



Amnesty International
Independent Review Panel Feedback
Accountability Report 2022
Review Round November/December 2023



Amnesty International Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

Review Round November/December 2023

Monday, 18th December 2023

Dear Agnes Callamard,

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 actions, and came to the assessment below.

This report is Amnesty International's fifteenth accountability report, and one of the few members' report that uses the new accountability reporting framework. The Panel acknowledges that this is a learning exercise, allowing the membership to identify areas for improvement and strengthening a reporting framework for CSOs, by CSOs.

Overall, the Panel found the report to be strong and all the questions being well-answered, giving us a good understanding of how accountability is being operationalised and advanced within the organisation and its network. Some areas are particularly commendable, such as the studies which enabled understanding of the ingredients for impact, and the advancement of different co-creative approaches to programming; these are key practices which should be further institutionalised or adopted into a coherent and holistic approach, especially for planning and strategizing processes.

Some other areas could use a little more unpacking, such as sharing more about the issues and challenges on implementing the anti-racism work plan, or more insights about the type of complaints received.

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





Amnesty International Accountability Report 2022

Review Round November/December 2023

Opening Statement from the Head of Organisation

Opening statement from Secretary General Agnes Callamard outlines the challenging context for human rights in 2022 and 2023. Despite these challenges, she also highlights the bravery and defiance shown by activists around the world in fighting for their rights. She emphasises the importance of generating public opinion that “stands for and leads to justice for everyone and everywhere”. She also shares examples of Amnesty International Secretariat’s work to advance justice alongside their members and colleagues.

Internally, she shares about the organisation’s efforts towards diversity and anti-racism, with action plans being implemented across the International Secretariat (IS). Another notable focus is placed on well-being for staff, with positive results showing progress in this area. Callamard also noted that the organisation is shifting towards a post-pandemic way of working, adopting hybrid working practices to enable staff to decide the modes most suitable for them.

She closes the statement by sharing how the organisation will continue to strive and learn forward.

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 report shares Amnesty’s most significant achievements and impacts (through detailed examples), in correlation to the organisation’s strategic priorities such as:

- freedom of expression and association,
- promoting gender, racial and intersectional justice,
- strengthening rights to health, housing, and social security,
- climate justice,
- and protecting the rights of refugees, migrants, and people on the frontline of crises.

To further understand the impact of its programmes and advocacy, the organisation conducted [eight studies](#). These impact studies showcase how the organisation worked alongside both internal and external stakeholders, such as partners, local CSOs, communities, experts, among others in order to formulate its advocacy

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actions. It is important to note that these studies acknowledge the significant contribution of Amnesty's partners in achieving impact.

The studies also highlighted key factors that made success possible, the Panel notes that the inclusion of this is quite interesting as they spell out a set of key ingredients for impact that could inform future programme designs; the Panel would be interested in hearing more about: a) the cost of these programmes as it may be interesting for others to understand how impact can be financed, and b) if the studies overall generated broader lessons about what it takes to advance human rights in an increasingly complex and authoritarian global context, lacking meaningful accountability mechanisms.

The placing of rights holders' voices at the centre of the research and then in the development of advocacy actions, is seen as a great example of 'sharing power'. In a moment where sector conversations on shifting power continue, Amnesty's approach is a **good practice**. The Panel therefore commends the policy changes made and impact of the organisation's work in the past year.

The report also recognises measuring advocacy's impact at the community level is very difficult in the short term, and the Panel echoes this insight; however, it may be useful to revisit these programmes to learn more about their long-term impact and provide space for stakeholders to validate these outcomes. A relevant good practice comes from Transparency International's [Impact Monitoring Approach. Generation Equality Forum's Feminist Accountability Framework](#) also offers important insights as to the importance of valid and accessible data, communicating and receiving feedback and community led advocacy.

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

The response outlines Amnesty International's learnings from the controversy generated as a result of its 4th August statement about Ukraine. The response notes that the organisation commissioned two independent reviews and accepted the recommendations. The results of these reviews are published on Amnesty's website, a transparent and public practice which the Panel commends. The response further shares that these recommendations have been implemented in their response to the Sudan crisis.

The Panel would also like to know how relevant stakeholder's inputs, views and feedback was incorporated in the recommendations and action plans. The Panel nudges the organisation to continue to consider the balance between impartiality and potential impact on stakeholders and affected communities. We understand that Amnesty International places high value on its ability to report on conflict, crisis, and rights violations around the world, and we suggest that the Ukraine statement is an opportunity to reflect on how affected communities should be engaged in terms of risks, impacts and necessary response mechanisms.

The response also raises other areas where the organisation has been shifting in terms of its accountability practices, namely the implementation of the anti-racism strategy and well-being work. It would be useful for the Review Panel for Amnesty to provide some concrete examples of how policy has been translated into practice

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across the different domains mentioned (work environment, representation and work practices), how positive results are defined, and how the progress being made is mapped onto the specific issue area(s) found by the anti-racism review.

While its [past report](#) already detailed how the organisation is advancing this stream of work through the REDIG working group and multiple trainings, the Panel would also recommend that it would be helpful for Amnesty to describe in more detail key actions within the plan mainstream gender, racial justice and intersectionality. Sharing more about senior leadership commitment to the implementation of a whole of agency strategy and implementation of gender and racial equality would enable setting a clear rationale for their action plans, priorities, timelines, objectives, expected outcomes and targets. Information on how Amnesty is creating awareness and regular reviews would also be helpful to understand some of the challenges described.

The report shared that a challenge includes a lack of resources to implement these types of actions within entities, but also noting that there's been an under-utilisation of anti-racism funds. On this end, further socialisation of the available funds, and understanding whether there are potential roadblocks to or reasons why national entities are not using the funds would be very important.

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 report notes that 5 grievances were received by the IS in 2022 and shares the organisation's learning in terms of improving how it investigates these grievances. As for National Entities, a total of 42 grievances were reported, 21 of which were resolved. 15 of these resolved grievances were resolved in a way that complainants perceived to be fair and equitable.

It would be helpful for the reviewers to know the current status (i.e are the unresolved grievances still in review?), and category or type of grievance given that different types of grievances require different types of strategies to address. Learning can come from clearly identifying and recognizing certain areas that might be gaps or areas of improvement. Additionally, does the organisation have any targets relating to improving the number as well as perception of resolved complaints?

At the IS level, a notable practice includes the utilisation of multiple external investigators, with diversified sets of expertise to adequately take on the range of complaints being raised. Are similar investigation methods available for National Entities? Given the new framework requiring NEs to meet a minimum criteria and to report on grievances received, what type of support and resources (beyond the well-noted Safeguarding training course) are made available for them to meet and excel in these criteria?

At the IS level, one of the learning from the nature of the complaints raised is said to be the inconsistency in line managers' experience in dealing with people management matters. To bridge this gap, Amnesty International is working to launch specific training for managers, alongside a planned review of their Grievance Policy.

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Dealing with staff grievances also involves acknowledging power dynamics within the workplace and the need for staff to feel 'safe' to raise issues. It would be useful to have Amnesty describe how it is working to create an environment that is conducive to staff feeling safe to raise these types of grievances (beyond training).

The report also shares about how the IS has been taking steps to train staff on Safeguarding Essentials, which received positive uptakes and is a built-in part of new staff's induction processes. Another training provided is the in-person Child Safeguarding training, which led to an ongoing revision of the training. The Panel looks forward to learning more about the revision, and how it is shaping up in later editions. An aspect that Amnesty may want to consider is ensuring an intersectional gender responsive approach to safeguarding that considers gender and other social identities. This will ensure that Amnesty fully recognizes the specific and unique risks that children and youth with differing genders and social identities face. Some interesting reference materials include [Plan international's Child Safeguarding Policy](#) and the [ChildFund Alliance's Child-Friendly Accountability Approach](#).

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

The report shares feedback received as part of the Employee Experience Programme, which includes the 2022 IS Diversity Survey. The main findings for the 19 new equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) related questions are presented. As a result, a range of training is being initiated and made available to staff on these issues, with some courses provided specifically to management. Amnesty International has also partnered with the Business Disability Forum, revised its Racial Equality, Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, and made anti-bias tools available for reviewing job adverts (but not yet job descriptions). These are positive steps to follow through on the commitment towards better inclusion within the organisation.

Although there appears to be significant investments in understanding the issues, through surveys as well as training, and the results of some of the surveys provide insights into areas that Amnesty needs to tackle, the report does not provide enough information as to how it is responding to some of the feedback received; for example: only "44% of IS employees feel that it is safe to call out racism, with a large number who feel unsure"; "25% of IS staff do not feel confident to report discrimination", which is much below the benchmark; and "a high number of colleagues (percentage unavailable) are unsure whether harassment is taken seriously". At the same time, the Panel notes that IS Regional Offices and Programmes teams are also working on completing anti-racism plans, and potentially this information will be included in the next report. Beyond that, it would also be good to share about how the organisation will measure its progress (i.e through which indicators or metrics) in terms of addressing concerns, some key commitments it is making and the duration for delivering those actions.

In terms of well-being, the report shares the progress being made alongside main findings from the EEP survey. The report also notes that key sources of stress include pressure and change, lack of resources and high workload, and lack of strategic prioritisation. The report lays out some recommendations that the IS has received to alleviate some of this stress, which includes better communications and

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encouragement to uptake well-being activities. Different teams are also preparing action plans in response to the survey results.

Potentially, the organisation can look into more types of support in terms of wellbeing for staff, if these are not already considered, such as enhancing capacity in terms of human resources for different teams, directly engaging staff on which well-being activities and support may be most valuable for them, offering mental-health leave days, or supporting managers to provide strategic prioritisation to employees.

Another note is that while the organisation is looking to run more surveys and capture more data, it should also consider that very frequent surveys may lead to fatigue. Here, it would be good to maintain proper channels for communicating what actions are being taken as a result, and to streamline surveys where possible.

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

The response shares that the organisation has been strengthening its efforts to actively monitor the way they engage stakeholders into their projects, noting that the organisation has been perfecting its methodologies to ensure its impact claims are corroborated by partners and stakeholders. Examples from National Entities in the Czech Republic, Mexico and Mongolia showcase how activists have been involved in the planning and implementation of campaigns.

At the IS level, the Protect the Protest campaign included a listening exercise with key external stakeholders (organisations, movements, and activists) to inform the direction of the campaign's strategy. Additionally, the campaign's objectives for the ten countries of focus were also developed in collaboration with partners and civil society in the relevant countries. The project overall also led to a research (carried out by Beautiful Trouble), which reviews Amnesty's current knowledge, expertise, and experience in working alongside people-centred movements.

The Panel recognises that some of the efforts described about involving stakeholders seem to be about consultation while others go beyond this to more meaningful co-creation (e.g. Growing Rights Instead of Poverty). This suggests an opportunity to provide more guidance across the organisation on relatively more participatory forms of stakeholder involvement, including in evaluation (noted as an area for further strengthening), as well as generate broader lessons for the network.

Further examples from other National Entities (UK, South Africa, Canada Anglophone) show how different strategies such as using vernaculars, harnessing different forms of media consumption (radios, etc), considering different identity intersections, and centering rights-holders to lead decision making, are being deployed to support accountability towards external stakeholders. It is very well noted that a majority of NEs involved and made sure to consider diverse voices in their mobilisation and fundraising strategies. For those NEs that did not, what challenges did they encounter and what support may they need to advance?

Other examples also noted that both NEs and IS are taking positive steps to ensure that their human rights work does not reinforce gender and racial stereotypes. While

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these are great examples, the report shares that the majority of NEs did not begin similar actions, here, it would be potentially useful to understand what types of support these NEs may need to start implementing.

At the IS, specific actions are also being taken to centre needs, perspectives and identity of stakeholders throughout the organisation's work. Teams are furthermore provided with tools and resources to promote diversity and gender equality.

The range of initiatives being taken to engage stakeholders is quite impressive. In the next round, it would be good to share feedback and challenges that both NEs and IS have encountered in carrying out such engagements. The Panel understands that the work is iterative and that there will be key-lessons learned that will contribute towards further improvements.

Key	Explanation (See also Reporting Guidance and Annex 1 Core Reporting Guidelines)
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.