



**Accountable
Now**

GLOBAL STANDARDS LOCAL TRUST



CIVICUS

Independent Review Panel Feedback

Accountability Report 2021-2022

Review Round January 2023

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CIVICUS

Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

Review Round January 2023

10th February 2023

Dear Lysa John,

Thank you for submitting your accountability report. We, the Independent Review Panel of Accountable Now, appreciate your efforts to strengthen accountability to communities, local partners, supporters, staff, donors, or other key constituencies. Our key focus is on accountability to those you serve. It is against this background that we critically discussed your report and came to the assessment below.

This report provides useful detail on the encouraging progress that CIVICUS is making towards implementing dynamic accountability in diverse issue areas. Areas of particular strength include a strong strategic commitment to dynamic accountability principles, the focus on traditionally marginalised stakeholders, a responsive and flexible approach to internal staff complaints and a holistic approach to risk management and mitigation.

In future reports, the Panel looks forward to learning more about how progress against the new strategic indicators is measured against the Integrated Results Framework, particularly in cases where non-orthodox methods are used to capture data. The Panel would also welcome further detail about how staff are advised about whether to choose informal or formal channels for raising concerns, and whether the effectiveness of informal channels for complaints are evaluated in any way other than staff feedback. Further, the Panel would be interested to know if and how data and digital security strategies vary across country contexts (and if so, how these strategies are devised, i.e. incorporating guidance from whom/what?).

We look forward to discussing our feedback with you in a follow-up call, which the Secretariat will be in touch to schedule. This conversation will form the basis for your response letter, which will be made publicly available on the Accountable Now website along with your report and this feedback letter.

If you have any other feedback or comments on our work, please share them with us via the Accountable Now Secretariat.

Yours sincerely,

Accountable Now's Independent Review Panel





CIVICUS

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Significant Changes

A small summary of significant changes and achievements was also included in this report. Together, they showcase the key work that the organisation has carried out in the previous year.

The Panel commends the organisation on the work that it is carrying out, and note that other significant changes in terms of accountability such as updating organisational policies, data security, financial and risk managements, among others, have also been shared within the [annual report](#) (pg. 47 onwards).

Opening Statement from the Head of Organisation

The opening statement from Secretary General Lysa John emphasises the alliance's focus for 2021-2022 and beyond. The statement notes that the organisation has put together a [five year strategic plan](#) (2022-2027) that includes a Strategy Implementation Roadmap alongside the (ongoing) development of an extensive Integrated Results Framework. The Roadmap and Framework aim to support collective decision making and the advancement of the plan. The Panel notes positively that the Strategic Plan has been put together via dialogues with the Alliance.

The statement further indicates the continual commitment from the organisation to ensure the well-being of its staff and stakeholders, making processes more available and better understood. The Panel is reassured about the ongoing commitment of CIVICUS to the principles of dynamic accountability by this strong opening statement.



Cluster A: What We Want to Achieve

A. The Impact We Achieve

A2	<p><i>What are your key strategic indicators for success and how do you involve your stakeholders in developing them?</i></p> <p>(b. Developing an integrated results framework and transitioning to a new monitoring and evaluation system to hold ourselves accountable to our new Strategic Plan)</p> <p>With the new Strategic Plan, the organisation is currently finalising the Integrated Results Framework. The report states that the framework aims to unpack evidence of emerging and systemic changes. Indicators of success and evidence of change are provided within the framework.</p> <p>The Panel notes positively the steps that CIVICUS is taking to realise this line of work in a collaborative way with members of the Alliance. The Panel welcomes the way in which the draft Integrated Results Framework prioritises working with and for groups affected by the combined impact of civic space restrictions and structural forms of discrimination. We invite CIVICUS to provide further information in the next report about how it involves stakeholders (at which point and through which processes) in developing its strategic plan as well as the indicators, and about how progress is advancing against stated indicators. It would be particularly interesting to learn about which 'non-extractive' methods are used that value indigenous and local knowledge networks, and for this learning to be shared among other member organisations of Accountable Now.</p>	3
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B. We Lead By Example

C4	<p><i>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?</i></p> <p>(c. Mainstreaming risk mitigation strategies to minimise negative impacts on stakeholders)</p> <p>The response shares about the organisation's current and existing strategies for minimising harm for their stakeholders. The report states that risk identification and management take a bottom up approach. Following up on the Panel's request in</p>	3
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the previous feedback letter, the report further provides examples of mitigation strategies and actions.

The Panel notes positively how strategies are adapted to different types of stakeholders, and that risks are identified collaboratively. It is encouraging to see that traditionally 'low profile issues' concerned with risk mitigation, such as mental health and wellbeing, are being addressed.

For future reports, questions that should be addressed are: how will CIVICUS create further organisational awareness and mainstream practices? Do data security and protection policies vary across the organisation to meet the operational risks that exist in different country contexts (and if so, how)?

Cluster C: What We Do Internally

J. Governance processes maximise accountability

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.*** 3

(a. Raising awareness of our internal complaints and feedback mechanisms)

The report follows up on the Panel's previous request regarding more information regarding informal channels. These include failure festivals, amicable escalation and courageous conversations. Further upskilling were carried out for line managers to better resolve issues at team level. In the future, CIVICUS aims to commit further to socialising its staff on informal channels for raising complaints, feedback and grievances.

The Panel welcomes these additions, and advises that potentially the organisation may find it useful to have some system in place to track informal complaints/resolutions as well as formal ones. In this way, the organisation will be able to understand if the channels are working. A useful example comes from Educo's [2020-21 report](#), where the organisation has a system in place to track Complaints, Suggestions and Commendations.

Additionally, while informal channels are useful, the organisation should be clear with its staff on the types of complaints and grievances that should still be raised through more formalised channels as well.

Furthermore, the organisation has raised internal awareness through all staff workshops on Sexual Harassment workshop; Grievance Policy and Procedure



Workshop; Contract Management Awareness; Sensitivity, Negotiation and Mediation.

The Panel is glad to see the range of options and actions carried out by the organisation, and the pro-active commitment to cultural diversity issues. It would be interesting to learn in the next report what type and frequency of trainings regarding internal complaints and feedback mechanisms are mandatory for staff (if any), and at what stages of their career.