

Part 4 — Empowered, Effective Staff  
and Volunteers



2022

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**CSO Accountability  
in Focus**

## How did our Members score?



# 2.66/4

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 'H1', 'H2', 'H3', and 'J4' within the reporting framework.

**Staff and volunteers are often referred to as “the most valuable resource” by many organisations. They are the engines that enable civil society organisations to reach their vision and mission. With the right working environment, staff and volunteers can realise their full potential and flourish.**

One of the ways that CSOs can create the right environment is through policies such as codes of conduct, staff handbooks, values, and safeguarding policies among others. These are important to inform staff and volunteers regarding how they should conduct themselves and business, setting expectations and enabling mutual accountability between the organisation and their staff.

It is also very important that these policies reflect the voices of all staff and volunteers. As staff and volunteers may come from all walks of life, they have experiences that when put together, can strengthen the organisation and its practices. Additionally, as policies need to be lived by all staff members, their engagement at the creation and review phases could equate to better buy-in, enabling them to know and support the policies being put in place.

**Imagine what the involvement of staff and volunteers during the creation and review phases of policy development could do to ensure better buy-in.**

Another way to empower staff is through providing the right development opportunities. Through continuously supporting their staff and volunteers to grow, CSOs can ensure that their staff and volunteers have the right skills to carry out their work, are able to improve on their performance and get the right results.

CSOs also need to further empower their staff to input into the organisation and be part of the decision making process. In doing so, staff's expertise and knowledge are put to use, widening the foundation for the organisation. Not only that, through empowering and meaningful engagement with staff CSOs can establish better ownership of work from their staff and volunteers, thus enabling outcomes to be shared.

It is because of the above reason that this Accountability in Focus report zooms in further on what our members are doing in order to achieve "**Empowered and effective staff and volunteers**". This is one of Accountable Now's [12 Accountability Commitments](#) and it focuses on the development of staff and volunteers so that they can reach their full potential.

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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.



**Through continuously supporting them to grow, CSOs can ensure that their staff and volunteers have the right skills to carry out their work, are able to improve on their performance and get the right results.**



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

**How do you ensure that your organisation's values, codes of conduct, standards, expected attitudes and behaviours are known and followed?**



**How does your organisation encourage diversity and what special considerations does your organisation have for the needs of women and minorities that work for or with you?**

**What mechanisms are in place for staff to communicate their concerns and ideas in a safe manner without negative consequences?**



**How do you assess your staff and volunteers' performance and needs to develop their skills and competencies to do their job better?**

**How do you involve different members of staff and volunteers in planning and decision-making processes and how do you support them in potential leadership ambitions?**

**How do you know that your efforts to create a safe, fair and supportive environment are successful, including in conflict and high-risk areas?**

Through these questions, we are encouraging our Members to assess and think about empowering working environments for their staff and volunteers. Professional, well-equipped, and loyal staff and volunteers improve the quality of an organisation's work and reduce risks of mismanagement.

To achieve this, CSOs must have transparent and fair principles, policies and procedures for recruiting, developing and managing staff. By including staff and volunteers in planning and decision-making processes, CSOs will create empowering environments in which individuals can effectively perform and grow.

## How are our Members promoting “Empowered and effective staff and volunteers”?

When reviewing our Members’ accountability reports submitted in 2021, we can see that our Members ensure that staff and volunteers share and act in line with their values and professional standards. Fair and transparent recruitment and employment practices are in place, and most members have written policies and procedures that formalise these practices. Members encourage and provide resources for staff and volunteers to constantly improve their skills, protect the personal safety of those who work with their organisation, and create fair and supportive workplaces. Members also involve staff and volunteers at all levels of the organisation, ensuring that they have a say in strategic decision making processes.

# 13

Members have documented their commitment to a **safe workplace environment in a policy, code of conduct or similar.**

# 11

Members reported having a **dedicated budget for staff and volunteer development.**



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



# all 15

Members have a complaints mechanism for staff members, however **only 7** members reported initiatives to promote and socialise the mechanism so that staff members are aware of it and know how to use the mechanism.

These numbers are a reflection of the importance that our Members put on ensuring that their staff and volunteers are empowered and effective.

In the following pages, we will share concrete examples on how our Members have robust policy frameworks in place to institutionalise the commitment to create empowering environments for staff and volunteers. Practical examples on how members engage and involve staff and volunteers in decision making at the highest levels, be it strategy development or programmatic choices, provide a sense on how members genuinely close feedback loops internally. Lastly, this report provides examples on how our Members enable staff and volunteers to develop personally and professionally, in particular, there has been an emphasis on wellbeing and mental health triggered by the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Robust policy frameworks addressing empowered staff and volunteers

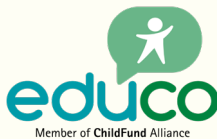
Members' policies relating to staff and volunteers such as code of conduct, diversity and inclusion, grievances, whistleblowing, and staff development, provide a transparent overview of the commitments and expectations that our members hold in regards to their staff and volunteers in a wide range of areas. See below for some examples:



**ChildFund Australia's** Grievance Policy enables staff, interns and volunteers to lodge a claim with regard to any employment matter or if they feel adversely affected by the misinterpretation or misapplication of any of the policies. The Grievance Policy is supported by the [Whistleblowing Policy](#), which aims at encouraging employees and others who have serious concerns about any aspect of ChildFund Australia's work to come forward and voice those concerns where they feel other reporting mechanisms are not appropriate.



The **World YWCA** continues reviewing, developing and adopting appropriate personnel policies to ensure the World YWCA commitments to human rights and to being a safe working environment are fulfilled. Some examples of the publicly available policies are the following: [Staff Code of Conduct](#), [Grievance and Appeal Policy](#), [Whistleblowing Policy](#), [Sexual Harassment Exploitation and Abuse at Work Prevention and Response Policy](#), [Transgender Inclusion Policy](#), [Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct](#), and [Staff Representative Group Terms of Reference](#).



**Educo**'s staff, volunteers and interns must sign a letter of commitment to the [Code of Ethics](#), which establishes a conduct framework to guarantee coherence between Educo's actions and its institutional ideology. Through the Code of Ethics, the organisation is committed to guaranteeing the safety, health and wellbeing at work of its employees, receiving all possible protection and complying with current legislation.



**Restless Development**'s [global performance and development guidelines](#) are used and applied by all Hubs. These guidelines aim to enable staff members to fulfil their potential by enhancing their existing capabilities and building new skills based on the needs of Restless Development, the particular job that they do and where they want to go in their career. It is hoped that this will bring mutual benefit to the agency, enabling the staff member to do their job better and to develop their skills.



## Staff and volunteers' feedback informs decision making

Member organisations engage with their staff and volunteers using a great variety of channels, from online surveys to face to face workshops and meetings. Inputs and feedback gathered is used to inform decision making at different levels. Below are some examples:



**World Vision International's** 'Our Voice' survey gathers employee opinions on their experience of working for World Vision. Scores in 2020 increased on average across all themes, and were particularly high in areas such as positivity about the future of World Vision, satisfaction with having the tools and resources to do their job well, and being able to live out their faith identity, while at the same time being respectful of people of faiths other than Christianity. Lower scores in other areas indicated that World Vision International could be more agile in how they deploy resources and in ensuring a good work/life balance. The survey data showed progress is being made across all these lower-scoring areas.



**ChildFund Australia** is committed to providing opportunities for open dialogue and honest feedback. These opportunities most frequently take the form of meetings, such as regular one-to-one meetings between staff and their managers, as well as all-staff meetings which include opportunities for discussion of key issues and for staff to provide feedback to senior management. As an example of the approach, a survey of Sydney-based staff was conducted by ChildFund's internal Space and Place Working Group in 2020, following discussions at an all-staff meeting. The survey was designed to ensure staff attitudes and feedback informed decision-making about working-from-home arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic.



When **Accountability Lab** developed their **2020 – 2023 Strategy**, an open document for comments was created and formed the basis for iterations, clarifications and realignment.

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Feedback from **Restless Development's** staff across all hubs also strongly shapes the direction of travel of the organisation and helps identify priorities areas of work. In addition to the **annual agency survey**, which helps to make changes in the organisation - in 2020, following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic quarterly wellbeing surveys were introduced, to understand how staff members were feeling professionally and personally about the pandemic, and how Restless Development could **support mental health** during a challenging time. Staff responses have led to the implementation of flexible hours, the closure of the India Hub for a two week period to protect staff wellbeing during the most challenging months of the pandemic in India, and informed the return to the office, among others. **Feedback from volunteers has gone on to further shape programmes** and the support Restless Development provides.

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In **SOS Children's Villages International's** annual **Harvesting workshops**, which are based on the principles of positive psychology, staff from all over the world come together to share their work experiences, develop their strengths and work on future projects. With storytelling and appreciative inquiry, the workshop enables participants to identify what works well and what might be improved. In a creative process, they "dream" of what an ideal future might look like and collaboratively plan the implementation of their future projects.

## Identification and development of staff development opportunities

Our Members realised how staff and volunteer development is becoming ever more important. The pace of change in the sector requires a constant and intentional development plan for all staff and volunteers, who should be the owners of their own development. Below read some examples on how Members are approaching the development of their staff:



For **World Vision International**, **staff development is closely related to performance management**, which starts with robust goal setting aligned to organisational objectives and ongoing conversations between staff and their managers throughout the year about performance and ends with an annual performance review. In 2020, 86% of staff reported that they have regular, helpful conversations about their work with their immediate manager.



**ChildFund New Zealand's** Leadership team undertook a **large-scale skill assessment project** that ultimately produced a gap analysis of the entire team's current skill and passion level across what the leadership determined to be our future critical skills). This analysis indicated areas of strength and opportunity across the entire team, specific departments and by tenure. The results were shared with the team and development has taken place informally through managers to employees in quarterly performance review sessions.

**GREENPEACE**

In 2020, **Greenpeace** developed specific training on **how to have courageous conversations** when it comes to receiving or witnessing disrespectful behaviour. This training is a direct follow-up on actual staff needs as identified based on the **Integrity & Respect training** outcomes. In the Integrity & Respect training staff was called to indicate what else they would need from the organisation to support them in terms of sexual harassment, bullying, and discrimination, upon which their staff requested more training on actual cases and how to have a courageous conversation with persons that do not behave respectfully – when feeling safe to do so.

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**Educo's Development Room**, a global e-learning platform, which is now available in English, Spanish and French, is accessible to all staff across the organisation. In 2020 Educo opened the Development Room to local partner organisations, who have received training from internal experts.

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In 2020, the **World YWCA's** employee performance system was comprehensively revised and now includes provision for **mutual performance evaluation** between the supervisor and the supervisee. The annual performance review is intended to be a fair and balanced assessment of a team member's performance at the annual mark of the performance year. It is a time for the supervisor and team member to review the performance of the last 12 months (approximately), give and receive feedback, clarify job duties, explain management's expectations, and review goals and improvement areas for the rest of the year.

# Wellbeing and mental health of staff and volunteers

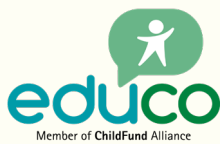
Members are more deliberately supporting the wellbeing and mental health of staff and volunteers, since the outbreak of Covid-19, when many people across the globe have seen their wellbeing and mental health challenged at a dramatic scale and importance.



**Amnesty International's** International Secretariat supports entities through the provision of a Wellbeing framework, models and resources on wellbeing and security, assistance to conduct needs assessment and organisational surveys on organisational climate. In [2020](#) and [2021](#) a number of resources aimed at supporting young activists to sustain their wellbeing while fighting for human rights were disseminated and made publicly available.



**ChildFund Australia** implemented a new pro-active employee assistance program (EAP), UPRISE, in March 2020. UPRISE is an online platform which offers short learning videos and exercises and supports managers and staff to actively work on wellbeing and stress management.



**Educo** is working on flexibility and work-life balance agreements that allow the whole team to work remotely, with flexible working hours, according to the possibilities of the position, with the idea of incorporating **work-life balance leave** in countries where labour legislation does not currently provide for it. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this whole process and has given Educo valuable experience and learning in managing remote working.



**Greenpeace** has regular and ongoing staff training on the Code of Conduct under the heading of "Integrity and Respect". All new staff are fully inducted within four weeks of onboarding. In addition, we have uploaded our model Code of Conduct on our website, where their [Integrity System](#) is also well described. The global annual number of integrity cases received by Greenpeace NROs is documented in the organisation's intranet and, since 2017, publicly available in our Annual Reports.

# References

1. See **ChildFund Australia**'s 2020-21 Accountability report [here](#).
2. See **World YWCA**'s 2019-20 Accountability report [here](#).
3. See **Educo**'s 2020 Accountability report [here](#).
4. See **Restless Development**'s 2019-20 Accountability report [here](#).
5. See **World Vision International**'s 2020 Accountability report [here](#).
6. See **Accountability Lab**'s 2020 Accountability report [here](#).
7. See **SOS Children's Villages International**'s 2019 Accountability report [here](#).
8. See **ChildFund New Zealand**'s 2019-20 Accountability report [here](#).
9. See **Greenpeace**' 2020 Accountability report [here](#).
10. See **Amnesty International**'s 2020 Accountability report [here](#).





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