A network diagram consisting of various sized grey circles (nodes) connected by thin grey lines, forming a complex web-like structure. The nodes are distributed across the page, with a higher density in the lower half.

# **EDUCO**

## **ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT**

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**2021 INTERIM REPORT**



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## Statement from Educo's Executive Director

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We are pleased to present Educo's 2021 Interim Accountability Report. This report presents a progress update for the five areas of improvement that we identified in our response letter to the Independent Review Panel's feedback on our 2020 report: Social impact measurement and theory of change, Key strategic indicators, Feedback and complaints mechanisms, Transparency and access to information, and Participation in reporting and accountability practices.

In 2021 our work continued to be profoundly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with schools still closed in several of the countries we work in and significant mobility and sanitary restrictions still in place in many areas. In this context, we continued to adapt our activities and look for opportunities to innovate, finding new ways to reach people and listen to their voices, especially the voices of children and young people. In Nicaragua, for example, we collaborated with a local television network to make our child-led Open Day accessible to stakeholders when an in-person event was not possible. And at a global level, we listened to how children and adolescents from different parts of the world have experienced their rights to education and participation during the COVID-19 pandemic, producing a new [report](#) which promotes children's agency and demonstrates the importance of taking into account their ideas and opinions. These are just two examples of how the pandemic has pushed us to look for new ways of fulfilling our mission and ensuring that we are accountable to the people we work for and with, particularly children.

Accountability is central to our 2020-2030 Global Impact Framework and our 2021-2025 Global Programmatic Framework, and in 2021 we have taken important steps towards promoting a culture of accountability across the organisation. We have reviewed and promoted institutional policies that are key to our accountability to stakeholders, such as our Suggestions, Complaints and Commendations Policy and our Policy on Protection against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harrassment (PSEAH), whilst the creation of the role of Global Safeguarding Specialist at the beginning of 2021 is proving key to ensuring the coordinated implementation of safeguarding and compliance mechanisms, including comprehensive training to all staff. We have also made significant progress towards becoming an impact-driven organisation, with the development of our Social Impact Measurement System which is described in more detail below. We have also started creating and publishing [Systematisation of Evidence and Lessons Learned Reports](#) from our projects, which facilitate the visualisation of achievements and impact, learning, and decision making. All of these elements contribute to Educo now having a clearer understanding of the type of dynamic accountability that we want to practice and promote, and greater awareness of how we can be accountable to children and their families and communities in the contexts we work in.

In terms of accountability, over the coming year we will be focusing our efforts on the following three areas:

- **Finalising and rolling out our Social Impact Measurement System**, which will allow us to identify and measure the changes in children's lives that our projects are bringing about, as well as identify where we need to make improvements. The system will be key for facilitating transparent reporting to our different stakeholders on our progress towards our commitments. There is more information below on the progress made in this area during 2021.

- **Promoting children's agency for social change**, as set out in our 2021-2025 Global Programmatic Framework. As an organisation that focuses on children's rights and well-being, it is fundamental that we work to support their empowerment and participation in all aspects that affect them. We will be striving to create more spaces for participation and listening to children, so that their voices can guide our work and so that they can influence the other spheres of their lives: families, schools, communities, and governments.
- **Strengthening our expertise and capacities in humanitarian action**, including adapting our monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning tools and mechanisms to humanitarian contexts. This will require us to adapt our procedures and ways of working, but we will be able to draw on the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year we have been able to carry out our work with a much greater degree of normality, and restart many of the activities that had been on hold during the pandemic. However, we should now build on the learnings of the last two years: the ability to adapt to crisis situations, employ flexible ways of working, and look for innovative solutions, including digital tools for participation and accountability, will all be vital to our work going forward, particularly in the uncertain, unpredictable, and continually evolving country and global contexts that we face.



Pilar Orenes

Pilar Orenes  
CEO, Educo

## Significant organisational changes during the reporting period

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The following is a summary of the most significant organisational changes that have taken place during the reporting period:

- Over the last couple of years, we have been developing and putting in place the different elements that make up our new Institutional Planning Cycle (IPC). 2020 was the first year of our 2020-2030 Global Impact Framework (GIF), and 2021 saw the start of two other key documents, the **Global Programmatic Framework 2021-2025 (GPF)** and the **Global Organisational Development Plan 2021-2023 (GODP)**. With the aim of consolidating a high-impact and agile model that proposes innovative solutions which place children and adolescents at the centre, actively listening to their voices and taking them into account, the 2021-2025 Global Programmatic Framework structures Educo's action into **three programmatic areas**. These three areas, which establish our priorities and will guide the design of Educo's programs, are: Safe, equitable and quality education; Protection from violence and exploitation; and Empowerment and Agency for social change. On the other hand, the 2021-2023 Global Organisational Development Plan establishes **four Organisational Development Results (ODR)** which involve capacity building and putting into practise ways of working aimed at consolidating resources and optimising efforts, so that we can achieve the social change that guarantees that children and adolescents enjoy their rights and live a dignified life. All elements of our IPC are built on results-based management and prioritise impact measurement.
- At country office level, the **Country Programmatic Frameworks 2021-2025** and **Country Organizational Development Plans 2021-2023** that each country office has developed, based on the GPF and the GODP, were also finalized and put in place in 2021. These plans represent another key element of the IPC, since they set out the specific ways in which our programmatic and organizational strategies will be operationalized in each of the countries and contexts we work in.
- In 2021 we have given **greater priority to our work in response to humanitarian disasters**, marking an important shift for the organization. We have elaborated new institutional protocols, such as the Emergencies Protocol, and have activated a Humanitarian Response Committee, which aims to coordinate Educo's departments and teams at head office involved in emergency response so that they are effective, timely and appropriate. During 2021 we carried out emergency response work in several contexts, including Cox Bazar in Bangladesh and 'education in emergency' projects in the Sahel region, for example, as well as our Covid-19 emergency work that continued in several countries.
- With regards to our internal structure, last year we created a **new Advocacy, Social Mobilisation and Social Research Department** at Head Office, as part of our drive to prioritise and strengthen our efforts in this area, and as set out in our GIF, GPF and GODP.

- In terms of our geographic focus, in 2021 we **consolidated our work in Niger**, opening a country office in the capital, Niamey. As set out in our Global Programmatic Framework 2021-2025, the decision to start work in Niger is based on a series of vulnerability criteria, such as (among others) the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and human development criteria, such as (among others) the Gender-related Development Index (GDI), also developed by UNDP. In addition, we have taken into consideration a set of principles for maximising the impact of our work, such as the conditions for developing our sponsorship program or the potential for coordination and partnership with key actors in each territory.
- Finally, in 2021 we welcomed **Anna Forés** to our Board of Trustees. Ana Forés brings expertise in education and neurodidactics: she is deputy director of Neuroeducation at the University of Barcelona, a new academic discipline that integrates knowledge in neuroscience to apply it to education and learning. She is also a researcher at the university's Education Research Institute (Institut de Recerca en Educació, IRE). At Country Office level, we were pleased to appoint **Gemma Castillo** as new Country Director in the Philippines.

# Update on identified improvement areas

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## Mission statement and theory of change (A1)

Educo's Global Impact Framework 2020-2030 (GIF) defines our theory of social change for the current decade and, among other approaches, establishes the construction of Educo's **Social Impact Measurement System**. The development of this system is based on global indicators for measuring and contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals, associated with the Social Impact Results of the GIF and the objectives and results of the three programmatic areas of the Global Programmatic Framework 2021-2025.

In 2021, following a collaborative mapping of desired changes based on each programme area and its lines of action, we carried out an analysis to determine a **framework of global impact indicators**, linking the Global Impact Framework and the Global Programme Framework, and taking into account international standards related to the different programme areas. It is worth noting that this analysis placed special emphasis on the child well-being approach, as well as the rights and capacities approach, and worked collaboratively between MEAL, Programmes, thematic specialists and the social research area, with the support of external facilitation.

The resulting global indicator framework:

- is a compendium of 26 indicators,
- focuses on social impact on children and adolescents and their environments,
- ensures linkage between the GIF and the GPF,
- has a contribution to change approach,
- takes into account the SDGs and international standards in the sectors of action,
- is quantitative and qualitative, with a strong focus on well-being,
- can be disaggregated by gender, life stage, and development or emergency context.

During the last months of 2021, we finalised the consultation phase of the Social Impact Measurement System with country offices and the Global Executive Committee (GEC) and obtained suggestions for the next steps in building the system. We held a specific session during our annual GEC meeting and among the suggestions received, respondents highlighted the need to have a flexible system adapted to different contexts and projects, which is easy for teams to use, and stressed the need to accompany and train them, and the need to advance in digitisation for data collection and analysis.

Subsequently, in the finalisation of the country programme planning, the corresponding impact indicators for each programme were applied within the logical framework to prepare the measurement cascade between projects-programmes-GPF-GIF.

In the first months of 2022 we have continued with the development of the system, focusing on the development of measurement tools for each indicator and the definition of the process planned for 2022 and 2023. The next steps can be summarised as follows:

- Breakdown of each indicator into key guiding questions: worked on together with specialists and country teams
- Development of questionnaires and interview guides based on the guiding questions: the tools are adapted by age and population group. In 2022, we are focusing on developing those related to data collection from children and adolescents, life stage 2 (6-12 years) and 3 (12-18 years, and young people up to 24). For 2023 we plan to extend to families and community, teachers and duty bearers. An adaptation for children under 6 years of age will also be planned.
- Methodological adaptation for children and adolescents to carry out focus groups in a playful way: this is being developed in collaboration with a local partner in Guatemala with more than 20 years of experience in play-based methodologies with children, in order to work on content.
- Elaboration of an impact measurement guide (in progress).
- Digitisation for data collection (ongoing).
- Selection of 12 projects in 8 countries for the first measurement to allow us to test the tools and make the necessary adjustments before scaling up in 2023.
- Preparation for the management of the impact system: analysis and forecasting of necessary resources and capacity building.

Measuring and managing impact will allow us to check the progress made with respect to planning and the areas that need to be reinforced in order to achieve changes in the lives of people and children in particular, as well as to detect possible negative or unplanned impacts. In addition, the impact measurement will be completed with some questions for project participants about satisfaction and assessment of the actions that they have liked the most and the least, which will allow us to know if the actions and the changes they introduce are the most valued by them or not. Finally, there is a space for logging possible suggestions, complaints and commendations. All the information will be analysed and used for learning, continuous improvement and decision-making, including, if necessary, adapting our strategic planning and impact results.

## Key strategic indicators for success (A2)

For information about global impact indicators, please see the previous section.

At the project level, monitoring and measurement is being carried out as normal, in line with the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) procedures and tools set out in our MEAL Manual and the toolkit it refers to. During 2020, we reviewed in depth our internal procedure for the submission of technical monitoring reports, with the aim of updating the contents to be reported, as well as the format. To this end, we relied on suggestions from Country Offices and several departments at head office. The new procedure and online reporting format was approved and began to be implemented in January 2021, with quarterly, half-yearly and annual reports, with different depth and scope of content to increase efficiency and speed in the analysis and implementation of necessary improvements. The reports contain very complete

information on the development of activities, the degree of coordination, the degree of progress against indicators, achievements and impacts obtained, learning, compliance with quality standards, recommendations and action plan for the next period, and related annexes.

One of the most important tools is the indicator progress monitoring matrix, which contains the measurement of outputs and outcomes of the project. In the new projects of this call, we are now starting to make the link with the global impact indicators, associating them at the general objective level, in cascade with the corresponding programme that already contains impact indicators. In this way we complete the multi-level measurement cascade and integrate the impact measurement system into the programming cycle.

## **Main likes/dislikes from stakeholders and Educo's response (E3)**

In 2021 we published the updated version of our [Suggestions, Complaints and Commendations Policy](#), which was reviewed in a participatory way with input from key staff in each of our Country Offices. Amongst other things, the new policy ensures alignment with our whistleblowing channels and reflects the internal structures that now facilitate the implementation of the policy: a Global SCC Commission and Country Office SCC Committees. It also provides greater clarity on the internal procedure for managing SCC and the roles and responsibilities of the different teams involved. The SCC Committees in our Country Offices have started promoting the new policy, translating it into local languages and presenting it to different stakeholders. In conjunction with the updated policy, we also created new email addresses for receiving SCC, with a standardised format that aims to promote the idea that feedback is valuable and useful to us, as an opportunity for learning and continuous improvement.

In terms of SCC tools, in 2021 we finalised a new *Guide to designing and implementing SCC mechanisms* and carried out training sessions on its contents with both Country Office SCC Committees and Programmes staff. The guide sets out the roles and responsibilities in the SCC process, details the steps that are required to set up and manage SCC mechanisms, and gives recommendations for handling different types of mechanisms. With this tool now available, we are in a better position to set up SCC mechanisms that are tailored to project participants' needs in a more systematic, homogenous way, which should ensure greater uptake and increased use of the mechanisms by project participants across the different countries we work in. This seems to be bearing fruit, as in our analysis of 2021 SCC data we noted a significant increase in the SCC received by some of our country offices, compared with data from 2020, although we should also take into account the increased mobility and easing of COVID-19 restrictions in 2021. In 2020 the SCC received in Spain made up 79% of the total, whereas in 2021 they made up only 27% of the total. Our SCC Report 2021 is due to be published in the coming weeks.

The first step in designing and setting up SCC mechanisms with project participants is a consultation to find out their needs and preferences. In 2021 we started working on specific guidelines to accompany this process and guarantee that it follows minimum standards. This document will also be an important tool for supporting country offices in the implementation of SCC mechanisms for project participants and will help to make sure that the consultations are integrated into the programme cycle.

The following table shows the amount of SCC received in each Country Office in 2020 and 2021:

<b>Total SCC received</b>		
<b>Country</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Bangladesh</b>	4	73
<b>Benin</b>	7	14
<b>Bolivia</b>	5	1
<b>Burkina Faso</b>	1	13
<b>El Salvador</b>	0	14
<b>Guatemala</b>	0	24
<b>Mali</b>	6	7
<b>Nicaragua</b>	1	11
<b>Philippines</b>	2	134
<b>Senegal</b>	3	7
<b>Spain</b>	130	114
<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>422</b>

Furthermore, one of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) that will be used to measure the implementation of our Global Organisational Development Plan will be centred on assessing the level of satisfaction that our stakeholders feel with respect to the quality and social impact our work. The KPI focuses particularly on capturing the perceptions of project participants (especially children and young people), as well as the local partners we work with. We will use different methodologies for each stakeholder group, such as an annual survey in the case of local partners, for example.

## Availability of key policies and information on our website (G1)

In 2021 we initiated a comprehensive review of our External Transparency Policy. The new policy will encompass our transparency commitments both towards internal and external stakeholders, whilst at the same time integrating a more holistic approach to transparency, rather than focusing primarily on the information that we publish on our website. Once finalised, the new policy will provide an important new framework for our transparency commitments, both at a programmatic and an organisational level.

During 2021, we also began work on the transparency tools which will make up part of the accountability component of our MEAL Manual. The tools focus on guiding the development of a *Participative plan for information sharing at project level*, including minimum standards for information sharing and guidelines on consulting with project participants on their needs and preferences in terms of transparency and access to information. These tools aim to systematise the work that we are already doing to promote access to information and will help to ensure that the information we share, and the ways in which we share it, is always based on what our stakeholders require.

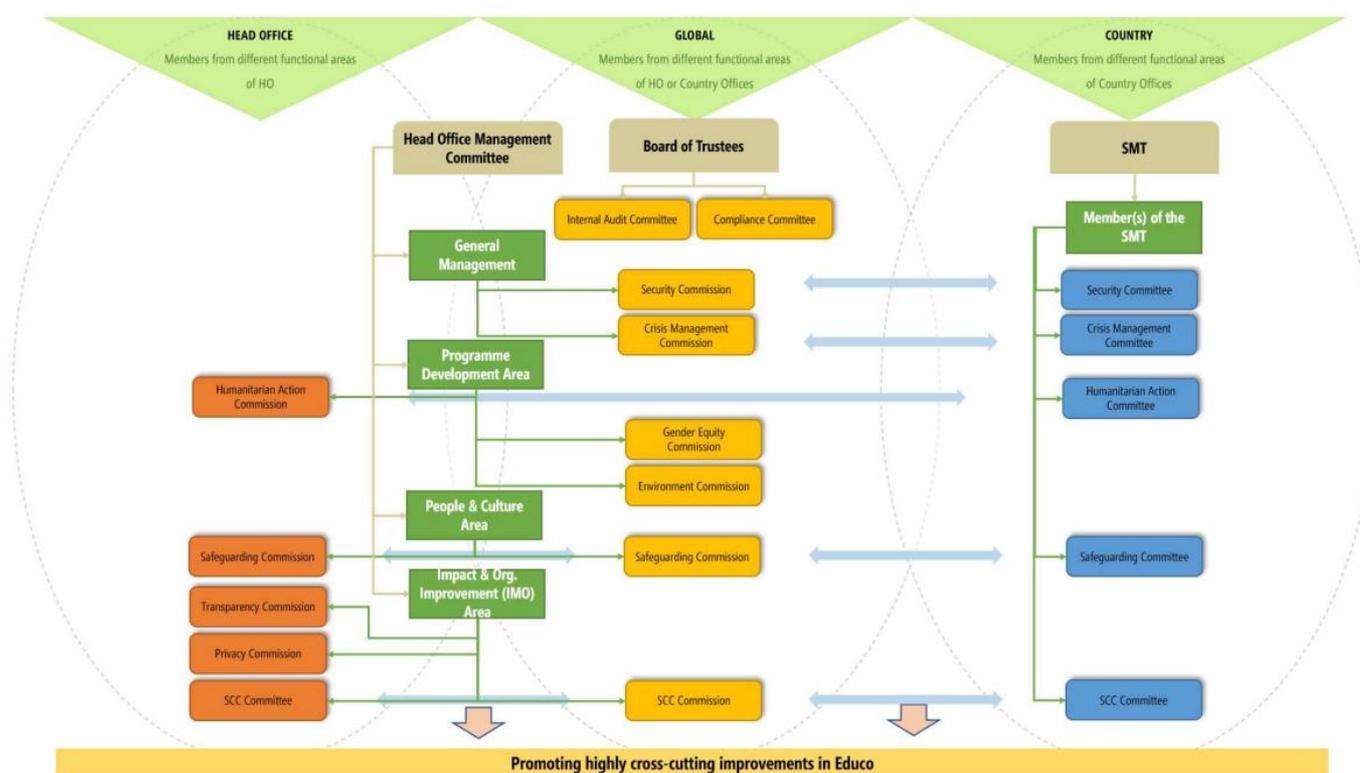
One of the ways in which we share information with people involved in our projects is via our Open Day events, an activity that we have carried out in many more of the areas that we work in during 2021. The Open Days are opportunities to share information in user-friendly, visual ways, as well as getting feedback and responding to questions from our stakeholders. The information we share covers Educo and our projects, including financial information on our budget, spending, and how we are financed. We continue to test out new ways to share this information so that it is easy to understand and adapted to all our stakeholders. Looking ahead, as stated in our response letter to Accountable Now, we will now be working on how to make the financial information that is available on our website more accessible to the people we work for and with.

## Scope of the accountability report and influence over national entities (K3)

In Educo, the implementation of our institutional policies is carried out by inter-departmental commissions and committees, with representation at global level and/or country office level, as required. In 2021 we worked on reinforcing the structures that we use to implement our policies, to try to ensure that the commissions/committees' work has the necessary resources, is incorporated into annual planning, and has the visibility and recognition needed to operate correctly. This work, which included drawing up and disseminating specific terms of reference, has helped to better define the roles, responsibilities and functioning of the commissions/committees, and aims to encourage staff to actively participate in, and coordinate with, these bodies. In this sense, the terms of reference state that "Educo's committees and commissions play a fundamental role in promoting cross-cutting actions that contribute to continuous improvement and the achievement of the results established in our strategic planning. It is therefore vital that all of us who form part of Educo commit ourselves to the success of these committees and commissions. The most concrete way of expressing this commitment is precisely by participating in a committee and commission, contributing our own expertise, skills and motivation".

Moreover, the terms of reference state that each commission/committee will be formally and permanently linked to a member of the Head Office Executive Committee (at global level) or a member of the Senior Management Team (at Country Office level). The member of the Executive Committee or SMT commits to supporting the commission/committee chairperson with the smooth running of the commission/committee, acting as a liaison with the rest of the Executive Committee or SMT, and ensuring that the commission/committee's activities/products are incorporated in the institutional planning and budget, where necessary.

The following diagram is taken from the terms of reference and shows the purpose and mode of operating of the committees and commissions:



In terms of internal accountability and reporting, our new internal communication channel, IRIS, which has been rolled out over the past year, has substantially increased the amount of information that is shared within Educo. Staff from all of our Country Offices proactively publish their updates, achievements and progress on the global news channel, which automatically translates between Spanish, French and English. This allows for much greater organisational learning, through the direct, continuous sharing of ideas and good practice, whilst also promoting internal accountability and facilitating external reporting processes. The use of the new channel has been promoted via teams of ambassadors at global and country office level, and the fact that the channel provides an opportunity to showcase work and get feedback from colleagues in real time means that staff are motivated to share information and interact on it regularly.