for us to facilitate intergenerational dialogues in order to empower more young people," he says.

Welcome Mori.

**Mori Cheng (World Organization of the Scout Movement) (02:46):**

Hello! Hello everyone! And thank you Katie for having us today.

**Katie McCarthy (Accountable Now) (02:50):**

Yes! I'm so glad. As we can hear in your biographies, both of you have experience in Youth Advisory Positions. Just to get all of our listeners on the same page, would you guys mind explaining a bit more, from your specific experiences – what the time commitment or payment or capacity building looked like? Mori, could you start?

**Mori (03:12):**

Sure! As outlined in my bio, so I actually am a Scout of the World Organization of Scout Movement since I was really really young. And then in 2015, there was an opportunity for me to join the Asia Pacific Region as a Youth Forum Participant. And during the Youth Forum Participant, I got elected to the Regional Scout Community and other things — being the Youth Advisor to the World Scout Committee and I'm currently a member of the World Scout Committee.

So it actually comes with a capacity building opportunity that I have as a Youth Forum Participant. And during the Youth Forum, when we get a chance to really discuss a lot on social changes and also like the future, (what) we want to have in the Scout Movement. And from that is how we have, or I have, the opportunity to really grow up as a Youth Advisors and currently and up to now as my current position at the World Scout Committee.

In terms of time commitment, I would say it took quite a bit of my time. I always joke about it with my colleagues in office, that scouting is my second job, in a sense — a volunteer second job. At the same time, I find it is really rewarding, although it's a pro bono work. At the same time, I think the skills, the friendships that I make all over the world is really, really vital. And when I see the contributions that we can make to the Scout Movement and the society, I think that is really the most rewarding part of my second job.

**Katie (04:49):**

That's really great. It's cool to hear you talk about benefits that aren't super tangible. You're talking about friendships and capacity building. Thanks for sharing that. Prekkshya, what about you?

**Prekkshya (05:02):**

Yeah, like, as you have mentioned already, like during the introduction. So my work in Accountability Lab, it's mostly with the youth related work.

So with the programs, like Accountability Incubator and Safe Group Fellowship that creates the opportunity for youth. I get to work with a lot of youth and in different themes and sections. So, this is especially having a network of very alike minded people working together, you know, and also being in the same alignment of thinking and talking. So it's a fun part over there.

And along with that, I was also a part of Accountability Lab's Youth Council, which we also call as a Junior Staff Council.

So Accountability Lab's a transnational network, so there's a lot of countries, a lot of Accountability Lab countries. So based on that, we had this member council of a junior staff, or we say a very young staff, and the whole purpose of this council was to make sure that our voices are equally heard in the time of decision-making within an organization. And if there are any projects or initiatives that we would like to initiate, and that would be a platform where we discuss and take it forward — right?

So other than that, that I have also been, I am also a member of UNODC's YouthLED Integrity Advisory Board to the Peace Initiative. And this usually identifies and ensures that the youth voices are heard and it takes youth voices as a key tool to fight against corruption. So these are the young people from different regions of the globe fighting against corruption. So like Mori has mentioned, this is more about like capacity building and having that network of people working.

So if we talk about time commitments — so it is all voluntary based and it all depends upon your will power and the extra amount of time you are willing to give, because the reason, as mentioned, is really rewarding and that is something that makes it meaningful to engage with with this kind of works.

**Katie (07:11):**

I think that the experiences you had really highlight how when youth voices are taken seriously and you're given a platform for your own creative ideas, solutions are found and there's really great intersector dialogue from that. Thanks for sharing.

So, I'm curious, we talked a little bit about the benefits that you guys gained in youth advisory positions already.

So, what made these positions successful? What makes for a successful youth advisory position? Prekkshya, can you start this one?

**Prekkshya (07:45):**

Okay, so to make it more successful, I think I will again start with the commitment thing — like how much time you are willing to commit.

And it's not necessarily that it's the only thing that we are enrolled in, it's the only priority that comes to us, but the amount of time you're giving to it, because it's for a greater cause, there is

always something that you are contributing to, sometimes you will change is that you're looking forward to.

So, the commitment that you could give as the 'something' that makes it really successful.

And the other one is the amount — the way you that you invest often yourselves, especially in regarding increasing your capacity, in making how resourceful that you are — because if you are in a position, you are going to contribute to things, you are representing a lot of voices and how true you stay with that and the amount of work you do in that and the amount of effort you put in understanding your role and justifying your role that makes it really a good ingredient for successful.

And also the how the engagement is going with the youth advisory with all the kinds of work because there are a lot of people coming in — you are also giving your time and how proactively you could collaborate with the one other, how active you are in building the synergies.

And how other than the let's say the monetary incentives, there are a lot of other incentives — in terms of like networks, in terms of the collaboration and in terms of those things that these Boards can offer.

So, the amount of time you are investing and the actively, proactively, looking forward to having a meaningful output out of it, this all will help you make it a rewarding in a successful way.

**Mori (09:35):**

I think, Prekkshya talked a lot about like how, as a youth advisor or from the youth perspective, how can we make it a successful possession.

And I want to step one step back to talk about, like, institutionally, how can we make sure that this Youth Advisor is a successful possession.

From my perspective, I think it's really important that the organization itself or like the culture would build a culture of intergenerational dialogues.

Like, it is very often that we have this sort of, like, organizational culture where, like, we always have more seniors within organizations or, like, we just have, like, different layers or, like, bureaucracy in it.

And there's sometimes, it is important for us to bear in mind the importance of intergenerational dialogues and the trust that we have to build across different layers and different stakeholders.

And we have to be open-minded and to provide ample opportunities for our youth to join in the movement and to take certain responsibilities.

I know it sounds a little bit scary in the beginning to say like we were given a lot of responsibility and accountability to the youth, but at the same time this is part of the learning experience and the learning journey that we have to make.

Having said that, like giving the responsibility and accountability to the youth doesn't mean that we are just throwing them under the bus and then they will run this stuff.

It's more about how we also provide mentoring, guidance, capacity building – in the same time to make sure that they learn from the experience and to get the support that they have in order to make a successful (capacity) building.

I think these are more like the soft skills or like the journey that they have to go through and together with what Prekkshya has been talking about — like from a youth perspective, how can they be more proactive in the process and to build up their own capacities — I think both ways added up together will create a successful Youth Advisor Position.

**Katie (11:38):**

Interesting. Yeah, the inner and outer perspectives are different, but they are aligned in some ways — so thanks for sharing both the youth internal perspective and the institutional one as well.

It's interesting because trusting youth and giving youth platforms is something that comes up quite frequently in the conversations on this podcast. And I think that with the audience of our podcast, really aiming for CSOs, this something that's really crucial to hear — that the youth have a voice that they have this capacity, and they want to build it stronger with the support of CSOs.

So in the same vein as that, how can CSOs encourage youth to come into these youth positions? We've talked a little bit about money, about the time commitment, about capacity building. But what can civil society organizations really do to encourage people to join Youth (Advisory) Positions? Mori, what are your thoughts on that?

**Mori (12:36):**

I think we have touched quite a bit during our conversations earlier. I think one of them is really to set expectations in the outset. I do, like as a Youth Advisor before, I do feel like sometimes we are fear. Like we fear about like the time commitments that we need to do, like what are the roles, like what are the responsibilities, and all these uncertainties sometimes will just give us the fear whether we would like to join or not.

And also I think another thing that we have to do is to keep the constant conversations with the youth. Like, because I do feel the fear that sometimes we would try a lot to join or to participate at the same time, we think that we don't have the capacity and when we feel lost, we don't know who we should talk to or like how we can actually make meaningful contributions.

From my perspective, it is important to get it started with a lot of mentorship and also to really build up the trust between the generations and the intergenerational dialogues that we have.

And another thing that is more tangible, I think, is also important sometimes to provide financial support to make sure that you have the capacities to really go on missions that they have to go or like to fulfill their task or like their workshops or like to organize their meetings and other things.

One last thing that I would like to add in terms of this is about the flexibility of responsibilities. It's not about like [the fact that] you have not taken up the responsibilities, but we also have to acknowledge that they are other sort of priorities sometimes. So we have to be sometimes, be a little bit more flexible, agile, and and what I would also recommend, not just our CSOs, but then our Youth Advisors is to be open about this sort of conversation. So like if you have some other priorities coming along the way, it's very important for us to have that open discussions and to find a way out. It's not like a black and white. It's not like there's like definite answers or like solutions to every answers, to every solutions, every scenarios, but then I do feel like having these sort of open conversations will give you more confidence and, like, comfort in joining the sort of like Youth Advisors Positions.

**Katie (15:03):**

Flexibility of responsibilities is a cool, cool concept. I think it's so true that youth are often

students or people in new positions and they have different priorities. So making sure that they feel both comfortable and welcome to participate in the capacity that they're able to, is a key to making successful Youth Advisory Positions.

Prekkshya, what do you think about that?

**Prekkshya (15:26):**

I think I'll totally echo what Mori and you have just said — like it's very necessary that you have that open space where youth can put forward their opinions and their thinking without any fear of being judged or fear of being — any kinds of fear. It has to be that open.

And I think, like mentioned before, the support from CSOs — it's not only in terms of monetary basis. If there are any financial incentives, it's so much better. If not, there's many other ways that they can support — like it could be in the form of mentorship or even it could be in the form of, you know, giving a shout out to the initiative or the advocacy they're doing. It could be in terms of sharing the resources and sharing the expertise that the CSOs or the organization already has. So this kind of approach from the CSOs can really help the youth.

And also like what CSOs can do is they can actually, they can of course open a space for it. They can also ensure like if their team is already youth friendly or if they are welcoming youth or not. It's not necessary but whenever we think of an institution or organization, we take it more in a traditional way. It's not necessary, but we usually view the institution or the system as a more traditional way. So if one can ensure if it is youth friendly, if it is open to learning and suggestions and feedback. And that could really help to, and that would actually encourage the youth to, come up to these position here.

**Katie (17:11):**

I love the concept of an open space, a place for learning — because you're totally right that youth are, they are experts at their own lived experiences but they aren't supposed to be experts at everything, quite yet. So these positions need to be places that are safe for people to voice opinions, to make mistakes, and to learn new things.

That's great to hear about these different successful mechanisms that Youth Advisory Positions can have.

Just looking at the time I think we should start wrapping up but I know both of your organizations have really really great practices for Youth Advisory Positions and settings. And I would love it if you guys could highlight how our listeners can find that — maybe your websites or social media handles, can you share some?

**Mori (18:02):**

Maybe I will go first. So to all our listeners here, please follow us on our Instagram account. 'worldscouting' is our Instagram account. Or if you want more information about what we are doing in terms of Youth Engagement, Youth Empowerment and Youth Leadership, you are always welcome to look at our website, where there are more information, successful stories on scout.org, S-C-O-U-T.org, and looking forward to have a meaningful conversation with you all.

Feel free to follow us and enjoy!

**Prekkshya (18:36):**

Okay, so for us for Accountability Lab, you can always visit our website, which is accountabilitylab.org, so it's A-C-C-O-U-N-T-A-B-I-L-I-T-Y, so quite a word.

And we are in every, like, social media, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, with the user name of 'accountabilitylab' — so that is where you can follow us.

But once you visit our website, we are based in different countries, based on your preference, and can follow any of the countries. So, yeah, [accountabilitylab.org](https://accountabilitylab.org) is where you need to go.

**Katie (19:12):**

I totally recommend you check out both of these websites. Like I said, Scouts and Accountability Lab are just really strong examples of what listening to youth voices look like and the benefits that come from that.

Well, I want to thank you both so much for your time, for explaining your own personal background, and your experiences in advisory positions.

Thanks again. Well, that's a wrap on part seven of our Youth Engagement Series. Thanks for listening. Until next time!