



CIVICUS Accountability Report 2020-2021

Empowering a more accountable, effective
and innovative civil society

Submitted: December 2021

Table of Contents

Opening Statement from Secretary General.....	2
Cluster A. The impact we achieve	4
Cluster B. Positive results are sustained	8
Cluster C. We lead by example	11
Cluster D. Key stakeholders are identified with great care	16
Cluster E. We listen to, involve and empower stakeholders	19
Cluster F. Our advocacy work addresses the root causes of problems	21
Cluster G. We are transparent, invite dialogue and protect stakeholders' safety	24
Cluster H. What we do internally	26
Cluster I. Resources are handled effectively for the public good	30
Cluster J. Governance processes maximise accountability	33
Cluster K. Leadership is dedicated to fulfilling the 12 commitments	37

Opening Statement from Secretary General



The Covid-19 pandemic continued to provide a stark backdrop as we moved from 2020 into 2021, with the full extent of its impact becoming increasingly more apparent. The pandemic not only continues to have devastating effects on health and livelihoods, but in many instances, governments have used this as an excuse to introduce or implement additional restrictions on civic freedoms. However, when freedoms were restricted, civil society took a stand. When states failed the pandemic test, millions mobilised to demand action.

At CIVICUS Secretariat, we continued our work to strengthen civil society resilience in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Shortly after its onset, we reached out to members and stakeholders, through our [Covid-19 Survey](#) to better understand how the pandemic was affecting them, and actions CIVICUS could take to respond. The survey resulted in responses from across 50 countries and this, along with our State of Civil Society Report, also developed with and informed by our partners, not only helped us prioritise and shape our interventions, but also helped shape our [ask of actions needed from governments to support and sustain civil society through this period](#). These examples provide a glimpse of the many successes and learnings detailed in this report.

As well, we are increasingly seeing how the accountability processes and systems we have been putting in place since the start of our current strategy are contributing to change at organisational, programme, and constituent levels:

- We are continuing to implement CIVICUS' [action plan in response to its mid-term strategy review](#) (progress detailed in this report). This robust review, which included substantive feedback and joint analysis with members, staff and Board, has provided a critical reflection point and guide for how we are approaching our strategy amendment process which will take us from 2022-2027.

- We have expanded our use of participatory and co-design methodologies'. Building on extensive research and consultation, CIVICUS initiated a [grassroots resourcing campaign](#) that is being co-created and implemented with grassroots activists who are leading the development of an influencing strategy and storytelling campaign to increase the recognition of grassroots activists and the resources and solidarity required to support their vital work.
- To further our commitment to gender justice, CIVICUS is part of [FAIR SHARE](#), an initiative founded to put into action the principles and values of feminist leadership. CIVICUS signed FAIR SHARE's Letter of commitment, which includes commitments to promoting parity, equality and representation of women at different organisational levels, as well as providing updates on our progress.

We continue to look inwards, to improve our organisational processes and policies. In this period, these efforts have included a comprehensive strategic amendment process, a rigorous racial justice review and the drafting of an operational strategy on data and digital rights.

We also continue to learn and improve our efforts to close feedback loops with our stakeholders, publish our policies online and actively communicate how we make decisions, especially in relation to our global calls. We have begun operationalising a Delegation of Authority note to enhance understanding and alignment to our communication, consultation and decision-making guidelines. This and more, is outlined in the below report.

We thank Accountable Now for this opportunity to reflect on our progress and look forward to sharing this report, and your feedback with our alliance and wider stakeholders.

Sincerely,



Lysa John Berna
(Secretary General, CIVICUS)

What follows is CIVICUS' response to [Accountable Now's reporting questions](#), focusing on areas identified by the [Independent Review Panel](#) in previous years. Please also find Annex I for CIVICUS' self-assessment based on the color-coded assessment levels identified in the [Accountable Now reporting guidelines](#).

Cluster A. The impact we achieve

A1. What are your mission statement and your theory of change? Please provide a brief overview.

CIVICUS' [vision](#) is “a worldwide community of informed, inspired, committed citizens engaged in confronting the challenges facing humanity”. We work to strengthen citizen action and civil society towards a more just, inclusive, and sustainable. Our work is guided by our [four strategic goals](#), which reflect our belief that people-powered and collective action is at the centre of transformative change.

Our Goals are:

1. Defending Civic Freedoms & Democratic Freedoms
2. Strengthening the Power of People to Organise, Mobilise and Take Action
3. Empowering a More Accountable, Innovative and Effective Civil Society
4. Building a Fit for Purpose Organisation

We deliver our work through these four goals, which are outlined in our Strategic Plan. The Theory of Change can be found on page 12 of our Strategic Plan. You can download the full Strategic Plan in six languages and watch videos [here](#).



CIVICUS STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2022



A2. What are your key strategic indicators for success and how do you involve your stakeholders in developing them?

In developing our current [Strategic Plan 2017 - 2022](#), we listened to thousands of members and partners from 28 countries in all regions across the world, through surveys, consultations, collaborations and conversations to understand what they envisioned CIVICUS' strategic priorities for 2017-2022 should be. Through this consultation process, we heard people's deep concerns about challenges facing humanity, how civil society can best address these challenges and how CIVICUS can best support civil society to enact change.

This informed our strategic goals, objectives and long-term outcomes (changes we seek to contribute to) for the period of 2017-2022:

Strategic objectives	Changes we seek to contribute to
DEFENDING CIVIC FREEDOMS AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES	
1.1. To research, analyse and curate global trends on civic freedoms and democratic values to substantively influence key stakeholders. 1.2. To engage decision makers and institutions at national, regional and international levels with a view to protecting and expanding civic freedoms and democratic values. 1.3. To provide requisite support and solidarity to civil society stakeholders experiencing impediments in their work through restrictions on civic freedoms and undermining of democratic values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More people living in societies where civic space is open and fewer people living in societies where civic space is closed.• Increased recognition of the importance of civic freedoms across the world, including in national parliaments and intergovernmental institutions.• More and better-quality participation by people in democratic and governance processes at all levels.• Improved legal and regulatory environments for civil society in more countries.
STRENGTHENING THE POWER OF PEOPLE TO ORGANISE, MOBILISE AND TAKE ACTION	
2.1. To connect and work in solidarity with a diversity of change-seeking individuals, organisations and movements on inequality, insecurity and climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More CIVICUS members reporting involvement in new and impactful initiatives made up of a diverse range of civil society actors that result in direct action

<p>2.2 To support people and their organisations to participate in and influence global forums and monitor progress and hold governments to account on their global commitments on human rights, development and the environment.</p> <p>2.3. To build multi-stakeholder partnerships that contribute to resourcing and creating a more enabling environment for a resilient and diverse civil society.</p>	<p>to drive change for a more just, inclusive and sustainable world.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More CIVICUS members leading multi-stakeholder initiatives.• More civil society actors receiving support for training, collaboration and travel that strengthens their ability to build coalitions and catalyse change.• More meaningful opportunities for citizens and civil society, particularly grassroots movements, to come together to participate in and influence global governance institutions and processes.
EMPOWERING A MORE ACCOUNTABLE, EFFECTIVE AND INNOVATIVE CIVIL SOCIETY	
<p>3.1. To overhaul and introduce alliance and sector-wide capacity building products that are digitally accessible, engaging and packaged for scaled use.</p> <p>3.2. To model and test distributed civil society organisational models to improve the sustainability, security and effectiveness of civil society action, particularly in repressed and closed civic spaces.</p> <p>3.3. To introduce new metrics for measuring civil society performance that are grounded in people-generated evidence and prioritise accountability to the people that civil society serves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More civil society actors testing new tools and approaches that could transform the ways that they work, including the use of citizen-generated data and constituency feedback loops.• Southern, smaller and informal civil society formations having better access to resources that support their resilience.• Increased number of effective national civil society platforms across the globe.• More CIVICUS members having designed and implemented appropriate diversity and inclusion policies and practices.• Greater levels of public trust in civil society
BUILDING A FIT FOR PURPOSE ORGANISATION	
<p>4.1. To upgrade and mainstream organisational systems and practices that promote seamless and integrated operations, which in turn strengthen the organisational culture grounded in collaborative accountability, progressive cohesion, and high-performance based talent retention.</p> <p>4.2. To integrate programme and operational design, execution, and evaluation underpinned by strategic priorities, allowing for real-time risk mitigation and resource maximisation geared toward programme excellence.</p> <p>4.3. To align data (operational and programming) streams, performance and strategic indicators based on an organisational results framework, which focuses on principles of failing forward and generative management, data-driven decision making, as well as a critical learning agenda that is shared with the broader sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CIVICUS is considered a credible, trustworthy and accountable organisation by all our stakeholders• Increased ability of CIVICUS to be evidence-based and data-driven to allow for adaptive management and execution of our programmes• Increased understanding of CIVICUS unique value to members and the sector by understanding the needs of stakeholders and impact of our approaches and theory of change in different contexts• Greater levels of integration of our systems and processes across programmes and operations, supported by a collaborative and principle-based organisational culture

CIVICUS measures performance through our [Impact and Accountability Framework](#), which was developed alongside the Strategic Plan 2017-2022, and is underpinned by our [developmental evaluation framework](#) (DE). The framework helps to track the organisation's progress and impact consistently and systematically against the strategy, meet accountability commitments and enable organisational learning.

Each year, projects and clusters develop annual workplans based on the strategic plan, outlining activities that will contribute to the indicators. Progress against these indicators is monitored continuously, and results and learnings are uploaded each quarter on our online monitoring, evaluation and portfolio management system [DevResults](#). The DevResults platform is aligned to our strategic results framework and was pre-populated with planned activities and associated indicators for the first year of our strategy.

The Impact & Accountability team reviews and cleans the uploaded data, and then provides a comprehensive organisational-wide update based on all the data against the indicators for measuring success. This data feeds into a bi-annual impact reflection process, in which staff can reflect on and analyse performance against the planned set of activities for the year. This includes

feedback from our members and stakeholders, which we use to inform and strengthen our plans for the coming year.

Every year we continue to improve our data capture, analysis and reflection processes and are incorporating tools and processes (outcomes harvesting, Grow Logs and learning frameworks and learning questions etc.) to help us reflect on qualitative outcome data, as well as quantitative data captured on DevResults. Analysis and reflection from these processes are regularly shared across the organisation, and presented to management, Board and external stakeholders in the form of trends analyses, goal updates, star stories, reflection summaries, annual and donor reports, etc.

A3. What progress has been achieved and difficulties encountered against these indicators over the reporting period?

CIVICUS' most notable achievements and key lessons can be found in our [Annual Report 2020-2021](#) which we suggest reading along with this report. This narrative report is further supported by our [annual performance](#) story which summarises key indicators and results per Strategic Goals. However, here are a few highlighted indicators of where we made notable progress during the reporting period:



In terms of challenges encountered with monitoring progress this year, we have had difficulties with completeness of our data and capturing the qualitative outcomes that tell the story of **why** our work matters. However, we continue to refine how we measure our progress, and in the coming year, we will be looking at reducing the number of indicators we report on to create a more complete organisational story, rather than indicators that are more narrowly defined for specific projects. We will do this by continuing a central review of all indicators on DevResults, prioritizing those that can be aggregated across the organisation as well as disaggregated for particularly projects (for example helping us to deepen our understanding of our media mentions helping us to understand the difference we are making in the public domain). Reducing the number of indicators will improve data quality and completeness as teams will have less indicators to report on and we can focus capacity and efforts on data quality and completeness.

CIVICUS' Impact and Accountability team has also made efforts to help teams focus more on systematic collection and documentation of outcomes, rather than outputs, through project and cluster [Grow Logs](#). The Grow Log provides a structured format for collecting, reflecting and

sharing qualitative data, and generates much of our outcome data for CIVICUS. We hope to share progress and lessons in our next report.

A4. Have there been significant events or changes in your organisation or your sector over the reporting period of relevance to governance and accountability?

Implementation of Midterm Strategy Review Recommendations:

In March 2020, CIVICUS finalised an action plan in [response to its mid-term strategy review](#). During this reporting period, we focused on implementing the outcomes of [our mid-term strategy review](#) of our [2017-2022 Strategic plan](#) and prioritised follow-up on the [key recommendations](#) from the mid-term strategy review, this included the review of CIVICUS' Theory of Change as well as the related programming frameworks and organisational mechanisms. We analysed 238 outcomes and conducted targeted interviews, through which the Impact and Accountability team identified gaps related to some strategic goals, as well as a lack of critical assumptions and opportunities around protest movements and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Strategy Scoping Exercise:

This Mid-term review exercise also informed a strategy scoping process undertaken as we approach the end of CIVICUS' current Strategic Plan 2017-2022. The first phase (September - December 2020) included a civic space trends analysis and a collective scoping exercise with the Board, staff, and selected members of the alliance. The outcome of this exercise was to define challenges facing our sector and innovative responses to these. This exercise revealed that while several of the challenges sought to be addressed by our Theory of Change have accelerated considerably, the current strategic goals and objectives remain largely relevant.

To further 'stress-test' the current strategy, we complemented the analysis of historic trends with a more forward-looking [strategic forecasting exercise](#) (February – March 2021) that engaged CIVICUS members to produce future scenarios related to civic space and citizen action, and to sense-check these scenarios with allies from other sectors to identify potential disruptors and strategic opportunities that we may have missed. The learnings from this exercise were captured and shared with members in a [blog](#), which we hope will support their ability to use scenario planning for agile strategic alignment.

Based on this scoping process, the CIVICUS Board of Directors took the decision to amend the current Strategic Plan over 2020-2021 to ensure it remains relevant in the near future, rather than to engage in a new strategy development process, which could divert our time and attention towards responding to the continuing challenges and changes posed by the pandemic. The strategy amendment process began in July 2021 and is currently in progress. We look forward to sharing the outcomes of this process and its impact on CIVICUS' direction of travel in our next reporting period.

Board Elections:

The [CIVICUS Board Elections](#) concluded in November 2020. The four new board electees joined the current [Board of Directors](#) in January 2021 for a three-year term. This new Board will continue with the mandate of having a strategic oversight of what CIVICUS does. They will support CIVICUS on finalising the Strategy Amendment process and spearhead the process of developing our new strategy from 2022.

Other relevant changes to governance and accountability:

The Delegation of Financial Authorities (DoA) clarifies the process and decision makers for financial decisions. CIVICUS continues to refine internal communication guidelines, which further shows the steps and channels of communication that must accompany announcements and policy changes.

The new Risk Register policy is a pro-active decentralised process to record, analyse and mitigate risk. High risk activities are reported annually to the board. Finance has completely

transited to new finance software that improves the audit trail of CIVICUS. Financial and operational policies have been refined for consistent application throughout the organisation and continually updated for compliance.

The change management process was initiated to monitor and report against new processes and changes internal to CIVICUS. HR policies have been revamped for more open and consistent application of policies. Resilient Roots has contributed to internal accountability by working with teams to be more systematic in how they collect and respond to stakeholder feedback in our programmes, sub-granting processes and member-to-member platform, which increases our engagement and accountability with members. These initiatives are covered in more detail in subsequent section in this report.

Cluster B. Positive results are sustained

B1. What have you done to ensure sustainability of your work beyond the project cycle, as per commitment 4? Is there evidence of success? (also relevant for E4. How do you know that people and partners you worked with have gained capacities, means, self-esteem or institutional strengths that last beyond your immediate intervention?)

CIVICUS' core objective is to strengthen civil society by supporting the sector's efforts to mobilize, engage and promote civic action in different ways, globally. Our role as a convenor, enabler and influencer, sees us working to not only reinforce our members and partner' capacity to foster change through their work, but also implementing initiatives that go beyond immediate outcomes. The objective is to see long lasting, and tenable actions that continue to make an impact long after any of our interventions or causes we support, have ended.

Testing methods to improve sustainability post-intervention: We tested and shared models and approaches to support youth-led and grassroots networks to be effective, resilient and sustainable through initiatives like the [Youth Action Lab](#) and [Grassroots Changemakers](#). The Youth Action Lab is a one-year co-creation lab for grassroots youth activists based in the global south which works to support their movements to become more resilient and sustainable in their pursuit of a more equitable world. We used the [learnings](#) from the experience of the first cohort of activists to inform the next iteration of the Youth Action Lab and CIVICUS' approaches and practices for supporting movements and activists more generally, as well as to engage with other funders and enablers to influence their practices.

We also engaged in activities that contributed to resourcing and creating a more enabling environment for a resilient and diverse civil society, even beyond the current COVID-19 crisis. Building on extensive research and consultation, CIVICUS initiated [a grassroots resourcing campaign](#) that is being co-created and implemented with grassroots activists who are leading the development of an influencing strategy and storytelling campaign to increase the recognition of grassroots activists and the resources and solidarity to support their vital work.

We also published [Rebuilding for Good](#) – a guide for actions that governments can and should be taking to sustain and strengthen civil society as part of COVID-19 recovery and rebuilding efforts. The Rebuilding for Good framework drew on the evidence of initiatives that have been introduced across the world and offered suggestions to bolster these efforts based on insights provided by civil society networks in 80+ countries, including members of the [Affinity Group of National Associations](#) (AGNA). We are currently producing a communications and advocacy toolkit for partners to strengthen their efforts to secure the supportive measures we need across countries.

To empower a more accountable, innovative and effective civil society, we worked with members and partners to foster dynamic accountability in the sector through initiatives like [Resilient Roots \(RR\)](#), [Global Accountability Week](#) and the [Dynamic Accountability Community of Practice](#)

[\(DACOP\)](#). Tools developed during RR continue to be shared and used by different actors beyond the nine project partners, while we continue to grow the DACOP by initiating learning groups, webinars and other initiatives that bring members closer to each other, support cross learning. A year after the completion of, Resilient Roots Phase One, former partners to the initiative shared [stories](#) about how they are continuing to deepen their accountability practice especially during the pandemic, using their experiences and tools developed during the project.

Deepening our understanding of resilience: Building on the members' needs identified through a capacity needs assessment, CIVICUS facilitated an Organisational Resilience Course to help them better respond, adapt and prevent disruptive circumstances and crisis. A resilience mapping of members' practices and lessons learned also contributed to our understanding of organisational resilience during this period. Participants of Resilience Course acknowledged that the training has not only changed their understanding and perception of resilience, but for some, increased their capacity to introduce these concepts and approaches within their own organisations and communities, while others have initiated conversations on resilience with their senior management to get them to think about it on a much broader organisational level.

As part of our efforts to introduce alliance and sector-wide capacity building products that are digitally accessible, engaging and packaged for scaled use, [Innovation for Change](#) launched a Design Thinking Academy that trains participants to shape and lead design thinking processes in their Hubs and networks, while also providing a skill for income generating activities. One aspiration of this course was to enable participants to offer it as a paid service in the future, with possibility of on-going support for practitioners.

Sustainability as a core criterion for programme evaluation: In addition to our organisational impact reflections, strategic reviews, learnings tools and framework described above and in previous sections that foster ongoing learning throughout the programme lifecycle; our programme evaluations mostly utilize the [OECD DAC criteria](#), of which sustainability is one of the six evaluation criteria. During this reporting period, our multi-year Consortium for Human Rights and Media Development in Sub-Saharan Africa (CHARM) project undertook such an evaluation following the first phase of the programme. The full set of recommendations, including those in relation to sustainability can be found in the annex of supporting documents. The CHARM coordination team is working with consortium partners to action these recommendations.

These programmatic learnings all feed into our organisational reporting, learning and reflection cycle, to ensure cross-programmatic learning and sharing across the alliance. Further to this, we are investing in developing our Programme Quality and Innovation framework which will help further mainstream and strengthen the sustainability of our work. We look forward to sharing this in the next reporting cycle.

B2. What lessons have been learned in this period? How have the lessons been transparently shared among internal and external stakeholders? How do you plan to use these lessons to improve your work in the future?

We have had several reflection moments throughout the year. Most of these are related to the current COVID-19 crisis and will help us strengthen our work and shape how we engage with our members and various stakeholders in the long run. We learnt that at a time for restricted movement and limited contact, we should take advantage of new media formats that bring civil society closer to each other and to their stakeholders, allowing for better, more coordinated actions.

We found that while working in the digital space, digital security has become increasingly crucial and extra care should be taken to ensure that we use platforms that are safe, relevant, inclusive and effective. Access to funding has also been a challenge for our members, especially those

from the Global South, and at grassroots level. We realised that resourcing and sub-granting practises and policies in the COVID-19 pandemic cannot remain the same, and adjustments need to be made to enable members to continue working, and address challenges brought by the pandemic.



These lessons learned informed our developmental objectives and are reflected in our [Annual Plan 2021-2022](#).

Sharing our learnings across the alliance and beyond:

In addition to our annual report, which summarises key lessons (being) learned, we make use of multiple channels for joint reflection, co-learning and sharing, for example:

- When we concluded the [Diversity and Inclusion](#) pilot project, we worked to embed key learnings like those captured in the D&I Diaries in our interventions and [resources](#) for members.
- Our Youth Action Lab regularly [posts blogs](#) and hosts learning events with participants and partners. Programme evaluations are discussed and shared with partners to inform future design
- We strive to keep our [toolkits and guidelines](#) up to date, incorporating lessons and feedback as they are utilised.

Finally, it is also common practice for all teams to share lessons on their activities through the internal Workplace group, which triggers further discussions and learning, and we have dedicated impact reflection sessions to unpack lessons that can inform our programme planning. Staff

bulletins and meetings are also a key platform for sharing lessons learned and introducing new concepts based on what has been previously learned.

Cluster C. We lead by example

C1. How does your organisation demonstrate excellence on your strategic priorities?

CIVICUS provides leadership and guidance to peers in the sector as well as stakeholders through our membership engagement models, leading in research in civic space and coordination of working groups and initiatives, facilitating trainings on critical issues and developing toolkits and other resources.

CIVICUS' partnerships are selected based on their relevance and contribution to our strategic goals, and according to our partnership guidelines. The following is just a small selection of how we are engaged through partnership in the year in review:

- Accountable Now – Founding Member, Board Member
- Affinity Group of National Associations – Secretariat
- Action for Sustainable Development – Founding Member
- Bridge 47 Network – Member, Steering Group
- Civic Space Initiative – Founding Member
- CIVICUS Monitor Research Partners Network – Convenor
- Community of Democracies – Member, International Steering Committee
- Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations – Board Member
- CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness – Member, Enabling Environment WG
- European Commission – Framework Partner
- Fight Inequality Alliance – Founding Member
- Forum for Information and Democracy – Founding Member
- Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund – Consortium Partner
- Multi-stakeholder Task Team: CSO Development Effectiveness & Enabling Environment – Member
- Open Government Partnership – Partner, Civic Space WG
- Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies – Partner
- Transparency, Accountability, Participation (TAP) Network – Member
- UN Democracy Fund – Member, Advisory Board
- UN Development Cooperation Forum – Member, Advisory Group
- UN Economic and Social Council – General Consultative Status

Below are some of our specific offerings this year that contributed to CIVICUS strategic priorities:

- (Goal 1) We continued to share ownership of research and data of, from and for civil society, including the 10th edition of the [State of Civil Society Report](#), which draws on numerous in-depth interviews and consultations with civil society activists, leaders and experts, and the [CIVICUS Monitor](#) whose research partners keep information on the platform up-to-date, accurate and grounded in local realities.
- (Goal 1) CIVICUS also worked with the partners to produce a [Watch List](#) every four months to coincide with Human Rights Council (HRC) sessions, which provided context specific analysis on civic space backsliding ahead of elections in [Francophone West Africa](#), the ongoing use of restrictive laws to stifle dissent in [India](#), and the national security law in [Hong Kong](#), as well as several Enabling Environment National Assessments reports (West Africa, Thailand, SADC, Mozambique and Brazil).
- (Goal 1) CIVICUS, together with the Lifeline Consortium released [a toolkit on advocacy in closed spaces](#) and organised several complementary webinars.

- (Goal 1) Regionally, the Consortium for Human Rights and Media Freedoms (CHARM) in Sub-Saharan Africa published an anthology [People Power Truth](#), trained hundreds of partners on ways to engage with human rights mechanisms and provided sub-grants to enhance advocacy, while also coordinating timely and coordinated responses to human rights violations (e.g., Ugandan election violence).
- (Goal 1) The LAC Central American Civic Space Project (CACSP) financed by the Dutch Ministry of Development, launched the new "[Explorador](#)" a search engine with resources and tools to enhance the resilience of organisations and defenders in contexts of restricted civic space in Latin America and the Caribbean and organised more than 20 workshops to support learning and skills sharing with more than 400 participants from the region.
- (Goal 2) In September 2020, CIVICUS published the [Learning from Networks report](#), highlighting 20 learnings from CIVICUS' member networks.
- (Goal 2) We facilitated connections between different forms of civil society through the launch of the CIVICUS Online Community as a space for solidarity and collective action, and convenings like [International Civil Society Week](#), which brought together more than 700 organisers, presenters and participants to learn (and re-learn) how to support and sustain people-powered change.
- (Goal 2) We tested and shared models and approaches to support youth-led and grassroots networks to be effective, resilient and sustainable through initiatives like the [Youth Action Lab](#) and [Grassroots Changemakers](#).
- (Goal 2) We also utilised new communications tools to amplify local voices, including the podcast series [CIVICUS Voices](#).
- (Goal 3) And in June 2021, CIVICUS published the [CIVICUS Donor Finder](#), a multi-lingual directory of progressive funders supporting activists, civil society organisations and small, informal civil society groups.
- (Goal 3) CIVICUS maintained [Toolkits and Guides](#) on twelve different areas related to civic space, engagement, diversity and inclusion and monitoring and accountability.
- (Goal 3) We continued to roll out our [developmental evaluation framework](#) (DE) at organisational and project level and use DE methods that deepen understanding, learning and accountability. Partners and other stakeholders are using our [Monitoring and Evaluation online toolkit \(now in English, French and Spanish\)](#), through which they can access the M&E tools, approaches and examples that we develop and use in our own projects, as well as share their own tools as well.

C2. What evidence is there that your expertise is recognised and welcomed by your peers, partners and other stakeholders?

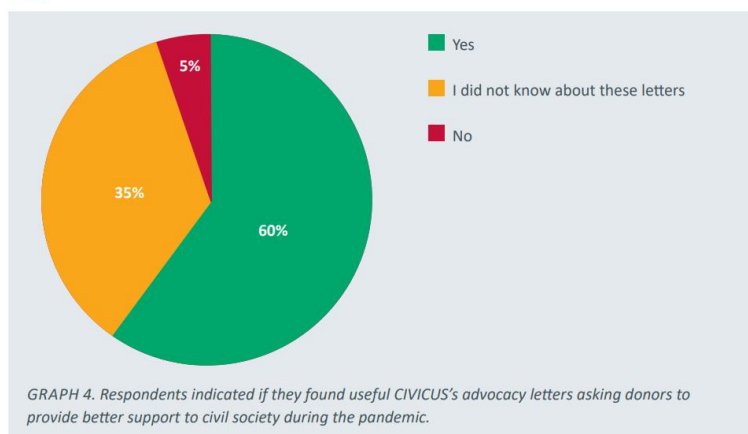
CIVICUS' [developmental evaluation framework](#) (DE) guides our understanding of how we are delivering on strategic priorities. This includes monitoring mentions to CIVICUS' work as well as capturing outcomes and feedback from stakeholders. We capture this data quarterly in DevResults and use it to create our [performance story](#) and [annual report](#).

We adopted a new communication strategy to help us to share information, advocate on behalf of civic space, amplify the voices of our members and partners, and connect civil society to each other. As a result, we reached and connected more people in 2020-21 than ever before: we had a dramatic increase of [CIVICUS in the news](#), with over 900 media citations in more than 50

countries, including 39 thought leadership Op-eds, 10 broadcast appearances and numerous source interviews - breaking into mainstream media such as New York Times, the Economist, BBC, among others. Furthermore, we produced 17 advice pieces in relation to Civil Society Resourcing that were shared/engaged with, documented 196 external Monitor uses (citations, actions, etc.), and noted 38 direct references to CIVICUS and 28 CIVICUS recommendations related to civic space included in formal outcome documents at the United Nations.

Efforts to influence key stakeholders through research, analysis and the curation of global trends on civic freedoms and democratic values included the launch of major publications including the annual CIVICUS Monitor report [People Power Under Attack 2020](#) and annual thematic report [Solidarity in the Time of COVID-19](#), which resulted in a peak in external citations, ranging from country-specific news outlets and prominent international media like the BBC and The Economist to the UN Deputy Secretary General and the [President of Taiwan on Twitter](#). The Innovation 4 Change (I4C) East Asia Hub supported a [music video](#) to combat Disinformation in Timor Leste that was viewed over 35,000 times and garnered the attention of the local broadcaster TVE Entertainment. For the past five years, CIVICUS has facilitated the co-creation and incubation of the I4C network. In evidence of the I4C network's growing maturity, there were increased instances where the seven Regional Hubs shared skills, knowledge, and solidarity directly without the I4C Helper Hub's (hosted by CIVICUS) intervention.

5 SENSE-CHECKING THE VALIDITY OF CIVICUS ADVOCACY WITH THE DONOR COMMUNITY



As part of our "[Solidarity in the time of COVID survey in 2020](#)" that engaged CIVICUS members, we checked the validity of CIVICUS's advocacy with the donor community during the COVID-19 crisis, particularly the [two open letters to donors](#) published in March and April, calling for more flexibility, certainty and stability towards grantee partners and asking donors to prioritise solidarity for a lasting and stronger local civil society in the global south. Sixty per cent of respondents knew about the letters and found them useful for their work. Some reported having shared these

letters with their donors and used them in negotiations.

The first iteration of the [Youth Action Lab](#) was completed in December 2020. [Ñañaykuna](#), one of the youth collectives that participated in the Youth Action Lab was recognised by the Organisation of American States with the award of Best Practices in a Latin American Youth-led Organisation for their "Families Online" project that seeks to work with women victims of GBV providing trainings on digital security, sexual education and preventive measures against COVID-19.

Further, one of the letters that we sent to all members of Parliament in Denmark was discussed in session and this contributed to the Parliament throwing out a repressive "Security for all Danes" Bill that aimed at severely restricting freedom of assembly and target minorities. After the bill was thrown out, we received this feedback from one of our members in Denmark, "*We are beyond excited to let you know that the assembly ban has just been voted down in parliament! You are very welcome to celebrate. Thank you for your amazing support throughout the last few months.*"

Please refer to Cluster F and our [annual report](#) for further examples.

C3. How does your organisation practice being inclusive and protecting human rights, including promoting women's rights and gender equality, in accordance with commitments 1-2?

In July 2020, CIVICUS initiated an internal conversation to examine and understand the challenges pertaining to race and racial justice in the context of our work. This process included staff workshops facilitated by [Leadership Lab SA \(LLSA\)](#), which focused on engaging staff to better understand the contextual and daily challenges around racism, discrimination and exclusion in the workplace. Findings from these conversations were presented to staff and the CIVICUS Board in June/July 2021 and a Racial Justice action plan to address priorities including improving processes related to recruitment, pay parity and career progression, has been agreed on and are currently being reviewed. Implementation of agreed actions will begin in October 2021.

Following a Diversity and Inclusion audit carried out in 2016, an internal Diversity and Inclusion working group was created to champion key recommendations to foster a culture of diversity and inclusion alongside key functions like Human Resources and Development and dedicated capacity like a D&I Coordinator (2019-2020) and Equity and Engagement Coordinator (2021). In the next year, CIVICUS plans to adopt a composite Diversity and Inclusion framework which also institutionalises recommendations of our Racial Justice Action Plan. Guidelines on ensuring racial diversity in internal and external forums of CIVICUS are also being developed, including composition of internal forums to address under-representation of staff in forums, as part of the Racial Justice Action Plan.

The work on reviewing and shifting our culture (beliefs, attitudes, behaviours) to better align with our values and mission will continue to be prioritised. Beginning in 2021, for instance, interventions that support improved and inclusive ways of working, such as the 'Time to Think' framework and Friday Learning workshops, have been activated. We will continue the work on culture change and leadership development with external facilitation and expertise, with a focus on understanding and enabling 'active and inclusive leadership' across levels, which is also a recommendation from our mid-term strategy review and a key objective of our composite Staff Learning & Development framework.

In addition, the Diversity and Inclusion Pilot Programme, which engaged eight organisations from different regions and captured their experiences in the [D&I Diaries](#). To build on the learnings identified through the pilot programme, an interactive, multi-lingual [D&I Diagnostic Tool](#) was co-created to assist CSOs and movements on their journey to becoming more inclusive, diverse, and sensitive to the needs, identities, and backgrounds of their people. While the pilot programme concluded in December 2020, we continue to embed key learnings in our interventions and resources for members.

To further our commitment to gender justice, CIVICUS joined [FAIR SHARE](#), an initiative founded to put into action the principles and values of feminist leadership and measure the proportion of women in leadership positions through its [FAIR SHARE Monitor](#). CIVICUS signed FAIR SHARE's [Letter of commitment](#) and committed to promoting parity, equality and representation of women at different organisational levels and updating on our progress against these commitments. Already the I4C team has contributed a piece '[The Missing Conversation on Civil society leadership](#)' during learning exchanges while the Secretary General facilitated a workshop on Authentic Leadership as part of the Eight Week [Feminist Leadership Series](#).

C4. How do you minimise your organisation's negative impacts on your stakeholders, especially partners and the people you work for? How does your organisation protect those most susceptible to harassment, abuse, exploitation, or any other type of unacceptable conduct?

CIVICUS's primary constituents are its members, and partners, and we strive to create a membership experience that is collaborative and supportive, and that fosters solidarity among our members, and partners. Through our [Member Code of Conduct](#), we ensure that all members

subscribe to the values outlined in the CIVICUS [Membership Policy](#), including maintaining justice and dignity for all, and ensuring inclusion without discrimination. These values are core to the work we do, and indeed, to our engagement with members.

In this reporting period, we worked with members and peers to strengthen our Member Code of Conduct to ensure that we subscribe to our commitments, and agreements on how to address instances where the code is violated. This update is necessitated by the realisation that as our membership grows, the code needs to be more dynamic and inclusive, while also making it more explicit and comprehensive, as we learn from the feedback we received from our members. The code is supported by our [Feedback and Response Policy](#), and in line with our policies on harassment and discrimination.

Cases of contravening the code are reported through multiple channels, captured in a centralised database (for more detail refer to section E.1) and handled through our normal feedback and response process. The new draft of the code of conduct will be finalised next year, which will guide CIVICUS and our stakeholders in addressing any issues that arise. An implementation plan for the updated Code of Conduct will be adopted at the 2021 CIVICUS Member AGM and rolled out in multiple languages, platforms, and formats in the first half of 2022. We anticipate that this exercise will increase awareness of expected behaviours (and consequences), we hope will help to prevent misconduct.

An example of how we responded to a case of violation of the code was a complaint we received during this reporting period, where a digital security workshop participant had sent an inappropriate message to the consultant who facilitated the training – a clear example of harassment. The Chief Strategy Officer, who leads our external feedback and complaints process, discussed the matter with the membership team to map a way forward in terms of how to address the complaint. As part of the investigation process into the matter, the Membership team engaged the member in question and reiterated the CIVICUS member code of conduct. The member issued a formal apology, which was forwarded to the complainant. His membership has been indefinitely suspended pending feedback from the complainant on how best to resolve the matter.

To provide context-specific guidance to complement the membership code of conduct, we have community specific codes through co-creation processes (e.g., I4C network, DIGNA network, CIVICUS online community) and developed an [Event Code of Conduct](#), and to ensure that we are providing a friendly, safe and welcoming environment for all, which allows them to fully participate without concern of discrimination or harassment. It outlines our expectations for participant behaviour at our events, as well as the consequences for unacceptable behaviour, including harassment or threats to personal safety. All participants at CIVICUS events are alerted on the code and asked to report any such behaviour to CIVICUS staff at the event, who will in turn put in a process to address this concern, as per our procedures.

Finally, it is important to note that CIVICUS carries out risk assessments before engaging in any programming to ensure that we do not unintentionally put our stakeholders at risk - we have a 'do no harm' framework and programmatic risk matrix to support this. We also practice our duty of care to our constituents through our commitment and contribution to digital and data management safety and security.

C5. How do you demonstrate responsible stewardship for the environment?

We are committed to reducing our environmental impact, and continually improving our environmental performance as an integral part of our business strategy and operating methods, a priority we focus on through our [Environmental Policy](#), which provides guidance on how can minimize our carbon footprint at our offices, during our events and generally in the way we do our work.

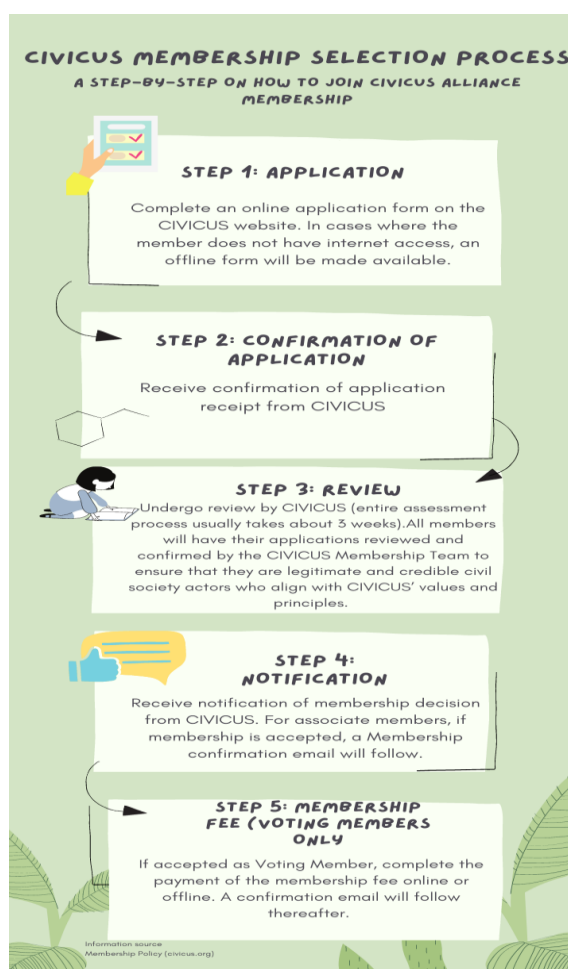
Due to COVID-19, our carbon footprint was significantly lower, as we suspended all staff travel and in- person events in March 2020. This means that for this reporting period, we do not have any data to present to determine our CO2 emissions. Similarly, our three main office hubs in Johannesburg, Geneva and New York have also remained closed and all staff are working remotely to ensure their safety during the pandemic.

However, before our office closure, by February 2020, we had started to use reusable glass bottles and reusable cutlery for all in person events, to be returned to the provider for re-use, and had committed to prioritized service providers who provided local produce. This is very much in line with our Events principles, which state out standards that all CIVICUS staff follow to make for sustainability in events, and a core principle of that is “Being environmentally conscious and minimising harm to the planet”.

We are looking to opening offices again when it is safest to do so and will resume our usual practices to safeguard the environment, including recycling paper and sorting waste; using motion detector lights in low traffic parts of the office; and being efficient in our use of water. In future, we plan on initiating a process to better understand how our electricity consumption at our Johannesburg office impacts on our CO2 emissions.

Cluster D. Key stakeholders are identified with great care

D1. Please list your key stakeholders. What process do you use to identify them?



CIVICUS is a membership based global alliance with over 11,000 members from different parts of the world. Our membership is a collective of civil society which includes non-governmental organisations (NGOs), activists, civil society coalitions and networks, protest and social movements, voluntary bodies, campaigning organisations, charities, faith-based groups, trade unions, and philanthropic foundations, among others. We therefore welcome different types of civil society, of issues, sizes and organisation types, transcending thematic, geographic and sectoral divides, and yet unified in solidarity towards our common purpose.

We are represented by our members in 175 countries/territories, with 65% of them coming from lower-middle income countries. The majority of our members are grassroots level organisations mostly from the Global South. Our members can be found in 5 regions, and their distribution is as follows: Africa – 6666; Americas – 1893; Asia – 2083; Europe -1120 and Oceania – 175.

Our member selection process is open and transparent and is governed by our [Membership Policy](#), which includes our membership criteria and description of our membership categories, and

membership fees where relevant.

All potential members seeking to apply for membership, either as individuals or organisations, fall under two categories, (a) **Associate membership**, who are committed to citizen action and

civil society and are committed to supporting and advocating for citizen participation at local, national, regional and/or global levels, and can join without any financial contribution, and (b) **Voting Members**, who are individuals and organisations willing to commit to collectively set the agenda and priorities for the CIVICUS alliance and make a financial contribution that goes towards the [Membership Solidarity Fund](#).

For any member wishing to join the membership, a verification system is in place to ensure our process is fair, transparent and accountable. Applicant individuals and organisations are asked to fill in an [application form](#), and provide documentation to help us assess their credibility and suitability in joining the membership, including their registration, financial standing and contribution to civil society strengthening.

CIVICUS has a strong focus on diversity and inclusion, and our projects and programmes sometimes focus on those groups that need more support, e.g., the [CIVICUS Solidarity fund \(CSF\)](#) which supports members that normally struggle to access resources and support due to restrictions in the space where they operate, their organising characteristics or simply who they are and what they challenge.

Our selection process is not only done by the CIVICUS membership team but includes other stakeholders as well. For **associate members**, verification will include review of publicly available information, previous CIVICUS engagement/relationships and consultation with peer organisations. For **Voting members**, in addition to a self-assessment, a peer review is conducted to determine how their values are reflected in their work. The CSF has a [Member Advisory Group](#) (who are CIVICUS members themselves), which is the decision-making body of the CSF that reviews applications, selects grantees and decides on funding and applicant support.

A membership might not be awarded for reasons that include evidence of hate speech/actions (based on any distinction) which are contrary to CIVICUS ethos; governance bias contrary to CIVICUS values, mission and vision or previous proven corruption, mismanagement of funds, projects, staff and partnerships (with no attempt at mitigation).

D2. How do you ensure you reach out to those who are impacted or concerned by your work?

CIVICUS membership comprises of individual and organizational members, who make up numerous networks and communities of practice within the alliance. Due to the sheer volume of members we have to coordinate and engage with, one of our most effective ways of reaching out to all these members has been through these networks, for instance [The Affinity Group of National Associations](#) (AGNA), which have a far greater local reach in terms of local gatherings, phone, mail and other ways that we take advantage of to reach hard to reach groups. It is through these platforms that we have managed to create awareness of what is happening within the alliance and fostered better connection amongst the members themselves. The efficacy of this approach is demonstrated through the increase in CIVICUS membership. Without any membership drive, and just engaging in the projects and programmes that we do, membership has increased by almost 2000 new members in the last year (19% growth in membership).

As a global alliance, our work happens in many places in which we do not have physical presence, hence the need to constantly keep in touch with members in different parts of the world. During this reporting period, we adopted a new communication strategy to help us to share information, advocate on behalf of civic space, amplify the voices of our members and partners, and connect civil society to each other. As a result, we reached and connected more people in 2020-21 than ever before, evidenced by our growing social media footprint: Facebook 49,069 fans; Twitter 25,267 followers/ 3,819,400 impressions; Twitter Español nearly tripled followers from previous year to 1463; Instagram 2,369 followers, and an increase of 44% visitors to our website from the previous year. We also shifted media priorities to amplify people's voices,

producing series such as “[Harassment goes virtual: women activists and journalists speak out](#)” and “[Fighting for democracy from afar: Myanmar activists in the diaspora](#)”. We also utilised new communications tools to amplify local voices, including the podcast series [CIVICUS Voices](#).

CIVICUS has experienced some challenges to engaging some groups of people especially in the current COVID-19 era. Since the start of the pandemic, we have suspended in-person meetings and have adopted more virtual avenues to continue engaging with our members. This has deepened the digital divide in many instances, which disproportionately affects those already marginalized, especially with respect to lack of access to affordable data. We have been investigating various ways to mitigate this, including an offline version of our membership platform, to make the information and connections contained therein more accessible, and will be exploring ways of ensuring access to data for participants who would otherwise not be able to attend CIVICUS meetings without that support. We have also instituted Signal groups which do not require that much data to improve coordination and coordination between the secretariate and members, and amongst members themselves.

CIVICUS uses email to reach our members and stakeholders more broadly, including sending out membership wide mailers and our newsletter e-CIVICUS. We are also continually working on making these communications more secure through our digital security initiatives and [free courses](#) available on our website, enabling members and partners to safely communicate with CIVICUS in difficult and repressive circumstances.

D3. How, specifically, do you maximise coordination with others operating in the same sectoral and geographic space with special reference to national and local actors?

CIVICUS works with local partners and communities in line with the following partnership guidelines:

- Our partnerships contribute to the achievement of a shared vision, mission and goals and seek positive change on issues related to justice, inclusion and sustainability.
- Our partnerships are based on clear roles and responsibilities that improve coordination for greater effectiveness and impact and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Our partnerships represent a variety of actors that offer diverse perspectives and seek to extend beyond traditional power bases.
- Our partnerships are with actors who respect, promote and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and share common values and principles.
- Our partnerships reflect a commitment to mutual learning and dynamic accountability.
- Our partnerships respect the voice and independence of the actors involved and are grounded in respect.
- Our partnerships allow for meaningful engagement rather than tokenistic participation.
- Our partnerships are based on legitimacy, transparency and accountability; acting with integrity is core.

Examples of how we implement these guidelines include the review of our influencing approach to further deepen our engagement with local partners, and exploring how to complement our proven track-record in advocacy with the United Nations with new campaigning tactics like [#StandAsMyWitness](#). We continued to share ownership of research and data of, from and for

civil society, including the 10th edition of the [State of Civil Society Report](#), which draws on numerous in-depth interviews and consultations with civil society activists, leaders and experts, and the [CIVICUS Monitor](#) whose research partners keep information on the platform up-to-date, accurate and grounded in local realities (refer to sections F.1 and F.2 for more information on our advocacy approach).

In addition, for several years, CIVICUS members have asked the Secretariat to create opportunities for members to connect directly with one another for mutual learning, exchange and solidarity. After an extensive 12-month process of research, co-designing, testing and iteration, which concluded in December 2020, CIVICUS has now launched the new CIVICUS Online Community. Based on specific needs and desires expressed by members, the Member-to-Member Platform will facilitate improved connection, collaboration, learning and development amongst members and better connection to the secretariat. To learn more, watch this [video](#). It is our aim that this platform will improve sharing of information within the alliance in real time and strengthen synergies with members. Our next report will provide an update on how useful the members are finding the platform.

Cluster E. We listen to, involve and empower stakeholders

E1. What avenues do you provide your stakeholders to provide feedback to you? What evidence demonstrates that key stakeholder groups acknowledge your organisation is good at listening and acting upon what you heard?

CIVICUS prioritises listening and being responsive to the concerns and views of the individuals, organisations and groups we seek to serve and support, including our members, partners and other supporters. This feedback helps us to improve the quality of our work, enhance trust and confidence of stakeholders, identify areas of work which need strengthening, and ensure that we continue to learn from the feedback that we receive.

We encourage members to share their feedback about our work through the [Online Feedback form](#) and strive to ensure that we respond to all feedback received based on our feedback and response handling processes. Please see section J3 for more details.

Each year, we distribute an Annual Constituent Survey in which members and other stakeholders are invited to measure our performance on our identified commitments and how we are fulfilling our mandate. In lieu of the ACS in this reporting period however, CIVICUS members took part in a survey in June 2020 to gauge the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on civil society and civil society responses. The survey contained three blocks of questions – on experiences of solidarity and innovation, civil society resourcing and civic space restrictions – the respondents could choose to focus on, each of them feeding into a research and advocacy stream. We received 298 responses in three languages (English, French and Spanish) from 187 members in 59 countries.

As mentioned above, in response to CIVICUS' members request for the Secretariat to create opportunities for stronger engagement, mutual learning and solidarity, we launched the CIVICUS online community. The community can access the secretariat in real time, and provide feedback on different aspects of our work, and on how the platform itself is being managed, and working for them. We have also included an offline version of this platform and a mobile download option for ease of use.

We utilise post-event surveys at our events, provide members with the opportunity to interface with the secretariat and board during our Annual General Meeting and solicit feedback related to publications and resources.

Through our online feedback form in October 2020, one of our members responded to eCIVICUS asking us to say something concerning the EndSars movement, and the killing of protestors in Lagos, Nigeria. We connected the member with our Advocacy team lead, and jointly developed a Spotlight graphic with our official [comment](#) on the issue, including a quote from a previous CIVICUS Board member based in Nigeria, as well [as an article](#) on the same.

In collaboration with the Innovation for Change (I4C) Helper Hub team, the Capacity Development Cluster organised two Focus Group discussions with participants of the online Design Thinking training that is taking place between January and February 2021. The objective was to help the I4C team sense-check, half-way through the course, what was the participant's experience overall with the process being followed, and the structure and dynamic of the sessions.



■ The brutal shooting of peaceful protesters in Lagos by Nigerian security forces is a gross violation of protesters' rights and those responsible should be held accountable by the authorities web.civicus.org/EndSARS
 @CyrilRamaphosa @MBuhari @AUC_MoussaFaki
 #EndSarsNow #EndSARS



E2. What evidence confirms a high level of stakeholder engagement in your activities and decisions from beginning to end?

CIVICUS embraces collective approaches to our programme lifecycle. We are increasingly using co-design and co-creation processes to strengthen our programmes, as exemplified by the Consortium for Human Rights and Media Development in Sub-Saharan Africa (CHARM) and the Grassroots Solidarity Revolution. We continue to roll out our developmental evaluation framework at organisational and project level, which promotes the use of iterative feedback and learning loops and this framework is used to create project level learning questions and tools which focus on bringing partners and constituents together with CIVICUS to learn together to inform the programme interventions.

CIVICUS programmatic and operational teams have also started to use the Grow Log more systematically as a powerful qualitative tool that helps to capture constituent feedback to identify key successes, tensions and challenges in our interventions. More formally, it is also common practice to include our constituents' feedback through projects evaluations, such as the CHARM phase 1 evaluation (which is included in the supporting documentation), to inform recommendations for subsequent phases of programming.

Examples of how we incorporate stakeholder feedback into our programming:

In continued efforts to become more constituent-led and network supported, the [CIVICUS Solidarity Fund](#) (CSF) interviewed members to understand hidden costs and barriers faced when applying for this fund. The Membership Advisory group voted on which of the [recommendations](#) identified would be implemented in the subsequent funding cycle. The application process was redesigned which 1) reduced the gender gap of applicants, 2) diversified the nationality of applicants, and 3) increased applications from constituency-led groups. One of the key results to this re-design was the introduction of an eligibility quiz that allows participants determine their eligibility for the fund before investing time on the application. The quiz also reduced gender gap in applications, where applications from females increased to 50% from 30% in 2020.

This reporting period we have also improved the way we prepare for our annual planning process by engaging member feedback on how they view our outcomes and suggest ways of improving during our Bi-annual impact reflections process. Feedback from the members will be used to further strengthen the plans that we have for the upcoming year. We are already using some of this feedback to change our approaches, including making language more accessible in the co-design playbook for our [Innovation for Change](#) initiative that we are currently developing.

Our [Youth Action Lab](#) initiative embraces a constituent-led project implementation strategy, including engaging former Lab participants in co-designing next phase of the lab, and participatory selection process for activists in the next lab, where they are deciding selection criteria, process and results of grant/fellowship application. To learn more, read the outcomes of the Pilot Youth Action Lab, [The Power of Radical Collaboration](#).

Stakeholder engagement in setting strategic priorities

CIVICUS members, and in particular our voting members, lead our alliance. Our members (and partners) input into our Strategic Priorities, so in a very real way steer the organisation's objectives and ways of working. Another way in which members contribute to our strategy is our representative Board of Directors who are elected from our voting membership. As representatives of our membership, they guide input and approve our annual plans and budgets, and work with staff, members and other stakeholders on our Strategic Priorities.

E3. What are the main likes/dislikes you have received from key stakeholders? How, specifically, have you reacted to their feedback?

Typically, we receive more detailed information regarding our members' main likes and dislikes through our annual constituency survey ([2019](#) and focused [2020 survey](#) on Covid-19), and [our online feedback form](#). We also make use of event feedback forms, programme evaluations and other mechanisms at programme level to gather feedback. During this reporting period, the feedback received through our online feedback form was in relation to requests to contribute content to CIVICUS website, request for advocacy support and funding opportunities and we channel feedback for action through to the various teams as per our feedback policy. This is elaborated in more detail in Sections E1 and J3.

E4. How do you know that people and partners you worked with have gained capacities, means, self-esteem or institutional strengths that last beyond your immediate intervention?

Please note Question E4 has been addressed in B.1.

Cluster F. Our advocacy work addresses the root causes of problems

F1. How do you identify and gather evidence regarding the root causes of the problems you address and use this to support your advocacy positions?

CIVICUS' main priority on advocacy is to respond to civic space restrictions by providing support and solidarity to civil society stakeholders whose work is impeded by restrictions on civic freedoms and the undermining of democratic values. Our advocacy strategies are rooted in the evidence we collect through research, continual engagement with our members and partners, and diligent monitoring of world events, which ultimately shape how we respond to challenges that we identify in our work. The findings from different CIVICUS reports and research initiatives enable the development of long-term advocacy strategies and campaigns for more sustainable outcomes.

Our members and partners continuously alert us about ongoing human rights issues and civic space restrictions happening in their contexts through our advocacy networks, including through

Consortium for Human Rights and Media Freedoms ([CHARM](#)) in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Coalition for Civic Space and [Crisis Response Fund](#) partners. We engage them on identified issues at country and regional level, and collectively decide with them what advocacy or campaign approaches to use.

Through the [CIVICUS Monitor](#), we generate real time data on the state of civil society and civic freedoms by collaborating with over 20 civil society research partners who keep the information on the forum up to date, accurate and grounded in local realities. The Monitor provides a country's [civic space rating](#) as **Closed**; **Repressed**, **Obstructed** and **Open**, and we use this data to determine the advocacy strategy that works best in each situation, which helps our response to timely, relevant and coordinated.

For instance, we have used [advocacy letters](#) to engage with governments of countries like Denmark, the United Kingdom, Australia, South Africa and this led to some policy changes and lifting of restrictions. In Denmark, a letter sent to all Members of Parliament led them to [reject a repressive - "Security for all Danes" Bill](#) that aimed at severely restricting freedom of assembly and target minorities.

However, in some cases, our efforts require additional advocacy actions to receive the desirable response, especially for the countries that are rated *repressed*, *obstructed* and *closed*, whose governance structures are less inclined to change their repressive policies. We continue to explore other ways to strengthen our advocacy efforts and engaging our members and partners on the best, most suitable ways to do that in their unique environments.

The CIVICUS Monitor includes a regularly updated [Watch List](#) which shows countries where there is a serious threat to civic space, based on an assessment by CIVICUS Monitor Research and local analysis of the situation. We use the Watchlist to monitor developments in each country and determine corrective action to take as we engage upon [specific governments](#) to address these developments. This year, we published the Watch List every four months to coincide with the HRC sessions and provided context specific analysis on civic space backsliding ahead of elections in [Francophone West Africa](#), the ongoing use of restrictive laws to stifle dissent in [India](#), and the national security law in [Hong Kong](#), as well as several Enabling Environment National Assessments reports (West Africa, Thailand, SADC, Mozambique and Brazil). Additionally, our [People Power Under Attack report](#) provides [insights](#) into civil society trends and real time changes in civic space dynamics and make recommendations for improvement for states and civil society actors.

This year marks the 10th edition of the [State of Civil Society Report](#). Each year, the report draws



on numerous in-depth interviews and consultations with civil society activists, leaders and experts to analyse how contemporary events and trends are impacting on civil society and how civil society is responding to the major issues and problems of the day each year.

This 10th edition outlines 10 long-term trends affecting civil society and trends in civil society action, including a massive crackdown on civic space, country based economic inequalities and the climate change crisis, and a retrospective of 10 years of civil society activity and key

ideas for action in civil society for the future. Each year, we use these trends to ponder some key

questions facing civil society, and how civil society can respond to them. Within CIVICUS, we have used these trends to further develop our advocacy plans for the coming year.

In addition, we continued to deepen our analyses of supporting evidence-based advocacy to improve resourcing for smaller and informal groups, for instance developing a new research stream (and consultations) looking at barriers, inefficiencies and transaction costs related to grant application processes. Efforts to influence key stakeholders through research, analysis and the curation of global trends on civic freedoms and democratic values included launch of major publications including the annual CIVICUS Monitor report *People Power Under Attack 2020* and annual thematic report *Solidarity in the Time of COVID-19*, which resulted in a peak in external citations, ranging from country-specific news outlets and prominent international media like the BBC and The Economist to the UN Deputy Secretary General and the [President of Taiwan on Twitter](#)

The data we draw from the different reports and research enable us to identify trends that we use to prioritise countries for each region or globally, which we will engage in sustained advocacy for at least 12 months. They also inform our responses to requests for media interviews and presentations on specific countries or issues of focus, and further strengthen our standing as our advocacy is evidence based, and strongly informed by the realities of our advocacy partners and collaborators.

F2. How do you ensure that the people you work for support your advocacy work and value the changes achieved by this advocacy?

In all our advocacy interventions and campaigns, we consult extensively with members and partners, particularly those affected by the civic restrictions, and jointly implement and monitor our actions with them, except in cases where the overt actions of partners can lead to reprisals from the state and non-state actors. Below are some of the ways we use to engage with people to support the work that we do.

- Through our [#Standasmywitness](#), members and partners determine the advocacy actions we should prioritise and the key decision-makers and stakeholders to engage with, based on their knowledge of the local context. This new campaign supports human rights defenders facing persecution and is supported by lawyers, Human Rights Defender's (HRDs) families and their colleagues to advocate for their release.
- We secure updated information from HRDs about their specific situations as they progress, which has contributed to emergency laws targeting protesters being lifted in Thailand, the international rejection of threats to journalists and NGOs in Nicaragua, and the release of human rights defender Narges Mohammadi in Iran and Germain Rukuki in Burundi,
- We are committed to amplifying the voices of those not often heard, and as part of our advocacy efforts, we link up families with media outlets to speak about the HRD's situations, as we have seen that their voices make an enormous difference to how decision makers will respond. Due to our efforts, five HRDs were released in Sri Lanka.
- CIVICUS has also co-curated two dialogues with the International Service for Human Rights to better connect civil society organisations working on UN related issues in Geneva and New York.
- We always strive to include members and partners when formulating advocacy strategies and working together to implement them by consulting with them formally through structured face-to-face consultations with a host of members or informal phone, Skype, Signal or Zoom conversations, which occur weekly to ensure continued engagement.

- We often draft [statements](#) and other submissions together with members and partners, including those presented at the regional and international human rights mechanisms including the United Nations Human Rights Council, the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. An example of feedback received from an HRD detained after the military deposed the transitional government and increased restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly who was released through our efforts is as follows, *“I have read the draft statement and only have a comment regarding OP6 and the issue of dialogue. Dialogue is the only way forward and the statement needs to put pressure on both the civilian as well as the military elements on engaging in dialogue. So would recommend adjusting OP6 to ensure the message is directed to both civilians as well as military – and not just military as it stands now”*.
- We have seen some significant mentions of our work, including in social media, and by high level civic actors. For instance, our SOCS report 2021 was cited by Marcia Walker, a campaign strategist from Mencap as a *“Reminder of the power of collective action in a year like no other and why the international system needs to do more to uphold norms on the right to protest”*. Hence, our research findings are functioning as evidence for continued advocacy for critical issues and holding duty bearers to account.
- Civic actors and activists also quote sections from the SOCS report related to their context to bring attention to issues that still require collective action, for instance, LuaLua TV’s reference to how Bahrain’s continued imprisonment of civil society activists shows how the state has failed the “pandemic test”. The UNA-UK also highlighted specific chapters in the report and the report itself was cited by the Commonwealth Foundation.

This reporting period, CIVICUS worked closely with the core group on civil society space in drafting a new civil society space resolution, which passed with consensus, while the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ [UN Guidance Note on the Protection and Promotion of Civic Space](#) drew on CIVICUS’ research and statements.

Cluster G. We are transparent, invite dialogue and protect stakeholders’ safety

G1. Are your annual budgets, policies (especially regarding complaints, governance, staffing/salaries and operations), evaluations, top executive remuneration and vital statistics about the organisation (including number of offices and number of staff/volunteers/partners) easily available on your website in languages accessible by your key stakeholders?

As part of our Strategic Goal 3 on empowering a more accountable, effective and innovative civil society, we remain committed to maintain transparency about what we do, including the policies and processes that drive our work. While we strive for more openness, we are also aware of our responsibility to ensure privacy to personal information as outlined in our [Protection to privacy policy](#).

We have made our core policies publicly available on our [Accountability webpage](#), including our [Whistle blowing policy & Procedure](#), [Event code of conduct](#), [CIVICUS Anti-fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy](#), and [CIVICUS Risk Management Policy](#). Our [Benefits and Remuneration Policy](#) is also publicly available on our website

We publish our annual plan and accountability metrics each year in English, French and Spanish, and share the details of our [staff](#) profiles and Office Hubs in Johannesburg, New York and Geneva and [Board members](#), as well as our [Governance calendar](#) on our website.

To make our work more accessible to our members and stakeholder, we make available critical Reports and Publications online, including our [Annual Reports](#), with our audited financial statements and budgets. Our Accountability Reports are publicly accessible on both the [CIVICUS](#) and [Accountable Now](#) websites and can also be found on the [IATI website](#). We also publish external reviews and evaluations, like our [Mid-term Strategy Review](#) and the resulting [Management Action Plan](#).

G2. What policies do you have in place to ensure a fair pay scale? Do you measure the gender pay gap in your organisation, and if so, what is it? What are the salaries of the five most senior positions in the organisation, and what is the ratio between the top and bottom salaries?

In January 2021, we completed a 15-month, externally coordinated Job Grading and Appeals exercise involving staff and the Board to develop and standardise all CIVICUS job descriptions (JDs). The rationale for the exercise was to ensure a consistent approach to developing and evaluating job descriptions thereby ensuring that the placement and remuneration of roles is based on an objective and externally validated system. The outcome of this exercise is the alignment of all JDs against the Patterson Grading Scale to ensure consistent and verifiable placement and remuneration of roles completed in March 2021, and approval of our approval of our [Remuneration Policy](#) by the Board in March 2021.

We report our gender pay gap on DevResults and the gender development index (GDI) is tracked through other processes such as Fair Share reporting. These are our figures on gender pay for the June 2020- July 2021 period:

Staff category	Percentage
Senior Management	0.3% above average for category of staff
Mid Management	1.91% above average for category of staff
Staff	8.19% below the average for category of staff

As of June 30, 2021, CIVICUS has instituted new salary band designations in line with our HR policy framework. The new salary structure was affected from July 2021, which necessitated movement of 19 positions to the grading mid-point to address past anomalies. While the current gender pay gap is historical, it will eventually reduce through natural movement of staff out of CIVICUS. Going forward, we offer new hires pay that is in line with the correct salary band designation. Our hope is that by next reporting period, there will be less of a disparity. From January 2022, CIVICUS will explore a new gender parity calculation, to calculate and report on gender disparities along the new salary band designations.

The top five salaries of CIVICUS staff in 2020-2021 were:

Job Title	Salary
Secretary General	US\$ 154 714.87
Chief Strategy Officer	US\$ 132 587.55
Chief Programmes Officer	US\$ 132 587.55
Chief Operations Officer	US\$ 125 146.84
Head of Geneva Office	US\$ 99 844.00

As part of the Job grading exercise, we have also identified the grades that these senior leadership roles fall.

G3. How do you ensure privacy rights and protect personal data?

At CIVICUS protection of personal data is of utmost importance to us. Our [Privacy Policy](#) outlines our commitment to maintaining the right to privacy in the collection, storage and disclosure of personal data on all our online systems including on our organisational website www.civicus.org and other websites we operate (monitor.civicus.org and vukacoalition.org). This also applies to our other digital communications services that we may use to collect and retain data (e.g., newsletters, social media, surveys and online events). We use these same channels to continuously share our policy and clarify how and when we will use data collected or shared through our platforms.

As a regular convenor of high-profile events, we strive to ensure that collection and use of participant data is by consent, and access is limited to only a few relevant staff. We regularly conduct security checks of our systems which store personal information and use our data privacy email privacy@civicus.org to collect and respond to requests for deletion of data from our servers and acts as a complaints and response mechanism ¹for data use related matters.

To improve knowledge on our Privacy Policy, we have made it available on our website, in our publications, and mention relevant sections during any events that we coordinate.

To further strengthen our approach to data security, CIVICUS mandated a cross-cluster forum for staff to identify opportunities to strengthen our duty of care to staff, members and civil society, the Data and Digital Security Working group. The group identifies gaps in data and digital security and recommends constructive solutions to mitigate data and digital security challenges with the assistance of experts. Since its inception, it has reviewed and provided guidance on internal and external communications platforms within the secretariat and membership respectively and ensured organisational compliance with data privacy regulatory frameworks such as GDPR and POPIA. The group will continue to contribute to the development of CIVICUS' wider digital strategy.

G4. Who are the five largest single donors and what is the monetary value of their contribution? Where private individual donors cannot be named due to requested anonymity, please explain what safeguards are in place to ensure that anonymous contributions do not have unfair influence on organisational activities.

The five largest donors during the reporting period were: Ford Foundation, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Dutch MFA, Open Society Foundations and European Commission. The value of their contributions are as follows:

Funding Partner	Value of contribution
Ford Foundation	US\$ 2 890 000
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	US\$ 2 552 246
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Netherlands	US\$ 1 561 159
Foundation for Open Society	US\$ 1 050 000
European Commission	US\$ 816 553

CIVICUS does not receive funding from individual donors, hence we are not affected by potential undue influence of anonymous donors on our work.

Cluster H. What we do internally

¹ Our process includes an escalation avenue to a local [Data Protection Authority](#).

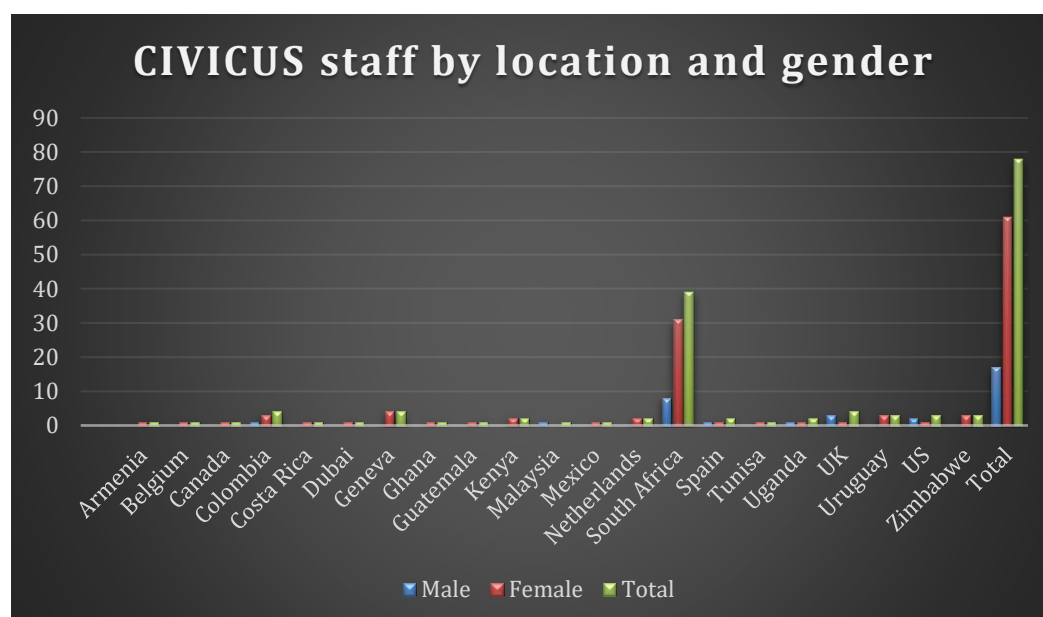
H1. Provide evidence that recruitment and employment is fair and transparent.

The CIVICUS recruitment process is governed by our [Recruitment and Selection policy](#) and is guided by relevant employment legislation and organisational values. CIVICUS is an equal opportunity employer, and our priority is to hire the best candidate for the job, based solely on relevance of their skills, qualifications, and competencies required to fulfil the job requirements, without having regard to discrimination factors, such as race, gender, disability, etc.

Our recruitment and selection process is designed to prevent any bias, conscious or unconscious, from influencing our hiring decisions. We advertise positions both broadly and in specific publications and platforms to try to reach people from excluded groups. We aspire to ensure that our staffing and decision-making reflects the diversity of the world we live in, including with regards to gender balance and representation of excluded and under-represented groups. Thus, our Internship Guidelines prioritise provision of learning opportunities to candidates located in the Global South who are of African descent/ Black or from other excluded groups.

The HR department leads on the recruitment process, provides guidance to recruiting line managers on recruitment practices, and supports staff to also participate in the selection process through a multidisciplinary panel interview. We try to ensure that roles are open to all potentially suitable candidates, that our recruitment process is transparent to all who apply for positions and that our workplaces are accessible. In this regard, we have made our Recruitment and Selection policies, [Benefits and remuneration policy](#) publicly available on our “[Work with us](#)” Webpage, and have put together [FAQs](#) for potential candidates to fully understand our recruitment processes. Our Benefits and Remuneration Policy outlines staff benefits, including cost of living adjustments, learning and development budgets, and performance bonus. CIVICUS’s contract management guidelines were developed with agencies specialising in labour law and legal compliance in South Africa and other locations. As a result, the system ensures due process is followed at all stages of the employment process, thereby minimising personal bias and interference. A PEO arrangement that allows us to review and fulfil legal compliances in locations beyond our official hubs was also introduced.

CIVICU staff breakdown as at 30 June 2021



At the 30 June 2021, CIVICUS had a total of 78 staff members, with the largest number located in South Africa, where our main hub is based. 78% of staff (61) were women, while 17 were men. CIVICUS contracts fall under 4 categories: permanent/core contracts, fixed term/project related

contracts, intern contracts and consultancy contracts, and are duly outlined in our Contract Guidelines. In the reporting period, staff contract breakdown stood as follows: Permanent staff: 43; Fixed Term: 28, Internship: 7, which makes 78, as at 30 June 2021.

From our 2018-2019 accountability report, CIVICUS staff has slightly increased from 74 to 78. CIVICUS recruitment tries to ensure diversity, although in some instances, roles are location specific due to work we are doing in a particular region.

Over the past months, CIVICUS has been working on several institutional exercises that relate to diversity and inclusion (D&I), including progressing actions agreed as part of our Race and Racial Justice Review.

H2. What are you doing to invest in staff development? What indicators demonstrate your progress? What are your plans to improve?

At CIVICUS, we understand that providing an environment that staff are enabled to do their best is crucial to achieving quality in our work and fostering retention of staff. The operating environment is constantly changing and evolving, and our staff need to be versatile and constantly grow their skills set to remain relevant and effective. We have instituted staff development opportunities that are designed to boost employee engagement and potentially attract top talent in the sector.

We budget annually for staff development at 1% percent of individual staff salary costs and Line Managers identify development initiatives aligned to annual work plans. Each team also budgets 2% of their staff costs for training expenses, and HR also allocates some budget to overall staff development as well. In this reporting period, staff attended finance for non-finance training and Line Managers attended Employment Law training both of which were facilitated by external experts.

Between 2020 and 2021, the organisation dedicated time for staff to focus on professional growth and learning that helps them to thrive in the new COVID-19 operating environment. Staff were supported to identify objectives and pursue activities that contribute to their professional growth and are related organisational learning goals. From January 2021, we introduced the “Learning Fridays” initiative, where the third Friday of each month was devoted to time off for staff to focus on learning and renewal, either based on individual interest, or as a team, and in line with their unique professional goals.

For the second half of the learning Friday, CIVICUS introduced the “Time to Think” Framework where a collective session was held for all staff, and facilitated by various, wellbeing coaches and mental health professionals from South Africa and beyond. This framework focuses on ten enablers that create nurture an active ‘thinking environment’ including Attention, Equality, Ease, Diversity, Information and Appreciation, and is aimed at fostering organizational behaviours and systems for dialogue, innovation and creative engagement across all aspects of our work.

Staff feedback collected through a survey and personal stories of change, indicates the sessions provided a platform to connect and support each other during the difficult adjustment to remote work and coping with COVID-19 implications in their personal and professional lives. They reported positive learning outcomes around vulnerability, interactive listening skills, developing mental resilience, and embodying greater self-awareness. Going forward CIVICUS has committed resources to the creation and implementation of a new Staff Learning and Career Development Framework as part of the Human Resources workplan for 2022-2023.

Performance appraisal

We are in the process of refreshing our performance appraisal process, based on a learning-oriented Performance Appraisal System and developing accompanying frameworks related to

progression and succession planning. Owing to the disruption caused by COVID-19, the normal cycles of performance management did not take place in 2020-2021. Instead, we introduced a light touch process for performance appraisals which were reduced from quarterly to bi-annually, with a simple process to clarify and confirm alignment to organisational strategic goals, and with each team's strategic objectives, in line with the 2020-2021 annual plans. The process also included a reflection on what worked or not in adapting to our changing circumstances and identifying learning and development goals that could inform role and team related learning for the periods under review.

As part of our governance accountability, our Secretary General's performance was reviewed through a comprehensive 360-degree process facilitated by the Board Chair, in which identified staff members, Donors and Board Members participated in the exercise. Feedback was shared by the Board Chair to all staff.

Succession planning is part of the terms of reference for the Learning and Development Framework, and another way to foster staff development opportunities. Vacancies are advertised internally and externally, with internal staff encouraged to apply where they qualify. Through acting opportunities (when a team member goes on leave for a prolonged period), staff are supported to fill in more senior roles which strategically positions them to develop skills that improve their chances to securing senior roles when vacancies arise.

H3. How does your organisation ensure a safe working environment for everybody, including one free of sexual harassment, abuse, exploitation, or any other unacceptable conduct? What indicators demonstrate your progress? What are your plans to improve?

At CIVICUS, we take our responsibility seriously to create and maintain a work environment in which people are treated with dignity, decency, and respect seriously. All employees should be able to work, collaborate and learn in a safe and stimulating atmosphere, but also carry the responsibility of adhering to the organisational values outlined in our Staff Code of Conduct. We have developed policies that help us create an environment that allows people to work freely in the absence of intimidation, oppression, exploitation, and discrimination, including the Staff Code of Conduct, Whistleblowing Policy, and Anti-discrimination and Harassment policy. These have been included in the Staff Policy and Procedure Manual for easy access and continual reference by staff. The policies are available on the HR Policies and Procedures Dashboard, and are also explained through staff meetings, team meetings, and management platforms.

Our Anti-discrimination and Harassment policy outlines the procedure for reporting and responding to cases of harassment and discrimination. Employees who feel that they have been harassed or discriminated against are encouraged to report discreetly to Human Resources. In cases involving Human Resources or where the harassed individual would prefer to not approach Human Resources, the matter is addressed with either the Secretary General (SG), Chief Operating Officer (COO), the Line Manager, or a Diversity and Inclusion Group Representative. Once a claim has been made, the matter is investigated within three days (usually by a team made up of HR, SG and COO), following which a recommendation is made on how the organisation should address the issue. Where allegations of sexual harassment are substantiated, the offender will be sanctioned in strict accordance with the CIVICUS disciplinary code, regardless of his or her position at CIVICUS. Findings are communicated within seven working days of the inquiry.

The Grievance policy has been designed to allow for a fair and transparent process for the resolution of grievances/complaints raised by employees regarding employment matters, while the Whistleblowing policy ensures that staff are able to report any unethical and/or other inappropriate behaviour safely. Both policies feed into the process outlined above, and are applied as needed, depending on the issue at hand. CIVICUS has engaged an employee assistance program ICAS, which provides confidential counselling services to CIVICUS employees including those affected by harassment and discrimination. Individuals wishing to

discuss an incident confidentially or seeking information and advice of a personal nature are encouraged to contact ICAS. However, this does not constitute submitting a formal concern to CIVICUS, they would still need to apply the above outlined process.

A legal review of our Grievance policy and process has been undertaken via Operations Management Forum to improve our ability to support and address workplace incidents of harassment and discrimination. We plan to conduct training and awareness sessions on the refreshed Grievance policy to ensure that all staff are aware of how the grievance will be progressed, who will deal with it, and the timeframes in which actions will take place. This will provide an opportunity to help staff make the connection between the grievance policy and other safeguarding policies in the organisation (e.g., whistleblowing, anti-sexual harassment).

Cluster I. Resources are handled effectively for the public good

I1. How do you acquire resources in line with your values and globally accepted standards and without compromising your independence?

CIVICUS' resource mobilisation activities are guided by our 2017-2022 Resourcing and Sustainability strategy, which (1) outlines the ambitions and approach for the resourcing and sustainability of the CIVICUS secretariat and alliance; (2) ensure coherence of CIVICUS' internal resourcing activities with a strategic effort to enhance the resilience of the sector, writ large; and (3) encourages testing and learning from different approaches so that we know which interventions are most impactful for future scaling and investment.

Our funding partnerships are subject to our Partnership Guidelines. Our points of departure when engaging in activities related to our resourcing and sustainability strategy are found within our Strategic Plan 2017-2022. The values and principles contained in this document will form the backdrop of all programming, and the strategic niche outlined used as leverage to enhance the resourcing and sustainability of the alliance.

Within this context:

- CIVICUS seeks funding and support from a number of different actors represent private foundations, government agencies, etc., so that we are not dependent on any single source. Our ambition is for no one donor to make up more than 25% of our total income.
- CIVICUS aims to diversify its donor portfolio. Complementary to this approach, CIVICUS will engage progressive, mission-aligned philanthropies in its membership.
- CIVICUS seeks to increase support coming from southern actors (public and private). Donors from the Global South, emerging economies or countries that are newer to development cooperation, included.
- CIVICUS strives to become more independent through income-generating activities. Any income generation should also be mission-aligned and contribute to our strategic goals.
- CIVICUS prioritises long-term, flexible support (i.e., core funding) that allows us to be responsive to the changing context and needs of the alliance. This approach is reflected in our civil society resourcing advocacy and the CIVICUS Solidarity Fund.
- CIVICUS does not accept funds which would compromise members' legitimacy (real or perceived). Historically, CIVICUS has not accepted US government funding on the advice of members in Latin America and the Middle East.

- CIVICUS does not compete with its members for funding. We do not respond to requests for proposals that will put us in direct competition with our members or disadvantage some members over others.
- CIVICUS supports consortium arrangements that help us to deliver more, better coordinated and holistic support to our constituencies. We adhere to the principles of development effectiveness.

CIVICUS attempts to model the behaviours we advocate for with the donor community in our own sub-granting. Our sub-granting practices should “shift the power” to constituents in terms of decision-making, accountability, and funding approach; provide flexible, predictable funds, complemented by other types of support, and cater for movement building and a diversity of civil society actors.

I2. How is progress continually monitored against strategic objectives, and resources re-allocated to optimise impact?

CIVICUS’ [developmental evaluation framework](#) (DE) guides our understanding of how we are delivering on strategic priorities. This includes monitoring mentions to CIVICUS’ work as well as capturing outcomes and feedback from stakeholders. We capture this data quarterly in DevResults and use it to create our [performance story](#) and [annual report](#). Each year we reflect on the outcomes and learning from the previous year before our annual budgeting and planning. This allows us to allocate resources and focus on the most impactful work as recommended by our Midterm Strategy Review.

I3. How do you minimise the risk of corruption, bribery or misuse of funds? Which financial controls do you have in place? What do you do when controls fail? Describe relevant situations that occurred in this reporting period. What are your plans to improve?

Cash-flow and budget management: We produce monthly internal financial management reports and circulate to stakeholders as part of our routine financial monitoring. This allows budget holders to be constantly cognisant of any variances and take corrective action as needed. The Financial Manager conducts weekly cash flow monitoring using electronic banking facilities, to ensure there are sufficient funds in the organisation’s bank accounts for operations and other running costs and ensuring that anticipated funds have been received. The Chief Operations Officer is immediately informed of anticipated cash flow difficulties and takes mitigating actions.

Audit processes: CIVICUS undergoes an annual Audit by external auditors who review our internal control environment and ensure that our accounts are accurate and fair. We have always received a satisfactory audit report and action any recommendations accordingly.

Anti-corruption and bribery: CIVICUS has adopted a zero-tolerance policy on fraud, bribery and corruption, and strive to uphold an anti-fraud and corruption culture for both the people that work for and with CIVICUS, as reflected in our Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy. All reported matters are taken seriously, and thoroughly investigated by the Senior Leadership Team, or designated team if needed, in line with our Fraud Response Plan. When necessary, we notify and fully cooperate with law enforcement agencies, and the SLT determines the correct course of action if an act of fraud or corruption has been proven during an investigation. Fraudulent or corrupt activities that result in disciplinary action (in accordance with CIVICUS’ Disciplinary Code and laws of the country) will be reported to the Board of Directors.

CIVICUS has established internal controls, policies and procedures to deter, prevent and detect fraud and corruption. We verify employment history for all vacancy applicants and conduct criminal background checks and orientation of the Anti-fraud policy for all new employees, which was updated in 2021. Staff are asked to complete annual conflict of interest forms as part of our

commitment to maintaining controls aimed at preventing fraud, bribery, and corruption. CIVICUS' Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Compliance builds upon the U.K. Bribery Act, currently the most comprehensive act on this topic. This procedure focuses on the definition and types of bribery, key risk areas and penalties.

Whistleblowing: Through the CIVICUS Whistle blowing Policy, we aim to create a culture that facilitates the disclosure of information by CIVICUS staff members relating to criminal conduct or conduct which violates any other CIVICUS Policy, Staff Handbook, or regulatory procedures. The policy provides guidelines for the disclosure of such information and protection against any reprisals due to such disclosures. Any employee wishing to raise any concern in a confidential manner should report the matter to the Chairperson of the CIVICUS Executive Board who will serve as the Appointed Officer who will handle the matter. Due to the nature and type of concerns raised through whistleblowing it is not possible to set definite time limits for the completion of investigations. However, the Appointed Officer will ensure that an initial investigation will start within five working days of any concern being reported, and feedback on how the matter will be addressed is provided within the same timeframe.

Managing Risk: We have introduced a new "Risk List" for tracking our financial engagements with service providers, partners, and others with whom we enter financial relationships. All CIVICUS contracts note what our organisational principles are, and which behaviour or actions would prohibit CIVICUS from working with transgressing partners or service providers. Such actions include financial mismanagement and transgressing the CIVICUS Code of Conduct. The CIVICUS Risk List functions as a central internal database which is continually updated by staff as they come across any partners that would be potential risks for future transactions. This allows us to avoid repeatedly working with/procuring the service of potentially high-risk partners, meet our donor requirements and supporting partners who have previously struggled to adhere to contractual requirements.

Due to some incoming banking legislation during the reporting period, we have adjusted our Procurement policy (now available in French and Spanish as well) to require sanctions check for the country where the bank account is located for all payments, regardless of the amount. These sanctions checks are done on the online platform "[Hyperflow](#)", and help determine whether we proceed with a potential financial agreement or payment if a risk is flagged for a potential provider. During the reporting period, we had three entries that were considered high risk: (a) a service provider who failed to meet the deliverables outlined in the service level agreement; (b) the fiscal agent acting as the legal representative of a partner organisation, who after changes in staff, lacked the financial management capacity to deliver on the terms of the agreement, and (c) a partner organisation who failed to meet the financial management and reporting requirements of the sub-grant. In the first two instances, the contracts were terminated, and in the third instance, the grant had to be written off. All parties identified as 'high risk' on the list are ineligible to receive future funding from CIVICUS.

Procurement: CIVICUS has a detailed Procurement Policy which is communicated to all staff and partners, and trainings are done to keep staff updated on any changes/amendments. We also share the policy with subgrantees as an annex to the sub partnership agreement. All vendors, contractors and suppliers must be active, in good standing and authorized to transact business in the country which CIVICUS operates from. Vendors, contractors, and suppliers are subject to screening, including verification of the individual's or company's status as a debarred party. In addition, no service providers' bank accounts can be located in sanctioned countries per the Office of Foreign Assets Control list.

Travel: According to CIVICUS' Travel Policy, all travel booked at CIVICUS' expense must be cost effective (we always purchase Economy class), and all travel arrangement should be time conscious to allow enough time for preparation. As mentioned previously, all travel has been suspended for the safety of staff during the reporting period.

Cluster J. Governance processes maximise accountability

J1. What is your governance structure and what policies/practices guide replacing and recruiting new trustees/board members?

At the core of the CIVICUS' governance framework is the CIVICUS Board of Directors who are nominated from and elected by the CIVICUS membership, to whom they are directly accountable. The Board have a fiduciary responsibility, oversight of policy decisions, and ensure the delivery of the mission and purpose of the organisation.

The CIVICUS Board of Directors are elected by the Voting Members to serve for a three-year term that is renewable upon re-election. Nominees are drawn from the membership and can serve for a maximum of two terms. In 2016, the Board instituted a staggered rotation system that would from 2022 see at least 6 new members join the Board every 18 months. This system is designed to ensure regular rotation in Board membership while retaining a level of continuity with respect to Board values and ways of working.

CIVICUS Voting members can self-nominate for elections or be nominated by other Voting members to become part of the Board. It is the Board's responsibility to ensure that a broad, yet representative slate is presented to the Membership for elections. This is done through the Nominations Committee which oversees Board elections and are appointed through a Board Meeting. The CIVICUS Board Elections concluded in November 2020, and four new board electees joined the current Board of Directors in January 2021 for a three-year term. The CIVICUS By-laws allow an upper limit of 15 Board members per term. This includes 2 co-opted members, which affords the Board some flexibility to address skills gaps or concerns around representation. The positions are tightly controlled to promote the more democratic process of elections as the primary pathway to the Board.

The Board sees itself as a strategic Board and is not involved in day-to-day affairs of the organisation. Executive authority is delegated to a senior leadership team, with clear decision-making guidelines outlined in a Board approved Delegated Financial and Authorities Policy. The Board retains direct oversight over certain aspects of executive function, including approval of multi-year strategic plan and annual budget and plan. The Board is also responsible for monitoring the Secretary General's performance and contributes to the purpose and mission of the organisation as part of the broader alliance.

The Annual General meeting of Members (AGM) is a key accountability moment for the Board. The AGM provides an opportunity to review CIVICUS' work for the previous year and set an agenda for the upcoming year. This includes reviewing and approving the Annual Report and financial statement. This reporting period, we held a virtual CIVICUS Member AGM which focused on the theme of resilience and was accompanied by a week of virtual events on transforming civil society resourcing practices, the power of positive narratives, the #StandAsMyWitness campaign and the Diversity and Inclusion diagnostic tool.

There are three main Board committees, namely Executive Committee, Operations Committee (which includes financial matters), and Governance and Membership Committee. In addition, there are special purpose committees for specific issues.

J2. How does your board oversee the adherence to policies, resource allocation, potential risks and processes for complaints and grievances?

All CIVICUS policies are within the purview of the Board, either directly by drafting, reviewing or approving, or indirectly, through Secretary General approval or the approval of structures such as the Operations Management Forum or Program Management Forum. These approvals are based on authority derived from the Board via the Delegated and Financial Authorities Policy. A

few examples of some policies that the Board directly approved are the Remuneration Policy, Investment Policy, Resourcing strategy/policy and the Member Code of Conduct.

The CIVICUS Board of Directors retain strategic oversight over the organisation's risk management framework (RMF). CIVICUS management is responsible for functional execution of the Risk Management Policy, in line with the Delegated and Financial Authorities Policy.

Role	Responsibility
Board of Directors	<p>Oversight of management's risk management practices – the Board (at its 2nd Board meeting each year) reviews the organisation's risk report, highlighting risks weighted on the basis of likelihood of occurrence and impact</p> <p>The Board (through its Operations committee) has a direct interest in financial reporting risks, internal financial control and fraud as it relates to financial reporting. The Committee reports to the Board regarding the integrity and robustness of financial risk management processes</p>
Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	Overall responsibility for risk management and more specifically, risk mitigation, communication, and reporting
Cluster Leads/ Project Leads	As direct risk owners, Cluster and Project Leads are responsible for risk identification, assessment, and mitigation (to the extent necessary)
Operations & Programme Management Fora	The Operations and Programme management fora serve as the core platforms for cross-cluster collaboration in risk management
Governance, Risk & Compliance (GRC) Coordinator	<p>The GRC ensures that CIVICUS retains a pro-active posture to risk management. This includes coordinating quarterly risk fora, where risk owners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review identified/residual risk, • identify emerging risk • undertake preliminary assessment of identified risk <p>The GRC maintains CIVICUS' risk register</p>
Special purpose committees	<p>Senior management may assign special purpose committees (SPC) special risk management responsibilities. These are ad hoc committees designed to respond to specific circumstances of organisational risk exposure arising from emergency situations or unpredictable socio-economic, political, legal, technological and environmental trends.</p> <p>The Duty of Care Task Team is an example of a cross-cluster SPC assigned the responsibility of managing CIVICUS internal response to the Covid-19 pandemic</p>

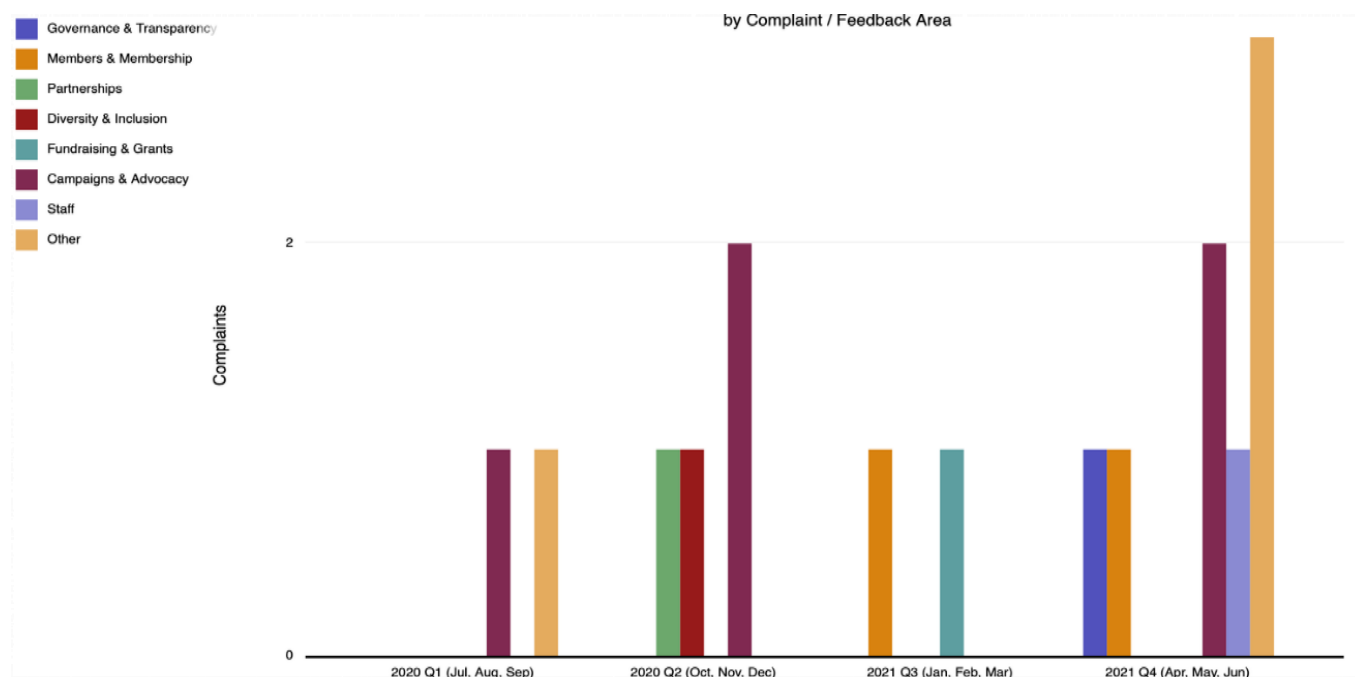
This framework reflects a bottom-up approach to risk management, where all staff are directly involved in risk management through the quarterly cluster/program risk management forum. Some clusters/programs have opted to dedicate a few minutes of monthly staff meetings to risk discussions.

J3. What processes and mechanisms does your organisation have in place to handle external complaints including those relating to unacceptable conduct of your staff, volunteers, or partner organisations? Please provide an overview of the number and nature of complaints in the reporting period, how many of those were valid, and of those that were valid, how many were appropriately handled and resolved.

At CIVICUS, we are open to all forms of feedback from our stakeholders, including complaints, as they are an indicator of where we need to improve. Our complaints and response processes are outlined in the [Feedback and Response policy](#), and apply to all of the CIVICUS Secretariat, and Board, and are underpinned by our [Membership Policy](#) and [Code of Conduct](#), against which all are held accountable. We have included the link to our [Feedback form](#) at the bottom of every webpage on our website, and on the CIVICUS Online Community platform to ensure it is easily accessible for our members and stakeholders and serves as a reminder to make use of it.

The CIVICUS [Online Feedback Form](#) is our main mechanism for collecting complaints, although we also receive feedback from our dedicated email address, feedback@civicus.org and through CIVICUS colleagues and stakeholders who receive and share feedback on our behalf. All feedback received is taken seriously, is logged onto our Online feedback portal on DevResults. This allows us to accurately document and follow up on issues raised until they are resolved.

During the last reporting period, we received 16 submissions



Of these, 8 were suggestions for improvement, two were complaints, and six were those we have categorised as spam. Due to the number submissions classified as spam, especially in quarter four, we decided to update the guidance to filling in our online feedback form, clarified our position on publishing external content, and added a link to [our newsletter](#) and [job opportunities page](#) for those seeking more information on how they can collaborate with us.

One complaint received was the absence of solidarity by CIVICUS to its member communities, specifically the Diversity and Inclusion Group for Networking and Action, in times of COVID-19. The Secretary General held a meeting with the complainant and the rest of DIGNA advisory group to address the concerns raised. The agreed way forward includes reinstatement of regular meetings to re-establish relationships and trust, and the creation of a transition/sustainability plan. This issue highlighted the need for us to strengthen our coordination with our memberships, especially considering the current COVID-19 challenges, and our recently launched member to member platform will be useful in solidifying that engagement not only between CIVICUS and its members, but also amongst members themselves.

Apart from the online feedback form, and dedicated feedback email address, CIVICUS also uses various other ways to listen and respond to feedback and complaints. We often receive feedback during events that we host, or we specifically arrange for feedback collecting sessions with specific groups. The [CIVICUS Solidarity Fund](#) hosts feedback sessions for unsuccessful applicants to explain again the criteria and answer any questions, usually related to why they were not selected for the fund. Most of our clusters and projects sustain an ongoing engagement with stakeholders in different forums, which provides an avenue for receiving feedback about staff, and our work. Our social media platforms also present an opportunity to occasionally hear from our stakeholders, i.e., on Twitter and Facebook, and this usually coincides with a specific

event or publication we will have posted, for instance the State of Civil Society report, which always draws some interesting questions around how we rate countries.

We have also realised that much of the feedback received through our clusters and teams and is not making its way to our online feedback repository on DevResults. Although teams do individually follow up and learn from this feedback, we need a coordinated approach to document, process and share this learning across the Alliance. This coming year, we will be working on a systematic way for all CIVICUS projects and teams to collect and respond to feedback and documenting this appropriately.

J4. How are internal complaints handled? Please provide an overview of the number and nature of complaints in the reporting period, how many of those were valid, and of those that were valid, how many were appropriately handled and resolved.

We are committed to ensuring that we strengthen our accountability to staff. Across most of 2020 and all of 2021, CIVICUS staff have been working remotely. We have introduced several wellbeing interventions which we believe have collectively reduced complaints across staff. Our Grievance Policy is in place, and defines what constitutes a complaint, points to relevant principles or policies the organisation has agreed to abide by and can be held accountable against (e.g., code of conduct, anti-discrimination, or anti-corruption policy), includes the steps and timeframe for handling complaints, and points to a dedicated channel for complaints submission (not the generic info@ email address).

Our HR team leads the internal grievance process, and we safeguard confidentiality by ensuring that only those HR team members directly involved in addressing an issue and colleagues required to supply supporting information or attend a hearing, have access to relevant documentation and communication about the grievance. When needed, the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and our Legal Advisory are engaged in resolving the grievance. If a member of the HR team or the COO is the subject of a grievance, the Legal Advisor, Board Chair, Chief Strategy Officer, or Secretary General assumes responsibility for resolving the issue.

During the reporting period we received one complaint through the organisation's grievance process in relation contract termination during probation. The matter was resolved through a mutual agreement to terminate. All new employees receive an orientation on Human Resources policies and procedures, including our internal grievance process.

Apart from the orientation sessions with new staff, we have also budgeted for socialising the Grievance Policy across all staff through sessions facilitated by an external expert. Each staff member will be required to attend one session. Moving forward, we will ensure that we reference the policy and process once a quarter in all staff meetings and share awareness briefs on Workplace once a quarter and will encourage Line Managers to reference the policy in monthly team meetings as well.

J5. How do you make decisions about the need for confidentiality and protecting the anonymity of those involved?

Our Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Policy makes provision for confidentiality in the grievance process. Through this policy, we have committed to "courteously, confidentially and professionally treat any person who invokes this complaint procedure, and the organisation will handle all complaints swiftly and confidentially to the extent possible in light of the need to take appropriate corrective action". We also ensure that all grievances related to harassment and discrimination are investigated and handled in a manner that ensures confidentiality of the identities of the persons involved. During and after the disciplinary inquiry, all parties concerned must endeavour to keep confidential all proceedings at the inquiry. Only appropriate members of management, and the aggrieved person, his or her representative, the alleged offender,

witnesses, and an interpreter, if required, shall be involved in the enquiry and where applicable the disciplinary meeting, in accordance with our policies.

From our last accountability report, we received constructive feedback on ensuring confidentiality in internal anonymous complaints and grievances in line with our [Feedback Response policy](#). In the current reporting period, protecting staff confidentiality in the internal grievance process was highlighted in the HR work plan for 2020-2021 and a review of the staff Grievance policy and process was conducted by legal counsel and updated in June 2021 to ensure that it aligns to the current work environment, policies, and systems ensure confidentiality in the grievance handling process. To ensure that we improve in safeguarding confidentiality in the internal grievance process, only the Human Resources team are involved in following up on these issues.

Overall, CIVICUS staff are governed by the Code of Conduct, which lays out, amongst other things, the Alliance's commitment to confidentiality and the responsibility that staff do have to adhere to the values on keeping each other's privacy in all matters, including in the grievance management process.

Cluster K. Leadership is dedicated to fulfilling the 12 commitments

K1. How is the governing body and management held accountable for fulfilling their strategic promises including on accountability?

As described in Sections J.1 and J2, the CIVICUS Board of Directors are nominated from and elected by the CIVICUS membership, to whom they are directly accountable. The Board have a fiduciary responsibility, oversight of policy decisions, and ensure the delivery of the mission and purpose of the organisation. Decision-making and oversight processes across the organisation are coordinated in accordance with the 'Financial and Delegated Authorities Approvals' framework which has been finalised by the CIVICUS Board, with inputs from staff.

The Board are currently overseeing CIVICUS' Strategy Amendment Process and the updated Strategy will be presented as an extraordinary AGM in February 2022 for their engagement. We anticipate that our annual planning and reporting processes will continue (as described in detail in sections A.2 and A.3) to provide the substantive vehicle which we hold ourselves accountable to the Board, members of the alliance and our partners to our progress against our strategy. The Board self-evaluation process is currently under review. A substantive assessment of the Secretary General is also coordinated through the Board Chair (as described in section H.1). In addition to this, all CIVICUS staff participate in performance management cycles.

Our Senior Leadership Team, Programme Management Forum and Operations Management Forum are key mechanisms to ensuring that we collectively deliver our strategic objectives. Through our quarterly reporting and impact reflection processes, these forums also play an important role in actioning cross-organisational recommendations from various strategy reviews, culture assessments (e.g., the Racial Justice Action Plan). This has been a key leverage point for CIVICUS to improve our reporting and "line of sight" across staff, management, and board mechanisms, as was recommended in our Midterm Strategy Review.

K2. What steps have you taken to ensure that staff are included in discussing progress toward commitments to organisational accountability?

The annual planning cycle is a key organisational moment to set organisational commitments and determine how institutional capacity and resources will be used to advance agreed outcomes. The annual plan is developed by staff and approved by the CIVICUS Board.

Key cross-organisational priorities outlined as part of the annual plan included amending our current strategic plan, the continued implementation of recommendations from the mid-term

strategy review and taking further steps to promote a workplace culture of equity and transparency. These outcomes have been progressed in this period and include a comprehensive strategic amendment process, a rigorous racial justice review and the drafting an operational strategy on data and digital rights. All of these processes have involved active cycles of deliberation and feedback across staff, and in accordance with the CIVICUS Approvals framework.

Further discussion and reflection on organisational accountability occurs primarily via the cross-organisational work led by the Impact & Accountability (I&A) cluster and includes the Resilient Roots (RR) initiative which is working to promote and enhance the accountability of civil society organisations, including CIVICUS itself.

Our Accountability report writing process is an agency wide undertaking, where staff from different teams and projects come together to describe how their work has contributed to improving our collective accountability as an organisation. Following each report, we always develop an improvement plan that outlines what the key gaps are and what we need to do to address them. This helps us to effectively monitor our progress towards continuous improvement on accountability. It has always been a culture for us to share all reports, Independent Panel Review feedback and accountability improvement plan with staff in staff meetings and on our internal Workplace channel, and invite staff feedback on the feedback, which feeds into our improvement plans as well.

K3. What is your accountability report's scope of coverage? Are you reporting for the whole organisation or just the international secretariat? For secretariats of international federations, on which issues of accountability (or relating to Accountable Now's 12 commitments) do your members report to you on, and with what frequency? Where there is no routine reporting, how do you use your coordinating functions to elevate attention to accountability issues throughout your federation?

Our accountability report reflects the journey we are taking to improve accountability within the alliance, to and with staff, as well as our commitments to our members, stakeholders and most importantly the individuals, groups and communities that are directly and indirectly affected by our work. This report also includes how we have supported and collaborated with our members to improve their own accountability to their own constituents.

Examples of how we strengthen and elevate accountability issues throughout our alliance are provided throughout this report, most notably our Resilient Roots (section B.1), Diversity and Inclusion Pilot (section C.3) and our new Member Code of Conduct are all initiatives that will strengthen our accountability practices within the CIVICUS and with our members.

CIVICUS continues to prioritise and invest in strengthening its accountability to all its stakeholders. Accountability remains a key element that has been highlighted in our current strategy amendment process. In this process, we have drawn on lessons and experiences from our members and through our own work, reflecting on how we need to change in order to further the collective impact of the CIVICUS alliance and turn the tide on the challenges that are faced by our members and constituents. CIVICUS looks forward to sharing our amended Strategy Plan 2022-2027 in our next interim report, specifically how we plan to align implement our strategy and hold ourselves accountable to the commitments we make.

This report covers the period from 01 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 – with some more current examples where clarified. It was submitted in December 2021. For any questions or feedback on this report, please get in touch with the Impact & Accountability Cluster (Yvonne Madondo, Yvonne.madondo@civicus.org) or via feedback@civicus.org.



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