



# INGO Accountability Charter Annual Report 2014

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**Biennial report**

**Completed by:**

Alicia Cummins  
Head of PS2 Operations and Planning

**Email:** [acummins@sightsavers.org](mailto:acummins@sightsavers.org)

**Telephone:** 01444 446712

**Reporting format**

Sightsavers has moved to bi-annual reporting following recommendation from the Independent Review Panel in the 2013 report feedback letter.

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

## 1. Statement from the most senior decision-maker of the organisation

In last year's report I set out ten priorities 'for the next few years'. Many of these are commented on in the sections below, but I would like to draw out a few key areas, where we have made significant progress and which are relevant to the accountability agenda.

- Our NTD programmes are all on track and are delivered via large collaborative coalitions. In order to achieve goals the coalitions need to be aligned and work in harmony. These programmes showcase accountability in action, as they can only be achieved in close liaison with the donors, with partners and with the governments in the various countries. We have delivered against promises made only by being transparent with various stakeholders and by listening to their concerns.
- Our new Social inclusion strategy (launched early 2015) was developed in close collaboration with disability groups internationally. We have worked with them too in our advocacy around the SDGs. As at the time of writing, all the indications are that we will see a massive step change for disability in this arena, with the text of the SDGs including people with disabilities both as a core principle and in many of the goals. Historically, the disability movement has been somewhat fragmented, but this time organisations across the world have worked together, holding each other mutually accountable for messages given and speaking with one voice. As a result we have achieved more than I thought we ever would, and this is a great example of advocacy in action.
- We have streamlined our management structures particularly at the regional level, linking our countries more closely to the centre and empowering the Country Directors (who now attend annual board away days). This has enabled us to reduce costs too, along with a couple of successful office moves (in UK and Ghana) which have reduced carbon footprint and improved accessibility as well as reducing overheads.
- Our global fundraising strategy is beginning to bear fruit, with the Million Miracles campaign raising over £10 million. We are investing in other markets, particularly India, where the local board and team are enthusiastic and have worked in partnership with our UK based fundraising team.

We spend a great deal of time with our stakeholders and scan the horizon for new trends so that our decision making is not just internally focused. We work particularly closely with DFID, our biggest donor, working on policies together (such as their new Disability Framework) and our relationship goes beyond just donor and recipient. We recently became a partner of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, leading the 'Uniting to Combat Neglected Tropical Diseases Support Center'. This gives us valuable insight into the concerns of wider constituents in this sector which enables us to adjust our strategies accordingly.

We are constantly hearing from stakeholders that they want our work to be evidence based, and this has become a major thrust of our work (see section 3 below). Our view is that accountability demands this, otherwise how do we properly justify what we do? We are planning to update our website in 2015 and then undertake a major rebuild in 2016. This is a key communication tool and is the place most donors and the general public look at to find out what we do. We already publish a lot of information on it, but I don't think it is good enough yet and want to improve navigability and content, not just for the UK but internationally. This means engaging with a wide range of stakeholders in different countries.

Accountability is featuring more and more in the UK press. There have been a number of high profile events, such as the death of an elderly woman who had received large amounts of charity mail, investigative journalists exposing poor practice in call centres and the collapse of a charity called Kids Company amid accusations of financial mismanagement. These have led to clarion calls for increased regulation of charities.

Now as never before, the trust which the sector commands is under threat. Accountability could not be more important and is front and centre of the decisions we make. We find the Independent Review a useful tool in helping us improve as it offers an objective look at what we do, which complements stakeholder comment. This helps us be more robust in what is becoming an increasingly difficult environment.

Caroline Harper  
CEO, Sightsavers

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

As described in the 2013 report, Sightsavers, in 2014, undertook a review of its Strategy, Implementation and Monitoring (SIM) Card. The primary drivers of the review were twofold, firstly to update the strategic objectives to ensure they remain reflective of the organisation's priorities, approaches and external environment and secondly to replace indicators that weren't providing sufficient or relevant information or evidence to understand performance and support organisational decision making. The review was led by the Planning, Performance and Reporting team and involved key stakeholders from global and country teams. The review provided an opportunity to reinvigorate the strategy map and SIM card across the organisation as the central strategy performance measurement tool. The changes will be presented to the Board of Trustees to be reviewed and adopted at the January 2015 Council meeting. The revised strategy map and SIM Card dashboard can be accessed via our website at the following link [http://www.sightsavers.net/in\\_depth/quality\\_and\\_learning/organisational\\_monitoring/13068.html](http://www.sightsavers.net/in_depth/quality_and_learning/organisational_monitoring/13068.html)

The strategic alignment process (SAP) continued into 2014, focused on aligning the eye health, education and social inclusion portfolio with the organisational and thematic strategies. The programme portfolio is now viewed with a global lens across each of the thematic areas, allowing us to make better informed decisions on where to target our projects and interventions, based on identified gaps in the delivery of our strategies, evidence of need and opportunity to have positive impact and added value through Sightsavers' engagement. In 2015 a review of our processes for project design will be conducted to support this new way of working.

The successful recruitment of a Technical Lead for Social Inclusion in May led to the conceptualisation and development of an organisational Empowerment and Inclusion strategy. The strategy will set out our organisational approach to disability inclusion and inclusive programming. The strategy will be shared with the Board of Trustees at the Council meeting in January 2015 to be agreed and finalised. Roll out of the strategy and development of new strategic inclusion projects is planned for 2015.

A departure from the strategic management team led to a redesign of the Global Fundraising Department's management structure. Following this departure, the Global Fundraising Director role was split into two, a Director of Individual Giving and a Director

of Major Giving. Both roles now report directly into the CEO. In addition, we successfully recruited a new Director of Strategic Communications.

Development of the Programme Portal, a new system for monitoring project implementation, continued throughout 2014. Regional training sessions were held in December 2014 with country, regional and global staff in attendance. The system is expected to go live in January 2015 and data collection for 2014 output statistics will be gathered using this platform, reducing time spent on manual collection processes. From 2014 this system should enable us to collect output data on a quarterly basis improving oversight and performance management. More information on how the Programme Portal is running will be provided in the 2015 report.

The Neglected Tropical Disease programme continued to grow in 2014, with two Trachoma elimination projects starting implementation. Sightsavers is leading a consortium of International Coalition for Trachoma Control (ICTC) member organisations to deliver two 5 year programmes focused on rapidly increasing work on the elimination of blinding trachoma, funded by DFID and The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust.

### **3. Progress updates against areas identified by the Independent Review Panel in the Improvement Analysis (November 2014)**

#### **Evidence**

Sightsavers, through its organisational goals and objectives, understands the importance of evidence in demonstrating the achievement of impact and change.

Sightsavers has a number of formalised policies at both the organisational and programmatic level. These policies have been developed to be relevant to the differing contexts in which we operate and, therefore, some policies have a global focus whereas others are specific to regions and countries. Where appropriate, policies linked to our operations are published externally on our website ([http://www.sightsavers.net/in\\_depth/policy/default.html](http://www.sightsavers.net/in_depth/policy/default.html)) however HR policies with an internal focus are not always shared externally. All policies are housed on our internal intranet and employees are required, as part of global induction requirements, to engage with these policies. Departments and teams are responsible for managing different policies relevant to their area of the organisation. This responsibility includes monitoring the usage and application of the policies. Policies are reviewed every 2 years to ensure they remain relevant and that they are supportive of the organisation's goals being met.

Sightsavers is keen to ensure that key policies are embedded in the organisation and looks to develop frameworks which help translate policy into effective implementation. One such framework is our Financial Framework through which we provide practical guidelines for the implementation of appropriate financial standards in our programme offices. In 2014, through the use of our SIM card indicators, we identified partnership as an area where there were difficulties in implementing the tools and processes developed to support policy. As a result we started work on the creation of a more focussed and practical framework that would enable offices to implement the policy effectively. We aim to finalise this in 2015 and can report more fully in our next report.

Sightsavers has taken into account the Panel feedback on the 2014 report and will endeavour in future reports to give reference and links to policies, where they exist, in

order to provide a robust evidence base. Where policies do not exist we will aim to share additional supplementary data to act as supporting evidence.

### **Reporting process (3.5)**

The 2013 report and panel feedback, including the improvement analysis, was disseminated globally throughout the organisation. Areas of focus in the improvement analysis were discussed in depth with relevant teams responsible for these areas. Although a formal management response wasn't developed, the panel feedback has led to new initiatives being driven forward in the following ways:

- A Transparency Working Group was set up in Q4 2014 in response to the 2013 Panel feedback, to ensure efforts to engage with transparency and accountability initiatives within the organisation are joined up and disseminated. Membership of the group represents both programme and finance and operations departments with the aim of strengthening cross organisational understanding of transparency and accountability and to embed it into policy and practice.
- The frequency of reporting to the INGO Accountability Charter has changed to bi-annual reporting however annual data collection will be ongoing for HR, environmental and fundraising indicators. This is to ensure the organisation continues its engagement and analysis of information relating to organisational transparency and accountability.
- The 2013 report was produced in conjunction with other organisational reporting initiatives, including the Annual Review and the DFID PPA annual report. This was to ensure consistency in transparency and accountability messaging to our internal and external stakeholders, which includes donors and supporters. This practice has proved useful in embedding understanding of transparency and accountability throughout the organisation and in improving the quality of our reporting. This practice will continue for future reporting processes.
- At the end of 2014, two new projects were initiated. The first to review internal processes and procedures for designing programmes (the Project Design Process) and the second to conduct a review of our interaction with partners throughout the project life cycle processes (the Partnership Framework review). Transparency and accountability have been placed at the heart of both these initiatives as we believe we are ultimately accountable to our partners, who deliver much of our shared programmes and to our beneficiaries who participate in and benefit from our projects. This will be reflected in the project results as they come to completion in 2015 and specific details will be provided in our 2015 annual report to The Charter.
- A global transparency resource has been set up on our intranet for internal staff to engage with. The resource houses information on the INGO Accountability Charter and the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), including reporting and feedback documentation.

### **Complaints handling mechanism (NGO2)**

The Complaints Policy has been running successfully for one year and a direct link has been established between our complaints policy and our internal control and assurance mechanisms. In 2014, our Internal Audit and Assurance function incorporated the quarterly review of the complaints log into its remit. Complaints that are received, both internally and externally, now influence our approach to assurance and are featured in our audit programme. Testing has been incorporated into internal audits to ensure that operational changes in response to complaints are adequate in order to mitigate future

grievances. There are plans to audit the complaints policy and procedures structure in 2017

The complaints procedure and policy is available on our website at the following link [http://www.sightsavers.net/about\\_us/governance/20930.html](http://www.sightsavers.net/about_us/governance/20930.html). In addition, a dedicated area on the organisation's internal intranet has been developed for employees to engage with, which includes the Global Complaints Policy, guidance procedures on how to handle complaints and process documentation to be completed when a complaint arises.

### Resolution of complaints (NGO9 and PR6)

Sightsavers has a grievance procedure in place which includes an organisational policy and process for handling grievances. Recently reviewed in 2014, the policy is managed and monitored by the Human Resources department and is known by employees. The Grievance Policy and procedures are attached as appendix 1 and 2.

As detailed in the 2013 report, Sightsavers and its entities operate in compliance with a number of internal guidelines and a broad range of legal national standards and voluntary codes. The requirements of these standards and codes, along with our internal procedures, govern how we manage and report against complaints that are received.

In 2014, the number of complaints recorded in relation to fundraising activities are detailed below, broken down by type of activity. Complaints are reported annually to Fundraising Standards Board (FRSB) and are published on their website at the following link (<http://www.frsb.org.uk/organisation/sightsavers/>)

Type of fundraising	Volume	Complaints
Telephone fundraising	124607	14
Addressed pieces of direct mail	1376251	127
Un-addressed pieces of direct mail	74905	0
Email fundraising	1014690	6
Radio advertising	2400000	0
Television adverts	225173000	0
SMS fundraising	5582	4
Press advertising	4716139	0
Magazine / Newspaper inserts	5355707	0
Prospect face to face fundraising	13530	4
Outdoor events	11	0
Raffles	194088	3
Fundraising from business	110	0
Trusts and foundations	1491	0
Major donor fundraising	300	2
Online fundraising	8756052	0
Cash collections	1	0

Fundraising complaints received directly are logged on our supporter database with responses and actions recorded in detail. Sightsavers' Customer Care team is responsible for handling all direct complaints and responses differ depending on the fundraising activity. In 2014 all complaints were resolved satisfactorily by the Customer Care team without escalation to senior management teams being required.

The Fundraising Standards Board (FRSB) has their own complaints handling mechanism, which is detailed on their website and can be accessed via the following link <http://www.frsb.org.uk/complaints/the-complaints-process/>. The FRSB complaints mechanism operates on a 3 tier system. In 2014 the complaints raised to Sightsavers via the FRSB were all resolved within tier 1 of the complaints procedure.

At the end of 2014, work began to review and update our existing Donations Acceptance Policy, which describes where our Global Fundraising teams will accept donations from. In recognition of the Panel feedback, this policy will now be further developed to create an overarching Fundraising Policy covering where we will seek and accept donations from and illustrating our approach to fundraising in general. The Fundraising Policy will be developed in 2015 and will also take in consideration our global fundraising operations in India, the Middle-East and Europe. Detail on the policy development process and the signed off document will feature in our 2015 report submission.

### **Advocacy (NGO5)**

A developed and signed off process for developing policy is managed by the Policy and Global Advocacy Directorate (PGA). The organisation aims to ensure that its policy and advocacy work is consistently of a high standard and informed by research and evidence, both, from within the organisation and from outside. To ensure continued consistency in this area a Policy Development Guide (attached as appendix 2) was rolled out in 2014, aimed at promoting good practice in policy development within PGA. The guide seeks to draw a closer link between the policy change desired (the intended outcome) and the policy paper (the output). This in turn should enable the organisation to meet its SIM card objective, of delivering effective joined-up advocacy, more effectively. At the time of writing however this guide has not been made publically available and we will consider whether that should now be done.

In terms of corrective adjustments, in 2015, we propose to carry out an evaluation to establish the degree of influence and contribution the policy campaign (Put Us in the Picture) has had on the establishment of the Department for International Development's Disability Framework. This evaluation, at mid-point between phases one and two of the campaign, will enable us to document and learn and make any corrective adjustments necessary for phase two of the campaign. This will help influence decision making about the policy, political and public facing aspects of the campaign, including if necessary and appropriate recommendations for an exit strategy.

### **Appendices**

1. Sightsavers' Grievance Policy, 2014, Human Resources department
2. Sightsavers' Grievance Procedures, 2014, Human Resources department

3. Sightsavers' Policy Development Guide, 2013, Policy and Global Advocacy directorate