CIVICUS
Independent Review Panel Feedback

Accountability Report 2016-2017
Review Round August 2018

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Dear Danny Sriskandarajah,

Thank you for submitting your accountability report. We, the Independent Review Panel of Accountable Now, appreciate your efforts to continuously strengthen accountability to communities, local partners, supporters, staff, donors, or other key constituencies. Our key focus is on accountability to those you serve. It is against this background that we critically discussed your report and came to the individual assessment below.

CIVICUS' ninth accountability report is comprehensive, engaging, and provides a good overview of the organisation's accountability efforts, with notable improvements from the previous report.

Institutional commitment is demonstrated in the opening statement from the Secretary General, and through the implementation of a new accountability framework.

The Panel is pleased to see much of its previous feedback has been taken on board, with the introduction of a new complaints and feedback mechanism, more information on approaches to fraud, corruption, and environmental impact (in fact this is now seen as a good practice), and more examples and links to documents provided throughout the report. The Panel also appreciated the Looking Ahead sections of the report with follow-ups or upcoming initiatives, ensuring the reader has the most current picture.

CIVICUS' efforts on responsible stewardship for the environment (C4), capacity building (E4), and involvement of stakeholders in advocacy (F2) are seen as **good practices**.

More information would have been appreciated on how CIVICUS minimises negative impacts on stakeholders (C3), maximises coordination with other actors operating in the same space (D3), and what feedback has been received from key stakeholders (E3). While several key policy documents are made available online, many were only shared with the Panel in confidence; the Panel believes more of these could be made publicly available and, on reviewing them, can see no reason for keeping them confidential. As a network of (largely) CSOs we suggest your members and the CSO community generally would find it useful to have these documents more generally available by the next report. These are considered **areas for improvement**. Furthermore, the Panel would like to know if there are any policies which underpin sustainable work and impact (re. question B1).

The promotion of CIVICUS' accountability efforts with a dedicated page on their

, including reference to Accountable Now, the accountability commitments, and links to CIVICUS' Accountability Reports, are appreciated.

As CIVICUS now has an organisation-wide feedback and complaints handling mechanism in place, and the Panel is otherwise overall satisfied with the quality of CIVICUS' accountability reports, it would like to **move CIVICUS to the biennial reporting cycle** (i.e. submitting full reports every two years with shorter interim reports in the years between). This comes into effect immediately, and the next report CIVICUS submits should focus on a statement from the Secretary General, any major changes in the reporting period, and the areas identified in the improvement analysis which accompanies this letter.

Our intention is that this feedback letter, and any response you may wish to provide, is made publicly available on the Accountable Now website along with your report – as it is the case with all previously reviewed reports. However, should there be errors of fact in the feedback above or in the note below; we would of course wish to correct these before publication. Please share any comments or amendments by 11 October 2018. If you have any other feedback or comments on our work, please share them with us by sending them to the Accountable Now Secretariat.

Yours sincerely,

| Mihir Bhatt | John Clark | Elodie Le Grand | Jeremy Sandbrook |

CIVICUS' Accountability Report 2016-2017
Review Round August 2018

Comments on the Executive Summary Report

While a separate executive summary report was not provided, the Secretary General clarified to the Panel that his opening statement serves as an executive summary of sorts, covering key changes, challenges and successes in the reporting period. The Panel suggests that this statement might be published separately, for those readers who might not open the full report due to its length or because it may seem too technical. A link to the full report could be provided for those who then want to find out more.

Comments on the Full Report

Opening Statement from the Head of Organisation

CIVICUS' report opens with a strong statement from Secretary General Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, making reference to the importance of accountability and strengthening links with the people organisations serve, in a time of declining trust in civil society and the recent safeguarding crisis in the sector.

The statement highlights a new accountability framework, which aims to put people at the centre of CIVICUS' work and enables more participatory programming. It also outlines key achievements in the reporting period, including a new strategic plan and organizational restructuring.

The Panel is pleased to see that its previous recommendations have largely been taken on board and that CIVICUS has a new feedback and complaints mechanisms in place as well as targets for inclusive hiring and promotion practices. A number of other new policies in the areas of diversity, inclusion and environment are also mentioned .

Overall, it seems apparent that CIVICUS has worked to implement meaningful changes and improve accountability practices over the past year, and the Panel looks forward to reading about how these perform in future reports.

Cluster A: Impact Achieved

A. The impact we achieve

1	***Mission statement and theory of change***
	CIVICUS' vision and mission are presented, along with a new Strategic Plan 2017-2022. The plan has four goals, and the Panel notes positively that two of these feature key accountability ideals – strengthening the power of people to organise, mobilise and take action, and empowering a more accountable, effective and innovative civil society. This information is available in a number of languages on CIVICUS' website, along with more information on goals and how CIVICUS makes a difference.
2	***Key strategic indicators for success***
	A new accountability framework (provided to the Panel but not for wider distribution) was developed to track progress and impact against the new strategy, meet accountability commitments, and foster learning. It is underpinned by the concept of purpose-driven evaluation , and includes key stakeholders, aspirations, approach, activities, and immediate, intermediate, and long-term measures of success.
	A series of critical learning questions have been developed to help staff understand how their work fits under each of the strategic goals, what impact is being achieved, and what changes may be needed.
	The Panel commends CIVICUS in consulting its members, partners, and civil society colleagues during the strategic planning process, and identifying priorities to address. Will they also be involved in monitoring the implementation of the strategic plan?
	A biannual Impact Reflection Process will take place for the first time in 2018, and a review of the strategy reshaping process will also be undertaken. The Panel looks forward to an update on key findings in the next full report.
3	***Progress and challenges over the reporting period***
	The report states that it is difficult to share comprehensive successes and learnings on its new strategic plan, as it has only been in place for a year at the time of writing the report. However, progress against strategic objectives for 2016-17 is presented in CIVICUS' Annual Report 2016-2017 (pp. 8-19).

	It is also mentioned that a new web-based M&E system adopted in June 2018 will improve data-driven decision making and allow more data-heavy evidence on CIVICUS' performance in future reports. Panel looks forward to hearing about some of the successes and learnings stemming from the process, and reading about new developments – including any challenges encountered – in the next report.
4	***Significant events or changes regarding governance and accountability*** The main changes in the reporting period are CIVICUS' new Strategic Plan and Accountability Framework, as covered above in A1 and A2, and a restructuring of the Secretariat in line with the new strategic goals. This involves more streamlined leadership with smaller leadership teams, and opportunities for more colleagues to take on management and coordination roles – the Panel asks for some clarification on what this means (how does CIVICUS achieve smaller leadership teams but enable more staff to take on management roles) in the next full report. As mentioned above, these will be reviewed in the coming year and the Panel looks forward to hearing about how they work in practice.

B. Positive results are sustained

1	***Sustainability of your work*** This is largely covered under the response to E4 (from page 14 of CIVICUS' report). CIVICUS convenes civil society to learn from each other, network, and build capacity, leading to sustainable outcomes. Examples from CIVICUS' DataShift initiative are provided, demonstrating increased knowledge, empowerment, capacities, and efforts being continued beyond the end of programmes. Are there any policies which underpin sustainable work and impact?
2	***Lessons learned in the reporting period*** The report refers to an external evaluation of CIVICUS' organisational capacity, commissioned by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Overall, CIVICUS was found to be fit-for-purpose to achieve its mission though some challenges and recommendations were highlighted, mainly around the new governance structure and decentralised staff structure. An internal lesson learned in relation to the new management structure is the importance of documenting and clarifying the scope of new structures and

	forums, to ensure staff are aware of membership and decision-making remits. Terms of reference were created to achieve this. The Panel would also like to know about lessons learned in relation to programmatic work , and how lessons are shared with stakeholders and peers in the sector, in future reports.

C. We lead by example

1	***Leadership on strategic priorities*** The report mentions positive feedback on CIVICUS' research and advocacy work. Several institutions, including governments, intergovernmental organisations, CSOs, philanthropic organisations, academic institutions and donors, use CIVICUS Monitor data to inform their work. It is stated that more than 20,000 people have consulted the Monitor since its launch, and the data has been used "to substantiate news articles in prominent media platforms, international research and human rights analyses". CIVICUS' active involvement in diverse partnerships and forums, coordination of initiatives such as the AGNA Secretariat and the Resilient Roots project, and increasing funding from various donors, are all indications that CIVICUS' leadership in the sector is recognised.
2	***Inclusivity, human rights, women's rights and gender equality*** The report outlines the ways in which CIVICUS use its role to push for rights and representation of women from a variety of excluded groups. CIVICUS' programmes link civic space and gender equality, and CIVICUS plans to take part in movements which challenge sexism, gender discrimination, and other intersecting discriminations. Examples are provided of how CIVICUS supported LGBTIQ groups and women human rights defenders in 2016-17. The organisation's zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment and gender equality is highlighted through an email the Secretary General sent to all staff in March 2018, and the implementation of Harassment and Gender Equality policies planned for 2018-2019. A Breastfeeding Policy was introduced in 2018, and a revised Recruitment Policy includes greater focus on diversity and inclusion. An internal Diversity and Inclusion Group shares ideas, concerns, and solutions to challenges around gender, diversity and inclusion. In 2016-17, the group focused on CIVICUS' commitment to undertake a diversity and inclusion audit of the organisation's policies, practices and ways of working. Recommendations led to the revision of CIVICUS' Recruitment Policy to focus

	on diverse and accessible recruitment processes, and the creation of an action plan as well as diversity and inclusion targets.

CIVICUS has a Youth Working Group, launched in August 2016, which brings together CIVICUS members under 30 and youth organisations. The group is led by the Youth Action Team, who also advise CIVICUS on how to meaningfully mainstream youth voices across the organisation's work.

Beyond gender and age, CIVICUS is creating a social inclusion toolkit, planned for publication in mid-2018, and the organisation's Events Principles include a focus on accessibility, awareness of religious holidays, and translation of events into multiple languages.

Overall, the Panel commends CIVICUS on its strong approach to gender and youth rights and inclusivity, and looks forward to updates on efforts around other potential exclusion factors (e.g. through the planned social inclusion toolkit). |
| 3 | **_Minimising negative impacts on stakeholders_**

CIVICUS' work is grounded in a human rights-based approach. Do-no-harm is a priority within partnerships, stakeholder engagements, and advocacy and campaigning work.

All CIVICUS members are required to abide by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and CIVICUS' code of conduct, and the international human rights framework is used as a benchmark in CIVCUS' work.

Overall, more details on this are requested in the next report, including relevant policies for CIVICUS staff as well as partners (as is provided on the issue of fraud and corruption later in the report). The Panel would like to know if there is a specific policy on sexual exploitation and abuse which applies to the conduct of staff and members. |
| 4 | **_Responsible stewardship for the environment_**

The Panel commends CIVICUS on improvements in this area since its last report, with a new and comprehensive Environmental Policy in place and more detailed information on efforts to mitigate negative environmental impacts. It is important that, in future, the same methodology is used each year to allow for monitoring progress; it may also be worth focusing on the direct footprint of CIVICUS (staff; board etc) rather than including the extra footprint due to, for example, financing of partners to travel to meetings; this could be a separate programme footprint. |

The new Environmental Policy includes targets in the areas of energy and water, office supplies, transportation, maintenance and cleaning, and culture. Environmental awareness training is being introduced for staff in parallel with the new policy.

The report notes that although convening is a central component of CIVICUS' work and travel cannot always be avoided, efforts are made to choose meeting locations/venues with the level of greenhouse gas emissions in mind, hold alternative local and virtual events where possible, keep meetings paperless, and contribute to carbon offsetting programmes. CIVICUS' Event Principles include a section on sustainability and minimising harm to the planet. Tracking of carbon emissions has been included as a key requirement when sourcing a new Travel Management System, to better monitor environmental footprint.

CIVICUS' carbon emission data is provided, with more comprehensive reporting than in previous years – this is the reason emissions appear to have increased drastically.

Overall, the Panel sees CIVICUS' commitment and efforts in this area as a **good practice**.

Cluster B: Stakeholder Involvement

D. Key stakeholders are identified with great care

1	***Key stakeholders and how they are identified***

CIVICUS has a broad variety of stakeholders, due to their mission of strengthening citizen action and civil society. These are listed in the report, and the Panel notes that the main stakeholder group, CIVICUS members, include associations and individuals from 172 countries. While most members are based in the Global South, the majority of voting members come from higher income countries. CIVICUS is aware of this challenge, and their new Member Engagement Strategy seeks to address power imbalances, such as by making membership fees for voting members optional for those below a certain income threshold.

Membership selection is based on membership criteria, CIVICUS' code of conduct, and a verification process. While membership is open to a very broad range of individuals and organisations, prioritisation does occur when selecting event participants and partners – a checklist is in place, which considers CIVICUS values, diversity and inclusion, and potential for knowledge sharing and future collaboration.

	Is there also criteria for the selection of partners? In the next report, the Panel would also welcome details on those currently prioritised by CIVICUS' programmes – e.g. are there particular countries/regions CIVICUS is targeting, or prioritisation based on gender, age, etc?
2	*Reaching out to those impacted or concerned by your work* CIVICUS' members meet once a year at the Annual General Meeting, which was held virtually in 2015 and 2016 to be more inclusive of members across different regions and time zones. Efforts to increase member participation at meetings includes Q&A sessions, video messages, chat groups and polls. In 2018 CIVICUS will adopt a hybrid format allowing virtual and physical participation. Members and other stakeholders also meet every 18 months during International Civil Society Week and the aligned CIVICUS World Assembly. Throughout 2016-2017 CIVICUS engaged members and partners through a range of communication channels, including newsletters, the website, and social media. Annual Membership and Constituency Surveys also allow members to share feedback with CIVICUS. Member engagement is elaborated further in CIVICUS' response to questions E1 and E2. As covered under D1 above, CIVICUS is working to address power imbalances amongst its membership and remove financial barriers to participation. The Membership Engagement SWOT Analysis provided to the Panel also flags the size and diversity of CIVICUS' membership base as a challenge, and suggests redefining the purposes and benefits of membership and clarifying engagement opportunities to improve sustainable engagement levels. The Membership Strategy shared with the Panel provides more details and outlines next steps, with implementation of the new membership strategy and policy from early/mid 2018. The Panel looks forward to an update on this in the next report.
3	*Maximising coordination with others operating in the same space* CIVICUS works in partnership with several organisations and entities, and key partnerships are listed in the report. Examples of how some of these partnerships have worked in practice in Kenya and at the UNHRC in Geneva are provided. Partners are also key to the production of the CIVICUS Monitor which tracks civic space. More details about the working relationship with partners is requested in the next full report. Is there a Partnership Policy? What principles underpin work in

	partnership? How does CIVICUS help build local capacities, and ensure it does not duplicate efforts?
E. We listen to, involve and empower stakeholders	
1	***Stakeholder feedback*** The report states that CIVICUS is committed to active stakeholder engagement and the closing of feedback loops. CIVICUS' six principles which underpin key stakeholder presentation are outlined, together with a "triple feedback loop" approach to reflecting on the organisation's strategy, which reflects on learning practices. CIVICUS invites feedback from its internal stakeholders through the Whistleblower and Grievance policies, both of which allowed for staff inputs before being finalised. An example is provided of how staff shaped decision-making processes by setting up an internal Failures Club to share learnings. External stakeholders, including the public, can provide feedback (online or via email) in line with a new Feedback Response Policy. Members and partners are invited to contribute via the AGM, Annual Constituency Survey, Membership Survey, event feedback forms, and project evaluations. Positive results from the Membership Satisfaction Survey conducted in May 2018 are referred to as evidence that members are happy with their membership after the introduction of the new Strategic Plan 2017-2022. In the next full report, the Panel would like to know why CIVICUS thinks member voting is relatively low (around 30%) if there is such high satisfaction?
2	***Stakeholder engagement*** The report points to the consultative process (voting members were able to co-author) of creating CIVICUS' new strategy as an example of stakeholder engagement. Feedback is captured during events through participatory facilitation, dedicated time for sharing and reflection, and spaces for networking and knowledge sharing. It is stated that constituents' interests and priorities were used to shape programmes and the Strategic Plan. More details on how this happened would have been welcome. In the next report, perhaps some specific examples of how constituents' engagement shaped decisions could be provided. Details on how stakeholders shape and lead CIVICUS' advocacy work are detailed under E4, F1 and F2 below.

	Low participation rates amongst voting members in board elections and the AGM is flagged as a challenge. A new Membership Engagement Strategy which aims to strengthen engagement, participation and horizontal communication amongst constituencies was approved in May 2018. A new Customer Relationship Management system was introduced in early 2017, and will allow the Secretariat to track engagement and target efforts accordingly.
	The Panel appreciates that CIVICUS is working to ensure its mechanisms for stakeholder engagement are accessible to more diverse stakeholders, for example by making feedback forms available in different languages or using safe forums for stakeholders to provide input.
3	***Main likes/dislikes from stakeholders and organisation's response***
	The report mentions one example of feedback on Regional Capacity Strengthening Coordination Meetings, with several participants flagging the need for stricter time management. This was improved in subsequent meetings and the majority of participants were "entirely satisfied" overall, feeling the trainings were relevant and could be applied to their work.
	The Panel would have liked to see some more examples here, such as key findings from the most recent Membership Satisfaction Survey, or input which influenced the new Strategic Plan. In future reports, the Panel expects CIVICUS will also be able to draw on feedback received under its new Feedback Response mechanism.
4	***People and partners have gained capacities that last beyond your immediate intervention***
	CIVICUS works primarily through members and partners at the national and regional level, and provides financial and technical assistance. An overview of shifting funding patterns according to regional needs is provided. The response also states that CIVICUS convenes civil society to learn from each other, network, and build capacity, with a dedicated Capacity Development Cluster supporting this approach.
	The report outlines ways in which CIVICUS strengthens the capacities of partners and people. Needs assessments were conducted by region in early 2017, and different thematic needs were identified. A series of Regional Capacity Strengthening Meetings was conducted in response, focusing on practical skills such as interview techniques, digital security, and participatory resource development, and participants provided positive feedback.

	Useful examples from CIVICUS' DataShift initiative are also provided, demonstrating increased knowledge, empowerment, capacities, and efforts being continued beyond the end of programmes.

The Panel appreciates CIVICUS' plans to better demonstrate positive capacity and knowledge building efforts in future by collecting data from pre- and post-training tests.

CIVICUS also works to strengthen the advocacy capacities of its partners and members through its Enabling Environment National Assessment Initiative, which assesses the legal, regulatory and policy environment for civil society. The assessments are locally-owned and carried out in a consensus-based multi-stakeholder process. This leads to strengthened advocacy capacities as well as improved CSO-government relations.

CIVICUS' approach is recognised as **good practice** by the Panel. |
| **F. Our advocacy work addresses the root cause of problems** |
| 1 | *Evidence regarding the root causes of the problems you address*

The report states that CIVICUS' work is underpinned by a thorough evidence base, and that local voices inform advocacy positions. The different avenues for gathering this evidence (e.g. research, stakeholder consultations, situation analysis, interviews) are listed.

Policy positions and findings from CIVICUS' main analysis tools are developed with the input of local partners and members, and advocacy positions are co-created with partners and local civil society representatives.

The Panel commends CIVICUS' efforts in this area. |
| 2 | *Stakeholders support your advocacy work and value changes achieved*

CIVICUS puts its partners and national civil society representatives at the forefront of its advocacy efforts – from conceptualisation to implementation. Advocacy positions are co-created in consultation with partners and voices on the ground and published with mutual consent.

Efforts are made for members or partners to feature centrally in external discussions, and CIVICUS supports civil society representatives to speak for themselves in high-level, discussions such as at the UN Human Rights Council. Interviews are conducted with local civil society leaders to amplify their voices. Illustrative examples of some of these efforts from the reporting period are provided. |

CIVICUS also works to strengthen the advocacy capacities of its partners and members through its Enabling Environment National Assessment Initiative. More feedback on this is provided under E4 above.

The report states that CIVICUS generally receives positive feedback on its research and advocacy work. The wide variety of institutions using the CIVICUS Monitor are noted.

Are key stakeholders also involved in the review and evaluation of advocacy positions (in addition to conceptualisation and implementation)?

The Panel commends CIVICUS' efforts to involve stakeholders in advocacy efforts, and notes this as **good practice**.

G. We are transparent, invite dialogue and protect stakeholders' safety

1	*Availability of key policies and information on your website*

The report states that transparency is a core value for CIVICUS and is included in their Strategic Goals. It is stated that efforts are made to publish as much information as possible online, whilst striking the balance regarding sensitive information and personal data.

Annual reports, audited financial reports, budgets, are available online, as are the Feedback Response Policy, Environmental Policy, Event Principles, Membership Policy, Code of Conduct for members (but not for staff or board), and Privacy Policy. Other policies are not published online. The Panel urges that more policies such as the internal complaints, grievance and whistleblower policies, the accountability framework, staff code of conduct, the policies and procedures manual, and programme and institutional evaluations be made public. The Panel doesn't find grounds for these being regarded as sensitive, warranting the current level of confidentiality, and considers that CSOs in general (including CIVICUS members) would find the documents give useful pointers for their own approaches.

CIVICUS aims to publish organisational evaluations on its accountability page. Project evaluations are shared with relevant partners and stakeholders, but are not published online. Salary benchmarking and findings of an annual gender pay gap review are shared with staff but again not published externally.

The Panel commends CIVICUS for improvement in the information available online compared to previous years. There is however still room for improvement. Sightsavers' and Restless Development's approaches in this area have been identified good practice examples. Sightsavers publishes a

	wide range of policies as well as information on salaries and a gender pay gap report online. Restless Development takes a radical approach to transparency, and publishes most of its policies, governance related documents, financial documents, and programme evaluations on its website.
2	***Pay scale, gender pay gap and top salaries*** CIVICUS' salaries are based on the Paterson grading scale. The 2016-2017 pay scale was shared with the Panel but is not published online. The Secretary General's salary is stated, and the ratio between top and bottom salaries appears to be 13:1. A salary benchmarking exercise against similarly sized CSOs was conducted in 2018, and the Panel looks forward to seeing the results in the next report, as well as any targets of plans for improvement. CIVICUS' leadership is discussing how to promote good practice in this field, and a voluntary commitment to internal pay ratios is being considered. It is stated that CIVICUS conducts annual gender pay gap analyses, and that there were no noteworthy findings in 2016-17. Are these findings publicly available? The Panel points to SIghtsavers' transparency in this area as a good practice. The number of staff members in various salary bands can be found in Sightsavers' annual report (page 89), and a gender pay gap analysis is published online.
3	***Ensuring privacy rights and protecting personal data*** CIVICUS' privacy policy explains the collection, use, and disclosure of personal data when using CIVICUS' services, and choices people have regarding that data (e.g. amending, correcting, deleting, limiting scope of use). The policy was updated in 2018 to be compliant with the EU General Data Protection Regulation. The report explains how in the reporting period, a number of CIVICUS grantees, partners, and members requested anonymity, and how CIVICUS responded. Relevant documents have been moved to more a secure online cloud, the new CRM only tracks necessary information, the CIVICUS Monitor captures less specific user data with its analytics software, and a new Data Management Policy is being developed. Digital security trainings were conducted with members and partners to develop capacities in this area, and CIVICUS is partnering with Access Now

	on their Digital Security Helpline. Have CIVICUS staff also been trained in digital security and new data protection requirements?
4	**_Largest donors and their contributions_** The report lists (on page 27) CIVICUS' donors during 2016-17, highlighting the five largest contributors. Amounts, contract period and funding type (core or project) are provided.

Cluster C: Organisational Effectiveness

H. Staff and volunteers are enabled to do their best

1	**_Recruitment, employment and staff development is fair and transparent_** The report states that CIVICUS' Recruitment Policy was revised in 2018 to ensure a fair and transparent process, to focus on local and multiple languages and more diversity when hiring. The Panel suggests the policy be made available online, and would like to know more about efforts to ensure fair hiring, such as accessible application processes, efforts to remove bias, etc. Restless Development's comprehensive equal opportunities policy (in their Employee Handbook) is an example of good practice. Employee statistics including breakdown by location and gender are provided. The Panel would also like to know about age as well as those in management/leadership positions, and their gender and location/nationality. It is mentioned that there is underrepresentation from Oceania and the Pacific, and that targets are being developed as part of CIVICUS' Diversity and Inclusion Indicators (a draft has been shared with the Panel). The Panel looks forward to more information in future reports, including other targets relating to gender, age, and responsibility level. The report also notes challenges in obtaining South African work permits, and that this poses difficulties for CIVICUS' aim to have the majority of staff based in Johannesburg. CIVICUS is exploring possible solutions together with Deloitte.
2	**_Staff development and safe working environment_** In the last year, CIVICUS has grown significantly, and has changed its structure to enable increased collaboration, synchronised workflows, and

staff engagement. Steps have been taken to transform the Secretariat into a non-hierarchical learning organisation.

It is stated that training needs are identified as part of quarterly performance reviews, which 100% of staff participated in during 2016-17. The Senior Leadership Team is reviewing its performance management system in light of organisational restructuring. A leadership and staff development plan will be rolled out in 2017-2018, including coaching for management positions. Training is usually either to address shortcomings or support staff to grow their skills in new areas. 45 staff members attended trainings in the reporting period.

An online learning management system was launched in 2017, which offers practical training courses, some of which are mandatory for all staff as part of the induction process. It is mentioned that uptake from staff is still limited, and the Capacity Development Cluster is exploring how to increase engagement.

It is stated that a new Employee Handbook has been created. The Panel would like to see more in the next report about what is covered in the handbook, both in terms of development opportunities and workplace culture and safety.

Relating to the latter point about a safe working environment, the report refers to a new Organisational Health and Safety Committee at the new CIVICUS Hub in Johannesburg. As noted under C2 above, new Harassment and Gender Equality policies are planned for 2018-2019, and the Panel looks forward to an update on this in the next report. Is there a Code of Conduct for staff members?

Results from a staff survey conducted in November 2016 indicates that the majority of staff are satisfied working for CIVICUS, see value in their work for the organisation, and are able to learn.

I. Resources are handled effectively for the public good

1	***Resources are acquired in line with your values, globally accepted standards and without compromising independence***
	CIVICUS has grown funds and funding resources for the past four years, with a particular increase in unrestricted resources. Details are available in the Annual Report (pp. 30-36). The majority of CIVICUS' income in 2016-17 came from development agencies and foundations/trusts. The report explains that

	membership fees are kept low on purpose and are not seen as a key income source.

Fundraising and marketing activities are in line with CIVICUS' five basic principles, South African law, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The report refers to a Resource Mobilisation Policy, which reflects Ethical Fundraising Guidelines. How do these help protect CIVICUS' independence, and what particular measures are there to ensure funds are not obtained in a way contrary to CIVICUS' beliefs? |
| 2 | ***Monitoring of progress and re-allocation of resources***

Annual donor coordination meetings allow discussion of projects in line with CIVICUS' mission and activities, and ensure coordination between differently funded projects. Donor Coordination Guidelines outline efforts to harmonise reporting formats, timelines, and expectations.

How does CIVICUS track spending against strategic objectives, and re-allocate resources as needed? How much flexibility is there – are changes to project design and funding possible during implementation? Are CIVICUS' stakeholders involved in these discussions? |
| 3 | ***Minimising risk of corruption, bribery and misuse of funds***

The report refers to CIVICUS' Fraud Prevention Policy and Fraud Prevention Plan as well as Anti-Bribery Compliance (provided to the Panel but not publicly available). These express a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and corruption, provide definitions and examples, mention key risk areas, and outline how concerns should be reported and followed up on.

CIVICUS' Whistleblower Policy aims to create a culture which facilitates the disclosure of information, provides guidelines for disclosure, and protects against reprisals.

It is stated that internal controls, policies and procedures have been developed to deter, prevent and detect fraud and corruption. All employees are subject to background checks, new employees receive training, and staff are regularly updated on the policy. Vendors, contractors and suppliers are also subject to screening, and are covered by the Fraud Prevention Policy (where CIVICUS resources are involved).

In 2016-17, operational functions were divided, and new dedicated resources for risk, compliance, and contract management were introduced. |

Procurement (sourcing) was split from finance(transactions) to mitigate financial risk.

A review of CIVICUS' accounting system began in 2017 and recommendations will be implemented in 2018. Development of a grant management system began in 2017, and will be complemented by internal expertise. The Panel looks forward to updates on these efforts in the next report.

It is stated that no corruption cases were reporting in 2016-17. Can CIVICUS point to any evidence that its policies and procedures are well known amongst staff and partners, such as any enquiries about potential incidents (even if no official reports were made)? Will CIVICUS review its disclosure policy to consider making public the relevant documents mentioned above and report in the next report (or via letter) its consideration?

J. Governance processes maximise accountability

1

Governance structure and recruitment of trustees/board members

An organogram reflecting CIVICUS' new organizational structure is provided in Annex 3, and is mentioned under A4 above.

The report provides a comprehensive description of CIVICUS' governance structure, the role of the Board and its committees, recruitment and induction of Board Directors, terms, and division of roles between the Board and Secretary General. What policies guide these processes (as well as possible dismissal of Board Directors)? The Secretary-General is an ex-officio Board member, and the only paid member of the Board. All other Directors work on a voluntary basis.

The Panel notes positively that the Board is currently very diverse, with nine women and two men, six members from the Global South, two youth representatives, and overall representation from various different types of institutions. More information about Board Directors is provided online.

The Board undertakes an annual self-evaluation. The Panel notes positively references to minor challenges relating to the Board, and issues which were flagged in previous self-evaluations, and how these are being followed up on.

The Board conducts a 360-degree appraisal of the Secretary General each time the Secretary General's contract is up for renewal. How often does this happen? The Panel notes that other measures are in place to ensure good accountability of the Secretary General, such as regular discussions with the

	Board Chair, but suggests that a formal annual review would be good practice.
2	**_Board oversight of adherence to policies, resource allocation, potential risks, and complaints processes_** The Board is responsible for strategic oversight and fiduciary responsibility and policy approvals and reviews. There are three main Board committees – the Executive Committee, Operations Committee (including financial matters), and Governance and Membership Committee – as well as special purpose committees for specific issues. The Board meets in person at least twice a year, with ongoing meetings of its committees. The Secretary General provides an update to the Board at every Executive Committee meeting and at the two Board meetings, and the Board provides guidance as necessary. A quarterly Board Health Dashboard covering finances, HR, and membership is provided to the Operations Committee. Top risks identified and monitored in 2016-17 under CIVICUS' risk matrix are outlined on page 32 of the report, and include restrictive government legislation and currency volatility. Staff engagement with the Board is seen as a priority, and the Board had lunch with CIVICUS staff in Johannesburg in December 2016. Are there other processes by which staff are able to provide input to the Board?
3	**_Complaints handling mechanisms and overview of complaints (internal and external)_** CIVICUS invites feedback from its internal stakeholders through its Whistleblower and Grievance policies. These were provided to the Panel but are not made publicly available online. The Panel suggests that CIVICUS consider uploading these policies to its website. External stakeholders, including the public, can provide feedback (online or via email) in line with a new Feedback Response Policy which was adopted in early 2018. The Panel commends CIVICUS on the implementation of this policy, which outlines the scope and definition of complaints, principles under which complaints will be considered, and outlines the procedure for complaints handling. The Panel encourages more detail be given on the process, in particular timelines for response and options for escalation if complainants are not satisfied with the handling of the complaint. The Panel appreciates that the visual overview of feedback procedures in Annex I

includes Accountable Now's complaints mechanism for issues which are unable to be resolved between members and their stakeholders.

The Panel notes positively that a rollout and outreach plan is in place for June-August 2018 to promote awareness about the new Feedback Response Policy amongst staff and stakeholders. The Panel looks forward to an update in the next report on how this was done (particularly for external stakeholders) and how initial implementation of the policy is working.

Before the adoption of the new feedback policy, there was no centralised complaints and feedback system, therefore no information about complaints in this reporting period can be provided. No complaints from external stakeholders were brought to the attention of staff in the reporting period.

There were also no complaints received in 2016-17 for breaches of fundraising. It is noted that the new Feedback response Policy will allow more systematic tracking of this in the future.

Information on internal complaints from staff was not provided, and the Panel requests an overview of this in the next report

K. Leadership is dedicated to fulfilling the 12 Commitments

1	***The governing body and management are held accountable for fulfilling strategic promises***

The division of responsibilities between CIVICUS' Board and Senior Leadership Team is covered in J1 and J2 above. The quarterly Board Health Dashboard presented to the Operations Committee includes updates on where CIVICUS stands in relation to its Strategic Goals. The Senior Leadership Team also meets monthly to discuss organizational structure, programme delivery, and resourcing. Minutes of these meetings are shared with staff. External evaluations, the financial audit, and legal advice from Deloitte strengthen independent oversight and legal compliance.

Accountability constitutes CIVICUS' third Strategic Goal for 2017-2022, and a new Cluster was created to deal with monitoring, evaluation, learning and accountability issues. Two staff members were recruited in 2017 to ensure CIVICUS adheres to relevant standards. Members are able to hold the Secretariat to account at the AGM, through Membership and Constituents Survey, and through other informal methods. CIVICUS staff as well as external stakeholders can also hold CIVICUS to account, most notable through the

	new online feedback form. A call for feedback is prominently displayed on CIVICUS' new accountability page. As covered above under J1, the Board undergoes an annual self-evaluations, and periodically conducts an appraisal of the Secretary General.
2	***Inclusion of staff in discussing progress toward organisational accountability*** The report outlines the ways in which CIVICUS has promoted its accountability commitments amongst staff. This includes informing staff about Accountable Now issues and the accountability commitments, providing regular updates on challenges such as those identified by the IRP, and engaging staff in improving organisational performance. An example is provided of how staff followed up on IRP recommendations around diversity and inclusion during the 2017 staff retreat. Efforts are led by CIVICUS' Impact and Accountability Cluster. The accountability report is developed in collaboration with different Clusters and management levels. Some more information on process would be welcomed. Are staff provided the opportunity to give input or feedback on the report before it is finalised? CIVICUS' Youth Action Team was part of Accountable Now's 2016-17 pilot on people-powered decision making. In late 2017, CIVICUS began its Resilient Roots initiative which tests whether organisations that are more accountable and responsive to their primary constituencies are more resilient against external threats. Involvement in and leadership of these projects indicate organisational commitment to accountability and make it part of staff members' everyday work.
3	***Scope of this accountability report and influence over national entities*** The report covers the activities of CIVICUS, which is a single entity operating out of several locations. The report covers the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017, with some more current examples and updates included.