Glossary - Resilient Roots Initiative

Accountability | Accountability relates to the ways in which an organisation is answerable to its stakeholders, and is held responsible by them for its policies, decisions, and actions. This includes - but is not limited to - donors, regulatory agencies, partners and collaborators, its staff, board of directors, volunteers, and primary constituents (the people or groups for whom the organisation works to serve or support). In the context of Resilient Roots, it is accountability to this last stakeholder group, the primary constituents, that is of particular focus. This area of work is what we refer to in this initiative as "Primary Constituent Accountability".

Baseline assessment | A baseline assessment aims to establish a reference point for a particular issue or phenomenon, at a given moment in time. This enables one to track and evaluate any changes to the issue over time. For Resilient Roots, we are measuring baselines with our partner organisations at the start of their pilot projects, for both accountability to their primary constituents and staff, and their resilience. We will then repeat the measurement process at the end of their pilot projects, to examine any changes in their accountability and resilience.

Capacity assessment | The capacity assessment of a civil society organisation (CSO) entails an analysis of the skills and experience of its staff; the relevance and effectiveness of policies, procedures, resources and infrastructure; and other internal factors which affect its ability to operate effectively in pursuit of its objectives.

Civic space | The physical, legal, and virtual space in which civil society operates. Depending on the policies and practices of governments and other non-state actors with power and influence, civic space can either enable or inhibit civil society actors to claim their rights and influence the social and political realities around them. When civic space is open, citizens and civil society organisations are able to organise, participate and communicate without hindrance. This can only happen when a state holds by its duty to protect its citizens and respects their fundamental rights to associate, assemble peacefully and freely express views and opinions.

Constituent Voice | *Constituent Voice(™)* is a methodology developed by Keystone Accountability to enable organisations to improve their results by optimising their relationships with their constituents. The Constituent Voice methodology is based on a five-step feedback loop that consists of : 1) designing surveys, 2) collecting data, 3) analysing data, 4) engaging in dialogue between the organisation and its primary constituents to sense-check the results of the survey, and 5) taking corrective action(s) in response to what is surfaced through the previous stages. Once corrective actions have been implemented and been able to take hold, the whole cycle is repeated to collect feedback on the corrective actions and ensure that the desired improvements have been achieved.

Context analysis | A methodology allowing for the analysis of a CSO's environment, namely the combination of different external factors and conditions that might impact its work and results, including its relationship with its primary constituents. This analysis plays a fundamental role in defining adaptation and mitigation strategies and has been used to inform the preparation of each of the pilot organisations' Resilient Roots implementation plans.

Enabling environment | An enabling environment is when the laws, policies, regulations, resources, and practices of governments and donors create the conditions under which CSOs can both structure their work and mobilise effectively.

Feedback | Feedback involves the expression of opinions and perceptions by primary constituents and other stakeholders, based on their personal experience of an organisation's activities. Feedback can be quantitative (e.g. a numerical satisfaction rating) or qualitative (e.g. a story about a particular experience). It can be used to help evaluate an organisation's effectiveness and appropriateness, as well as identify particular successes and failures, or strengths and weaknesses.

Feedback loop | A feedback loop is a continual process by which an organisation collects, analyses, and responds to feedback from its stakeholders or constituents, as a means of improving performance on activities, projects, and programmes being implemented. **Closing the feedback loop** is the most important step in the loop and involves responding to the feedback gathered. When an organisation asks its primary constituents questions, it gets answers and raises expectations. By closing the loop, a CSO validates the meaning of those answers and informs its primary constituents of the type of actions or changes it plans to take and not to take based on the feedback. Closing the feedback loop and responding to feedback also lets constituents know their opinions are valued and heard, thus incentivising further feedback in the future.

Outcomes | Indicators that measure the direct result of an intervention on the target group, for instance a change in the behaviour or capacity of the target group.

Outputs | The direct effects of the actions and activities implemented in the project or programme, for instance the number of workshops, number of focus group discussions, number of participants, etc.

Peer-learning | Peer-learning is based on the cooperative exchange of skills and experiences (both positive and negative), solutions and practices between two or more actors in a similar field or community. In the Resilient Roots initiative, peer-learning happens between pilot project organisations themselves, and between organisations and technical experts brought in by the Resilient Roots team in particular fields or topics.

Primary Constituents (PC) | Refers to the people or groups for whom an organisation works, and those it seeks to see benefit from its programmes and activities. Most CSOs will have a large and diverse range of primary constituents, each with a unique relationship to the organisation. For example in the case of an educational CSO, their primary constituents might include the students, teachers, students' families, school board/council, etc.
NB: The civil society sector often also uses "beneficiaries" to refer to the people it works for or with. Resilient Roots prefers "primary constituents" because we believe it better captures a relationship that goes beyond one-directional service provision. Besides, "beneficiaries" tends to reinforce an unequal power dynamic between CSOs and their primary constituents, by suggesting they maintain a passive role as recipients of aid, instead of being active agents of change within their communities.

Primary Constituent Accountability (PCA) | Primary Constituent Accountability is both a policy and a principle. As a policy it entails communicating and consulting with primary constituents on all aspects of an organisation's work, from their overall governance and strategies, to specific projects and activities. As a principle, it represents a commitment to putting primary constituents at the heart of an organisation's governance and decision-making structures. This means that constituents' needs, interests and opinions are central to deciding a course of action or evaluating the performance of an organisation. This requires continuous, active engagement with primary constituents, ensuring that the feedback loop is always closed by responding to explain how their feedback is being used or not used.

Resilience | In the civil society context, resilience can be broadly described as the ability of an organisation to respond to or manage threats or shocks, in order to continue working towards their objectives. However, in more restrictive environments, the ability to simply survive in the face of

threats, is also an important dimension of resilience to consider. There are multiple different actions an organisation can take (or not take) in response to threats, which can be viewed on a resilience spectrum ranging from from 'survive' to 'thrive'.

Improving resilience is therefore not necessarily a linear process. When faced with threats, organisations can either resist, adapt, desist or disband. The Resilient Roots initiative is looking at resilience in the context of civic space threats in particular.

Social accountability | Social accountability is a process of constructive engagement between citizens and their government to evaluate the use of public resources when providing services, improving well-being, and protecting the rights of the citizens. Social accountability can be considered as a social control mechanism exerted by the citizens over their government officials in order to ensure that they are acting in a transparent, responsible, and effective manner. This is different from *Primary Constituent Accountability which is solely focused on the relationship between CSOs and their primary constituents.*

Threats | Broadly speaking, threats are factors which impact negatively on an organisation's ability to function effectively. For Resilient Roots, we are focusing on external threats pertaining to civic space. In this context, a threat is anything which affects an organisation's access to finance, stakeholders, information, or any other infringement of their rights to associate, assemble peacefully and freely express their views. We are able to break down threats to civic space into two categories:

1. **Bureaucratic restrictions**, which threaten an organisation's mobilising structure, i.e. the freezing of an NGOs bank account, or preventing it from registering; and
2. **Repression**, tactics which target an NGO's people (which could include members or constituents), such as the detention or surveillance of staff or board members, or the use of online and offline intimidation or violence to prevent the organisation from functioning.