



CIVICUS
Independent Review Panel Feedback
Accountability Report 2017-2018
Review Round February 2019



CIVICUS

Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

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06 March 2019

Dear Lysa John,

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' first interim accountability report is concise, well laid out and easy to read. It provides helpful information to explain key developments relating to accountability in 2017-2018, and responds to the Panel's requests for more information on certain areas. Several links are provided for those who wish to read more about the issues mentioned.

Institutional commitment to dynamic accountability is demonstrated in the opening statement from the Secretary General, and through several developments in 2017-2018 such as a new accountability framework, feedback and complaints mechanism, and partnership guidelines. The report is reflective, identifying areas for progress in the coming years as well as sharing successes.

The Panel notes that a number of CIVICUS' policies are being reviewed and consolidated, and that it is then planned to upload these onto the website, as per leading practice and the Panel's suggestion. We note positively that several new documents have been uploaded already, including the updated accountability framework, membership policy, diversity statement, and a Spanish version of the accountability website.

The Panel commends CIVICUS on its efforts in the reporting period, and looks forward to reading more in its next full accountability report.

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 06 April 2019.

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,

Accountable Now's Independent Review Panel





CIVICUS's Accountability Report 2017-2018

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Opening Statement from the Head of Organisation

The opening statement from outgoing Secretary General Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah outlines the challenging context in which CIVICUS implemented the first year of its new [Strategic Plan](#), and that accountability is crucial for achieving CIVICUS' mission.

Key developments relating to accountability in 2017-2018 are highlighted, including a new [accountability framework](#), feedback and complaints mechanism, M&E platform, and a number of accountability-related projects and events that CIVICUS is coordinating. Sriskandarajah notes that these developments are one step in a longer accountability learning journey and recognises the importance of longer-term internal culture change.

It is clear from the report that accountability remains a key focus for CIVICUS, and the Panel looks forward to hearing about future developments from new Secretary General Lysa John in future reports.

Significant Organisational Changes

While not directly impacting CIVICUS' 2017-2018 operations, the most significant change noted was in its leadership, with Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah stepping down as Secretary General (SG) in December 2018 (after six years in the role). The new SG - Lysa John - took up the position in January 2019.

The key organisational changes from the reporting period relate to the implementation of CIVICUS' new [Strategic Plan](#) 2017 - 2022. In line with its strategic goals, CIVICUS set up a number of new systems and decision making bodies to streamline leadership and increase effective and innovative management. These included the creation of a Senior Leadership Team, Operational management Forum, and Programme Management Forum.

These changes resulted in a number of delays in recruiting key positions, which in turn impacted a number of activities, including implementation of CIVICUS' new membership policy. A document with more details is [linked](#), and the report highlights the new Senior Leadership Team's top learnings – a need to modernise CIVICUS' methodologies and approach, further resourcing and leveraging the



CIVICUS network, more testing, learning, and innovation, and investing in responsive and agile systems.

Two key global events from 2017 are also highlighted – International Civil Society Week and the SPEAK! Campaign – with links to more information on achievements and learnings.

The information on the gender pay gap at CIVICUS (at the end of the report) is also welcomed, and the Panel notes positively that the large gap at senior management level is changing from January 2019, as Lysa John takes up her role as CIVICUS's new Secretary General.

Cluster A: Impact Achieved

B. Positive results are sustained

B1

Sustainability of your work

It should be noted that this section refers more to the long-term sustainability of CIVICUS' work and impact, rather than environmental sustainability (which the Panel had flagged as a good practice in CIVICUS' previous report). Nonetheless, the Panel appreciates the update on environmental sustainability and notes the sourcing of a new travel management system that is expected to lead to improved tracking of carbon emissions and offsetting efforts.

In terms of sustainability of impact, the response states that this is deeply ingrained in CIVICUS' [accountability framework](#). The framework highlights the importance of longer term changes and measures of success, and explains that while these are sometimes difficult to measure, CIVICUS has adopted Critical Learning Questions to inform a better understanding of its long-term impact. Some examples of the questions are included in the report.

Internal impact reflection discussions which took place in 2018 considered successes and challenges relating to these questions. One finding was a need to strengthen outcomes data collection at project level, to better understand impact and sustainability and be able to take related decisions.

The Panel found the information provided in this response helpful, and looks forward to updates in CIVICUS' next report.



C. We lead by example

C3	<p>Minimising negative impacts on stakeholders</p> <p>The Panel had requested more information on relevant policies CIVICUS has in place, in addition to the code of conduct, and asked whether there is a specific policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.</p> <p>CIVICUS has shared its new Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy (Annex III) which was approved in 2018. The Policy is comprehensive and includes explanations and examples of what does and does not constitute sexual harassment, consequences of unacceptable behavior, and reporting procedures. A new diversity statement was also developed in 2018, and staff were consulted during the drafting of both policies.</p> <p>CIVICUS' members and partners are also encouraged to minimize negative impacts on stakeholders and the environment via the Code of Conduct and CIVICUS Event Principles – CIVICUS' membership guidelines have been updated to reflect these.</p> <p>CIVICUS has recognised that having policies and procedures in place is only the first step, and will continue to embed them in the development and implementation of its programmes and events.</p> <p>The Panel appreciates the information provided. CIVICUS' efforts (though still in their evolutionary stage) appear sound, and the focus on sharing learnings about any breaches of their codes/policies is noted positively.</p>
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Cluster B: Stakeholder Involvement

D. Key stakeholders are identified with great care

D3	<p>Maximising coordination with others operating in the same space</p> <p>In 2018 the CIVICUS Board approved new partnership guidelines, which will inform updates to a number of other relevant policies and documents. While more detail will be provided in the next full report, the guidelines are listed, and the Panel notes positively that they are underpinned by a dynamic accountability approach, with a focus on fair collaboration, mutual learning, respect, clarity, and impact. While positive, we await a fuller account regarding the working relationship with partners.</p>
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	<p>CIVICUS has begun to shift the focus of its communications to be more member and partner centred, and is putting more effort into creating communications outputs together with the alliance.</p> <p>The report also refers to CIVICUS' capacity development efforts, outlining trainings and resources provided in 2017-2018, and noting that there is a move to a more networked (rather than centralised) approach to capacity building. This approach has the potential to be shared as a good practice, and we look forward to seeing the results of this initiative in the next report.</p>
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E. We listen to, involve and empower stakeholders

E3	<p>Main likes/dislikes from stakeholders and organisation's response</p> <p>The Panel had requested some more examples of key pieces of feedback, and appreciates the provision of an overview of findings from CIVICUS' 2018 membership survey. The infographic makes this information particularly reader-friendly. Overall, constituent value CIVICUS' work as an alliance, particularly in terms of connecting people, driving collective action, and amplifying voices. There was a desire for more member engagement, more diversity and inclusion, and more opportunities to leverage the work of the alliance to feed into national and regional agendas. Key follow-up action points are also outlined.</p> <p>An overview of feedback received through CIVICUS' new online feedback form is also presented, with a breakdown by broad category. A recurring topic was delayed payment of subgrants to partners, and CIVICUS has prioritised this as an action area for 2019.</p>
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