

Accountable Now

GLOBAL STANDARDS LOCAL TRUST



Educo **Independent Review Panel Feedback** Interim Accountability Report 2015 Review Round November 2016



Educo

Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

Review Round November 2016

22 December 2016

Dear José Faura,

Thank you for submitting your Accountability Report. We, the Independent Review Panel of Accountable Now, appreciate your efforts to continuously strengthen your 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. Before we share this with you, however, we want to highlight a few issues of concern that we found throughout most of the nine reports assessed in the last review round.

Closing the feedback loop with stakeholders (NGO2, NGO9)

A [recent study](#) on 40 international civil society organisations' (CSOs') accountability practices - conducted by the *direct impact group* on behalf of Accountable Now - revealed that only three out of these 40 CSOs responded with an appropriate answer to a complaint test within three weeks.

This is alarming. All Members of Accountable Now should have a fully functioning feedback mechanisms in place. However, when checking your reports we found a consistent lack of reporting filed complaints per type, quantity, and region as well as a total lack of information on how they were resolved. We believe this is not an acceptable level of accountability. CSOs should not only have a mechanism in place but should first be capturing complaints with the appropriate level of detail and then monitoring their resolution and agreeing what actions need to be taken to ensure the same issues do not arise.

[Feedback Labs](#), with whom Accountable Now collaborated on the [Digital Accountability project](#), also serve as a valuable source of information on how to close feedback loops.



Collaboration with partners, communities and networks (NGO6, EC7 & SO1)

As part of the [10 Accountability Commitments](#), Accountable Now Members commit to working in genuine partnership with local communities and partners. With increased globalisation of information, more empowered citizens engage and civic space is challenged, it becomes ever more important to help local communities and partners to thrive. However, we found that coordination with local communities is still an overall weakness area among the Accountability Reports we received. Some “common” ICSO practices can have intended or unintended consequences on local communities. We would thus like to particularly highlight a lack of contributions to building local capacity and resources. Do you take into account local market conditions and think about working alongside local organisations building their capacity? We suggest that ICSOs should start to consider their impact on the sustainability and independence of local civil society in all their work (such as planning, budgeting, economic impact, etc.).

Adding to what people do to improve their lives (NGO3)

To state the obvious, impact measurement is important. However, many evaluations mentioned in received Accountability Reports focus on collecting relatively large amounts of data on people reached, however, this does not tell us much about the improvement in their lives. Moreover, we should critically ask ourselves: What is the ICSO’s credit in this improvement and what positive impact is actually due to the people and beneficiaries themselves?

While we are of course aware that resources are limited, there is clearly no substitute for a robust and honest impact evaluation of our programmes and activities.

Organisation-specific feedback to Educo:

Educo’s fifth report to Accountable Now is a concise interim report, based on [last year’s Improvement Analysis](#), which came along with the [Independent Review Panel’s Feedback Letter](#).

Educo’s Executive Director José M. Faura, provides a strong **institutional commitment** on how the organisation ensures that accountability is an integral part of its [2015-2018 Strategic Plan](#). They strive for a culture of continuous participatory improvement in respect to transparency and accountability across the various regions in which Educo operates. Accountable Now membership, the former Charter **logo** and accountability reports are also published on their [website](#) (however, the link to the report should also lead to the English version of the accountability report). Educo also deserves praise for making a number of policies readily available via its website, including their complaints policy. Having these policies together at one place is seen as **Good Practice** by the



Panel. Moreover, the Executive Summary of their accountability reports, available in multiple languages, is also very commendable. The use of infographics in this report is commendable as it makes reading and understanding much easier.

Interesting narrative-based **evidence** and illustrative examples (e.g. implementation of the Partnership Policy and Guide in Mali) are again provided in the report. While most issues raised in the recent Improvement Analysis are clarified, some are not covered in sufficient detail: It is encouraging that a new staff appraisal process is being put into place, but it would still be good to record what percentage of staff appraisals were conducted in 2015. And what kind of feedback has Educo received from communities as well as what was the response to this feedback received?

In financial terms, 2015 was the 4th consecutive year in which expenditures exceed income. Reserves accounted for approximately 26% of expenditures in 2015. Is this a deliberate strategy to reduce the reserves level?

Overall, it is clear that Educo takes the Panel feedback seriously and tries to incorporate it into ongoing or new initiatives or reviews. It will be interesting to see how accountability is managed as Educo grows and changes. The Panel looks forward to further improvements in the identified areas and to reviewing the next full report.

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 these comments or amendments by 25 January 2017.

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

Rhonda Chapman

John Clark

Louise James

Jane Kiragu

Nora Lester Murad

Michael
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Cover Note on Educo's Interim Accountability Report 2015

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PROFILE DISCLOSURES

I. Strategy and Analysis

1.1	<p>Statement from the most senior decision-maker</p> <p><i>Fully addressed</i></p> <p>Educo's Executive Director José M. Faura, provides an interesting and commendable statement on how the organisation ensures that accountability is an integral part of its strategy. Educo's 2015-2018 Strategic Plan includes specific accountability objectives. Moreover, Educo succeeded in launching several new policies and its Child Rights Situation Analyses (CRSA). The organisation is furthermore part of ChildFund Alliance's Child-Friendly Accountability Initiative. Overall, it is clear that they aim at empowering children to foster effective accountability and improving the organisation's impact.</p> <p>The Panel will be following how the organisation approaches mentioned priorities for the future – such as their non-discrimination policy, transparency policy or the implementation of the Accountability, Learning and Innovation System (ALIS).</p> <p>Educo has recently joined the ChildFund Alliance. It would be interesting to learn whether membership is leading to any shifts in approach to transparency and accountability.</p>
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PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

I. Programme Effectiveness

NGO2	<p>Mechanisms for feedback and complaints</p> <p><i>Fully addressed</i></p> <p>Educo is now able to present figures on complaints received: In 2015, the organisation received 21 complaints (the majority on sponsorship issues), all of which could be responded to and resolved satisfactorily. Furthermore, the Panel notes progress on the global rollout and implementation of the</p>
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	<p>Complaints and Feedback Policy, which is expected to be finalised by 2018. Educo is praised for making it easy to access the complaints policy and for setting out clearly how complaints will be addressed.</p> <p>Educo also provides more information on the Social Action Programme (SAP) as requested by the Panel last year. SAP is aimed at organisations in Spain who work with children and families. The online platform Agora is unfortunately not in use at the moment; however, all SAP organisations have access to Educo’s central complaints and feedback channels. The Panel would like to see the assessment of this system, i.e. what is the benefit and cost effectiveness for Educo and its country offices as well as other stakeholders.</p> <p>The Panel is furthermore interested to learn more how the central complaints and feedback channels could help the country office as other key stakeholders at country office level are able to access the channels.</p>
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IV. Human Resource Management

LA12	<p><i>Global talent management</i></p> <p><i>Addressed</i></p> <p>Educo is currently moving towards a more fluid internal structure, built around project-based work (instead of results-based). In 2015, a new job design, evaluation and appraisal system was implemented on the global level in this regard. A pilot is planned with the Philippines office for 2016. It is appreciated that this whole process aims at better linking job descriptions to Educo’s overall mission. Does it also include a human-rights based approach, e.g.: To what extent have you integrated participation, empowerment and inclusion in your work? Can you give examples?</p> <p>It is also commendable that Educo is partnering with the Open University of Catalunya (UOC) on developing a global online learning platform. Progress will be tracked in future reports.</p> <p>Only 42% of all staff underwent a formal review process in 2014. Figures for 2015 have not been included in this interim report and are expected for the next full report. What is Educo’s improvement target in this regard? The Panel also wishes to learn why there is no information about the staff performance review. As it is important for an organisation to be more sustained, a proper staff performance management and succession plan should be treated as priority.</p> <p>Finally, the Panel also wishes to learn more about the new appraisal system (360) and result of the implementation - including lessons learnt and challenges of this new system in the next full report.</p>
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V. Responsible Management of Impacts on Society	
SO1	<p><i>Managing your impact on local communities</i></p> <p><i>Partially addressed</i></p> <p>Educo’s Partnership Policy and Guides sets out that all work with partners must be collaborative, participatory, prioritising local efforts, sustainable and aimed at capacity building through mutual learning. The organisation’s Child Rights Situational Analyses (CRSA) also seems like a positive approach towards active participation from children and their local communities. While Educo’s effective management of entering, operating and exiting campaigns is well noted – is there any evidence that this has led to improved management response? What kind of feedback has Educo received from communities and how as Educo responded to this feedback?</p> <p>Finally, the Panel would be interested to learn more about the <i>actual results</i> from the Social Return on Investment (SROI) study of the Social Action Program. Is there a specific timeframe and which countries are going to be repeated in this study? Please also share the plan of action for turning the recommendations made by the 2015 study report into practice.</p>