



**Accountable
Now**

GLOBAL STANDARDS LOCAL TRUST



Sightsavers Independent Review Panel Feedback

Accountability Report 2020
Review Round October 2021

Accountable Now · www.accountablenow.org ·

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Sightsavers Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

Review Round October 2021

15th October 2021

Dear Caroline Harper,,

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.

Sightsavers tenth report is an interim one that addresses the improvement analysis and also provides a comprehensive update on material changes and accountability related matters.

The Panel commends Sightsavers for a high quality report which demonstrates a strong commitment to dynamic accountability, and a focus on continuous improvement and vigilance. This is even more commendable given the Covid-19 context and the funding challenges during the reporting period.

The Panel has found especially remarkable the proactive approach to equity, diversity and inclusion, and the Speak up tool.

We look forward to 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





Sightsavers's Accountability Report 2020

Review Round October 2021

Opening Statement from the Head of Organisation

The opening statement by Caroline Harper, Sightsavers' CEO, highlights the organisation's efforts to overcome the new challenges for accountability posed by the pandemic, including more fluid and frequent reporting, and new risk mitigation processes.

Accountability to staff is also highlighted, and two key initiatives enabling more transparency and feedback internally are listed.

The challenges posed by the termination of the biggest contract with the UK government, and by the uncertainty around other contracts with the FCDO are also mentioned.

The statement also highlights that despite the challenges, the staff survey showed positive results and the good results on voluntary income. The Panel notes very positively the proactive approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. Even though the Employee Survey did not reveal problems in this area, the creation of a Racial Diversity Working Group demonstrates a strong focus on accountability.

Transparency and honesty in engaging stakeholders are emphasized throughout the opening statement as crucial elements to navigate the crisis.

Material changes

The report shares the new appointments at governance and management levels, and the changes in organisational structure as well.

The report also explains how the thematic strategies have been developed and updated. The strategic principles that underpin the programme and thematic strategies are shared, as well as the plans to roll out the strategies.

An overview on how Sightsavers has adapted its ways of working to the Covid-19 context is provided.



Cluster A: Impact Achieved

C. We lead by example

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| C3 | <p><i>Inclusivity, human rights, women's rights and gender equality</i></p> <p>The report addresses the Panel suggestions and shares several developments in justice and equality, and in women's rights and gender equality.</p> <p>It is explained how Sightsavers has adapted or postponed its advocacy work due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. One of the focuses was to ensure that governments' responses to Covid-19 were inclusive and participatory. It is explained that advocacy work is integrated within programmes. The report provides numerous examples of country offices successes in health, gender, education and social inclusion.</p> <p>It is emphasised that greater attention to other aspects of inclusion is now reflected in the new Social Inclusion strategy, which focuses on participation in society by people with disabilities in all their diversity. The Panel commends the commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion by acknowledging the relevance of intersectionality.</p> <p>A more deliberate focus on how Sightsavers will achieve equity in their programmes is outlined in the new strategies with explicit commitments to be gender responsive and inclusive.</p> <p>The results of the 'synthesis review to promote gender equality' are briefly explained and some follow up actions mentioned, which include making the Synthesis a valuable future reference for future programming.</p> | 4 |
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J. Governance processes maximise accountability

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| J4 | <p><i>Complaints handling mechanisms and overview of complaints (internal)</i></p> | 4 |
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| | <p>The Global Grievance Policy continues to be the formal mechanism by which staff can raise complaints, and it outlines how staff can use the mechanism. Staff is made aware of this and other relevant policies at their induction, and also via weekly video updates by the CEO where wellbeing and a culture of openness is promoted in the context of the pandemic.</p> <p>The report recognises the low number of formal grievances (two in 12 months) and describes the 'Speak Up' system, which aims to capture feedback from staff beyond the formal system currently in place. Speak Up is a web and phone-based platform open to anyone to provide feedback and raise concerns.</p> <p>The biennial 2020 Employee Survey process and uptake are explained, and the key results summarised. It showed very positive feedback from staff and some areas for improvement. The feedback was discussed by senior management teams, who propose ideas to follow up on the feedback. An example of such an initiative is shared.</p> <p>The panel commends Sightsavers for developing the Speak Up platform as a genuine effort to capture feedback from stakeholders and looks forward to learning in future reports about its use and the feedback received through it, as it could be a good practice to be shared through Accountable Now's Good Practices library.</p> | |
| <p>K. Leadership is dedicated to fulfilling the 12 Commitments</p> | | |
| <p>K1</p> | <p><i>The governing body and management are held accountable for fulfilling strategic promises</i></p> <p>The organisational SIM card, which includes Council KPIs that help monitor the performance and accountability of Trustees and senior management, has been reviewed. The new areas of focus of the KPIs are listed.</p> <p>The Global Board's performance and governance mechanism was externally evaluated against the UK Charity Governance Code and showed full compliance.</p> | <p>3</p> |