GLOBAL ANNUAL REPORT 2022

Several important lessons emerged from Accountability Lab's work over the past year. In expanding our programming to Somaliland and the Democratic Republic of Congo, we reaffirmed how important it is to have a local team in place to help us withstand challenges and ensure our programming fits within the context. We also discovered strategic new ways of working on gender inclusion and regional representation - particularly in deeply patriarchal societies. Our female Integrity Icons helped us build powerful narratives around diverse roles for women; and working purposefully in remote regions through offline methods ensured strong regional impact.

Meanwhile, AL's Civic Action Teams program introduced a new project called Gov-Her-Nance in Nepal, Nigeria and Pakistan, that focuses on embedding inclusive policies in local government units. We reflect on some of the key innovations that have led to the program's success later in the report.

So many of our processes of governance show their age every day - they are simply not fit for the 21st century. At the Lab, we're using our translocal network as an alternative approach to collective problem-solving and development. As a global collective of independently-registered Labs with a shared vision and mission, we're learning more every year how to equitably share resources and capacities and put the eco-system as a whole ahead of individual or organizational aims. We show you how we're doing this in established and new network labs.

We also strengthened our coalition-building efforts, setting up an online resources website and newsletter for the Summit for Democracy. Enjoy these updates and let us know what you think!

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INTEGRITY ICON

Integrity Icon started in Nepal in 2014, with the aim of generating civic debate around the idea of integrity within the public service. Since then, the campaign has expanded globally, connecting with citizens and encouraging them to name and fame those government officials that make a positive impact. We recently launched the campaign in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somaliland

Integrity Icon seeks to inspire a new generation of effective and passionate public servants. We have found that positive role-models can shift narratives around integrity and accountability. These conversations, by design, choose not to focus on exposing corruption, while highlighting networks of excellence that exist. In this, positive networks can expand, providing a critical breakwater against the seemingly surging tide of corruption that citizens perceive all around them.

Integrity Icon has now launched in the DRC and Somaliland. Expanding a campaign into unknown spaces challenges us to rethink what we already know. Through the past couple of years, we have realized that without citizens our campaigns would not have impact. Our expansion into new spaces meant that we had to consider the unknowns, while standing firm regarding what we know. This approach allows us to consider the unique contexts and potential of the new campaign locations, while we are able to stand firm regarding the core building blocks that we are unable to compromise upon. This iterative process ensures that we don't enter new spaces with a cut-and-paste solution, but it also lays a foundation on which to construct a context-specific campaign. Each country is unique, with untapped potential and hidden challenges. Our work is not simply to implement, but to understand how a local ecosystem can benefit from becoming part of a global, yet context-sensitive movement. Our expanding work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somaliland gave us the opportunity to reflect, learn, and adapt upon our approach. Here are some of the key lessons that we learned:

1. Stand strong against the structural drivers of corruption, without losing your ability to be flexible when needed.

This means engaging constructively with the Government. In Somaliland this has meant clarifying to the government how the campaign differs from its own staff appraisal process; and how it creates positive engagement with the broader population around the public sector - including highlighting the other work of the Civil Service Commission. In DRC, this meant managing the reputational risks by not allowing authorities involved in corruption scandals to be associated with the campaign. It also meant trying to leverage government priorities, especially around the President's anti-corruption agenda, to further push for change in the processes for greater transparency in the management of public affairs.

> "
> Our work is not simply to implement, but to understand how a local ecosystem can benefit from becoming part of a global, yet context-sensitive movement.

2. Program implementation cannot be rushed at the expense of communication.

This was evident in both DRC and Somaliland, which have a deep culture of deliberation and continuous conversation. These conversations take time. Continuous communication is critical to manage partnerships at all levels. Making time for shared sense-making, storytelling, and exploration of shared values is strategic methodologically to ensure inclusion, co-creation, and broad support. Positive messaging is also a powerful tool to bring detractors on board. For example, it was only when governments realized that thousands of people engaged positively around the work of public servants that they became truly excited about the campaign.

3. Grassroots campaigns need to connect with communities and galvanize the energy of those involved in the campaign in creative ways.

Both countries have a history of highlighting only those with perceived power. This has been the case with previous award ceremonies and even government employee of the year celebrations. On Facebook discussion boards, and in conversations, people mentioned how energizing it was to see the important work of very ordinary people celebrated through this campaign. Citizens have indicated that they engaged with this campaign because it was not just giving them passive information. It shared stories and then invited people to act. This call to action initiated conversations about Icons within their family/friendship circles and communities, and they then took personal interest in ensuring that their stories reached more people.

4. We need to be strategic in folding gender inclusion and regional representation into the overall approach.

Both Somaliland and DRC are deeply patriarchal societies. Highlighting more female Icons helps build the narrative around women's role outside of their homes. In Somaliland, two women were included as winners which opened up a space for conversations about equity and diversity. Similarly, stories from places like Gowsa-Weyne in Somaliland and remote areas of South Kivu in DRC were important to demonstrate the importance of these issues- and the people finding solutions- in non-urban contexts. However, while we had 25 women and 25 men amongst our volunteer ranks, we struggled to find parity when it came to nominations. Less than 10% of our nominations in the first year were women. We have put in place measures to try to ensure greater numbers of female nominations in subsequent campaigns by working with local gender advocacy organizations and women's groups. We're also working with our volunteers to address challenges that were raised by potential nominees around fears of jealousy or repercussions in the workplace resulting from their participation.

5. It's important to consider the value of both offline and online methods of communication.

The use of social networks or other modern technologies is beneficial but has limits. In DRC this meant identifying ways to communicate beyond social media and TV, and using other creative means, such as mobile billboards and interactive posters. At least 82% of people in the DRC do not have regular internet access, highlighting the need to use traditional channels like radio stations rather than social media platforms in many communities.

STAFF FEEDBACK

Accountability Lab is dedicated to encouraging a supportive and inclusive culture across our teams. Our aim is to ensure that all employees are given equal opportunity and that our organization is representative of all parts of society.

Additionally, AL has robust safeguarding, duty of care, social media, and equity policies which are reviewed regularly. We are continuing to center the well-being of our team members in every possible way, improve our talent management, identify and retain the very best people, and to put in place capacity development plans to build or bring in the knowledge we need to achieve our strategic goals.

I'm satisfied working at AL ➡ **90.88%**

My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment ➡ **89.59%**

I'm encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things ➡ **84.79%**

I'm satisfied with my involvement in decisions that affect my work ➡ **78.03%**

6. A strong, local team can help you navigate the storm.

Local political or socio-economic realities can change quickly, but with the right team- who not only understand the context but are also able to manage relationships on the ground- anything is possible. In both DRC and Somaliland we have very intentionally built teams with diverse backgrounds, skills and networks that can deliver the campaign. Additionally, we operate as part of a translocal network- through which we are constantly sharing ideas, feedback and lessons, that have allowed the Somaliland and DRC teams to learn quickly from progress- and challenges- elsewhere in the world.

7. Working within an oral culture.

Somaliland has a deep culture of deliberation and continuous conversation. This takes time. Implementation cannot be rushed at the expense of communication. Continuous communication is critical to manage partnerships at all levels. Making time for shared sense-making, storytelling, and exploration of shared values is a strategic methodology to ensure inclusion, co-creation, and broad support. Positive messaging is also a powerful tool to bring detractors on board. The complexity of the Somali language also needed to be considered throughout. Language used in campaign materials needed to remain non-political, objective, non-confrontational (especially to government), and inclusive.

8. Framing narratives around integrity.

This is a very sensitive subject in the country and had to be approached with great tact - especially with local government authorities. The innovative and positive approach of the Lab made sense and helped us frame conversations in a non-threatening way. This did not unfortunately prevent dubious requests from certain authorities who were used to asking for 'a piece of the cake'. But it did allow us to sidestep damaging and entrenched practices and begin to work on changing norms around them.

INCLUSIVITY IN PRACTICE

Throughout AL's programming, we prioritize recruiting and engaging diverse participants from all communities and levels of society. This year, 65% of our Open Government Partnership Summit Youth Delegates were female or non-binary, with areas of expertise in disability inclusion, digital inclusion, citizen participation, and more. AL's Gov-HER-nance programs, in collaboration with female local government representatives, also aimed to bring new voices and ideas to challenges in gender equity, local development and open government.

In Mali, the YALI Film Fellowship invited 10 young women who have creative ideas about leadership, accountability, and gender equality to a training camp in short film production and directing techniques. The participants made 10 short films on themes that reflect realities in their communities - from gender-based violence to the role of women in the arts. In South Africa, our FIlm Fellowship included three women, one trans-gender man, and one gender non-binary person. Over the three-month program, fellows participated in social-impact storytelling curriculum, shooting and directing, and on-going mentorship. Each fellow produced a solution-driven short film about the challenges in their respective communities. These ranged in subject, showcasing people and initiatives responding to substance abuse and hunger to the impact being made by innovative community workers to unlikely gender-justice advocates.

As an organization, AL has worked to prioritize the intersection of democracy and inclusion, particularly for women, youth, marginalized groups, and around Global South participation, placing an emphasis on democratic and citizen safeguarding.

In November, in response to the Biden Administration's Summit for Democracy and Year of Action, Accountability Lab set up the unofficial website for the Summit for Democracy on behalf of civil society to help coordinate inputs on the Summit's key themes: defending against authoritarianism, addressing and fighting corruption and promoting respect for human rights. We saw 45,000+ page views- with many from countries that were not invited to the Summit and we saw an overwhelming number of resources, blogs and other content sent to the website.

VOICE2REP

Through our Voice2Rep program in Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Liberia, young conscious musicians have released songs about gender, inclusion, gender-based violence, and accountability. Since its inception, the campaign has given young, aspiring music artists a platform to make their voices heard, connect with socially conscious leaders in the music industry, and build their music skills.

The campaign in Liberia was named by the United Nations as one of the finalists for the SDG Action Awards for "harnessing conscious music as a tool for social change through the platform of youth participation."

The introduction of a COVID-19 special edition earned AL Liberia a nomination for keeping people informed about the Covid-19 pandemic and for debunking harmful myths about its source, symptoms, and potential long-term effects through viral Hipco songs.

V2R has led to some powerful songs which are helping shift perceptions around key social accountability issues, including educating people about the Covid-19 pandemic.

Artists in Nigeria produced an album called #Genwoke, a socially conscious compilation on business integrity and human rights, and artists in Zimbabwe made an album called Power. These young music artists are actively influencing the conversation, and also speaking in a conscious way about governance and accountability.

EXPANDING OUR ARTS4CHANGE WORK

Around the world, creative young filmmakers and musicians are using their skills to engage young people, communities and governments on some of the most pressing social accountability issues affecting their communities. These storytellers and musicians continue to work on projects focused on telling the untold stories of minorities and other priority groups.

Through our Arts4Change program, young people from Nepal, Mali, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and South Africa have worked hard to produce impactful multimedia content that has gone on to receive international acclaim in 2021. Through the incubation process of our Voice2Rep program and Film Fellowship, our young creative artists also received deep support from industry experts to grow their creative skills.

Film Fellowship

In 2021, AL Nigeria equipped nine young aspiring filmmakers with the critical filming and messaging skills needed to document accountability-related issues through our Film Fellowship program. By the end of these sessions, fellows collaborated to develop videos of their own on the streets of Abuja.

These Vox Pop interviews, dubbed "Street Vibes", reflected accountability issues in the various communities in which our fellows live, advocating for issues such as equality, inclusion, accountability, and integrity. The videos included: Joy Ataboh on integrity; Raphael Ukwubiwe on gender equality; Babalola Victor on accountability and Nsikan Umoh on gender equity. These were in addition to the instrumental role the fellows played in filming AL Nigeria's top five Integrity Icons for the year in their workplaces and communities across the country.

Nigeria's youngest artist of the year, Glory Oladipo, was only 19 when she was selected as part of the last cohort. Nonetheless, she emerged as one of the star performers and was even featured on national television via the Weekend Show on Africa Independent Television. She encouraged young people to avoid social vices and embrace integrity, especially in the music industry. "My only desire is that through socially conscious music I can ignite hope in my listeners and give them the ability to fight for what is rightfully theirs without fear so that eventually we can build the democracy we deserve."

The winner of the competition in Zimbabwe, Sarah Bonne, was incubated by the Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD). Her song, 'Hear Me Now' was used as part of a campaign to address issues of GBV through the WILD's platforms. She also headlined the launch of the Matabeleland voter education and mobilization project, EKhaya Vote, which aims to increase the rural vote in the region.

Another V2R Zimbabwe artist, Oxzy, spearheaded a fundraising drive benefiting an orphanage. Oxzy also received the Prince Claus Seed Award which recognizes emerging artists whose artistic work engages with pressing social and political issues. Fellow V2R graduate, Marve Tee, was featured widely in print media, discussing her various campaigns for people living with albinism and promoting awareness for the rights of people with disabilities. She is also involved in fundraising activities to support people living with albinism.

Our Film Fellows in Nepal, Bhima Thapa and Yajaswi Rai, won the Plural+ youth video festival award on migration, inclusion, and diversity hosted by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). The award was for their film 'Pahichan' or 'Identity,' which tells the story of a brave transgender woman living in Nepal and overcoming all sorts of social and educational hurdles.

Meanwhile, our Film Fellow in South Africa, Gomolemo Khasebe, supported the documentation of the "Occupy National Arts Council" by artists protesting maladministration and corruption. She helped with the edit of a made-for-tv documentary on the issue, which was broadcast on Moja Love TV. With this experience, she went on to join the production crew of a popular South African telenovela, The River. She has now been commissioned to produce a film for a major local entertainment network, Mzansi Magic.

Fellow South African Integrity Film Fellowship alumna, Faith Riyano, supported the Rivonia Circle with audiovisual documentation of their community outreach programs. This is supported by AL South Africa through her continued access to the ALSA Mobile Film Library.

"Working with ALSA as a fellow was a big privilege since I am an aspiring filmmaker," she says. "I have always dreamt of producing my own work as a filmmaker. It was wonderful to have been given an opportunity to make a film that could potentially call for the government's intervention in problems that my community faces."

In Zimbabwe, the Lab works in partnership with the Magamba Network network to implement the ALZ Film Fellowship. In 2021 the Fellowship recruited the inaugural cohort of Fellows who had the opportunity to showcase their work at the Bokola Film Festival. It was hosted via five provincial screenings organized in partnership with community-based organizations.

Sikhanyiswe Sebata, one of the ALZ fellows, won a creativity award at Ignite Youth for her powerful film, "Her: A Disintegrated Notion". She entered the film into the One World Media and the European Union Film Festival, where it was shortlisted for the next level of the EU Film Festival competition in the art design component.

Meanwhile, Djelika Mama Traoré participated in AL Mali's YALI Film Fellowship through which she produced the short documentary "Ma Passion." The film explores the many obstacles and prejudices aspiring women artists in Mali have to overcome to pursue their dreams. The film received critical acclaim and won the grand prize at a film festival in the Ivory Coast.

LAUNCHING GOV-HER-NANCE IN NEPAL, NIGERIA & PAKISTAN

Gov-Her-Nance is a pioneering gender-focused campaign initiated by Accountability Lab Nepal (ALN) in 2021. The work arose in collaboration with female local government representatives in Nepal's Dhangadhi sub-metropolitan city, bringing in new voices and finding solutions to issues of gender equity, local development, and open government. The program has expanded to Nigeria and Pakistan, with our Community Frontline Activists working closely with local government leaders to embed policies and practices around inclusion and gender equity.

In Nepal, our team launched our Gov-Her-Nance Bulletins in 2021, a process that gathered gender-related rumors, myths, issues/concerns, and questions from communities. The objectives are to reduce the information gaps between local governments and citizens, lift up the ideas of women and gender minorities and provide a shared basis of understanding to make local government departments more gender-sensitive in the way they work with communities.

Contrary to what many citizens commonly believe, this work has shown that government representatives can be eager to collaborate with community members to drive change, and to work towards a shared vision of 'samrachana sabaika laagi' or 'a system for everyone'.

In Pakistan, we trained 339 community volunteers - more than 30 in each of the project districts - on rumour tracking, identifying fake news, and countering misinformation. We also produced educational videos in collaboration with public health experts, government officials at the Department of Health, political and religious figures, and social media influencers, to encourage communities to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

In Nigeria, there is a major challenge around unequal decision-making processes. The National Assembly, for example, has one of the lowest numbers of female members in the world- at just 8% of the total. Traditional gender roles and deep-seated cultural norms have led to the perception that women are not suited for leadership roles. In addition, because citizens and communities are rarely consulted about decisions that affect their lives and often lack the information they need to engage with their constituencies in meaningful ways, many women are not aware of existing gender policies in the country. This leads to a plethora of problems including unequal access to services and justice and Gender Based Violence (GBV). AL Nigeria conducted town hall meetings in 3 communities (Kabong, Gangare, and Dahwol Giring) in Jos North and Jos South, to introduce Accountability Lab Nigeria's Gov-HER-nance activities and generate engagement around these issues. Key lessons included the need to:

Design creative tools to engage citizens.
Governments often fall short in finding creative ways to disseminate policy information related to gender, neglecting to circle back to citizens on decision-making and listing policy documents related to women

Although government agencies use g social media or digital tools, like this <u>one</u> in Nepal, they lack a coherent strategy to connect with women. The failure of these approaches to engage citizens around and through them brings into question the government's commitment to these efforts. This is where CSOs can collaborate with the government to deliver public messages creatively- like the weekly Gov-Her-Nance <u>bulletins</u> and radio programs, which contain information on different government mechanisms and services; debunk rumors around gender issues; and include real-time stories and voices from the community members on gender and social inclusion. In Nigeria, we're addressing information gaps for women by building diverse coalitions through Gov-HER-nance Bootcamps launched in Jos, Plateau state. We implemented a series of context specific advocacy trainings and brainstorming sessions to unearth practical methods to include a greater percentage of women in local governance processes.

Identify champions and make them role models.
Throughout our work, we come across champions like Deputy Mayor Bhatta, who are committed to collaboration and communication with citizens, and who take action to make cities inclusive and prosperous. When we have leaders like her within the government, CSOs, the media and business can step in to support collective gender equity efforts. For example, ALN's work with Dhangadhi has helped feed community voices into the city's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Policy which will soon be adopted. For this we organized community meetings, town halls, youth camps (for leadership, campaign and advocacy skills), and stakeholder consultation meetings to identify social problems, gather solutions

and generate larger consensus. Once finalized, the policy document can serve as a template for other local units that are working towards inclusion. In Nigeria, Dr Nentawe Yilwatda, former INEC Commissioner for Benue state, said a focus on building the sustainability of institutions in an inclusive way was key. "I always say that building institutions is the best we can do. You can have strong personalities, but the personalities don't actually function on their own, the system must get itself working. And I think it's best to actually build institutions that can check themselves out."

Connect agenda for inclusivity to large policy goals.
Local representatives may look at inclusion in isolation and not connect it with their larger vision or mission for their community. Decision-makers may include women and other marginalized communities only in policies that are directly targeted towards them, not realizing gender and social inclusion are cross-cutting themes that should inform every policy from infrastructure to healthcare to employment generation. CSOs can support local governments to understand the entry points for reforms and the connections across different areas of development and policy making. For instance, during community dialogues we hosted this year, local representatives were made aware of the problems that transgender people face when asked to produce sex change documents from hospitals to get their gender identity documents. Not everyone has access to formal health facilities, which can exacerbate disparities.

Act as a convener to introduce new ways of thinking.
Young people are eager to raise awareness around the issues they face but may not always be in a position to

KNOWLEDGE-BUILDING THROUGH TRAINING

How can we better equip civil servants, activists and civil society leaders to push for reforms? This is the question at the heart of AL Global's tailored knowledge-building offerings which we've expanded in scale and geography over the last few years.

talk to government about their concerns. CSOs have the power to convene these two groups- as we did in 2021 through our Inclusion Fellowship in Nepal. We connected the Inclusion Fellows to local government representatives to start difficult conversations around gender or social issues and collect ongoing feedback from their communities. Local government officers made several commitments to support the survivors of gender based violence through the local governance units in Nepal. Our Nigeria team also trained activists from target communities to collect data at the local level in order to create a shared basis of understanding around gender and other inequities with local leaders. We have been feeding validated information on these issues back down to communities via local radio shows, thereby facilitating conversations about key inclusion and gender-related concerns. In Pakistan, we commissioned and distributed research pieces, highlighting the impact of COVID-19 on various aspects of life and the invisible gap of digital outreach regarding government services for vulnerable communities.

Finally, local ownership is key for any campaign to sustain beyond a project cycle.
This point cannot be emphasized enough. The Gov-HER-nance campaign has demonstrated how aligning government and local priorities as well as engaging local actors can lead to sustainable outcomes at the policy level. From its onset in Nepal, for example, the campaign was driven by local government representatives and the Inclusion Fellows. Ownership and collective efforts by local representatives like Deputy Mayor Sushila Mishra Bhatta in Dhanghadi led to successes like the establishment of separate quarantine facilities for men and women during the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to the creation of a gender-friendly local governance unit.

With support from UNDP, we created a bespoke knowledge-building program on integrity in the civil service for participants from various ministries in Guinea-Bissau. We also worked with change makers from the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime's Resilience Fellowship from more than 10 countries on strengthening their advocacy and coalition-building skills, and joined civil servants at The Hague Academy on Local Governance to unpack entry points for reform. As part of a newly formed training partnership with United People Global, we trained 500 young activists from across the globe who are eager to build networks and campaigns centered on accountability and good governance.

While each training opportunity is unique due to the experience participants bring to the table, we have learned a few key lessons which helped us fine tune our work. A few things we've learned so far:

1. Big picture corruption isn't the best entry point.
While working with individuals from endemically corrupt spaces, we've often seen that participants feel deflated when thinking about the magnitude of the problem, or disconnect from a conversation due to the fear that so often comes with tackling the c-word in spaces where reprisals are not uncommon. Instead, we start at the hyperlocal local and guide participants through unpacking the different intertwined threads of universal challenges such as poor service delivery or low participation. Looking at issues felt by all citizens across the political spectrum and helping them identify specific entry points where they can make a difference often serves as motivation and a "light switch".

YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF DEMOCRATIC CRISES

We canvassed the views of four young activists from Zimbabwe, El Salvador, Ukraine and Morocco to understand the role of youth leadership in times of democratic crises

Mantate Queeneth Mlotshwa, Kateryna Dvornichenko, Khadija Amahal, and Lourdes Maria Argueta Vides discussed the current state of youth and civic space, the barriers that young people face, how to get youth involved, and the power of intergenerational collaboration. The young leaders shared extensively about their lived experiences pushing for positive change in their countries. Here are 3 lessons we learned from them. Watch the stream on Voice of America here.

2. Allowing anonymity can create bolder, safer spaces.

We have learned to be deeply aware of where our participants are coming from and how that may feed mistrust of other participants and their intentions. Being an activist in an insecure space comes with many challenges, and we've learned that being allowed privacy can lead to more open conversations. On a practical level, that means communicating with participants using secure channels and protecting their data, facilitating conversations without cameras when needed, not forcing use of real names when engaging, and also embracing alternative virtual platforms such as Jitsi which offers space for anonymity. This requires a great deal more from the facilitator, but the safety, engagement and development of participants is essential.

3. Informal spaces lead to rich conversations.

Over the last few years we've made a point of building informal, voluntary engagement with facilitators into our training programs. These virtual office hours or coffee sessions have led to really robust and authentic conversations during which participants often share about the ways in which they see and push back against corruption daily. At first, we positioned it as extra Q&A time with the facilitators, but they quickly turned into meaningful storytelling sessions where participants from very different backgrounds grapple with the interconnectedness and similarities of corruption in their environments. And this peer learning is often richer in terms of content and network building than some of the more formal settings.

Our team sees knowledge-building as a core compnent of our efforts and as an area of constant growth. Working with diverse cohorts, ever-changing civic space and a plethora of governance challenges requires agility and care from course designers and facilitators alike.

1.Young people are taking charge of their future

"It was the day when, after our students ran to protest, they were beaten. We woke up the next day, and thought, how did it come to this moment? Our young people were being beaten in the center of our capital by our own police who were being paid with our taxes. That moment was an epiphany for me. It made me understand I have to be involved in activism. I have to change my country. That was a crucial moment for many Ukrainians that we can't just do our usual job, or studying, or something, we have to be part of action."
– Kateryna Dvornichenko

Youth will play a substantial role in democratic processes to create the futures they want for their countries. Young people are frustrated by the status quo and are willing to fight for different, more inclusive systems. When they aren't heard through the traditional participatory processes, they will put their energy towards avenues through which they feel heard, whether democratic or not.

2. Creative messaging can create trust

Khadija Amahal discussed how storytelling and education could further youth involvement in democratic processes.
"When young people see the results of actions, they

UPDATING OUR STRATEGY

The Lab has begun the process of updating our strategy for the period 2023-2026. As part of this process, we engaged The Better Org to conduct an organizational assessment of our work over the past ten years since we launched in Nepal in 2012. The objective was to assess the Lab's strategic positioning within the accountability field and interrogate the impact of our programming in the 12 targeted countries to which we have since expanded.

1. STRENGTHENING AL'S STRATEGIC APPROACH

Encouragingly, the Review showed that the Lab is unanimously viewed as authentically values-driven and purpose led by staff, participants, board members and partners who contributed to the assessment. AL's positive deviance strategy around 'naming and faming' our Integrity Icons for instance, as well as our people-centered approach to developing and implementing projects, were some of the key reasons behind this finding. The Lab's translocal model is also seen as a significant strength which places the organization in a unique position to generate greater sustainable impact with our global programs.

On the flipside, there were some suggestions as to how AL can further exploit these strengths as it grows. This relates to working more closely with key policy makers and governments to effect more tangible changes, and operating with more visibility on the global stage. The lesson for us here would be in communicating our impact more broadly by leaning deeply into strategic advocacy issues and working with partner organizations to help amplify the outcomes of our work.

2. EXTENDING MENTORING AND NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

AL's programmatic strengths included the consistent focus on inclusion, proactive solutions and positivity. The use of arts like music and film to engage young people was highlighted as one particularly effective programming stream. Participants reported that the programs they completed led to sustainable changes in their personal growth and in related organizational

become more interested, more motivated, and more engaged. Due to this, there needs to be more space for young people to tell stories of how they're engaged in democracy. We must allow young people to share stories about how they make a change, or create an initiative within a local or national context. Storytelling allows people to see the realities and the kind of challenges that we have, and how we react to these challenges in our communities."

3. Civic education is key

"You have these MPs who promise to fix things they're not responsible for, like potholes. Because citizens don't know that, they can come in and promise those things. Once they get elected, you can't ask them questions they say it's not their responsibility, it is up to the local government."
– Mantate Queeneth Mlotshwa

Mantate talked about how young people need to be educated on how their government works in order to spend their energy effectively. Often, youth can be convinced to spend their energy on politicians who aren't thinking about making actual change. Similarly, a lack of understanding of different government entities can lead to efforts to build accountability in the wrong places.

Lourdes, who also teaches history, shared that she's seen an increase in students' understanding of politics since she started teaching 8 years ago. At first, she observed low levels of understanding of basic political processes or governance structures, but this changed. "Flash forward to now and I'm seeing that my students are a lot more active, they know more about the basics… they're more outspoken," she says.

capabilities for the communities with which they worked. The Civic Action Teams (CivActs) were viewed as one of the most impactful programmes, with the Accountability Incubator, Integrity Icon, and Open Gov Hub collaboration spaces also resonating strongly with respondents. Participants were almost unanimous in their confirmation that they would participate in another Accountability Lab program in the future.
One area identified for improvement, however, was the provision of more targeted mentorship and coaching facilities for participants in the Incubator program. There were also valuable suggestions around providing additional networking opportunities within and between programs.
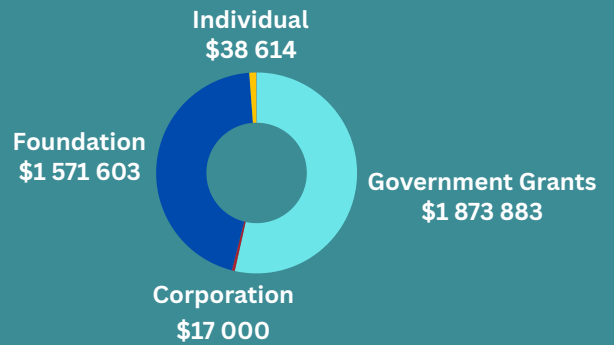
3. STRATEGIC QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

The report culminated in a few important questions for the Lab to consider as it grows its programs and geographic footprint. Firstly, how does AL expand its influence on the global stage while maintaining its bottom-up approach to programming and impact? Secondly, a challenge was posed around how the Lab could become a stronger movement builder and more intentional political advocate. Related to this, what competencies would we need to develop to ensure we are adequately able to engage with a wider array of key policymakers? This is a critical question, especially as it occurs against a backdrop of shrinking civic space in almost all our network labs.
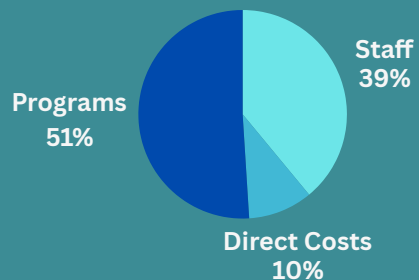
The Lab's new strategy for the next three years offers the ideal opportunity to effect some of the changes and internal shifts needed to meet these challenges in a sustainable way. Key will be ensuring that the organization maintains our competitive advantage while strategically positioning ourselves to create greater impact for our staff, participants, donors and partners in the coming years.

ANNUAL BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Total Revenue

Individual
$38 614

Foundation
$1 571 603

Government Grants
$1 873 883

Corporation
$17 000

Spending Breakdown

Staff
39%

Programs
51%

Direct Costs
10%

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