

## **Annual report 2012**

### **INGO Accountability Charter**

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

*“Accountability is possibly the most critical issue for NGOs at present and is likely to become even more so, with huge financial pressures on governments, ever increasing demands for NGOs and greater competition for resources.*

*Considerable progress has been made in 2012 to establish the INGO Accountability Charter as an effective organisation for improving the quality and accountability of NGO work. Our Members' commitments to excellence, transparency and accountability have also been recognized by the Independent Review Panel which is now in its third year of assessing reports. These are made publicly available on our website. In their last assessment of Charter Member reports they emphasised the increasing quality of the submissions. We have started to introduce some good practice indicators to further strengthen the quality of work.*

*During the year, the Charter Company organised a successful workshop for its Members on Public Challenges to Accountability which not only provided valuable insight, but also helped to improve the active learning network among Charter Members. Developing a strong collective voice on the quality of NGO accountability will be ever more important as a narrow top-down focus on accountability gathers pace, for example in the public debate on 'value for money'.*

*Finally, we are pleased and grateful that Members have agreed to substantial increases in membership fees (albeit from a low base) and thus put the Charter on a much sounder financial footing for the coming years. This is recognition of the importance of accountability and of the value of the Charter as means to increase it.*

*With the on-going commitment and support of all those involved with the Charter we are looking forward to continued success in 2013.*

*Thank you. ”*

Oxford, January 2013

Jeremy Hobbs  
Executive Director, Oxfam International and  
Chair, INGO Accountability Charter

### **Reporting - Independent Review Panel**

The Independent Review Panel assessed 24 Accountability Reports from Charter Members and highlighted that the quality of the reports is continuously improving, institutional commitment is getting stronger, and a better understanding of how to use the Charter as an internal quality driver is emerging.

Tony Tujan, International Director of the IBON Foundation, was appointed by the Charter Board as a new Panel member to replace Gavin Neath, former Senior Vice President for Sustainability at Unilever, who left the Panel at the end of the year. The other highly respected members of the Panel are: Janet Hunt, former Executive Director of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid; Wambui Kimathi, former Commissioner at the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights; and Richard Manning, former Chair of the OECD's

Development Assistance Committee. The Board will decide on the appointment of two new Panel members in early 2013.

*“In the short time that the Panel has been in place very considerable progress has already been made.”*  
Gavin Neath, Panel member,  
December 2012

In addition to reviewing the Accountability Reports, the Panel is also responsible for handling complaints made against the Charter and as a body ensures the credibility and integrity of the Charter.

A working group on the Charter reporting requirements was set up to explore how the *normative* Charter commitments can be better reflected in the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) reporting framework, which focuses on *transparency* only. The suggestions from the working group will be implemented in 2013. The Board also decided that Good Practice Indicators shall be gradually introduced to provide more clarity on quality.

Comments from Members on the Panel feedback, October 2012 round:



*“Your feedback will continue to be a very valuable check on how we are progressing also in the future. We appreciate both the support and the pressure of the INGO group and its host, the Berlin Civil Society Center, which has provided valuable support in the process. The work you do on the review panel is contributing to a more vibrant and accountable INGO sector.”*  
Joanna Kerr, Chief Executive, ActionAid International



*“We are encouraged by the Panel’s recognition of our development and we appreciate the Panel’s input, hard work as well as the Charter’s dedication towards excellence in the NGO sector. The good practice report from the Charter provides a pool of great impulses for our work. The Panel’s feedback gives good advice for further organisational development of the CBM family as well as for further improvement of our accountability report.”*  
CBM Reporting team

## Members’ Workshop

The annual Members’ Workshop focused on *Public Challenges to Accountability: How the Charter can help*. 20 representatives of organisations that are Members or potential members of the Charter attended this workshop which took place at Amnesty International Netherlands in Amsterdam. Communications, accountability, strategy, and evaluation staff shared with their peers from other organisations ideas on how to best use the Charter to drive accountability issues internally and improve communications when faced with public allegations. Policies and experiences were actively exchanged. Participants also explored how improved cooperation between Charter Members could facilitate collectively agreed standards of accountability. 94% of participants found the overall workshop “extremely useful” or “very useful”. The workshop outcome is available on the [Charter website](#).

Comments from 2012 Members’ Workshop participants:

*“Learning of other organisations’ experiences of trust and accountability issues was extremely useful.”*

*“Role play was a fascinating exercise and a real eye-opener to the roles within which INGOs are constrained.”*



## Charter Membership



Charter membership was originally confined to organisations with affiliates, presence or programmes in five or more countries. This excluded a number of organisations who work on international issues but have no operations outside their home country. In order to fulfil its strategic aim of becoming the leading global frame for NGO accountability, the 2012 Annual General Meeting opened the membership to organisations who “work predominantly internationally” or “on international issues”.

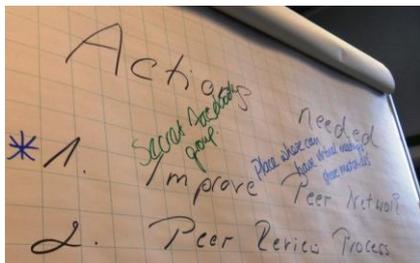
In order to protect the Charter’s reputation as the membership grows, it was also decided that all organisations that are approved for membership by the Charter Board are first granted *Affiliate membership* status. These organisations only become Full Members when they have submitted their first accountability report and this has been vetted and approved by the Independent Review Panel.

An additional category of formally associated organisations called *Friends of the Charter* was created and opened to organisations which are ineligible for membership.

## Cooperation with Freshfields law firm

The Charter received throughout the year legal advice from the UK law firm Freshfields. They supported us in amending the Articles of Association and in producing the following documents which are all available on the Charter website: Terms of Reference for the Independent Review Panel, Complaints Handling Procedure, Conflict of Interest Policy, and Open Information Policy. We are deeply grateful for their pro bono support.

## Outlook 2013



In order to close the gap between the Charter’s ambition to develop into the global accountability framework of choice and its extremely limited resources, it was agreed to significantly raise the membership fees as of January 2013. The new fee structure, which is frozen at this level for the coming three years, enables the Charter to maintain a consistently high level of management proficiency, build up some reserves and further develop its activities.

Next year the focus will be to further improve our good practice indicators and reporting requirements, better communicate the valuable insights into best practice examples across the membership, and push for greater coherence in NGO accountability requirements across the globe. Thanks to the kind secondment of a very qualified staff member by CBM to the Charter in 2013, we also hope to substantially improve peer exchange, peer learning and an active community of practice among Charter Members.

## Full Charter Members



## Affiliate Charter members

