



**Accountable
Now**

GLOBAL STANDARDS LOCAL TRUST



CIVICUS
Independent Review Panel Feedback

Accountability Report 2019-2020

Review Round March 2021

Accountable Now · www.accountablenow.org ·

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CIVICUS

Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

Review Round March 2021

29 March 2021

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' 12th Accountability Report is an interim one that addresses the feedback provided by the panel in the last [improvement analysis](#). It also provides an overview of organisational changes and a brief outlook for 2021.

CIVICUS' report is again very well written, demonstrates **strong commitment to accountability**, and is accessible to the external reader. The report provides additional information on the already very strong approach to stakeholder engagement, and addresses the questions raised by the panel.

We look forward to seeing 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' Accountability Report 2019-2020

Review Round March 2021

Opening Statement from the Head of Organisation

The opening statement by CIVICUS' Secretary General, Lysa John, is framed around the challenges that the COVID-19 crisis posed for civil society, and also how its role in meeting needs, defending rights and forging new paths for civic action was reinforced. The acknowledgement on how the crisis puts meaningful engagement with stakeholders under strain, highlights the CIVICUS' alignment with the dynamic accountability approach. Several initiatives to better understand the situation and mitigate the negative consequences of the crisis are shared.

An internal key event for CIVICUS during the reporting period was the CIVICUS' Strategic Plan 2017-2022 mid-term review and several related documentation, all of which was shared, highlighting the high level of transparency and accountability. The [management response](#) gives an overview of the future actions to achieve the Strategic Plan goals. While the response highlighted the action steps that CIVICUS committed to taking over the next 12 to 18 months, no progress was actually provided as to the progress made during the year.

Material changes since the last report

A list of successes and key indicators, which are reported in [CIVICUS' Annual Report 2019-2020](#) are listed here, as well as some operational changes provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic.

New developments in MEAL are described, in particular the increase of data capturing and the adoption of the *DevResults* platforms. The top learnings identified through the impact reflection processes and mid-term strategy review are outlined.

Key activities related to CIVICUS' accountability work are also shared, from a [webinar on domestic violence during the pandemic](#) to the work on the [Global Accountability week](#).



Cluster C: Organisational Effectiveness

I. Resources are handled effectively for the public good

I2	<p>Monitoring of progress and re-allocation of resources</p> <p>Annual planning and budget templates were reviewed so that teams are able to plan per strategic objectives. It is stated that CIVICUS was able to quickly shift expenditure in the context of the pandemic. The adoption of an accounting software is a good decision especially as real time information will reduce decision-making time and offer more adaptability.</p> <p>Several recommendations resulting from system audits and numerous internal reviews are progressing.</p> <p>The Panel would appreciate more information about Membership Solidarity Fund and the role played by the Board Finance committee, as requested in the last review.</p>	3
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J. Governance processes maximise accountability

J5	<p>Protecting confidentiality and anonymity of those involved in complaints</p> <p>On internal grievances, confidentiality is ensured by involving only the reduced number of staff in resolving the grievances depending on its nature. It is acknowledged that although a submission form for anonymous complaints is in place, remaining so it is a challenge as the Secretariat has ca. 75 staff members. 2 internal grievances were received in the reporting period. The panel would also like to know whether CIVICUS now enables anonymous submissions of internal complaints, as it was noted in the last report that this has been postponed.</p> <p>23 external complaints are received through the online feedback form, most of them in relation to partnerships. Two cases are briefly described. A chart depicting cases by complaint/feedback is provided. While the Panel commends this presentation of complaints and feedback, confirmation that all were investigated and details of what portion were found to be legitimate, etc. would have been appreciated.</p> <p>Also two cases, where people didn't feel safe at CIVICUS led events are shared, and the new Feedback Response Policy is linked.</p>	3
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Cluster B: Stakeholder Involvement

E. We listen to, involve and empower stakeholders



E2	<p>Stakeholder engagement</p> <p>CIVICUS' planning and M&L process are guided by the Developmental Evaluation framework. Examples of participatory M&E in the reporting period are provided.</p> <p>The CIVICUS annual constituency survey had increased uptake and informed the mid-term strategy review, annual planning and budgeting exercises. A link to the Innovation for Change is provided as an example of new approaches to citizen engagement, that can also expand to stakeholders (Governments) outside civil society space</p>	3
E4	<p>People and partners have gained capacities that last beyond your immediate intervention</p> <p>It is stated that CIVICUS sets all goals, plans and implements all programmes together with partners through co-design processes or applying a Design Thinking methodology. Several good practices on working in partnerships are listed and an example is provided.</p> <p>The parties involved in the DIGNA community and the Membership Solidarity Fund have shared with CIVICUS that they have strengthened their capacities, means, self-esteem and institutional strengths. Some testimonies are provided to illustrate this.</p>	3
<p>G. We are transparent, invite dialogue and protect stakeholders' safety</p>		
G1	<p>Availability of key policies and information on your website</p> <p>The dedicated Accountability website has been updated and more policies can be found there. Also the revised Impact & Accountability Framework has been published</p>	4