



# **ChildFund International Independent Review Panel Feedback**

**Interim Accountability Report 2022  
Review Round March 2023**



# ChildFund International

## Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

Review Round March 2023

21st April 2023

Dear Isam Ghanim,

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 assessment below.

Overall, ChildFund International's interim report addresses the areas of improvement raised by the Panel in the previous feedback letter. The report indicates that the organisation is progressively improving on its accountability practices. The Panel looks forward to learning about how these newly developed strands of accountability work will synergise and support one another to form a congruous and strong accountability system.

The Panel is furthermore pleased to learn that the new organisational Strategy of ChildFund International (Global Strategy 2030) reflects the accountability commitments of the organisation, and looks forward to learning more about this in the coming years.

Lastly, the Panel encourages ChildFund International to share more examples of practices to its reports whenever possible as they will support the Panel to provide more relevant feedback and to have a better understanding of how accountability approaches have been co-created by and diffused to the different stakeholders.

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 via the Accountable Now Secretariat.

Yours sincerely,

Accountable Now's Independent Review Panel





# ChildFund International Interim Accountability Report 2022

Review Round March 2023

## Opening Statement from the Head of Organisation

The opening statement from President and CEO Isam Ghanim outlines the organisation's commitment to accountability and transparency, which includes a new accountability monitoring framework. The statement serves as a great summary of the report, and it clearly reflects the commitment of the organisation to foster transparency and accountability. A useful outline is given on the key areas of progress including in the areas of environment, fair-pay, succession, diversity, equity and inclusion.

The statement further notes the areas of focus for this report, which includes and goes beyond the areas highlighted by the Independent Review Panel in the previous year. They are: commitment to environmental sustainability and support for communities in mitigating impacts of climate change, fair pay and remuneration, staff development, making children's worlds safer, humanitarian accountability, and expanding on diversity, equity and inclusion practices

Additionally, the Panel understands that the organisation is taking its stride in delivering its 2030 Global Strategy and looks forward to learning more about the results, especially as ChildFund International advances on local ownership.

## Cluster A: What We Want to Achieve

### A. The Impact We Achieve

A3	<p><b><i>What progress has been achieved and difficulties encountered against these indicators over the reporting period?</i></b></p> <p>As the Panel has previously asked to see the (then upcoming) impact report for 2020, a link has been included. The <a href="#">Impact Report</a> provides progress against the five outcome areas as outlined in their strategy Destination 2020. It is very positive to see that stakeholders such as communities, children, families, and partners' feedback have informed the evidence base for the report. To remain connected</p>	3
----	---	---



	<p>and informed by data, ChildFund International is expanding its global platform of Monitoring and Evaluation.</p> <p>ChildFund International notes that it is currently embarking on a new strategic period (Growing Connections), with the goal that “by 2030, local partners and ChildFund will reach 100 million vulnerable children and family members annually to help children grow up healthy, educated, skilled and safe”.</p> <p>The response shares the difficulties encountered within the transition period so far and how ChildFund International has mitigated some of the challenges. The Panel is glad to see that the global strategy was implemented in phases that allowed for reflection, and aligned with country offices and partners’ strategic plan.</p>	
<b>B. Positive Results Are Sustained</b>		
B2	<p><b><i>What lessons have been learned in this period? How have the lessons been transparently shared among internal and external stakeholders? How do you plan to use these lessons to improve your work in the future?</i></b></p> <p>A set of successes and lessons learned from their impact report is shared within the response. It includes impressive key successes such as: Disaster risk reduction (DRR) programs raised awareness with communities and children in Kenya and Indonesia, COVID-19 response actions, and violence prevention for youth.</p> <p>Beyond these, the Impact Report further presents some lessons learned within each Programme Evidence Snapshots as well as key takeaways, which includes how the organisation has learned from and will change or continue given the results of their programmes (see an example on pg. 41-43 of the <a href="#">Impact Report</a>). The Panel commends ChildFund International for the thorough reflections and transparency in showcasing information and data within the impact report.</p> <p>The impact report shows commendable achievements in the countries of focus in many areas such as stopping child marriage, violence against girls/children, and making adolescent girls aware of their sexual and reproductive rights. The Panel would be curious to know if such action supported girls to further assert their rights and fostered equality and empowerment.</p> <p>In terms of this section, the Panel would like to understand how the learnings have been shared and discussed internally and externally (e.g with partners, communities, staff) and to see how those early successes in the education programmes (for reading fluency and maths for younger children and skills training</p>	3



	for youth) will be built upon to improve the existing scores, especially in the regions with lower success rates or higher dropout rates.	
<b>C. We Lead By Example</b>		
C3	<p><b><i>How does your organisation practice being inclusive and protecting human rights, including promoting women's rights and gender equality, in accordance with commitments 1-2?</i></b></p> <p>The response provides an update on the <a href="#">previous report</a> (pg. 14), noting that the position of Director of Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) is now filled. The new Director is establishing a DEI Council and making changes in organisational culture. The Panel welcomes this addition.</p> <p>The report further states that country offices have started to identify specific issues in relation to DEI, relevant to their context and culture. This an important step as diversity, equity and inclusion all look different in different contexts. In the next report, the Panel would like to see further evidence and examples of how this work is being implemented and the results achieved (if results are already being collected) within global and country offices. It would also be great to see what the expected timelines for addressing these issues are, how they will be prioritised within the given work plans and budgets and what fora will be created to share DEI related updates (and gather feedback) with the staff beyond the DEI council.</p> <p>A potentially interesting reference comes from CARE International (see their <a href="#">presentation</a> at an Accountable Now session). Their approach considers "power-down" groups in different contexts.</p>	2
C5	<p><b><i>How do you demonstrate responsible stewardship for the environment?</i></b></p> <p>The response shares a range of initiatives being taken up at ChildFund International to address responsible environmental stewardship, including: working with Alliance partners on climate solutions, signing up to the <a href="#">InterAction NGO Climate Compact</a> and creating a green team dubbed as VERDE ("Validating [ChildFund's] Environmental Roadmap for Development Engagement").</p> <p>The Panel welcomes the creation of VERDE, and looks forwards to further updates on the initiatives being taken up by the team, including metrics that the organisation will be tracking in terms of energy and resource usage/emission. The Panel is especially interested in how the team will advance on Education and Advocacy, as it has the potential to become a good practice (see <a href="#">Library</a>) if</p>	2



further results and evidence of implementation can be later shared. Additionally, it would be helpful to see how partner organisations are to be included in the awareness raising and capacity development aspects of VERDE implementation.

As the report further mentions the development of a “green standard”, a potential recommendation (and one that ChildFund International may have already planned on) is to ensure stakeholders (especially country offices) are consulted and engaged to establish that such standard is applicable and appropriate to different contexts.

An additional resource recommendation can be found within [this guide](#) produced by Accountable Now and its member the [Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development](#).

## Cluster B: Stakeholder Involvement

### E. We listen to, involve and empower stakeholders

E1 ***What avenues do you provide your stakeholders to provide feedback to you? What evidence demonstrates that key stakeholder groups acknowledge your organisation is good at listening and acting upon what you heard?*** 3

The response follows up on some of the areas raised by the Panel in the last feedback, showcasing ChildFund International's efforts to pilot a humanitarian accountability feedback process with certain country offices (Guatemala, Kenya and Uganda). Details on key learnings from these feedbacks are also given.

The Panel very much welcomes the roll out of these pilots, and hopes that they will continue beyond the pilot stage and be replicated in other countries and contexts. Particularly commendable are reflections on limitations of the current process and how the organisation is aiming to improve.

The Panel further sees that considerations are being paid to accessibility, cultural preferences, and increasing the quality of participation. See also for some potentially useful questions for further reflections as the pilots are rolled out: How do we communicate when we are unable to follow through on a particular feedback (e.g when requests are out of scope)? Do we have referral mechanisms in place? How can we support and encourage more anonymous feedback? How can we work with our local partners/country offices to continue building trust in our feedback and complaints mechanisms? How do we continue to ensure that all types of community members (e.g women, children, the elderly) understand and have access to our systems? How do we train our partners and their staff to recognise any community facing engagement as a feedback session? How can



	<p>budgets and budget holding responsibilities be drawn up to allow for programmatic adjustments based on community feedback?</p> <p>A potentially useful point of reference comes from Plan International's <a href="#">Child Friendly Feedback Mechanism</a>.</p> <p>In the next report, the Panel would like to see a small update on these ends, and recommend to focus on how internal stakeholders (more on country offices, staff, volunteers) are being engaged.</p>	
E2	<p><b>What evidence confirms a high level of stakeholder engagement in your activities and decisions from beginning to end?</b></p> <p>The response provides a follow up to the Panel's request in the last feedback letter, highlighting how feedback from Local Partners' Advisory Processes and the ChildFund Advisory Network have been followed up and implemented. It is encouraging to see that ChildFund recognises the objectivity of a potential third party evaluation/feedback monitoring. Is any such activity anticipated to be piloted or implemented in the foreseeable future?</p> <p>An example shows how the feedback collected by ChildFund International's partners inform the development of policies, operating plans and adjustments in resources. The CAN further provided insights and enabled the organisation to choose appropriate channels and technologies for communications.</p> <p>The Panel further encourages ChildFund International to reflect on engagement by other stakeholders in its next report. A practice from Restless Development (<a href="#">2020 Report</a>, pg 15-16) on how they ensure engagement from all stakeholders within different aspects of organisational practices may be an interesting reference.</p>	3
<p><b>G. We are transparent, invite dialogue and protect stakeholders' safety</b></p>		
G2	<p><b>What policies do you have in place to ensure a fair pay scale? Do you measure the gender pay gap in your organisation, and if so what is it? What are the salaries of the five most senior positions in the organisation, and what is the ratio between the top and bottom salaries? If this information cannot be provided or is confidential, please explain why.</b></p> <p>The response outlines the processes that are in place to monitor and address pay gaps. The Panel notes positively the continuous efforts to track and review pay scales, and the considerations being paid to different factors beyond gender, such as age. Efforts to be transparent with staff regarding how pay structures are created and updated and progression models are also well noted.</p>	2



	<p>Top executive remuneration are available in publicly disclosed documents. To make this practice exemplary, the Panel recommends to share the ratios of top-bottom salaries to enable an understanding of discrepancy, if this is possible.</p> <p>It would also be helpful to see if any remuneration/compensation/incentives or benefits are provided to people who are not staff, like volunteers for example. Additionally, is there a policy about local consultancy/contractor rates, are there any fairness considerations in the picture?</p>	
--	---	--

## Cluster C: What We Do Internally

### H. Staff and volunteers are enabled to do their best

H1	<p><b><i>Provide evidence that recruitment and employment is fair and transparent.</i></b></p> <p>The response in this section does not provide a lot of updates beyond what was stated in the last report. While efforts to promote diversity and some reflections around some gaps in remuneration have been shared in responses C3 and G2 respectively, the Panel still encourages the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Where possible, to share available policies such as the aforementioned staff remuneration structure, progression models, employee handbook, total rewards-and-recognition philosophy and practice, and hiring processes. It is further recommended to share these types of structures with prospective employees (if not being done already) for further transparency in the hiring process.</li> <li>● If possible, to share a breakdown of staff's contract type, location, seniority, position. An example of how this has been done, in manners that still protects data privacy, can be seen in Sightsavers' <a href="#">2017 report</a> (pg. 22-23).</li> <li>● To share any challenges and any limitations that ChildFund International has encountered in ensuring fair and transparent recruitment.</li> </ul> <p>Unfortunately, without further information, the Panel cannot make more concrete comments beyond the above recommendations.</p>	<b>2</b>
H2	<p><b><i>What are you doing to invest in staff development? What indicators demonstrate your progress? What are your plans to improve?</i></b></p> <p>An overview of the range of performance management processes are provided. The Panel can see that there are multiple formal processes and notes that these are important channels as they provide the opportunity to identify training needs. On this</p>	<b>2</b>





end, the Panel would like to enquire what type of training is formally mandatory (if any), to what type of staff (e.g are safeguarding training mandatory for all child-facing staff?), and at what stage(s) in their careers. Additionally, are there budgets available for staff development?

It is also encouraging to see that an organisation wide survey has been conducted with staff and its learnings have been disseminated internally. We hope that this practice continues in the future, and to learn more about the impact of the action plans created.

Furthermore, the organisation has implemented formal succession plans to further develop their (staff) leadership potentials. Besides, ChildFund International collaborates with the staff to each set one goal to achieve for the year. It would be great to understand how initiatives such as the new DEI working group (detailed in C3) are synergised with staff development and recruitment.