



CIVICUS Accountable Now Report

July 2022 to June 2023

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Compiled by the CIVICUS Impact and Accountability and Human Resources Clusters, with inputs from colleagues across the organisation.

Contents

Introduction from the Secretary General	2
1. What have been your most significant achievements and impacts this year and how has this been validated with your stakeholders?	3
2. How have your organisation's accountability processes been impacted by significant internal or external changes over the reporting period?	5
3. How has your organisation learned from reported incidents, complaints and grievances received in the past year? (These may include safeguarding, fraud, corruption, whistleblowing, integrity violations, etc.)	8
4. Internally, how has your organisation practised a more dynamic approach to accountability?.....	10
5. How has your organisation worked towards being dynamically accountable to your external stakeholders (i.e partners, communities, programme participants, etc)?.....	11
Annex 1. Reporting questions and guidelines	13

Introduction from the Secretary General



As an alliance of over 15,000 progressive, rights-oriented civil society groups and individuals around the world, our mission is to support people's struggles for justice, equality and sustainability. Yet conflicts and crises left deep scars on millions over the past year, and [research](#) from the CIVICUS Monitor has found that civil society is under severe attack in 117 of 197 countries and territories. But our alliance and the wider sector has [continued to innovate and resist](#) during these turbulent times, providing essential services, helping and advocating for victims, and holding those responsible for human rights violations to account.

Against this backdrop, the first year of our [2022 - 2027 strategic plan](#) has represented an important period of internal reflection and adaptation for the organisation, combined with ongoing programmatic delivery and the further embedding of our accountability practices. This included an independent, in-depth review of progress made during our previous strategic period, which was undertaken via an extensive consultation with a wide range of staff and external stakeholders. This pointed to significant successes across our strategic objectives, but also recommendations with clear links to further enhancing dynamic accountability, such as to deepen partnerships with our target groups, continue to nurture and celebrate the work of our networks, and involve members even more directly in our activities, including greater tailoring of campaigns to local needs.

Initial progress on these fronts and other accountability-related areas includes a refocusing of our work to more actively support and strengthen youth groups and social movements at the forefront of progressive change, along with marginalised and repressed groups bearing the brunt of civic space restrictions. This has included a shift away from providing direct capacity building activities to a more ecosystem strengthening approach that is able to reach a larger number of people. Our Strengthening Twenty-First Century Citizen Action (STCCA) programme has been pivotal here, in terms of enabling us to learn from our target groups about what more effective support, equal partnerships, and true solidarity really look like in practice. And our Freedom of Peaceful Assembly Programme has launched via an in-depth co-creation process driven by a combination of existing members and frontline actors new to the alliance.

Internally, our new Integrated Results Framework has seen us begin to adopt a more community-driven approach to measuring and understanding our impact. And as our interlinked revamped Learning and Development Framework also continues to take shape, we are becoming better placed to leverage our human capacities more effectively in pursuit of our strategy, including as a means of advancing our racial justice action plan. We are also responding to staff feedback by reorganising our internal management systems to break down the siloes between our operations and programmatic work. And our board of directors has begun implementing new accountability-related commitments to regularly engage with representative from our key networks, and publish summaries of its meetings on our website.

We look forward to seizing the opportunity presented by the Accountable Now reporting framework to build on this report by creating a multi-year action plan that the whole organisation can rally around and hold ourselves accountable to.

1. What have been your most significant achievements and impacts this year and how has this been validated with your stakeholders?

This reporting period coincides with the first year of our new five-year [strategic plan](#), which includes an emphasis on engaging and supporting a number of specific groups and types of civil society actor (see p.5). Our membership grew by 17% this year, to 15,656 members in 189 countries, with us organising 4727 engagement moments with around 3100 members. However, we have also focused on deepening the way we work with our members and wider civil society actors, including via a new member engagement journey methodology. Below are a few examples of our achievements. A more comprehensive impact story is available in our annual report.

In March, we published a [strategy review](#) aimed at identifying a selection of the most significant outcomes of the implementation of our previous 2017 – 2022 strategic period. This involved an initial review of existing strategic plans, annual constituency surveys, programme evaluations and other outcome and impact reflection pieces, which was then corroborated by 50 interviews with selected CIVICUS staff, alliance members and external partners. The review also included several key recommendations for succeeding during the current strategic period.

CIVICUS initiated two new major projects as important vehicles for delivering our five-year plan: the [Digital Democracy Initiative](#) (DDI) and [Local Leadership Labs](#) (LLL). DDI will be driven by partners around the world to strengthen financial and non-financial support infrastructure for civil society in the global south to safely harness digital technologies in pursuit of greater civic and democratic freedoms. LLL is a concept based on an extensive consultation process in late 2022, involving 100+ diverse constituents. The project builds on our [civil society resourcing](#) portfolio of work by convening inclusive, context-appropriate spaces in different geographies for local civil society groups - especially from marginalised communities - to engage with governments, donors and other key allies and enablers.

We have continued to achieve extensive media mentions for the organisation's research and advocacy activities, and the CIVICUS Monitor data is also being increasingly referenced by governments. These civil society-driven research projects strengthen and amplify the voices of actors on the ground at a time when they are increasingly challenged. Several members and partners have reached out to tell us that both projects provide civil society with a better understanding of the challenges faced in different contexts, and the tactics successfully used to help overcome them.

The start of the year saw the CIVICUS Solidarity Fund (CSF) publish its "[Learning Journey](#)" – a bottom-up effort in which a wide range of past applicants to the Fund shared insights about how to make the process more inclusive and participatory by reducing costs and barriers associated with applying. The Learning Journey was praised by several organisations, such as Conducive Space's Learning Note on Innovative Practices recognising the CSF as an innovative practice and invited us to conduct a training for Danish INGOs on how to improve their funding practices. These extensive efforts to engage with applicants, address their queries, and promote our revamped and approach via new networks, all resulted in a more than three-fold rise in the number of applicants from to the CSF during this year, and in-turn a boost in CIVICUS membership. Furthermore, in addition to members accessing more grant opportunities after their CSF grant ends, greater levels of ownership and confidence are seeing an increased willingness to challenge inequitable power dynamics in the funding landscape.



Another important achievement related to strengthening the support ecosystem for civil society is a partnership with USAID to run a focus group with grassroots leaders on their new Good Practices for Local Engagement initiative and accompanying 'USAID Local Leadership metric' framework. This is an outcome of a long-term advocacy effort challenging USAID to be more ambitious in addressing unequal power relationships in its grant-making, in response to its stated commitment to adopt a more localised approach. This included an open letter to the donor in 2021 signed by hundreds of CIVICUS members and wider civil society actors.

We also returned to participants of our Accountability Accelerator online course to learn about how successful they have been in using the knowledge and skills acquired. Overall the [results](#) were extremely encouraging, with dozens of organisations reporting significant positive shifts in their policies and working cultures that have improved accountability to their communities. We are now working towards adapting the course content so that it has a more explicit ecosystem-strengthening focus, especially in relation to empowering our target groups.

The CIVICUS Membership and Networks Cluster has worked to better understand the extent to which our target groups are represented within the current membership, and how best to support them in pursuit of this objective. This has included partnering with Roots (Greenpeace) to delivering the first Organising for Organisers training in Sub-Saharan Africa. The training focused on providing tools to different movements, grassroots organisations, journalists, activists, human rights defenders, and campaign organisers, among others, to build sustained movements that seek social justice and generate long-lasting change. The full impact of the training will take time to be seen, but participants gave an encouraging Net Promoter [feedback] Score (NPS), and it was an important step for developing and formalising a key piece of our approach to advancing several of our strategic objectives. We are also in the process of revamping our member application and renewal process to capture better data on our target groups.

We have also started to increase our internal capacity by implementing a new learning and development framework, which incorporates concepts and leadership practices that foster a culture of a commonly shared identity and enhance collaboration and cohesion across teams. The first phase of its roll out focused on familiarising staff with the framework's learning-oriented and employee directed approach, which informed an initial round of growth-focused goal setting. In the coming year we will attempt to more directly link the framework to our DEI principles and ongoing commitments to racial justice. We will also use the framework to more explicitly clarify the roles and responsibilities for implementing performance management across all levels of the organisation, which we believe will drive individual and team accountability and advance the practice of distributed leadership.

With the support of external consultants, we also undertook a cross-organisational data mapping exercise to identify how each team processes and retains personal data about its stakeholders. The result was a new Registry of Processing Activities, which is an obligation under GDPR. This activity has also supported the organisation to further secure the platforms where personal information resides and implement a new data retention policy which schedules how and when personal information is deleted from our systems. In the coming year, recognising the need for greater dedicated capacity on this topic, we will be recruiting an expert Data Security Officer.

2. How have your organisation's accountability processes been impacted by significant internal or external changes over the reporting period?

Internal Changes:

First year of our new [Strategic Plan 2022-2027](#):

The most significant internal change came as a result of our newly approved of our new Strategic Plan in April 2022. As such, this reporting period was largely focused the strategy implementation roadmap which prioritised:

- An assessment of our current **ways of working**, and what changes therein would be required for effective alignment with and delivery of the new strategic plan. This initially involved an external desk review and consultation into the key contemporary ways of work that are shaping civil society.
- Our first **Membership Engagement Month** (MEM - Nov/Dec 2022) leveraging annual governance, programme and network activities for a consolidated window of strategic engagement. Using an innovative online conferencing platform, it enabled over 700 members to participate in activities such as the annual general meeting and member discussion on ways to strengthen engagement with the new strategy.
- Board approval of a new [integrated results framework](#), with refreshed monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning processes that is being implemented by all teams. This will allow us to more systematically capture both programmatic and institutional learnings across the organisation, specifically improving articulation of our contribution to change and its relevance to our target stakeholders.
- Building on the ways of working and other assessments a new **Programme Quality and Innovation Framework (PQI)** was developed. This framework integrates lessons learned from the Freedom of Peaceful Assembly programme pilot, to create a process-based, systemic approach to programme management. It has been tailored to CIVICUS's current strategy and provides practical recommendations to break down silos between clusters.

New Senior Leadership Team structure: An outcome of the strategy implementation processes mentioned above and workload assessments in 2022, has been an alignment and expansion of the senior leadership team (SLT) to deepen our programmatic focus. Three new cross-cutting programmatic workstreams and corresponding leadership roles were created with the following mandate envisioned:

- Chief Officer Evidence & Engagement, responsible for our flagship research work areas as well as media engagement, taken on by our former Chief of Programmes
- Chief Officer Advocacy & Solidarity Action, responsible for advocacy and campaigns, membership and networks, communications and our UN engagement in Geneva (recruitment completed September 2023)
- Chief Officer Innovation & Sustainability, responsible for resource mobilisation and partnerships, innovation and quality management as well as civil society resourcing (recruitment completed October 2023)

These three programmatically focused leadership roles, in addition to the Secretary General and Chief Operations Officer brings the Senior Leadership Team up to a total of five for this strategic period.

Lines of internal accountability have been clarified and, in some cases, adjusted to align with the new SLT structure, with each cluster or project team being overseen by an SLT champion.

Team transitions: In keeping with our changes in programme priorities and to optimise our internal coherence and external impact the following two teams transitioned out: Capacity Development and Innovation for Change. We also saw the formation of two new core teams, namely Resource Mobilisation and Partnerships and Innovation and Quality Management, as well as a new Media Lead, increasing our core capacity to deliver our strategy.

Earlier on in the reporting period, we experienced some challenges with new core recruitments on hold until the completion of the ways of working analysis process, which resulted in some capacity constraints and increased workload in some teams. Recruitment gained momentum again from the middle of this reporting period with new team members for the two new teams onboarded during Q1 of the new CIVICUS year (July – September 2023). CIVICUS has also been recruiting and preparing for two new programmes, the Digital Democracy Initiative and Local Leadership Lab, amongst others.

Related stakeholder engagement processes and reflections on key changes:

We ran a number of consultation processes to inform both the design and implementation of the above internal changes related to our new strategic plan. The most significant were:

Ways of Working consultation (Sept – Nov 2022) The first year of our new strategic plan has involved many processes related to internal reflection, external consultation, and adjustment of the ways that we organise ourselves and undertake our work. Following further consultations with all staff on the ways of working analysis, the CIVICUS Senior Leadership Team identified 12 key corresponding actions. External accountability actions included to better assess the value of our work with our target stakeholder groups identified in our strategy. Internal accountability actions included the need to foster multidisciplinary work, including by breaking down siloes, updating our programmatic and operations management forums to distribute leadership and provide development opportunities to a wider cohort of colleagues and commitments to identify more explicit workstreams for different parts of our strategy (resulting in the realigned SLT structure mentioned above). Each of these actions have started to be implemented, monitored and will remain a priority for the coming year.

Feedback process on team transitions (March-May 2023) Across March 2023, a series of consultations were held with CIVICUS Board and staff to generate feedback to proposals for team-level transitions in relation to alignments to be made across the CIVICUS Secretariat in response to the Strategic Plan for 2022-27, and corresponding review exercises undertaken across 2022/23. In keeping with the CIVICUS' Delegated and Financial Authorities (DFA) framework, consultations aimed at sharing information and soliciting feedback included preparatory meetings with all teams directly impacted by the team transitions, discussions with Board committees and email updates to the wider Board, discussions with programme management forum and monthly all-staff meeting. A feedback table was shared with key elements of the feedback received from Board and staff and outlined responses from the Senior Leadership Team. Key changes resulting from feedback included the clarification and adjustments of new team mandates, for example the expansion of the innovation and programme quality team to include operations quality, and systematic tracking of job descriptions (as part of the learning and development framework).

SLT-OMF-PMF collaboration process (April – June 2023) The feedback received on team processes, as well as through other external and internal feedback mechanisms, has also reinforced the need for a dedicated effort to strengthen communication and collaboration across the three management and leadership forums – the Programme Management Forum (PMF), the Operations Management Forum (OMF) and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). A number of conversations were held with staff across May 2023 to define and prioritise processes that will enable greater agency and convergence across levels. This included a first ‘co-design’ exercise held as part of the global staff retreat in May 2023. Interventions agreed as a result of this process will focus on opportunities to build on the outcomes of existing institutional frameworks. Suggestions received in this regard include developing a team level assessment of the DFA framework; undertaking workload assessment and objective setting across teams (as part of the next cycle of our Learning & Development framework) and a continuation of our leadership development offerings for line managers; and the exploration of a refreshed collective management structure for more joined-up working, further detailed in the next section.

External Changes:

Our flagship [State of Civil Society](#) and [People Power Under Attack](#) reports offer a civil society perspective of the world as it stands in early 2023: one plagued by conflict and crises, including of democratic values and institutions, but in which civil society continues to strive to make a crucial difference in people’s lives. Civic freedoms are being curtailed in a growing number of geographies and civil society is under severe attack in 117 of 197 countries and territories. This strategic period we will continue to focus our projects and activities on engaging, supporting, and collaborating with civil society actors operating in more repressed contexts. This includes deepening our accountability with larger numbers of these actors and our other target groups, by ensuring greater awareness of our programmes and opportunities to work with us, capturing and using more of their perspectives and feedback about our activities, and creating further moments for them to hold us to account via co-creation and direct decision-making.

Our Freedom of Peaceful Assembly (FoPA) programme can be seen as a direct response to one of the top global civic space violations for the period – the detention of protestors. The Weaving Resilience FoPA project developed this year is grounded in an ecosystem approach which positions CIVICUS as a convenor that brings together a wide range of actors to advance a common goal of protecting the right to FoPA in specific contexts and geographies, by strengthening the support services and opportunities available to frontline activists and movements. More information about the co-creation process to develop the project is provided in section 5.

The external context at the national level has also impacted our work, especially in “[watchlist](#)” countries we have chosen to prioritise for long-term engagement, support and solidarity. For example, we supported local civil society to successfully halt new repressive legislation on several SRHR issues in Guatemala. Yet the country was nevertheless downgraded in 2022 to ‘repressed’ by the CIVICUS Monitor, as the country’s civil society - including advocates of abortion and same-sex marriage - continue to experience persecution. In Guatemala and further countries where civic space is shrinking, we have attempted to respond to changing needs and requests from local partners by diversifying the support we offer them, such as accompaniment of activists during legal proceedings, and associated campaigning. Nevertheless, supporting civil society in countries with deteriorating civic space remains fraught with challenges, especially in relation to the ensuring the safety and security of all parties.

However through the CSF we were able to support a women's rights group in Iran to [use translation as a tool for activism](#), and provide CRF funding to a coalition of more than 100 HRDs in Afghanistan to assist with numerous resiliency and advocacy activities.

Challenging national contexts have also increased limitations on how we engage our target groups in international projects, often due to the risk of arrest associated with travel or even simply engaging with our campaign activities online. For example, we have been unable to include LGBTQI activists from Uganda in meetings to develop our new FoPA We Rise! campaign, as we are not sufficiently able to secure everyone's safety and wellbeing given the recent developments in the country. However, we have adapted our travel policy to strengthen duty of care considerations related to transit arrangements for all CIVICUS-booked travellers, and in the coming year we will be running an internal consultation with all staff to learn more about our experiences and recommendations in relation to duty of care to external actors, as per an ongoing commitment from last year's Accountable Now reporting. This will include better actively tracking and managing risk factors and strengthening our data and digital security protocols and practices.

Our five-year Strengthening Twenty-First Century Citizen Action (STCCA) programme concluded at the end of this reporting period. It sought to better understand grassroots groups and actors, the types of resources and funding mechanisms they require, and things which currently stand in the way of their resourcing needs being met. Building on these foundations, it explored solutions with grassroots actors for making civil society resourcing more accessible, inclusive, and needs-based. This saw us continue to track shifts in the civil society resourcing environment, including via a [report](#) published on the barriers to resourcing experienced by CSOs in Latin América, which found that the funding system in the region is highly inefficient and does not adequately support and strengthen frontline actors, especially those defending civic space and the rights of marginalised groups. These sentiments have been repeatedly echoed by our collaborators in all other Global South regions.

The STCCA programme has in turn guided our grassroots-centred advocacy with donors and influenced our engagement with consortia like [Lifeline](#), especially regarding how they can better resource youth-led actors. It has also informed internal efforts to make our own resourcing practices more accountable, such as inspiring the Crisis Response Fund (CRF) to become more agile and inclusive via the prototyping of approaches which directly target groups that have difficulty accessing mainstream funding opportunities, like social movements, indigenous groups and feminist organisers of SRHR work. In turn, the CRF has increasingly relied on local and grassroots partner connections for identifying further similar groups to support, rather than the traditional national-level partners it has mainly collaborated with in the past.

3. [How has your organisation learned from reported incidents, complaints and grievances received in the past year? \(These may include safeguarding, fraud, corruption, whistleblowing, integrity violations, etc.\)](#)

Summary of reported incidents

The number and type of external complaints has remained similar to previous years - five were received in total. Three were in relation to service providers, one in relation to governance, and

another was in relation to staff which was re-routed to our internal feedback mechanism. All complaints were resolved in line with our feedback policy, and learnings have been used to inform the revision and expansion of our feedback policy to improve clarity between mechanisms and conflict of interest.

Internally, no formal grievance procedures were commenced during this period. However, several written complaints were shared with the Human Resources Cluster and Senior Leadership Team. The nature of complaints received pointed to underlying challenges including: differing levels of awareness and therefore implementation of internal policies, siloed planning and working resulting in tensions between teams, lack of clarity on dispute resolution processes in certain instances. These challenges were exacerbated with surge of activities post the Covid-19 pandemic. These challenges, along with other feedback gathered, were used as the problem statement/starting point for the PMF-OMF-SLT collaboration process, described in detail in section 2.

General process and systems improvements

In response to this feedback, we are now running more regular refresher sessions on key organisational policies and systems, to emphasise why they are necessary, and how they will impact the work of our respective teams. In the coming year, this will specifically include improving our collective tracking and communications with service providers. We are also developing new guidelines for effective cross-organisational planning and delivery of flagship events, and exploring building on our DFA framework, which stipulates protocols for core decision making process, to include the next level of line managers (cluster leads and other mid-level decision makers), and better socialising this framework across the organisation.

We are also using the coming year to experiment with a more joined up Collaborative Management Forum, which will replace previously separate Programmes and Operations Management Forums. Furthermore, we are attempting to link better understanding of organisational systems and collaborating with wider teams, groups and processes, into our revamped learning and development framework (further information in section 4).

Unified code of ethics framework with a revised feedback policy

Based on learnings from our feedback mechanisms (internal and external), we initiated a process to update our Feedback Policy expanding it to include our internal feedback approach and strengthen and clarify the way we handle external feedback, including exploring the appointment of external ombudsman to avoid conflicts of interest. The Policy will be accompanied by an implementation plan which we will use to continually socialise with all staff our collective and individual responsibilities for collecting and responding to external feedback, as well as the various mechanisms and processes available to them for flagging and resolving issues internally. The Board acknowledged our progress and encouraged us to take this a step further by situating the Feedback Policy within a unified code of ethics framework. The framework will also include new or updated policies related to safeguarding, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and staff and member codes of conduct. The development of the code of ethics framework is being led by HR with the guidance of the board and additional external experts.

4. Internally, how has your organisation practised a more dynamic approach to accountability?

We ran significant consultation processes in relation to the transition to our new strategy as described in section 2. The new approach to systematic individual and organisational growth via our new learning development framework is also a critical internal accountability milestone for the period, as outlined in section 1. We have also improved our internal dynamic accountability through several other processes:

Diversity equity and inclusion (DEI): We have continued making progress against our race and racial justice review commitments. Internal growth and development have been encouraged through a conscious practice of offering opportunities (including external engagements) to those outside of traditional leadership roles. Online leadership training has been offered to 15 staff members, including 13 women of which four were black African women and two women of colour. Our new-look Diversity and Inclusion Group (DIG) is now more representative of the full secretariat and has a stronger mandate for helping to drive improved DEI outcomes across our work. DIG played a critical role in the consultations for our staff retreat (further described below) and also piloted an extensive DEI-specific online learning platform, which has now been rolled out to all staff.

Our refreshed recruitment policy has started increasing diversity, especially with our internship programme. Our recruitment policy now includes CIVICUS's diversity statement, inclusive job descriptions and consideration of a wide range of skills and qualifications to ensure inclusion of those who have alternative standards of education and knowledge. We also increased the range of advertising platforms we use to ensure opportunities attract a more diverse pool of candidates. Now, our internship policy prioritises Global South, Black Africans and those from South Africa. For this reporting period, these changes resulted in hiring 73% of interns from the Global South, 59% Black Africans and 40% South Africans.

Staff-owned staff retreat: In May 2023 we hosted a global staff retreat which was designed and facilitated to connect people in person for the first time since late 2019. The focus of the retreat was team building and understanding both our individual and collective contributions to delivering our new strategy. This involved a cross-organisational process run by retreat's external facilitators to co-create an agenda based on our collective needs and interests. The DIG also led a consultation with staff which enabled us to do things like move the retreat date to avoid a religious holiday, arrange safer travel by ensuring daylight hour arrivals, allow interns to attend, and cater for all dietary preferences.

A big emphasis was placed on creating safe spaces for staff to have open conversations about challenging topics like fostering more collaboration and reducing siloes between teams. We held open space dialogues where colleagues were able to bring up topics for discussion and solutioning. Staff provided overwhelmingly positive feedback about all elements of the retreat, including specific appreciation of the inclusive and thoughtful preparation process, and the diversity of activities organised by the external facilitation team.

Learning from our staff exit feedback: Our overall staff turnover during this period was below the sector average, however we did notice higher than average turnover in our Geneva Office. Further feedback gathered indicated that while all of the departing Geneva staff stated that they were leaving

for better career opportunities, some also cited the high cost of living in Geneva as a motivator for seeking higher-paying positions in the sector. Quick action was taken by introducing new location allowances for staff located in our UN hub offices. We also recognise the importance of notice periods in ensuring institutional memory and smooth transitions. Next year we will explore extended notice periods and reviewing annual leave policy during notice periods with staff and leadership. Furthermore, the combination of individual and organisational growth plans in our updated learning and development framework also aims to help grow our pool of internal candidates.

5. How has your organisation worked towards being dynamically accountable to your external stakeholders (i.e partners, communities, programme participants, etc)?

An important accountability-related shift for the organisation this year has been towards a more solidarity-based member engagement model. Our engagement data shows that much of our appeal - especially for new organisations - is based on individual or organisational growth and sustainability opportunities. We have therefore begun to explore how to develop this initial or priority draw into a longer-term journey of solidarity and collective action with a wider community, across three stages: develop; collaborate; and lead. These are complemented by more consistent initial onboarding and ongoing communication via multiple channels about opportunities at different stages of the engagement journey.

In this regard, we have used our new Membership Engagement Month (MEM) as an opportunity for both more comprehensive onboarding for newer and “refreshing” for older members, and deeper engagement with the contents of our 2021-2022 annual report. This included via open sessions with the Board and Senior Leadership Team organised in different time zones, and approximately 200 members present at our virtual AGM. MEM was also utilised to promote programmatic priorities and associated forthcoming activities, such as our new member learning experience initiative as part of the “develop” engagement stage. This is built around three online courses run on the member community platform, which explore priority topics for our members but which also support the delivery of our new strategy. MEM also included a virtual Fair for Collective Action in which numerous external organisations and networks that had previously expressed an interest in engaging with the membership, were invited to run “stalls” which were organised into priority categories. This included End Water Poverty and Sanitation and Water for All, with whom we convened a follow-up session with their networks and our members to discuss trends in WASH rights activism, and the subsequent creation of an online group on this topic on the CIVICUS community platform. Extensive efforts were made to dialogue with participants about the effectiveness of our inaugural MEM, and to then close the loop about what we learned.

We have continued iterating a new quarterly MEL reporting template, which all teams use to provide data on progress and what they are learning, in-line with our new IRF. This includes a narrative form asking teams to share perspectives and testimonies from our stakeholders. We are therefore now better placed to understand some important aspects of our external accountability practices at this critical level, as well as begin aggregating this information to track our progress organisationally. However, we intend to use our AN Action Plan as a vehicle for improving the quantity and depth of



external feedback, especially from our target groups, and to continue enhancing our ability to integrate lessons from system-wide outcomes analysis into how we plan and talk about our work on an ongoing basis (not just during annual planning and reporting cycles).

A number of CIVICUS teams, such as the CSF and Innovation for Change (I4C) are already explicitly built on community accountability practices such as being directly member-led, and have been consistently capturing community perspectives via tool such as weekly/monthly team “growlogs”. The CSF has continued to build more partnership-based relationships with fund grantees by directly involving them in decision making processes about the support and learning opportunities we facilitate for them. And as planned, the I4C “Helper Hub” team has handed-over full control of the I4C network to its regional hubs and global governance body, which was made possible by a sustained effort to adopt various new income generation activities for financial sustainability. The transition process and interim secretariat model were all designed by the network, in a manner that ensures hubs with greater capacity take the lead with others in support, and any challenges faced are addressed collectively.

We have also continued using co-creation as a way of putting our priority audiences in the driving seat, especially during project inception phases. For example, our extensive consultation with different actors in the FoPA ecosystem taught us that project-by-project work on this topic tends to be fragmented and lack sustainability. We are therefore aiming to provide an innovative model for mid- and long-term support on FoPA rights, focused on increasing solidarity across regional and thematic boundaries, and between relevant actors from different sectors. After mapping many of the key players at all levels across the global FoPA ecosystem, we began a consultation to better understand their support needs and priorities. As a result, we are prioritising a preventative approach to FoPA violations, across three thematic areas: innovative tools and tactics; building alliances and counterpower; and financial and non-financial resourcing.

We then convened online co-design sessions for each of the three FoPA themes, seeing the participants provide 65 innovative solutions to some of the most pressing corresponding challenges, ranging from encouraging use of art and creative expression to raise awareness, to developing resources for holistic safety of protestors including in relation to mental health and people in remote rural areas. Participants noted the significance of these convenings: “Such spaces are rare and fundamentally needed to strengthen learnings and sharing of experience, and to strategise in addition to building solidarity networks and bridges”, with a number of them proceeding to engage in various subsequent CIVICUS-convened FoPA advocacy efforts in UN spaces.

The CIVICUS Youth team has also continued to lead the way on accountability this year, with a particular focus on supporting others to learn from and replicate its community-driven approach. This includes via its flagship co-created [Youth Action Lab Playbook](#) and associated “learning circles” on priority topics such as resourcing youth-led action. The Playbook is a guide to help others build or strengthen their supporting mechanisms for young individual activists, youth-led or focused unregistered collectives and grassroots groups. It took almost a year to be completed due to the prioritisation of iterative UX feedback from both target audiences and wider “critical friends”. During the process, the team was already able to encourage another organisation to successfully pilot its Learning Partnership Programme model, in which participants are supported to identify their own mentors. Overall, the period saw a continued increase in youth membership, which we believe is related to the regular promotion of open youth-led virtual events on diverse topics every month, along with a concentrated engagement period in August around International Youth Day.

We have continued to meet a demand from the alliance to play the role of a broker and incubator for innovative pilot projects, especially those developed via the STCCA programme. We have built variations of the [Jam Sessions](#) approach for protecting and nurturing the mental, physical and emotional energy of civil society activists and groups, as first developed by our cohort of [Grassroots Changemakers](#), into new projects like FoPA and LLL. This enabled us to support further groups to utilise the methodology, as well continue iterating it based on feedback received. We have also updated and expanded the [Donor Finder](#) directory, including in response to requests from target groups needing rapid response resources for urgent situations. And when promoting the project in 2021, we learned that our target groups needed more help understanding donor jargon and how to identify and engage suitable donors, so this year we also offered an online class explaining how to make the most of the tool and providing further grant-seeking strategy advice. This saw huge participation numbers, with 721 registrations and 224 attendees, and the event received a very high NPS score of 86.

DEI continues to be more effectively mainstreamed across our programmes, both in terms of how we undertake our activities (such as strengthening our ability to deliver core work across three languages), and starting to more directly focus our activities on our target groups. For example, of 128 CIVICUS Lens interviews this year 90+ were from the Global South, 78 were women, and 69 were black, indigenous or other people of colour. And our Freedom of Peaceful Assembly research emphasised the impact of race, gender, sexual orientation, indigeneity, class and other factors on the exercising of this right, which has seen us embed an intersectional approach into the programme.

The CIVICUS Board has also started [publishing](#) key talking points and decisions made during its bi-annual meetings. In addition to this new layer of transparency, the Board is also in the process of appointing focal points for engagement with different key CIVICUS member networks like youth and AGNA. The focal points will have formal written mandates and engage in quarterly conversations with network representatives, covering topics such as subgranting arrangements and the board election nomination process, and will report back on what they learn to the full board.

A SIDA audit provided an opportunity for an external reviewer to independently assess our systems and processes and give suggestions for how they could be improved. This process included interviews with members of the [CHARM-Africa](#) consortium with whom we oversee large subgrants, along with over 200 survey responses from local-level project partners. We were ranked highly in several areas, including internal control systems, funds flow management and governance and legal status. Areas for improvement included strengthening our whistle blowing, anti-fraud and anti-bribery policies, which are being addressed via the aforementioned process to develop a new unified code of ethics.

Annex 1. Reporting questions and guidelines

No.	Core Reporting Questions	Guidelines for responses
1.	What have been your most significant achievements and impacts this year and how has this	Main achievements/impacts including any financial commitments are listed <u>or</u> links to relevant documents are provided (annual reports, financial statements, evaluations etc).

been validated with your stakeholders?

Descriptions of how information on achievements and impact claims are made accessible to and adapted for the needs of the organisation's target stakeholder groups (especially communities).

Processes of how relevant stakeholders (especially communities) have *actively* validated the organisation's relevant achievement and/or impact claims are provided.

The processes described are adapted to the differing needs of stakeholders across different projects/the organisation.

<p>2. <i>If applicable</i> - How have your organisation's accountability processes been impacted by significant internal or external changes over the reporting period?</p>	<p>Descriptions of significant internal (strategy, personnel, policies, funding, etc) and/or external (social, economic, environmental, political macro level, etc) changes are provided.</p>
	<p>Reflections of the (potential) impact of these changes on accountability practices/processes are provided. If the changes are not perceived to impact accountability, please provide an explanation.</p>
	<p>Reflections of why and how the organisation has adapted their accountability processes to these changes are provided.</p>
	<p>Descriptions of how stakeholders' feedback will be/have been incorporated into the changes made are provided.</p>

<p>3. How has your organisation learned from reported incidents, complaints and grievances received in the past year? (These may include safeguarding, fraud, corruption, whistleblowing, integrity violations, etc.)</p>	<p>A summary of <u>only</u> the categories and numbers of reported incidents, complaints and grievances over the reporting period is provided <u>or</u> links to relevant public documents are provided.</p>
	<p>Reflections about what the organisation learned from the incidents reported are provided.</p>
	<p>Reflections about how the organisation aims to improve and adapt according to incidents reported are provided. Complainants' feedback regarding the handling process is also taken into account.</p>

4.	Internally, how has your organisation practised a more dynamic approach to accountability?	Response shares how the organisation is implementing dynamic accountability practices with different internal stakeholders (e.g from staff, volunteers, national chapters/offices, etc). Dynamic accountability practices can potentially include: being open and accessible, creating spaces for input, fostering inclusion, listening, closing the feedback loop, continuous learning, among others. <i>*Organisations may choose to focus on one or two, or all stakeholder groups - depending on needs.</i>
		Response shares a summary of the feedback received internally over the reporting period.
		Response includes how the organisation has responded to the feedback received and what changes may have been made as a result.
		Reflections and commitments towards improvements are provided. Feedback from internal stakeholders are shown to shape these commitments. <i>*Commitments provided will be reassessed in the following year by the IRP.</i>

5.	How has your organisation worked towards being dynamically accountable to your external stakeholders (i.e partners, communities, programme participants, etc)?	Response shares how the organisation is listening to, being responsive, and collaborating with its partners and/or the communities that it wishes to serve. <i>*Organisations may choose to focus on one or two, or all stakeholder groups each year - depending on needs.</i>
		Response includes how partners and/or communities have been engaged in line with values of accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion. For example, this may include how the organisation is making its listening, responses and collaborative processes more accessible to different groups (i.e women, children, the LGBTQ+ community, people with health conditions or impairments, etc).
		Response includes a set of feedback, comments, evaluations, etc, that the organisation received from external stakeholders such as partners, communities, etc. Response furthermore shares what has changed as a result of the feedback received.
		Commitments to improvements are provided. Feedback from partners and/or the communities are taken into account in shaping these commitments. <i>*Commitments provided will be reassessed in the following year by the IRP.</i>