





Creating structures for accountability

José M. Faura // *Educo Executive Director*

After another year, here is our **Transparency and Accountability Executive Summary**, which brings together our main advances in fields like children's rights, internal governance and environmental responsibility. This report is another cog in the machine we are building to strengthen our accountability, which was consolidated during 2017 through various actions, among which we can highlight:

- The creation of the **Accountability and Policies Unit**, whose mission is to promote a culture of accountability based on transparency and learning, sustained by the processes of construction of internal policies and implementation of international standards.
- The setting up of the so-called **Policies and Standards Commissions in our Country Offices**, multidisciplinary working groups whose aim is to promote and coordinate the implementation process for the aforementioned policies and standards.



CONGDE (SPANISH DEVELOPMENT NGO COORDINATOR) TRANSPARENCY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE SEAL

The Spanish Development NGO Coordinator (CONGDE in Spanish) has given us an "Evaluated NGO" seal. This distinction certifies that Educo, as a member organization, has applied the **Transparency and Good Governance Tool**, an initiative that promotes the strengthening and ongoing improvement of transparency and accountability in development NGOs. After carrying out the relevant audit, **we successfully passed all the sections which make up the tool**, demonstrating our firm commitment to the principles on which it is based.



Creating structures for accountability

Why accountability?

Increases our **credibility** and **legitimacy**.

Strengthens our governance **structures**.

Strengthens the **quality, effectiveness** and **efficiency** of our programs and projects.

Minimises the risk of misuse of funds.

Is an opportunity to **learn** from what we do, through monitoring and evaluation, and therefore **improve and innovate**.

Creates spaces for our stakeholders to **participate** in the decision-making process.

As an organization which has incorporated the rights-based approach, accountability is **our obligation** and **responds to the rights of our stakeholders**, especially those of the participants in our activities.





Children's rights



We continue to make progress in the integration of the child rights-based approach in all organizational areas, beginning with the implementation in our Country Offices in **Latin America** of our **Organisational Standards for Children's Rights**, a tool which serves as a guide for advancing systematically in the full incorporation of the approach, as well as providing a general framework for guiding accountability and internal and external learning.

During 2017, **Educo Nicaragua** has been part of the **Nicaragua branch** of the **Coordinating Committee of the Global Movement for Children**, a network which works for the **promotion, defence and protection of Children's Rights**. Within the framework of this alliance there is a working group whose specific task is to promote dialogue with the legislative and executive bodies for the **promotion and implementation of the 2030 Agenda**, with children as the main actors in this process.



In 2017, after identifying the need to start a **debate about the children at risk from exclusion in Spain**, we published the study **Natives of the crisis: the latchkey children**. The study analyzes the situation of more than 350,000 children in Spain, aged 6 to 14, who spend their weekday afternoons alone at home, at risk of isolation and social exclusion, due to their carers' lack of time, a lack of social networks in the community and a lack of financial resources.



In January 2017, a **community diagnosis** aimed at identifying the main violations of children's rights was launched in the Kolda region in **Senegal**. Based on the results of this diagnosis, **two projects, focused on education and child protection**, were formulated. The latter was also selected for funding from **AECID** (Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation).



Children's rights STRATEGIC AXES



EDUCATION

In 2017 the study ***The shadow of educational investment in Spain***, was published, which analyzes the growing financial effort that families are having to make for their children's schooling, which they already indirectly contribute to via taxes, and which casts doubts over not just the notion of gratuity but also equity. This study led to the **campaign Education is not free**, which defended the **right to receive a free, inclusive and quality education**.



PROTECTION

The Educo Country Office in **Bangladesh**, as a member organization of the **Coalition for the Defence of Children's Rights**, was selected as a member of the **Child Wellbeing Council**, the public body responsible for ensuring the fulfilment of children's rights, and in particular for all aspects related to **child protection**.

GOVERNANCE

As part of our work in favour of children being active citizens, in **Ecuador** we have supported the process for the **democratic and participative election of twenty-four children to form a Children's Advisory Council in the city of Guayaquil**. This council is the advisory body for the implementation of public policies in favour of the fulfilment of children's rights, as well as being an organ for promoting and demanding these rights.





Strategy and Innovation



During 2017 we set up the **sixteen working groups which will put our Theory of Change into operation**. These groups have been created to carry out the aims that were set out in our five “change domains”, which include aspects like program quality, learning and accountability. They are also promoting a number of **global innovative initiatives**, called “prototypes”, which allow for specific ideas to be tested, in order to improve them, learn from them and eventually, replicate them.



One example of these prototypes is the project **Protection and wellbeing led by children**, which we have set up in fifteen schools in the state of Maharashtra in India, and which aims to promote **active participation from children in initiatives related to good treatment**, as well as involve them in the development of child protection policies. In **Mali**, a prototype based on an **innovative strategy for motivating and strengthening school attendance and performance** was set up which involves working with the children’s grandparents.

As participants in the **Spanish Network for Development Studies (REEDES in Spanish)**, we have taken part in the coordination of a working group which aims to **analyze the role of civil society as a global actor in development and interaction in international society**. The interest areas of the group include strengthening democracy, development policies and global development governance, as well as dialogue and public debate about development.



In 2017 **we consolidated our commitment to our work in humanitarian action**, with the creation of a new area which coordinates our work in prevention and risk reduction for natural disasters, as well as our emergency response. One of the highlighted actions of 2017 was the collaboration with local and regional authorities in the Bicol region in the **Philippines for attending to the population most affected by the Nock-ten typhoon**. After the first response to the emergency, we continued to collaborate with the repairing of damaged schools so that children could get back to their studies and return to normality as soon as possible.



Advocacy



In 2017 we created a **Children's Advisory Council** within the framework of the project ***Once upon a voice... what children think about violence***, in order to prepare for the next edition of the report in 2018. **Listening to and taking into consideration** the opinion of the real protagonists of this study, the children, is not just their right and our obligation, but also an effective research strategy.

During the celebration of **African Children's Day 2017**, which took place in the prefecture of **the Ségou region in Mali**, we approached, along with the **Regional Institute for Young People with Visual Impairments** and the **Mali Association for the Fight against Intellectual Disability**, local government authorities and civil society in an attempt to increase awareness about the situation of children with disabilities.

In **El Salvador** we have been working to join up initiatives which are developed in the different dimensions of **comprehensive protection** (prevention, comprehensive care, special protection and restoration of rights), via a series of interventions articulated on a national, departmental and local level which contribute to comprehensive development in early childhood. For example, we participated as a member institution in the **Technical Committee for Comprehensive Care in Early Childhood**, we were part of the **Shared Care Network** and we are members of the **CONNA (National Board for Childhood and Adolescence)** Board of Directors.



Educo Nicaragua carried out an institutional communication campaign called ***Education for children is unlimited, join us!*** which emphasized the Right to Education as an obligation of the State and a responsibility shared by mothers, fathers, children, adolescents, teachers and non-governmental organizations. The campaign reached eighteen thousand students from ninety-two educational centres and included the direct participation of more than a thousand children, teachers and parents, through a series of recreational and reflection engagement activities based on the Right to Education.



Transparency and good internal governance



During 2017 we carried out **accountability sessions** in some of our Country Offices, like the one in **El Salvador**. These are spaces for joint dialogue, analysis and reflection about Educo's work in the territory, and include the participation of the different actors involved in our work, including children and adolescents. In these events we try to promote the involvement of the different stakeholders in the planning and evaluation of our work, as well as **promoting institutional openness and transparency**.

We presented our biannual accountability report to Accountable Now, a platform of international organizations from civil society which work towards being more transparent, improving their impact and responding more effectively to the opinions and needs of their stakeholders. The report, which is available on our website, includes information about the effectiveness of our programs, about internal governance, financial management and fundraising, as well as other aspects.



**Accountable
Now**

As an **NGO with consultative status in ECOSOC**, the Economic and Social Board of the United Nations, we can participate, carry out contributions in writing and present statements to the board and its subsidiary organs. In 2017 we presented our four-year report, which summarises the contributions we have made to the work of the United Nations over the last four years.



Within the framework of the construction of our Theory of Change, we have activated a **working group specific to internal governance**, with the aim of **launching good governance practices within our organization and strengthening effectiveness and efficiency in our institutional management**. It will also contribute to reinforcing a culture which favours transparency, accountability and decision-making processes that motivate and empower staff.



Inclusion and diversity



In **India** we launched the project **Empowered for putting an end to violence – When women and children are listened to**, which specifically addresses the issue of gender violence and its impact on children. In 2017, efforts were concentrated on the development of work modules for changing adolescent behaviour, which mainly addressed aspects related to sex and gender, the third gender, gender-based discrimination, caste-based discrimination, violence and Children's Rights, among others.

We supported the work of **ChildFund Australia** in the humanitarian crisis caused by the displacement of the Rohingya ethnic minority in Bangladesh, providing a total of €179,500 for strengthening support for the protection of Rohingya women and children in the Kutupalong-Balukhali refugee camp. The focus is on providing **gender-sensitive and child-centered emergency protection services to 6,000 refugee families**.

Educo Nicaragua participated in the program **Recycle for Life and Hope** by the organization **Los Pipitos**, an association of parents of children with disabilities. This collaboration involved donating used paper from our offices for it to be used in craft workshops organized by the association.



In **Mali** an **increase in the presence of women in School Management Committees** was registered. These bodies are in charge of managing schools in a decentralized way in the name of the municipality and are made up of representatives of all the actors involved in the educational community (teaching staff, students, parents of the students, members of the community). As an example, in the Pélengana area, the percentage of committees with at least one female member went from **0% in 2016 to 71.42% in 2017**.



Participation

During 2017 we continued to work on the implementation of our Complaints and Feedback Policy, so that all the stakeholders with and for whom we work can express their opinions. Some important progress was made, like the creation of the Global Commission for Implementation and Monitoring, which aims to coordinate and support the Country Offices in all aspects related to communicating, implanting and monitoring this policy, or the launch in Educo El Salvador of a specific online portal for making complaints, suggestions and compliments.

In the four projects which were carried out in 2017 in the Philippines all work related to the Right to Participation for children and adolescents was strengthened, via various actions:

- **Awareness-raising** among adults.
- **Strengthening the abilities** of children and adolescents for reclaiming their Right to Participation.
- Creation and strengthening of the capacities of **child and adolescent organisations** on a community and municipal level.
- Implementation of a **pilot initiative for monitoring and evaluation led by children and adolescents**.



Ethical fundraising



In 2017 Educo signed a framework agreement with ECHO, the agency responsible for designing and applying the European Union policy in the area of humanitarian aid. This agreement ratified our fulfilment of the ECHO criteria and standards and **manifests our commitment to its operational principles, which include transparency, accountability and improving the effectiveness of aid, among others.**

In November 2017, **Educo El Salvador**, in partnership with three other organisations, received the notification that they had been awarded their bid for 10 million dollars from the program **FOMILENIO II**, which will be funded by the US and El Salvador governments. The program will promote activities related to **strengthening the curriculum** to improve learning among the students of the 'Integrated Full Time Inclusive School Systems' which is the El Salvador Education Ministry model for teaching and school management.





Environmental responsibility



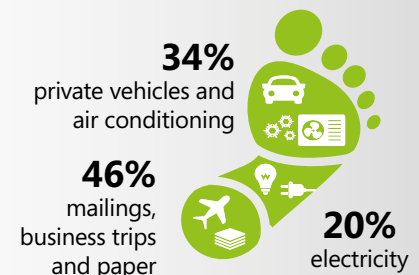
The message from our **Environmental Policy** regarding waste management (the **4 Rs: Rethink, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle**) has successfully filtered through the organization, with several related actions, for example:

- Considerable **reduction in the consumption of paper** in almost **all the Country Offices**.
- **Reduction of the consumption of plastic** in the **Educo Head Office**.
- In the **Benin** Country Office a **composter has been built for organic residue**, creating compost which will enable us to stop using chemical fertilizer.

As of 2017, **Environmental Impact Studies** are drawn up for all the construction work for educational, health and recreational infrastructures, carried out as part of our projects in **Guatemala**. The studies are coordinated by the Ministry for the Environment, with support from local municipalities.

Our **Mali** Country Office has included a clause in its contracts with construction companies which establishes that **if a tree must be cut down** during the construction of any type of infrastructure, the service provider will **plant ten trees** in exchange.

In 2017 our **carbon footprint** represented a total of 1,907 tons of CO₂, an increase of 18.60% over 2016. This increase is due to the updating of reference data and the inclusion of new sources of consumption in the calculation, although the consumption itself was equal to or less than the previous year. This was the case with paper consumption, for example, which was lower than 2016.





Our team



In January 2017 a **new and unified Program Department** was created, with the following objectives:

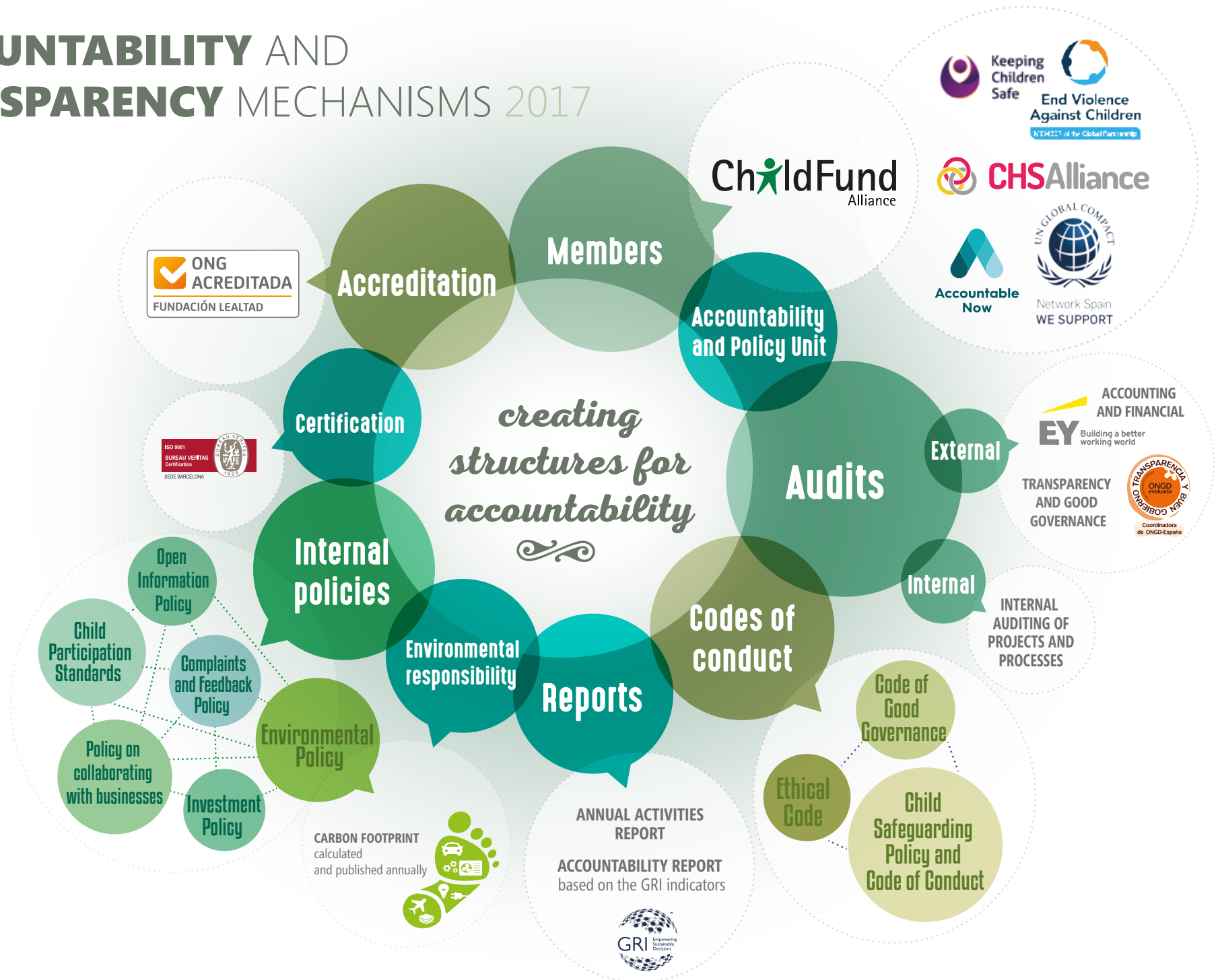
- **Lead the Educo action programs and support each Country Office strategy**, guaranteeing global coherence.
- Strengthen **collective learning** in order to improve the quality of our work and increase our impact, encouraging **innovation**.
- Support economic sustainability through **resource mobilization**.
- Guarantee **effective and efficient management** in order to **improve accountability**.
- Lead the **partnership strategy** and develop evidence-based **advocacy**.

In order to do this, during the year the structure was strengthened through contracting **thematic reference figures at Head Office**, as well as **regional figures and focal points in the Country Offices**, in the areas of **Program Quality, Child Protection and Disaster Risk Reduction**.

The percentage of senior positions in the Country Offices that come from the **local community** has stabilized at **100% in Asia, 75% in Africa and 83% in America**.

The new methodology and tool for **evaluating performance** in the **Birches human resources management** system has been applied to 100% of staff in our three Country Offices in Asia (**Philippines, India and Bangladesh**), as well as in the Educo Head Office. The implantation of the **Birches system** has also begun in **Latin America (Nicaragua)**.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY MECHANISMS 2017





Related documents

[Study \(in Spanish\) Nativos de la crisis: los niños de la llave](#)

[Study \(in Spanish\) La sombra de la inversión educativa en España](#)

[Report \(in Spanish\) Érase una voz... lo que niñas y niños opinan sobre la violencia](#)

[Accountability Report 2015-2016](#)

[Complaints and Feedback Policy](#)

[Environmental Policy](#)

Websites

[Educo](#)

[Educo Nicaragua](#)

[Educo Philippines](#)

[Spanish Development NGO Coordinator – CONGDE](#)

[Global Movement for Children for Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

[Children's Advisory Council, Guayaquil, Ecuador](#)

[REEDES \(Spanish Network for Development Studies\)](#)

[Shared Care Network \(El Salvador\)](#)

[CONNA \(National Board for Childhood and Adolescence\) \(El Salvador\)](#)

[Accountable Now](#)

[ECOSOC](#)

[ChildFund Australia](#)

[Los Pipitos](#)

[ECHO](#)

[Educate a Child](#)

[FOMILENIO II](#)





Further information

For more information about any of the issues addressed in this document, click [here](#) to visit the *Accountability* section of our website.

For any other questions or suggestions, please contact us via email: renpol@educO.org.

Your opinions help us to improve



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