Accountable Now
GLOBAL STANDARDS LOCAL TRUST

Restless Development
Independent Review Panel Feedback

Accountability Report 2022

Review Round October/November 2023

Restless Development
Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

14th November 2023

Dear Kate Muhwezi,

Thank you for submitting your accountability report and action plan. 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 Restless Development's seventh accountability report; it is also the first member report that uses the new 2023 reporting framework. The IRP acknowledges that this is a learning exercise allowing everyone to identify areas for improvement, blind spots, and potential gaps in the reporting framework.

The report covers Restless Development's 9 countries where the organisation is registered, and extends to its operations in additional countries where they closely collaborate with youth organisations. Overall, the report signals a new period in the organisation's work, detailing the roll out of a new global strategy and a power-shifting checklist that deepens the organisation's commitment to equity and justice. The Action Plan furthermore outlines the organisation's plans and commitments towards operationalising the new strategy.

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

Restless Development
Accountability Report 2022
Review Round Month October/November 2023

Opening Statement from the Head of Organisation

The opening statement from co-CEO Kate Muhwezi shares about the launch of a new global strategy in March 2022, which centres Youth Power. She notes that the new strategy is propelling Restless Development towards a power-shifting focused agency model, ushering in a more horizontal global structure alongside bringing in more young leaders from the majority world.

The statement furthermore reiterates the organisation's commitment to strengthening youth civil society and dynamic accountability. Such commitment is tangibly demonstrated by a new Resource Mobilisation Strategy (accompanying the aforementioned new global strategy), which includes "an explicit focus on prioritising partnerships and resources that shift power to young leaders in the Majority World".

She concludes the statement by closing the loop on their previous accountability report (further details about this is also available at the end of this report), which include successfully closing the feedback loop and sharing results from their last Annual Leaders Survey, and procuring a new online global HR system.

IRP Feedback on 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?**	FM

The report lists key achievements of the last year using metrics such as number of active programmes and allied activities (68), young leaders trained and supported (3,731), number of changemakers who went on to lead further change in their communities (107,452) and resulting in 531,346 young people in communities being engaged and supported through different approaches across multiple strategic goals.

Key positive achievements from different strands of work, including Voice and Democracy, Livelihoods, and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, were also included. Notable is the inclusion of participants' perceptions of the impact of programmes on their lives.

Similarly, results from the Development Alternative programme were also shared. Quantitative results showed that the organisation and its partners collaborated closely with communities to identify solutions through meetings.

The report shares that the organisation typically relies on listening and feedback to gather evaluative data and validate their findings. Additionally, it would be great to

	see if and how the evaluation findings have been shared back with partners/communities, and to share if new actions or future proposals have been taken or planned based on the evaluations' findings. Furthermore, in future reports, it would be good to share examples or processes of how the organisation identifies marginalised groups and ensures their participation.	
2	**If applicable** - **How have your organisation's accountability processes been impacted by significant internal or external changes over the reporting period?** As mentioned above, the report highlights that significant changes include a new global strategy and correlated changes in operations and resource mobilisation. The strategy was formulated through a global consultation process, with a Strategy Reference group composed of seven young leaders from Restless Development's network. The report states that "this group was over 50% female, and 85% from the Majority World, representing a diversity of backgrounds." Research into youth-led change, carried out alongside youth civil society organisations and movements, also informed the process. The report also reflected on the impact of the new strategy to accountability practices and processes. To this point, Restless Development has put together the Power Shifting checklist, which articulates the organisation's accountability commitments and mechanism towards fair compensation, youth leadership, safeguarding, among others. Alongside this, the organisation has also revised its Resource Mobilisation strategy, which now includes an objective and percentage target to 'prioritise partnerships and resources that shift power to young leaders in the global south'. The report and potentially the checklist would benefit from a clear definition of what Restless Development means as "feminist, inclusive and anti-racist way of working"; this would be useful to support a wide understanding of how the organisation is taking those principles forward. Additionally, as the checklist is being operationalised, it would be good to share in future reports (or in the respective Action Report, correlating to actions 2 below), about whether guidances will be provided to users, what kind of training will be developed accordingly, and its overall scope (programmatic, internal, applicability to partners, etc). The Panel welcomes the effort made to ensure that Restless Development's key stakeholder groups (young people and youth civil society) are deeply involved in, and are leaders of this process. The Panel also commends the organisation's approach to Resource Mobilisation, which includes commitments to co-fund the programme design phase, a brilliant example of walking the talk about shifting the power. Once the organisation has collected data on the new strategy and checklist, it would be interesting to also learn about stakeholders' feedback on these new processes in terms of impact for them and how the organisation will continuously improve.	*PM*
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.)** A summary of the types and numbers of incidents escalated to the Board is provided. Information regarding incidents escalated to the Board is publically available on the organisation's website. The report also states that in the last financial year, a total of seven incidents were reported to the Board (two safety and	*PM*

security related incidents, and five safeguarding related incidents). While not mentioned in the report, the Panel can see that Restless Development has a [Global Safeguarding Policy](#) in place, with clear guidelines on safe programme design, requirements for a safeguarding focal point for in-country projects and on working with partners.

The response also shared that after investigations into incidents, reports are produced to summarise, share reflections, and identify preventative actions. These reports are shared with staff members who were involved in particular investigations and with the global Safeguarding lead.

Key actions/commitments resulting from the incidents, expanding on how the organisation aims to improve and adapt according to incidents reported are provided. The report also openly reflected that there is no structured process in place to capture complaints specifically related to the handling of incidents. However, complaints received to this end are noted to be responded to still through their standard approach.

Lastly, the IRP would recommend that Restless Development provides information on how stakeholders will be made aware of the duty of care, especially those who are the most marginalised from traditional communication channels.

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

For this question, the report focuses on staff and volunteers. It highlights how the introduction of the new global strategy has led to the development of a new power-shifting focused agency model, which resulted in commitments to a more collective and global governance structure and to bring in more young voices and representation from the Majority World. These commitments came about as a result of consultation of wider staff bodies, staff representative groups and leadership teams.

One of these changes include the introduction of a global support and coordination team, made up of people from all Restless locations. This team replaces the mostly UK based, "International Team". The new team is going to work alongside and in support of the Hubs rather than to have oversight over them. The Panel welcomes this decentralised approach to core functions. As one of the Pod's areas of work will focus on quality assurance, in the next report, it would be good to reflect what quality assurance looks like from a more horizontal and advisory approach.

Through the [Annual Young Leader Survey](#), Restless Development also drew recommendations and suggestions from its volunteers and volunteering alumni. These include fair compensation for young people's time, practical ways to support young people to become leaders, prioritising safety of young leaders during engagement with the agency, and the need to provide linkages to employment opportunities post-volunteering. It is encouraging to see a sustained level of engagement through surveys and formal channels, however the Panel also suggests that informal channels are continuously maintained for ad hoc feedback that doesn't necessarily fit into the survey questions.

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

For this question, the report focuses on youth civil society, young people, and communities as external stakeholders.

In terms of youth civil society, the organisation shares the example of the Youth Collective. This a platform where youth-focused/led CSOs can connect amongst each other. Feedback from the latest survey of members of the Youth Collective resulted in deepened access to networking, training and funding opportunities through sharing of global and regional newsletters in English, Spanish and Arabic. Another channel for feedback was the research conducted towards the State of Youth Civil Society Report; this led to Restless Development operationalising youth funds for education in Sierra Leone and Climate in India.

Additionally, the report notes that youth-led research has enabled it to capture insights on what matters the most to young people and use these insights to shape programming.

Furthermore, efforts to engage and enable communities to lead programming are also highlighted. These include an example from the WeLead programme where young women and adolescent girls (who live with HIV; face vulnerability and discrimination; live with a disability; and/or are affected by displacement) are actively playing a leading role in strengthening their own sexual and reproductive health rights. Another example showcases how rights holders used trainings received to collect evidence on violations related to sexual and reproductive health.

While these examples are very impressive and show that there is close collaboration between Restless and its partners, it would also be good to share more clearly how the organisation plans to improve and adapt to the feedback received, even those that affirm the organisation's approach. Furthermore, the Panel notes that for the next report, it would also be good to share how the organisation creates more informal spaces and channels where external stakeholders can provide their feedback beyond the more institutionalised channels shared here. These channels may involve open-door policy, opportunities to interface between surveys, among others.

IRP Feedback on Action Plan (2022-2024)

1	Action	Creation of a Global Leadership Group and Global Board composition in line with the concept of powershifting
	Involved Steps	- Launch of new Global Leadership Group (GLG) in January 2023 - Stretch target of 50% of the GLG members being under 35, and the majority of staff being based in the Majority World (targets we also have for the Pod) by 2025 - Recruitment of a young, Majority World based Power Shifting Director

		- Increase the proportion of board members based in the Majority World, and also recruiting a new Majority World based Power Shifting trustee by August 2023
	IRP Feedback	The plan notes that actions outlined have been formulated in response to feedback from a global consultation process. The Panel notes positively the efforts to ensure that the organisation's leadership reflects its principal stakeholders. With this, there needs to be careful balance in terms of providing inclusive space for engagement and relevant training to young people so that they feel equipped and ready to take on leadership positions while enabling them to lead. It would also be interesting to learn more and unpack, in the action report for next year, about the role of a Power Shifting director and trustee and what would entail in regards to their accountability.
2	**Action**	**Finalise a New Agency Plan to ensure we are walking the talk on Power shifting**
	Involved Steps	- Finalise a new agency plan by September 2023 - Drive high performance through monitoring and measuring eight quality areas, as well as power shifting impact through monitoring and measuring against the six items of the Power shifting checklist.
	IRP Feedback	The Panel looks forward to learning more about and reviewing the agency plan once it is completed. Perhaps it is already included in the agency plan, but it would also be important to add key considerations regarding the environment, and its impact on the activities and lives of young people world wide. The Panel would also like to understand better the impact of the checklist on partners, and whether such changes will be accompanied with support to ensure that they can easily and accordingly adapt. In the Action Report, it would also be good to share more information about the quality areas as they are being developed and also how the Pod is supporting the quality assurance through the checklist.
3	**Action**	**Creation of a new financial model with the principles of feminism, inclusion and equality at its heart**
	Involved Steps	- Agreed a new financial model, driven by the power shifting agenda by end of 2023
	IRP Feedback	The action outlined showcases a deep commitment by the organisation on actively committing to a model that shifts power in terms of resources. This is definitely very innovative and commendable. A key area for considerations as this step is being implemented include the potential needs to train and support staff members on the new model. Additionally, the Panel would be interested in learning more about how the organisation is balancing this approach alongside requirements from donors, as such learnings may support and call other organisations to shift towards similar models.

		It would be good in the Action Report to share some definitions, examples/processes that are entailed in this model, alongside potential impacts on partners, if possible. Additionally, as mentioned above, it would be good to share definitions and communicate these principles to partners and stakeholders.
4	**Action**	**Conducting an agency-wide internal baseline assessment against the power shifting checklist**
	Involved Steps	- Complete baseline assessment by the end of October 2023, - This will then form the basis of future actions to strengthen implementation of the power shifting checklist, in alignment with plans to monitor power shifting impact through the Agency plan.
	IRP Feedback	It is very commendable to take stock of current processes. We assume that after this assessment, identified areas for improvements and plans will be put in place to ensure that different teams have the capacity and support that they may require to succeed? Additionally, is there a minimum "passing" ("good enough") score that the baseline data will be checked against? What are the resources made available to support different hubs to carry out this evaluation?
5	**Action**	**Further embed the use of community feedback and the concept of dynamic accountability in our community level programming**
	Involved Steps	- Systematically embed mechanisms to gather and respond to feedback from young people and communities in the organisation's work by developing and sharing a best practice guidance note on Learning and Adaptation systems with all Hubs by December 2023 - Explore (through evidence review process) ways to ensure that all hubs have some mechanisms in place to apply these systems
	IRP Feedback	The results from the 2022 Annual Young Leader Survey provides very positive feedback for the organisation's listening ability. Potentially Restless may want to go beyond maintaining this percentage and actively improve on it. Here, the Panel would suggest to include how the organisation is listening through informal channels, beyond surveys or formalised consultations, into its set of best practices. From the Annual Young Leader survey, it seems that many young leaders feel like they are listened to, and including such examples will mean that such efforts can be continuously sustained. Furthermore, potentially Educo's Suggestions, Complaints and Commendation (pg.7) process may be of use in this process. An interesting aspect of this mechanism is its inclusion of commendations, allowing for the organisation to hear and learn about its positive impacts.
6	**Action**	**Creation of best practice and internal guidance to support the re-granting of funds to youth-led organisations**
	Involved Steps	- Develop practical guidance and examples of best practice on how to effectively re-grant funds to youth-led organisations, in a power shifting way, by December 2023.
	IRP Feedback	It is well noted that the plan took in considerations from both youth civil society and funders as these processes are often impeded by donors' own

		requirements. It may therefore be useful to also include (if not already included and also if timeline permits), guidelines on how different hubs can negotiate and enter into dialogues with their funders on certain criteria, so that they too can take these recommendations forward and have that flexibility to re-grant funds in power shifting ways. The IRP would recommend to include criteria for considering a practice as a "best practice" and the evidence used to evaluate it as such.
7	**Action**	**Roll-out of a new online HR system, allowing the organisation to strengthen recruitment processes and capacity to respond to complaints and grievances.**
	Involved Steps	- Roll-out a new, global cloud-based Human Resource Information System (HRIS) to be used by all Hubs
	IRP Feedback	With the introduction of this system, considerations need to be placed on how these types of personal data can be handled in ways that are secured and protect the privacy rights of staff members. Additionally, since the new system will be used to store complaints and grievances, the Panel also suggests that clear rules and safeguards are put in place to ensure that complaints are only visible to designated personnel on a need-to-know basis. It is also useful to unpack in the next report on how different types of data will be presented within the system, as there is a possibility that having complaints centralised alongside HR information may present a mental barrier, where colleagues may be less inclined to raise grievances if it is being recorded alongside their HR files. Two interesting examples come to mind in regards to considering DEI in their work and managing complaints. Respectively, they are: CARE International's approach to look at power-down groups in their DEI work (in AN's webinar on DEI), and Transparency International's Integrity Violation Policy.

Grading Key for Core Responses

Key	Explanation
FM	The response **fully met** the specific guideline.
PM	The response **partially met** the guideline, with **minor improvements** needed.
PS	The response **partially met** the guideline and **significant improvements** are still needed.
NM	If the response has **not met** the specific guideline.