



**Accountable  
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GLOBAL STANDARDS LOCAL TRUST



# **ActionAid International Independent Review Panel Feedback**

**Accountability Report 2016  
Review Round August 2018**



# ActionAid International

## Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

### Review Round August 2018

13 September 2018

Dear Adriano Campolina,

Thank you for submitting your accountability report. We, the Independent Review Panel of Accountable Now, appreciate your efforts to continuously 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 individual assessment below.

ActionAid International's tenth accountability report is a concise interim report, based on the Panel's improvement analysis for the 2015 report. The main focus is the adoption of a new global strategy in 2016 and the Panel assumes that the development of the strategy led to action on other issues being delayed. While the report demonstrates that ActionAid has given thought to the areas the Panel had identified for improvement, it seems that translating it into action is only anticipated from 2018 onwards (hence why the Panel has rated some of these issues as only being partially addressed).

Adriano Campolina's opening statement mentions that the new global strategy puts accountability to the people ActionAid works for and with at the centre of their work. The key organisational changes highlighted in the report support this, with commitments to strengthen ActionAid's rooting in local communities.

Finally, the Panel appreciates that ActionAid highlights its commitment to accountability on its [website](#), mentioning its membership of Accountable Now and linking to the 12 Accountability Commitments.

The Panel looks forward to updates on progress in the next full report and notes positively discussions between ActionAid and the Accountable Now secretariat in which ActionAid expressed its commitment to submit future reports in a timelier manner, as the Panel has been encouraging all Accountable Now members to do.

Our intention is that this feedback letter, and any response you may wish to provide, is made publicly available on the Accountable Now website along with your report – as it is the case with all previously reviewed reports. However, should there be errors of fact in the feedback above or in the note below; we



would of course wish to correct these before publication. Please share any comments or amendments by 11 October 2018. If you have any other feedback or comments on our work, please share them with us by sending them to the Accountable Now Secretariat.

Yours sincerely,

Mihir Bhatt

John Clark

Elodie Le Grand

Jeremy Sandbrook



# ActionAid International's Accountability Report 2017

Review Round August 2018

## PROFILE DISCLOSURES

### I. Strategy and Analysis

1.1	<p><b>Statement from the most senior decision-maker</b></p> <p><i>Fully addressed</i></p> <p>The opening statement from ActionAid's Chief Executive Adriano Campolina highlights the challenges that ActionAid faced in 2016 in the context of shrinking civic and political space and funding cuts, and explains how these shaped development of the organisation's new International Strategy (not linked in the report, but available on ActionAid's <a href="#">website</a>).</p> <p>Campolina mentions that the new strategy puts accountability to the people ActionAid works for and with at the centre of their work, focusing on stronger mutual accountability and collaboration, greater organisational agility, and innovation. The Panel would have liked to see more of a focus on this, and on why accountability is seen as important in ActionAid's work, in the opening statement. Examples of how the strategy has led to greater accountability would also be appreciated.</p> <p>The Panel was however pleased to see commitments to increase ActionAid's internal and external accountability in the strategy (pages 29-30). ActionAid aims to increase participation of key stakeholders in its governance, monitoring and evaluation, and to strengthen policies, standards, systems and capacities. A federation-wide mutual accountability framework will help the Secretariat to better enforce compliance with internal policies and commitments.</p>
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### Material changes since the last report

The most significant change in 2016 was ActionAid International's adoption of a new global strategy, [Action for Global Justice 2028](#). The strategy focuses on fighting inequality, justice and poverty, putting women at the centre of ActionAid's work, and supporting human rights defenders and young women leaders.



It is stated that the strategy was developed through several rounds of consultations, with the engagement of staff, partners, and other stakeholders. The Panel would like to see more information on how ActionAid's key stakeholders (people and communities living in poverty, especially women and young people) were also included in the process, in the next full report.

As part of the new strategy, ActionAid also introduced new global monitoring and evaluation standards, an Organisational Development Change Management Plan, and a Fundraising Strategy. It is unclear however if they have now been implemented or not.

Further organisational changes include commitments to applying feminist lenses and values in ActionAid's work, taking transformational feminist leadership as the organisation's leadership model, and further rooting its work in the contexts in which it works.

The Panel commends ActionAid on what appears to be a thoughtfully crafted strategy (and accompanying new policies and processes), and looks forward to more information on how they result in a higher level of accountability in future reports.

## PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

### I. Programme Effectiveness

NG	<b>Mechanisms for feedback and complaints</b>
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O2	<i>Partially Addressed</i>
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	<p>ActionAid approved a revised Assurance Policy, which guides compliance with ActionAid policies across the federation, in 2016 (a summary of what the main changes is requested in the next report). The rollout of the Assurance Policy commenced with the development of a key policies handbook – it would be helpful to know to what extent feedback and complaints are covered – and compliance monitoring tools were created in 2018. It is stated that countries will undertake self-assessments in 2018 and report to the International Board and General Assembly, and the Panel looks forward to seeing the results as well as planned steps for improvement – including steps to ensure all countries report to the Secretariat on complaints – in the next report.</p>
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	<p>The report states that 779 complaints were received across the federation in 2016, a 45% reduction from 2015. It was noted that the bulk of them were from financial supporters and involved fundraising modalities and communications. The report however did not address the underlying issue</p>
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	<p>of the total number (percentage) of AA entities who reported to the Secretariat on this indicator In addition to having this, the Panel would appreciate seeing a summary of the main categories of complaints. A graph with a detailed breakdown, as well as a breakdown by country, would be welcome in the next report.</p> <p>Can ActionAid point to any evidence that the complainants were satisfied with the complaints handling process, and that appropriate action was taken to address / resolve the issue raised?</p> <p>Finally, the Panel looks forward to more information in the next report on the global reporting mechanism relating to safeguarding, and the Global Safeguarding Reference Group, including plans to improve how ActionAid deals with complaints.</p>
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#### IV. Human Resource Management

<p>LA 12</p>	<p><b>Global talent management</b></p> <p><i>Partially Addressed</i></p> <p>The response explains that the decreasing number of performance reviews over the past few years is due to disruption of processes in several countries due to change/re-design processes, as well as more staff being on probationary periods during which performance assessments do not take place (though the Panel would suggest that performance assessments should be offered to all staff regardless of the type of contract they are on). Furthermore, not all countries use ActionAid's online performance management system, and those that do may not all log performance assessments online.</p> <p>The Panel understands that ActionAid is looking into introducing the online performance management system HRMEnterprise across the whole federation, though no firm dates are given as to when this might be. The report also states that the 2018 Global Engagement Survey results, with specific scores on performance management, will reveal more about current staff engagement and plans to improve performance assessment. Is the survey for all staff? The Panel looks forward to key findings and information about how ActionAid plans to improve in the next report. Information/evidence about whether staff are satisfied with performance reviews and learning and development opportunities, and whether they feel these have a positive impact on their work and career development, will be of particular interest.</p> <p>Skills needed for human rights goal have changed in the past several years due to increasingly restrictive governance of civil society and the panel</p>
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	would like to know how this is addressed in Action Aid's work with the help of media, written evidence, third party review, etc.
LA 13	<p><b><i>Diversity of workforce and governance bodies</i></b></p> <p><i>Addressed</i></p> <p>ActionAid states that the lack of a common definition/understanding across the federation of what diversity means has been the main challenge to reporting on diversity beyond gender. It is stated that a position paper will need to be created, and that this will be prioritised in the strategy operating period 2018-2020, in alignment with other workstreams. The Panel recommends that the position paper include targets as well as a definition, and looks forward to more information in the next report, including how ActionAid aims to improve diversity at senior management and governance levels.</p>