Accountable Now
GLOBAL STANDARDS LOCAL TRUST

**ChildFund International
Independent Review Panel Feedback**

Accountability Report 2019-2020
Review Round March 2021

ChildFund International
Feedback from the Independent Review Panel
Review Round March 2021

29 March 2021

Dear Anne Lynam Goddard,

Thank you for submitting your accountability report. We, the Independent Review Panel of Accountable Now, appreciate your efforts to 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.

The Panel is pleased to receive ChildFund International's first accountability report, which was informative and provided a good insight into accountability systems. The report indicates a **strong commitment to accountability** and transparency, and to including key stakeholders in ChildFund International's work. The opening statement by Anne Lynam Goddard, emphasises the alignment with Accountable Now's accountability commitments.

The Panel appreciated that the report included an introduction with basic information about the organisation. The inclusion of examples on how key stakeholders were involved in advocacy work (C1) is considered a strength in the report. Further **strengths** include the prompt reactions and responses to negative feedback (E3); how root causes of problems are identified and how evidence is gathered (F1); and the strong and rigorous process to ensure data protection and overall security policy (G3).

In the next report, the Panel would like to see more on how the accountability systems work in practice, and more details on outcomes of actual engagement with key stakeholders. Key **areas for improvement** in this regard are the overview on progress and challenges (A3); environmental accountability (C5); results of reviews of systems to reach out to stakeholders (D2); ensuring key stakeholders are meaningful engaged and their feedback is taken onboard (E1 and E2).

Overall, the Panel approves of ChildFund International's first accountability report to Accountable Now, and the organisation is moved from Affiliate to Full Membership with immediate effect.

We look forward to discussing our feedback with you in a follow-up call, which the Secretariat will be in touch to schedule. This conversation will form the basis for your response letter, which will be made publicly available on the Accountable Now website along with your report and this feedback letter.

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,

Accountable Now's Independent Review Panel

ChildFund International's Accountability Report 2019-2020
Review Round March 2021

Opening Statement from the Head of Organisation

The opening statement by ChildFund International President and CEO, Anne Lynam Goddard, emphasises a strong alignment with, and commitment to, Accountable Now's twelve accountability commitments as a way to sustain ChildFund International''s mission. It highlights the crucial role of accountability in different areas of work, from programming to partnerships. Five top charity reviewers' websites are shared, which demonstrates a high level of transparency and accountability.

An internal accountability system based on a balanced scorecard is briefly described.

The Panel appreciates the strong commitment to Accountability demonstrated and emphasised through the opening statement. The panel also suggests that in

> the next report, this space is also used to reflect on accountability related challenges during the reporting period.

Cluster A: Impact Achieved		
A. The impact we achieve		
A1	***Mission statement and theory of change*** The mission and vision are shared, and Theory of Change (ToC) explained. To achieve the outcomes described, ChildFund uses a *Three Life Stages* approach which recognises the different developmental needs from infancy through young adulthood. Several visualisations of the ToC and the 3 stages are provided.	*4*
A2	***Key strategic indicators for success*** Three key strategic indicators are described; Knowledge and Potential Use of Child Protection Mechanisms, Strong Partners, and Advocacy. The M&E system is mentioned, as well as its link with the ToC, and how ChildFund seeks to improve it by engaging stakeholders. It is reported that child protection mechanisms are identified with communities including children. It recognizes that using data collected to inform decision making is still a challenge. Among the stakeholders consulted, has been the children and communities ChildFund work for and with included?	*3*
A3	***Progress and challenges over the reporting period*** Progress is expressed in growth percentage in all three strategic indicators mentioned above for the period 2017-2019. Challenges in M&E are briefly described, mostly on collecting data. The panel appreciates the information on this specific area, but points out that the scope of this question is on general challenges encountered by the organisation in the reporting period.	*2*
A4	***Significant events or changes regarding governance and accountability***	*3*

	An Organizational Effectiveness initiative was launched, its expected outcomes are listed within three categories: *Structure*, *Roles/Functions/Staffing*, and *How we work*. While the report outlines the outcomes of the report, the panel would welcome details on what aspects have been implemented. In the context of the COVID-19, ChildFund International, in conjunction with Alliance members developed and implemented an emergency response plan worth $56 million and aiming to reach 6.3 million children and family members with the main objectives of preventing hunger and violence. The Panel appreciates the internal flexibility allowing a rapid adaptation to Covid-19 crisis.	
B. Positive results are sustained		
B1	***Sustainability of your work*** ChildFund believes in working in partnerships with other civil society actors and organizations who are responsible for child development and upholding child rights to achieve long-term sustainability. An assessment was launched 2017 to measure partners' compliance, governance, strategy, and programming. A table with the 14 measures for FY19 and FY20 is shared, showing a continuous monitoring and evaluation of progress with a display of evidence. The results show positive progress across a number of the measures. Notwithstanding this, more information around the number of partners being monitored (all the 195 mentioned in the intro?) would be appreciated, along with how the results are consolidated (from a methodological perspective) ChildFund develops an action plan to help partners to support training and capacity building, in a form of collaboration between ChildFund and its local partner staff.	*3*
B2	***Lessons learned in the reporting period*** The response briefly outlines three lessons learnt. One of them being how ChildFund's community-based child-protection mapping and action-planning exercises were often too complex for community members. The reaction was to simplify the materials and bring in some	*3*

online training opportunities. It also outlines that lessons learned are shared with local partners as training sessions aim at improving processes. The Panel appreciates the lessons learnt shared here and will welcome in the next report the inclusion of specific takeaways from successes as well.		
C. We lead by example		
C1	***Excellence on strategic priorities*** On **advocacy**, ChildFund has demonstrated excellence by providing leadership recognized by peers and stakeholders, in several key advocacy/partnering coalitions, influencing US government policy and funding, and working with ChildFund Alliance on advancing SDGs related to children. An example of a community that took part in the community-led process for mapping child-protection mechanisms (CBCPM) - one of 326 such communities - is provided. Based In the Philippines, the community group was invited to the city council to present results, upon which most of the concrete actions (focusing on child-protection mechanisms for people living with disabilities) were adopted. This implies that beneficiaries are owning ChildFund strategic priorities. It is also mentioned that ChildFund is building a "robust" global M&E/Project Management Platform that would help advance programmatic objectives.	*4*
C2	***Expertise is recognised and welcomed by peers and stakeholders*** ChildFund International staff are part of numerous external bodies and some examples of products ([here](#) and [here](#)) developed with their contributions are shared. Several working groups and committees at both national and international levels that ChildFund is involved with , are listed. These groups work on relevant early-childhood-development (ECD) and education, and on child protection and policy advocacy.	*3*
C3	***Inclusivity, human rights, women's rights and gender equality***	*3*

		The response acknowledges the entrenched gender inequalities and that all actors must challenge existing systems and promote gender equality to achieve social justice.	
		A gender equality position paper has been adopted in 2020 to formalize ChildFund commitments for women rights and gender equality. The key commitments contained in the paper are summarised in the report. The panel sees this as positive, and suggests iln the next report to also address inequalities based on other diversity factors such as race, disability, income or religion.	
		CIVICUS' overall approach (see their 2019 report, pp. 19-21) might provide some guidance.	
C4		***Minimising negative impacts on stakeholders***	***3***
		An interdepartmental working group is tasked with strengthening PSEA policies and practices in line with IASC standards and UNICEF's PSEA core values. ChildFund's Code of Business Conduct and Ethics, and whistleblower policy are shared. A safeguarding focal point in each country office ensures victims are supported. SEA incidents can be reported through 4 different channels.	
		Safeguarding standards are socialized throughout the organisation globally through specific training, mainstreaming in ongoing activities and translation in languages of operation.	
		The response also describes how ChildFund staff is involved, and partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries are made aware of the related policies and practices. During the pandemic, additional communication channels were enabled to overcome the social distance restrictions.	
C5		***Responsible stewardship for the environment***	***1***
		The response recognises that ChildFund is still articulating how responsible stewardship of the environment will look like for its programmatic work. However an example of DRR programs related to environmental degradation is shared.	

	As protecting the environment has been identified as a priority for the next strategic period, several ChildFund Alliance wide proposals are shared. The panel suggests to see ChildFund New Zealand's approach ([see report pp. 17](#)) as it has been flagged as good practice.	

Cluster B: Stakeholder Involvement

D. Key stakeholders are identified with great care

D1	**Key stakeholders and how they are identified** ChildFund International has stakeholders "at all levels of the development and humanitarian continuum" , including program participants and their communities, partners, donors, and other actors in the sector. People in most need are identified by working together with governments and local organizations. How other stakeholders are identified is also briefly explained.	*3*
D2	**Reaching out to those impacted or concerned by your work** A yearly program quality review is conducted at the field level with partners, and partners conduct this with selected program participants. In emergency situations a wider range of stakeholders is consulted at a regular basis. On social media, ChildFund responses to all messages and there is an escalation process in place to address concerns. It is also mentioned there is a dedicated team to manage continued communication with donors. The Panel commends the extensive and responsive methods of communication with stakeholders, partners and beneficiaries across various channels. Notwithstanding this, it would be helpful to include some feedback from the various reviews that have been referred to.	*3*
D3	**Maximising coordination with others operating in the same space** ChildFund works directly with governments to decide on the geographic areas it will work. It is stated that as ChildFund's ToC approaches programs in life stages, from infancy through young adulthood, rather than through	*3*

	specific rigid areas, complementarity is often achievable, instead of competing with other actors. An example in Indonesia is provided to illustrate this. ChildFund's approach in emergencies is briefly explained, which usually involves participation in UN or governments led bodies. Does ChildFund International also work with other NGOs/CBOs that are not part of the UN system? If so, the panel would appreciate information in the next report.	

E. We listen to, involve and empower stakeholders

E1	**Stakeholder feedback** As explained in D2, ChildFund has a program quality review (PQR) process in place, through which ChildFund'sr partners conduct the review with selected program participants. In the context of the COVID-19 response, inputs from participants were sought via mobile surveys. Some country offices receive feedback from governments. Feedback from the public is captured through public social sites and watchdog organisations. While it has received some sorts of feedback from stakeholders, ChildFund envisions to build a proactive accountability mechanism that would systematically solicit, collect or act on feedback or complaints from the people served. Notwithstanding this, in the next report the panel would like to see more details on some of the feedback mentioned, and suggests to use some examples to illustrate how stakeholders' feedback, especially from children and communities ChildFund works for and with, is treated and how it might be used to inform decision making.	*3*
E2	**Stakeholder engagement** Local partners have processes to engage with parents and communities' representatives, through spaces like an Advisory Council at local level. The recently created ChildFund Advisory Network provides the organisation with regular feedback on fundraising and stewardship issues. Supporters' satisfaction surveys are also regularly run to capture supporters opinions and views about work. The Panel appreciates the information on	*2*

	engagement with various stakeholders, and will welcome in the next report to address how children and communities are engaged in ChildFund's work. Is that engagement only achieved through implementing partners? If so, how is ensured the engagement entails a continuous and meaningful dialogue?	
E3	**_Main likes/dislikes from stakeholders and organisation's response_** The response outlines the main dislike by group of stakeholder: **Beneficiaries**' main dislike is around sponsors sending money directly to their sponsored child as this creates "jealousy and stress" among other families. ChildFund tries to alleviate this by exploring other types of contributions for the whole community. **Donors**' main dislike is about the website. The main like is about the ChildFund mission and the updates they receive. From the **general public** the main dislikes expressed through social media are about legitimacy, not helping in the U.S., being discriminatory and CEO salary. The typical responses to these concerns are shared. The thorough explanations on how the organisation reacts and responds to negative feedback is flagged as a **strength** in the report.	_3_
F. Our advocacy work addresses the root cause of problems	
F1	**_Evidence regarding the root causes of the problems you address_** All country offices undertake 3 steps to identify and gather evidence: (1) Develop a strategic plan and identify root causes of problems to be addressed, (2) study of the contextual analysis and problem statement, and (3) identify specific child-protection advocacy priorities through the CBCPM. The response also acknowledges issues on further connecting program development and planning advocacy, and on measuring advocacy impact.	_4_
F2	**_Stakeholders support your advocacy work and value changes achieved_**	_3_

	Partners, community members, and children and youth are involved in the design of country advocacy plans, the CBCPM being one of the major processes to inform advocacy work.

Some examples are given of direct participation of children and youth in advocacy work, where these stakeholders could speak with decision-makers and influential policy-makers. This is flagged as **strength**. | |

G. We are transparent, invite dialogue and protect stakeholders' safety

G1	***Availability of key policies and information on your website***

A link to a [dedicated website](#) where annual reports with information on budgets, staff and volunteers, is provided. On the website, a '*submit a question*' form and email address are also available. As in the open statement, links to Five charity reviewers' websites are provided.

it is stated that all global policies and procedures are published internally in the intranet. As transparency is a key component of dynamic accountability, the panel commends ChildFund International for making [key policies](#) publicly available (published alongside the accountability report in Accountable Now's website). The panel would like to know whether joining transparency initiatives such IATI has been considered? | **3** |
| G2 | ***Pay scale, gender pay gap and top salaries***

Salary scales are regularly updated based on benchmarks produced by a third party organisation. Gender pay gap and top-bottom salary ratios are not monitored currently, however it is stated that with the deployment of a new human resources information system this will be done on a regular basis. Senior positions salaries are published on the website along with the [990 report](#). The panel appreciates that this information is available online, however the tax document is hard to navigate through. Making this information available in more accessible formats would help stakeholders searching for this information. | **2** |
| G3 | ***Ensuring privacy rights and protecting personal data***

ChildFund has strong practices in place to protect **employees**' data, and uses several tools to prevent data breaches and to ensure personally | **4** |

	identifiable information (PII) is only accessible to staff and parties who need it. **Donors and supporters**' data is managed through the well known CRM platform, Salesforce, which it is stated to be "certified as compliant with some of the most rigorous, industry-accepted security, privacy, and reliability standards". Payment card information is subject to payment card industry (PCI) compliance and link to the certificate is shared. The panel commends the strong and rigorous process to ensure data protection and overall security policy, and flags this response as a **strength** in the report.	
G4	*Largest donors and their contributions* A table depicting the five largest donors and their contribution (information also available online [here](#)) is provided.	*3*

Cluster C: Organisational Effectiveness

H. Staff and volunteers are enabled to do their best

H1	*Recruitment and employment is fair and transparent* A policy is mentioned to ensure equal treatment of applicants and employees. ChildFund International is committed to "equal employment opportunity governs all aspects of employment". A report is annually submitted to the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), which ensures "that employers doing business with the federal government comply with the laws and regulations requiring nondiscrimination". No investigation/audit was suggested recently by the OFCCP, implying compliance by Childfund.	*3*
H2	*Staff development* Learning, Engagement and Performance (LEaP) are part of a global talent strategy. Staff development opportunities are provided based on annual performance and development goals. There are quarterly review sessions between managers and direct reports.	*2*

	It is recognized that there is no global staff development budget, but this is made up by staff development planned at divisions and country offices level. More information on how alignment between developmental opportunities offered and current needs is ensured, and examples illustrating the approach would be appreciated in the next report. Sightsavers' report (pp. 27) might provide some useful insights on how to approach and report on staff development.		
H3	***Safe working environment*** It is stated that regular risk assessments are conducted and each country office has a safety and security plan, under the leadership of a Director of Safety and Security. It is also mentioned the launch of a process to strengthen the organization's formal response to sexual exploitation and abuse, which is an important element of the Code of Business Conduct and Ethics.	*3*	
I. Resources are handled effectively for the public good		
I1	***Resources are acquired in line with your values, globally accepted standards and without compromising independence*** The publicly available corporate partnerships policy and a due diligence process determine whether donations from corporate or corporate foundations are accepted. For **face to face fundraising**, ChildFund places a contractual obligation with supplier partners to ensure people are treated with dignity and respect, and that the Association of Fundraising Professionals standards are adopted. For **foundations and institutional donors** the criteria is based on consistency with program priorities and alignment with values. The Purchasing Policy and Procedure are shared.	*3*	
I2	***Monitoring of progress and re-allocation of resources*** The balanced scorecard mentioned in the opening statement is further described here. The objectives for FY2021 are shared and clustered in 4	*3*	

		focus areas: social impact, financial, internal process, and learning and growth.	
		The annual targets along with quarterly milestones are approved by the board, which subsequently receives reports on progress on quarterly basis.	**3**
I3		*Minimising risk of corruption, bribery and misuse of funds*	**3**
		The previously shared Code of Business Conduct and Ethics policy, is listed among other policies and procedures aiming to minimise the risk of corruption, bribery or misuse of funds. Financial controls to detect or prevent fraud are in place.	
		Training and other initiatives are held every two or three years to ensure staff are aware and apply the existing systems.	
		What is done in case controls fail is explained by providing case scenarios and briefly describing the curse of action for each of them. One incident involving an expense not recorded in the proper time is explained in the report.	
J. Governance processes maximise accountability			
J1		*Governance structure and recruitment of trustees/board members*	**2**
		The response is very brief and it states that a trusteeship committee ensures "a strong pipeline of member candidates that support the organization's commitment to diversity". The panel would appreciate more information on the board and committees. How many individuals are on the board? And in the committees ? Are there any policies and procedures in respect to diversity and inclusion ?	
J2		*Board oversight of adherence to policies, resource allocation, potential risks, and complaints processes*	**3**
		The responsibilities of the audit committee -part of the board- are listed. The committee provides oversight to the concerns and complaints processes in diverse areas, from auditing matters, to harassment and safety in the workplace. No details however were provided as to how	

		often the committee meets, or how many concerns or complaints had been received. It is mentioned the whistleblower policies and procedures are reviewed by the director of global assurance, who also presents statistics about complaints received during the fiscal year at the audit committee meetings.	
J3	*Complaints handling mechanisms and overview of complaints (external)* At the headquarters, all country offices, and ChildFund's local partners' locations, the different ways to report complaints (see C4 for more info)are displayed. 18 external complaints were received in 2020, all of which were investigated. The panel appreciates the openness and transparency on numbers of complaints. In the next report, ChildFund could helpfully elaborate on what 'properly handled and resolved' entails, and also provide more information on how non-safeguarding complaints and general feedback is treated, including how to ensure the most vulnerable and destitute stakeholders are aware and able to use the existing mechanisms.		3
J4	*Complaints handling mechanisms and overview of complaints (internal)* As for external complaints, at all locations is displayed how a complaint can be lodged, by employees. 19 complaints were received in 2020. All of them were investigated. As in J3, the panel will welcome more information in the next report, specifically on how is ensured the mechanisms to provide feedback and complaints is known to employees		3
J5	*Protecting confidentiality and anonymity of those involved in complaints* It is stated that confidentiality and anonymity should be protected by those receiving the report. The submitter's identity should be disclosed only "for administrative, disciplinary, or judicial action or to ensure due process in the investigation of the allegations made".		2
K. Leadership is dedicated to fulfilling the 12 Commitments			
K1	*The governing body and management are held accountable for fulfilling strategic promises*		3

	Board members and vice presidents (part of the management team with CEO) form committees to oversee programs, fundraising, investment, trusteeship, and audit. The committees provide updates to the larger board, which also approves the strategy and reviews progress every quarter.	
K2	**Inclusion of staff in discussing progress toward organisational accountability** It is mentioned that the global annual planning and budgeting process enables engagement of staff and cross-functional teams assess and report progress. It is currently unclear to the panel however how staff are actually involved.	**2**
K3	**Scope of this accountability report and influence over national entities** The scope of the report is ChildFund International, USA, and its subsidiaries, these are all country offices directly managed by ChildFund International, USA. All country offices are subjected to and abide by global policies and regulations. In the introduction, it is said that the report covers all the countries where ChildFund has a legal presence, and the countries are listed.	**3**