

Vision Works 2019

The Global Chairs and CEOs meeting

Collaborative Advocacy

16 April 2019

Outcome

The 12th *Vision Works* meeting of the International Civil Society Centre brought together 17 international CEOs and 7 Board representatives of leading international civil society organisations (ICSOs) at Greentree Estate, New York on 2-4 April 2019. Participants discussed how civil society can increase collaborative advocacy on overarching issues like climate change and right-wing populism, considering the role of ICSOs as custodians for global good.

Two external speakers provided input and kick-started the discussions. Kel Currah of www.whatworldstrategies.com unpacked the Art of Advocacy and showcased how traditional approaches (towards multilateral institutions) have given way to new forms activism. The challenge for large CSOs is to stay connected to such movements and be a bridge between those and policy levels. A panel discussion highlighted some good practices and success patterns such as long term investment in trust and light touch approaches, and acknowledged that collaboration is complicated and organisations need to plan cautiously for this to succeed. Aarathi Krisna of the IFRC presented trends, their complex interrelations, and the need to develop a positive vision for the future. The group took up this challenge and entered into visioning exercises around a collaborative future.

The meeting continued with presentations and discussions of big trends. The '[Leave No One Behind](#)' partnership by 12 of the leading ICSOs – many of which represented in the room - had been developed as a common ambition of given the most marginalized communities a voice, borne at Vision Works 2016. Discussions were led by VSO and CBM International, and focused on how to bring the choices of the most marginalized to the forefront of global advocacy, and how to develop a global view of what 'leaving no one behind' means for our respective organisations, including possibly a collective vision.

Other discussions tackled the need to accelerate work against climate change, as well as countering right-wing populism and authoritarianism. Greenpeace, CARE International, Amnesty International and Transparency International guided the respective discussions and offered possible ways to collaborate. These could include: Mobilising as one movement around key battlegrounds and moments; nimble responses to real world events; developing a set of principles of engagement; freedom of each CSO to work to its strength; or a shared vision for the world we want to see. In countering populism, this should start with better (hope-based) communication and narratives, the need to win over the 'persuadable middle majority', building movement diversity, and increase citizens' engagement and community mobilisation. Amnesty offers to engage in their 'Us vs. Them' initiative aiming to, as they say "counter the demonizers". In this work, they are exploring how as a global human rights movement they can move towards engaging a larger audience of citizens in the discussion around human rights, and offer others to join into the initiative.

The meeting concluded with sessions of peer advice, aiming to support colleagues who are taking up exciting but challenging advocacy themes. These included the strengthening of advocacy efforts



at SOS Childrens' Villages International, the design of a feminist advocacy methodology to raise young women's voices at the World YWCA, and the faith perspective to gender justice by Islamic Relief Worldwide.

Overall, while collaborative advocacy is not in the genes of many organisations, the need to work together on political ambitions beyond organisational mandates was acknowledged, and many opportunities were developed over the course of the meeting. The range of ambition span from increased compassion to genuine systems change, and many individual commitments were expressed. One of those was not to lose (and to use) humour in dealing with the worrying state of the world.

In the closing session, participant expressed their appreciation for the openness and honest sharing in the meeting by and valued the unique platform for exchange it provides.

