Global Exchange: Diversity and Inclusion

CIVICUS members from across the globe convened on the 16 December 2018 in Montevideo, Uruguay to i) **discuss** what diversity & inclusion means within the civil society sector, ii) **identify** obstacles that organisations and individual activists face, and iii) **share** best practices and tips. The exchange drew perspectives from a wide breadth of civil society geographically and thematically, with representation from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, India, Ireland, Macedonia, Malawi, Mexico, Philippines, South Africa and Zambia.

i) what does Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) mean: unpacking the concept

Diversity is a free and safe space in which complex perspectives, differences and intersectionality are celebrated as strengths and opportunities for innovation, acceptance and collaboration. Trust is a key concept, between and within diverse communities and groups.

Inclusion is the action point of diversity, a dynamic and continuous process that works on multiple political, economic and social levels, and leaves no one behind. It works to build meaningful connections between groups, and sometimes unlikely allies, toward a positive outcome for disenfranchised populations. Tokenism and quotas vs meaningful inclusion as a complex system (there is no 'one size fits all') was emphasized.

ii) what are the obstacles and barriers to diversity and inclusion?

Entrenched systems and power dynamics stand as a key obstacle to D&I. This is manifest in multiple arenas, including the workplace, justice system, funding environment, home and in language itself (e.g. victims vs survivors). Policies and procedures must be supported by practices that meaningfully promote D&I as a structure beyond just representation, which is both transparent and accessible to all.

iii) best practices and tips

Best practices were examined from the angle of monitoring and accountability mechanisms, shifting power, strengthening networks, and creating diverse and inclusive structures. The key (cross-cutting) points and recommendations that arose during the discussions can be summarised as follows:

- Sexual harassment **policies must be universally adopted** and endorsed. They should be **living** documents responsive to changing contexts and work environments
- **Inclusive recruitment** is a process beyond representation, ensuring marginalised populations are integrated and supported in an organisation. The process is dynamically responsive to different needs and ways of working
- Ensure there is **no formal or informal backlash** for reporting incidents. This includes changing of assigned tasks, refused promotions or other tactics used to exert pressure and punish those who speak out
- **Language** is the powerful tool we use to reflect our realities and experiences. We must ensure the language we use fosters accessibility and trust
- When dealing with internal issues organisations are encouraged to **consult an external** and objective **third party** to facilitate the process (bias vs objective)
- Accountability needs to be dynamic, sensitive to cultural contexts, and considering partners, members, CSO's and donors, to name a few
- **Monitoring and evaluation** is a key component of D&I and should be conducted at every stage of a programme (pre, during, post). We need to capture and utilise this knowledge
- **Measuring impact** can be costly, organisations must budget and motivate for these expenses
- Social media is a **key driver of change**, and can be used by civil society to circumnavigate traditional platforms. Social media campaigns can amplify the voices that are normally excluded from discussion (e.g. #metoo). However, we should not forget how many people are excluded in the digital integration and must take the additional steps to reach all communities.
- Use **creative and innovative platforms** to heal communities, e.g. community theatre could be used to shift power and deal with trauma
- **Alternative resourcing** should be identified and disseminated, and new modalities explored.
- Resources like service trading **mobilises a wide breadth of resources** beyond the financial, including training and technical know-how, and strengthens networks
- Address **the challenge of reaching informal movements and networks**, and engaging those who are not engaged through more formal/traditional structures

Organisations and individuals, in personal and professional capacities, must demonstrate an ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion at all levels, both horizontal and vertical.

Health and wellness

The Global Learning Exchange examined self-care as a critical concept for civil society. Self-care is often de-prioritised because of the magnitude of the problems the civil society sector faces. This a very harmful practice, both to the individual and civil society as a whole. It is also important that we extend this self-care ethos to our friends, colleagues and fellow activists. Here are just a few tips we identified:

- Make a manifesto that supports your self-care, recognising *your* worth and importance. Challenge yourself to deal with your issues and seek help when you need. Set small goals and keep to them
- Responsibility to those around us- check in with colleagues, raise the importance of caring, encouraging mental health days
- Be aware of how context can affect the self-care objectives of everyone in a different way. Set content warnings, have a psychologist available in meetings where there may be triggers. Have resources to deal with the trauma associated with the work we do