

12 Commitments Handbook



About this handbook

This handbook is designed as a resource for Accountable Now's members and other civil society organizations. It offers an overview of the 12 Accountability Commitments. For each commitment, the handbook includes a rationale, practical actions, and one or more examples to illustrate how the commitments can be applied within organizations. Additionally, a glossary at the end of the handbook defines key terms and provides common definitions.

12 Commitments: A Brief Overview

The Global Standard 12 Commitments are a reference standard, unifying understandings and practices of accountability (see glossary) worldwide to connect civil society organisations with people, partners, supporters, and donors to build trust and leverage impact in times of shrinking civic space.



GLOBAL
STANDARD
FOR CSO
ACCOUNTABILITY

To learn more about the Global Standard for CSO Accountability, visit:
csostandard.org

What are the Commitments? How were they created?

The 12 Commitments in the Global Standard describe what we aspire to achieve as civil society actors and how we must work to implement positive change. It provides a strong narrative of what the sector wants to achieve and how, and it encompasses the entire sector – not just humanitarian work.

Accountable Now and eight accountability networks from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean worked together for two years to develop the 12 Accountability Commitments below. Together, we consulted over 1500 CSOs, each working at a different level (grassroots, local, national, regional, and international), through different scopes and of different sizes to truly capture what accountability means for civil society around the world.

The Commitments therefore represent a globally shared, dynamic understanding of accountability and are written in plain English to facilitate dialogue with our stakeholders and communication with the wider public. Taken together, they are called the Global Standard and promise a powerful contribution of our organisations to the benefit of people and the environment and an invitation to hold us to account for how well we deliver.

Each Cluster & How to Use Them



Cluster A: What we want to achieve



1
Justice & Equality



2
Women's Rights &
Gender Equality



3
Healthy Planet



4
Lasting Positive
Change

In essence, these are the changes and “end goals” that civil society worldwide wants to see. CSOs should see these as cross-cutting themes, and keep these at the top of their minds throughout all aspects of their work, be it governing bodies (see glossary), programmes, risk assessments, or communications.

Cluster C: What we do internally



9
Empowered,
Effective Staff
& Volunteers



10
Well-handled
Resources



11
Responsive
Decision-Making



12
Responsible
Leadership

These are the factors that ensure the organisation will run well. In investing in staff and volunteers, organisations empower them for success. Great leadership alongside transparent and responsible handling of resources will make sure that time and money are well invested. Lastly, decisions are reflective of stakeholders’ needs and thus more effective.

Cluster B: Our approach to change



5
People-driven
Work



6
Strong
Partnerships



7
Advocating for
Fundamental
Change



8
Open
Organisations

These outline the key commitments needed to work with external stakeholders (see glossary). It asks organisations to be driven by the people affected, to form strong partnerships (not just with institutional partners, but also with communities! (see definition in glossary), to always look to solve the root causes of problems rather than only the symptoms, and to be transparent and open as a way to build trust.

More information about the Global Standard 12 Commitments

Across the world, many accountability initiatives have reporting processes and guidelines to support CSOs in using the 12 Commitments; Accountable Now is one of them and so are our Global Standard partners. But CSOs do not have to subscribe to a partner to use the 12 Commitments, organisations can use the [Rendir App](#) (available in [French](#), [English](#), and [Spanish](#)) to self-assess their current accountability practices and use the guidance materials (available in [English](#), [Spanish](#), [North Macedonian](#) and [Albanian](#)) to be inspired on how they can close those gaps.

Additionally, this handbook will also offer some examples of how other organisations have taken steps to meet the 12 Commitments.



Commitment 1

Justice and Equality

We will address injustice, exclusion, inequality, poverty and violence to create healthy societies for all.

The Low Down

Justice and equality empower individuals to engage in the decisions shaping their lives and hold accountable those in positions of power. As civic organizations striving for societal transformation alongside the community, CSOs are tasked with fostering inclusive environments. CSOs' role must be to influence behaviors, norms, and systems to ensure equitable treatment for all, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized.

Commitment 1 underscores the fundamental and inalienable rights each person should possess. Within CSOs' work, it's crucial to comprehend the current realities from the perspectives of affected individuals and to tailor programs and initiatives according to the genuine needs and priorities voiced by communities. Solutions and actions that overlook or exclude certain segments of society are inherently flawed and contrary to the principles of progress and inclusivity.

Useful Resources

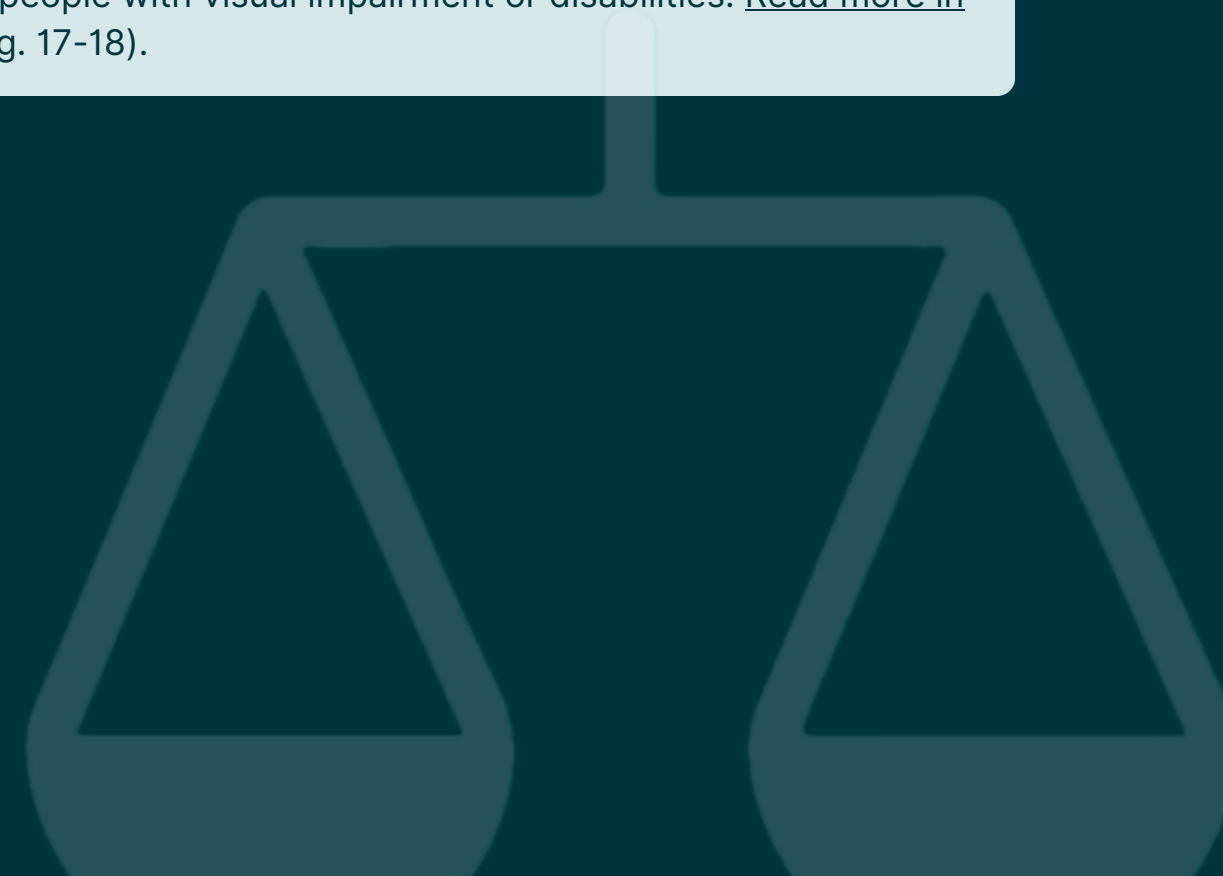
- **Accountable Now (Elisa Lopez):** [When Inclusion Gets Real](#)
- **Accountable Now:** [Spotlight - Youth Engagement](#)
- **CBM:** [Disability Inclusive Development Standard](#)

Practical Actions

- Listen to people, understand and address the root causes and effects of injustice, violence and inequality.
- Lead by example: be inclusive, respect and promote human rights in our organisation and make sure we do no harm ourselves.
- Support people to know their rights and to hold accountable those responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling them.
- Collaborate with other actors to collectively address the root causes and effects of injustice, violence and inequality and to ensure all people's rights are respected and protected.

Implementation Examples

Sightsavers provide the communities, partners, and people that they work with a wide range of training aimed at building the capacity of individuals, including daily living skills, mobility and orienteering, rights and entitlements, vocational training and economic empowerment. These courses give the people who Sightsavers work with the means to lead independent lives, and the skills learned can be life-changing and long-lasting. Since 1950 Sightsavers have supported the training of over 224,000 people with visual impairment or disabilities. [Read more in their report](#) (pg. 17-18).



Commitment 2 Women's Rights & Gender Equality

We will promote women's and girls' rights and enhance gender equality.

The Low Down

Gender equality is crucial for the socio-economic progress of peaceful societies. When women and girls have access (see definition in glossary) to essential political and economic resources, they can fully engage (see definition in glossary) in society and realize their true potential. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) play a pivotal role in promoting behaviours and attitudes that ensure equal opportunities, rights, and obligations for both women and men across all aspects of life.

Commitment 2, as one of the core values, is pertinent to all CSOs, not just those focused on advancing gender rights. Given that women constitute 50% of the population, it's imperative to consider their ability to participate, their needs, and contributions, along with those of other marginalized gender identities when designing programs or policies. For instance, in many households, women bear the responsibility of caring for children, which could hinder their participation in in-person consultations; or if they are staff members, this might affect their ability to work regular hours. Factors like holding events late in the evening or remote locations may pose additional challenges.

While not every circumstance will be the same, it's crucial to acknowledge the discrepancies in access, time availability, responsibilities, and resources that women, men, and others with marginalized gender identities may face in engaging with CSO initiatives. By recognizing and addressing these differences, CSOs can ensure more inclusive (see definition in glossary) and effective participation in their endeavours.

Practical Actions

- Listen to women, men, girls and boys, about their needs and wants in programmes and activities
- Create spaces where women, men, girls, boys, and others feel safe to share their thoughts
- Consider how different people may need different types of support and targeted actions
- Work closely with all parts of society to drive lasting social, economic and political change.

Useful Resources

- **Accountable Now and Accountability Lab:** [How Not To Lose Gender Perspective Cheatsheet](#)
- **World YWCA:** [Feminist Consultation Methodology](#)
- **Accountable Now, CARE International, CIVICUS, Accountability Lab:** [Being Accountable, Our Different Journeys towards Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) (see definition of diversity and equity in glossary)
- **CIVICUS:** [Gender and Social Inclusion Toolkit](#)
- **MIO-ECSDE:** [Gender Policy](#).

Implementation Example

Plan International's Intersectional Approach to Safeguarding. The approach recognises that social and gender identities come together to influence a person's risk of harm. Therefore the organisation recognises and responds "to the specific safeguarding (and PSHEA) risks and needs of the differing gender and other identities and challenge biases and discrimination and other forms of violence, which may arise because of these."



Healthy Planet

Commitment 3

We will protect the natural environment and enhance its ability to support life for future generations.

The Low Down

For the development sector as a whole, many of the issues that we are working on are either directly or indirectly linked to environmental causes. From poverty, war, migration, and gender inequality to corruption and beyond, climate change is either causing or exacerbating the problem. In the search for clean, healthy and sustainable policies and practices that benefit humanity and the planet, CSOs must develop and implement strategies that contribute to the protection of the natural environment.

However, it is also important to go beyond and even lead by example. As part of CSO accountability to the environment, organisations must acknowledge the important knowledge and potential solutions that local communities have regarding environmental challenges. At the same time, we also know that traditionally underserved communities are most affected by pressures such as climate change. It is exactly these communities and groups who are better positioned when it comes to identifying risks, understanding root causes, observing changes, monitoring actions, and finding the most effective solutions

Practical Actions

- Understand and recognise the differentiated effects that actions taken in response to droughts, floods, fires, among others, and environmental policies/changes may have on stakeholders with differing identities and backgrounds (i.e. gender, age, etc).
- Create space to elevate the voices of impacted groups in conversations, debates and discussions on potential policy and programmatic design, implementation, and solutions.
- Facilitate access and provide information and support to traditionally underrepresented and marginalised groups so that they can meaningfully participate in different environmental accountability processes such as monitoring and evaluation, ensuring transparency.
- Lead by example: Map our organisation's environmental impact, minimise it to the extent possible and be open about our successes and failures.
- Search and form coalitions with usual and unusual allies and institutions to collectively look for solutions and bargain for better environmental actions. Influence those with power (donors, governments, corporations, etc) to take a more active and just role in environmental commitments.

Useful Resources

- **MIO ECSDE and Accountable Now:** [How to Maintain "Healthy Planet" as a Cross-Cutting Value in CSOs' Work](#)
- **Pan American Development Foundation, Green'N'Kool, Restless Development:** [Engaging Stakeholders in Climate Advocacy Action](#)
- **SouthAsianDisasterJournal** (edited by Accountable Now): [Environmental Accountability in the Post-Pandemic Context](#)
- **Ford Foundation:** [Intersections of Digital Rights and Environmental and Climate Justice](#)
- **MIO-ECSDE:** [Environmental Policy](#)

Implementation Examples

Transparency International ensures that a wide range of stakeholders participates in monitoring their impact and contribution to different projects on climate justice and financing - an example of this can be found in their final evaluation of the [Climate Policy and Finance Integrity project](#). Furthermore, they make all resources and information relating to this strand of work available [on their website](#).

MIO-ECSDE commits to reducing its carbon footprint where it can and to offset it where it can't. The carbon offset of the staff's flights is done individually to create an environmentally conscious culture in the office while for the flights of participants to MIO-ECSDE's events, the carbon offset is done overall. The carbon offset is applied by donating to one of the projects of the [Gold Standard fund](#) or [Greentripper](#).



Commitment 4

Lasting Positive Change

We will deliver long-term positive results.

The Low Down

Achieving the overarching goals of social inclusion, environmental protection and economic growth in the present must not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Lasting positive change requires CSOs to undertake long-term strategies in partnership with other actors and organisations. A long-term and inclusive approach that addresses the root causes of current problems and that focuses on achieving sustainable impacts will contribute to increasing the trust in and the legitimacy of CSOs.

Such work does not only apply to the individuals or communities that CSOs work with, but also to partners. For organisations who hold traditional power, especially those who hold resources in funding relationships, sustainability should be a clear principle that is applied throughout all joint projects, from the inception and planning stage to exits. Furthermore, mechanisms to monitor sustainability well beyond the project cycle are important tools to build check-ins several years down the line.

Useful Resources

- **Intrac (Lucy Morris):** [Transitioning from International Partnership, A Toolkit for Small NGOs](#)
- **CIVICUS:** [Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit](#)
- **Accountable Now and Amnesty International:** [Measuring CSOs' Impact \(and Surviving to Tell it in a Blog!\)](#)

Practical Actions

- Learn from people and partners where we can add most value to what already exists.
- Support people to have the information, resources and capacity to actively drive the changes we want to see collectively.
- Evaluate our long-term results in consultation with the people we work with, including unintended negative effects.
- Collaborate with other actors in ways that build on one another's strengths and ensure accountability for our collective impact.
- Continuously monitor, evaluate, learn, adapt and innovate with a focus on lasting results.

Implementation Examples

CARE International's [2020 Program Strategy](#) outlines how the organisation promotes lasting impact and inclusive development – through humanitarian action, innovative solutions, and by multiplying impact. Learnings from CARE's programmes are used to influence broader change and scale up effective solutions. Furthermore, CARE's [Scale by Design Accelerator](#) supports development practitioners within CARE and its partners to design innovative projects for scale and sustainability from the outset.

Commitment 5

People-Driven Work

We will ensure that the people we work with have a key role in driving our work.

The Low Down

Truly people-driven work requires that the resources and power required to achieve CSOs' goals are adequately shared between organisations and people. Only where people and CSOs share leadership and ownership of the process to achieve shared goals, can lasting positive results be accomplished and local initiatives strengthened.

Sustainable success of initiatives can only be realized when leadership and ownership of the process are jointly held by people and CSOs. This collaborative approach ensures that the outcomes resonate with the community and have a lasting positive impact. Central to this endeavor is the commitment to actively engage and listen to the voices of individuals in decision-making processes. By prioritizing inclusivity and participation, CSOs not only make their work more pertinent to the people they serve but also enhance its overall effectiveness.

Useful Resources

- **ChildFund New Zealand:** [RoadMap Approach](#)
- **Restless Development:** [Youth-Led Change - What Works?](#)
- **Bao Han Tran Le:** [Going Global, Acting Local](#)

Practical Actions

- Learn from the people we work with and represent so their issues are our goals.
- Support people in taking active roles to drive the change we collectively want to see.
- Ensure that people's views are well reflected in our decision-making processes at all levels of our organisation.
- Invite and act on people's feedback to improve our performance and collective impact.

Implementation Examples

Accountability Lab's [Civic Action Teams](#) (CivActs) are a pioneering citizen feedback, dialogue and community voice platform to ensure accountability in the development process. CivActs have now collected critical information from hundreds of communities across Nepal, Pakistan, Liberia and Mali, solving daily problems for citizens and closing the loop on challenges related to everything from migration to human trafficking, to natural resource management and security issues.

Commitment 6

Strong Partnerships

We will work in fair and respectful partnerships to achieve shared goals.

The Low Down

Establishing robust partnerships hinges on fostering transparent and mutually beneficial relationships, which serve as the cornerstone for CSOs to effectively pursue shared goals and objectives. Collaborating and coordinating with diverse stakeholders enables CSOs to embrace a comprehensive approach, pinpoint gaps, and mitigate redundant actions in pursuit of public goods.

By harnessing the collective strengths and varied perspectives of different actors, CSOs can streamline their efforts and amplify their impact. It's imperative for organizations to proactively cultivate strong connections among various stakeholders and actively promote synergy to tackle intricate challenges over the long haul. Through sustained collaboration, CSOs can not only maximize their effectiveness but also drive towards a more resilient and adaptable ecosystem for addressing societal issues.

Useful Resources

- **Danish Refugee Council:** [Partnership Principles](#)
- **Accountability Lab:** [Partnership Policy](#)
- **Zambian Governance Foundation:** [What Does it Mean to be Community-Led?](#)

Practical Actions

- Identify organisations that work towards similar goals and build respectful partnerships that play to each other's strengths.
- Ensure that the roles and responsibilities of our organisation and our partners are clear and fair.
- Collaborate with different kinds of organisations to achieve shared goals.
- Share information, resources and knowledge with our partners and make important decisions collectively.

Implementation Examples

Restless Development is committed to capacity building for partners at various levels, and supports increased Southern CSO engagement in advocacy and influencing. Partnerships are based on common visions and goals, increasing impact, and comparative advantage. There is a focus on working through existing structures, which leads to sustainable outcomes. [Read their report](#) (pg. 22)

Commitment 7

Advocating for Fundamental Change

We will address root causes by advocating for fundamental change.

The Low Down

Advocacy and campaigning raise awareness at different levels to enable positive change. To those who hold traditional and political power, advocacy from civil society puts pressure on such actors to tackle the deep-seated issues of injustice, poverty, violence, inequality, gender bias, and environmental degradation. CSOs must therefore engage with and challenge the underlying values and identities that constrain public and political attempts to overcome the challenges people face.

By amplifying and legitimizing the voices of those affected by these issues, CSOs serve as catalysts for meaningful change. Through evidence gathering - both scientific and those experienced by affected communities, CSOs harness people's power to confront systemic barriers and work towards policy reforms on local, national, regional, and global scales.

Useful Resources

- **Pan Americal Development Foundation, Green'N'Kool, Restless Development:** [Engaging Stakeholders in Climate Advocacy Action](#)
- **Innovation 4 Change:** [Advocacy and Campaigning Curriculum](#)
- **World YWCA:** [애드보커시 로드맵 \(Advocacy Roadmap \(2022-2024\)\)](#)

Practical Actions

- Ensure our advocacy work is based on evidenced research, and is informed by the views of affected people.
- Advocate for positive changes which address both root causes and their effects.
- Support people – including affected people – to learn, connect, mobilise and make their voices heard.
- Mitigate the risks for people involved in or affected by our advocacy.
- Evaluate the effects of our advocacy in consultation with affected people.
- Form partnerships and alliances with other organisations, institutions, and actors pursuing similar policy goals.

Implementation Examples

Terre des Hommes International Federation recognises new technologies and the internet have opened up many opportunities for children, but children's online presence has also increased their exposure to harmful and often illegal content. They advocate for new protective legislation so that tech companies take responsibility and use their tools to combat child exploitation. [Learn more about their influencing work.](#)

Commitment 8

Open Organisation

We will be transparent about who we are, what we do and our successes and failures.



The Low Down

Trust is really important when it comes to building a good relationship between organisations and the societies/communities that they wish to serve. Being open and transparent offers an initial step towards enhancing that trust since transparency allows people (especially donors and beneficiaries) to know what has taken place, what will be done, and what was not carried out. In sharing the potential issues and challenges, organisations will also be able to collaborate deeper with those stakeholders to find possible solutions and common grounds.

Transparency goes beyond making information available, it's also about making it accessible. If an organisation is working with young people, a technical piece of writing may not be easily understood. Similarly, information on websites may not be accessible to certain communities without internet connections.

CSOs that embody transparency not only strengthen their work but also justify the trust and confidence put in them, and the civil society sector as a whole, contributing to the preservation of civic space.

Useful Resources

- **ChildFund Australia:** [Transparent approach to gathering consent](#)
- **Accountable Now:** [A Guide to Creating Accountable Virtual Meetings](#)
- **ChildFund Alliance:** [Child-friendly accountability approach](#)

Practical Actions

- Share timely and accurate information on who you are, what you do, how decisions are made, your resources and the impacts of your work.
- Publish, or at the very least, make available on request documents such as your annual reports, complaint procedures, approaches to safeguarding and inclusion, financial statements, and governing body documents.
- Make sure that the information you share is appropriate for your audience and purpose, and easy to understand.
- Establish and uphold clear procedures to respect privacy rights and protect personal data from misuse.
- Provide opportunities for people to question your work and engage in constructive dialogue to reach a shared understanding where possible - this can be done through setting up meetings, holding consultations, and establishing feedback mechanisms.
- Ensure communication and marketing are reflective of your values.

Implementation examples

MIO-ECSDE has a webpage dedicated to Accountability where it shares all its policies, Reports of Activities and Financial Statements, and accountability reports and feedback from the Accountable Now Independent Review Panel.

CIVICUS has made a copy of their strategic plan publicly available (in 6 languages) on their website, showing their commitment to being inclusive. In addition, it further made introductory videos available in four main languages for its members and the wider public.



Commitment 9

Empowered and Effective Staff and Volunteers

We will invest in staff and volunteers to develop their full potential and achieve our goals.

The Low Down

Professional, well-equipped, and loyal staff and volunteers improve the quality of an organisation's work and reduce risks of mismanagement. Staff and volunteers are also the backbone of any organization, possessing valuable insights, expertise, and perspectives that can inform strategic decisions and drive innovation. When staff members feel valued, empowered, and included in decision-making processes, they become more engaged, motivated, and committed to the organization's mission and goals.

Additionally, involving staff in decision-making promotes a culture of collaboration, trust, and transparency, which can lead to better outcomes and more effective problem-solving. To achieve this, CSOs must have clear and fair principles, policies and procedures for recruiting, developing and managing staff. By including staff and volunteers in planning and decision-making processes, CSOs create empowering environments where individuals can effectively perform and grow.

Useful Resources

- **Accountable Now:** [Accountability in Focus Report, Part 4: Effective and Empowered Staff and Volunteers](#)
- **EU TASCO:** [Volunteering and Volunteer Management Webinar](#)
- **MIO-ECSDE:** [Whistleblowing policy + Code of Conduct](#)

Practical Actions

- Ensure that staff and volunteers share, receive training, and act in line with your values and professional standards.
- Put in place fair and transparent recruitment and employment practices, such as transparently disclosing available salary bands, making recruitment processes accessible to a range of candidates, using language that is inclusive in job adverts, and making work hours flexible to include those with child-rearing responsibilities in the workforce.
- Encourage and provide resources for staff and volunteers to improve their skills.
- Support your staff to prioritise their work.
- Involve staff and volunteers at all levels of your organisation.
- Protect the personal safety of those who work with your organisation and create fair and supportive workplaces by providing clear and concise policies, and channels for feedback, complaints and whistleblowing to enhance safety in the workplace.

Implementation Example

ChildFund Korea's Green Bell Initiative.

The organisation makes an internal platform available for all of its staff to add their ideas and feedback to organisational processes in an anonymous manner. Once an initiative receives more than 100 agreements from other staff members, it is taken up and discussed at the leadership level. Through this initiative, certain changes have been made to the organisation, such as flexible working and more company-wide public holidays.

Restless Development's Salary Transparency.

Restless Development hires from a range of locations and makes its salary scale for each position available for prospective applicants. In this way, the organisation is transparent about its pay and works to ensure that staff across the organisation receive equivalent remuneration.

Commitment 10

Well-handled Resources

We will handle our resources responsibly to reach our goals and serve the public good.

The Low Down

The efficient, effective and ethical use of financial and other resources is essential for CSOs to manage programmes, achieve results and develop trust from stakeholders. CSOs should follow generally recognised financial accounting standards, ensure the implementation of strict financial controls and reduce the risk of misuse of funds by handling resources responsibly.

Moreover, organisations should be open with their donors as far as possible about the challenges that they might be facing, and come up with solutions together. Additionally, in interrogating the sources of income, and accepting funding from transparent sources, CSOs can also ensure trust in how they are using such funding (e.g. funding from oil companies may taint environmental programmes).

This commitment also links well with Commitments 8 and 9 above. Resources are not only financial, expertise from staff, material and time should be considered resources too. Organisations that invest well in their staff, use their staff's time and knowledge well, and conserve material resources will get more in return for their efforts. Additionally, strategic resource allocation enables CSOs to sustain their programs and initiatives over the long term, driving meaningful change and advancing their missions effectively.

Practical Actions

- Acquire resources in ways that align with values and goals.
- Report openly and transparently about who provides our resources and how they are managed.
- Assign clear responsibilities to staff: who is responsible for budgetary decisions? Which budgetary decision requires Board approval? Who is the owner of a certain budget? Who will monitor the overall budget? What are the financial protocols that are needed?
- Manage resources responsibly and comply with professional accounting standards.
- Ensure appropriate financial controls to reduce the risk of corruption, bribery, misuse of funds, and conflicts of interest.

Useful Resources

- PLEASE NOTE: as financial requirements vary from country to country, organisations should still adhere to the national legislation and consult the right expert to get correct financial advice. The following resources are not replacements for such legal advice but are there to provide some guidance and reflections on responsible resource handling.
- **ACNC:** [Managing Charity Money for Responsible People](#)
- **Megan Colnar:** [Putting Trust and Resources to Work for Healthier Grantee Organisations](#)
- **MIO-ECSDE's** [Anti-Fraud/Corruption Policy](#)

Implementation Example

Amnesty International makes information about its financing, including information from donations and other revenue sources publicly available on its website. To complement this, the organisation furthermore shares how it is spending resources according to its strategic goals, alongside its financial reports on the same page.

Commitment 11

Responsive Decision-Making

We will ensure our decisions are responsive to feedback from people affected by our work, partners, volunteers and staff.

The Low Down

Responsive (see definition in glossary) decision-making allows organizations to stay agile and resilient in ever-changing environments, quickly pivot strategies, allocate resources efficiently, and capitalize on evolving market trends or stakeholder needs. By prioritizing responsiveness, organizations can enhance their ability to anticipate and respond to potential risks or disruptions, minimizing negative impacts and maximising opportunities for innovation.

One way to become more responsive is through an effective feedback system, which will help CSOs improve both their programmes and performance. Feedback systems should not just be limited to a single approach, but instead, should be adapted depending on the stakeholder in question. It is useful since it helps make stakeholders co-creators of their work and truly demonstrate their accountability to all their stakeholders. CSOs should close the feedback loop through discussions and the development of solutions with partners, staff, volunteers, and most importantly, the people they work with and for.

Useful Resources

- **Resilient Roots:** [10 Tips to Collect Great Feedback from Your Community](#) + [Conquering the Feedback Loop](#)
- **Accountable Now:** [10 Steps to a Great Complaints Mechanism](#)
- **MIO-ECSDE's** [Complaint Policy](#)

Practical Actions

- Invite feedback and complaints from key stakeholder groups in ways that are accessible to them; carefully analyse and review this feedback.
- Ensure decision-making processes at all levels are informed by and responsive to feedback from our stakeholders.
- Clarify and communicate how people can provide input and feedback into decision-making processes, and be clear about why the organisation is unable to take up certain feedback.
- Enable frontline staff and volunteers to respond to feedback.
- Communicate about the feedback received, how it was used and what changes have been made.

Implementation Example

Educo (pg.9) works on children's rights, education and participation. A set of [Child Participation Standards](#) guides Educo and its partner organisations on how to work alongside children to ensure their active participation. The nature and scope of child participation are determined by the principle of the best interests of the child and adapted to reflect local contexts and the child's age and maturity levels.

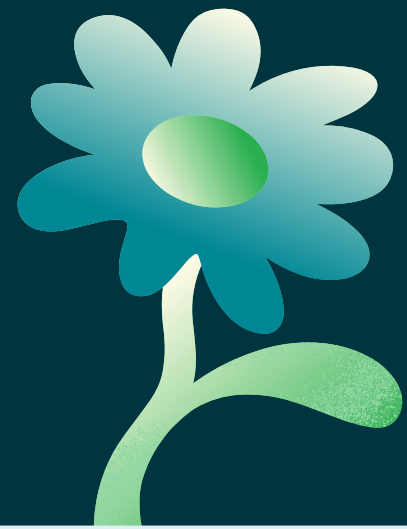
Children participate in all stages of Educo's projects, from conception and planning through a participatory Child Rights Situational Analysis process, to implementation and evaluations. Approaches are tested and learnings are shared throughout the organization.

Educo believes that it is necessary to carry out capacity building on children's rights to best involve them in monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning initiatives and that it is important to be flexible and adapt to children's needs during these processes.

Commitment 12

Responsible Leadership

We will ensure our management and governing body are accountable.



The Low Down

Responsible leadership within an organization is more than just the technical aspects of governance (see glossary). While effective governance, including sound financial management, legal compliance, and accountability for staff and volunteers, is crucial, true responsible leadership extends beyond these elements.

In addition to governance practices, responsible leadership entails the establishment of a clear vision and ethical values by the leadership team, which includes both management and an independent governing body. This vision serves as a guiding light for the organization, shaping its direction and informing decision-making processes. Ethical values provide the moral compass that ensures actions align with the organization's mission and principles.

By fostering a culture rooted in integrity and transparency, leadership empowers its staff and volunteers to act ethically and responsibly in all actions. This not only enhances the organization's reputation but also strengthens its relationships with stakeholders, including donors, beneficiaries, and the wider community.

Ultimately, responsible leadership combines effective governance with a commitment to shared principles and a compelling vision, enabling CSOs to fulfil their missions and make meaningful contributions to society.

Practical Actions

- Ensure an independent governing body oversees our strategic direction, legal compliance, risk management, and performance.
- Hold governing body and management equally accountable for delivering on our strategic goals and fulfilling the Commitments in this standard.
- Nurture a culture where all staff and volunteers feel a strong sense of ownership and accountability for their actions and impacts.
- Support responsible, visionary and innovative leadership at all levels.
- Take internal and external complaints and disputes seriously, creating safe spaces and appropriate mechanisms to address them.

Useful Resources

- **SOS Children Villages:** [Youth Advisory Board](#)
- **Transparency International:** [Approach to Handling Conflict of Interest](#)
- **Marilyn Wyatt:** [A Handbook of NGO Governance](#)
- **Oxfam:** [One Oxfam Safeguarding Core Standards](#)

Implementation Examples

Restless Development's Board is mandated to consist of at least 2 young people under 30, one of which is also their current Global Chair. Moreover, throughout the organization, young people under 35 constitute 80% of the staff and volunteer body, hold key senior leadership positions, and take active leads in the organization's accountability processes and implementation actions.

glossary

Accessible/accessibility: refers to the state of something or a practice being easily used, understood, reached and obtained. Accessibility considerations are different for different groups of people and there are multiple barriers to enable accessibility. Barriers may include, for example, disability, language, gender, age, and race, among others.

Accountability: refers to any processes in which the organisation is interacting with its stakeholders, such as giving an account of what they will do, taking account of their stakeholders' views and wishes, and being held to account for actions.

Communities: are primary constituents - they are the groups that CSOs' work target and those whose lives CSOs are trying to improve. If the organisation is a network or a Secretariat of an alliance, "communities" point towards other CSOs who may be national chapters, partners within an alliance, or members that the organisation is supporting.

Diverse/diversity: refers to the unique qualities and differences that each person and individual possesses. Implied is the value of individuals and the differences in their identities.

Engage/engagement: refers to the different types of practices that an organisation may take to consult and get their stakeholders' inputs and feedback. Engagement can be carried out in multiple ways, and this list of examples is by no means exhaustive: suggestion box, consultation meetings, 1:1 conversations, meetings, surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.

Equity/equitable: refers to fairness and justice, with the recognition that the same treatment and actions cannot be applied to all. Implied is a recognition that different people from different identity groups may receive different forms of privilege, discrimination, treatment, and inequality as a result of who they are. Equity is therefore about ensuring that different people receive the same outcome despite their different circumstances.

Governing bodies: depending on the organisation, this may refer to a Board of Directors, Executive Committees or bodies that hold ultimate decision-making (within an area of or for the whole organisation).

Inclusive/inclusion: is when an organisation makes an active choice to enable as many people as possible, regardless of their backgrounds and identities, to be heard, respected and participate.

Response/responsive: refers to how the organisation reacts and adapts to the inputs and feedback received.

Stakeholders: are individuals or groups who are a part of, or are impacted by, an organisation's work. They could be partners, members, donors, governments, staff, national chapters, volunteers, boards, the public, and most importantly the communities and peoples that organisations aim to serve.



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