

# Accountable Now Biennial Report 2016



Sightsavers has moved to biennial 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.

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

2016 has been a year of great turbulence in the world. Most of Sightsavers' income comes from the UK, and the vote to leave the European Union will have a major impact on us. In the short term, the step change in the value of sterling has meant that our income will go less far in supporting programmes. It is unclear what the longer term will bring, and our strategy is to remain as agile as possible. Post Brexit we will no longer be able to access EC funds from the UK organisation, but our organisations in Sweden, Italy and Ireland should still be able to do so. We are seeing uncertainty in the US too, with President Trump seeking to dramatically reduce development funding. Fortunately, the UK government is staying committed to development funding, notwithstanding sustained attacks in the media. We are particularly pleased that the Secretary of State has made it clear that DFID will be prioritising the support of disability (as part of the SDG 'leave no one behind' agenda) and will increase its support for neglected tropical diseases.

Several of the countries where we work have seen serious security and conflict issues – last year we had to evacuate our country team from South Sudan (they are currently working from Uganda).

The SDGs form the bedrock of our work, with a big emphasis on learning how to include people with disabilities in our programmes. We have done a lot of work on data disaggregation – unless you know who is accessing your programmes how can you know whether you have been inclusive or not? There have been some quite unexpected results from this work, which are helping us to redesign programmes.

An important development last year in our accountability work was the impact study commissioned by Accountable Now looking at six key areas of accountability (more in the body of this report). Overall, we were extremely pleased with the results, but one gap identified was that we did not have an Open Information Policy. We have now rectified this. Last year we paid particular attention to our stakeholders, and were very pleased to come first in the charity section of the UK 'Top Customer Service' Awards. At a time when there is a great deal of criticism of the way charities interact with the public, we felt it was particularly important to focus on this, and are very proud that our efforts were recognised. We were voted as one of seven global 'Top Seven' charities for our work on deworming by the US organisation Givewell, after two years of extensive due diligence. Our work with Accountable Now was helpful here, and we used our Independent Panel report to help demonstrate our capability.

Having refreshed our overall strategy in 2015 we focused on a number of more detailed aspects in 2016 – introducing a new refractive error strategy and a new overarching strategy for NTDs 'Time to Say Goodbye'. We paid particular attention to risk management given the increasing external environment, devoting significant governance time to this topic. We appointed a new Director of News with extensive experience at the BBC to help both promote our achievements and ensure we are resilient in any media crisis. This year we will hold a rehearsal to test out the new crisis procedures we have put in place. Our SIM card (the balanced scorecard which we use to monitor performance) results for 2016 are now published [here](#) on our website, and we were pleased with most of them. Our outputs increased in almost every category (including the all-important number of eye operations and NTD treatments), showing we are reaching more people than ever before. Our financial results were strong – increased income, expenditure and reserves putting us into a good position to weather such storms that 2017 may bring...

In short, 2016 was a good year for Sightsavers performance - but we are mindful that the environment is perhaps as turbulent and uncertain as it has been since I became CEO.

Caroline Harper  
CEO, Sightsavers

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

### Strategy

#### Refractive Error (RE) strategy

Our Refractive Error (RE) strategy (appendix 1) was developed, and approved by Council, in 2016. The RE strategy is a component of our thematic Eye Health Strategy (2013–2018) and aligns with our organisational Strategic Framework: Making the Connections (2012-2018). The strategy defines our aspirations and goals based on where we are currently and what we aim to achieve; how and where we choose to invest resources; and how we plan to leverage existing opportunities to deliver this Strategy. The RE strategy will be rolled out across the organisation in 2017 and will be a key topic at our annual global programme meeting in June.

**Eye Health strategy refocus** - In 2016, we undertook a thematic strategy mapping process, led by our Global Technical Leads (GTLs), to understand how our current eye health portfolio supports delivery and achievement of our thematic eye health strategy. The mapping exercise generated information on the progress we have made towards meeting our objectives; identification of strategic gaps in our portfolio; and the resources needed to address gaps and achieve our objectives. Based on achievements and gaps identified by the mapping, we have selected thematic focus areas within eye health that we want to concentrate our programme design and implementation efforts on for the remaining organisational strategic period. We will explore opportunities to increase investment and capacity to deliver against these priorities.

**Open information policy** – In 2016, we participated in an impact study commissioned by Accountable Now to understand how well NGOs perform against their promises of accountability and where can the sector develop in the future. Results of the study showed that Sightsavers were demonstrating strong commitment to accountability across six areas of accountability (transparency, participative response, responsible advocacy, sustainable impact (MEL), effective financial management, environmental responsibility). Recommendations on areas for improvement highlighted a policy gap in relation to open information. Based on this recommendation a decision was taken at senior management level to develop an Open Information policy to further strengthen our commitment to transparency and accountability. The policy has been launched globally and is available on our website. Click [here](#) for the full policy document.

**NTD overarching strategy** - In Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs), we launched 'Time to Say Goodbye to NTDs' our first over-arching strategy to eliminate NTDs by 2025. This strategy (appendix 2) complements our existing trachoma and river blindness strategies and provides clear direction for increased integration and coordination of NTDs, strengthening existing partnerships and building more cross sector alliances (WASH, malaria, and behaviour change) and ensuring inclusion of people with disabilities.

**Global diversity policy** - to strengthen our organisational capacity we updated our Global Diversity and Equality Policy (appendix 3) in January 2016, which sets out our organisational commitments to diversity and the actions we will take to uphold these commitments. The policy also defines how we will monitor the effectiveness of our policies and practices in order to best support diversity in the workforce. The policy has been rolled out across the organisation and is available to all staff on our internal intranet

### Governance

**New Treasurer appointed** – In 2016, we appointed a new Honorary Treasurer, Bill Kendall, to Sightsavers' board of trustees. Bill chairs the Sightsavers investment committee and is a member

of the audit, governance and remuneration committees. He is also a board member of Sightsavers in the USA.

**Cyber Essentials** - Cyber Essentials is a UK Government backed scheme aimed at helping organisations defend against internet-borne threats by developing key technical controls. Sightsavers are seeking Cyber Essentials certification and work began in 2016 to achieve this. The initiatives undertaken further compliment our continued enhancement of our ICT infrastructure and information security framework. In addition to the development of our technical controls and system management processes, we have implemented a number of robust anti-malware solutions, aimed at safeguarding our networks and data from an ever-evolving landscape of cyber threats. More information about the Cyber Essentials scheme is located [here](#)

**Lobby register** - In 2016 Sightsavers signed up to the Lobby Register and will submit our first Lobby Return covering the period from September to December 2016 in January 2017. The Lobby register aims to enhance the transparency of those seeking to lobby Ministers and Permanent Secretaries on behalf of a third party.

**IATI** - We continued to improve the availability of programmatic information that is published externally via the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) website. Published information through this portal now includes financial data detailing annual budget allocations by country, GIS mapping presenting project locations and geographic reach of our work, and published project information including evaluation reports.

### **Programme effectiveness**

**NTD programme awards** – in November 2016, along with our private sector partner Crown Agents, we were recognised at the Logistics & Supply Chain's Supply Chain Excellence Awards for our work in making sustainable improvements to the way treatments are distributed to combat neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) in Northern Nigeria as part of the UNITED programme. The programme won the award in the best Public and Third Sector category, and was also shortlisted for the Overall Award. The awards are in recognition of organisations around the world that demonstrate excellence in their supply chain operations.

In addition, through our partnership with Unilever, we were declared the overall winners of the International Society for Neglected Tropical Diseases (ISNTD) Water Award for our behaviour change & communication programme on the prevention of trachoma infections in Kenya.

**Inclusion report** - Following the launch of our Empowerment and Inclusion Strategy in 2015, we launched our first Annual Inclusion report in June 2016. The report (appendix 4) highlights experiences and learning from our inclusion work across the organisation. This initial report was shared with existing partners and stakeholders across our portfolio, to garner feedback and input for future, more widely circulated reports. The annual report is now one of the mechanisms that we use to track our progress on implementing the empowerment and inclusion strategic framework. The report covers the first year of activities under this new strategy and is structured in line with the seven strategic objectives

**Social Inclusion working group** - To promote staff commitment and drive our efforts to mainstream inclusion we established a social inclusion working group to work on embedding inclusion within the organisation. The Social Inclusion working group is a collaboration of cross-departmental staff that champions positive change to make Sightsavers a leading organisation that promotes and embodies diversity. The aim of the group is to facilitate through a coherent approach a fully inclusive organisation both operationally and programmatically. Membership includes

employees from across the organisation including programme staff from Cameroon, Pakistan and Tanzania. Objectives of the group are:

- To promote staff commitment to inclusion through organising awareness raising activities and supporting capacity-building;
- To monitor inclusion efforts to understand where we are now and which organisational gaps we need to address;
- To encourage adherence to Sightsavers' Empowerment and Inclusion Strategy; Framework and its three pathways to mainstreaming disability inclusion within our portfolio and operations: implementation of human rights policies, equality of opportunities and removal of stigma and discrimination

**Programme partnership** - Our approach to partnership is contained in our Programme Partnership Policy and framework and Sightsavers implements the policy through its Partnership Management Toolkit. In 2016, we updated the due diligence tool (part of the toolkit) making it more user friendly, and the minimum criteria for partnership worksheet was made into a separate tool. We also developed a new complementary partnership review tool that is a mechanism for annual monitoring and updating of the Action Plans that emerge from the Minimum Partnership Criteria and Due Diligence assessments. The toolkit has tailored due diligence questionnaires for its three main types of partner; 1. Government; 2. Disabled Persons Organisations, civil society organisations and 3. NGOs or private sector. Our partners are usually working in our strategic focus (eye health, NTDs, inclusive education, social inclusion) or allied sectors. The updated toolkit also includes questions related to child safeguarding and prevention of modern slavery.

**Project start up and inception** - In 2016, we introduced an improved process for project start up and inception. This process outlines a series of logical steps that must be undertaken to ensure that all new projects are compliant with donor and organisational requirements. The process was presented to our country management team during regional management calls, which take place every 6-8 weeks. Following the training of in-country staff, 13 new projects in Africa and Asia went through our new start-up and inception process in 2016. An additional inception module for data management assurance was piloted in late 2016 in Tanzania and Zambia. This module has been introduced to maximise the quality of our practice related to data collection, storage and analysis. Work will continue in 2017 to embed the additional module into the inception process.

**Programme portal** - We implemented our first major upgrade to the programme portal in 2016. This upgrade introduced new features to improve management oversight, including improvements to data dashboards, ability to group projects into programmatic units; and improvements in administrative oversight of quarterly data reporting processes. This has enabled us to more effectively monitor and report how data is entered and approved through the system. We have also taken steps to automate our Programme Reporting Oversight process more fully with the Portal by populating these directly from the system.

**Research** - In research, we continued to expand our capacity, producing and disseminating high quality research in line with our research strategy. In 2016, we started the application process for Independent Research Organisation status. This will help to sustain and consolidate our internal capacity to generate high quality evidence for more effective programming and allow Sightsavers staff to act as Principle Investigators in collaborative research projects.

## **Human Resource management**

### **Staff appointments**

A new Director of News, Alistair Burnett joined Sightsavers in August 2016, from the BBC, to lead our media and communications team. In addition, Sightsavers Ireland had a change in leadership,

with Catrina Sheridan joining as the new CEO, following the retirement of Michael Marren in July 2016.

### **Financial management**

**System upgrades** - Project Information systems such as the Financial Management Framework (FMF), Standard List, and Proactis all had system upgrades in 2016 to improve functionality and efficiency. Sun accounts, our core financial system, underwent a review in 2016 to enhance its functionality and value as the basis for all our financial reporting, in order to keep up with the financial growth of Sightsavers Global in recent years. Information gathering, review and analysis work was undertaken in 2016 with system changes being rolled out and globally implemented in spring 2017.

### **Responsible management of impacts on society**

We continued working on the review of our Child Protection policy which led to development of a new Child Safeguarding Policy. Developed with support from an expert consultant, the policy provides clear definitions, sets standards across the organisation, and gives clear guidance on how to apply and implement the policy throughout the organisation and in relation to partner organisations. The Child Safeguarding Policy will apply across all organisational activities and in all of our programme themes, including health, education, social inclusion and research. All of our representatives - defined as trustees, employees (permanent or temporary), consultants, volunteers who work directly for Sightsavers and donors travelling on Sightsavers business - and partner organisations should adhere to the policy. In addition to complying with the policy, all representatives must sign and will be held accountable to our Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct. The policy will be submitted for approval at the Council meeting in March 2017

### **Ethical fundraising**

**Fundraising regulatory bodies** – In July 2016, we became members of the Fundraising Regulator, which has taken over from the Fundraising Standards Board. The Fundraising Regulator is the independent regulator of charitable fundraising in England and Wales, established in 2016 following the Etherington review of fundraising self-regulation (2015) to strengthen the system of charity regulation and restore public trust in fundraising.

**Fundraising awards** – In 2016, we received first place for the charity category as part of The Top 50 Awards, and ranked 15 overall, with most of the other entrants being commercial organisations. The Top 50 is the largest benchmarking exercise for customer service in the UK, run in partnership with GfK Mystery Shopping. Mystery shoppers assessed our supporter care phone line and email service, both of which are a customer care service for our donors, including regular supporters and those responding to our television adverts.

**Good governance awards** - Demonstration of our commitment to the highest standards of transparency, governance and accountability was evidenced through nomination of Sightsavers Ireland in the Good Governance Awards, where they were finalists in October 2016.

## **Progress updates against Improvement Analysis**

### **Inclusion and Diversity**

Our HR Operations manager and one of our HR Business Partners (HRBP) are members of the Social Inclusion Working Group (SIWG). The HR Operations Manager has also successfully updated Sightsavers accreditation with Disability Confident and this is at level 2. Our HR Operations team have continued to develop their advertising reach by using specialist diversity websites and are working with our recruitment agencies to improve further. In 2016, we updated and published our organisational policy 'Sickness, Health and Wellbeing', which now includes full

guidance on supporting staff with disabilities and illnesses. The policy (appendix 5) was rolled out to staff last year via the organisational intranet

### **Workforce training (LA10)**

We established internal Knowledge Cafes during 2016 to provide a series of training sessions for line managers. The first series focused on benchmarking and the upcoming series is focusing on how to give effective feedback. These latter sessions are complimenting the role out of our new Personal Development Review process, now called VIP (Valuing Individual Performance). Our International HR Business Partner (HRBP) travelled to Zambia in September 2016 as part of a regional meeting and led an HR workshop, with employees based in the region, covering a number of people management topics.

HR have also worked with Directorates to identify new managers (either new to the organisation or that have been recently promoted) to receive additional support and training. In-house, our HRBP's ensure regular contact and coaching and an external training course, specifically designed for new managers, is offered to those with direct report responsibilities. If, outside of development needs, performance improvements are required, staff may be required to work to a 'Performance Improvement Plan' (PIP) agreed with their manager. A small number of PIPs have been implemented and the majority have been successful in improving performance. No formal capability proceedings have been enacted within the reporting period.

### **Performance development process (LA12)**

In early 2017, we surveyed our entire workforce to understand what employees need and want with regard to a redeveloped performance appraisal/objective setting process. The survey feedback highlighted that the process should focus on successes during the preceding 12 months and personal development. Due to the changing nature of objectives during an annual period, it was agreed that objectives would be set through regular one to one and team meetings, instead of relying on a once per year appraisal. The survey also highlighted the need for managers to receive more training on how to give effective feedback and this has been scheduled to take place during April and May 2017 in the form of Knowledge Cafes for managers. We will not be monitoring completion rates under this new process, as reviews will be conducted on a 'rolling' basis. Each staff member can expect a formal development review at least every 12 months and which will be the responsibility of line managers, who also hold responsibility for training and development budgets.

Additionally, HR Business Partners (HRBPs) will identify management training needs, particularly in relation to performance and people management issues, based on ongoing logging of issues and identification of trends, and will develop topical Knowledge Cafés for these (or other training) or source external coaching/training if specific needs require for individuals.

### **Workforce grievances (NGO9)**

Our Global Grievance Policy and Procedure was updated in January 2017 and is available on our intranet. Our Whistleblowing Policy was updated in 2016 and is also available on our intranet page. Within the past year, employee relation issues have all been successfully resolved informally and as a result there have been no formal grievance cases and no employment tribunals. Our policy and approach focuses on informal resolution through HR Business Partner (HRBP) facilitation and coaching. One HRBP is also able to, for suitable situations, carried out professional mediation. HRBP's have worked closely with managers and coached them to address issues earlier on than may otherwise have been the case. Managers, through building good relationships with their HRBP's raise issues more promptly, thus increasing the possibility of resolving issues and maintaining positive workforce relations.

# Appendices

1. Sightsavers' Refractive Error Strategy, 2016, Policy and Programme Strategy department
2. Time to say goodbye to NTDs' overarching strategy, 2016, Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) department
3. Global Diversity and Equality Policy, 2016, Human Resources Business Partner
4. Annual Inclusion Report, 2016, Global Technical Lead: Social Inclusion
5. Sickness Health and Wellbeing Policy, 2016, Human Resources Business Partner,