



ChildFund Korea

Independent Review Panel Feedback

Accountability Report 2022-2023

Review Round December 2023/January 2024



ChildFund Korea

Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

Review Round December 2023/January 2024

Thursday 24th January 2024

Dear Hwang Young-Key,

Thank you for submitting your accountability core report using the new framework. 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 actions, and came to the assessment below.

This report is ChildFund Korea's second accountability report, and its first using the new accountability reporting framework. The Panel acknowledges that this is a learning exercise, allowing the membership to review, explore, and identify areas for improvement. In this sense, the Panel was pleased to receive ChildFund Korea's report which clearly demonstrated significant staff time and attention. There were several areas where the Panel felt like the information provided did not holistically respond to the reporting questions, but we assume that language barriers played a significant factor, including the need to translate documents to-from English and Korean.

From the practices described in the report, we observe that ChildFund Korea has strong, embedded processes for listening to and acting on children's feedback. Moreover, we note that the organisation has in place a commitment to enabling staff feedback and insight, and the Panel was pleased to learn about ChildFund Korea's interesting Green Bell Initiative. The practice has been identified as a **'good practice'**, an exemplary practice for internal accountability in the sector.

Overall, while the information was comprehensive, the Panel felt many of the responses merely described how key processes or accountability mechanisms work on paper, but provided little evidence or examples of what type of information is being collected, how decisions and resolutions are taken, and what wider lessons ChildFund Korea is learning from the implementation of its accountability practices. However, given that this is ChildFund Korea's second report, recent leadership transition, and clear commitment to accountability, we encourage ChildFund Korea to work closely with the Accountable Now team to receive in depth support on the new framework, and develop an Action Plan that focuses more on actions, reflections, challenges, and changes.

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



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Opening Statement from the Head of Organisation

The opening statement from ChildFund Korea President and CEO Hwang Young-Key shares about the various projects that the organisation undertook in the past year, including the "I-Talent" project, the "COVID-19 Recovery Support Project", Children Support Project, the "Let's Go Home" campaign, and the META NPO partnership. Notably, the META NPO campaign responded to implementing partners' feedback and simplified reporting processes and provided capacity training as a result.

Another accomplishment is the Prime Minister's Commendation at the 2022 Korea Housing Welfare Competition. Additionally, the organisation empowered children to voice their concerns towards prospective political leaders to prioritise child-related issues in their policies.

Internally, the Opening Statement also shared about ChildFund Korea's efforts to strengthen accountability to staff, noting the Green Bell initiatives which provide staff with a channel to anonymously submit feedback and the Green Bridge which is a learning and innovation initiative for junior employees. He furthermore noted that ChildFund Korea will be strengthening its feedback and complaints system, especially for children and partner organisations.

Core Responses (See [Guidelines and Grading](#))

1 What have been your most significant achievements and impacts this year and how has this been validated with your stakeholders?

The response shares about the most significant achievements and impacts that ChildFund Korea accomplished through its domestic and international activities. For both strands of work, a list of projects, alongside their description and primary impact are also included. While achievements are well described with quantitative reporting, some impact claims would benefit from supporting evidence; for example, 'various advocacy efforts are having an impact across the country'.

Domestically, ChildFund Korea notes that performance indicators and impact measurement processes are results of collaborations alongside partner organisations and children who are directly participating in the projects. Notable among the highlighted projects is "A Vote from the Future", which formulated a policy pledge proposal by collecting opinions from over 4,000 children across South Korea, showcasing how the organisation is planning its actions alongside the target stakeholder group.



Internationally, ChildFund Korea is implementing projects across multiple countries and examples provided showcases the organisation's work in Nepal, Laos, Indonesia and Bangladesh. The response notes that projects are carried out with participation of children and local communities to bring about change, with a programme guide and capacity building-training being provided to local staff.

While the high-level of engagement (seen through participation numbers and school attendance numbers) indicate that there is positive reception and validation of the organisation's work, it may be useful in future reports to dive into more details on how the organisation directly validate its impact claims alongside programme participants and other impacted stakeholders (e.g through end of programme survey, most significant change evaluation approach, or others).

Additionally, given that 10% of its budget is dedicated towards overseas activities, the organisation could provide specific details on different activities carried out to enhance clarity and understanding.

Moreover, while it is mentioned within the report in passing, it would also be good to learn more about how ChildFund Korea closes the feedback loop and discuss results with its programme participants.

PS The response **partially met** the guideline and **significant improvements** are still needed.

2 **If applicable - How have your organisation's accountability processes been impacted by significant internal or external changes over the reporting period?**

The response focuses on how significant external changes have affected the organisation's advocacy direction. The example provided showcases how ChildFund Korea reacted to increased demands on young carers by carrying out specific advocacy actions towards the government.

Within the example, ChildFund Korea shares about how it formulates policy stance, as well as how it includes the views of children and young people within the process. From this example, it seems that Childfund Korea has developed extensive systems for gathering feedback from children.

For future reports, responses to this question should expand further to include a wider scope and go beyond the programmatic level, such as focusing on significant changes that affect the organisation's accountability processes as a whole. For example, this may include other types of significant changes that affect the organisation's ways of working, or the introduction of a new policy/strategy etc. Including such detailed information would enhance the completeness and relevance of the information provided.

PS The response **partially met** the guideline and **significant improvements** are still needed.



3 How has your organisation learned from reported incidents, complaints and grievances received in the past year? (These may include safeguarding, fraud, corruption, whistleblowing, integrity violations, etc.)

The response explains a major incident whereby ChildFund Korea was accused of discrimination, and how the organisation responded. A key takeaway from the incident resulted in the establishment of an internal Crisis Management Committee to deal with future events.

Additionally, the response shares about the complaints received from its supporters and how it has dealt with these. As supporters are important stakeholders, the process and the system in place seem adequate for dealing with their complaints.

In its [previous report](#), it is noted that ChildFund Korea has a system for tracking complaints received about its staff, volunteers and about its work as a whole. While a few examples such as those above are cited, the overall picture of the nature of complaints and grievances is not detailed, nor how many of them are resolved. Whether any formal grievance procedures were activated is not clear. Therefore, in the next report, it would be good to share more about what the organisation learned and changed as a result of these types of complaints.

Additionally, it would also be useful to share about the systems that the organisation has in place to receive complaints from programme participants, and how these mechanisms are being made accessible to them.

PS The response **partially met** the guideline and **significant improvements** are still needed.

4 Internally, how has your organisation practised a more dynamic approach to accountability?

The report notes three initiatives that ChildFund Korea has created to improve its listening abilities and responsiveness to its staff: the Green Bell, the Cyber Audit Office and Green Bridge.

The Cyber Audit Office is a whistleblowing channel that provides staff members with avenues to share work-related grievances.

The Green Bell is a very interesting initiative which allows staff to express opinions on the organisation's policies, guidelines and project content. These are then circulated for other staff members to validate, and the management team responds once an item reaches 100 signatures. The initiative so far has yielded impactful changes to ChildFund Korea's internal operating guidelines, such as an alternative holiday for its founding anniversary and the introduction of optional staggered working hours. This is considered by the Panel to be **a good practice**, providing a clear channel for staff to be heard.

The Green Bridge initiative is a group for junior employees to contribute to organisational and professional growth. Through these channels, they have been able to propose substantive changes to the organisation's work. From the report, it seems that at times, the proposals by the employees do not quite match the outcome provided (although this may be a translation issue), therefore ChildFund Korea can helpfully clarify if there has



been instances where the organisation received inputs that it could not action due to operational constraints on through the Green Bridge initiative, and how does it communicate such news back to employees.

The channels above show that the organisation is serious about its work to centre and listen to staff's voices. In the next core report, ChildFund Korea can helpfully focus on its accountability processes to volunteers, as well as sharing how the organisation communicates in instances when feedback cannot be taken up.

PM The response **partially met** the guideline, with **minor improvements** needed.

5 **How has your organisation worked towards being dynamically accountable to your external stakeholders (i.e partners, communities, programme participants, etc)?**

The response outlines how ChildFund Korea centres children's rights throughout different aspects of its work. The response also links this approach to how the organisation works with its local partners. This section furthermore includes a very helpful table of actions recommended in 2022 and action being taken in 2023. The process of how the organisation captures feedback from children, families and communities who participate in its programme is well described in the report.

One of the described processes details the types of training, guidance and support that ChildFund Korea provides to its partners. Naturally, a lot of support centres around children's rights and quality assurance, which is very commendable. It would be helpful to have brief summary statistics on training courses and numbers of internal/external participants, information ChildFund is likely already collecting through its training feedback system.

It is also very good to hear that ChildFund Korea is elevating best practices from its partner's organisation and putting together a case study to share those practices further. From the answer to Q3, it also seems that ChildFund Korea has a robust system in place to listen to the voices of its sponsors/supporters.

However, the next report should include how the organisation is balancing a high-standard of work, given the nature of working with children, with space for local partners to also input with their own expertise and knowledge. What has been some of the feedback that ChildFund Korea received from its partners? How did the organisation respond?

Lastly, it would also be useful to share (in the next round), more information about how ChildFund Korea works with overseas programmes, and alongside ChildFund Alliance partners.

PM The response **partially met** the guideline, with **minor improvements** needed.