



## GREYCELLS INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE ON CIVIL SOCIETY MOBILISATION ONLINE ANONYMOUS SURVEY - SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

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Greycells, in cooperation with its partners, launched an online anonymous survey on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn in April 2021 in order to identify some of the main features characterizing public opinion's views on the role of civil society mobilization. The questionnaire of this survey, prepared by the Steering Committee of the Dialogue (posted in English, French, Spanish, Italian and German), revolved around the participation and the support to civil society movements or organisations, examples of success or failures, civic space for civil society, the role of private firms and philanthropic entities, millennials and seniors' involvement, methods and factors that determine impact of civil society, differences in high-income vs low-income countries. A total of 49 replies (24 men, 25 women) were received from the five continents, of which a half of them are residents in Europe; the proportion of young and seniors was approximately 50/50. Respondents could add their own comments to each question, as reflected in this summary.

*The following are the main issues highlighted by the replies and the comments to the questionnaire:*

**The increasing role of civil society** in the past 25 years is welcome. NGOs have long had a merely consultative and/or operational role in the functioning or decision-making processes of international organizations. Today, however, many of them are now involved in defining policies and priorities for the programs of international organizations. Civil society organizations **have gained space and voice, particularly at UN-level forums**. This has come hand in hand with a better organization of civil society organizations and platforms, which have adapted to work and operate in international forums, speaking their language and acting as formal stakeholders. The survey shows that in general millennials are more engaged than seniors in civil society mobilisations.

The **main issues of concern** for NGOs, groups and movements represented in the survey results are labor rights, youth empowerment (including youth, student and intern rights), development (right to water and sanitation, food for all, social and solidarity economy, microfinance), environment (climate crisis, soft mobility), multilateralism (SDGs, UN promotion) and democracy (supporting pro-democracy movements).

The **private sector**, or "for profit" private firms, play a major role in influencing governments' policies and global agendas. Most of the respondents highlighted that these are more influential than "non-

profit entities”, but many think that their role is negative and unreliable. Bill Gates was the most mentioned as example of “high-net-worth” individual. Most respondents believe that social mobilisation has an impact on the accountability of the private sector mainly at the national, local and global level. Therefore, the thought arises **on how to encompass and channel private firms interests’ with sustainable development and global goals arising from social mobilization**. Indeed, it will be key to link aspects such as climate change and poverty to private companies’ goals and to be able to measure the impact of private companies on the long term. There are various ongoing trends and aspects that could improve these synergies by: (i) Enhancing **corporate social and environmental responsibility**, for instance through the non-binding OECD guidelines, as mentioned by Raymond Saner at the Dialogue, or even better by strengthening the implementation of international rules through legally binding national laws; (ii) **Demanding and well-informed clients** that promote a system of accountability; (iii) Non-profit organizations should be **learning** from private companies on their organizational, professional and efficiency skills; (iv) Promote **thinking globally and acting locally**.

Respondents supported civil society organizations in their mission either by **donating money or volunteering** for them. Most of donators were satisfied in the way their money was used. Examples included *Médecins Sans Frontières*, *ICRC*, *refugee rescue boats* saving lives in the Mediterranean, *OXFAM* (researching on poverty eradication), *UNICEF* (vaccinating less privileged kids), *Akcja Demokracja* (a Polish NGO advocating for democracy), homeless people, young women etc. Some respondents mentioned that their companies doubled their donation amount (e.g. Bail out project for BLM). While making decisions on which NGO one should donate, respondents considered the past record of NGOs as an important indicator, based on published reports.

In terms of mobilizing public opinion and influencing political leaders, Fridays for Future and Amnesty International are viewed by our respondents as **successful civil society movements/organizations at the national and global levels**, followed by Black Lives Matter, Swiss women's strike, ICRC, Greenpeace, OXFAM, International Peace Bureau, American Civil Liberties Union, and Planned Parenthood. Other movements and NGOs such as Women Engage for Common Future, The Female Lead, World YWCA, #MeeToo are quoted to have made significant impact on our day to day behaviors, habits, ways of communicating with each other and working together. According to one of our survey respondents “*political parties that win elections are successful civil society groups*”. Fair Internship Initiative is another successful example that has an impact at the UN level, in the context of the SDGs# 8 (decent work) and 10 (on inequalities): since the UN Secretariat is not covering the costs of living of its own interns, the access to UN internships is easier to people with privileged backgrounds. Some ten years ago, even the thought of paying UN interns felt dubious and unattainable to most. An increasing number of UN agencies outside of the UN Secretariat under the pressure of Fair Internship Initiative started to provide living allowance (and thus equal opportunities) to their interns. Hopefully at the next session of the 5<sup>th</sup> Committee of the General Assembly, the UN might abolish unpaid internships at the UN Secretariat. This UN process (abolition of unpaid internships) will influence policies of companies for-profit and non-profit alike, in order to change their unfair internship practices.

Regarding the **methods** to achieve success and impact on policy makers, **elections** are seen as the most effective method followed by the **use of social medias (with a growing influence)**, **street mobilization** and less so, **strikes**. Respondents highlighted what may determine success of social

mobilisation: in the first place, nowadays, **visibility on social medias** (even if often they don't mirror reality and matter more than people), financial support (regretting that Governmental support is disappearing), educational and socioeconomic level of participants. Age, political opinions and private firms' support are seen as less important.

According to a respondent, there are no **"failed" social movements**: "getting organized is never a failure per se". Another respondent mentioned the *Gilets jaunes* in France which according to him "started as a spontaneous mobilization of socially marginalized and ignored people but soon was infiltrated by violent extremist groups". The fact that human rights defenders are often murdered is mentioned as an example of failed social movement. Swiss people's rejection of "Responsible Business Initiative" is, according to one of the respondents, a failed social movement, as well as protests for abortion rights in Poland, mobilization against Iraq war, Arab Spring or Hong Kong pro-democracy movements, "US Capitol's takeover by Trump supporters".

The impact and motivation of civil society mobilizations differs in **high-income and low-income countries**. In many low-income countries it is more related to the link to poverty and lack of economic and social opportunities, whereas in high-income countries the social mobilization is often linked to global challenges. The **space** of civil society also is different according to the economic development and to political regimes: civil society organizations have more space and influence in high-income, democratic countries. Finally, the **level of education** was also highlighted by respondents: in high-income countries more people have higher education and are more sensible towards social movements and at the same time, have more access to information. One of the comments highlighted the need to empower civil society in low-income countries with the view of **accessing the networks that hold political and financial power**.