

## CID Talk, Darren Ward

Direct Impact Group



## Scanning the Horizon

*September 6, 2018*

Darren Ward from Direct Impact Group gave a great CID talk last week in Wellington, on the recent Scanning the Horizon conference in Nairobi.

You can watch the talk [here](#).

The Scanning Horizons event held in Nairobi brought together senior strategy people working with NGOs around the world. This collaborative platform helps civil society organisations to prepare for disruption. The theme was “What is coming at us in the sector and how can the sector better respond?”

**Development** - We are struggling to have the impact we want to have. What is the role of NGO in the world now? There are three major disruptors – funders want to deal directly with the field, a shrinking civil space and developing countries are becoming lower-middle income countries

### **Why is our sector so slow to change?**

There is a lack of flexibility in organisational structures and inappropriate governance - 64% of CEOs and board members are from global north. If we don't start addressing this now we will start having some challenges.

Local NGOs are reporting on the fact that international NGOs aren't thinking about the secondary consequences of their programmes. How do we monitor and check for unintended consequences?

The tools are available but we are not using them. It is possible to forecast for strategic planning using experience in the room and the tools available. This was tested at the conference, and the longer term impacts weren't what was assumed.

Our sector isn't looking at this, and they should be. How can we harness this and use a global database?

Numbers alone don't tell us the full story –How do we use foresight in strategic planning?

This all needs to be built into strategic planning. We need to look at community around us, and not just what work we are doing as international NGOs. The importance of localization is becoming clearer and the information is there to help us. We just need to use it!

**Politics** - Unfortunately service delivery is becoming increasingly political and it is important to be aware of what's going on in a country and the shrinking civil space. Never take local politics for granted. It shows the importance of partnerships with private sector and local NGOs – this helps with continuity of services. Systems can be built to help understand what the media is saying about you and give warnings.

**Technology** - Digitalisation will have a big effect on civil society organisations. There are five areas that will make an impact:

1. **Connectivity:** will be a big inequality driver.

2. **Data revolution and AI:** How do we recognise limitations of AI? Who's the watchdog of data and AI? So it doesn't reduce rights.
3. **New pathways for interactivity:** Platforms like FB, skype are changing things
4. **Automation:** will change jobs that took them from developing to low income countries – where will that income come from in future after automation?
5. **Business model transformation.**

Feedback from local NGOs in Nairobi, is that iNGOs need to get of their way. It is important to stop creating dependency where they are trying to build businesses and stop working against the development.

### **Summary**

Civil society organisations are working in a shrinking space and technology is driving change faster than ever. Big data is a wonderful thing if done right and gives us all the opportunity to narrow down into the communities we are working in.

It is important to look at how technology affects our programmes, and ensure we have the technology expertise in our organisations and on our Boards.

Things are growing fast and partnerships are very important. It is important to start measuring success by shifting away from revenue and measuring impact. This is a big shift in the way we, and our donors think.