

# KEY INSIGHTS

## Pioneers of Change - It starts with us

Bangalore, India | September 2 - 4, 2019







### KEY OBJECTIVES

- To look at the bigger picture and to strengthen the voice of Civil Society as a global cultural movement
- To create a sense of togetherness and make new connections and partnerships
- To strengthen the ethical basis of our work

**“Pioneers of Change – It starts with us”** is the motto that shaped the recent 3-day Leadership Forum in Bangalore, India. It was the very first time that Civil Society Academy (CSA) organised a conference to discuss and share new ideas related to responsibility and value-based leadership, the shifting of paradigm with a focus on “Us” involving heart, mind, and energy.

The event attracted 40 civil society leaders from Africa, Europe, and Asia who have been powered by the Civil Society Academy to excel in their professional and personal life as responsible leaders.

Each day of the event was filled with important keynote presentations, followed by interesting subgroup inputs and discussions. At the end of every day, the team ‘Treasure Hunters’ presented the key insights they had collected throughout the day to all participants.

The overall summary of the top 9 key insights is presented below.

## 1. New World Order – Capture the moment

We feel the current global chaos and believe that capitalism has to be rethought. Also the role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), at the moment mainly as economic actors, needs rethinking. Climate change could be a trigger in this shift.

We should capture the moment as Civil Society: integrate the youth, use new technology and support movements. The scale of interventions and campaigns matters.

The participants are committed to focus on young people as they are the future of the planet.

Often the formal Civil Society has a tendency to get stuck at the level of blame and justification, but does not use the momentum. But: Civil Society can use its connections on all levels to make use of the momentum for social change.

## 2. There is a need for a new Civil Society

Critical characteristics of such a new Civil Society are:

- a. We need to sense instead of think, be empathetic and embrace spirituality
- b. We need to hold the state accountable and open up to engage with the state
- c. We need to hold the market accountable

We can use the internet as an analogy of the new Civil Society: flexible, resilient, and with lots of independent nodes.

## 3. Deal with politics

Think about the green initiatives in Germany, which evolved into a movement and then into a green political party which had immense influence on politics. Such processes can serve as an example for dealing with politics.

Strategies to deal with politics could be: building civil society networks, expanding their space towards influencing politics.

Each of us can build knots in such a network, knots that are independent, transmit, and follow a common purpose. Many knots will make the system powerful and resilient.

## 4. Build alliances – horizontally

Currently, there are twisted power relations within Civil Society, but pessimism regarding networks remains. One strategy for a more equal power relation is building horizontal alliances, like Family for Every Child.

To build such alliances, a rigorous alliance building process as well as a good selection of members are equally important. The members need to be value-based and have trust in the process. They need to be open to embrace a shared governance model.

## 5. Get out of your current role and start empathizing

People have pains that fuel populism and terrorism – we should try to understand the emotions and pains of the people who feel attracted to this side.

Practically this means: Get out of your “daily” role, take time to listen, and value collaboration!

We need to understand that Civil Society is not only a technical space. Civil society is about dealing with people. That’s why empathy and emotional intelligence are crucial.

We need to be more empathetic in order to create better solutions. Awareness and self-reflection are very important to social work.

## 6. Social business can be one solution

Social business is defined by purpose and intent, not necessarily by the legal structure.

We need to be solution oriented and see problems as opportunities. Here design thinking can help! We need to create different interventions for different problems. Focus on one thing and do it well!

Social businesses can help solving issues, but they might be less effective in addressing more complex issues, i.e. related to behavioral change.

## 7. The Ethiopian Case: Civil Society in the “waiting room”

In Ethiopia, the current political transition asks for broad civic engagement. The formalized “Civil Society”, however, is twisted with international development organisations fueling the twist. Civil Society is characterized by MoNGOs, FaNGOs (Family-run NGOs), GoNGOs (Government-affiliated).

On the other hand, youth movements which are partly violent and increase the ethical divide, occupy the Civil Society space. There is little connection between the “informal” and “formal” Civil Society.

We call for a Civil Society Coalition to support a peaceful transition. Formal actors may be able to get the youth movement on board and positively influence them. Campaigning and multi-actor partnerships could be relapproaches.

## 8. Ideas on organisational development

*Holacracy:* The CSA has been using Holacracy for 3 years now. It can be a good model for Civil Society Organisations as it discourages hierarchies. Self-management is key and leads to trust and responsibility, which is even more important in Civil Society. We recommend a culture manifesto as organisational culture is key.

*Spiral dynamics:* The model can be a good reflection model on organisation and self

in order to find the way towards a new consciousness. This could be integrative and ecological, as well as looking at the current world from a cosmic perspective.

*Resilience:* Organisational resilience is critical. It is drawn by the individual’s resilience that comes from courage, connection and the ability to bounce back. To become resilient, an organisation needs to take the four stage Resilience model into consideration. The four stages are: foresight, insight, oversight and hindsight. Other conditions such as a having a shared purpose or enabling leadership, meaningful relations and collaborative learning are as important.

*Impact models:* Impact models are “business models” for the social sector. CSA currently works on 100 impact models, described by the Why – purpose of the model? How it creates impact? And with what resources it creates impact? Those include Yunus’ Micro-finance, Buffets “Giving Pledge” or Martin Luther King’s Civil Rights Movement. The collection will be published to inspire pioneers of change and provide them with ideas to solve current problems.

## 9. On the leadership forum as a format

This was the first Leadership Forum organised by the Civil Society Academy. Overall, there was a very positive resonance among the participants. It was seen as a rare opportunity to change perspectives and have general discussions. Also the format with the keynote

speakers and thematic inputs by the academy was seen as positive.

*“It is a rare opportunity for small CSOs like mine to engage in such a conference” said one Indian participant.”*

It was proposed to organise the leadership forum regularly and include online engagements in between the conferences.

## CONTACT US

[www.civilsocietyacademy.org](http://www.civilsocietyacademy.org)

[info@civilsocietyacademy.org](mailto:info@civilsocietyacademy.org)

[facebook.com/civilsocietyacademy](https://facebook.com/civilsocietyacademy)

[instagram.com/academycivilsociety](https://instagram.com/academycivilsociety)

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