



ACCOUNTABILITY INTERIM REPORT

Empowering a more accountable,
effective, and innovative civil society

January 2019

1. Opening Statement by the Secretary General on the strategic importance of accountability to achieve CIVICUS' mission:



The nature of civil society is changing. New social and protest movements are often struggling to find common ground with established civil society. Public trust in many institutions is falling, or fallen, and many in civil society continue to report that their resourcing position has, at best, plateaued. Anti-rights groups are increasingly claiming civil society spaces, often with the support of regressive governments, restricting civil society agendas and muddying their messages. At the same time, the spotlight has also fallen on civil society following recent #MeToo revelations of abuse scandals and cover ups.

This is the context within which CIVICUS implemented its first year of the [CIVICUS' Strategic Plan 2017-2022](#). During this foundational year of 2017-2018, we sought to put structures and procedures in place that would make us fit for this new stage in our mission to strengthen citizen action and civil society throughout the world. Accountability is crucial to achieve this mission and is embedded in Goal 3 of CIVICUS' new Strategic Plan which focuses on "empowering a more accountable, effective and innovative civil society".

CIVICUS' understanding of accountability:

At CIVICUS, accountability means we are transparent about who we are and what we do. It also means we answer to our members, partners, donors, civil society and ourselves on what we have achieved and how we have achieved it.

We are putting our accountability strategy into practice in several ways. Specifically, in 2017-18, our [Accountability Framework](#) was developed to help us achieve our strategic accountability goals, as mentioned above. This framework is underpinned by [CIVICUS' new online feedback and complaints mechanism](#) which helps to support implementation of our framework. Since the adoption of our Accountability Framework we have also implemented a new M&E platform, called DevResults, to capture and analyse programmatic and organisational data to improve data utilisation, inform decision-making, and ultimately help us effectively implement our Strategic Plan 2017-2022. These systems and processes are just the first step in our accountability learning journey and we recognise the importance of the longer-term internal culture change that is required for us to truly prioritise real-time evidence, learning and reflection as a way of working.

In addition, CIVICUS continues to actively promote and strengthen CSO accountability in the wider alliance. One example is the [Resilient Roots initiative](#) which tests whether organisations who are more accountable and responsive to their roots – namely, their primary constituents – are more resilient against external threats. Moreover, the Legitimacy Transparency and Accountability working group of the [Affinity Group of National Associations \(AGNA\)](#) held their first Global Accountability Day on 08 November 2017, promoting CSO accountability around the globe. Learnings around how to improve collaboration with AGNA partners and how to frame accountability in a more accessible and engaging way have helped to develop this into a whole CSO Global Accountability Week in November 2018.

At the end of December 2018, I stepped down as Secretary General of CIVICUS after six years, with incoming SG Lysa John taking up the role in January 2019. I would like to thank CIVICUS members, partners, Board members, and colleagues – past and present – who have shaped CIVICUS over the last 25 years. Also thank you to Accountable Now and the Independent Review Panel for being a part of that journey and for continuously pushing us to improve where needed.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah".

Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah
(Secretary General, CIVICUS)

2. Overview of significant organisational changes

As mentioned in the opening statement, 2017-2018 was the first year of [CIVICUS' new Strategic Plan 2017-2022](#). The organisation took the time to set up new systems and organisational structures to best enable us to achieve these Strategic Goals. This revised structure includes new decision-making bodies such as the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Operational Management Forum (OMF) and Programme Management Forum (PMF). As CIVICUS had grown, both in terms of financial and human resources, the organisation needed a more streamlined leadership and more effective and innovative management forums.

Detailed information on our organisational structural and systems changes were provided in the 2016-2017 Accountability Report and the new organogram is attached as an annex. As a result of this substantive change process, the recruitment for several new positions took longer than expected which delayed activities in certain areas of the organisation, for example, numbers in membership remained unchanged due to the delay in the implementation of the new membership policy which was approved in October 2018. Please find more details in this regard in the [Annual Review presented to CIVICUS' Donor Coordination Group](#) (June 2018) as well as in the SLT's top-line learnings highlighted below gathered through our annual reporting process:

Top-line SLT learnings from the annual reporting reflection process for 2017-2018:

DOUBLING DOWN on what we believe is the bedrock of our work: Policy + Advocacy work by modernising our methodologies, approach, and learning
LEAPING FORWARD in putting our Alliance front and centre by pushing for resourcing, equalising, and leveraging the key differentiator we have: the power of our network
COMMITTING TO INNOVATION through testing, learning, transparency in our work and to our stakeholders
STRENGTHENING our foundations by investing in timely, responsive, and agile systems to enter our second quarter century

Despite some operational delays, 2017-2018 was a year of many inspiring, inclusive and successful events, including our flagship International Civil Society Week and our global SPEAK! Campaign:



International Civil Society Week (ICSW): Every 18 months, CIVICUS organises a global gathering for civil society to connect, discuss and debate shared solutions to global challenges. From 5 to 8 December 2017, over 600 civil society representatives met in Suva, Fiji. More details on workshop sessions, event partners, and outcomes can be found in the [final ICSW 2017 Report](#). The next ICSW will take place in April 2019 in Belgrade, Serbia.



SPEAK! 2017: SPEAK! is a global campaign to give voice to everyone and the evolution of CIVICUS' Global Day of Citizen Action held in previous years. In 2017, there were 232 events held in 65 countries, with over 46,000 people participating and more than 7.5 million reached online. One of the insights from 2017 was that breaking down barriers and speaking with people one usually does not (rather than simply speaking out) should be the focus for the 2018 events (which took place in November 2018 and will be reported on in the next full report). The final campaign summary report is attached as an annex and also includes areas for growth such as exploring new means for data verification or translating all campaign assets into Arabic, Portuguese and other languages to facilitate further global engagement.

For more information on our activities and achievements in 2017-2018, please have a look at the full [Annual Report 2017-2018](#).

3. Update on the improvement areas identified by the Independent Review Panel's feedback on CIVICUS' previous accountability report (see [here](#)):

a) Additional information on the sustainability and impact of our work (Cluster B, 1)

Generally, CIVICUS recognises that it has a responsibility to the environment beyond legal and regulatory requirements. We are committed to reducing our environmental impact, and continuously improving our environmental performance as an integral part of our business strategy and operating methods – as is evident in our [Environmental Policy](#).

Due to the rapid growth of CIVICUS staff and income, our previous travel processes were not well-equipped to handle the increased volume of travel from both staff and partners. It was therefore challenging for us to accurately calculate our carbon emissions for 2016-2017. As such, we began the process of sourcing a new travel management system in 2017-2018 and have included carbon emissions tracking and reporting as one of our requirements. The global nature of CIVICUS' work makes international travel impossible to avoid and, and therefore, accurate tracking will enable us to set organisational targets around emissions and help to inform carbon offsetting initiatives. In addition, another proposed requirement is an online approvals system where possible, to eliminate the need for paper-based approvals. This was put to the test during ICSW 2017, our flagship event, where we embraced our policy of holding paperless events, utilising a mobile application to share all related information, including agendas, supporting documents and updates with delegates.

The sustainability and impact of our work is also deeply engrained in CIVICUS' Accountability Framework where we have identified critical learning questions to help us better understand our impact and our theory of change.

"CIVICUS brings CSOs from the region together and this builds a sense of fraternity sharing similar concerns and standing up for similar causes in our respective countries." – CIVICUS Member

We have begun to explore these questions internally through our first impact reflection discussions which took place in August / September 2018. Although these impact reflections were valuable in allowing teams to reflect together on successes and challenges, we found a need to strengthen our outcomes data collection at project level to allow us to better understand the impact and sustainability of our work. Even although we have the

organisational systems and processes in place – we need to improve the quality of data and evidence discussed to be able to meaningfully take related decisions. This will be further elaborated upon in our next Accountability Report on 2018-2019.

Examples of our critical learning questions include: what type of research products and campaigns have the intended impact on the ground, when and why; and to which extent and how CIVICUS' membership accelerates impact on key global issues.

- b) Minimising negative impacts on CIVICUS' stakeholders, including staff and partners, specifically in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse (Cluster C, 3)

CIVICUS policies and procedures are currently undergoing a review, based on an HR audit conducted by external consultants OneHR in late 2018. The 2018-2019 Accountability Report will provide more detail on this process. With regards to sexual exploitation and abuse, a new Anti-Harassment & Anti-Discrimination Policy (*attached as an annex to this report*) was approved in October 2018. Moreover, the internal Diversity and Inclusion working group finalised an organisational [Diversity Statement](#) in November 2018. We were able to raise awareness with staff on these important issues through the development and consultation processes of drafting these policies throughout 2017-2018; however, the policy and statement documents were only finalised at the end of 2018.

In addition, CIVICUS' members and partners are encouraged to minimise negative impacts on their stakeholders and the environment via the [Code of Conduct](#) and the [CIVICUS Event Principles](#) and our membership guidelines have also been updated to reflect these principles and values. CIVICUS also took the decision to recruit a Diversity and Inclusion Specialist (recruitment in 2018-2019), a resource that will be available to all our members to support members' efforts as we collectively work towards a more inclusive, accountable sector.

We appreciate that having the right policies and resources in place is only the first step and we continue to work on embedding these policies and principles in the development and execution of our programmes and events across the membership. In addition, we know that it is inevitable that we will be faced with situations where our code of conduct is breached and, whilst we respond to these issues as and when they arise, we understand the need for us to be more institutional about how respond to such cases and make sure that we can share these learnings across the alliance.

- c) Maximising coordination with others operating in the same space, through trusting partner relationships (Cluster D, 3)

Partnerships

In December 2018, the CIVICUS Board approved new partnership guidelines (*see below*) that will be used to update relevant documents such as our Resource Mobilisation Policy, the sub-partnership checklist, and new programme/partnership forms before the next Board meeting in April 2019. In our subsequent report for 2018-2019, CIVICUS will be in a better position to report in more detail on selection criteria beyond participant selection, priority countries, and how we ensure our work does not duplicate efforts of others. In the interim, our partnerships guidelines are summarised below.

Working in partnership is a core CIVICUS principle in our Theory of Change and openly and publicly acknowledges those with who we work. For example, our [SPEAK! Campaign partners](#) and [CIVICUS Monitor research partners](#) are available openly available online. Communication is another key consideration when coordinating and working in partnerships. It is critical to ensure that our members and the wider public understand and engage with our work to ensure that we have the right partners and stakeholders mobilising to deepen the impact of our work.

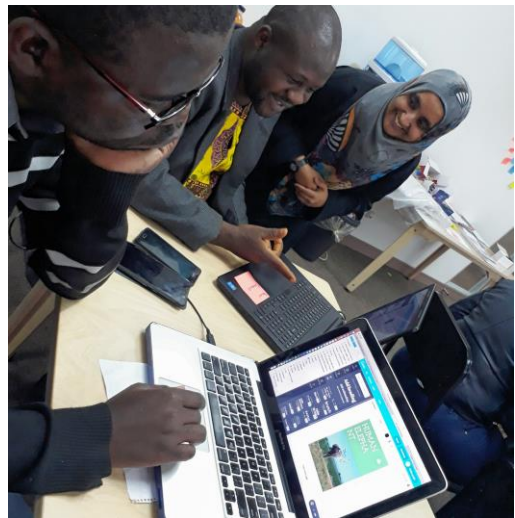
We enter partnerships based on the following guidelines:

1. Our partnerships contribute to the achievement of a shared vision, mission and goals and seek positive change on issues related to justice, inclusion and sustainability.
2. Our partnerships are based on clear roles and responsibilities that improve coordination for greater effectiveness and impact and avoid duplication of efforts.
3. Our partnerships represent a variety of actors that offer diverse perspectives and seek to extend beyond traditional power bases.
4. Our partnerships are with actors who respect, promote and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and share common values and principles.
5. Our partnerships reflect a commitment to mutual learning and dynamic accountability.
6. Our partnerships respect the voice and independence of the actors involved and are grounded in respect.
7. Our partnerships allow for meaningful engagement rather than tokenistic participation.
8. Our partnerships are based on legitimacy, transparency and accountability; acting with integrity is core.

In 2017/2018 we published 66 opinion articles, 55 media releases, and had 437 articles written about CIVICUS in 17 languages, but what is most important is that we shifted the focus of these communications to being much more member and partner centered, putting significantly more efforts into working with the alliance to write articles and jointly draft and distribute press releases.

Capacity Development

Beyond the above guidelines, our Capacity Development Cluster is also providing guidance to the organisation on how to best engage with our (local) partners and strengthen capacities. The latter is based on a global needs assessment carried out across our constituencies in 2016-2017. As a result of this needs assessment, in 2017-2018, CIVICUS conducted a digital security training to CSOs in Asia and Europe and organised a communications training for African CSOs to help build their organisational capacity. Moreover, CIVICUS launched a digital security online course for local organisations and created a new [Social Inclusion Toolkit](#) in 2017-2018.



“I personally believe the training was a great success in equipping the journalists and civil society activists from different corners of the globe in recognizing cyber threats and in preparing them to take preventive measures to counter such threats.” — Digital Security Training Participant

Although we continue to deliver capacity development to our members and partners, CIVICUS is largely moving away from a centralised capacity development approach held within the Secretariat. We are dedicating more capacity to map our members’ knowledge, expertise, resources and capacity strengths and weaknesses, to enable a more networked approach to

build our collective capacities, which we believe, contributes to more sustainable and impactful outcomes. For example, the AGNA thematic working groups or the Innovation for Change sharing economy.

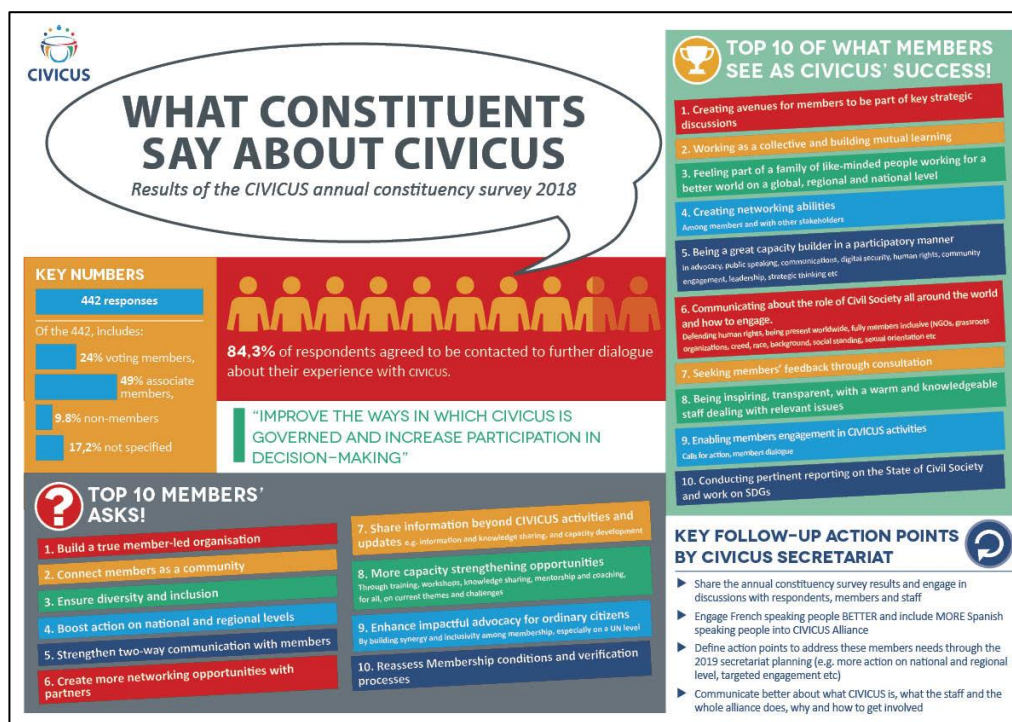
Moreover, we learnt from the annual Members Survey 2017-2018 and the targeted Youth Working Group 2018 survey, that our youth members wish to see more opportunities and resources for young people's skill development. This can only work if the CIVICUS Board and Secretariat set organisation-wide clear youth targets that are impactful and aligned with our Strategic Goals 2017-2022. Thus, there is a need to target specifically those stakeholders under the age of 30 for CIVICUS' capacity development offers. These targets should also be combined with consistent data collection on the amount of resources (finance and space) allocated to youth participation per cluster/ work stream. This is another priority area for CIVICUS and we will track and report on progress in the next Accountability Report.

d) What we've been hearing from our stakeholders – feedback from our most recent Membership Satisfaction Survey and trends from the new feedback mechanism (Cluster E, 3)

Membership Survey

In early 2018, we asked our constituents to share their perceptions of CIVICUS' work in general, as well as our successes and areas for improvement. We received 442 responses from members and non-members. The overall trend from the survey showed that CIVICUS' constituents value the work we are doing as an Alliance, specifically CIVICUS' power in connecting people, spurring collective action, creating avenues for civil society to be heard by other stakeholders etc. At the same time, there is appetite for increased member engagement for CIVICUS to truly emulate a member-based organisation. There were also requests for more diversity and inclusion (regarding e.g. membership, sub-granting, event participation, or language coverage) and also for more opportunities to leverage the work of our alliance to accelerate and compliment national and regional agendas (e.g. via ensuring more regional activities or strong networking and collective action at local and national level).

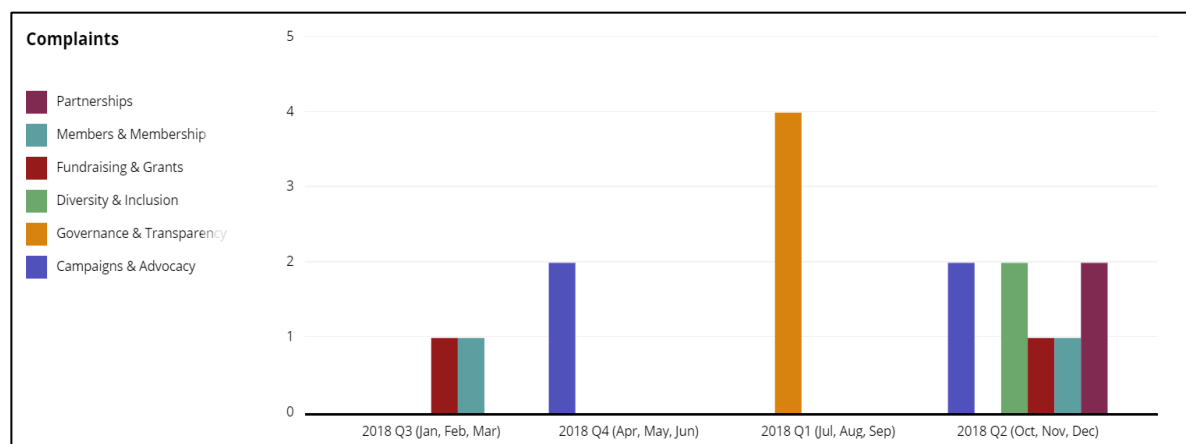
The infographic *Fig.1* below (also found in [this blog post](#)) summaries the feedback from this survey, including the top 10 success and improvement areas for CIVICUS.



Infographic of CIVICUS' constituent survey 2018 results (Fig.1)

Online Feedback Form

Our online feedback form was launched in June 2018 and we are pleased to see it increasingly being used over the past six months as our stakeholders and constituents become more aware of this mechanism. We presented our first analysis of feedback received through this mechanism to the Board in December 2018. To date, we see an overall balance regarding the location, gender, membership status and nature of complainants. However, we see slightly higher numbers in terms of submissions from Africa and complaints in relation to advocacy and campaigns as well as governance and transparency issues as depicted in the graph below (Fig.2). One reoccurring topic regarded delayed payment of subgrants to partners. This is now prioritised action area for CIVICUS for 2019.



Feedback submissions by complaint area (Fig.2)

e) Publication and transparency of policies and key documents (Cluster B, 8)

As described in section 2b) above, our Operations team together with our HR consultancy team, OneHR, are currently reviewing and consolidating CIVICUS policies to ensure coherence, consistency and to establish level of compliance. Once the review is completed in early 2019, we will then upload updated policies onto our website as per leading practice. To date, we have published the following additional documents or information since our last reporting period:

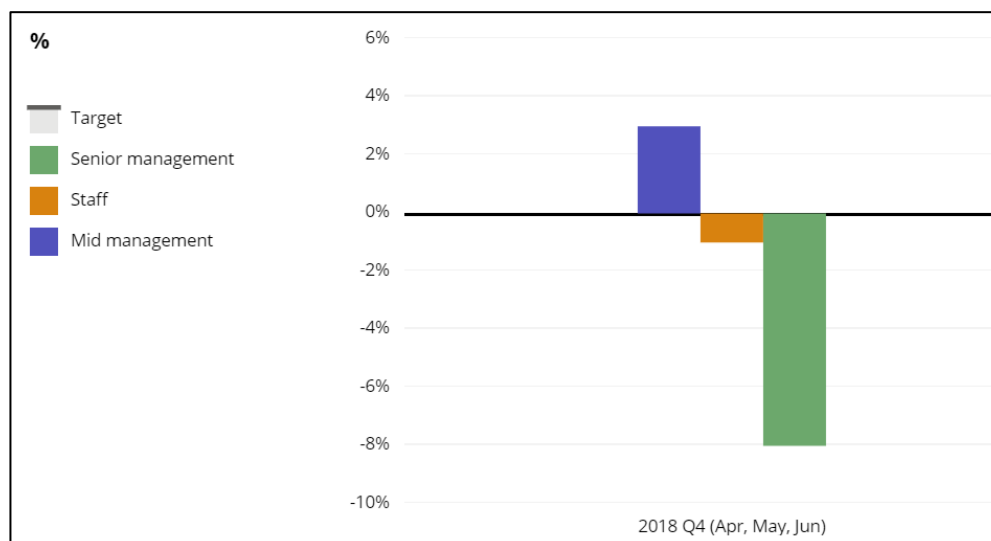
- [Updated Accountability Framework](#)
- [Accountability website in Spanish](#)
- [New Membership Policy](#)
- [Diversity Statement](#)

Implementation of newly adopted policies (for example, environmental awareness training as outlined in Environmental Policy, or training on responding to feedback and complaints as part of our new online feedback mechanism) is still in progress. With our newly appointed Operations Manager we anticipate that we will be able to gain more momentum in this area over the next year.

Finally, CIVICUS is part of the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) whose goal is to achieve equal pay for women and men everywhere. We committed to improve our gender pay ratio during a public pledging event aligned to the UN General Assembly in September 2018.¹ Our pledge included setting gender pay targets at the CIVICUS Secretariat level as well as raising awareness and providing capacity support across the alliance.

The graph below (Fig.3) depicts CIVICUS' gender pay gap categorised by management level as of June 2018. The largest gap is within our senior management team comprising of three men (including the Secretary General) and two women. However, this ratio will change as we welcome Lysa John as Secretary General from 01 January 2019.

¹ More details can be found in [this press release by UN Women](#).



Gender pay ratio by management level - June 2018 (Fig.3)

4. 2018-2019 Outlook

From an accountability perspective, we have set in place the systems and processes to operationalise our framework and accountability principles. Now, we need to shift focus to deepening our analysis, expanding our understanding of the outcomes, in addition to outputs, and turning our learnings into actions so that we can be held to account by our constituents.

Prioritised recommendations that surfaced through our first impact reflection process were shared at multiple management and governance levels. We are now working to incorporate these into 2019-2020 planning priorities to ensure that the systemic, cross-cluster recommendations and actions are reflected in annual plans, as well as accompanied by targets. Moreover, we aim to further embed and institutionalise the Accountability Framework through the prioritisation of meaningful data collection, target setting, results reflection and evidence-based decision making, and a culture change that holds to account non-compliance across our policies and practices. Progress on this will be reported on in the next full Accountability Report.

Finally, in 2018-2019 we will also be undergoing a leadership transition as we welcome our new Secretary General, Lysa John. We look forward to her continuing to champion CIVICUS' accountability journey along with our management, staff and members as we collectively strive for a more accountable civil society sector.

This interim report covers the period from 01 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 – with more recent examples where clarified. It was compiled in a participatory process with involvement from other CIVICUS Clusters where needed and representation from designated members of the Senior Management Team. In case of any questions or feedback on this report, please get in touch with the Impact & Accountability Cluster (Merle Rutz, Impact & Accountability Coordinator, merle.rutz@civicus.org) or via feedback@civicus.org.



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