

Accountable Now

GLOBAL STANDARDS LOCAL TRUST



Islamic Relief Independent Review Panel Feedback

**Accountability Report 2015
Review Round July 2017**



Islamic Relief

Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

Review Round July 2017

07 September 2017

Dear Naser Haghamed,

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. 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 [People-Powered 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 [12 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 Islamic Relief:

Islamic Relief Worldwide submitted an interim report this year, following a reversal of the decision to terminate their Accountable Now membership in early 2017.

The Panel is pleased that IRW has decided to remain a Member of Accountable Now, and sees the CEO’s statement, which refers to the importance of a global accountability standard and includes open and self-reflective identification of areas for improvement, as a demonstration of **institutional commitment**.

While some of the Panel’s requests from the previous feedback letter were taken into consideration, it is noted that several areas remained unaddressed over the reporting period due to the initial decision to withdraw. As such, **weakness areas** remain, as in the previous report, specifically ensuring high standards of accountability with working with other actors (NGO6); global procedures for local hiring (EC7); low number of performance reviews (LA12); imbalance between female and male (senior) staff and Trustees (LA13); and the low number of anti-corruption trainings (SO3). The Panel looks forward to seeing progress on these issues in IRW’s next full report to be submitted in 2018, and in the meantime would appreciate management responses to the Panel’s feedback.

It is appreciated that IRW presents Accountable Now Membership on their [website](#). However, following Accountable Now’s rebranding in 2016, IRW is asked to update this information to the new name (instead of INGO Accountability Charter). Moreover, all Full Members are also requested to publish the new logo, too. This visualisation would clearly strengthen IRW’s public commitment to accountability –



also for stakeholders to hold them directly accountable towards the commitments made.

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 22 September 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

Saroeun Soeung



Cover Note on Islamic Relief's Accountability Report 2015

Review Round July 2017

PROFILE DISCLOSURES

I. Strategy and Analysis

1.1	<p>Statement from the most senior decision-maker</p> <p><i>Partially addressed</i></p> <p>Islamic Relief Worldwide's report opens with a more comprehensive statement from CEO Naser Haghamed, compared to the previous report, with more emphasis on the opportunities provided by Accountable Now membership. The importance of a global accountability standard in allowing stakeholders to easily access information and compare organisations is highlighted, whilst noting that many organisations do not yet report about their accountability practices. IRW's acknowledgement of the importance of Accountable Now, and decision to remain a Member, is noted positively by the Panel.</p> <p>In the next report, the Panel would welcome more details on how accountability drives management decision-making in IRW, a review of how accountability practices have worked in the reporting year, as well as how IRW defines accountability. A link to IRW's Accountability Framework would be appreciated.</p>
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Material Changes

The report identifies numerous changes in 2015, most notably to the leadership structure – both within the Board of Trustees and the Executive Management Team. Four Trustees were replaced, four high-level executives resigned, and five new executives were appointed. The Panel would be interested in knowing the reason for this significant turnover.

It is stated that IRW asked for input from the UK Charity Commission on improving its governance structure, which the Panel notes positively. It is noted that significant changes are being made to the governance structure and a number of draft documents are referred to, including a members' agreement detailing the different organs of IRW, a new governance manual, a new constitution, and a new object clause. The Panel looks forward to receiving links to the finalised



documents in IRW's next report, as well as information about how the new structure is working.

IRW also undertook a strategy review in 2015, and the Panel is pleased to hear that the wider Islamic Relief family as well as external stakeholders were consulted in the process – did this include the communities that IRW works with, as well as the donors that were mentioned? More details about these consultations, such as the process as well as numerical statistics, would be welcomed by the Panel.

The Panel would also appreciate a link to the new Global Strategy, information about how accountability is included in it, and looks forward to a link to the first progress report of its implementation in the next report.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

I. Programme Effectiveness

NGO6

Coordination with other actors

Partially addressed

The Panel is pleased to see the developments in IRW's work with partners, such as the embedding of IRW staff in local partner organisations to share expertise and assist in improving organisational and staff capacity. The Panel appreciates the provision of an example to illustrate these efforts.

IRW has conducted a mid-term evaluation of one of its partnerships, exploring best practices and areas for improvement, and identifying concrete steps to improve weakness areas. The Panel would be interested in whether the weakness areas were indeed able to be improved, and whether such evaluations were carried out for all partnerships.

The Panel appreciates inclusion of a section on accountability in IRW's partnership policy. However, whilst it is stated that IRW will "ensure partners abide by the principles of the IRW Accountability Framework", the Panel would welcome details on how it will ensure this. Furthermore, a link to the Accountability Framework would be appreciated in the next report.



IV. Human Resource Management	
EC7	<p>Procedure for local hiring</p> <p><i>Partially addressed</i></p> <p>IRW has introduced the new position of International HR Manager, which will oversee HR globally and ensure continuity within the organisation, on policies and procedures in areas such as recruitment. IRW's Recruitment and Selection Policy provides a clear overview of the recruitment process, and the roles of the recruiting manager and HR department. This policy is the bases for regional offices' policies, but these are stated to vary to some degree due to differences in local laws.</p> <p>The Panel congratulates IRW on awards won by its HR team in 2015, and notes positively initiatives on developing a global compliance process, and improved management and resolution of international investigations processes.</p> <p>However, the Panel's questions about IRW's efforts to building capacities and not undermining the local sector through its hiring practices, were not answered.</p>
LA12	<p>Global talent management</p> <p><i>Partially addressed</i></p> <p>The Panel notes that the Appraisal Process will likely be reviewed, and we look forward to receiving information in the next report on how a new process will increase performance review rates.</p> <p>The Panel would also welcome evidence on whether performance reviews have a positive impact on staff development.</p>
LA13	<p>Diversity of workforce and governance bodies</p> <p><i>Addressed</i></p> <p>The report states that due to a recruitment freeze for all but business critical posts in 2015, there has been little difference in statistics on gender ratios compared to the previous report. The panel looks forward to seeing progress on this area in the next report, targets at the Board level are mentioned with regards to gender diversity but not outside the Board?</p> <p>It is mentioned that the new draft constitution includes a requirement for diverse representation on the Board. The Panel would be interested in seeing the document when it is finalised, to see the details of those requirements, and whether it refers only to gender or also other aspects of diversity (such as age, disability, and ethnicity).</p> <p>Furthermore, how does IRW plan to ensure its aims for diverse representation are achieved, and how is diverse representation defined? The panel also notes the high level of zero hour contracts for female staff</p>



V. Responsible Management of Impacts on Society

SO3	<p>Anti-corruption policies</p> <p><i>Partially addressed</i></p> <p>IRW provided corrected figures on its anti-corruption training in 2014 – 38 UK based staff and 779 field office staff. In 2015, 49 UK based staff were trained, and IRW will provide figures on field staff in its next report.</p> <p>The report states that three fraud cases were reported in 2014, and four cases in 2015. The Panel is interested in the size and topic (?) of these cases, as well as how they were dealt with, and whether there is evidence of efforts to reduce fraud.</p> <p>A survey was conducted in 2015 on employees' understanding of the anti-fraud, bribery and corruption guidelines – however, the results of this are not mentioned in the report. The Panel would welcome more details on this.</p> <p>Finally, the Panel looks forward to learning how IRW develops its work in this area following restructuring and the introduction of a new Governance Department.</p>
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