

Accountable Now



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2017 Highlights

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Dear Friends,

2017 has been a challenging, high tempo and successful year in a period of transition with the departure of Karenina Schröder as Executive Director in August, to be succeeded by Rocio Moreno Lopez from January 2018. Nick Roseveare ensured a smooth transition in the interim period. The Board and Members owe a huge debt of gratitude to Karenina for her leadership, dynamism and tenacity, which has established Accountable Now as the trusted organisation it has become.

The Global Standard for CSO Accountability was launched at the International Civil Society Week in Fiji in December 2017. Accountable Now was the first of all the Project Partners to adopt the 12 Accountability Commitments of the Global Standard and has further adopted a new reporting framework to reflect those commitments. The new framework has significantly fewer questions and a focus on demonstrating effectiveness rather than strict quantitative reporting. Members will begin using it from 2018. We have been asked to host the Secretariat for the next phase of the Global Standard with our fellow Project Partners in 2018.

Accountable Now applied for and received charitable status and is now a charitable company. Over the past two years, Accountable Now has raised an increasing amount of income not only from membership fees, but also from external funding. Whilst fundraising for CSO accountability has always been challenging, our new status should help. There seems to be a lack of awareness among donors that CSO accountability is a crucial prerequisite to fight for civic space. Accountable Now has been working on making that link more explicit.

We initiated a pilot project, exploring how organisations can interact more systematically with their stakeholders to capture data on stakeholder views/preferences in a timely, comparable and actionable manner to help decision making. Six organisations took part and a data science company helped set up communication processes and technology.

To address many governments' move to curtail civic action by challenging the legitimacy of civil society organisations, negatively portraying them as disconnected special interest groups, Accountable Now will be partnering with CIVICUS for the "Resilient Roots" project funded by the Ford Foundation.

In light of the newly developed "dynamic accountability" concept of the Global Standard, Accountable Now will revise its Strategy "Beyond 2015" to raise more awareness among civil society organisations, the public and donors about our work and its importance.

I am delighted to announce that we have welcomed TECHO, SolidarityNow and ChildFund Alliance's Secretariat as Affiliate Members and are in active discussion with potential new members.

Rocio and I look forward to the continued active engagement of our Members in 2018 as we consolidate the progress achieved this year.

RJ - huy

Brendan Gormley
Board Chair

3 Accountability is global

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Since 2015, Accountable Now is developing the Global Standard for CSO Accountability with eight other Project Partners. The overarching aim of this project is to strengthen the effectiveness of CSOs worldwide by devising a collective Global Standard on CSO Accountability. The networks of all nine Project Partners have, over the past two years, cooperated to learn from each other, gain a truly global view on CSO accountability, improve their accountability codes and reduce transaction costs.

The Global Standard is built from the bottom up, carving out the significant existing overlap on core parameters for CSO accountability in all participating codes. It will be used as a key reference standard for the nine networks and beyond, and serve as a point of orientation for CSO accountability globally.

In December 2017, the Global Standard was officially launched at the International Civil Society Week in Suva, Fiji.

It is our ambition to mutually recognise the Global Standard's accountability commitments between all participating networks. Their constituencies, representing nearly 1500 CSOs across the world, will be actively engaged in developing and testing the Global Standard's parameters and sharing it with other CSO networks. Accountable Now Members agreed to adopt the Global Standard at our Annual General Meeting in June 2017.

The project is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) and its first phase officially started in spring 2015. The next phase of the project, focusing on using the Standard developed in the first phase, will begin from mid-2018. If you're interested in learning more about how to work with the Global Standard, get in touch with us!



The 12 Accountability Commitments

Accountable Now's Accountability Commitments, derived from the Global Standard, are at the core of what we regard as good practice in CSO accountability and form the value basis of Accountable Now. All Members have signed these 12 Accountability Commitments and seek to respect and promote them.

History

Accountable Now (previously the INGO Accountability Charter) used to have 10 commitments as a voluntary code of conduct. These were initiated in 2005 by 11 international CSOs. In 2008, the Charter was founded as an organisation to assure compliance and to further improve international civil society standards. In 2014, the Commitments were fully revised by a working group of Accountable Now Member Organisations and in 2017, Accountable Now's Members unanimously agreed to adopt the 12 Accountability Commitments of the Global Standard for CSO Accountability to replace the Charter commitments, thus aligning with eight other CSO accountability networks around the world.

Purpose

The 12 Accountability Commitments outline our common commitment to transparency and accountability as being essential to good governance, whether by governments, businesses or civil society. Wherever we operate, we seek to ensure that the high standards which we demand of others are also respected in our own organisations. The Commitments complement, draw on and supplement a range of existing codes, norms, standards and guidelines. They are voluntary and their adoption does not prevent Members from supporting or using other tools to promote transparency and accountability.



Refining our annual Reporting Framework

To accompany our new 12 Accountability Commitments, we have refined the reporting framework and questions against which our Members report each year. Our aim is to make the process more:



Timely: By reducing the number of reporting questions from 90 to 34 and allowing flexibility in the format of reports, we hope to reduce submission timelines by up to 6 months. We also aim to provide feedback to our Members within two months of submission (compared to four months previously). This means Members should receive feedback 8 months after the end of the year their report covers, and be able to use it to shape their plans for the following year.

Global: We are getting rid of our standardised reporting template and encouraging Members to explain how they fulfil the Accountability Commitments in reports that can be shared beyond our Independent Review Panel. By including this information in more accessible annual reports or global accountability reports, our Members can share their successes and challenges with their stakeholders – and encourage further feedback.

Evidence and impact based: Instead of just asking about the policies and processes an organisation has in place, we are requesting evidence and examples of how these work in practice. Are they achieving the impact they aspire to? Is there meaningful change and growth taking place within the organisation? We hope these changes will increase the utility of the reporting mechanism – both for our Members and their stakeholders. Furthermore, in the spirit of the Global Standard, the new framework and questions were co-created with our Members through several rounds of consultations and will be reviewed and improved based on their continued feedback.



Learning from the best

When reviewing Accountable Now Members' reports, the Independent Review Panel identifies good practices which could potentially provide valuable information for other Members and the sector. We have selected several excerpts from our online library mainly derived from Members' accountability reports submitted in 2017.

Stakeholder Engagement

World Vision includes stakeholders in its programme development, advocacy efforts and strategic planning. Specifically, it is implementing a child-friendly accountability mechanism. **Educo** engages in efforts to improve access to information about their work, ensuring the accessibility to their main target group by creating child-friendly versions of various institutional documents.

Feedback and complaints

BRAC has an Ombudsperson with a comprehensive mandate to investigate any incident of misadministration and misuse of power within the organisation. The Ombudsperson is independent from BRAC and can take decisions independently.

Impact and M&E

World Vision launched a Partnership-wide "Fail Fest" in 2016, encouraging staff to share failed approaches/projects which led to positive change and results, and reinforcing the concept of "failing forward" to encourage innovation.

Diversity of workforce and governance bodies

World YWCA's policy requires women aged 30 or below to form at least 25% of all decision making spaces, which they meet, since 60% of their current World Board members are 30 or below.

Procedures for local hiring

CIVICUS' job advertising considers locality of applicants, as well as difficulties in obtaining permits to work in the Global South. Synergies with Partners and Members, as well as the use of shared work spaces have been found and are ever increasing.

Human resource management

In **Terre des Hommes**, throughout the Federation, accountability is part of the hiring process, specifically addressing personal accountability in interviews for instance. Thus **Terre des Hommes** strives to only recruit and retain employees who embrace accountability as part of their personal value

ActionAid has reduced the number of its foreign staff to less than 1% percent, through the implementation of limits in international expatriate contracts and reducing the benefits long-term expatriate staff receive. ActionAid operates through its national offices worldwide and through the IS hubs. In national offices, the majority of staff (at all levels) are local people.



Accountability is dynamic

Accountability is so much more than just a report – it is a dynamic approach encapsulating all aspects of an organisation's operations, from inclusive and sustainable practices to engaging stakeholders in the design and implementation of policies and programmes.

In the digital age, empowered citizens demand an active role in co-shaping CSOs' work. Stakeholders become partners and the set of skills, capacity and knowledge to achieve collective impact grows. For CSOs to build on this opportunity however, we must innovate our accountability practice.

Pilot Project

Our pilot project of 2017 explored how organisations can interact more systematically to capture data on stakeholder views in a timely, comparable and actionable manner for decision making. 350.org, BRAC, CIVICUS, Greenpeace, Restless Development and TECHO took part; CPC Analytics helped set up communication processes and technology and provided data analysis.

At the core of the project lies the assumption that integrating feedback from stakeholders into decision making more frequently helps achieve two key challenges at the same time: working more effectively with stakeholders and tracing the impact of this work.

BRAC's pilot, for instance, involved asking smallholder milk farmers in Bangladesh to bring their milk to collection centres themselves, rather than sending it via a middleman. The milk farmers filled out periodic questionnaires about the challenges they faced and assistance they needed. Analysis of the responses was able to identify regional differences in the farmers' needs, and more targeted assistance could be provided, e.g. in the vaccinations offered to the farm animals. This led to improved animal health and increased milk production. This example shows how consulting stakeholders can allow quick changes to be made to improve CSOs' processes and programmes.

Along the way, we have learned how important it is to really understand one's stakeholders and their needs, and to close the loop when asking for feedback. The mere process of involving stakeholders in decision making can mean that an organisation's usual modus operandi is questioned, highlighting the crucial importance of internal buy-in, particularly at the management level.



Workshop 2017

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Accountability is about responsiveness to your key stakeholders. Many civil society organisations (CSOs) subscribe to this but few have figured out the what, how and why of establishing both mechanisms and a culture of responsiveness to feedback, and using stakeholder data (including feedback) to enhance decision making.

CSOs use data to inform their strategies, but getting real-time data to improve global decision making and to have this as part of their daily operations is the real challenge. How to filter data and push-it up the organisational hierarchy is not only a systems issue but a behavioural one too. CSOs have piles of data but their accuracy is questioned; they are under-used and they are in many cases in siloes. The bigger the organisation is, the more difficult the journey will be, but some have started to find a way.

Representatives of 16 CSOs, both Members and non-members of Accountable Now, joined our annual workshop at Greenpeace Netherlands to address this challenge.

Why stakeholder data driven decision making?
Rather than some other competing priority

For leadership: Responsiveness to stakeholder feedback is not only a good practice in the sector. It will increase impact and empower communities. Donors have started to ask CSOs to become more responsive and they believe that it will improve the sustainability and effectiveness of our programmes.

For boards: Often CSOs need to build trust at a time when it is in question. This is only possible if we demonstrate whether and how we are responsive to our stakeholders. Eventually, this will help us measure our programme effectiveness in a timelier manner, beyond just numbers. Also, it will help better manage risks and reduce fraud and corruption.

For development partners/donors: Funded projects and programmes will achieve their impact and course-correct along the way. Ultimately, stakeholder engagements will help CSOs demonstrate "value for money".



Join the discussion

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And shape the accountability practice of the future!

In 2017, Accountable Now conducted three webinars, triggering each time lively debates with 25-40 participants, and coordinated a Peer Advice Group on Feedback and Complaints Handling Mechanisms.

What's 'accountability' in the eyes of youth?

In this webinar we learned about **Restless Development's** youth-led accountability approach, combining data-driven accountability with high-level advocacy, global and local campaigns, and global mobilisation moments. Additionally, **CIVICUS** presented about their Youth Action Team, whose primary role is to provide strategic, informed advice on how youth participation issues can be better mainstreamed in **CIVICUS'** programmes, and on how **CIVICUS** can develop new activities to strengthen youth voice in civil society.

How to keep up with the digital customer feedback revolution?

Oxfam acquainted us with their findings and lessons learned from a pilot project that aimed at capturing and using informal feedback by refugees in the Za'atari Camp in Jordan by recording complaints and feedback in a mobile application. We further had **Transparency International Kenya** present "Uwajibikaji Pamoja", an automated web-based Integrated Complaint Referral Mechanism in Kenya, implemented in cooperation with 70 partners.

Social Accountability: Learning from People How to Improve

In this webinar **CARE International UK** talked about their use of the Constituency Voice model, originally developed by Keystone Accountability, to improve relationships with the least powerful stakeholders in CARE's programmes and improve programming. **Action Aid** demonstrated how participatory processes have contributed to enhancing mutual accountability to communities in Nepal and Pakistan.

Peer Advice Group: Feedback and Complaints Handling Mechanisms

The group was initiated in August 2017 with the registration of eleven participants and is still active. It is aimed at anyone working on feedback and complaints mechanisms, both at a programmatic and an organisational level. As initiator, **Educo** showed particular interest in discussing mechanisms aimed at children and young people.

The aim of the group is to create a space for sharing experiences and best practices on setting up and managing feedback and complaints mechanisms. Discussions should generate ideas for making existing feedback mechanisms more effective and deal with issues for consideration when setting up new feedback mechanisms.

Tap into our inspiring community of practice!
Join our webinars where topic experts share their valuable expertise and discuss critical aspects of accountability, or initiate a Peer Advice Group to exchange experience with other Members!



**HOSTING an INSPIRING
COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE TO
LEARN FROM**

Looking ahead

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The Global Standard

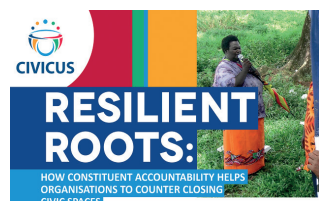
The first project phase of the Global Standard, focused on its creation, is drawing to a close in April 2018. The Standard was officially launched at the International Civil Society Week (ICSW) in Fiji in December 2017, with many organisations expressing their interest in using it. Accountable Now will continue working with the other project partners, our Members, and other organisations to encourage broader use of and work with the Standard.

Resilient Roots

While there is growing recognition amongst CSOs of the need to become more accountable, too often this focuses on pleasing donors rather than meaningfully engaging and responding to the people and communities these organisations are created to serve. This is even true at the local level, where working closely with the community does not necessarily translate into consistent accountability practices which are responsive to peoples' needs and ideas. At the same time, an increasing number of governments are seeking to curtail civic action by challenging the legitimacy of CSOs, portraying them as disconnected special interest groups.

What is more, the typical ways CSOs demonstrate their accountability – through compliance with regulatory requirements and donor reporting – are unlikely to be sufficient to convince sceptical politicians or members of the public.

In late 2017 Accountable Now, Civicus and Keystone Accountability started consultations for the launch of an 18-month initiative to test whether organisations who are more accountable and responsive to their primary constituencies are more resilient against external threats.



Ten years on, accountability in action

We are celebrating Accountable Now's 10th anniversary in 2018! From an organisation with compliance and reporting at its core, to one which is at the forefront of shaping innovative accountability practices, Accountable Now has grown tremendously over the past decade. In the coming years, we are excited to take this further as we host the Global Standard project and collaborate with others on exciting new accountability initiatives!

Ten years on, we can say that we have learned from our Accountable Now membership and it has been worth it. Yes, the reporting has at times felt bureaucratic, but we have improved our own data collection and reporting over time so that we concentrate on the issues most meaningful for our own accountability; and the reporting framework has also evolved over time to become more useful. The Independent Review Panel has given us direct and challenging feedback on our reporting, which has led to improvements in our own thinking and systems. The collection of good practices – as identified by the Independent Review Panel – is well worth browsing for inspiration.

Janet Dalziell, International People and Culture Director, Greenpeace International



Governance

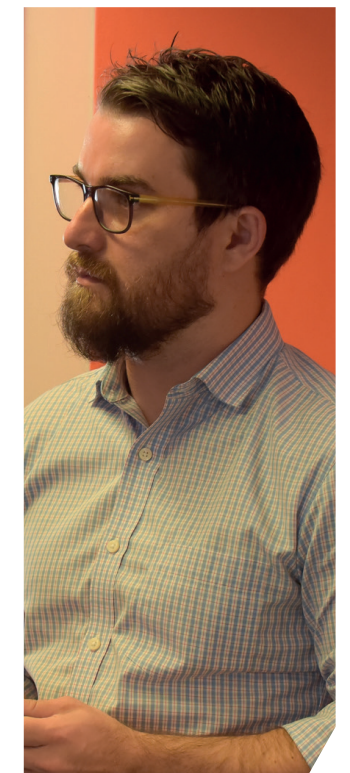
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We are most grateful to our committed Board for their extraordinary support in 2017, leading the Secretariat through a period of transition and continuously exploring our future strategic direction. While we had an Interim Executive Director we continued with our proactive and outcome-focused agenda. In addition, Accountable Now was the first of all nine Global Standard Project Partners to fully adopt the 12 Accountability Commitments and to develop a new reporting framework to reflect them. Last but not least, we acquired charity status to strengthen our recognition with donors.

We would like to specifically express our deepest gratitude to Clare Doube and Miklos Marschall, who both departed from Accountable Now's Board in 2017. Your invaluable support and advice has greatly contributed to the organisation and it will be a challenge to replace you.

The composition of the Board in 2017 was the following:

Brendan Gormley, Chair
Bettie van Straaten, Treasurer
Caroline Harper, Vice Chair, CEO Sightsavers International
Clare Doube, Director of Strategy and Evaluation, Amnesty International
Elie Gasagara, Partnership Leader, Global Accountability, World Vision International
Janet Dalziell, Director of Global Development, Greenpeace International
Janet Naumi Mawiyoo, CEO, Kenya Community Development Foundation (KCDF); Chair, Viwango
Miklos Marschall, Deputy Managing Director, Transparency International
Perry Maddox, COO, Restless Development
Rosa Inés Ospina, Co-Director, Rendir Cuentas; National Director, Red de ONG por la Transparencia
***Thomas Price**, Assistant Legal Counsel, Amnesty International



Our Members

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The real drivers of Accountable Now's strategy are our Members. Together we strive to be transparent, responsive to stakeholders and focused on delivering impact! All internationally operating civil society and non-profit organisations are welcome to join us. Currently we have 27 Members who have adopted the 12 Accountability Commitments of the Global Standard and have committed to pro-active stakeholder engagement to drive better strategic decisions and collectively owned impact. We had the pleasure of welcoming three new organisations to Accountable Now's Membership in 2017!

- **TECHO**, a youth led non-profit organisation present in Latin America & the Caribbean. Through the collaborative work of families living in extreme poverty with youth volunteers, TECHO seeks to overcome poverty in slums.
- **SolidarityNow**, a network of people and organisations whose goal is to assist and support

both the local Greek and migrant populations affected by the economic and humanitarian crisis in Greece.

- **ChildFund Alliance Secretariat**, a global network of 11 child-focused development organisations working to create opportunities for children and youth, their families and communities.



***Affiliate Members.** Organisations approved by the Board of Accountable Now have the status of Affiliate Members until their first Accountability Report has been vetted and approved by the Independent Review Panel, after which they become full Members.

Our Independent Review Panel

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The Independent Review Panel is vital to the credibility and integrity of Accountable Now. It assesses individually and critically if our Members are in compliance with the 12 Accountability Commitments. It is also the final instance for handling complaints filed against Accountable Now Members.

In 2017 our Panel members played a major role in developing our new Reporting Framework to reflect the newly adopted 12 Accountability Commitments of the Global Standard. We would like to share our greatest appreciation and gratitude to Rhonda Chapman and Nora Lester Murad who left the Panel in 2017, for all their hard work, commitment and valuable support.

The composition of the Independent Review Panel in 2017 was the following:

Mihir Bhatt ¹ (India), Director and founder of the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute

Rhonda Chapman ² (Australia), independent consultant specialising in the review, assessment and capacity building of CSOs

John Clark ³ (United Kingdom), Chair of the international anti-corruption NGO Partnership for Transparency Fund, on the supervisory board of the European Center for Not-for-profit Law, on the advisory Council for the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law.

Louise James ⁴ (United Kingdom), Global Programmes Director for Accenture Development Partnerships

Jane Kiragu ⁵ (Kenya), Human rights lawyer and Advocate of the High Court of Kenya, Managing Director of Satima Consultants Ltd.

Nora Lester Murad ⁶ (Palestine), Co-founder of Dalia Association, Aid Watch Palestine and independent researcher

Saroeun Soeung ⁷ (Cambodia), Executive Director of the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC)



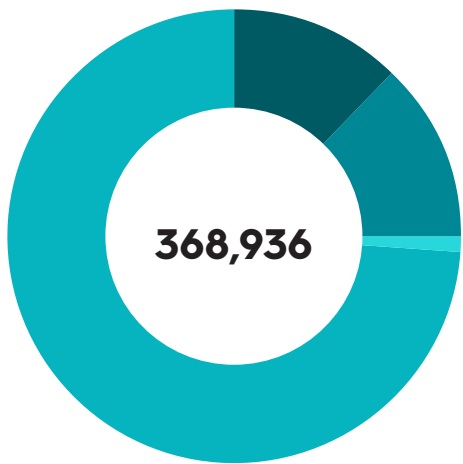
Annual Accounts¹

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¹ Accounts still need to be audited, all figures may be subject to change. The final audit report will be published online.

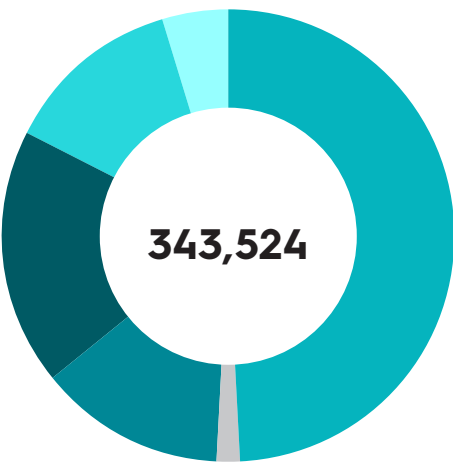
Income

Membership Fees
Global Standard
Digital Accountability
Members' Workshop Fees



Expenditure

Administration / Secretariat Costs
Discretionary fund
Digital Accountability
Global Standard
Legal & Finance
Branding & Communication



Thank you!

For all the valuable support in 2017, we are most grateful to our

- ▶ Trustees
- ▶ Independent Review Panel
- ▶ Members
- ▶ Global Standard Partners
- ▶ Pilots of the People-Powered Decision-Making project
- ▶ CPC Analytics

and various other partners and organisations who have hosted our meetings or have in other ways immensely contributed to our work!

Last but not least, we would like to thank our long-term incredible leader and champion – **Karenina Schröder**, for her great contribution over the past seven years, who turned Accountable Now into the dynamic, innovative organisation it is now, leading it to the forefront of shaping the accountability practices of the future!

Our Secretariat in 2017

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From left to right:

Nick Roseveare Interim Executive Director
Mahmoud Farag Programme Officer
Erika Baranda Student Assistant
Karenina Schröder Executive Director
Kameliya Tomova Programme Officer



Ezgi Akarsu
Programme Manager



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