



LEARNING REPORT 2018



Welcome to this Learning Report for Accountability Lab for 2018. Over the following pages, you will hear about some of our progress outcomes from 2018 as well how we're updating our Theory of Change. We also report back on how we're improving our understanding of gender in our programming as well as what our staff reported about working for the Lab and how its impact is changing. We round up the report with some budget highlights for the year under review.

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters of the Accountability Lab,
This year was a year of growth, reflection and significant learning for the Accountability Lab as we continued our efforts to build a new generation of active citizens and responsible leaders. In 2018, we started a new Lab in South Africa; worked with new partners to scale our work to other countries including Sri Lanka; piloted new approaches to learning, like a contribution tracing process in Liberia; and brought on new staff and Board members in critical positions across the globe.

Our Integrity Idol program grew to 8 countries globally; our Accountability Incubator graduated its 46th “accountapreneur”; and our Citizen Helpdesks expanded to engage citizens in feedback loops around issues as diverse as justice, security and natural resource management. We are proud of all of this- 2018 was a year in which our work found new audiences and supporters too; and culminated in December with the honor of winning the International Anti-Corruption Excellence Award.

But we also recognize that as we continue to try new things, we make mistakes. There were times when we thought we could do more than we could; when we hoped we could reach communities in more sustained ways than was possible; and when we pursued partnerships that did not work out as we had intended. 2018 was also a time in which our efforts became more difficult in many places, whether as a result of instability, political transitions or continued impediments to the work of civil society. Part of what we have learned about trying to make governance work for people is that we need to constantly adapt- using our learning to inform programs and partnerships in real-time.

A second key learning for us in 2018 was the importance of “unlikely networks”. We have realized that the more we can bring in and build diverse coalitions in support of accountability and integrity, the more enduring and effective these efforts will be. Whether this means connecting rappers and community justice advocates in

Liberia; students and honest government officials in Nepal; or civic activists with film-makers in Pakistan, the creativity and diversity of these networks are critical to building a collective movement for change.

Finally, 2018 was a year in which we realized the demand and impact of our efforts not just with civil society and the media but also with government. If we can connect reformers within government- like our Integrity Idols- to each other and to people within civil society, media and the private sector who can support their efforts, we can begin to shift the ways decisions are made. And if we can support a pipeline of honest young people coming into government- through working with civil service training schools and other bodies- we can begin to shift systems over time. This is one big area of work we would like to learn more about and focus on in 2019.

We are more committed than ever to this work to build accountability, and will use the findings of this survey to improve what we do- as we outline later in the report. We welcome your partnership and support as we do so. If you have ideas or have comments on this report or our work more broadly please reach out to us by email or on social media to let us know.

“I FEEL HONORED TO BE PART OF AN ORGANIZATION THAT IS BECOMING MORE EFFICIENT AND RECOGNIZED FOR ITS WORK. I ALSO FEEL EMPOWERED TO PROVIDE STRATEGIC INPUT IN HOW WE DRIVE THINGS FORWARD.”

“BY ENABLING PEOPLE TO GENERATE THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COALITIONS NEEDED FOR ACCOUNTABILITY, WE UNLEASH POSITIVE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE”

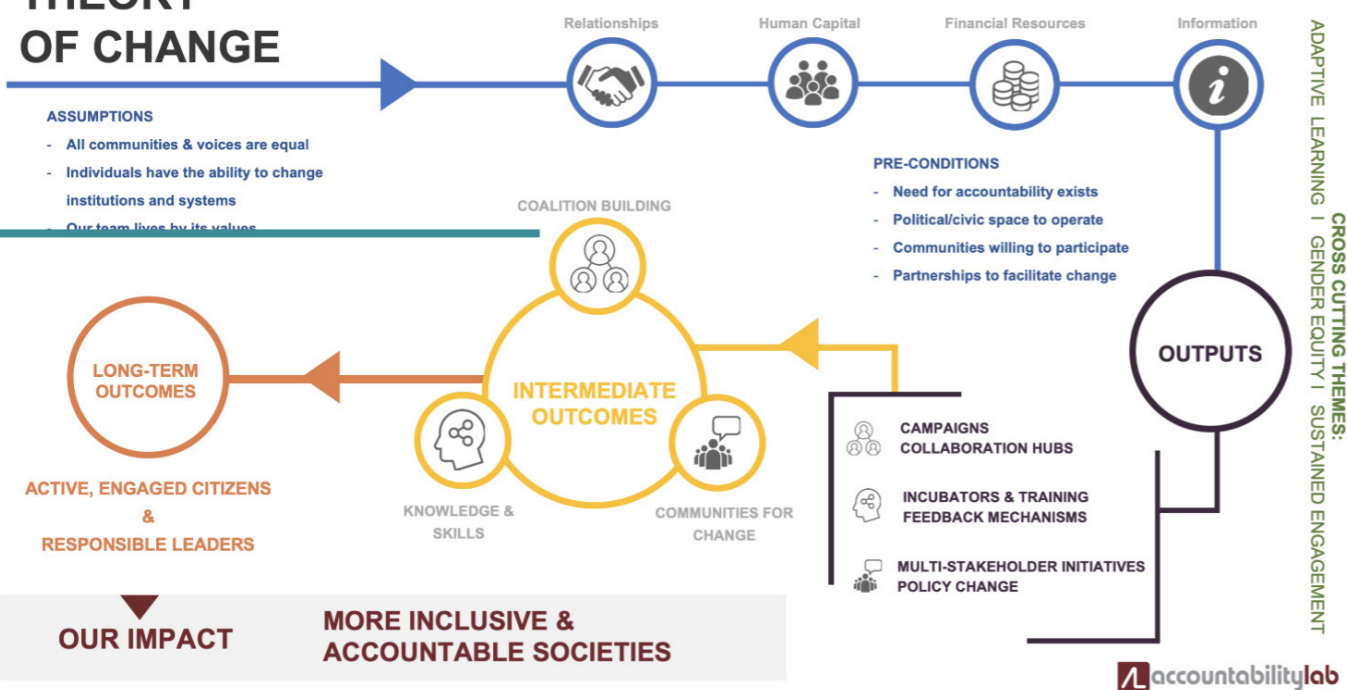
VISION AND MISSION

Our *vision* is more inclusive, accountable societies. Our *mission* is to build a new generation of active citizens and responsible leaders around the world. We work towards this by supporting change-makers to develop and implement positive ideas for integrity in their communities. By enabling people to generate the knowledge, skills and coalitions needed for accountability, we unleash positive social and economic change.

OUR APPROACH

We aim to support a positive movement to build accountability; provide long-term support for young leaders who can collectively drive this movement; and improve collaboration around accountability and open governance. These mutually reinforcing efforts ensure that we are well placed to source ideas from the bottom-up across contexts that can inform policy decisions made from the top-down. See our Theory of Change for more details.

THEORY OF CHANGE



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Growing an organization requires regular stock taking to ensure that daily operations continue to align with the mission and impact. Seven years into the Lab's journey, our global staff recently spent several months revisiting our Theory of Change. We have three mutually-reinforcing objectives: to support a positive movement to build accountability; provide substantive, flexible and long-term support for those leaders who can collectively lead this movement within specific contexts; and support collaboration around accountability and open governance.

Beyond the technical deep-dive to distil our work into a clear and simple diagram and explanation we learned three key lessons:

1. **Refining a Theory of Change never ends**
2. **Drawing boxes around work can be hard, but it's worth it**
3. **Avoiding the tyranny of jargon is always a good idea**

"GROWING AN ORGANIZATION REQUIRES REGULAR STOCK TAKING TO ENSURE THAT DAILY OPERATIONS CONTINUE TO ALIGN WITH THE MISSION AND IMPACT"



WHAT WE LEARNED WHILE UPDATING OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Growing an organization requires regular stock taking to ensure that daily operations continue to align with the mission and impact. Seven years into the Lab's journey, our global staff recently spent several months revisiting our Theory of Change. Over the years, the Lab has had several iterations of our ToC (because we believe that it's a living tool that should inform our ongoing work). In light of increased expansion in terms of geography, staff capacity and the variety of programs through which we engage with communities, it became important to pause, reflect and ideate around our impact as a team.

With support from the Open Society Foundations, we began in September by unpacking the

assumptions around our work. We also researched which other organizations have carried out this process well and have great ToCs that clearly explain their work- for example, we liked Namati's clean simple diagram; and we liked the way ShelterBox predicated inputs, outputs and outcomes on certain assumptions and pre-conditions. It's fair to say that the process of revising our ToC wasn't easy. Inevitably, while an organization's mission, vision and impact might be clear, individuals frequently hold differing assumptions about the work. Beyond the technical deep-dive to distil our work into a clear and simple diagram and explanation we also learned three key lessons:

- **Refining a Theory of Change never ends**
At several points in the process we felt that our work was done, only to take one more look and realize that our thoughts may not translate to a larger audience. We took turns re-visiting and editing both the graphic depiction and accompanying narrative to ensure that it represent the full breadth of our work. We also learned that it probably won't ever feel perfect but at some stage, we have to send it out into the world and

see how it lands. And we're going to sense check the ToC every six months across the organization, and adapt it accordingly.

Drawing boxes around work can be hard, but it's worth it

Fitting our diverse program offerings into limited output and outcome boxes was hard. This experience isn't unique to organizations that are in a start-up phase, eager to prove themselves within the space and build a body of work to leverage future support. While the diversity of our programming can be seen as a strength, the exercise of building our new Theory of Change gave us the opportunity to evaluate which parts of our work still fit with our mission, which ones need to be regeared, and which ones we may need to bring to an end.

• **Avoid the tyranny of jargon**

In crafting language for both the graphic and narrative ToC, we were very tempted to fall into the jargon trap. At the end of the day it is important to go through an extended 're-languaging' process so that everyone- both within the organization and outside- can buy into the new approach and actually use it when thinking about our work. We hope to prioritize and nurture the deep buy-in to our mission that exists within our teams- the ToC is just a tool to help us do that over time.

We'd love any feedback or ideas on our new Theory of Change- what makes sense? What have we missed? Let us know @accountlab or email: cheri@accountabilitylab.org

OUR PROGRAMS BY COUNTRY

NIGERIA:

- **Integrity Icon:** a campaign to find, celebrate and support honest government officials to change the narrative around corruption and build coalitions for reform.
- **Accountability Incubator:** a year-long

support and mentorship process for young accountability entrepreneurs ("accountpreneurs") to build sustainable tools for greater accountability and transparency.

- **Voice2Rep:** Supporting Nigerian musicians to spread messages related to accountability, integrity and active citizenship through a national competition and TV show.
- **Election Awareness:** Local artists paint murals on auto-rickshaws ("kekes") to spark conversation around participation in the upcoming elections.
- **SDG16:** A national competition to support young leaders to craft innovative and sustainable solutions to challenges related to SDG16.

LIBERIA:

- **Integrity Icon:** A particular focus on growing the linkages between Icons and outreach within their agencies and ministries.
- **Citizen Helpdesks:** With a focus on national resource management issues and strengthening relationships between communities, government and companies in concession areas.
- **Accountability Incubator:** With a focus on accountability within natural resource management.
- **Rap2Rep:** A rap music competition, supporting Liberian musicians to spread messages related to accountability, integrity and active citizenship.
- **Reel Peace:** 45 women from across Liberia are making films about peace and accountability in their communities, culminating in a national women's film festival in the spring of 2019.
- **Community Justice Teams:** An alternative dispute resolution mechanism for Liberian citizens in high density, multi-ethnic and transient communities who often lack access to or distrust the formal justice system.
- **iCampus (OpenGovHub):** Liberia's first fully-equipped co-working, community and innovation space.

MALI:

- **Integrity Icon:** with a focus on justice and the



rule of law in particular.

- **Citizen Helpdesks:** With a focus on countering violent extremism and building trust among youth and government in the Mopti, Segou and Timbuktu regions.
- **Accountability Incubator:** with a focus on bringing in accountpreneurs from the center and the north of the country in particular.
- **Linking and Learning:** Supporting civil society groups in Mali (and Niger) to build coalitions and learn from one another, amplifying their work on the national, regional and international level.
- **TEDxBamako:** An event that brings together bright minds to give talks that are idea-focused, to foster learning, inspiration and wonder – and provoke conversations that matter.
- **OpenGovHub (Bamako):** A fully-equipped co-working, community and innovation space.

NEPAL:

- **Integrity Icon:** with a focus on building out ancillary programs including the Integrity Fellowship.
- **Citizen Helpdesks:** Working with communities since 2015 to close the loop

on accountability challenges related to the earthquakes, migration and budget expenditures.

- **Accountability Incubator:** With a focus on accountability within migration.
- **Film School for Women:** Training and supporting young women in filmmaking and visual storytelling on accountability and good governance issues.
- **OpenGovHub (Kathmandu):** A fully-equipped co-working, community and innovation space.

PAKISTAN:

- **Integrity Icon:** In 2018 we focused on Icons under 35, naming and fanning the next generation of civil servants.
- **SDG16 Innovation Challenge:** A national competition to support young leaders to craft innovative and sustainable solutions to challenges related to SDG16.
- **Accountability Incubator:** With a focus on civic technology in 2018.

SOUTH AFRICA:

- **Integrity Icon:** the 1st iteration of our campaign, with a focus on outreach and engagement to build support for

MAKING LEARNING AN ACCOUNTABILITY PRIORITY

The Lab grew in many ways throughout 2018, and enhancing our learning across country teams was a big part of that growth. We see learning as a responsibility, as a form of accountability to the communities we engage, our donors, and civil society in general. Over the last year, our learning capacity grew in the following ways:

- We added a Programs and Learning Manager to our global team. This role is positioned to give us a bird's eye view of our impact in different countries, allowing us to share lessons learned across teams and course-correct more efficiently. We're also better capacitated to collect and disseminate our learning products.
- We added dedicated Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) staff to Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, and Nepal, alleviating the pressure previously on program staff to be the custodians of our impact and learning work.
- We started strategizing around enhancing our learning capacity on the ground. Skilled fellows from 6 universities worked with our teams in Liberia, Nepal and Pakistan - adding valuable capacity around strengthening learning practices and communicating our impact at critical times.
- We've become more thoughtful around prioritizing MEL in our project planning and budgeting, especially given the increased staff capacity in this area of this work.

Growing and prioritizing our learning capacity aligns with our strategy to enhance our own understanding of our work, while adding to the body of knowledge in the broader governance space. Additionally, a key priority for 2019 is improving how we communicate about our impact across all countries.

"BEING PART OF THE LAB HAS ALLOWED ME TO GAIN SELF-CONFIDENCE AND TO WELCOME NEW PEOPLE INTO MY PROFESSIONAL LIFE."



WHAT WE LEARNED FROM OUR STAFF IN 2018

Our Impact Survey posed a number of questions to our staff around the strength of accountable systems and institutions in the countries in which we work; the efficacy and impact of the Lab's programs; and the challenges and achievements of the teams.

Overall, some of the Lab's key strengths were noted as its ability to (1) build communities of changemakers, (2) share ideas and learning around accountability and (3) advocacy and efforts to change policies.

In terms of challenges, a number of teams mentioned a shortage of staff - which is often an endemic problem in the non-profit sector. Building an effective communication network within teams and a dearth of technical skills including were also raised as challenges. This feedback will inform the way we grow as a non-profit as well as important learning exchange opportunities which we are planning for the next 6 months to address some of these skills gaps.

MEASURING OUR IMPACT

Understanding our impact in real terms has become a priority for us. We remain an organisation that is committed to adaptive and continuous learning and use every opportunity at hand to gather feedback from our staff, partners, stakeholders and program participants. Over the past year, we've worked on formalizing our data gathering processes to ensure there is stronger alignment and cohesion among our growing country teams.

We've also continued to gather feedback from our participants before, during and after our programs and ask questions that hopefully elicit honest, practical feedback that improves our programming on an ongoing basis.

We conducted a Staff Impact Survey for 2018 that speaks to this goal of ongoing learning. Chiefly, we wanted to find out how adaptive we are as an organisation, what the Lab's most valuable assets and inputs are, and also what our different teams' biggest challenges are. These responses (see the next section) will inform our processes as we continue to iterate and improve our programming.

We've also continued to share our learnings on our blog and social media platforms, host quarterly public learning calls, and tell our stories through videos, podcasts and resonant articles. Check out some of those stories [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

To what extent do you think a lack of accountability is a cause of problems in the country(ies) in which you work?



Do you think the Accountability Lab is adapting its programs based on feedback received?



How effective do you think the Accountability Lab is at supporting active citizens and responsible leaders?



MEDIA REACH - 2018

(Nigeria, Nepal, Mali, Liberia, South Africa)



VIDEO VIEWS: 6 MILLION



TOTAL VOTES: 184 336

TOTAL NOMINATIONS: 8 620



RADIO/TV COVERAGE:

ORTM, AREWA24, AP1,

HUMAN RIGHTS RADIO, AFP,

AMPLIFIED MEDIA RADIO, SABC,

KAYA FM, LESEDI FM, EAST COAST

RADIO, POWER FM

IMPROVING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER IN OUR PROGRAMS AND TEAMS

Gender equity is one of the underpinning principles of our work. Internally, we are striving to achieve gender balance on our country teams while fostering an organizational culture where all voices are equal, and externally, in our programming we prioritize the inclusion of the most marginalized in the communities where we work.

We have relatively good gender distribution on country teams. However, there is a need to grow the number of women in leadership roles. With the addition of Dadisai to the South Africa team, we now have our first female Country Director. Our current breakdown by country is as follows:

% of female staff members	
Global	80%
Liberia	50%
Mali	38%
Nepal	46%
Nigeria	33%
Pakistan	40%
South Africa	100%

Working towards gender equity on a staff levels comes down to more than just numbers, and this drove us to conduct an organization-wide survey to assess our team's perceptions of gender in our organization. Here's a snapshot of what we learned:

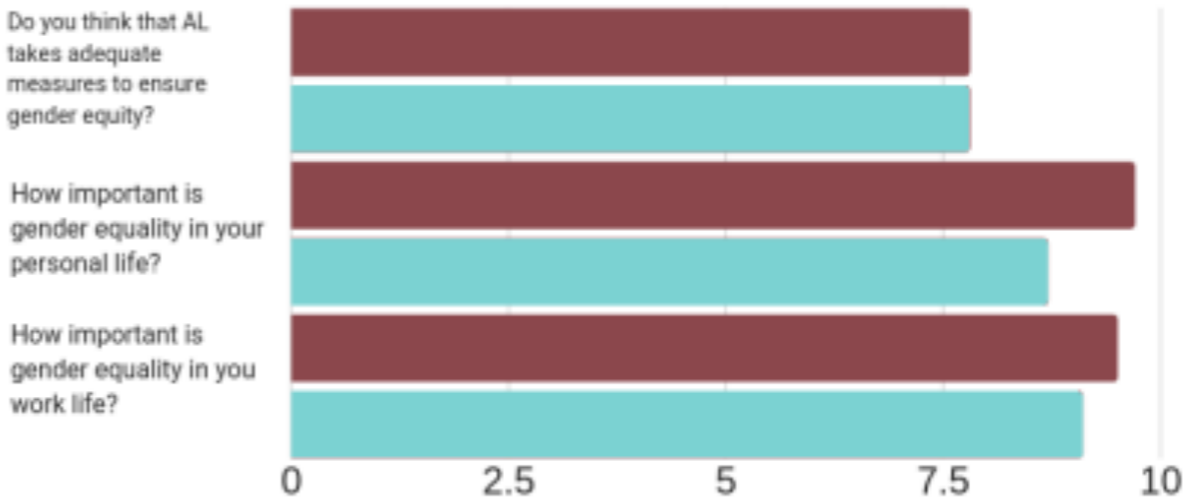
Gender equality really matters to staff members, both in their personal and work lives. While the majority feel that AL is taking adequate measures to ensure gender equality, we hope to see this number improve through annual revision of our gender-related policies, training and continued efforts to create a space for open dialogue.

98% of respondents thought that their colleagues valued gender equality. Notably, the 2% who didn't think that were male team members. Comments on this question included that there is space for conversations around gender equality at the Lab, however, there are certain cultural traits that don't align with organizational values. While the feedback here was largely positive, continued sensitization remains a priority.

No instances of sexual harassment have been reported. This is heartening, but we recognize the need to continue awareness around our Gender and Sexual Harassment Policy, ensure that country teams institutionalize training and maintain spaces for dialogue on gender-related challenges.

We still fall short of reaching gender equity in our programs, but we are monitoring participation rates more closely and we're creating a baseline to measure our progress.

Average % of female participants across programs	
Liberia	60% - note that this is high and not a true reflection of participation rates in Liberia, as the Reel Peace program had 100% female participation
Mali	38%
Nepal	38%
Nigeria	22%
Pakistan	40%
South Africa	60% - only based on Integrity Icon finalists



Increasing the number of female participants is a priority, and teams are finding ways to engage more women. Some of the strategies applied include:

- Using more female volunteers for outreach;
- Including questions around a nominee's track record around gender equity on Integrity Icon nomination forms;
- Encouraging Integrity Icon volunteers to ask community members whether they might know a female civil servant they'd like to nominate;
- Gender equity is considered during the Integrity Icon shortlisting process;
- Teams identify women in leadership working on the district and/or provincial levels and share the Integrity Icon call for nomination with them directly;
- Program and learning staff are more thoughtfully around where and when we host events and training opportunities, taking into account that women are often caregivers.

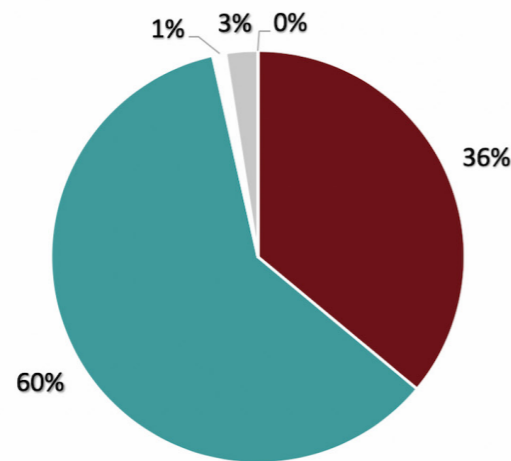
Essentially, we recognize that growing these numbers will not happen organically, but programs need to be conceptualized, planned and implemented in ways that make it appealing and easy for women- and all groups that are often excluded- to participate.

“98% OF RESPONDENTS THOUGHT THAT THEIR COLLEAGUES VALUED GENDER EQUALITY.”



BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

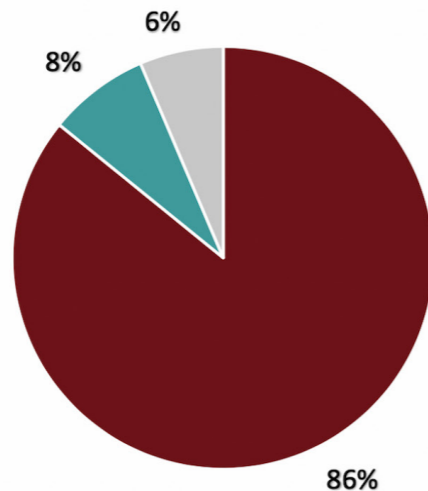
FY 18 Revenue



Contributions and grants (Without donor restrictions)	\$429,600
Contributions and grants (With donor restrictions)	\$720,000
Individual donations	\$12,340
Other income	\$29,704
Interest income	\$5

Total Revenue \$1,191,649

FY 18 Expenses



Program Expenses	\$819,970
Management and General Support	\$74,009
Fundraising	\$61,267

Total Expenses \$955,246

