



Impact Report 2013

Empowering citizens to build the world's best tools for accountability

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31 January, 2014

Key Information



Co-creating the world's best tools for accountability

2013
IMPACT

2 PILOT
COUNTRIES

We partnered with

13 ACCOUNTABILITY
CHANGE-MAKERS
or
ACCOUNTAPRENEURS



Liberia

Nepal

We provided



Training



Management Support



Mentoring



Networking



Seed Funding

to help these Accountpreneurs create...



HIGH
IMPACT



COST
EFFECTIVE
tools for
anti-corruption

OUR
ACCOUNTAPRENEURS

collaborated with
40+ Community Groups

trained
1,500+
People in Accountability & Integrity

engaged
20,000+
Citizens in Accountability Initiatives

93%
of respondents said
they feel part of an
accountability community

100%
said they have developed
new ideas for creating or
improving accountability

100%
plan to be involved in
accountability efforts
going forward

250+ Donors

100%
of respondents

indicated that they
would give again

have become
more interested
in accountability

thought their
donation was
invaluable

The Accountability Community

86% of peers think the
Lab's ideas are different

100% of peers indicated
willingness to partner with Lab
in the future

100%
FELT MORE EMPOWERED
TO CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE
IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

WE LEARNED
LESSONS IN **4** KEY AREAS

- Measure impact and tell stories more effectively
- Improve visibility and outreach efforts
- Strengthen collaboration and community building
- Expand to new contexts and countries

Introduction

The Accountability Lab **empowers citizens to fight corruption and build accountability**. Our team helps innovative people and organizations to develop ideas - and the communities around them - that can make power-holders more responsible. We provide our “accountpreneurs” with training, mentoring, networking, seed funding, and management support. This helps them create low-cost, high-impact tools for change that can be replicated across communities and contexts. We also strive to fundamentally change development paradigms through innovation within our own operations. We strive to set a **radical example for transparency**; measure impact in new ways; **ensure reporting is easily understandable**; and **creatively engage audiences** around the processes and principles of accountability.

The Problem

A lack of accountability between power-holders and citizens saps trust, undermines opportunity and perpetuates inequalities. It is often the root cause of development challenges, such as poverty, exclusion and violence. Committed change-makers know best how to transform their communities, but without basic governance in place this is very difficult. They need transparent and uniform rules for building wealth where they live, decision-making that has the full backing of the law, and the tools to make sure power is used properly. These basics rarely exist. Visit any budding businessman or civil society representative in most of the developing world, and you will see their struggle to receive equitable and fair treatment from decision-makers. They often end up angry and frustrated, lacking the tools to fight corruption and ensure integrity.

Our Solution

Things can be different. The Lab has developed a new entrepreneurial approach to harness the creativity of these citizens and help them change their societies - we call it **accountpreneurship**. We are putting our support behind individuals and civil society organizations that want to turn their energy and innovation towards governance and transparency in their own communities. We incubate their cost effective, high-impact ideas. We empower them to unlock the rich potential for political and economic development in their countries. And we’re moving citizens with innovative ideas beyond traditional aid models - and towards real, practical change.

Measuring Impact

The Accountability Lab is a learning organization, committed to testing out new ideas and ways of doing things and to embracing failure as step towards progress. In this, our first impact report, we attempt to follow the best practices of impact reporting as outlined in *“Principles of Good Impact Reporting for Charities and Social Enterprises”* by Acevo et al. (2012): **clarity, accessibility, transparency, accountability, verifiability, and proportionality**. The purpose is not to paint an overly glossy picture of what we do, but to give an open and honest account of how various stakeholders respond to our work, and of the challenges we continue to face in measuring that consistently, and how we’re learning from it all.

Methodology

Though we approach all stakeholders as our partners and hope they call benefit from our work in their own way, **we divided our network into 4 key stakeholder groups: Accountpreneurs, Participants and Beneficiaries, Donors, and Peer Organizations**. At the end of 2013, our team distributed surveys through Survey Monkey, and through email and in person in Liberia and Nepal. The following information is derived from the 141 survey responses received. Reporting on impact is a work in progress, and we will continue to develop more robust means of measurement. We appreciate the time and support of each individual who answered our surveys, as well as the generous pro-bono support of **Intentionality CIC** throughout our impact reporting process.



Morgana Wingard (www.morganawingard.com)

Accountpreneurs...

Accountpreneurs are the creative individuals and organizations (the accountability change-makers) with whom we partner to develop tools for accountability and anti-corruption. We received survey responses from 11 out of the 13 accountpreneurs (7 from Nepal and 6 from Liberia).

These accountpreneurs worked directly with:

20,460+ people and 40+ community groups

100% agreed that they can personally help build accountability in their local community
(77% strongly agree, 23% somewhat agree).

As an accountpreneur, what new skills have you developed?

- Negotiation and mediation
- Building and managing a team
- Designing and implementing media for public outreach
- Listening to and solving problems
- Proposal writing and project management
- Event planning and facilitation
- How to strategically use and encourage others to use the Right to Information Act to promote accountability

What have you learned ?

- That accountability needs a radical but gradual approach from the bottom-up
- To start with a personal approach
- How to be moderate, considerate, persistent, and self-confident
- Teamwork
- The art of networking with relevant groups
- To build consensus in a multi-stakeholder situation
- The power of training youth in accountability filmmaking

Accountpreneurs...

Built tools for accountability:

Accountability Film School – Liberia
Accountability Film School – Nepal
Bolaun
Community Justice Teams
Daily Talk
Hip Co Accountability Network
Inter-Religious Committee for Accountability

Kick Out Corruption
Nalibeli
Oil Talk
Open Justice Initiative
RTI Toolkit
TELL-it-True
University Dialogue Centers

75% said the Lab played a large role in their progress and 25% said a moderate role.

Select quotes from the accountpreneurs:

“The belief of the Accountability Lab regarding this project is the biggest support that the Lab has provided. Believing in an idea which people think is waste [sic] and very difficult to execute is one of the biggest support [sic] that Lab has provided, not only in terms of sponsoring the project but sharing of the minutest resources that are available to them.”

“The Accountability Lab has also introduced me to many interesting and helpful people working in the sector of technology and society. These relationships have been of great value. And may I also take this opportunity to say that I greatly appreciate the casual catch-ups over tea and/or skype. I feel it is more effective by far than more formal methods of reporting.”

“The Accountability Lab established the structure for artists to come together to do the work. By giving space, legitimacy, support, etc., the Lab allowed artists to focus on the issues rather than the bureaucracy.”

Accountpreneurs

The accountpreneurs ensure that their work is:

COST-EFFECTIVE

- Thinking about self-funding strategies
- Organizing programs in community venues
- Trying to empower people with self-reliance and volunteerism, in addition to character and social responsibility
- Asking for and utilizing free or existing resources
- Eliminating unnecessary costs from the budget
- Sharing resources and costs wherever possible

SUSTAINABLE

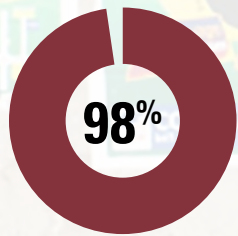
- Building networks that share our vision
- Partnering with local authorities
- Building a volunteer base
- Helping people really understand the importance of the work
- Planning a project that can take on a nationwide agenda
- Trying to find services we can vend rather than rely on grants

The accountpreneurs indicated willingness to improve their work next year by:

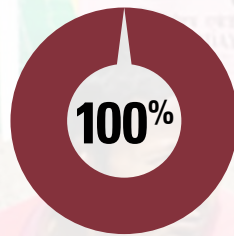
- Building more strategic work plans with specific goals
- Focusing activities on problem solving to a greater extent
- Ensuring that the demands of users are met and these users are satisfied with the results
- Building a core group of honest and determined youth to champion advocacy
- Reviewing strengths and weaknesses, and learning from past mistakes
- Expanding awareness and outreach campaigns to wider audiences through electronic media
- Creating an environment for collaboration and interaction between schools and the surrounding communities, so that the programs are tailored to the community's unique social, economic, and political history

Participants and Beneficiaries...

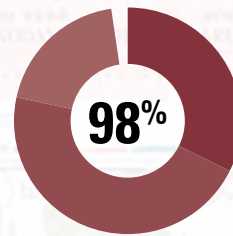
Many of tools we co-create have the capacity to benefit and empower citizens across Nepal and Liberia. For example, **Nalibeli** has been viewed over 165,000 times and just one of Takun J's **songs** on YouTube has over 95,000 views. However, we recognize it is impossible to track the full number of beneficiaries, and that promoting accountability from the bottom-up is a gradual process that takes time. We collected surveys from 48 individuals who directly benefited from our accountpreneurs' projects or participated in accountability training workshops held by our team. 82% were from Nepal and 18% were from Liberia.



said they feel to a greater extent than previously that power-holders and decision-makers should be held to account

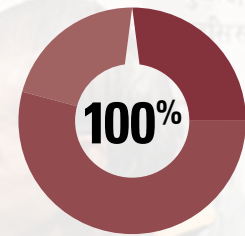


said they feel more empowered to create positive change in their life



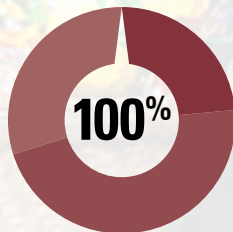
said they feel that they have improved their knowledge about accountability issues

37% a lot
45% a moderate amount
16% a little

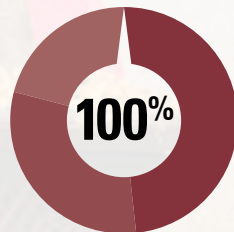


said they have developed new ideas for creating/improving accountability

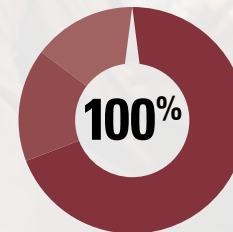
25% a lot
55% a moderate amount
20% a little



said they have developed new skills
22% a lot
46% a moderate amount
32% a little



said they feel a part of an accountability community
48% a lot
27% a moderate amount
19% a little



plan to be involved in accountability efforts going forward
69% a lot
16% a moderate amount
14% a little

Participants and Beneficiaries

In order to gauge the continued impact of our projects, as well to motivate each of the participants and beneficiaries to develop an action plan, we asked them how they will promote accountability going forward. Below are a few of the recurring responses:

- Commit to practicing personal accountability in all aspects and walks of my life.
- Make people aware of their rights and responsibilities, including how much they should have to pay for certain government services and why.
- Educate, empower, and mobilize youth to build accountability in their communities.
- Monitor the activities of power-holders; follow up with government officials on their election promises; write petitions and letters.
- Use the Right to Information Act to request information on healthcare, roads, schools, forest, water, etc.
- Develop coordination and cooperation among various stakeholders.
- Research the financial accountability of NGOs.
- Share ideas and experiences on [Bolaun](#).
- Write songs or media articles about accountability issues.



Anne Sophie Lambert, Accountability Lab

“Accountability is a very important concern, not just for community and country - it’s very important for individual life as well. An individual effort counts to make community, state responsible [sic]. The first step to promote accountability is to act responsibly and suggest peers do the same. And second hand [sic] we are working with different youth groups and networks in different sectors. Make aware [sic] and support them to work on accountability sector and encourage community as well to be accountable. Sometimes very small efforts also can make big difference. [sic]”

Donors...

In 2013, we raised a total of \$201,396.75 from over 250 donors from around the world – while maintaining our very high standards of cost-effective fundraising (less than 0.3% of total annual revenue) and complete independence from government or corporate funding.

The organizations and individuals who supported our work played a significant role in helping us achieve the impact outlined in this report and the Lab – as an accountability focused organization – remains directly accountable to our supporters.

This year, we further developed our transparency by publishing all our expenditures online in real-time, and by documenting our work through an annual report, year-end newsletter, press releases and blog posts, short videos on [YouTube](#), pictures on [Flickr](#), and daily updates on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).



Anne Sophie Lambert, Accountability Lab

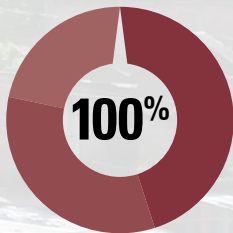


Anne Sophie Lambert, Accountability Lab

Donors

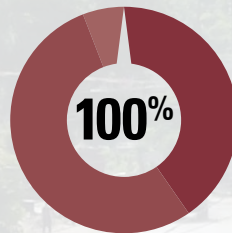
In order to gauge what we can do better next year, we also sent an impact survey to each of our donors.

Of the 27 responses we received:



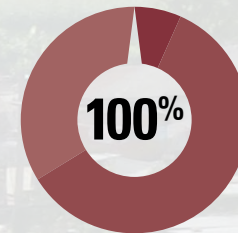
thought that their donation was valuable in helping to generate accountability

42% very valuable
37% valuable
21% somewhat valuable



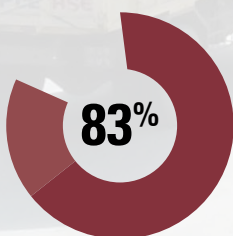
thought that we provide the right kind of information on the impact of our work on the ground

38% completely
54% mostly
8% somewhat



said they understand how the Lab works

8% completely
58% mostly
33% somewhat



said they received "enough information" on how their donation was/will be spent

17% indicated that they received "too little information"



said they have become more interested in issues of accountability and transparency since learning about giving to the Lab

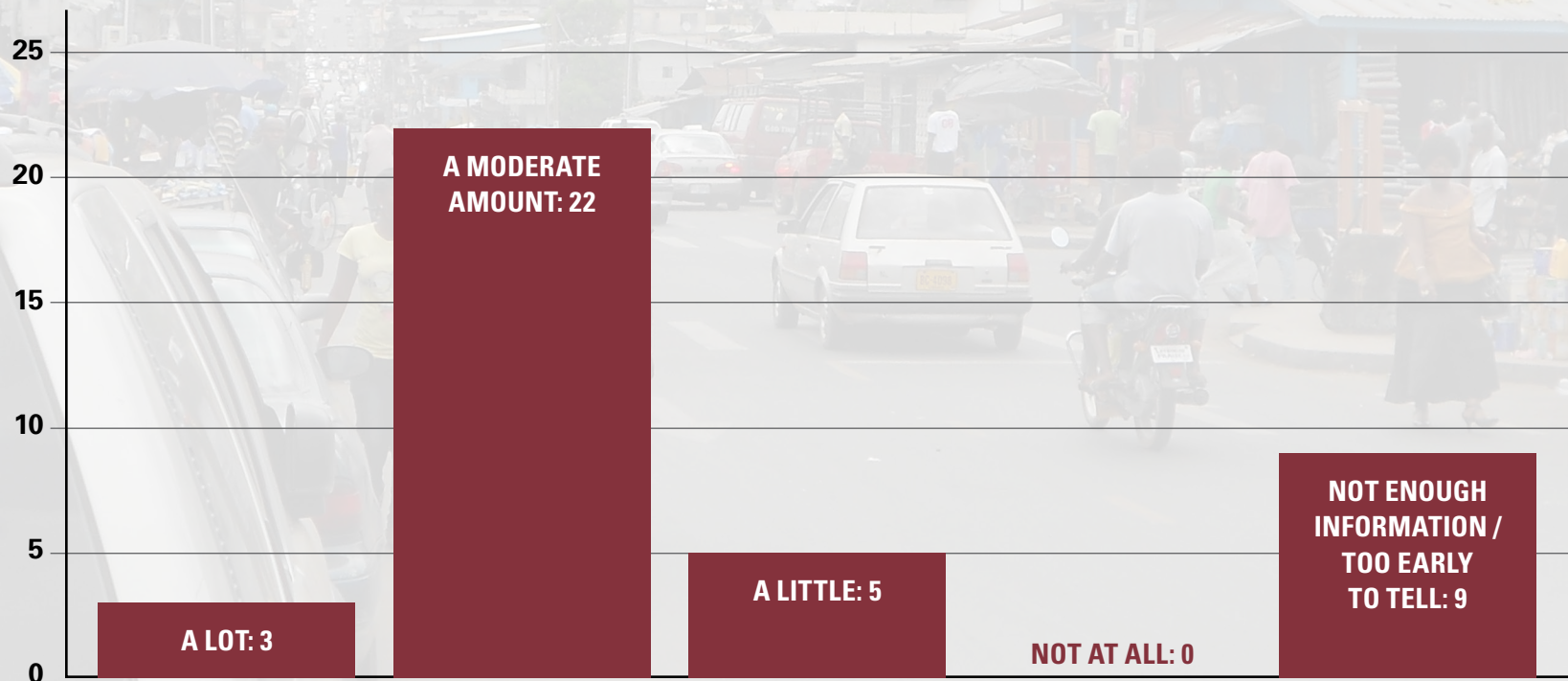


indicated that they would give again

Peer Organizations...

We believe that collaboration and community-building are central to finding sustainable solutions for accountability. Therefore, we strive to share ideas with, learn from, and partner with other organizations working on the anti-corruption, transparency, and governance agenda. We received 50 survey responses from representatives of organizations in 10 different countries.

To what degree has the Lab has positively contributed to the transparency and accountability agenda?



Peer Organizations...

Is what the Lab does is different from other transparency and accountability organizations?

87% said yes.

We asked them to elaborate and aggregated the most commonly recurring responses:

1. The Lab's projects are innovative, small-scale, and practical.

"Organisations like Transparency International are less open to collaborations on new projects that don't originate from their own organization in my experience. I feel that the Accountability Lab is a nimble and responsive organization able to take new ideas and run with them."

2. The Lab works on the ground with local individuals and organizations.

*"Humility. Recognition that people in Liberia/Nepal are the experts on governance in Liberia/Nepal."
"It works closer to citizens and with citizens than other entities active in the same field."*

3. The Lab uses new tools and technologies in an effective way.

"Many organisations provide access to global open data platforms. Not many show us how to use that data and how to improve access for real work on the ground."

4. The Lab advocates for personal accountability.

"The Lab doesn't just encourage people to take their complaints to the government, but asks them what they can do to help themselves and take responsibility for their own lives and communities."

Peer Organizations

What stands out as the strongest aspect of the Lab's work?

creativity appropriate-sized grants
learning **innovation**
efficiency
raising youth awareness and engagement
technology
practicality collaboration
grassroots approach young and energetic team



Anne Sophie Lambert, Accountability Lab

In addition to the aspects mentioned above, peers frequently noted

Our role as a connector in building a community for change

"Its role as a connector - helping bridge the gap between activists, communities, government, media and civil society organizations, without being biased against any of them."

"The Lab is very outgoing and stresses meaningful participation and networking among different stakeholders. One of its core competencies is to bring in people from diverse background to work for a cause."

"Community engagement interface to generate discussions on the burning issues."

"For me it is the networking and development of contacts and webs of support for smaller organisations and even individuals. Without this there would be less space for collaboration and less cross-pollination of ideas."

100% of respondents indicated that they would be interested in collaborating with the Accountability Lab in the future.

Challenges...

We also asked each of our 4 key stakeholder groups for feedback and ideas on how we can be more effective. In this section we aim to honestly and transparently evaluate their feedback and address core concerns.

By understanding where we fail and where the greatest challenges lie we can remain a learning organization and improve our work in the future. The boxes below provide summaries of the feedback received; the numbered points and responses bring together the key ideas that came out of the feedback and thoughts for how best the Lab might address them.



Morgana Wingard (www.morganawingard.com)

Peer Organizations are Concerned About Outreach Efforts

When asked “How do you think the Accountability Lab can improve its work?” 30% of peer organizations suggested increasing our outreach and visibility, 20% suggested scaling-up and expanding our current initiatives, 15% suggested focusing on the underlying roots of accountability issues, 15% suggested increasing collaboration with like-minded organizations, 7.5% suggested focusing on demonstrating impact, and 5% suggested empowering local citizens.

Going forward, 33% of peers suggested partnering with organizations within our same field, 27% suggested partnering with local organizations, 22% suggested partnering with government bodies, and 22% suggested partnering with youth organizations.

Challenges...

1. Improve Outreach

Our response: In the initial stages of its work, the Lab has been focused on activities on the ground. We agree, however, that better outreach would help to propel the work forward and raise awareness around important issues. We have now developed a media strategy and in the 2 months following the survey we received coverage by the [Open Government Partnership](#), [the Economist](#), [Global Policy](#), [the Guardian](#), [Forbes](#), [Reuters](#), and the [Huffington Post](#). We also co-hosted an “[Honesty Oscars](#)” initiative with the ONE Campaign, which received over 90,000 votes.

2. Measure and Provide more information on Impact

Our response: Building accountability in a sustainable way takes time, but we are working to develop the processes to effectively measure that change. In addition to our annual impact reports (and infographics), of which this is the first, we are now implementing surveys before and after each of our accountpreneurs’ projects, and to document their stories through [film](#). The quality of our impact reporting will improve in 2014 as we develop comparative data and expand our reach.

3. Scale up and Expand

Our response: The first year and a half of the Lab’s work (mid 2012 to the end of 2013) were a pilot phase that drew upon a human-centered design approach, listening to stakeholders and only slowly developing ideas where appropriate. The idea was to test the engagement model and understand its value before scaling up. In 2014 the Lab is developing the systems and partnerships to scale vertically – to deepen the work in Liberia and Nepal - and horizontally – to scale the ideas and approach in other contexts around the world.

Challenges...

Beneficiaries Want Further Awareness Raising Efforts

We asked our beneficiaries how we could be more effective in making power-holders accountable.

Responses included:

- Improving our relationships with citizens at the grassroots level
- increasing awareness of people's ability to demand accountability
- increasing awareness of power-holders who practice accountability
- continuing to support the ideas of all citizens to promote accountability
- expanding our support base throughout the focus countries
- improving our tools
- identifying more social leaders
- mobilizing more youth
- raising awareness in both rural and urban areas
- increasing the effectiveness of Bolaun
- coordinating with more stakeholders such as the media and government
- promoting personal accountability
- empowering the common citizen
- networking with like-minded civil society organizations
- lobbying government
- training government staff on accountability

4. Focus on Core Accountability Issues

Our response: The Lab's work is to co-create innovative tools to build accountability on the ground. These tools can then be used by civil society to build awareness, gather information, engage communities and monitor power-holders. We feel this is an approach that deals with core accountability issues but there are a number of issues that the Lab does not address. It does not at this point, for example, work with corporations on accountability issues. Given the size of the organization we feel that it is important to remain focused on areas where we have a comparative advantage in terms of understanding, networks and ability to create change.

Challenges...

5. Collaborate with a Cross-Section of Like-Minded Organizations

Our response: The Lab collaborates as far as possible with others to ensure collective solutions to shared problems. We do not compete for government contracts or corporate funding and therefore have no interest in bidding against others for what may be seen as finite financial resources. We would rather support these organizations to make their work as effective as possible. However, based on this feedback, the Lab will work to ensure in 2014 that it reaches out as far as possible to diverse organizations in this field to find areas for cooperation.

Donors Require More Easily Understandable Information

When donors were asked how the Lab could be more effective, answers included:

- provide more information on the organizational structure of the Lab itself
- increase efforts to garner attention from the media
- offer additional information on how supporters can get involved with the Lab's work
- create more videos of projects
- expand the scope of the activities
- better explain how the work leads to concrete results and impact
- the development of a growth plan for the organization.

6. Empower Local Citizens at the Grassroots Level

Our response: The Lab's work has largely been confined to urban areas of Liberia and Nepal to date, given the logistical and financial difficulties of operating in rural areas. The point that the Lab is not yet fully reaching citizens in some of the poorest (and often least accountable) parts of these countries so far is valid. However, our approach is predicated on the idea of empowering citizens, even in the most difficult parts of towns and cities; and many of the technology related tools in Nepal ([Nalibeli](#); [Bolaun](#)) are being used across the country. As the Lab develops reach and capacity we will seek to better engage with citizens at the grassroots in rural areas.

Challenges...

7. Increase Awareness

Our response: Awareness was cited as an issue both as it relates to the awareness of citizens to demand accountability and the awareness of citizens of accountable power-holders. The Lab is addressing both of these issues but recognizes that there is still a great deal of work to be done. In 2014 the Lab will endeavor to hold regular “friendraisers” in focus countries to increase awareness and build networks; and continue outreach efforts that can engage citizens on accountability issues. The Lab is also rolling out an “Integrity Idol” TV show in Nepal which will highlight the civil servants with the greatest integrity and allow citizens to vote for their favorite. We hope this will begin to draw attention to the most honest, accountable public servants.

8. Mobilize Greater Numbers of Youth/Leaders

Our response: The Lab has been actively building networks of individuals around accountability issues across the world, from citizens to policy-makers. We recognize, however, that networks can continually expand and that they require continuous maintenance and care if they are to endure. To address this issue going forwards, the Lab is committing to regular “Accountability Collectives” and “Friendraisers” in pilot countries and elsewhere; the development of an “Accountability Lab Ambassadors” program to engage new advocates and change-makers from other countries; and expand training and coaching activities to ensure more young people are aware of accountability tools and ideas.

Accountapreneurs Need Greater Support

We asked our accountapreneurs what challenges they faced during their efforts to promote accountability in their communities. The variety of responses we received is telling of the complex nature of efforts to generate more responsible behavior and reduce corruption. Nonetheless there were some common challenges identified by our partners. These included a lack of resources (time, staff, funding) (6), difficulty in changing attitudes and mentalities (3), and problems initiating their efforts (2).

Challenges

9. Engage Governments

Our response: Several responses focused on the desire to see the Lab better work with government on accountability issues. This is something that the team is doing as far as possible through identifying civil servants who are supportive of accountability and coordinating efforts with them. In Liberia, for example, the Lab frequently discusses issues of transparency of data with the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism. In Nepal, the team regularly consults with governmental institutions working on anti-corruption, such as the Anti-Corruption Commission. Going forwards, the Lab will work to bring the government into its projects and look to train public sector staff on accountability issues where feasible.

10. Create a Growth Plan for the Organization

Our response: The Lab is now transitioning from the pilot stage to the organizational growth stage of its development. The approach has been validated and programs are being consolidated and expanded where appropriate. The fields of accountability and social entrepreneurship are changing rapidly and advice the team has received indicates that it does not make sense to have a long-term plan for the organization at this point- given that it would quickly become obsolete. However, the Lab does have a vision, under which it is now operating through 3 month operational plans to match goals to activities. In 2014 the team will work on putting these into a digestible form on the website to allow supporters to monitor progress against stated goals

Next Steps

The team has found the process of conducting an impact report of this sort hugely beneficial- both in terms of developing a process for gauging the effectiveness of the Lab's work and understanding where we can improve our efforts in the future. Ideas for some ways to address our core challenges are outlined briefly above. Additional changes that the Lab will be making to its work in 2014 based on the outcomes of this impact survey and broader discussions with partners and supporters include:

1. A Greater Emphasis on Using Information Effectively.

The Lab will reorganize its website, for example, to make it clear how the organization operates; what our work is doing; and how it is achieving impact. The team will also develop a series of infographics to more easily show the thinking behind our ideas and the results of our work; and create engaging videos of our accountpreneurs to support outreach efforts.

2. Build Systems and Sustainability on the Ground.

The Lab will work to ensure sustainability and local-ownership over time through registering local chapters of the organization (where this has not already taken place) and ensuring that the relevant support is provided in terms of operational and financial systems-building. The Lab will also continue to invest heavily in its staff through training, fellowships and other opportunities for personal growth so that the team remains engaged and committed to the organizational goals.

3. A Focus on Building Revenue Streams.

The Lab is working to diversify funding sources both by building on the existing donor base and developing new streams of revenue that can provide resources to put back into projects. In 2014 the Lab is developing "Social Impact Tours" in Liberia- to provide paying customers with trips to visit some of the Lab's creative projects on the ground. These are being piloted in conjunction with the Business Start-Up Center Monrovia.

For more information, [view the complete dataset here](#).

We welcome your feedback:

please contact us at info@accountabilitylab.org with any comments or questions.