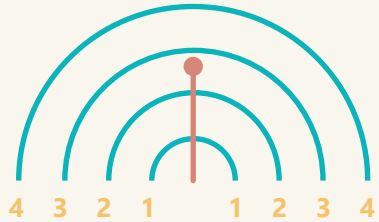


Part 2 — Advocating for Fundamental Change

2022

# CSO Accountability in Focus

## How did our Members score?



2.75 / 4

Out of the 16\* Member reports reviewed in 2021.

This average was calculated using the scores given by the IRP when reviewing Member accountability reports. For more information please read our [reporting framework](#).

\* A total of 15 full reports and 1 interim report were reviewed in 2021.

The average is calculated using members' scores on the reporting questions 'F1' and 'F2' in the reporting period.

**Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) around the world -national and international- advocate to improve people's lives. They do this through a wide range of approaches and by engaging with a wide range of stakeholders - but the main purpose is to make sure that people's voices are heard, that their rights are respected, with the ultimate goal of fostering more just and equitable societies. In addition, CSOs bring about meaningful change in policies, acting as a counterbalance to governments' power and ensuring policies are well implemented and that they produce the expected outcomes.**

In recent years, the global context has been characterised by shrinking civic space and civil society's capacity to participate in public processes has been limited. Furthermore, these past two years have not made matters easier: certain governments have used the global pandemic as an excuse to establish further restrictions to engaging in public life. Despite this challenging environment, CSOs' power to influence governments and public policies is significant and continues to grow.



**CSOs power to influence governments and public policies is significant and continues to grow.**

CSOs have become credible sources of information for people and communities around the world, and advocated for rights-oriented policies and accountability amid state and market failures. CSOs adapted advocacy work by piloting and enhancing different activities and channels to support people and communities, and to inform decision-makers. CSOs continue to adapt and evolve in this fast paced changing environment in order to keep playing a crucial role in advocating for fundamental change.

For this reason, it is essential that organisations who are undertaking advocacy actions engage on a regular basis with the people that will be impacted by their efforts. It is by implementing this type of approach that organisations will be able to identify key priorities and needs going forward. Furthermore, to achieve long lasting and sustainable results, advocacy efforts must be based on contextual evidence regarding the root causes of the problems addressed and thus focusing on systemic problems. CSOs need to stay abreast of advocacy issues, and actively engage stakeholders, particularly affected populations.

CSOs must engage with and challenge the underlying values and identities that constrain public and political attempts to overcome the challenges people face. This involves strengthening the structures through which people and communities can participate in the formulation of the policies that control their lives.

**Advocating for Fundamental Change** is one of Accountable Now's [12 Accountability Commitments](#), which entails addressing root causes of problems by advocating for fundamental change.



**CSOs must engage with and challenge the underlying values and identities that constrain public and political attempts to overcome the challenges people face.**



## Our commitment encourages our Members to reflect on questions like:

How do you ensure priorities and approaches are shaped by input from key stakeholders throughout the process and input is based on evidence from local and international sources with a focus on long-term positive change?



Is your organisation using a variety of clear structural advocacy strategies that bring about systemic changes and raise awareness, mobilise public opinion, utilise networking opportunities?



How do you ensure advocacy work provides space for people to connect among communities, movements and power-holders and risks for stakeholders are minimised and openly communicated?




How do you conduct evaluations that reflect upon the opinions and positions of a broad range of people, including those affected and those addressed by your advocacy work?

Through these questions, we are encouraging our Members to assess and think about how they are engaging with, supporting and working with people to bring about meaningful change in policies at the local, national, regional and global levels. **CSOs must ensure their advocacy targets issues and concerns are relevant to people and communities they work for and with, and support them in being heard. Stakeholders need to be aware and regularly updated on potential risks, and most importantly, they should be satisfied with CSOs' strategies used to minimise risk. Lastly, people and communities should be put at the centre when evaluating the results of CSOs' advocacy.**

## How are our Members advocating for fundamental change?

When reviewing our Members' accountability reports submitted in 2021, we can see that most of the Members' reports demonstrate that their advocacy work is based on research and evidence from local and international sources with a focus on long-term positive change. People and communities along with other stakeholders are involved in advocating for changes that would affect their lives, and that contribute to amplifying their voices to be heard by decision-makers. Members are transparent about their advocacy positions and how they intend to achieve their goals.



**““”**  
**How does your organisation address root causes by advocating for fundamental change, in accordance with Commitment 7?**

all **16**

Members involve **key stakeholders** in their advocacy work.



**14**

Members demonstrate that their advocacy is based on **research and evidence** from local and international sources with a focus on long-term positive change.

**In 2021, we received 16 accountability reports addressing 'Advocating for fundamental change' from our members and when reviewing these, we were able to draw the following data:**

**11**

clearly explain how **people and communities'** are supported to raise their voices and be heard by decision makers.



**6**

organisations have a publicly available **advocacy statement** which captures their approach to advocating for fundamental change.

In the following pages, we will share concrete examples on how our Members are gathering information, designing the content and deciding the approach of their advocacy efforts ensuring that root causes are addressed. Special attention is given to involving and supporting stakeholders in advocacy work, including collaborations and partnerships with different groups advocating for positive change. How Members measure the impact of their advocacy is also addressed.

## Advocacy is based on research and evidence

Members carry out research and gather evidence on the root causes of the problems they address in their advocacy work. They build into their programmatic experience and wide reach to include the views of stakeholders, especially people and communities whose lives are affected by the target issues.

Members pay attention to contextual analysis and ongoing research to identify and stay abreast of advocacy issues.



**Amnesty International** conducts **research** for action, systematically monitoring human rights situations in over 140 countries and conducting targeted investigations into alleged human rights violations. Their research spans from civil and political rights issues to economic, social, and cultural rights and covers various contexts, including conflict and crisis situations. Amnesty International employs a research methodology that allows sufficient analysis of context, drivers and causes of human rights violations and draws from a wide range of tools, such as system mapping, power mapping, problem tree analysis and political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal (PESTEL) analysis. For example, information was gathered on the effects of closing cross-border humanitarian crossings in north-west Syria and the [research](#) was used to brief the UN's Security Council members and explain the dangers of such a move – resulting in that crossing point remaining open in the subsequent [resolution 2533](#).

**GREENPEACE**

To inform their campaigns and policies, **Greenpeace International** is primarily guided by **science and peer-reviewed research** conducted by scientists all over the world. The Greenpeace Research Laboratories form part of the [Science Unit of Greenpeace International](#). Based at the University of Exeter in the UK, the laboratories provide scientific advice and analytical support to campaigns worldwide, over a range of disciplines. The laboratories are equipped with hardware for the analysis of heavy metal and organic contaminants in a range of environmental samples. An extensive database of scientific literature has been built up since 1986 and serves as a core information resource.



SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES  
INTERNATIONAL

The General Secretariat's Research and Learning team is a central hub for research and programme learning across the federation. Its mission is to promote and facilitate evidence-based programme development, which includes supporting our global advocacy team. The Research and Learning team manages the organisation's global research agenda and maintains a centralised overview of any research conducted by SOS Children's Villages members. The team is planning to launch a new research and learning platform and a global research network for exchange. In achieving research goals, they **combine internal research initiatives with collaboration with NGO, academic partners and supranational institutions**. Several examples to illustrate this approach are The United Nations Global Study on [Children Deprived of Liberty \(2019\)](#), and [Child Poverty Measurement and Monitoring: The Missing Children \(2019\)](#).

**RESTLESS  
DEVELOPMENT**

**Restless Development's** global advocacy messaging is driven by their youth-led research - as is the case with their [Education and Livelihoods focused work](#). [Resilient Realities](#) is a youth-led report, which explores how young people between the age of 18 to 30 are organising during the COVID-19 global pandemic. In this research researchers are driven by the key question: How is youth civil society responding to the COVID-19 crisis?

## Partnering with other actors

Members establish partnerships with other actors that are concerned with the same issues, acknowledging the complementarities in roles, expertise and relationship to other stakeholders. Members commit to partnership before, during, and after an advocacy initiative, as well as regular discussions among partners.

 **accountabilitylab**

**Accountability Lab** has worked to connect their efforts at the ground-level to larger reform processes at the local, national, regional and international levels. Accountability Lab is collaboratively pushing for reforms based on what they are learning and working to close the "implementation gap" between policy and practice. The goal of this element of work is not to become a global level advocacy organisation, but to complement the work of these kinds of partners where it makes sense, drive coalitions for change at the local level and connect dots in ways that can lead to long-term change in communities.





Partnerships with disability-focused organisations play a vital role in promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities. These **partnerships** have the potential to facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities and contribute to change in humanitarian practice. [Field research in Cox's Bazar](#) in 2020 (together with Humanity & Inclusion, the Centre for Disability in Development, and HelpAge International) revealed notable progress in data collection and analysis, the removal of physical barriers and the participation of persons with disabilities in the humanitarian response.

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The **World YWCA** led an alliance of YWCAs, local women's rights organisations (WROs), progressive faith allies, researchers and legal and policy advocacy experts, in designing a **collaborative initiative** to expand civic space in Egypt, Kenya, Palestine and South Sudan. The [Young Women for Awareness, Agency, Advocacy and Accountability \(YW4A\)](#), is an intersectional and multi-partner initiative is to raise awareness, advocate for and hold governments to account on young women's human rights, with a focus on young women's leadership, inclusion and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

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The General Secretariat works to **strengthen member associations' capacities in developing advocacy partnerships** and supports them in their efforts to reach out to key policy actors. The General Secretariat and member associations collaborate and coordinate through joint advocacy action plans based on shared objectives.

# Involving Stakeholders across the advocacy projects' life cycle

Members actively engage stakeholders, particularly affected populations, in formulating advocacy approaches, so that they can meaningfully shape intended outcomes and how success would be achieved.



To support the implementation of **SOS Children's Village International's** main programme document, the SOS Care Promise, detailed guidance on areas such as gatekeeping and youth development was developed. SOS Children's Village International's focused on strengthening youth participation, **involving young people in strategy review, advocacy and project delivery**, with the [Leaving Care project](#) as a notable example. Working with partners, they successfully advocated for the United Nations General Assembly's annual child rights resolution to be focused on children without parental care.



**World Vision International's** (WVI) ambition is to **create opportunities for communities and supporters to take part in all aspects of advocacy planning, implementation and evaluation**. In 2020, 76% of WVI's development programmes support communities to advocate directly to decision makers for changes in policy or practice using the [Citizen Voice and Action](#) approach. 35.317 occasions were tracked when communities engaged in monitoring and dialogue with decision makers on child protection issues in line with the [Child Protection & Advocacy](#) model.



As part of the programme "Young Women Changing Narratives on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Mental Health", in early 2019, the first cohort of young women regional coordinators and country leads was established spanning 25 countries of the YWCA movement from three regions (Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe). The goal was to implement new pathways for **collective evidence-based advocacy and strategic communication, co-led by young women**. The YWCAs of Ethiopia, Kenya, Nepal and Ukraine are all focus countries for the project - directly supported to conduct in - country activities. After a broad call for application was sent, three active and engaged young women were selected as regional coordinators to coordinate work of the initiative in their respective region. The regional coordinators played key roles in co-developing and coordinating the project implementation with the World YWCA.

## Raising the voices the affected people and communities

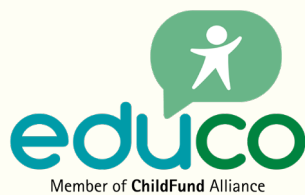
Involvement of affected populations in Members' advocacy efforts is prominent, and when relevant, our members step back into a supporter role and enable people and communities they work for and with to be heard directly by decision makers.



**ChildFund Alliance's** (the Secretariat) [Child-Friendly accountability approach](#) aims to ensure children have safe means to participate in monitoring the performance of child protection systems and holding duty bearers accountable. Children are supported in building their knowledge, in identifying protection gaps and facilitating direct action or advocacy with their communities to address these gaps.



**ChildFund International** has children and youth platforms that raise voice on the selected advocacy issues, so they too own it and know what ChildFund International is working towards. In addition, the organisation has incorporated children's participation and voices in advocacy efforts and events targeting the USA government, speaking directly to decision makers. Youth from Sri Lanka and Honduras participated in the "Lead Like A Girl" event in March 2020, where young women were able to speak directly to policymakers.



In Bolivia, within the project "Strengthening municipal public policies that promote good parenting, skills development and advocacy for children and adolescents in the municipality of La Paz" a Committee for Children and Adolescents was established on the basis of a programmatic offer made by each of the eight member organisations of the Inter-Institutional Network led by the Government of La Paz. In this process, each organisation revealed what they planned to carry out, and it is the children themselves who define by consensus which actions should be prioritised for implementation.



One of **SOS Children's Village International's** main advocacy goals is to open spaces so that **children and young people can raise their voices**. The organisation reaches out to them to tell them about opportunities to participate and let them set their own agenda. In preparation for consultations on the United Nations General Assembly's 2019 resolution on the rights of the child, SOS invited a diverse group of young people who grew up in care to participate. They held webinars to help them navigate the complexities of UN processes, but otherwise the group managed their work independently and ran their own blog, [For the Children We Used to Be](#).

Another example that illustrates this approach is the participation of children and young people's participation in UN meetings and the production of For the Children We Used to Be blog.



At the onset of the pandemic **World Vision International partnered with 12 young people as co-researchers to consult with 101 children and young people from 13 countries** on their [experiences of the pandemic](#) and they also published a [child-friendly version](#) of the report. Many of these young people spoke at virtual events to address directly policymakers from Brussels, Geneva and New York. With signs of the increasing secondary effects of COVID-19, WVI consulted another 763 children across 50 countries to document the [impact of COVID-19 on their lives, their families and communities](#). WVI drew from an [approach](#) jointly developed and validated with the University of Edinburgh and their '[Becoming Researchers](#)' handbook to guide children to lead rather than just participate in research about the issues that they care most about, for example, the [OUR Research, OUR Rights report](#).

# Sharing advocacy resources and learnings

Members share and exchange knowledge and other resources that are valuable inputs in advocacy work. CSOs' efficiency in their work is enhanced, and individuals and organisations benefit from each other's work.



Together with providing support to external stakeholders, **Amnesty International** learns and benefits from the work of other organisations by sharing information, and drawing from their knowledge and expertise. For example, data from the [CIVICUS Monitor](#) has been used in Amnesty International's annual impact assessment, and the data gathered by the [Human Rights Measurement Initiative](#) is being explored for use in impact reviews.



**Terre Des Hommes International Federation (TDHIF)** published a report entitled "[What works for working children: Being effective when tackling child labour](#)" which presents lessons learned from experience of TDH and partners. The report highlights the benefits of involving working children themselves in these interventions, both to find out what changes children say are most needed in their lives and to involve them in the action taken. The report presents recommendations to ensure that future action on child labour (and investments by government and private donors) genuinely has the results that are intended—stopping young lives being blighted by child labour. The report has been widely shared with the main stakeholders it addresses (including governments, international organisations, civil society).



**Transparency International** provides its global network of National Chapters and partner agencies with the evidence they need when they need it to inform their anti-corruption interventions. Helpdesk queries, resulting in the production of fully developed answers were produced, published and disseminated to a wider audience of anti-corruption practitioners on the [Anti-Corruption Knowledge hub](#). Transparency International also collects and uses evidence for holding governments and organisations accountable for their anti-corruption pledges.

## Measuring impact of advocacy work

The vast amount of work done by CSOs on advocating for fundamental change, begs the question: how are CSOs measuring progress? Cause-effect relationships in advocacy work are difficult to find as many actors and diverse factors play a role. The following examples show how some of our members address those challenges:



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## Access and engagement with decision makers

One of the biggest challenges for CSOs advocacy is being meaningfully involved in decision making processes. Access to the spaces where decisions about people and communities CSOs work for and with is something that our members have pursued.



In 2018 and 2019, in partnership with a coalition of like-minded NGOs, SOS Children's Villages International led an initiative to advocate for the annual resolution on the rights of the child by UN General Assembly's Third Committee to be devoted to the rights of children without parental care. The resolution, [A/RES/74/133](#), was adopted in late 2019. Reaching consensus on the best paths towards care system reform goals remains challenging, which sometimes hampers shared efforts with partners in this area. Also policy makers have turned to SOS Children's Villages International for advice, acknowledging the organisation as an important actor in the child rights sector at the EU level.



As an active member of Child Rights Connect, we led the establishment of a working group on child participation, recognising it as an opportunity to **harmonise the advocacy approach to child participation across organisations** and to mainstream child participation across the United Nations. We are also actively participating in two additional working groups, one on ending violence against children and the other on child rights to a clean environment.



As a key positioning and advocacy work from the Big 6 youth organisations, early during the pandemic, the World YWCA joined the Big 6 in a statement of "Community, Hope, and the Power to do Good" and offering of six resources (one per organisation). In December 2020, the Big 6 partners published a [policy-advocacy paper on youth in the post-pandemic world](#). World YWCA, as a part of Big 6 Youth Organisations, pursued a **global partnership initiative with WHO and UN Foundation** on changing narratives on young people and COVID-19, emphasising on the need to invest in young people-led solutions.

## Documenting approach to advocating for fundamental change

Members document their approach to advocating for fundamental change and publish position papers outlining members' stances in relevant topics. These practices provide direction and alignment on advocacy work within the organisations, and also help to manage expectations in partnerships and other collaborations.



The organisation's written [Global Advocacy Policy](#) describes the criteria or circumstances in which it will involve itself. The World Council and Board policies define the process for adopting and implementing the organisation's positions, and involving partners, experts and other parties as appropriate. They also contain due diligence provisions and sign-off procedures ensuring legal compliance and avoiding unfair or irresponsible public criticism and undue harm to third parties.



**Plan International's** advocacy efforts address one of the key parts of their Theory of Change, on how the rights of girls are fulfilled by their families and societies, through the changing of social norms and practices, and the strengthening of assets and safety nets. In the reporting period, they developed a **Global Advocacy Strategy** to guide influencing efforts globally and connect their different offices. It outlines how they use advocacy based on values and informed by evidence to promote a global girls' rights agenda, with girls' agency, leadership and organisation at the heart. A combination of values-based and evidence-driven elements has the potential to spur significant, sustained action. More details are available at the [global approach to programme and influence document](#).



# References

1. [Accountable Now](#) is a global membership platform. We support civil society organisations (CSOs) in being transparent, responsive to stakeholders, and focused on delivering impact. Together with Members and partners, we aim to engage CSOs in conversation on how to advance accountability practices, through reporting, workshops, projects, and more.
2. See **Amnesty International's** 2020 Accountability report [here](#).
3. See **Greenpeace International's** 2020 Accountability report [here](#).
4. See **SOS Children's Villages International's** 2019 Accountability report [here](#).
5. See **Restless Development's** 2019/2020 Accountability report [here](#).
6. See **Accountability Lab's** 2020 Accountability report [here](#).
7. See **CBM's** 2020 Interim Accountability report [here](#).
8. See **World YWCA's** 2019/2020 Accountability report [here](#).
9. See **World Vision International's** 2020 Accountability report [here](#).
10. See **ChildFund Alliance's** 2020 Accountability report [here](#).
11. See **ChildFund International's** 2020 Accountability report [here](#).
12. See **EDUCO's** 2020 Accountability report [here](#).
13. See **Terre des Hommes'** 2019 Accountability report [here](#).
14. See **Transparency International's** 2019 Accountability report [here](#).
15. See **Amnesty International's** 2020 Accountability report [here](#).
16. See **Plan International's** 2019/2020 Accountability report [here](#).





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