

Accountable Now

Board of Trustees Meeting

21 May 2019

Minutes

Present

Brendan Gormley, (Chair) *(Non-Member)*
Caroline Harper, Sightsavers (Vice-Chair) *(Member)*
Bettie van Straaten, (Outgoing Treasurer) *(Non-Member)*
Olivier Guth, Adra (Incoming Treasurer)
Elie Gasagara, World Vision International *(Member)*
Rosa Inés Ospina, Rendir Cuentas *(Non-Member)*
Jose Maria Faura, Educo *(Member)*
Colm O’Cuanachain, Amnesty International *(Member)*
Betty Ho *(Member)*

In attendance from the Secretariat

Rocío Moreno, Executive Director
Ezgi Akarsu, Programme Manager *(Minute taker)*

Apologies

Alex Sardar, Civicus *(Member)*
Janet Mawiyoo *(Non-Member)*

Welcome and agree on agenda (ACC 19/07)

- Most action points from the last Board meeting have either been completed or are currently being processed.
- The last [meeting minutes were approved](#).



- Trustees reported on current issues in their various contexts. Brexit continues to be an important topic in the UK context for CSOs.

Executive Director's Report (ACC 19/08)

The Executive Director provided an update on developments since the last Board meeting in October.

- An update was given regarding a recent meeting with ChildFund, where there was a discussion around how to prepare the accountability reports.
- Accountable Now will host the upcoming Humanitarian Quality & Assurance meeting in Berlin together with the Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance.

Financial and Legal Update (ACC 19/09)

The Board approved the budget report that ran from January to May 2019 as presented by the Treasurer.

- The trustees held a discussion on the provision for doubtful debt, based on the recommendations of the auditor. **It was decided that the Board will change the management response towards overdue accounts and has already changed the invoicing process.**
- **The Board has agreed to change the process of signing the Conflict of Interest declarations.** In future, these will be **signed online at the start of each year**, rather than signing them at the Annual General Meetings each year.
- **The Board has agreed to open up the tender process for new auditors**, after working with Sawyer Vincent for many years.

Communications: Value added for members (ACC 19/10)

The Secretariat provided an overview of Accountable Now's communication strategy. Some of the main topics included:

- How we can improve how members communicate about Accountable Now? For example, how can we encourage members to put info about us online and to publish their accountability reports online?
- The Board discussed possibly implementing large, campaign-style communications about the work of Accountable Now and our members, but also in line with discussions in the sector.
- **The Board has acknowledged** the need for a clear strategy for how to comment on members' issues. Do we (and members) want Accountable Now to comment on members' issues which gain widespread attention?



- The Board **deliberated** how to develop key messages for (new) CEOs, to ensure they're on board and understand the value of Accountable Now. This conversation must be part of orientation about Accountable Now.
 - In addition, it would be good to **communicate more with donors** and ensure our value is recognised by them.
- Another issue raised by the Board was how to **communicate members' reporting progress/timeline?** There is a need to develop a clear strategy for this.

Membership Update (ACC 19/11)

- There was a discussion amongst the Trustees about the need to revisit conversations we had a few years ago with members about their expectations from Accountable Now.
- The Board **approved** the new policy regarding complaints against members. There was a discussion about how to ensure that complaints made to Accountable Now, against its members, are followed up. One important component of the complaints procedure is that the complainant must be informed about what Accountable Now is doing. Also, Accountable Now must ensure the member is taking care of the complaint.

Reporting (ACC 19/12)

The Board discussed member reporting and the Independent Review Panel (IRP).

- The Trustees **acknowledged** that the IRP is quite strong overall, with more uniform standard amongst Panel members now. Recently, more reviews are being conducted in **small groups, with only 2 Panel members** on each call, and this will continue. Due to the difficulties of maintaining a sense of cohesion as a Panel, we need to ensure that **at least one plenary meeting** is held per year so that Panel members can discuss views and make sure they remain on the same page. There was also a discussion regarding the IRP's standard of review. Given that the aim is to maintain uniformity amongst the Panel, we need to decide how strict/lenient we should be, as some Panel members have been more tolerant than others.
- One issue that has been under review is the procedures regarding complaints against members, which has been resolved now. Accountable Now **needs to update Panel Terms of Reference in line with changes.**
- Concern until a year or so ago about how appropriate process is/was... Panel sometimes does a bit of desk review, e.g. is it actually easy to find complaints process online?
- Another issue with reporting is the lack of discipline in terms of timeliness of reports. Part of the challenge is that the Panel members have very busy schedules; therefore, it would be good to be able to schedule meetings in further advance.



- Accountable Now has noticed some variation in completeness of reports – in some, there are pieces of evidence/documentation still lacking.
- The **new reporting framework** has been better for illuminating accountability issues but has made the reports more difficult to review. Allowing organizations to use other formats can be tricky; therefore, we Accountable Now must insist on a good annex.
- Accountable Now has found the **calls with the CEOs of our members** have been useful but need to see if members also think so. If both parties agree, these calls will be continued. Calls have worked well in general so far; CEOs seem to appreciate them but need to validate this.
 - These follow-up calls with CEOs should be on demand; if they don't want it, we shouldn't push it.
 - The decision to make these calls was a conscious one, in order to engage top leadership into the conversations.
 - If there's a block or issue at CEO level, that cascades through the organisation – thus we need to keep pushing for that connection point.
 - If it is too challenging to organize these calls with each CEO annually, can be held once every 2-3 years.
 - Accountable Now needs to ensure that if the CEO delegates, it's not just falling back to the key contact.
 - It is needed to keep time zone issues in mind when appointing Trustees; especially if the Chair will need to join CEO calls.
- Would be interesting to get more feedback from members on how useful the reporting and review process has been, as well as the Panel's feedback on the reports. Who is reading the reports? Should we be satisfied with just a few people in the organizations reading the reports? Should we work towards having review process more regularly used by donors/foundations to build accountability within sector overall?
- The Board **discussed** the issue of federations: some organizations have joined as secretariats; however, this raises an issue as these secretariats may be unable to speak for their whole organization. The secretariats should be able to use their convening power to encourage their members (ie. their national or regional organizations) to put more focus/value on accountability. As well, the secretariat may be useful in gathering more information on their members.
- What about **Secretariats using Accountable Now logo? It makes it seem like the entire organization is covered when this is not the case. Accountable Now must solve this issue and see how we can be more transparent/accurate.**
- Another topic that was discussed was whether we are doing what we can to further the enabling environment for civil society?
- The Panel had also flagged issue of Accountable Now reporting about our own accountability; to date the Board still hasn't really discussed this. This idea will be explored, and a decision will need to be made.
- The Board was updated regarding Members with **outstanding reports** and debated how to resolve this issue. One idea presented was that a notification



should be published under the member's reports section of the Accountable Now website. In the future, we should record where each member is on their reporting cycle.

Board and Trustees (ACC 19/13)

Changes to the Board of Trustees were presented and discussed.

- **The Board will appoint** Pia Stavås Meier (independent) as the new Chair.
 - One-on-one conversations between each Trustee and the new Chair will be set up, in order for Pia to get to know the trustees better and to identify areas of interest.
- **The Board has appointed** a new Treasurer, Olivier Guth.
- A new Vice Chair will need to be appointed. Institutional memory should be considered as an important qualification during the selection process.
- **The Board also welcomes** several new Trustees:
 - Amy Taylor from CIVICUS, Belen Gonzales from TECHO and Jo Thompson - an independent.

Annual General Meeting (ACC 19/14)

- **The Board approved** the overview of the agenda for the upcoming Annual General Meeting.
- The invitation list for the meeting was also discussed.

Any Other Business (ACC 19/15)

- Trustees finished the meeting with a closed session without the Secretariat.

The next meeting will take place on Monday 4 October (virtually via GoToMeeting).

END