



How do movements practise accountability in ways that strengthen – rather than strain – their legitimacy?

The opening session of Vuka's Power & Resilience Dialogue Series confronted that question head-on, through the lived realities of activists navigating authoritarianism, founder dominance, digital organising without trust, and funding structures that reward paperwork over principle.

The session reframed accountability as political infrastructure – the internal coherence movements need to survive repression, build power, and maintain legitimacy.

THREE CORE INSIGHTS

- 1 Accountability is culture, not checklist**
Policies don't create accountability – daily practice does. What matters is whether accountability lives in difficult conversations, shared commitment to values, and how movements actually treat each other.
- 2 Internal accountability sacrificed under external pressure**
When accountability points upward to funders rather than inward to communities, it stops being transformative and becomes transactional.
- 3 Dynamic accountability as strategic infrastructure**
Intentional, values-driven accountability isn't bureaucratic overhead – it's what sustains movements through crisis, growth, and conflict.

WHAT MOVEMENTS SAID

Accountable Now's listening project reached 50 voices across 22 countries. For movements, accountability is:

-  **A compass:** what keeps movements aligned to values when external pressure tries to knock them off course.
-  **Power relationships:** navigating dynamics internally, externally, transactionally, and foundationally.
-  **Trust relationships:** without internal trust, formal mechanisms become meaningless paperwork.
-  **Relational practice:** not a checklist you complete, but a living commitment you maintain.

5 Global Pressures Reshaping Accountability

- 1) Authoritarianism & shrinking civic space** – Movements deprioritise internal accountability to focus on survival, yet that's precisely when internal coherence matters most.
- 2) Donor pressure & professionalisation** – Upward accountability to funders crowds out downward accountability to communities.
- 3) Digital organising & disconnection** – Rapid mobilisation without face-to-face trust-building.
- 4) Call-out culture & burnout** – Critique without restorative practices becomes punitive rather than transformative.
- 5) Global solidarity** – Movements are more interconnected than ever, strengthening accountability *across* struggles.

5 Core Principles from Movements

- 1) Trust is foundational** – Built face-to-face, not on WhatsApp.
- 2) Culture over structure** – Culture determines whether accountability lives or dies.
- 3) Adaptable, accessible tools** – Make tools co-created, not imposed.
- 4) Culture change can't be outsourced** – If the push doesn't come from within, it won't stick.
- 5) Balance transparency with security** – Context-specific and constantly shifting.

What Comes Next

"Being accountable isn't about perfection. It's about being in relationship across all our differences."

You can't build resilient movements without internal coherence. You can't shift power without addressing who holds it. You can't demand legitimacy from states whilst losing it within your own organisations.

The question the conversation leaves with participants is: **How do we move beyond compliance and into connection?**

Because as this dialogue proved, that's where accountability actually lives.