



CIVICUS 2021 – 2022 Interim Accountability Report

December 2022

1. Opening statement by our Secretary General

As an alliance of progressive, rights-oriented civil society, our mission at CIVICUS is to support people’s struggles for justice, equality and sustainability around the world. Our [2022 State of Civil Society report](#), published at the end of this Accountable Now interim reporting period, illustrated that at a time of immense upheaval, contestation and ongoing restriction of civic spaces, civil society – in all its forms – is continuing to fight back and hold those in power to account.



Practising Dynamic Accountability therefore remains a critical priority for CIVICUS, as we continuously strive to better engage, understand and support our diverse membership. An essential building block of our accountability practice is our [five-year strategic plan](#), which we spent much of this year refreshing through an extensive process, including via an ongoing dialogue with the Alliance. Our 2022-2027 plan will focus on building counter-power for more inclusive civic and democratic space, including with groups most affected by the combined impact of structural discrimination and civic space restrictions. We also have a specific strategic objective around strengthening positive narratives about civil society, that are reflected by greater public trust and solidarity with its work and priorities. To achieve this, it is essential that civil society actors around the world implement effective accountability policies and practices with their own communities, which is why we are building on our [Resilient Roots](#) initiative to continue providing our membership with specific tools and learning opportunities to strengthen these efforts.

To hold ourselves accountable for our refreshed strategic plan we will ensure that stakeholders understand what we want to achieve and how we will go about doing it, continue to collect and address feedback from our communities on how well we progressing towards our strategic objectives, and provide more opportunities for those affected by our interventions to co-create our projects and directly inform our decision making. To do this, we have devised a Strategy Implementation Roadmap, which includes the development of an extensive [Integrated Results Framework](#) – which relates directly to one of the priority steers from our previous Accountable Now report. Grounded in the principles of Dynamic Accountability, the framework is focused on a more concise set of priority outcomes which all teams across the organisation will help to track progress against – including via unearthing direct insights and testimonies from across the alliance.

The wellbeing of both our staff and members is central to our ability to deliver on our strategic plan, therefore we were pleased that Accountable Now has also encouraged us to deepen our practices on these topics. While official grievances have remained infrequent, we have recognised the need to help staff better understand our related policies, along with the many informal channels available to flag concerns and resolve disagreements, as we continue to build an internal culture of open communication, collective reflection and growth together. And while we have learned a huge amount about what being a responsible, power-shifting ally to [grassroots activists](#) looks like, we will dig deeper and broaden the scope of our “do no harm” principle when working with all external collaborators.

On the following pages, we provide an account of CIVICUS’ progress and plans on the priority improvement areas identified by the Independent Review Panel from our 2020-2021 report. We remain appreciative for the constructive feedback through Accountable Now and its Panel – thank you!



Lysa John Berna,

Secretary General, CIVICUS

2. Update on the improvement areas identified by the Independent Review Panel's feedback on CIVICUS' previous accountability report

a) Raising awareness of our internal complaints and feedback mechanisms

Throughout this year we have continued to socialise different formal and informal feedback mechanisms with staff to ensure that the issues raised are captured and used more systematically. We have raised staff awareness to use existing frameworks and policies to address grievances by running a series of internal all staff workshop: Sexual Harassment workshop; Grievance Policy and Procedure Workshop; Contract Management Awareness; Sensitivity, Negotiation and Mediation. In addition, we have reviewed our grievance policy incorporating mediation steps. Line managers have been upskilled to resolve complaints without escalating them to Human Resources (HR). Existing platforms such as Operation Management Forum (OMF), People and Organisation (P&O), Staff meetings, have also been more actively used to raise, discuss, and address feedback, and feedback tables which list responses to inputs received are now standard practice for closing the loop in organisation-wide consultations.

Going forward, we will endeavour to more systematically help all staff to understand and utilise the more informal options available to them for raising concerns, which can often see less-serious issues resolved faster and with less ill-feeling created. These include "courageous conversations" to acknowledge and resolve problems at team-level, "failure festivals" in which safe spaces are created to share, reflect and learn together on things that have gone wrong, and "amicable escalation" to ensure support from HR and/or senior leadership when disagreements cannot be resolved at team level.

We will also continue to roll out sensitivity training and conflict resolution by inviting external experts into the organisation to transfer learning and host cultural awareness sessions with staff. We will also incorporate DEI issues in all staff meetings and review representation on cross organisational platforms to make them more racially diverse and reflective of our membership. We expect this to further increase awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity, which in turn can reduce conflict and the occurrence of microaggressions, including those escalated to line managers and HR.

b) Developing an integrated results framework and transitioning to a new monitoring and evaluation system to hold ourselves accountable to our new Strategic Plan

Inspired by CIVICUS revised Strategic Plan 2022-2027, our accompanying integrated results framework (IRF) raises our ambition of understanding and articulating our contribution to systemic change and shifts our focus to better help us ultimately measure our success based on how all aspects of our work

enable publics and policy makers to trust and reinforce civil society's work and impact. The Strategic Plan articulates our four interconnected long-term outcomes with supporting outcomes, this is the basis upon which the IRF is structured. The IRF unpacks evidence of change in two categories – emerging change and systemic change - and how these are connected to the realisation of our long-term outcomes.

The framework provides an opportunity to not only hold ourselves accountable to our stakeholders in a meaningful way, but also helps us to tell our collective narrative of change for external outreach and engagement, becoming an important tool to communicate what we are doing and why we are doing it. It is currently in development and due to be finalised in December 2022. A robust process for membership and stakeholder engagement with our strategic progress is also a key component of this plan to ensure continued opportunities to enhance civil society strategy and impact across the alliance.

We are also in the process of revising our Monitoring and Evaluation system to drive an intentional practice of learning and accountability. The revised system seeks to enhance our ability to capture and reflect on outcomes more systematically on an ongoing basis. As such, we're exploring refreshed approaches to reporting; the iteration of our annual report for example will enable us to tell an additive impact story year-on-year, which looks at our work in relation to wider civil society landscape.

c) Mainstreaming risk mitigation strategies to minimise negative impacts on stakeholders

As outlined in the CIVICUS Risk Policy and Framework, risk identification and management at CIVICUS takes a bottom-up approach whereby teams identify and classify risks associated with the delivery of their work and put mitigation strategies in place. We have a range of examples of how this works in practice:

- Teams that work with grassroots and youth activists (stakeholders who face an increased risk of burnout because they often lack institutional support and resources) have adopted stakeholder engagement practices to mitigate risks associated with mental health and wellbeing through regular one-on-one check-ins and spaces for community building and peer support.
- Teams that work with high-risk individuals and organisations operating in highly restrictive contexts whose safety could be compromised by visibly working on human rights issues or with an international organisation like CIVICUS. These teams have adopted strict protocols around communications and information sharing, such as the use of encrypted messaging and redacted reporting, etc.
- The Data and Digital Security Group is working with teams across the organisation to understand how they engage with, use and store stakeholders' personal data to ensure compliance with data privacy policies and to sense-check if there are sufficient measures are in place to meet our duty of care in terms of data security and protection.

In the next year, we will continue to work with teams to improve our understanding of the different kinds of risk our stakeholders face when engaging with us and create organisational awareness of tools and tactics for mitigating these risks. We also aim to develop comprehensive guidelines for understanding and addressing risk to stakeholders that will be embedded in the institutional processes and frameworks, to ensure that systematic usage, reflection, and updates occur.

3. Significant organisational highlights and changes

Summary of key figures and achievements for 2021 - 2022:

- 20+ countries received urgent advocacy support, including Afghanistan, Colombia, Eswatini, Ghana, Myanmar, and Ukraine
- 24 country submissions to the UN Human Rights Council's reviewing human rights records
- 1,000+ media outlets and academic journals mentions of CIVICUS, including Al Jazeera, El País, Reuters, The Economist and The Guardian
- 5 sustained campaigns concerning the release of HRDs, resourcing for grassroots activists and the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association
- 150 interviews with civil society activists, leaders and experts featured in 110 CIVICUS Lens articles providing timely analysis of civil society issues and trends

For a more detailed look at what CIVICUS has achieved and learned during this period, please see our [2021 – 2022 Annual Report](#). This annual report was written using a new internal approach which focuses on systematically using our multiple project and issue-specific reporting commitments – including the interim accountability report – to capture and record, more efficiently, our overall progress against our plans more efficiently.

This interim report covers the period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022. It was compiled via a participatory process with involvement from other CIVICUS Clusters where needed and representation from designated members of the Senior Leadership Team. In case of any questions or feedback on this report, please get in touch with the Impact & Accountability Cluster via jack.cornforth@civicus.org.

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