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Accountability Lab 2020-2023

Strategy Update for 2022

Highlights

- Our goal in 2022 is to leverage learning across our translocal network to **close the proximity gap and support fellow local organisations in the countries in which we work, and elsewhere, by lending space, ideas, resources, time and relationships**.

- In 2022 we will also continue to **prioritize learning across our Labs, bolster our advocacy efforts, grow our technology and innovation streams of work, and place continued emphasis on diversity, inclusion and sustainability**.

- Accountability Lab made important progress in 2021, despite the challenges- highlights included the **growth of campaigns** (a reach of almost 100m online); **growth of our training for civil servants and civic activists** (200+ supported); and **support for key policy reforms** (for example in Nigeria and Nepal);
We did not make as much progress as we had hoped on issues of **media accountability, Integrity Icon networks and program partnerships;**

- Throughout 2022, we will also work on the development of a new strategy for the Lab for the 2023-2026 period.

Background

Accountability Lab makes governance work for people everywhere by supporting active citizens, responsible leaders and accountable institutions. We are reimagining how to build accountability to support a world in which resources are used wisely, decisions benefit everyone fairly, and people lead secure lives.

In late 2019, Accountability Lab developed a new global strategy for the 2020-2023 period.

The strategy outlined why we care about accountability, what we have learned from almost 9 years of work on these issues, where we are going now and how we'll get there.

We outlined that in the 2020-2023 period we will focus on:

i) shifting norms and behaviors- around issues of accountability to ensure that integrity becomes the expected behavior within societies (*campaigns*);

ii) equipping reformers for collective action- inside and outside government- with the knowledge and tools they need to push for better governance through training and learning (*knowledge*);

and **iii) influencing policies, processes and practices- around critical accountability issues, through growing coalitions and advocating for change (*communities*).**

Operationally, the strategy outlined that by 2023, the Accountability Lab will be working in 12 countries globally, and with partner-led programs in an additional 5 countries; with a global budget of $3.1 million; and a team of 100+ staff.

The strategy was matched with a 2020-2023 operational plan and a budget for this work (here.) Now, at the end of 2021, our strategy will cover one more year of activities.

Despite the challenges, we have met many of the goals we set out to achieve by the beginning of 2023. We now work in 12 countries; and with partners in another 5; and in 2021 our budget was $3.46 million globally. We have an amazing team of 100+ staff globally; and have made significant progress towards our strategic and operational goals.

Progress Against our Strategic Goals in 2021

Key data points demonstrating our progress against each goal include:

i) Shifting norms and behaviors- around issues of accountability to ensure that integrity becomes the expected behavior within societies (campaigns):
• Growth of campaigns and advocacy activities- with an estimated 98 million people reached with our content online in 2021;
• Improved and new communications outputs including 5 new podcasts (listener growth of 15% in 2021);
• Substantive evidence through learning reviews of the ways in which two of our campaigns (Integrity Icon and Voice2Rep) are influencing behaviors and actions.

ii) Equipping reformers for collective action- inside and outside government- with the knowledge and tools they need to push for better governance through training and learning (knowledge):
• Growth and codification of the Accountability Incubator- with 89 participants across 12 countries (new countries included DRC, Kenya, Uganda and Guinea Bissau);
• Additional consolidation and roll-out of our knowledge-building and innovation labs with civil servants (in Pakistan, Nepal, Nigeria and Guinea Bissau) with more than 300+ participants across these countries;
• Training for and with avariety of leading organizations in the field including the Global Initiative Against Organized Crime, UNDP, the Hague Academy, the Mastercard Foundation and others.

iii) Influencing policies, processes and practices- around critical accountability issues, through growing coalitions and advocating for change (communities):
• Contributions to key national and sub-national policy changes including the passage of the Disability Rights Bill in Kaduna State (Nigeria), localizing a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy in Dhanghadi (Nepal); and working with a rural district council through our CivActs partners to construct new infrastructure for informal traders in Goromonzi (Zimbabwe);
• Continued Chairpersonship of the C20 Anti-Corruption Working Group- growing the C20 group to 181participating organizations and successfully providing inputs to the G20 on these issues including through a new G20 ACWG Tracker;
• Supporting civil society engagement in the US Summit for Democracy through providing feedback on the process and hosting the civil society engagement website.

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Ongoing COVID-19 Challenges

In our strategic update note last year we highlighted the changes we made to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic. We moved quickly and built on our existing ideas, approaches, networks and assets to evolve our work, including a focus on the wellbeing of our teams; citizen feedback on pandemic responses through our Civic Action Teams; creative, bottom-up approaches through our Accountability Incubator; adaptive learning inside and outside our organization; working within systems with our Integrity Icons to push for reforms, and through multilateral approaches (as Chair of the C20 among other roles) to ensure decision-making focused on the most vulnerable; inclusion and diversity in programming and operations; and building out our structure as a translocal network.

In 2021, we continued to build on these efforts as the pandemic continued. The wellbeing of our teams remained paramount- we launched a new monthly internal wellness newsletter and increased our internal emergency fund to close to $100,000. We also provided targeted support to team-members as needed in response to pandemic-related challenges including work-from-home stipends and equipment, additional health insurance and extended or adapted leave policies. Our work to support citizen feedback as part of pandemic responses and counter misinformation grew rapidly, reaching 286 472 people including through 308 bulletins in 10 languages. This has led to partnerships for scale up including with provincial governments in Pakistan and Nepal.

Our incubator grew dramatically, and we now have an active network of more than 200+ "accountapreneurs" around the world. We have grown our learning networks including with local governments and through the OGP Youth Collective; and supported our Integrity Icons through large scale campaigns, ceremonies and network-building efforts. In terms of diversity and inclusion we have been supporting activists pushing for transgender and LGBTQI+ rights; and supporting reforms that benefit people with disabilities; and we have developed our thinking (and operational practices) around the idea of translocal networks.

Additionally, in 2021, we have among other things: grown campaigns including the Accountability Music Awards and Gov-HER-nance; launched new projects with partners including around issues like public budgets in Mexico, through art in Nigeria, around elections and local governance in South Africa, and in support of peace-building in Mali; worked with young people to connect accountability to peace-building initiatives in Pakistani universities; and helped to lead anti-corruption networks in Niger.

Operational Progress in 2021

In 2021, we outlined and worked towards what we think an effective post-pandemic CSO looks like and drew lessons from building new Labs in difficult contexts. This work across four key operational domains has included:

i) Human Resources
The addition of three new programs and learning managers at the Global level to help us synthesize data and share lessons across network Labs; Standardized HR policies and procedures across all Labs; and the development of standardized

mechanisms for promotions and raises; Transition plans in place for all senior management positions.

ii) Financial Management
All Labs use Quickbooks online and report financial data in full and on time to Boards of Directors; All financial policies and plans in place, in keeping with international best practice; A CFR Uniform Guidance Financial Audit for the US Government for the USAID grant with Zimbabwe.

iii) Communications
Consolidation of branding guidelines and implementation of new communications strategy; Use of new technology tools to track our influence and analyze sentiment around our work; Improved efforts to position our team members as

thought-leaders within the accountability field.

iv) Learning
Made significant progress towards the creation of a centralized data management systems across teams to ensure more effective synthesis; Concluded an evaluation of

our Voice2Rep program across Liberia, Nigeria and Zimbabwe using a Most Significant Change (MSC) approach, and trained key learning staff on data collection and evaluation methods along the way; Improved programmatic indicators and organizational KPIs to better assess impact and progress.

What We Have Not Achieved and Why

At the same time, this is an incredibly challenging time to be pushing for accountability around the world, and for the Lab itself. There were several parts of our work in which we did not make as much progress as we would have liked in 2022. These included:

i) *Media accountability and storytelling -* while our work to counter COVID-19 misinformation has grown, we hoped to begin to focus more intentionally on local story-telling and narrative-building within specific communities and have not had the bandwidth to do so. However, recruitment for a media incubator is underway in South Africa, with the incubator beginning in early 2022; and this year we are also hoping to build out partnerships with solutions journalism and creative media-makers across country contexts.

ii) *Building our Integrity Icon networks -* while we have made significant progress building networks among our Integrity Icon winners within countries, 2021 was the year we hoped to begin to connect networks more intentionally across countries. However, resource and capacity constraints, along with changing COVID-19 dynamics, have prevented this. In 2022, we intend to host our first global Integrity Icon Summit (virtually) and build-out sector and topic specific learning groups within the larger Icon network.

iii) *New program partnerships -* we have learned some important lessons about how we embed our positive way of working and our values in new contexts with new partners. We have learned that generating buy-in requires significant investment of time and resources (human and financial) to build trust and demonstrate the long-term value of the translocal model. The inability to travel due to COVID has also made building partnerships more difficult. In 2022, we are focusing on deepening the constructive partnerships we have maintained in 2021; learning the lessons from the past year and being strategic about where, how and when we create new collaborations.

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Moving Forwards

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a critical juncture, and a moment to reflect and respond to new realities. At the same time, 2021 has brought renewed attention to ideas related to accountability- given continued challenges related to authoritarianism and closing civic space- but also a significant new focus on anti-corruption from governments including the US and multilateral fora like the G20. In 2022, our existing Theory of Action and Strategy will remain unchanged. We will continue to investigate and deepen our work

to shift norms and narratives through positive campaigns; efforts to grow knowledge and "unlikely networks" from the ground upwards; and to build "insider-outsider" coalitions for reforms. In addition:

i) We'll consolidate our role as an eco-system-building organization - by leveraging learning across our translocal network to close the proximity gap and support fellow local organisations in the countries in which we work, and elsewhere, by lending space, ideas, resources, time and relationships. This means being generous, not being jealous within a field where competition can often overwhelm collaboration, and lifting up others at every opportunity. In practice, we'll find new ways to support key participants in our programs (such as our "accountapreneurs"); raise funds for and with others; develop collaborative platforms that will be useful for civil society (such as the Summit for Democracy website and G20 Anti-Corruption tracker); and by participating actively in local,

national and international processes wherever our voice might be useful.

ii) We'll continue to prioritize learning - this has always been a key part of what we do as an organization and the way we understand our role, and we will grow our learning efforts going forwards to inform our own work and that of others. In early 2022 we will put out key learning outputs related to our music campaigns, and our efforts to shift social norms along with a learning report about our efforts in 2021. We will also work to improve our data collection efforts; build learning and training capacity among our teams; carry out an external evaluation of our work; and build out an evidence map of key gaps in our approaches.

iii) We're going to double down on our advocacy work - because we see some important opportunities to link local and national level efforts to international priorities; and to ensure local level ideas and voices are fed into multilateral processes in ways that will make them more effective. This work will include continued leadership within the Open Government Partnership (particularly on youth and inclusion issues); build-out of our G20 Accountability Tracker with country-level advocacy efforts around specific G20 anti-corruption priorities; and our work to support a platform for the Summit for Democracy Year of Action, through which we hope to improve the transparency and accountability of the process.

iv) We're going to deep dive on innovation and technology issues - because we understand how essential this is to accountability around the world. This will include continued SDG16 innovation challenges to source and support creative approaches at the country level; and work to find and develop new anti-corruption technology tools with our partners at the Alliance for Innovative Regulation (AIR) that can help to push back against transnational graft. We also expect to become more engaged with thinking about and participation in networks related to digital governance issues.

v) We're going to focus on the "how"- of what we do - with a continued emphasis on inclusion, diversity and sustainability in particular. A starting point for this will be an internal audit and mapping process to understand where and how we can improve diversity and inclusion within our work; continued

efforts to improve the environmental sustainability of our programs (and a focus on environmental issues within our projects); and matching key changes to budgets and financial planning processes so that they can be hard-wired into the way we work.

Throughout 2022, we will work on the development of a new strategy for the Lab for the 2023-2026 period. This strategy will be informed by an independent review of our work; a management and Country Director retreat in Q2; a series of internal and external conversations with key stakeholders about our work; and an in-depth landscape scan to understand the Lab's positioning and value. This new strategy will be presented to the Board of Directors for sign off in Q4 2022.

What This Means Operationally

In operational terms, we see 2022 as a year of consolidation, with growth of thinking, deepening of systems and improvement in learning. We will continue to operate in a hybrid way, with the expectation that travel may become more feasible at some point in 2022 but that well-organized and supported online events can also improve diversity and inclusion. We will deepen the work we have begun in new contexts in 2021 (Somaliland, Guinea Bissau, Kenya and Uganda); and continue to **act as an eco-system building organization in those contexts where we have a well-established presence.** We expect our team at the global level to remain constant in size, with some country teams growing as we take on more work (South Africa; Mexico). We expect our budget to increase between 5-10% year-on-year (to around $4.25m) as funding and aid flows from donors decline after COVID-19 highs in 2020 and 2021.

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