

20 December 2013

Independent Review Panel – Virtual Meeting 28-29 November Letter to the Members in this Review Round

Dear Richard Pichler,

Thank you for submitting your accountability report to the Charter's Independent Review Panel for assessment. As in previous years we found that the quality of reports is generally improving, demonstrating greater institutional commitment and more evidence that mechanisms are working in practice. Before providing individual feedback on your organisation's report, allow us however to highlight three areas of general concern:

1.) *Embedding the Charter as a tool for organisational development (3.5)*

The disclosure profile 3.5 looks like a rather technical question on how the report is compiled and organisations tend to report accordingly. But it really asks for a process that is at the heart of what the Charter wishes to achieve: using the report as an opportunity for a cross functional systematic and critical reflection on how accountability is best implemented underpins the legitimacy and quality of your organisation's work. Accountability is all too often perceived as a defensive tool, when it is really a mechanism to pro-actively support organisational development. Please describe under 3.5 how you use the reporting process to embed accountability into your organisation. Against this background Members are also strongly encouraged to place the Charter logo prominently on their website and to further link to the Charter website, so that stakeholders know what to hold you accountable against.

2.) *Complaints Handling Mechanisms (NGO2)*

Having a fully functioning complaints handling mechanism in place is the only Minimum Standard for Charter Members so far. The Panel is very concerned about rather slow progress by many Charter Members to comply with this. We have therefore decided to ask the Charter Board to look into implementing a timeline and sanctions policy for compliance. In our view the leeway should be no longer than two to maximum three years after a Minimum Standard has been adopted. You find examples of well-functioning complaints handling mechanisms in the Good Practice document on the Charter website, capturing good examples from this and previous reporting rounds.

3.) *Succinctness and communication quality*

There is a danger that accountability standards develop a life of their own and become increasingly complex and detached. We have noted that Charter reports tend to get longer without necessarily providing more relevant information. It is important however to use these reports to actively communicate internally and externally how accountability is part of the DNA of your organisation and strengthens the quality of your work. In order for these reports to be read, we suggest that they should have a maximum of 40 pages. For each GRI indicator it is sufficient to report three things:

- a) Do you have policies and processes in place to address the issue?
- b) Do you have evidence that it is embedded in systematic practice?
- c) Is there evidence to show that this has led to improved quality of work?

Sometimes the Panel asks for more information. We are trying to do so only where it is necessary, and we encourage you to be as succinct as possible, and take the above three parameters as guidance. Also try to avoid repetition and where illustrations are given, please keep these brief. Organisations who wish to merge their accountability report with the annual report are encouraged to additionally provide a separate and more

reflective addendum relating to the Charter if the annual reports do not embrace that due to a desire to be more promotional.

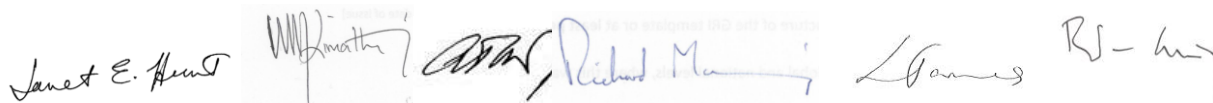
Organisation-specific feedback to SOS Children's Villages International:

*This is the first report of SOS Children's Villages, who joined the Charter in April 2012. As this report is approved by the Panel, the organisation now becomes a Full Charter Member. This also means that SOS is now allowed and encouraged to put the Charter logo and link to the Charter website on the SOS website. For a first report in particular it is very comprehensive and good. SOS Children's Villages has sound accountability practices in place assuring and driving the quality of its work. However, SOS is particularly encouraged to look at improvements with regard to the organisation's Feedback and Complaints Handling process. Such mechanisms are a mandatory Minimum Standard for all Charter Members and core to meaningful accountability. It is noted that SOS has very stringent Child Protection policies and processes in place however improvements need to be made in relation to all types of complaints. It is therefore expected that SOS will make improvements in this area in line with being a Full Charter Member. Other areas to improve include a formalised approach to advocacy work (NGO5) and the reporting on environmental issues. Finally, SOS processes for identifying and engaging with stakeholders (4.15 and NGO1) and the organisation's fundraising procedures (PR6) can be seen as **good practice** examples. This is impressive for a first report.*

Our intention is that this letter, and any response you may wish to provide, is made publicly available on the Charter website, along with your report. You can find the reports that were previously reviewed on the Charter website. 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 corrections by 20 January 2014.

If you have any other feedback or comments on our work, please share with us by sending them to the Charter Secretariat. We would very much like to hear your views.

Yours sincerely,



Janet Hunt · Wambui Kimathi · Tony Tujan · Richard Manning · Louise James · Brendan Gormley

**Review Round, October 2013
Note on accountability report
SOS Children's Villages**

Reporting period: Calendar year 2012

PROFILE DISCLOSURE	
Profile	Comments
Strategy and Analysis	
1.1	<i>Fully addressed</i> An overview of critical events in 2012 and strategic priorities for the coming years are outlined in the CEO's statement and a strong commitment to accountability is made. More information on how accountability improves the quality of SOS work is welcome in the next report.
Organisational Profile	
2.1 -2.6	<i>Fully addressed</i>
2.7	<i>Fully addressed</i> A good overview is provided on the key stakeholders which SOS Children's Villages wishes to serve. More information on selection criteria is found in 4.15.
2.8 – 2.10	<i>Fully addressed</i>
Report Parameters	
3.1	<i>Fully addressed</i>
3.2	<i>n/a</i>
3.3 – 3.4	<i>Fully addressed</i>
3.5	<i>Fully addressed</i> A very robust process for defining the content of the report and compiling its data is described. Information on the target audience of the report is to be found in 2.7.
3.6 – 3.7	<i>Fully addressed</i>
3.8	<i>Partially addressed</i> Information about the process for defining the report content is given. SOS stated in 2.6 that it can only report relatively little about its autonomous national associations. Although SOS only joined as the International Secretariat more information on the assurance that the national entities work to a standard that the International Secretariat supports is welcome in the next report.
3.10 – 3.12	<i>n/a</i>
Governance, Commitments, and Engagement	
4.1	<i>Fully addressed</i> An outline of the governance structure is provided. It would be interesting to also know how Members of the International Senate are elected / appointed. SOS is furthermore encouraged to indicate what kind of interaction takes place among national members apart from the General Assembly which is only held every four years.
4.2	<i>Fully addressed</i> The answer includes relevant information about the chair and the highest governance body. However, further information about how SOS Children's Villages ensures the effectiveness of the Board and the selection process of Board members is welcome in the next report.
4.3	<i>n/a</i>
4.4	<i>Partially addressed</i> Information about mechanisms for internal stakeholders to provide

	recommendations is given. Relevant processes are reported, which allow feedback from national member organisations to the highest decision making body. Further information on how internal stakeholders are informed of actions by the Board or International Senate is welcome in the next report.
4.14	<i>Fully addressed</i>
4.15	<i>Fully addressed</i> The answer gives information about the basis for identification and selection of stakeholders. A very thorough process of due diligence is described when choosing stakeholders to engage with. This constitutes potentially good practice for other organisations to follow.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	
Program Effectiveness	
NGO1 – Stakeholder involvement <i>Fully addressed</i> The answer shows a committed approach to meaningful stakeholder involvement and can be viewed as good practice . Key stakeholders, in particular children, are well involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects as well as the definition of the organisation’s overall strategy and key policies. Evidence where this involvement led to positive management response would be welcome in the next report.	
NGO2 – Mechanisms for feedback and complaints <i>Partially addressed</i> Relevant information is provided about very stringent Child Protection policies and processes in place. This indicator does however also ask for a general culture of inviting feedback and complaints in as a good source of information for constant quality improvements. All Charter Members are required to have a fully functioning Complaints Handling Mechanism as a Minimum Standard in place. SOS has described other processes for rather meaningful stakeholder engagement, but is nevertheless strongly advised to implement a comprehensive feedback and Complaints Handling Mechanism as soon as possible.	
NGO3 – Programme monitoring, evaluation and learning <i>Fully addressed</i> SOS has begun to develop a comprehensive, global monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system which shall replace the multitude of currently co-existing M&E processes. It is not clear when this will be fully implemented. The answer to this indicator would profit from being shorter and less internally focused. A visual depiction of the overall strategic goals and how they translate into success indicators for the MEL system would be interesting. The Panel looks forward to evidence in the next report that the new MEL has been implemented and led to improved performance. SOS Children’s Villages is commended for the long term evaluation of results in the organisation’s “Tracking Footprints” project.	
NGO4 – Gender and diversity <i>Fully addressed</i> A good overview is provided on policies and processes to ensure the inclusion of <i>all</i> children. Evidence that these policies are really implemented and examples where they have led to positive management response are welcome for the next report. SOS Children’s Villages will finalise a gender policy until the end of 2013 to ensure more systematic mainstreaming of gender equality in its programs and human resource practices. A critical reflection on who else is potentially excluded from SOS programs due to ethnicity, geographic reach or otherwise would be welcome in the next report.	
NGO5 – Advocacy positions and public awareness campaigns <i>Partially addressed</i> The report provides examples of two SOS Children’s Villages campaigns and the processes	

<p>and toolkit used. However, this area remains weak and there seems to be no overall established written policy determining a clear path for: choosing advocacy targets, gathering evidence, ensuring meaningful stakeholder participation, ongoing impact evaluation and processes to correct or exit a campaign.</p>
<p>NGO6 – Coordination with other actors <i>Partially addressed</i></p> <p>An impressive list of networks and partnerships is provided, giving evidence of a well established practice at SOS Children’s Villages to work in partnerships. However, there seems to be no written policy on how partners are chosen and the co-operation is implemented to ensure no doubling of efforts, best possible leverage of SOS work contribution and optimal learning for all partners involved. Evidence on how strategic partnering has improved the quality of SOS work would be welcome in the next report.</p>
<p>Economic</p>
<p>NGO7 – Resource allocation <i>Fully addressed</i></p>
<p>NGO8 – Sources of funding <i>Fully addressed</i></p>
<p>EC7 – Local hiring <i>Not addressed</i></p> <p>SOS Children’s Villages states that it does not have an official written policy but a strong practice of hiring local staff. The Panel encourages SOS to implement such a policy to ensure consistency and reliability.</p>
<p>Environmental</p>
<p>EN16 – Greenhouse gas emission by weight <i>Not addressed</i></p> <p>SOS does not gather information on the organisation’s greenhouse gas emissions. While it is acknowledged that this is difficult for the global SOS Children’s Villages movement, it is not so complex for the General Secretariat. The Panel advises SOS to consult other Charter Members on how they have accomplished this.</p>
<p>EN18 – Initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reductions achieved <i>Partially addressed</i></p> <p>The report provides relevant information on initiatives such as promoting train travels or ecologically friendly buildings and provides illustrative examples from some countries the organisation operates in. However, the Panel encourages SOS Children’s Villages to set organisational targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.</p>
<p>Labor</p>
<p>LA1 – Total workforce <i>Fully addressed</i></p>
<p>LA10 – Workforce training <i>Fully addressed</i></p> <p>SOS Children’s Villages states that 4.5% of the total overall salary should be invested in training of all staff and gives a good indication in which areas training was provided. Evidence that the training was effective is welcome for the next report.</p>
<p>LA12 – Performance and career development reviews <i>Fully addressed</i></p> <p>SOS can be commended for a high percentage (82.6%) of employees receiving regular appraisals.</p>
<p>LA13 – Composition of workforce and governance bodies <i>Fully addressed</i></p>
<p>Society</p>
<p>SO1 – Impact of operations on communities <i>Fully addressed</i></p>

SOS Children's Villages seems to have relevant processes in place to take local needs into account when entering and existing communities. Evidence that these processes are implemented and work well is welcome for the next report.

SO3 – Anti-corruption training

Fully addressed

Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption guidelines have been rolled out across the organisation since 2010. A link to this policy would be good. Evidence that these policies are practiced and have improved the level of fraud resilience is welcome in the next report.

Product Responsibility

PR6 – Ethical fundraising and marketing communications

Fully addressed

Information is provided on strong policies and processes in place to ensure ethical fundraising. The policy can be seen as **good practice**. Some evidence that it works in practice and helps to improve the quality of SOS work is welcome for the next report.

SOS Children’s Villages

Gap Analysis Table – Areas of Commitments and Progress achieved

Accountability is a process of continuous improvement. Each year Charter Members in their accountability reports identify and prioritise areas for improvement and corrective actions they plan to take. As of reports submitted in 2014, Members are asked to capture these commitments in this Gap Analysis Table. The Independent Review Panel may suggest the Member to add further issues when reviewing the Member’s report. Each year following, the table shall be submitted along with the accountability report and will then be used as a basis to demonstrate progress. The table will be published on the website along with the accountability report and the feedback from the Panel. Please note that the rows where commitments cannot be identified can be deleted from the table.

GRI - Performance Indicators	2012	2013	2014	2015
Program Effectiveness				
NGO3: System for program monitoring, evaluation and learning.	In report covering 2012: <i>“In 2012, we began the development of a comprehensive global monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system.”</i>			
NGO4: Measures to integrate gender and diversity into program.	In report covering 2012: <i>“We expect that the policy [gender policy] will be finalised by December 2013.”</i>			
NGO6: Coordination with other actors.	In report covering 2012: <i>“It is planned for the guide [guide for social care professionals working with children and young people without parental care] to be published and launched in 2013.”</i>			
Economic				
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Environmental				
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Labor				
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Society				

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Product Responsibility				
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