

Johannesburg, 15th January 2012

Dear INGO Accountability Charter,

In response to the useful and important feedback by the independent panel, we would like thank you and provide our response to the comments on ActionAid International's 2010 GRI Annual Report. We appreciate the amount of work and time put into this process. The inputs will be used constructively in our organisation when reporting on 2011 and when further developing our new monitoring system in 2012. We would like to respond briefly to some of the comments provided, where we feel it may add value to clarify our position or the content of the report.

We would like to highlight that the Accountability Charter and the peer review process has been a driver for our carbon monitoring, which has truly taken off in 2011 and is expanding to include more than half of our 43 members in 2012. It has also been useful in pushing us to get more aggregated information on critical issues such as diversity of the people we work with, our employees, and our boards.

Most of the comments provided by the independent panel are on issues of omission in reporting or clarity, and we provide further details on these in the following appendix. During 2012 our organisation is undertaking two major projects in relation to this reporting – the expanded carbon monitoring, and an improved and integrated system for organisational Key Performance Indicators and Management Information System development. These two projects should make more and improved quality data available for our 2013 reporting.

We appreciate the support and push of the INGO group and its host, Berlin Civil Society Centre, which has provided valuable support in the process as well as in initiatives such as the carbon monitoring learning circle.

We thank you again for your comments, and your leadership of this process.

Yours sincerely,



Joanna Kerr

Chief Executive, ActionAid International

Appendix 1:

Response from ActionAid International to the Independent Review Panel on the 2010 report *In blue are our responses, where we find it may be helpful to clarify or provide additional information to respond to the comments of the independent review panel of our annual report 2010, reviewed in October 2011.*

“2.8 Organizational Profile/ Scale of the reporting organization.”

Comment: The organisation states that it does not collect information on numbers of volunteers/ supporters. The report does not include information on the scope/ scale of the Organisation’s activities.

During 2012 we will conclude our development of a database system for collecting more data on numbers of supporters and activists.

“4.4 Governance, Commitments and Engagement/ Mechanisms for internal stakeholders (e.g., members), shareholders and employees to provide recommendations or direction to the highest governance body.”

Comment: The report does not state how the organisation informs/ consults its employees about the working relationship with formal representation bodies.

For the purpose of clarity, we would like to add to the information in the report, on involvement of employees in governance organs:

Chief Executive internationally and Country Directors nationally are the secretaries to the boards/assemblies - this offers a nexus/connection between governance and management. In most cases, they attend as ex-officio members of the boards/assemblies. The management (and thus representing employees) support the governance organs actively, they input on board/assembly deliberations and agenda, prepare and present papers and implement the decisions thereof. This preparation of reports and papers, drafting of policies, etc, is a key mechanism by which staff interact with the board. Often, senior staff involved in drafting policies and reports attend meetings of governance structures e.g. senior accountant attends the Finance and Fundraising subcommittee of board etc. This is not a rule but rather out of practicability and good practice.

Each national level board has a senior staff member from the international secretariat or another member to ensure cross-federation communication and learning.

Our Open Information Policy requires that the minutes or reports of all assembly and board meetings are made available to staff. The Chief Executive actively ensures that a communiqué is sent organisation wide communicating key decisions to all staff.

Each board is required to have a governance review annually. This review, facilitated by an external consultant in most cases to review the effectiveness of the governance structure, includes employees an opportunity to appraise and input on the governance process, relationships etc.

“NGO3: System for program monitoring, evaluation and learning, (including measuring program effectiveness and impact) resulting changes to programs, and

how they are communicated.”

Comment: It is not clear whether the organisation’s mechanisms include procedures on communicating adjustments to policies/ programmes internally and externally. The organisation refers to its planning tool (40 pages document) but does not provide references on where to find this information within this document.

Our Open Information Policy (pg 34 of planning doc) requires that all our policies and programme documents are publicly shared, as well as communicated internally. Specific mechanisms for this include:

- a) In annual reports
- b) In reports from governance structures
- c) Through ‘strategy appendices’ (any strategy which is significantly updated within the strategy period without being re-issued can develop an appendix to communicate changes)
- d) In regular communication from the CEO/Director to staff, and from programme staff with partners.

For example, in the 2010 annual report (pg 19) we reported that we had developed new policies in relation to fundraising, resource allocation, and community and membership self-assurance. These policies all went to the Assembly, and are available on our intranet.

Since our annual report – in March 2011 – we in fact published a revised planning document – ‘Alps 2011 update’, available on our website www.actionaid.org to more easily communicate changes in policies to all our key stakeholders in one place.

“NGO4: Measures to integrate gender and diversity into programme design, implementation, and the monitoring, evaluation, and learning cycle.”

Comment: The report mainly includes information on tools/ actions taken to achieve gender related goals.

It is correct that at present our international database system for aggregation only records gender disaggregation (and diversity is only captured nationally). During 2012, we will complete the design of an international database that will allow us to specify the social groups of the people we work with, thus allowing us to report in 2013 in more depth.

“NGO5: Processes to formulate, communicate, implement, and change advocacy positions and public awareness campaigns.”

Comment: It is not clear whether the organisation’s mechanisms include information on how the organisation ensures that consistency is maintained during implementation of advocacy/ campaigns or how public criticism is fair/accurate; on processes for corrective adjustments of advocacy positions/ public awareness campaigns; or on corrective actions taken; on where public awareness/ advocacy positions are published. The organisation refers to its planning tool (40 pages document) but does not provide references on where to find this information within this document.

Our international campaigns are approved by our international board, and managed and monitored through steering groups involving both international and national staff. Through the process of review and reflection on an annual basis, advocacy and policy activities are monitored in terms of progress made towards set targets and objectives or milestones reached. If the review and reflection process prove that the policy and advocacy activities need a change, the report following review and reflection would capture this change and the activities would be changed accordingly. Examples of changes made following a review or evaluation are provided in indicator NGO3.

“NGO6: Processes to take into account and coordinate with the activities of other actors.”

Comment: The report does not include information on the processes for identifying potential

for duplication; promoting learning from others; or identifying opportunities for partnerships with other organisations.

We would like to further detail our process of appraisals, as this is a core requirement for all programmes, and specifically looks at all of the mentioned areas. The appraisal stage is a thorough process of analysis in which the actions of other stakeholders, ActionAid's added value, and potential partnerships and alliances are a component. Appraisal takes place before a programme is officially started in an area, and before a campaign is launched internationally. ActionAid International believes the appraisal stage is crucial for building a solid foundation for participation and partnership with communities as well as for having an in-depth understanding of an area – which includes other organisations operating in the area and either complementing their work or ensuring that we do not have duplicated efforts. Our evaluations and peer reviews also always specifically look at the question of how well we have collaborated and learnt with other actors.

For all Environmental indicators

Comment: For the Environmental indicators, the organisation only reports for certain parts of the organisation as collecting this information has been a part of a pilot study not including the entire organisation.

Since the report was drafted, we are now proud to inform that the pilot study undertaken has led to a number of recommendations for carbon and environmental monitoring and reporting for the whole organisation. Through this process, 22 member countries have signed up to take part in this monitoring and reporting in 2012, alongside each international secretariat office. It is anticipated that the remaining 21 member countries will join this initiative in 2013-2014. This is a great step for the federation and is a major part of our work to reach our organisational objectives of having a greener organisation.

“LA1: Total workforce, including volunteers, by type, contract, and region.”

Comment: The organisation states that it is not in position to report on type of work, such as full/part time, for employees or on volunteers, but states its commitment to improvement within this area. This information is currently collected at national level, but not aggregated. We are currently developing a new global Human Resources Management Information System HR-MIS which will allow for more aggregation in future.

“LA13: Composition of governance bodies and breakdown of employees per category according to gender, age group, minority group membership, and other indicators of diversity.”

Comment: The organisation indicates that it is not in position to report completely on these diversity types for the national boards or general assembly members. The report does not include information on employees divided into each of these diversity categories.

We are improving our data system to capture the composition of governance bodies and hope to report more accurately on the issue of composition of national board members for 2011. However, it should also be noted that governance bodies change in membership through the year, which means that information cannot be captured in an aggregated manner effectively. It will be snapshot of what the governance bodies are at the time of reporting.

“SO1: Nature, scope, and effectiveness of any programs and practices that assess and manage the impacts of operations on communities, including entering, operating, and exiting.”

Comment: The report does not include the number/ percentage of operations to which the programmes apply; or on whether the programmes have been effective in mitigating negative maximising positive impacts.

Each programme (100%) undergoes an evaluation of a strategic period (as mentioned in indicator NGO3). In this evaluation, positive as well as negative impacts should be reported. As already mentioned, the exit policy related to a partnership is presently being reviewed to ensure that exiting an area of programme operation is done in a careful manner, in consultation with local communities and in accordance to reviews and evaluation findings and recommendations.

“PR6: Programs for adherence to laws, standards, and voluntary codes related to ethical fundraising and marketing communications, including advertising, promotion, and sponsorship.”

Comment: The report does not include information on the number of complaints of breaches of standards for fundraising and marketing communication practices in relation to the rights of affected stakeholders or the rights of donors.

This information is not presently available for the organisation as a whole, but is available from each member country individually. In the future, we will try to incorporate such breaches in the aggregated reporting for the organisation.