Part 3 — Lasting Positive Change and
Sustainable Results

2022

# CSO Accountability
# in Focus

**Accountable
Now**

# How did our Members score?



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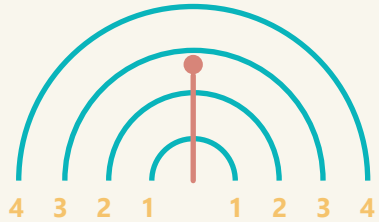
## 2.86/4

Out of the 15 Member reports reviewed in 2021.

This average was calculated using the scores given by the IRP when reviewing Member accountability reports. For more information please read our reporting framework. The average is calculated using Members' scores on the reporting questions 'B1''B2' and 'E4' within the reporting framework.

CSOs around the world work towards advancing lasting positive change and achieving sustainable results; these are goals inscribed in their mission and vision. However, CSOs face multiple competing demands from a wide range of stakeholders - especially those who hold power over fiscal resources such as donors -  to demonstrate the positive impact of programmatic interventions. These demands might lead to the prioritisation of quick fixes that may temporarily satisfy some stakeholders rather than enable the organisation to plan and implement long-term solutions.

How can CSOs address multiple competing demands and acheive lasting postive change and sustainable results?

Another challenge for CSOs in achieving lasting positive impact and sustainable results comes from the lack of encouragement for organisations to reflectively learn and particularly, to learn from failure. Evaluation reports from projects that failed are likely to be hidden in a drawer and shared only if strictly necessary. Yet there is an argument for both the organisation and all of its stakeholders to break the taboo of "failure" and to explore how it can be converted into a source of powerful learning and course correction.

Ultimately, for results to be truly sustainable, ICSOs must have both the will and the enabling environment to create more space to engage people and communities, local CSOs and other actors so that they can drive collaboration towards change and common results. However, at times the partnerships between ICSOs and local actors remain unequal. Shifts in resources and influence are much needed.
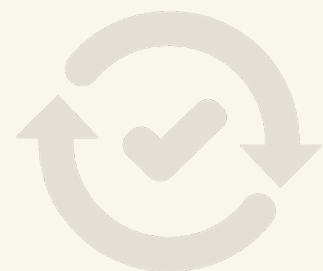
Because these challenges are still very present, this Accountability in Focus Report takes a look at what our Members are doing to address the barriers to lasting positive change.

**"Lasting Positive Change" is one of Accountable Now's** [12 Accountability Commitments](#).

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Accountable Now is a global membership platform. We support civil society organisations (CSOs) in being transparent, responsive to stakeholders and focused on delivering impact. Together with Members and partners, we aim to engage CSOs in a conversation on how to advance accountability practices, through reporting, workshops, projects and more.

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

**How are the context and needs of stakeholders analysed to identify what is already working well?**

**Do organisations´ programmes respond to the operating context, including changing dynamics in political environments and funding sources?**

**Have your stakeholders´ strengths, opportunities and impacts been enhanced through collaboration with you? Can your stakeholders influence change through their input?**

**Do organisations´ stakeholders recognise the long-term results of your programme and see that you build on existing or previous initiatives whilst contributing to systemic changes?**

**Can your stakeholders continue to work towards collective goals after you have ceased engagement?**

Through these questions, we are encouraging our Members to assess and think about how they are ensuring their interventions create lasting positive impacts. CSOs must work closely with people and communities to understand their unique contexts, needs, and culture. Identifying previous and existing initiatives and considering the views and feedback from a wide range of stakeholders are key to learning and innovation. Monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks support CSOs'ability to discern between quick fixes and long-term efforts.

**CSOs should create the conditions for local stakeholders to enhance their strengths, opportunities and impacts during the programmatic interventions. Ensuring that projects' benefits continue to materialise once the projects are over is crucial to CSOs' sustainability approaches.**

# How are our Members promoting lasting positive change?

When reviewing our Members' accountability reports submitted in 2021, we can see that they conducted monitoring, evaluation & learning, and innovation processes with people and communities and other stakeholders. Members identified and engaged with the programmes of other actors when designing, planning and implementing their own programmes. Members also contributed to strengthening linkages, local networks and learning opportunities across a wide range of stakeholders.

People and communities' ability to lead change was strengthened through deliberate initiatives like training, and through their involvement in members' work.

# 11

Members have policies/processes/initiatives to ensure the organisation's work is sustainable and that **people and partners continue to benefit from its efforts after the official end of projects and interventions**.

# 10

Members have **systems to ensure that lessons learned are acted upon and shared** within the organisation.

## In 2021, we received 15 full accountability reports from our Members and when reviewing these, we were able to draw the following data:

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Members develop **capacity sharing initiatives** in response to people and communities' needs and preferences as expressed by them.

These numbers are a reflection of the importance that our Members put on ensuring their work is sustainable and has lasting positive impacts.

In the following pages, we will share concrete examples on how our members analyse targeted contexts and build upon what already exists - emphasising listening, sharing and co-creating with stakeholders. Members pay special attention to enabling people and communities to lead change, through deliberate interventions that incrementally create the conditions for local actors to own and drive change. This is supported through capacity sharing initiatives that focus on the needs and priorities of people and communities. Robust Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks enable our members to assess how sustainability has been achieved (or not), and to learn from successes and failures so that future interventions build upon the knowledge acquired in previous programmes.

# Building on what already exists

Our Members understand that in order to achieve their ambitious goals, their work alone is not enough. Programmes' sustainability strongly depends on existing developments and on the work of local actors. Therefore contextual analyses are a first key step to achieving sustainability.
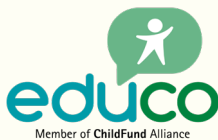
**Educo** emphasises feasibility and sustainability during the planning and design phases of programmatic interventions. Specific strategies such as exit and perpetuation plans that involve duty bearers from the outset through collaboration agreements are in place. In humanitarian actions, three pillars underpin the sustainable approach : Adoption of plans and laws in the medium and long term, ownership and continuity of actions, and capacity building. An illustrative example of the approach is an initiative in Benin, being carried out within the framework of a project for the protection and access to education of children and adolescents on the move. Members of the village committee for the management of canoes have made a commitment to guarantee two times the number of canoes and to hire canoe workers for the transport of schoolchildren.

**ChildFund New Zealand** considers the short-to-long term environmental, economic, social, or cultural impacts they may create in any activity they support. The SAFE (sustainable, appropriate, feasible, and empowering) analysis recognises that all activities have environmental, economic, social, and cultural dimensions that must be considered when designing and implementing projects.

**World Vision**'s ministry goal is the 'sustained well-being of children within families and communities, especially the most vulnerable'. They have identified five 'drivers' of sustainability which, once integrated into programmes, will enhance the chances of the impact being sustained beyond project closure.

# Enabling people and communities to lead change

Members understand that to achieve lasting positive change and sustainable results, change and development processes need to be owned and led by the affected people and communities. Our Members have worked closely with stakeholders to create the enabling environment that supports people and communities in driving positive change on the issues that are of relevance for them.

**Accountability Lab**'s Accountability Incubator, and other fellowship programs, enable participants to share and develop skills to work independently once they graduate. Accountability Lab Pakistan has reported that 30-40% of accountaprenerus are working independently and have been able to raise funds and build their networks. In Nigeria, Accountability Lab has partnered with Chocolate City for the Voice2Rep project through which first-time musicians have long-term connections and mentors within the music industry.

**Amnesty International** Ghana worked closely with rights holders in various informal settlements to ensure they had information and stronger skills to campaign for ending forced evictions, resulting in rights holders being able to engage local authorities more effectively on issues affecting them.

Sustainability is a fundamental component of **ChildFund New Zealand's** Road Map approach, which is based on the understanding that for change to be meaningful and long-term, development must be driven by communities and not outside actors. Communities must determine their plans and goals, as well as lead and implement activities. Ownership of projects is vital to the sustainability of community development because it ensures that project work is maintained and enhanced well after the life of the project.

**Plan International** engages with, and supports, partners to deliver outcomes for children, particularly girls, and to increase their reach and influence at all levels, working towards sustainable change. This includes strengthening and building partnerships and developing strategic alliances and relationships with a range of individuals and organisations from local to national to global. In working with partners, Plan International carefully, and constantly, appraises each relationship so that the opportunities and risks of working together can be understood, allowing informed decisions with risks managed through appropriate controls. The Building Better Partnerships approach considers sustainability of the outcomes of partnership after the partnership has ended.

Through the Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA) **Terre des Hommes** has extensively engaged in capacity building activities through in-person training and regular technical support in Kenya, Uganda and the Philippines to support the in-country GAA staff and other CSOs with knowledge and capacity. The aim is that local actors can autonomously participate in the human rights mechanisms well beyond the end of the programme. Young girls who participated in UN conferences were able to address a large audience of country representatives and present the problems they are facing.

The **World YWCA** initiative "Promoting Peace and Justice Through Women and Youth Empowerment in South Sudan" (2020) under the Fund for 2020-23 "Enabling Young Women's Transformative Leadership and Amplifying Their Voices for a Peaceful and Just World", is one example of World YWCA's efforts for young women to transform power structures towards Goal 2035 and the SDGs by using their lived experiences and power to influence decision makers to shape policies and actions on gender equality, peace and security.

# Robust MEAL systems and long term impact measurement

Monitoring, Evaluation, & Learning (MEL) functions of Members are instrumental to achieving lasting positive change and sustainable results. MEL systems provide a framework to understand how CSOs' projects impact people, communities and stakeholders. At a macro-level, MEL can help understand whether programmatic interventions' benefits last after the projects are over.

**ChildFund Australia** conducts and publishes longer-term impact reports. A recent example is the ChildFund Nonghet Program Operational and Impact Evaluation 2010-2020. The evaluation documents key findings from ChildFund's work over a decade with a specific focus on program achievements, documenting changes and identifying lessons learned and good practices.
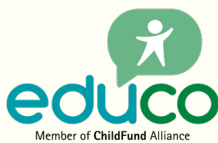
**Educo**'s Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Manual guides Educo staff and its partners in the use of the MEAL tools, and explains how to integrate these concepts in the programming cycle. The institutionalisation of specific tools has served to identify good practices and elements that need strengthening in the strategies and projects. Learning is reported, analysed and systematised for socialisation and capitalisation.

As part of the broader global results-based management approach, **SOS Children's Villages International** has developed a social impact assessment approach and methodology. The social impact assessments measure the long-term impact of alternative care and family strengthening programmes on the lives of former programme participants and their communities. In addition, the assessments provide a financial analysis of social return on investment.

# Learning sharing

Members' approaches to sharing knowledge aim to ensure insights gained from programmatic experience are fed into the organisation's institutional memory and made available for future projects. Members also invested in research projects that focus on understanding programmes' sustainability.

**Accountability Lab**'s learnings are shared internally through regular/weekly meetings. Additionally, some teams have instituted quarterly reviews for more thorough conversations around progress. These sessions include all staff, which allows for improved tracking and planning of programs and finances simultaneously, and increases teams' ability to identify bottlenecks, operations and cash flow challenges in advance. Bringing all team members into learning conversations also aligns with Accountability Lab's goal of cultivating a culture of learning across all country teams, which helps the organisation distribute the responsibility of gathering data, input or feedback for learning purposes among team members, especially where formal MEL capacity is low.

**Educo** evaluated ten prototypes (learning and improvement through experimentation projects) implemented in country offices between 2017 and 2020. The results, lessons learned, products/tools and prospects for capitalisation and replication in terms of the global strategy and for each prototype have been documented and shared internally in the first quarter of 2021 through a report and socialisation sheets. This work has revealed areas for improvement in the practice of internal working principles and dynamics that can be extrapolated throughout the organisation, such as rigid organisational structures, lack of coordination and prioritisation of objectives, and insufficient communication and accountability between teams.

As part of their commitment to innovation and learning, **Restless Development** has ongoing programmatic systems that focus on understanding what has worked and what has not from their programmes. An illustrative example is the growing body of youth-led research which has also produced valuable insights for Restless Development's work. This is shared externally - with both full reports available to download online, along with more accessible summaries of key findings (see the Resilient Realities research).

Beyond COVID-19, **World Vision International** have been involved in other collective learning initiatives, including a project hosted by the Movement for Community-Led Development. World Vision International joined with about 30 other organisations in pooling our programme evaluation reports to conduct a meta-analysis of the complex relationship between community-led development and development outcomes.

# Capacity sharing with local actors

Members understand that lasting positive change needs to be owned and driven by people and communities. In order to do so, their capacity development priorities are encouraged and supported by members. The following examples illustrates different approaches that our Members have put in practice:

**Accountability Lab**'s interventions are intended to develop key skills of program participants, and to be vehicles to gain skills on how to start conversations and take action no matter the theme. Capacity is retained on three levels:

- Knowledge – All programmes have a knowledge component to them, ensuring that not only are stakeholders and participants engaging in programming but also completing the project with a tangible skill.

- Networks - Teams support individuals and organisations they work with by intentionally connecting them with one another, and connecting them with others outside of the immediate network.

- Values - A key aspect of Accountability Lab's work is the emphasis on accountability as a value which threads through all the work by demonstrating: integrity, practicality, humility, collaboration and innovation.

A key focus of **ChildFund Australia**'s approach to sustainability relates to the understanding that sustainability and local capacity are fundamentally linked. If programs are to be sustainable, there needs to be sufficient local capacity to manage them without being dependent on external assistance; more importantly, enduring impact depends on the strength of local government and civil society. ChildFund Australia's increasing focus on strengthening formal systems was officially included in their Theory of Change in 2018. At a project level, for example, a nutrition focused health project in Laos worked to strengthen health care systems at the local level through training for staff and the provision of equipment to ante-natal care and postnatal care services. The project was designed and implemented in alignment with the Ministry of Health policy and approach to maternal and child health.

**ChildFund New Zealand** is currently working through ways that can meaningfully support partners to develop their skills and strengths. The starting point is the acknowledgement that partners must identify the capacities they want to build. ChildFund New Zealand is currently investigating a co-design process, which ensures that the power is shifted to the partner and their stakeholders to decide the necessary conditions and capabilities required for their growth. This approach supports partners to decide on what is most suitable and appropriate for their experiences, contexts, and culture, rather than other more traditional approaches which prescribe qualities, skills, or knowledge to be built.

**Greenpeace**'s Collective Climate Action is a global Greenpeace project that focuses on supporting the health and longevity of the existing climate movement, while also identifying methods to strengthen movements in key priority geographies that may not be as developed. In 2020, the project delivered various training sessions and workshops focusing on wellbeing, with approximately 1,000 activists trained by the end of the year. To support movement building driven by local and national context on climate in the Global South, a workshop took place in Tunisia with Greenpeace MENA, where an action plan for local climate-related work was developed. The Collective Climate Action team also focused on building the capacity of existing movements, for example by developing an activist platform for petition generation, access to resources, and the ability to connect and form groups with activists around the world.

# References

1.  See **Educo**'s 2020 Accountability report [here](here).

2.  See **ChildFund New Zealand**'s 2019-20 Accountability report [here](here).

3.  See **World Vision International**'s 2020 Accountability report [here](here).

4.  See **Accountability Lab**'s 2020 Accountability report [here](here).

5.  See **Amnesty International**'s 2020 Accountability report [here](here).

6.  See **Plan International**'s 2020-21 Interim Accountability report [here](here).

7.  See **Terre des Hommes**' 2019 Accountability report [here](here).

8.  See **World YWCA**'s 2019-20 Accountability report [here](here).

9.  See **ChildFund Australia**'s 2020-21 Accountability report [here](here).

10. See **SOS Children's Villages International** 's 2019 Accountability report [here](here).

11. See **Restless Development**'s 2019-20 Accountability report [here](here).

12. See **Greenpeace**' 2020 Accountability report [here](here).