

Accountability, equity, and justice in global governance

The One World Trust research and action strategy for 2011-2013

The world around us: key trends and development

Since the end of the cold war 20 years ago the map of power, influence and of challenges in the world has changed considerably. While the break up of the militarily underpinned bi-polar power balance between East and West initially led into a period of significant growth of civil society activity and economic liberalisation in the 1990s, in particular the last decade has again seen a range of trends that have shaken up international affairs with a poignant impact on the status and relationship of citizens with the state and global institutions and related understandings of state sovereignty.

In particular the new global security paradigm resulting from the responses to the terror attacks on the 11th of September 2001 has contributed significantly to a reassertion of the role of the state in national and global governance. This has been further reinforced by the tangible increase of power and influence of emerging economies in trade, industrial development and international negotiations such as on climate change, and the collective response to the financial crisis led primarily by national governments and monetary institutions. Some key global fora and institutions, some of which were already in decline such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), regained importance, resources and legitimacy. Others, such as the G8 began to reinvent themselves through the inclusion of a wider group of stakeholders towards a G20.

In addition transnational corporations have shown interest in developing their markets in the implementation of bi- and multilaterally funded global infrastructure programmes, development and humanitarian aid operations, and services such as health care both through traditional company expansion strategies, and engagement in multistakeholder initiatives and global public private partnerships. In result they have become more than ever direct partners or competitors to traditional actors in the delivery of global public services, and the decision making about how these are best funded and provided to people.

Yet this trend of change is not uniform: the main nuclear powers for instance retain critical influence in addressing global security questions from nuclear disarmament and proliferation to the engagement with regional instability alongside local partners, UN Security Council reform is hardly progressing, and tensions persist around the role and work of the International Criminal Court and the development of the doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect. State based organisations and structures have thus not only clearly become more visible and arguably more influential than proponents of a coming 'age of citizens' have suggested they would be in consequence of the developments in 1990s.

Yet at the same time that the hold of powerful nation-states on high level decision making in global governance arguably remains firm, many state-based organisations and also transnational corporations level continue to struggle with the changes in the way citizens seek to relate to them at global and national, demanding greater rights, opportunities for participation and a share in the benefits of globalisation.

Our research and analysis suggest that one of the main reasons for the difficulties which become apparent in the reponse of global organisations to these challenges is that despite their formal

claims to power global organisations of all sectors, like many national institutions, present themselves frequently as weak. Compounded by failing frameworks of regulation, and a lack of meaningful opportunities for access of citizens to the decision-making processes that directly affect them, these organisations are at times outright dysfunctional and fail to effectively deliver the global public goods they were set up to provide to those whom they claim to serve, and who are often most dependent on them.

As a result many billions of people around the world continue to live in conditions of poverty, growing environmental threats to their livelihoods, are barred from participation in governance, and do not have access to basic civil and political and human rights including social economic and cultural rights, which form the bedrock of the world's understanding of what it means to be human and a global community.

In particular civil society organisations have made these failures of global organisations and governance processes their issue, and continue to push for citizens' involvement in state, intergovernmental, and private sector corporate governance processes that affect them. However, their own growth and strength has also brought new challenges for NGOs. Their proliferation, increases in their financial power, and the proactive role these organisations have carved out for themselves in policy advocacy at national and also global level, have led many governments to question their role and in part also use the changes in the global security situation to curtail their space and question their legitimacy as partners in governance processes that affect the civil society organisations' constituents.

To date civil society responses to these threats for instance through the development of self-regulation mechanisms to demonstrate their accountability, effectiveness and public benefit have been sluggish, helping not only to confirm the critical stance that some of their opponents take to their role, but also undermining their own ability to fulfil the expectations that they consciously raise through their communications in advocacy, fundraising or regarding their charitable and public benefit.

Our focus: research into principles and practice, and building the case for reform

The above summary shows that despite a clear recognition that while traditional understandings about the relationship of the state and citizens are clearly in flux there is not yet a consensus on the horizon about which direction global governance should take, how the role and rights of citizens should be defined in it, and through what structures, political, commercial or civic, citizens should exercise their freedoms and influence in the most productive way. Above all, in the face of major systemic failures to ensure access to human rights and global public goods for citizens around the world, there is to date also no common framework that would enable citizens to hold global organisations and global governance from a systemic point of view to account over its failures.

In line with a perspective on global governance which gives it social purpose, engaging in this field of study therefore necessarily has to be also about reform. The essence of our work is therefore the search for dynamic ways to regulate power in ways that the energies and innovative potentials of human activity can be harnessed for the delivery of global public goods for all citizens and communities.

Central to our strategy is the understanding that the relationship of those with power, in particular global organisations, with their stakeholders takes place in an evolving regulatory framework. This framework is made up of self regulatory initiatives as much as of soft and hard international law, and

is mediated through processes of engagement of citizens in governance processes at both global and national levels.

Our programme of research into and support to organisations and governance processes therefore investigates issues of accountability in governance and delivery of global public goods at different layers, global and national, across different sectors. We do this by focusing as appropriate on both formal and informal systems of regulation and self-regulation to respond to the multilayered nature of global governance and the fragmentation in the way it works. In this respect we have found our federalist heritage of thought including principles such as subsidiarity, accountability, and the rule of law, and a vision of a world where all people are able to live in sustainable peace and security, and have equal access to opportunity and participation to be a helpful foundation.

We believe that there is value in seeking to distil common principles and issues that can guide an accountable relationship of power to citizens from a perspective of the impact that the exercise of power and influence has on citizens, and how the frequent alienation of citizens from political governance processes can be overcome.

To achieve this we take an independent approach to research and reform which is evidence based, flexible, incremental and collaborative in order to promote practical ways for improvement. As in the past key audiences for our work are primarily policy and decision-makers, political leaders and opinion formers. Beyond this target group we work in partnership with other organisations where we can add value with our competency in the field of accountability in global governance.

Our goals for 2011 to 2013

Our charitable objects and mission

Over 2009 and 2010 the One World Trust has gone through a process of review of its charitable objects which were first formulated in 1951. While keeping the spirit of the original purposes of the Trust as set out 60 years ago, we carefully modernised their language to reflect the current work as an active research organisation which focuses on accountability in global governance and make them more suitable and easier to understand as a general mission statement of the organisation.

To advance the education of the public in the purpose, theory and practice of effective, accountable global governance, in particular by undertaking research into the role that institutions, citizens, and regulatory frameworks play in the development of processes and principles of governance at every level, including local, national and world, and disseminating the useful results of such research.

Goals and objectives for the coming years

For 2011 – 2013 we will seek to realise the wider purpose of the organisation as described in our objects with research and the provision of services focusing on accountability, equity and justice in global governance.

We propose to structure our work along four main clusters which embody the identity of the One World Trust, and where over the past decade we have been able to develop a recognised track record of practical research competency, impact, and through both grant and consultancy work have also been able to attract resources required for our work.

Figure 1: Main strategic objectives and areas for research and service provision by the One World Trust 2011 – 2013



Objectives

A. Measuring accountability and promoting reform of global organisations

1. Measure the accountability of organisations with global reach across different sectors, and publicise related ratings and rankings
2. Conduct research on sector specific accountability principles and practice
3. Facilitate cross-sectoral and inter-sectoral learning and dialogue on accountability
4. Support individual accountability reform efforts within organisations

B. Empowering citizens and strengthening democratic practice

1. Generate and facilitate access to new empirical knowledge about practice, principles, potentials and limitations of CSO self-regulation
2. Develop practical tools and capacity building support to strengthen accountability, effectiveness and legitimacy of NGOs and civil society umbrella groups
3. Research and develop recommendations for the strengthening of parliamentary engagement with, and citizens participation in the oversight of the work of global institutions

C. Strengthening Accountability in Research and Advocacy

1. Generate transparency about accountability performance and good practice of different types of policy influencing organisations from different sectors
2. Research, develop and promote accountability principles in policy oriented research.

D. Strengthening accountability in global governance of the environment and human security

1. Research and strengthen accountability of global institutions, and of equity in global environmental governance responses to climate change and increasing use and degradation of the oceans
2. Study and explore the concept of the Responsibility to Protect in connection to issues of access to Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR)

In addition, we would continue to seek to strengthen our own organisation by focusing on

E. Building a stronger One World Trust

1. Improve the effective use of all tools under our communications strategy

2. Strengthen our business model through the development of new and sustainable income streams
3. Develop longer term organisational partnerships for joint project work
4. Maintain a 5-10 staff strong team in London
5. Explore opportunities for setting up One World Trust representatives / locations outside London and the UK to engage with a broader range of regional opportunities and partners
6. Consolidate our Governance structure and render it more effective
7. Further develop our corporate knowledge management, research and learning systems.