

# Accountable Now Annual General Meeting 2017

London, 09 June 2017

## Minutes

[Accountable Now's](#) Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on 09 June in London, hosted kindly by the International Planned Parenthood Federation. The meeting was underpinned by the theme of [dynamic accountability](#) - interactive relationships between CSOs and stakeholders, which in times of shrinking civil space is particularly important for building trust and improving agency.

### Highlights 2016 and Outlook 2017

Brendan Gormley, Accountable Now's Board Chair, presented some of the highlights of 2016 and plans for the coming year:

- ▶ [Annual Report 2016](#)
- ▶ [Webinars](#)
- ▶ [Annual Members' Workshop](#)



### Accountability is Dynamic!

Alex Stewart from Restless Development, Thomas Hughes from Article 19, and Helen James from the START Network shared how their organisations use stakeholder data to drive adaptive performance.

Restless Development's concept of [dynamic accountability](#) uses two-way feedback channels to inform decision making, with a focus on including young peoples' voices. [Article 19](#) is defining their strategy with a bottom-up approach led by their regional offices, and uses the in-time data reporting tool Cam Cycle to track progress. The START Network's [START Fund Portal](#) allows for local and timely decision making on the allocation of funds for humanitarian crises that can be tracked in a very transparent manner.

A common theme was the use of innovative technology to better engage stakeholders in decision making, and to track processes and the impact of projects.

### An exciting future for Accountable Now

Two recent developments have significantly changed the face of Accountable Now: The development of our dynamic accountability concept and agreement on a Global Standard for which Accountable Now has been asked to lead the future secretariat. Against this background our strategic priority for the coming years is to mainstream dynamic accountability with three distinct target audiences: (i) our Member ICSOs, (ii)



national accountability codes as the Secretariat of the Global Standard and (iii) the broader public, donors and governments through a public platform for advanced thinking and tools for dynamic accountability.

It was also announced that Accountable Now's Executive Director Karenina Schröder will



be moving on to a new job in August 2017. Karenina has led the Accountable Now Secretariat for the past seven years and has shaped us into the organisation we are today. Now we look for a great candidate to lead Accountable Now into the exciting future described above. The Board of Trustees has put together a search committee to recruit a new Executive Director as soon as possible.

### Adopting new Accountability Commitments

After two years of consultation, [nine CSO accountability networks](#) from Australia, the Balkans, Cambodia, Columbia, India, Kenya, Uganda and the US have agreed on a shared [Global Standard](#). It encapsulates the dynamic accountability approach.

Now CSOs around the world can use it to align their existing standards, and benchmark and improve their own performance.

Andres Gomez de la Torre welcomed this decision and presented CARE's internal accountability framework, which is closely in line with the Global Standard. The international framework was developed in response to demand from partners for a systematic approach to accountability and to align the work of national branches - both key points in favour of a Global Standard for accountability networks around the world.

Rosa Inés Ospina, Board Trustee and co-director of one of the Global Standard partners, Rendir Cuentas, presented the Global Standard's 12 Accountability Commitments.

Key takeaways are:

- ▶ All current Charter Commitments are reflected in the Global Standard
- ▶ Alongside with the current Charter's focus on organisational healthiness, the new Commitments add evidence for sustainable impact and stakeholder engagement
- ▶ The 12 Commitments are evenly clustered around three aspects of an accountable CSO: A. What we want to achieve, B. Our approach to change and C. What we do internally





- ▶ The Commitments provide clarity and a strong narrative on what CSOs offer, in plain language - making them accessible to a broad audience
- ▶ Stakeholder engagement and closing feedback loops have a stronger presence throughout all Commitments
- ▶ Taken together, the Commitments support an up-to-date understanding of how CSOs can contribute to sustained social and ecological change in today's world

Accountable Now's Members voted unanimously in a special resolution to adopt the Global Standard's [12 Accountability Commitments](#) and Key Actions as their Accountability Commitments - hence replacing our existing Charter. We are currently developing Guidance Notes with examples of how our Members can best implement the new commitments.

### Changing our Reporting and Assessment Framework

The adoption of the new Accountability Commitments encapsulating a dynamic accountability practice, also necessitate a new reporting and assessment framework. Accountable Now's [Independent Review Panel](#) developed parameters for the new framework in close consultation with Members, and these were presented at the AGM by Daniel Stevens from World Vision.

The key changes proposed were:

- ▶ Limiting the reporting questions to a maximum of 3 per commitment. The new reporting frame needs to focus on only the most relevant issues to ensure that the reports are an interesting read for stakeholders.
- ▶ Future reports should be split into an Executive Summary Report on the Cluster level and a Detailed Report that covers the 12 Accountability Commitments. The Executive Summary Report aims to attract much broader audiences for feedback.
- ▶ New assessment criteria including quantitative scoring and traffic lights in addition to qualitative feedback and good practice rosettes to grasp results much more easily.
- ▶ Timelier and more flexible reporting. De-coupling reports from audited financial accounts could lead to timelier submission. Additional website fact checks by the Review Panel will also improve the timeliness of assessment.
- ▶ Providing individual feedback to Members on their performance in comparison to an anonymised overall scoring of all Members. Anonymised average scoring of all Members could be published on Accountable Now's website.

The proposed changes were discussed in small groups. While there was overall appreciation of the line of direction - there were also concerns with regards to balancing the thoroughness and communicativeness of reports and what would be the most appropriate model to publicise quantitative assessment results.



The Chair of the Independent Review Panel, John Clark, outlined what the Panel



appreciates and enjoys reading in Members' reports, including innovative policies, emphasis on stakeholder engagement, and evidence and examples of policies working well in practice. He explained how the new framework will be finalised, with the Panel revising the current suggestion before its next full meeting in December, and that it will be implemented gradually throughout 2018 with the aim of all Members reporting against the new framework by 2019.

### Accountable Now Finances

Bettie van Straaten, Accountable Now's Treasurer, presented a five-year trend of income and expenditure from 2012 to 2016, as well as a forecast for 2017. A surplus of € 1,205 was recorded in 2016, bringing the reserves to € 135,547 at the end of the year.

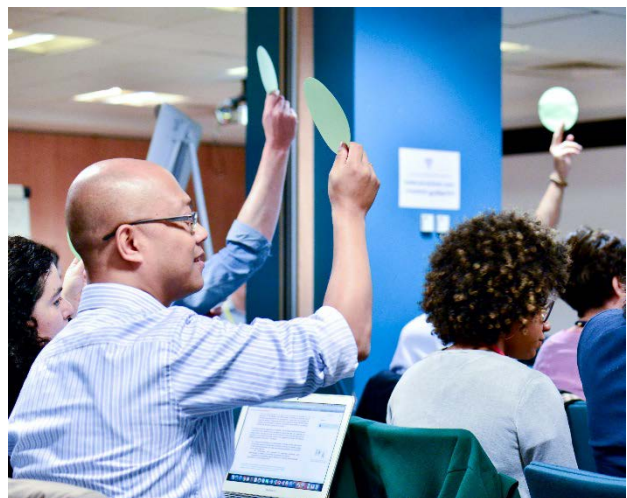
Bettie also presented the audited accounts for 2016, which were approved by the auditors without any financial adjustments. The auditors did however note that Accountable Now's income is increasingly secured from external sources rather than from Membership fees, and recommended the establishment of a [Finance and Risk Committee](#). The Committee was created comprising the Board Chair, Treasurer and one additional Trustee, and will meet before each Board meeting.

### Election of Board Trustees

Board Director Brendan Gormley announced that Janet Dalziell (Greenpeace), whose second term had come to an end, had been asked by the Board to stay on for one extra year. The Board can co-opt Board members for one more year, when their skills are particularly relevant. Since Janet has been instrumental in developing the dynamic accountability concept, it is important that she also supports its implementation in the first year.

Bettie van Straaten (CIVICUS) was re-elected by ordinary resolution.

The Board Chair also announced that Miklos Marschall (Transparency International) had submitted his resignation from Accountable Now's Board, as he is leaving Transparency International, and thanked him for his dedication during his term. It was decided that his seat would be filled at a later date, when





Accountable Now has clarity in terms of its role as the Secretariat of the Global Standard as of May 2018.

### **Special Resolution to Amend the Articles of Association**

Accountable Now is currently in the process of applying for charitable status in the United Kingdom. Based on the advice of our lawyers Bates Wells Braithwaite, we had changed our Articles of Association in December 2016 to reflect up to date provisions on good governance and management for charitable CSOs in the UK. Upon reviewing our application, the Charity Commission was satisfied overall, but requested we slightly adapt the Objects in our Articles of Association to finalise the process.

**Members voted unanimously in a special resolution to accept the proposed amendments to Accountable Now's Objects in our Articles of Association (Section 2.1) as follows:**

*2.1 The objects of the Charity are:*

~~*(a) to promote compliance with the law and ethical standards of conduct, including without limitation by encouraging the adoption and application of high standards of governance, conduct, accountability and transparency by charities, non-governmental and other organisations working in international development, aid, relief, environmental protection, anti-corruption or any related fields;*~~

~~*(b) to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of charities and the effective use of charitable resources including without limitation on the part of charities working in international development, aid, relief, environmental protection, anti-corruption or any related fields; and*~~

~~*(a) to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of charities and the effective use of charitable resources including without limitation on the part of charities working in international development, aid, relief, environmental protection, anti-corruption or any related fields by:*~~

~~*i. The development and promotion of operating standards and methodologies for testing accountability, transparency and impact;*~~

~~*ii. Developing and publishing support resources to promote and encourage the adoption of such standards; and*~~

~~*(e b) to advance the education of the public including without limitation in subjects relating to the accountability, transparency and impact of charities, non-governmental or other organisations working in international development, aid, relief, environmental protection, anti-corruption or any related fields and to promote study and research in such subjects provided that the useful results of such study are disseminated to the public at large,*~~

~~*(together, the "Objects").*~~



## From Evidence to Impact

The AGM was rounded off by a panel discussion on the collection and timely use of data to improve stakeholder engagement and manage programmes.



Tim Carter, Chief Impact Officer of [Peek Vision](#), shared how they have innovated screening in eye care by using technology on smartphones. The data is submitted in real-time to staff and donors, to improve the work Peek does in the future.

Christian Franz, co-founder of [CPC Analytics](#), presented Accountable Now's pilot project on [People-Powered Decision Making](#). Seven organisations (350.org, BRAC, CIVICUS, Greenpeace, Restless Development, SolidarityNow and TECHO) are setting out to improve how they collect and use stakeholder

data to inform their decision making. CPC Analytics is working with each pilot organisation to help them establish practices and tools to collect and analyse in-time, comparable stakeholder data. Christian highlighted that organisational issues are just as important as technical ones when it comes to integrating data and implementing innovative ideas. Success of this project will bring invaluable insights and progress in terms of institutionalising dynamic accountability.