



INGO Accountability Charter Annual Report 2015

Interim report

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Reporting format

ARTICLE 19 has provided a brief interim report for 2015 following recommendation from the Independent Review Panel in the 2014 report feedback letter

This interim report details any material changes that have incurred within the organisation during the reporting period, as well as progress update against the areas identified by the panel in the Improvement Analysis document

PROFILE DISCLOSURES

1 Strategic Commitment to Accountability

1.1 Statement from the most senior decision-maker of the organisation. [GRI NGOSS: p. 25]

ARTICLE 19 takes its mandate and mission directly from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

We work on two strategic pillars tied to the declaration: advocating and protecting Freedom of Expression and Access to Information. Accountability is at the heart of our work, as we use the power of access to information to hold decision-makers to account for their actions. We work on accountability at a number of levels: local, national, regional and international. One area where we are seeking to increase accountability is on combatting impunity for violations of individuals' freedom of expression and information rights. We are developing an independent platform that would make it easier for people who have experienced violations of these rights to report them to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the relevant UN Special Rapporteurs. Not only will this platform facilitate reporting, but also track responses by the UN and states to the allegations, improving the ability to hold states accountable for their actions.

ARTICLE 19 was one of the first, if not the first, organisations to explicitly link access to information to achievement of development outcomes in the global south, an approach that has now been endorsed and institutionalised by the inclusion of a target on access to information in the UN Agenda 2030, replacing the Millennium Development Goals. An informed citizenry and civil society become key agents of their own development, not passive recipients of aid. Through information, they can hold leaders to account for the realisation of the development agenda at local and national levels, and help to root out corruption and fraud. Our work on development is rooted in this belief, and lies at the heart of our present and future organisational strategy, currently under development.

Organisationally, we seek to embody accountability by holding ourselves open and accountable to beneficiaries, donors, partners, and crucially to ourselves. We demonstrate this to external audiences through our participation in the INGO Accountability Charter and the International Aid Transparency Initiative, as well as making our key annual reports and accounts publicly available. The majority of our major grants are audited and subject to independent external evaluations. Often, we will add in an external evaluation in our project proposals even if not required under the terms of the grant, as we continually seek to evaluate the impact of our work. This focus on impact is the basis of our monitoring and evaluation framework, a key internal process that feeds into decision-making.

A key component of our commitment to accountability and transparency internally is reflected in our investment in two new systems: a cloud-based project management

planning and tracking system (“CAMMS Sycle”) and a financial management suite (“Access Dimensions”). CAMMS will allow for total organisational visibility to review our progress against our strategic objective and project deliverables, tied to performance management criteria. This system was developed in 2016 and is in the initial stages of roll-out across the entire organisation. One unit of the CAMMS platform that we are particular pleased with is the business intelligence suite, which we intend to make available to our donors directly so that they can review our progress against our strategy as well. Access Dimensions will for the first time allow all finance staff across the organisation to view all accounting and budgeting information in real time for all offices, instead of relying on our old system of quarterly reporting into a centralized system in London. A final commitment we have made internally is to endeavour to use only open source software, predominantly for security reasons but also to support the development of the “open” community.

In our last statement, we mentioned our intention to develop online platforms for policy development that would allow for a wide range of people to participate in the debate and drafting of future policy documents. We have implemented this approach to policy development for both our Protest Principles and our Principles on Freedom of Expression and People with Disability. This approach increases our accountability to stakeholders, as they can see the comments given and our response to them in our final policy documents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'THUGHES', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas Hughes, Executive Director

2. Material changes that have occurred within the organisation since last report

In 2015, offices and teams across ARTICLE 19 worked together to develop a new six year strategy: The [Expression Agenda](#). This strategy outlines our unique and insightful plan for tackling existing and emergent challenges to Freedom of Expression and Information worldwide.

Our Theory of Change, which underpins the *Expression Agenda*, places the individual at the heart of our work. We’ll make sure local knowledge impacts policy-making at the international level, which can then secure progressive change at the national and local levels. We will draw on our decades of experience to deliver activities ranging from policy and legal standards, to international campaigns and development programs.

The *Expression Agenda* encompasses five themes, all cross-cut by our new approach to sex, gender and sexuality: the *Mx Method*.

Under the Civic Space theme, we will help secure the right to participate in public life: to engage in debate, criticise, protest and dissent, in the physical and online spaces. Through our Digital work, we will embed human rights principles into law and process, engaging governments, businesses and the technical community. Our Media work will ensure that

media pluralism, freedoms and the public interest are protected and promoted in a globalised, digitalised and converged landscape. Our Protection work will continue to defend those on the front line, ensuring that violations are reported and perpetrators held accountable. Our Transparency activities will ensure the right to information is secured so that communities and individuals are empowered to ensure power-holders are accountable.

The Expression Agenda was presented to international experts in London in September, receiving an engaged and positive response. We're confident that we will continue to lead the global battle to defend and promote Freedom of Expression and Information for years to come.

We had two departures from our Senior Management Team during the year and the post of Director for Finance and Operations was filled by Akila Lingham and we will start to recruit for a new Director of Communications in 2016

In June, we held our first General Assembly, with representatives of the organisation's regional affiliates from Africa, Asia and the Americas meeting with the International Board in London.

We started to develop a new system for monitoring progress against our strategic outcomes and project implementation in 2015. The system is expected to go live in 2016 after we have provided training to all staff across the organisation. We have already revised our internal reporting process to ensure that teams report against their strategic outcomes and we expect to be able to gather this data through the system by the end of 2016. More information on this system will be provided in the 2016 report.

3. Progress updates against areas identified by the Independent Review Panel in the Improvement Analysis (November 2015)

Evidence

Part of ARTICLE 19's challenge to date in this area has been in relatively unsystematic sharing of information across and between the London-based international and regional/country offices, and local variations in approach. The new project management process, ways of working and system currently under development is designed to encourage and enable improved practice in this area, prompting and supporting the sharing of key documents and information across the organisation regardless of location, and reinforce good practice and greater standardisation in documenting key elements such as stakeholder analysis, lessons learned, risks and issues, etc. This should improve both internal transparency and accountability and the development of longer-term institutional memory, knowledge management and experience sharing between teams and individual staff.

This will also enable us to more systematically identify, track and analyse the degree to which we *involve the 'people we serve'* – in ARTICLE 19's context, target groups (women and girls, media workers including journalists, bloggers and social media communicators, cartoonists and artists, human rights defenders, whistleblowers, persons with disabilities, LGBTI persons, refugees and internally displaced persons, and indigenous persons), change agents (legislators, judges, lawyers, companies, and foreign ministries including delegations), and partner institutions (civil society organisations, media, academia, companies and donors) – and better evidence the changes to which we contribute both for and through these groups.

Moreover, the processes and system itself is not just limited to management of discrete projects, but links project activities directly to the new 6-year organisational strategic outcomes and operational plans, and also the performance assessments of ARTICLE 19 staff who are respectively accountable for, responsible for, and support, their delivery. This will enable a higher degree – and better evidencing - of *impact focus*.

The project management system is planned to be shared with our partners involved in project delivery, and in the slightly longer term, access also given to our key strategic supporter and donor audiences through a ‘business intelligence system’ to have updates on our progress towards achieving our strategic outcomes on a more regular basis than annual narrative reports, which is currently the norm. This will enable a higher degree – and better evidencing - of *transparency, effective and independent oversight, and coordination with partners*.

In parallel with this, the introduction of a new global financial management system and supporting processes and new ways of working will also enable further continuous improvement in *sound financial management*.

Finally, as the basis to sustainably embed good project management practice as organisational habit and effectively induct new staff, in-house training and induction competencies and materials will be developed. A supporting peer learning forum/community of practice will also be established and supported. These processes will incorporate an integrated approach to project management, including communications, finance and fundraising, gender, HR and interpersonal/leadership elements, operational planning, M&E/quality and risk. Capturing the progress of this process, as well as use of the same system to plan and manage internal change initiatives, will support the development of illustrative case studies relating to our improved organisational effectiveness, as well as the programmatic ‘pathway to change’ evidence described in SO1 below.

Resolution of staff concerns (NGO9)

The grievance procedure can be made available in future as part of the planned redevelopment of the ARTICLE 19 website, along with other relevant policies noted elsewhere in the panel’s feedback.

An updated version of the 2014 report including a link to our online code of conduct policy in section 4.8 has been submitted for public sharing on the Charter website.

One example of how concerns raised by staff have been satisfactorily addressed is in relation to the management and reimbursement of intern roles. Two interns at ARTICLE 19 had highlighted a desire for stronger communication and supervision from their managers.

As a result, we have implemented the following:

1. A thorough interviewing process ensuring candidates are aware of what their role will look like, how they contribute to ARTICLE 19's mission and what they could expect to learn during their internship with us,
2. A more effective induction process, ensuring interns are familiarised with ARTICLE 19's work and culture and also they are fully briefed about their role and responsibilities
3. A more systematic approach towards providing feedback to interns, as well as regular meetings with their line manager.

For law-related work, we are also in the process of establishing a fellowship programme (instead of internships) through which participants will have a great degree of choice over identifying their own research topics and can receive the benefits of guidance and support from ARTICLE 19's in-house legal experts in relation to these.

Members of staff have also raised concerns that the level of financial reimbursement for travel expenses and meals for interns may not be sufficient, and that a revision might be required. Following several meeting with staff representatives, we significantly increased the level of reimbursement within the HMRC guidelines.

Staff representatives have confirmed their satisfaction with these changes/improvements in subsequent meetings.

Assessment of the direct and indirect impact of your activities (SO1)

From an initial emphasis of developing more detailed case studies from four pilot projects under one of our core donor strategic grants, the wider development of case studies as good practice within ARTICLE 19 has been given additional emphasis within the past 12 months, and is increasingly representative of a general organisational approach. Given the nature of our high-level policy and advocacy work at global, regional and national levels, it can be challenging to clearly illustrate and evidence the direct impact access to information can have on the lives of individual people, but we are continuously improving our ability to do this more systematically through this developing case study approach.

The project management system will incorporate a 'pathway to change' case study template as standard into our project workflow which can be continuously reviewed and updated during each implementation stage, and will be available in a final version as part of the closure process. Whilst this will not be mandatory for every project, its incorporation should promote increased use and uptake, especially for those involving legal analysis outputs. Incorporating stakeholder identification and analysis of target groups, change agents and partner institutions, and high-level strategies for engaging with them, will also enable more systematic tracking of the direct and indirect impact of our activities, at individual project level. Implementation teams will provide regular qualitative self-assessments as to the effectiveness dimensions of project activities, as well as on progress related to timing and cost, for instance, how useful or successful a workshop was found to be, rather than simply whether it was delivered on schedule and within budget. Regular contextual - Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental (PESTLE) - analyses encourage teams to think through the changing circumstances which may be influencing the type and level of contribution to change which project activities and outputs may be having.

At a higher aggregate level, our new 6-year organisational strategic outcomes are accompanied with carefully scoped targets, which incorporate both quantitative and qualitative dimensions, and progress towards achieving these will also be reviewed – including aspects of internal peer analysis and challenge – on at least a biannual basis. The new project management system is being specifically designed to provide much greater visibility of how the key underlying activities (in different projects) contributing towards each target are progressing, enabling a far more informed assessment and analysis of overall achievement to date.

Please also note that both our [2013](#) and [2014](#) Annual Reports have also included several additional examples of impact at the community level, for instance:

- working with protesters in Mexico and Brazil
- interfaith dialogue in Malaysia
- environmental protection in Bangladesh
- training human rights defenders and community leaders globally.

At the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR), we also aim to include grassroots activists in our advocacy, for instance journalists in Turkey during the country's UPR review session in 2014.

Anti-corruption trainings for staff (SO3)

The revised fraud and anti-bribery policy can be made available in future as part of the planned redevelopment of the ARTICLE 19 website. We will look at the potential for incorporating internal training on our anti-corruption policy into the new integrated induction and capacity building/learning and development processes and materials we will be producing following the introduction of our new global financial and project management systems. This will ultimately be available to all new and existing members of staff.

In 2015, we planned to conduct further anti-corruption training in at least two regional offices (Senegal and Tunisia). Training for Senegal went ahead as planned (for all five staff members and three retained consultants linked to accountancy and payroll), but unfortunately had to be cancelled in Tunisia due to political unrest. The training schedule for 2016 will be scheduled as appropriate to integrate with our roll-out plan for our new financial management system.