



**Accountable
Now**

GLOBAL STANDARDS LOCAL TRUST



CIVICUS

Independent Review Panel Feedback

Accountability Report 2018-2019

Review Round February 2020



CIVICUS

Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

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20 February 2020

Dear Lysa John,

Thank you for submitting your accountability report. We, the Independent Review Panel of Accountable Now, appreciate your efforts to 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' eleventh report is again comprehensive, engaging, and demonstrates the organisation's **commitment to dynamic accountability**; particularly in CIVICUS' efforts around stakeholder engagement, partnerships, and learning.

The Panel very much appreciates that several of its comments and recommendations from previous feedback letters have been taken on board and implemented by CIVICUS.

CIVICUS' approach to diversity and inclusion (C3) and engaging stakeholders in advocacy work (F2) are seen as **good practice**. Further **strengths** in this report are CIVICUS' approach to impact measurement (A2), stakeholder feedback (E1), capacity building (E4), and involvement of staff in discussions around accountability (K2).

The Panel would like more information on CIVICUS' monitoring of progress and re-allocation of resources (I2), and ensuring confidentiality when handling complaints (J5). These are flagged as **areas for improvement** to focus on in the next interim report.

The Panel appreciates the illustrative examples provided in many of the sections of the report, but encourages CIVICUS to consider making more of its policies publicly available, particularly key internal policies around whistleblowing, internal grievances, and fraud.

Overall, the Panel commends CIVICUS on another strong report, and looks forward to continuing to work together to keep strengthening accountability processes.

We look forward to discussing our feedback with you in a follow-up call, which the Secretariat will be in touch to schedule. This conversation will form the basis for your



response letter, which will be made publicly available on the Accountable Now website along with your report and this feedback letter.

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 2018-2019

Review Round February 2020

Opening Statement from the Head of Organisation

CIVICUS' accountability report opens with a detailed statement from CEO Lysa John, which outlines the many steps CIVICUS has taken over the reporting period to further strengthen their accountability processes. Several concrete examples are provided, and links point to where numerous supporting documents have been made publicly available.

The statement frames CIVICUS' efforts in the context of calls for greater responsiveness and accountability from public institutions. CIVICUS believes more must be done to shift the power to groups that have been systematically excluded from decision-making. This is very much in line with the dynamic accountability approach that Accountable Now advocates.

The Panel also notes positively the participatory and inclusive approach to the processes outlined in the opening statement.

The Panel appreciates CIVICUS' continued commitments to improving performance, learning, impact, and accountability related outcomes.

Cluster A: Impact Achieved

A. The impact we achieve

A1	<p>Mission statement and theory of change</p> <p>CIVICUS' vision, mission, goals, and current Strategic Plan are shared, and are also available on their website (the latter is available in six languages). The Panel had previously noted positively that the Strategic Plan's goals include key accountability ideals – strengthening the power of people to organise, mobilise and take action, and empowering a more accountable, effective and innovative civil society.</p>	4
A2	<p>Key strategic indicators for success</p> <p>CIVICUS' accountability framework underpins the organisation's tracking of its progress and impact against the Strategic Plan, and indicates an increasing focus on outcomes rather than outputs. The framework recognises the need for purpose-driven evaluation, as the social change CIVICUS works towards is difficult to measure and attribute. CIVICUS has a series of long-term critical learning questions to better highlight the impact</p>	4



	<p>of work on each of the strategic goals, assess what is working well, and what may need to be changed.</p> <p>A new Development Evaluation Framework was introduced in May 2019, which includes objectives, desired changes, critical learning questions, master indicators, and tools for measurement for the strategic goals. It also provides guidance on creating indicators for projects.</p> <p>CIVICUS summarises its learnings in Impact Reflections which happen twice a year, and a Performance Story - a table which is updated with the status of each of CIVICUS' initiatives, indicative activities by team, annual targets, and DevResults indicators and figures. The most recent version of the Performance Story was shared with the Panel.</p> <p>The response also explains how staff were involved in developing the organisation's annual plan, and how progress against objectives is reported to the Board every six months. A helpful visual overview is provided.</p> <p>The Panel commends CIVICUS' strong approach to measuring impact and outcomes, and to communicating this openly - the article (pp. 76-81) shared in the report explains how CIVICUS designed and is implementing its accountability framework, as well as what lessons have been learned.</p>	
A3	<p><i>Progress and challenges over the reporting period</i></p> <p>CIVICUS' key progress, achievements, and learnings relating to their strategic goals are presented in their Annual Report. The accountability report highlights a number of these, with links provided for further details.</p> <p>It would be interesting to know what progress was made against the Developmental Evaluation Framework; can this be shared in future reports?</p> <p>The response did not focus on challenges faced in the reporting period, though there is a section which shared recommendations from a European Commission evaluation of the AGNA Global Learning Exchange Programme, and how CIVICUS is responding.</p>	3
A4	<p><i>Significant events or changes regarding governance and accountability</i></p> <p>Key changes in this reporting period are the updating of CIVICUS' Accountability Framework, development and implementation of a Developmental Evaluation Framework, and revision of the organisational annual planning process.</p>	4



	<p>In its feedback letter on the last full report, the Panel had asked for more details about the restructuring of the CIVICUS Secretariat - specifically how to achieve smaller leadership teams whilst enabling more staff to take on management and coordination roles. Can CIVICUS provide an update on this?</p>	
<p>B. Positive results are sustained</p>		
<p>B1</p>	<p><i>Sustainability of your work</i></p> <p>The information in the section of the report referring to this question focuses on how CIVICUS engages its stakeholders, including members. Most of the relevant information on this question can be found in CIVICUS' explanation of how it works in partnerships (D3) and enables long-term capacity strengthening (E4), the latter of which the Panel has flagged as a strength.</p> <p>In addition, CIVICUS' previous report had shared that its accountability 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.</p> <p>The previous report also shared findings from internal impact reflection discussions, one of which 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 would like to see an update on this in the next report.</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>B2</p>	<p><i>Lessons learned in the reporting period</i></p> <p>The response shares recommendations from a European Commission evaluation of the AGNA Global Learning Exchange programme. One recommendation was to analyse causes of under-spending and to speed up consumption of available funds - in response CIVICUS is implementing a more ambitious activity plan for 2019-2020. Another recommendation was that CIVICUS take measures to enhance the gender dimension of the programme, which was done by including a session about gender at the AGNA Annual General Meeting, and conducting a workshop on diversity and inclusion with AGNA members.</p> <p>As requested in the Panel's feedback on the last full report, in future reports, can CIVICUS share lessons learned from their programmatic work and/or operations? Under the section of this report on capacity strengthening, the</p>	<p>3</p>



	<p>SPEAK! Campaign 2019 Highlights Report is shared, which includes a section at the end on lessons learned.</p> <p>The Panel would also like to know about CIVICUS' broader approach to learning and sharing of lessons. A good example to refer to here is Sightsavers (see pp. 6-7 of their report) who have several approaches in place to learn from its successes and failures, including learning reviews, evaluations, learning seminars, and learning events.</p>	
C. We lead by example		
C1	<p>Leadership on strategic priorities</p> <p>The report explains CIVICUS' role as a connector and builder of networks in the civil society sector, and refers to their organisation of International Civil Society Week, which brought together 594 members and partners from 93 countries.</p> <p>Information under the response to question C2 refers to the key analysis tools that CIVICUS produces - the annual State of Civil Society reports and the CIVICUS Monitor.</p> <p>CIVICUS' role as the AGNA Secretariat and their coordination of the AGNA Legitimacy, Transparency and Accountability working group, their coordination of the Resilient Roots initiative, and their membership in key sector groups and initiatives (as detailed under the response to D3) are also examples of their leadership in the sector.</p>	4
C2	<p>Expertise is recognised and welcomed by peers and stakeholders</p> <p>The report (pg. 24) states that CIVICUS generally receives positive feedback on its research and advocacy work, and provides the example of Bread for the World using CIVICUS Monitor data for their annual report on the state of global civil society. A number of other CSOs, intergovernmental organisations, academic institutions, media outlets, philanthropic organisations and donors also make use of and refer to the Monitor website.</p> <p>Results from CIVICUS's Annual Constituency Survey (Net Promoter Score of 42) point towards a satisfied membership, and results from event participation surveys were also positive (pp. 13-14 of the report).</p>	3
C3	<p>Inclusivity, human rights, women's rights and gender equality</p>	4



	<p>The Panel commends CIVICUS on a strong approach to diversity and inclusion in both their work and programmes, as well as within the organisation, and sees this as a good practice.</p> <p>The response shares CIVICUS' broader approach to diversity and inclusion - this is seen as a journey that civil society must embark on together. As this is an area of focus which is constantly evolving, there is no end point that CIVICUS strives for, but there is a general commitment to tackling institutional structures from all perspectives.</p> <p>Several recent initiatives and developments with regard to diversity and inclusion are shared. The Panel particularly regards the Social Inclusion Toolkit, which helps members assess their work on inclusion beyond gender and age, as a good practice to share with other AN members.</p> <p>Internally, CIVICUS developed a Diversity and Inclusion Statement which includes an extremely comprehensive list of factors which CIVICUS acknowledges, respects, and strives to protect against discrimination. The statement explains how each key function and section of the Secretariat commits to ensuring diversity and inclusion. The Panel appreciates this concise yet comprehensive document, and looks forward to updates on or examples of its implementation in future reports.</p> <p>An internal Diversity and Inclusion Group comprising 12 staff members from different teams strives to find solutions to challenges around gender, diversity and inclusion. In 2018-19 the group focused on implementing audit recommendations received in 2017, which included the hiring of a full-time diversity and inclusion coordinator, and updating CIVICUS' Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy (this is not publicly available but has been shared with the Panel).</p>	
C4	<p>Minimising negative impacts on stakeholders</p> <p>Pages 23-24 of the report explain that CIVICUS' partnerships, stakeholder engagement, advocacy and campaigning work is rooted in human rights and do-no-harm principles. The international human rights framework is used as a benchmark in CIVICUS' work and all CIVICUS members are required to abide by the UN Declaration of Human Rights.</p> <p>CIVICUS aims to minimise negative impacts on its stakeholders by undertaking its work in partnership with local people and communities. Advocacy work is published with mutual consent, and CIVICUS aims to</p>	3



	<p>feature national civil society representatives to speak for themselves, rather than CIVICUS speaking on their behalf.</p> <p>The report shares that as part of the SPEAK! campaign in 2019, a campaign partner in Tanzania was threatened due to their engagement in the campaign, and as a result CIVICUS is reviewing internal do-no-harm procedures to do better.</p> <p>Relevant CIVICUS policies which aim to protect stakeholders include the Diversity and Inclusion Statement and the Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy (which applies to behaviour in the workplace) mentioned under question C3. An Event Code of Conduct, available on the CIVICUS website, outlines expected and unacceptable behaviour, and what will be done if unacceptable behaviour is demonstrated. The report also refers to CIVICUS' Member Code of Conduct and a Child Protection Policy which is not currently published online. A link to the Child Protection policy is requested in the next report, to provide a better understanding of CIVICUS' efforts in this area.</p> <p>An employee Code of Conduct is included in CIVICUS' Employee Handbook, which was shared privately with the Panel, but this focuses on issues such as confidentiality, gifts, and representing the organisation, and does not include information on expected behaviours/conduct. The Panel would like to know whether there are any policies which outline expected behaviour outside the workplace and/or when staff are dealing with external stakeholders.</p>	
C5	<p><i>Responsible stewardship for the environment</i></p> <p>The Panel has previously identified CIVICUS' approach to environmental sustainability as a good practice, and this remains the case.</p> <p>CIVICUS has an Environmental Policy which is updated annually with objectives and targets, and additional guidelines on minimising the organisation's environmental footprint have been created. All staff are trained on the environmental policy, and informed of updates.</p> <p>The report lists a number of steps taken in the Johannesburg office to reduce impact, and includes an overview of CO2 emission data in all offices over the past six years.</p> <p>Given convening is a key component of CIVICUS' work, the majority of negative environmental impacts arise from events. CIVICUS tries to hold alternative local and virtual events when possible, and the Panel would be</p>	4



	interested in knowing whether all meetings allow remote participation, and whether the number of remote participants has been increasing over time.	
Cluster B: Stakeholder Involvement		
D. Key stakeholders are identified with great care		
D1	<p>Key stakeholders and how they are identified</p> <p>CIVICUS' mission is to strengthen citizen action and civil society around the world, and their definition of civil society is broad (this is shared in the report). Accordingly, CIVICUS membership is large and diverse in terms of organisation type, size, location, and focus. There is a table showing the number of total and voting members over the past four years, and in which region they are based (the Panel would like to point out that the references to the majority of members overall and voting would suggest over half of the membership, and it would be more accurate to refer to the highest representation of members).</p> <p>Membership is open, but there are membership criteria as well as a Code of Conduct which members must agree to, and a verification process to ensure potential members are real and credible actors who contribute to civic action and civil society strengthening. The response provides more information about this process. The Panel would like to know what non-voting membership entails, i.e. how these members interact with CIVICUS.</p> <p>CIVICUS has made an effort to increase the number of voting members from the Global South (who are underrepresented despite making up the majority of members overall) through their Members Engagement Strategy, and the report states that the gap was reduced over the last year.</p> <p>Another aim was to increase the number of members under 30 years of age, and the Goalkeeper Youth Action Accelerator programme allowed CIVICUS to exceed its target, with a particular increase in the number of young people from Africa joining the organisation.</p> <p>The Panel would be interested in whether CIVICUS' establishment of funding mechanisms for members has changed their relationship with their members at all, or whether this is a subject for internal discussion/monitoring?</p>	4
D2	<p>Reaching out to those impacted or concerned by your work</p> <p>CIVICUS' members meet once a year at the Annual General Meeting. In the past, a virtual AGM format was tested to be more inclusive of those</p>	3



	<p>across different regions and time zones, but the quality of engagement was found to not be as strong as at a physical AGM. A hybrid format with both virtual and physical participation was introduced in 2018, and was successful, leading to the same format to be used at the 2019 AGM.</p> <p>Members and other stakeholders also meet every 18 months at International Civil Society Week (ICSW), which was last held in April 2019. The event's summary document includes information on how the agenda was co-created and how the event engaged people who were not there in person, including through online activities.</p> <p>CIVICUS also reaches out and listens to its members and partners through its Annual Constituency Survey, post-event feedback forms focus group discussions, project evaluations, and the mid-term strategy review.</p> <p>Under the previous question, there was reference to some power imbalances amongst CIVICUS members, with members from the Global South not well represented amongst voting members. The previous full report had mentioned that a Membership Engagement SWOT Analysis suggested redefining the purposes and benefits of membership and clarifying engagement opportunities, and that the Membership Strategy had outlined next steps, including implementation of the new Membership Policy. The Panel would have liked to see an update on if and how these steps have led to new ways of engaging members.</p>	
D3	<p>Maximising coordination with others operating in the same space</p> <p>It is stated earlier in the report that CIVICUS undertakes its work in partnership and co-creation with members and local partners - CIVICUS primarily provides financial and technical assistance, and brings other actors together to network, learn, and build capacity.</p> <p>CIVICUS' previous reports (including the most recent report on 2017-18) have explained how the organisation works in partnerships, with their approach underpinned by a set of partnership guidelines. The Panel had noted the guidelines positively, particularly the fact that they are underpinned by a dynamic accountability approach, with a focus on fair collaboration, mutual learning, respect, clarity, and impact. The 2018 report had stated that the partnership guidelines would inform updates to a number of other policies and documents, and that more detail would be provided in the next full report.</p> <p>In this report, a Partner Due Diligence Form and Partner Checklist have been shared with the Panel, which provide more information about the</p>	3



	<p>selection of partners. The latter includes considerations around the potential partner organisation's track record on accountability and engaging primary constituents, the intended impact and potential to scale the partnership, as well as possible risks and safeguards.</p> <p>This report also explains that a new format is currently being tested around the Programme Management Forum's involvement in the selection of new partners. A diagram illustrating the process is provided, and it is stated that future reports will include an update on the process.</p> <p>A selection of key global partnerships in 2018-19 is listed, and more detailed examples of how CIVICUS works in partnership are given in relation to the Civic Space Initiative and the Resilient Roots Initiative. The former example focuses on a key success of the initiative, but doesn't provide real insight into how the various partners worked together or what CIVICUS' role was. Neither does the example on Resilient Roots, though the improved results of Net Promoter Score surveys within the partnership are shared, along with the reason for the improvement.</p> <p>In its previous feedback letter, the Panel had expressed their wish to see a fuller account of the working relationship with partners. More information on this is requested in the next interim report.</p> <p>The report also has a section on amplifying partner voices, stating that CIVICUS has worked to share knowledge, spark dialogue, and provide spaces for members' and partners' voices to be heard through various communication channels. One example is the CIVICUS Monitor, to which 20 regional research partners contribute with updates. CIVICUS holds regular workshops with these research partners, with a focus on research and writing skills as advocacy opportunities.</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>	
E. We listen to, involve and empower stakeholders		
E1	Stakeholder feedback	4



	<p>CIVICUS actively invites feedback from a range of stakeholders through various channels. The diagram in Annex II provides a simple overview of the channels for external and internal stakeholders.</p> <p>The organisation's Feedback Response Policy (available in English and French) reflects CIVICUS' belief that a strong and responsive mechanism for handling external feedback will improve the quality of CIVICUS' work, increase trust with stakeholders, identify areas for improvement, and prompt learning processes. Feedback can be shared through an online form (available in English, French and Spanish), via a dedicated feedback email address, or by post.</p> <p>In addition, members and partners are invited to provide inputs regularly via the AGM, Annual Constituency Survey, post-event feedback forms, focus group discussions, project evaluations, and the mid-term strategy review. The report explains that feedback is captured during events through participatory facilitation methodologies, allocating time for sharing and reflecting, and setting up spaces for facilitated networking and knowledge sharing. Net Promoter Score results from a selection of events in 2018-19 are shared.</p> <p>The report shares a number of actions CIVICUS has taken in response to feedback received recently.</p> <p>Internal stakeholders can share feedback or concerns through the Whistleblower Policy or Grievance Policy, and more on this is covered under question J4. Staff surveys are also conducted periodically - other sections of the report refer to a staff survey to evaluate the new Secretary General, and a survey in 2018 focusing on work culture, diversity and inclusion. The responses to the former survey fed into the setting of priorities for the Secretary General, with two key focus areas identified. The responses to the latter survey identified lower results around equal opportunities for employees of diverse backgrounds, and the participation of employees with different backgrounds in all projects - the report shares how CIVICUS is reacting. Staff can also provide feedback during monthly staff meetings and the annual staff retreat.</p> <p>Overall, the Panel commends CIVICUS' strong approach to inviting and responding to stakeholder feedback.</p>	
E2	<p>Stakeholder engagement</p> <p>The response focuses on CIVICUS' main stakeholder group - their members. An overview of the different ways members can engage in CIVICUS' work</p>	3



	<p>is shared on the Members in Action webpage and in a new Membership Welcome Pack. Key areas are connecting people and ideas, learning and exchange, producing and using data, knowledge and resources, in advocacy and campaign efforts, and in communications. CIVICUS works to ensure its engagement mechanisms are accessible to a diverse range of stakeholders, e.g. by translating feedback forms into different languages or using multiple means of communication.</p> <p>The Panel would like to get a better understanding of how members are engaged in strategic and programme planning, monitoring and evaluation processes. It is shared that constituents' interests and priorities were used to share the organisation's 2019-2020 annual plan; the Panel had asked for some more details on this process in its feedback letter on the last full report. This remains of interest, and the Panel requests some specific examples of how constituents' engagement shaped decisions in terms of strategy and/or programmes. Information on stakeholder engagement in advocacy efforts is covered separately under F1 and F2.</p> <p>The report explains how CIVICUS is exploring and responding to membership engagement trends, and shares that a Customer Relationship Management system will allow staff to analyse and target engagement efforts.</p> <p>When it comes to internal stakeholders, information on how their input is collected and fed into CIVICUS' work is shared under E1. Further to this, an example of how staff have shaped decision-making processes is shared - through an internal Failures Club, staff share lessons learned to improve CIVICUS' work. One result from this is the application of the Net Promoter Score method in all event participation surveys.</p>	
E3	<p>Main likes/dislikes from stakeholders and organisation's response</p> <p>Although this report did not include a summary of or link to the results of CIVICUS' 2019 Constituency Survey, this is available in a blog post on CIVICUS' website. The post summarises what constituents appreciated, what they would like to see CIVICUS doing in future, and how CIVICUS is responding. It also outlines eight ways in which CIVICUS responded to the feedback from the 2018 membership survey. The Panel commends CIVICUS' clear and public method of communicating on this topic, and their efforts to close the feedback loop.</p> <p>In the next report, can CIVICUS also share key likes, dislikes or suggestions received from staff?</p>	3



E4	<p>People and partners have gained capacities that last beyond your immediate intervention</p> <p>CIVICUS' capacity strengthening activities fall into two main categories - sub-granting and resourcing, and knowledge and skill sharing.</p> <p>CIVICUS' programmatic work at national and regional level is primarily implemented by members and partners - this approach is explained in more detail under question D3.</p> <p>CIVICUS' capacity strengthening through networking and knowledge sharing is explained. CIVICUS also shares models and resourcing strategies that support resilience, by connecting CIVICUS members with opportunities for dedicated training and coaching. More information on civil society resourcing is available online.</p> <p>The last full report had mentioned that CIVICUS plans to better demonstrate positive capacity and knowledge building efforts in future by collecting data from pre- and post-training tests. The Panel would like to see an update on this in the next full report.</p> <p>Overall, CIVICUS' approach to capacity strengthening is strong, and the Panel commends CIVICUS' dedication to this issue.</p>	4
<p>F. Our advocacy work addresses the root cause of problems</p>		
F1	<p>Evidence regarding the root causes of the problems you address</p> <p>The Panel had previously commended CIVICUS' efforts in this area, and finds that the approach remains strong. CIVICUS' advocacy work usually takes the form of statements, papers, interviews, and submissions as part of the Universal Periodic Review process.</p> <p>CIVICUS develops a thorough evidence base for advocacy work, which is grounded in local voices. This evidence is gathered through stakeholder consultation, partner feedback, research, situation analyses, and corrective adjustments in response to external critique. More details and examples are shared, and the Panel's comments on these are included under question F2.</p> <p>The report also shares how CIVICUS' advocacy work around environmental human rights defenders has prompted a re-thinking of the decision-making framework so that advocacy efforts are not only reactive, but also proactive. CIVICUS is working to better align its efforts to where the</p>	3



	problems lie and where CIVICUS' strengths and value-adds are. An example is CIVICUS' outreach work in the Pacific.	
F2	<p>Stakeholders support your advocacy work and value changes achieved</p> <p>The report states that it is integral to CIVICUS' approach that advocacy work is done jointly with members and local partners, and that advocacy positions are based on a "sense check" with voices on the ground. Advocacy work is co-created in partnerships and published with mutual consent. A detailed example of a joint advocacy effort in Guatemala is shared.</p> <p>CIVICUS' main analysis tools are also developed through inputs from CSOs and networks on the ground, with quotes and data from partners included where possible. Examples are shared, such as a paper documenting Democracy Dialogues in the US, and the State of Civil Society reports and the CIVICUS Monitor as finished products featuring local inputs and voices.</p> <p>The report also shares that CIVICUS generally receives positive feedback on its advocacy work. Examples of this are the use of CIVICUS Monitor data by a number of actors.</p> <p>Again, the Panel appreciates CIVICUS' efforts to meaningfully engage stakeholders in advocacy - this is seen as a good practice.</p>	4
G. We are transparent, invite dialogue and protect stakeholders' safety		
G1	<p>Availability of key policies and information on your website</p> <p>CIVICUS aims to publish as much information as possible on their website and social media, whilst striking the balance with regards to sensitive information and personal data.</p> <p>Audited financial reports, budgets, and the annual report are published on the website (financial are linked in each year's annual report), and an accountability page includes a range of key policies and some organisational and project evaluations, which the Panel notes positively. Member-related information and documents are available on the membership application page.</p> <p>However, some policies, such as on HR issues, Child Protection, and IT are not published online. The report states that the Secretariat is aware of the fact that they could publish more policies to a wider stakeholder group - is there a plan to make further policies available online in future? The Panel would particularly recommend that the Child Protection policy; staff code</p>	3



	<p>of conduct; CIVICUS' by-laws, and the anti-discrimination and harassment, whistleblower, and grievance policies be made publicly available.</p> <p>The report states that project evaluations are also shared with partners and stakeholders, and that findings from salary benchmarking and gender pay gap analyses are shared with staff.</p>	
G2	<p>Pay scale, gender pay gap and top salaries</p> <p>Comprehensive information about CIVICUS' pay scale is provided, with several developments in this regard over the reporting period.</p> <p>In 2018-19, the Senior Leadership Team, together with support from an external consultancy, conducted a comprehensive review of all employment contracts. In response to findings, CIVICUS' salary structure will be adapted to meet the 50th percentile of the US job market - this will allow pay scales to be comparable and competitive across locations.</p> <p>CIVICUS also undertook an analysis of how grading and location of roles is determined across the system, and agreed to position all roles against the Paterson grading scale. This will ensure all roles are placed against an externally recognised grading system.</p> <p>The new pay structure and grading will be implemented in 2020-2021, and progress will be shared in future accountability reports. CIVICUS will also publish the new salary scale transparently on its website, which the Panel notes positively. The report shared the top five salaries of CIVICUS staff in 2018-19.</p> <p>The Panel also appreciates the update on a previous idea about internal pay ratios, which had been mentioned in the last full report. It was decided not to pursue this, as disadvantages were identified, such as driving outsourcing of the lowest-paid positions.</p> <p>Gender pay gap analyses are conducted annually, and a graph is provided showing the gender pay gap by management level. There has been improvement over the past two years, particularly at senior level due to the Secretary General changing from a male to a female.</p> <p>Finally, moving beyond CIVICUS' offices, the report shares that CIVICUS received a remuneration recommendation by the European Commission as part of their evaluation of the AGNA programme. CIVICUS was asked to tackle the imbalance of salaries at CIVICUS member organisations between the AGNA programme fellows they were hosting, and non-fellow staff (which was lower). The report states that it is important for CIVICUS to</p>	4



	pay adequate salaries whilst not negatively impacting local labour markets, and that solutions to this issue are currently being explored.	
G3	<p>Ensuring privacy rights and protecting personal data</p> <p>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). There is a dedicated email address for privacy issues, such as requests to be removed from mailing lists. The policy is compliant with the EU General Data Protection Regulation.</p> <p>The Panel notes positively that CIVICUS has also been offering digital security trainings to members and partners, and that they created a Digital Security Starter Course together with the Digital Security Lab Ukraine, which is available online for free until March 2020.</p>	4
G4	<p>Largest donors and their contributions</p> <p>The report lists CIVICUS' top five donors during 2018-19, including the amount they contributed and what percentage of the organisation's total income this comprised (except for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, where this information is not shared, presumably due to a request from the foundation).</p>	4
Cluster C: Organisational Effectiveness		
H. Staff and volunteers are enabled to do their best		
H1	<p>Recruitment and employment is fair and transparent</p> <p>The report states that the CIVICUS Secretariat's streamlined structure enables collaboration, synchronised workflows, and an engaged, driven workforce. The report shares updates from the reporting period.</p> <p>In 2018-19, CIVICUS invested in HR capacity to ensure that this function is fit for purpose, and can respond to the changed needs of a growing and more diverse workforce. A new position of Head of People was created in 2019 to support this.</p> <p>The report includes an overview of the number of employees broken down by nationality, gender, location, age, and contract type - the Panel appreciates that CIVICUS has provided more information than in the previous full report. The Panel would also be interested in a breakdown of staff by seniority and gender - some insight into this is provided with the</p>	3



	<p>graph on the gender pay gap, which differentiated by management level.</p> <p>The report also shares some challenges experienced relating to recruitment and employment. CIVICUS aims to have the majority of staff based in Johannesburg, but South African work permits are becoming more difficult to obtain by staff - CIVICUS is working to find solutions for this. With staff based in countries outside of CIVICUS' official hubs, the organisation has also grappled with compliance with local labour regulations in these countries - CIVICUS is exploring the possibilities of member or partner organisations hosting employment contracts, and has been sharing experiences with other organisations in similar positions. Another challenge of the dispersed workforce is that some colleagues working remotely on their own feel left out of important processes; this was discussed at the 2019 staff retreat.</p>	
H2	<p>Staff development</p> <p>The report shares that over 33.33% of staff attended trainings in 2018-19, and lists some of the key training topics. Given the decision to cancel CIVICUS' subscription to their online learning management system, the Panel would like to know what CIVICUS' new approach to providing trainings will be.</p> <p>Training needs are identified in quarterly performance reviews, based either on shortcomings in relation to the job description, or based on new areas a staff member would like to develop skills in.</p> <p>Are any development opportunities apart from trainings available, such as internal placements or secondments to other organisations?</p> <p>100% of staff participated in the mandatory quarterly performance reviews in 2018-19, and a graph shows that the average performance review score has remained at a steady level between 3-3.5 out of 5. Whereas a 360 degree review approach was taken in the past, this was found to be too cumbersome, and the senior leadership team is revisiting the performance management system. The Panel looks forward to an update in the next full report.</p>	3
H3	<p>Safe working environment</p> <p>CIVICUS has a Health and Safety Committee (SHIELD) to ensure the physical safety of staff and visitors at the Johannesburg Hub. Committee members are trained in fire-fighting, first aid, and safety, health and</p>	3



	<p>environmental hazards. During South Africa's federal elections in 2019, there was particular attention to staff safety in the Johannesburg office.</p> <p>Here the Panel would also like to know about policies guiding staff behaviour. In the section of the report focusing on diversity and inclusion, there was reference to CIVICUS' Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy - this has been shared with the Panel, and includes explanations and examples of what does and does not constitute discrimination or harassment, and consequences of unacceptable behaviour, as well as reporting procedures.</p> <p>The Employee Handbook which was shared with the Panel also refers to a Grievance Policy and a Disciplinary Code and Procedure, the latter of which is said to address acceptable standards of behaviour in the workplace, and what constitutes misconduct. These policies are available in full in CIVICUS' Policy and Procedure Manual, but this is not available publicly - the Panel encourages CIVICUS to publish these policies.</p>	
<p>I. Resources are handled effectively for the public good</p>		
<p>11</p>	<p>Resources are acquired in line with your values, globally accepted standards and without compromising independence</p> <p>CIVICUS is in its fourth consecutive year of growth in funds and number of funding sources. The report shares the organisation's total income in 2018-19, the amount of reserves, and the key sources of income. Membership fees only comprise 1% of the Secretariat's annual budget, and are purposely kept low, seen as more of an indicator of support than a key income source. More details about finances are available in the audited financial statements.</p> <p>The Board has discussed, as part of the Resource Mobilisation and Sustainability Strategy, that CIVICUS is in a comfortable financial situation, but that there is further need to ensure diversity of funding sources.</p> <p>The report also shares that CIVICUS is required to report against the International Aid Transparency Initiative standard, and that reports can be accessed online.</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>Monitoring of progress and re-allocation of resources</p> <p>The report refers to a Board Finance Committee - the Panel would like to know more about the role of this committee, and how it is involved in resource monitoring and (re)allocation. There is also mention of a new accounting system, launched in November 2019, which will make the</p>	<p>3</p>



	<p>Secretariat's financial activities more efficient and fit for purpose. The Panel would also like to know more about this. In general, information is requested about the tracking of spending against strategic objectives, and how much flexibility there is to reallocate funds or change project design throughout the year. The Panel requests that CIVICUS share this in the next interim report.</p> <p>The report shares that a new Membership Solidarity Fund was rolled out in 2018-19. The fund is composed of the annual membership contributions, and a Membership Advisory Group consisting of alliance members decides how the fund is disbursed. This ensures that members are involved in decisions around how money is spent, which the Panel notes positively. Some more information about the Fund is requested in the next report - there is mention of reviewing member applications; do the funds go to CIVICUS members' projects or initiatives?</p> <p>Finally, the report describes CIVICUS' standing annual donor coordination meetings, which allow for coordination and strategic alignment among the differently funded projects and initiatives. Donor Coordination Guidelines are in place to harmonise reporting formats, timelines, and expectations. The Panel finds this to be a good approach, and would welcome any examples of key outcomes of these coordination meetings.</p>	
13	<p><i>Minimising risk of corruption, bribery and misuse of funds</i></p> <p>The report provides a comprehensive overview of CIVICUS' system of internal controls to manage and prevent financial risks. These include oversight by the Board and senior staff, cash-flow and budget management (an example of how CIVICUS responded to a cash flow challenge in 2018-19 is shared), audit processes, a Fraud Prevention Policy and Plan, Procurement Policy, Travel Policy, training and sharing policies with staff, and anti-bribery compliance. There is also a Whistleblower Policy to report any concerns. Most of the policies mentioned are referred to in the Employee Handbook, which was shared with the Panel, but the full texts are in CIVICUS' Policy and Procedure Manual. The Panel had previously seen some of these policies, and found them to be sound.</p> <p>The report also refers to sub-granting practices, with a grant management manual guiding funding relationships with partners. CIVICUS undertakes thorough assessments of potential partners to ensure they will not compromise CIVICUS' integrity. There was one case of grantee misconduct in 2018-19, and the grantee relationship was terminated.</p>	3



J. Governance processes maximise accountability		
J1	<p>Governance structure and recruitment of trustees/board members</p> <p>A very comprehensive explanation of CIVICUS' governance structure is shared, including the role of the Board and its committees, recruitment and induction of Board Directors, terms, meetings, and division of roles between the Board and Secretary General.</p> <p>The Panel had previously asked about the policies guiding these processes, and CIVICUS has shared its By-Laws, the Board's way of working document, and the Board Induction Manual with the Panel.</p> <p>The Panel appreciates the report's explanation of how processes have changed over the years in response to the Board's self-evaluation - for example introducing a staggered rotation system for electing Board members, or introducing the Board Induction Manual.</p> <p>The Panel is also pleased to see that, in response to a recommendation in a previous report, CIVICUS now publishes Board members' conflict of interest declarations online.</p> <p>The response also shares information on the Board's self-evaluation, and evaluation of the Secretary General (this is addressed in more detail under question K1) and on the composition and diversity of the Board. On the latter point, the Panel notes positively that the Board consisted of 14 members in the reporting period, with nine women (including the Chair) and five men. Eight members were from the Global South and one was a youth representative, under 30 years of age. The Panel commends CIVICUS on the diversity of its Board.</p>	4
J2	<p>Board oversight of adherence to policies, resource allocation, potential risks, and complaints processes</p> <p>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 Panel would like to know whether policies are reviewed periodically by the Board, or only when specific changes need to be made.</p> <p>The Panel notes that a Board working group for an updated Board reporting process was in place from March to June 2019, and that the new</p>	3



	<p>process was tested in November 2019 with deep-dives into two of the four strategic goals.</p> <p>The top risk identified and monitored in 2018-19 under the organisation's risk matrix was around government legislation, including those affecting the ability of CSOs to receive funding, introducing burdensome registration requirements, and constraining protests.</p>	
J3	<p>Complaints handling mechanisms and overview of complaints (external)</p> <p>CIVICUS' Feedback Response Policy guides the approach to external complaints, and complaints can be submitted via a dedicated email address or through an online feedback submission form. The Panel notes positively that the policy and online form are also available in French and Spanish (though the Spanish policy did not appear to be online at the time of reviewing this report).</p> <p>The policy outlines the scope and definition of complaints, principles under which complaints will be considered, and outlines the procedure for complaints handling. The Panel had previously encouraged CIVICUS to include more detail on the process, including timeframes for responding to submissions, and any escalation options. The report does mention that all complaints received in 2018-19 were responded to within seven days, in line with Internal Feedback Response Procedures.</p> <p>25 complaints were received in 2018-19, mostly related to transparency, governance, or CIVICUS' advocacy work and campaigns. Graphs depict the categories the complaints related to, and the regions the complaints were submitted in. The average resolution rate was 89%, and it is noted that some submissions were spam and/or inflammatory attacks.</p> <p>The Panel notes positively that CIVICUS conducted a tailored feedback training in February 2019 for staff in charge of handling feedback and complaints, and that this training was later extended to key partners, in English, French, and Spanish.</p> <p>The Panel appreciates that a large banner linking to the feedback webpage is placed at the top of CIVICUS' accountability webpage. How else does CIVICUS encourage its external stakeholders to use the mechanism, e.g. at events?</p> <p>Overall, the Panel finds CIVICUS' approach to external complaints to be strong.</p>	4



	<p>Finally, the Panel would like to flag that Accountable Now recently changed its complaints mechanism with regard to members, and no longer offers a final escalation mechanism for complaints against our members, as this is not within our mandate.</p>	
<p>J4</p>	<p><i>Complaints handling mechanisms and overview of complaints (internal)</i></p> <p>Staff can raise concerns or feedback via CIVICUS' Whistleblower Policy and Grievance Policy. The report states that these have clearly laid out responsibilities, time frames, and escalation steps. Although the policies are mentioned in the Employee Handbook which was shared with the Panel, the full texts are in the Policy and Procedure Manual, so the Panel is not able to fully assess the policies. We encourage CIVICUS to make these publicly available.</p> <p>The Panel does note positively that both policies were shared with staff for comments before being presented to the Board. Plans to amend the policies to allow for anonymity via submission on SharePoint (rather than email or in person) have been postponed - the Panel would like to know when CIVICUS plans to return to this issue.</p> <p>The report states that there were five formal internal grievances or complaints raised in 2018-19, and that all were investigated and dealt with according to the relevant processes. In future reports, can CIVICUS share what complaints broadly related to, and what action was taken (e.g. warning, disciplinary action, dismissal)?</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>J5</p>	<p><i>Protecting confidentiality and anonymity of those involved in complaints</i></p> <p>Although the report does not really explain CIVICUS' approach to confidentiality and anonymity in external complaints, the Feedback Response Policy states that "confidentiality relating to the complaint will be safeguarded so far as reasonably practicable, including the person(s) to whom any complaint is addressed," and the online feedback submission form allows for anonymous submission. In the next report, can CIVICUS share more information on how confidentiality is safeguarded when handling complaints?</p> <p>As mentioned above, plans to allow for anonymous submission of internal complaints have been postponed. The Panel would like to know when CIVICUS plans to continue looking into this.</p>	<p>2</p>



K. Leadership is dedicated to fulfilling the 12 Commitments		
K1	<p><i>The governing body and management are held accountable for fulfilling strategic promises</i></p> <p>The response explains how accountability is integrated into CIVICUS' work - through one of the strategic goals for the 2017-2022 period and through the Impact and Accountability Cluster (which was expanded over the past two years). The Panel appreciates the sharing of some challenges caused by staff turnover/leave, and how CIVICUS has responded. The report also talks about CIVICUS' role in coordinating AGNA's Legitimacy, Transparency and Accountability working group.</p> <p>In terms of holding the Board and management to account for fulfilling strategic promises, the report mentions mechanisms such as the AGM, annual Membership and Constituents Surveys, and other opportunities to provide feedback. Two examples of feedback from staff relating to inclusivity and fair representation are shared.</p> <p>Regarding performance management/review of the Board and senior leadership, this information is provided under the response to J1 and J2 in the report, on pages 36 and 37.</p> <p>As for the Secretary General (SG), the report explains that in 2019, the Board conducted a 360 degree appraisal of the SG following the six month probation period.</p>	4
K2	<p><i>Inclusion of staff in discussing progress toward organisational accountability</i></p> <p>CIVICUS has a strong approach to involving staff in discussions around accountability. Two concrete examples in the reporting period are staff's involvement in CIVICUS' Resilient Roots initiative which tests whether more accountable organisations are more resilient against external threats, and the Impact and Accountability Cluster's involvement in Accountable Now's peer learning group on feedback and complaints mechanisms.</p> <p>In terms of the accountability report, this was compiled in a participatory process with involvement from all Clusters and representation from all management levels. The Panel's recommendations are shared with staff at monthly meetings or through other channels, and colleagues are engaged in improving CIVICUS' performance. Examples are shared of staff follow-up on the Panel' recommendations around increasing</p>	4



	<p>awareness of new policies, and a staff review of the Secretary General. The Panel appreciates this.</p> <p>The report also shared that the Senior Leadership Team regularly promoted CIVICUS' Accountable Now membership with staff, partners and donors.</p>	
K3	<p><i>Scope of this accountability report and influence over national entities</i></p> <p>The report covers the activities of CIVICUS, which is a single entity operating out of several locations. The report covers the period 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019, with some more current examples and updates included.</p>	4