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ANTI-CORRUPTION
CONFERENCE**

**MOBILISING PEOPLE:
CONNECTING AGENTS OF CHANGE**

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Short Session Report: Game Changers

Session Title: Tools, systems, and good practices in CSO transparency and accountability

Date & Time: Thursday 8 November 2012, 9:00 – 11:00

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Experts:

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Guillermo Correa, RACI

Rosa Ines Ospina, Rendir Cuentas

Moderated by:

Anabel Cruz, ICD Rendir Cuentas

Robert Barrington, Transparency International UK

Session coordinated by: Rosa Ines Ospina

Main issues raised in kick off remarks. What's the focus of the session?

The session aims to share best practices and jointly design next steps and collaborative work in the field of CSO accountability and transparency.

What initiatives have been showcased? Briefly describe the Game Changing Strategies

Robert Barrington – In 2010 the UK Bribery Act came into force. The Act applies to non-governmental organisations as well as companies. TI-UK conducted research on whether NGOs pay bribes. The research showed that certain UK NGOs did pay bribes – e.g. One UK NGO was paying £50,000 in bribes to get vehicles through customs in disaster situations. TI-UK then conducted an analysis of how good NGO anti-corruption procedures were. The majority of the NGOs scored less than 20% showing that most NGOs do not have adequate procedures in place to prevent corruption. TI-UK realised that good anti-bribery policies are a necessary preventative measure. TI-UK worked with other NGOs – Oxfam, Muslim Aid, Global witness, Water Aid, and others – on a set of anti-bribery principles and procedures for NGOs. The collaborative work in this instance was very valuable in this area. www.transparency.org.uk

Lisa Henry – HAP is made up of 87 humanitarian organisations from over 70 countries that work together to be accountable to the beneficiaries of the work. After the Rwandan crisis many NGOs realised that they weren't learning from their mistakes or listening enough to the people they worked on behalf of. HAP sets standards, supports peer-to-peer learning, and makes humanitarian action accountable. HAP uses 6 benchmarks by which they assess NGOs:

1. Establishing & delivering on commitments
2. Staff competency
3. Sharing information
4. Participation
5. Handling complaints
6. Learning & continual improvement

www.hap.org

Guillermo Correa –The Argentine Network for International Cooperation (RACI) works to bring CSOs together that work with international crisis. RACI introduced the idea that international cooperation his needed to develop standards on transparency. RACI has introduced tools and mechanisms to improve cooperation and transparency. There are five principles of effective international cooperation: ownership, alignment, harmonisation, results, and mutual accountability. www.raci.org.ar

Rosa Ines Ospina – They developed a regional initiative called Rendir

Cuentas. This came out of several years of researching the experiences of the practices of NGOs in Latin America. The research was conducted by IDC and CIVICUS. The research revealed that standards were really low so they instigated a bottom-up practitioner approach. This self-regulating initiative encouraged them collectively to practice transparency and accountability. Three main tools were developed: 1) A strong website with all the latest information on transparency and accountability and the results of their accountability exercises. 2) A common accountability and transparency standard. There are two levels of commitment – the minimum standard CSOs have to agree on in order to join the collective, and a more detailed voluntary set of standards. 3) They are developing tools to help organisations to overcome their difficulties. E.g. they work with civil society organisations to develop online training. www.rendircuentas.org

Highlights: What are the main outcomes of this session? What's next?

- There is a real need for the sector to improve its standards on transparency and accountability. Civil society does not have the moral high ground – we do have bad practices.
- It is important to have a non-technical approach and recognise that this should not be a ticking the box exercise. The collaborative implementation of standards should drive internal discussion and reflection on the work.
- The process of implementing such standards generates a very rich learning experience which members value in itself – often more than the final outcome.
- Communication with the beneficiaries of the work is paramount. The gravity centre must be moved back towards the clients and beneficiaries as they are group of people who are ultimately impacted by the work.
- There must be collaboration between NGOs to address this issue. There must be a collective construction where all members have ownership and mutual accountability.

What are the recommendations, follow-up Actions (200 words narrative form)

There must be collaboration between NGOs to address this issue. There must be a collective construction where all members have ownership and mutual accountability. It is important to have a non-technical approach and recognise that this should not be a ticking the box exercise. The collaborative implementation of standards should drive internal discussion and reflection on the work.

What should be done to create opportunities for scaling up the proven solutions discussed in the session? What and by whom?

Key Insights Recommended to be included in the IACC Declaration

- It is important to have a non-technical approach and recognise that this should not be a ticking the box exercise. The collaborative implementation of standards should drive internal discussion and reflection on the work. There needs to be extensive internal discussion involving and reflection involving multiple stakeholders.
- The collaborative implementation of standards should drive internal discussion and reflection on the work.

Rachel Davies and Mariano De Donatis, 8 November 2012
