

Annual report 2011

INGO Accountability Charter

The world's most widely used multi-sectoral accountability framework for International NGOs

"2011 was a year in which the INGO Accountability Charter went through several important developments. It was the first year in which the Members reported using the GRI reporting framework and an independent report vetting process was set up through the establishment of the Independent Review Panel. In April the Members adopted a Five Year Strategy which points out the direction for the coming years. The Charter Company organised a successful workshop for its Members on NGOs' Environmental Performance and attended the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in South Korea.

With the fulfilment of this year the Charter has taken further important steps to establishing itself as the accountability framework of choice for International NGOs. In the coming year, focus will be on promoting interoperability with other accountability initiatives, encouraging more organisations to join the group of NGOs committed to improved transparency and accountability, and on securing funding for the Charter to ensure its continued development.

I would like to express my appreciation to all who showed their commitment and contributed their know-how and resources to the Charter throughout this year. We especially thank the Members of the Independent Review Panel who contributed with their experience and expertise on a voluntary basis and Freshfields law firm which gives important, pro bono legal advice to the Charter."

Oxford, February 2012

Jeremy Hobbs

Executive Director, Oxfam International and Chair, INGO Accountability Charter

The Five Years Strategy

At the Annual General Meeting in April, the Charter Members unanimously approved a Five Years Strategy for the Charter. The aim to establish the Charter as the accountability framework of choice and standard code of practice for all International NGOs is clearly formulated in five strategic objectives:

1. All leading international NGOs sign the Charter.
2. Donors and other key stakeholders of strategic importance recognise the Charter as the premier quality assurance mechanism for INGOs.
3. Smaller international and larger national organisations use the Charter as a basis for their accountability.
4. The Charter positions itself as the authoritative voice on NGO accountability.
5. The Charter has sufficient funding available to attain the above priorities.

Over the next years the Charter Company will work hard to reach these ambitious goals. In order for them to be achieved, the support of all Member Organisations and other stakeholders will be necessary.

"The INGO Accountability Charter has helped us promote the importance of our own accountability as an organisation amongst our members and staff. The INGO Accountability Charter has also allowed us to identify areas for improvement and to share good practices with other NGOs and the public in general. Being part of the Charter gives us the opportunity to be part of a community of practice on accountability and learning."

Zaira Drammis

Head of Learning and Impact, Amnesty International



Reporting process - Independent Review Panel

2011 was the first year in which the Global Reporting Initiative's (GRI) NGO Sector Supplement was used as reporting frame for Charter Members. The Charter thus applies the world's largest sustainability reporting framework, also widely used by the business sector. Over the year, 28 accountability reports were submitted from Members. All reports were reviewed by the Independent Review Panel which met twice during the year.

The Panel consists of four highly respected people: Wambui Kimathi, former Commissioner at the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR); Richard Manning former Chair of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC); Janet Hunt, former Executive Director of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid; and Gavin Neath, Senior Vice President Sustainability for Unilever. The Panel will in the future also be responsible for handling complaints made against the Charter and as a body ensures the credibility and integrity of the Charter.

The Panel has given general feedback to all Members - a common issue being how to report as a confederation/federation as well as individual members of the same group without causing confusion - and also suggested specific areas of improvement for individual Members. We hope to develop ways of improving qualitative assessment as INGOs become more familiar with this kind of reporting.

Members' Workshop

As part of its service to Members, the Charter organised a workshop focusing on NGOs' Environmental Performance in October 2011. The workshop offered the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences on best practice of environmental management in NGOs and discuss the current GRI reporting requirements on environmental issues. 17 participants

"Presentations from NGOs' were the highlight for me. Those alone made attendance worthwhile but the whole experience was very, very helpful. Please repeat!"

Greg Collins
Operations Director, Sightsavers

attended the workshop and the evaluation showed that 100% of the participants found the overall workshop very useful (17%) or extremely useful (83%). As a consequence of the workshop, the participants have established a network to continue learning from each other on how to consistently improve their environmental performance.

The 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF4), Busan, South Korea

In the end of 2011, the Charter attended the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. The conference offered a good opportunity to reach out to potential members, donors and other stakeholders, as well as to position the Charter in the debate on NGO accountability. During the conference the Charter co-organised a Side Event on NGO accountability, showing concrete examples of how international NGOs strive to improve and implement accountability in their work and how collaboration can support greater accountability. This also stirred some heated debate about the role of INGOs, raising legitimate concerns that relate to downward accountability more widely. During the Civil Society Forum taking place prior to the conference, the Charter also co-organised a workshop that presented the Charter as a mechanism for NGOs to improve their accountability.

Cooperation with Freshfields law firm

Throughout the year, the Charter worked with the law firm Freshfields to amend the constitutional documents, establish terms of reference of the Independent Review Panel and draft a complains handling mechanism. These documents are to be presented to the Members at the Annual General Meeting in March 2012. We are deeply grateful for their pro bono support.

Outlook 2012

One important priority in 2012 is to promote interoperability with other accountability initiatives, such as Sphere, HAP and national Codes, with the aim of building a coherent accountability architecture for the civil society sector. Another objective for the Charter is to reach out to potential Members and encourage them to join the group of organisations working to improve transparency and accountability of our sector. The Charter Company will also work to further develop the reporting process in order to move closer to our aim of being *the* accountability framework of choice for NGOs.

Charter Members

During 2011 *Article 19*, *CARE International Secretariat*, *Caritas Internationalis*, *Intervida* and *The Forest Trust* joined the Charter as new Members. We welcome these new Members to the growing group of NGOs – now adding up to 26 Charter Members - that state their commitment to transparency and accountability through Charter membership and collectively work on continuous improvement.



As of January 2012