



**Educo**

**Independent Review Panel Feedback**

**Accountability Report and Action Plan 2023**

**Review Round August/September 2024**



# Educo

## Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

Review Round August/September 2024

September 28th 2024

Dear Pilar Orenes,

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 Core Report and Action Plan are great demonstrations of Educo's commitment and efforts towards being continuously accountable and transparent with its stakeholders. The report provides clear examples, honest reflections and specific details about the organisation's ongoing accountability efforts. The Panel is heartened to hear about the positive direction of travel. We also note that the organisation is taking purposeful steps to ensure that different accountability pieces are built organically.

The Action Plan includes work that is grounded in the current needs of the organisation, and we look forward to learning more about how those actions take place in future reporting. At the same time, we would like to encourage Educo, in the future, to share and unpack more about its relationship, work and collaborations with local partners, especially in a context where the organisation is thinking more deeply about localisation and decolonisation within its work.

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





# Educo

## Accountability Report 2023

Review Round Month August/September 2024

### Opening Statement from the Head of Organisation

The opening statement from Educo's CEO Pilar Orenes shares the key highlights and changes that the organisation made in the reporting period. Namely – in 2023, Educo formalised its commitment to child participation with a new Child Participation Policy. This policy outlines the organisation's stance, guides teams in fulfilling this commitment, and emphasises ongoing internal training and capacity-building efforts to integrate child participation into all areas of work. Children's input is said to be central to the way Educo's efforts are designed, and to understanding impact post-implementation, playing an important role in the organization's learning and measurement system.

Additionally, Educo completed the 2024-2026 Global Organizational Development Plan (GODP) in 2023. This plan outlines the desired direction for the organization and includes commitments to dynamic accountability, including defining and adopting Educo's localization model. Orenes also signals the introduction of a new Transparency Policy, that will guide the organisation's future accessibility. Further details and explanations of the organisation's work in these areas are presented in the Core Report and Action Plan.

### 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 defines clearly how the organization understands and differentiates between outcomes and impacts, noting that outcomes are tracked, measured and evaluated within projects while impacts are measured differently - through the organisation's Social Impact Measurement system. The system includes surveys and measures the perceived impact from the perspective and feedback of children and adolescents which are one of the primary stakeholders of Educo's programmes. Specific achievements from Burkina Faso, Bangladesh, Niger, and El Salvador were shared in the report.

From our accompaniment to Educo over time, we understand that the Social Impact Measurement system is a process that Educo has been piloting [since 2021](#), with the creation of the 25 global indicators; [updates were provided in 2022](#) regarding how the organisation was developing and devising different data collection methodologies and adapting them to age-appropriate approaches. It is therefore exciting to see that effort is paying off, with the system being applied for children and adolescents to actively validate, provide feedback and recommend improvements to Educo's work. The report also noted that the organisation received positive results through this tool, with a satisfaction level of 88.23% for a total of 13 projects.



The response further notes that a digital platform for visualization is currently in testing.

Beyond the scope of this specific question, the Panel is interested in the insights the organisation has gained from conducting this round of engagement using the Social Impact Measurement (SIM) system. Will all projects' impacts eventually be validated by stakeholders (through the SIM system)? What key suggestions for improvement have been received so far? How does the organisation communicate these results to stakeholders? Additionally, have stakeholder perceptions of impact led to any shifts in programming?

While not mentioned in this response, Educo's reports and financial information (including the latest audits) are easily accessible and available on a dedicated "[Transparency](#)" page. It is therefore suggested that this is taken under consideration for future reporting.

**FM** The response **fully met** the specific guideline.

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

The response highlights three major internal changes to the organisation in 2023, which will have impacts on the organisation's accountability practices going forward.

Firstly, the report notes the expansion and focus of Educo's humanitarian efforts (especially for Education in Emergency), driven by the increasing number of emergencies around the world. It states that further adaption of monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEAL) tools are happening within the organisation; the Panel also notes the commendable drive to continuously test and contextualise MEAL tools to various emergency contexts

Another key shift is the introduction of a new Global Organisational Development Plan (GODP) and Country Organisational Development Plans. These plans set out organisational development outcomes and targets, with specific commitment to "define and adopt Educo's localisation model", and goals of child participation and empowerment, transparency and measuring satisfaction.

Lastly, the merger of Fundación Comparte with Educo was recently completed. As a result of this merger, Educo has expanded its countries of operations and a number of projects; the organisation is currently integrating these strands into its existing MEAL processes.

While not explicitly discussed here, some of the accountability changes included in this section are further provided in the Action Plan portion of the report.

**FM** The response **fully met** the specific guideline.

**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 the two interrelated systems that Educo has in place to listen for complaints, incidents and grievances. One is the Suggestions, Commendation and Complaints mechanism, whereby they receive, record and manage feedback from all stakeholders - this is a policy that has been previously deemed a good practice by the IRP. The other is an external system for whistleblowing (Whispli), which provides the organisation with the ability to follow up on anonymous complaints.

This dual approach is very commendable, and represents the multiple pathways for an organisation to collect, manage and follow up on different forms of feedback and complaints; such an approach also gives choice to stakeholders for the different pathways that they can raise their voice, depending on the severity of their potential complaints.

The response furthermore provides an overview of the number of complaints by categories (as received through their whistleblowing channel) and shares how the organisation has learned from previous incidents and describes the general process for organisational-wide learning that happens each year. The Panel welcomes Educo's transparency on this matter and recognises that a higher number of reported incidents is a sign that the channel is being used. Out of scope, but given that this data came through an external channel, are there ways for the organisation to discern and learn about whether complaints are coming from internal or external stakeholders? A high-level view of such data may help Educo to understand if further socialisation with different stakeholder groups would be needed; although we would nudge to retain anonymity and confidentiality factors to build confidence in complainants.

The organisation also took measures to respond to the weaknesses identified as a result of the complaints system. In this context, the organisation revised its Conflict of Interest procedure as well included an audit procedure as a way to take corrective measures. The results and the feedback from the complainants can be elaborated in the future.

**FM** The response **fully met** the specific guideline.

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

The response mainly focused how the organisation is shifting the way it thinks about leadership and culture, through the implementation and expansion of the new Child-Centred Leadership programme. The training programme is delivered through volunteer ambassadors and is being implemented in nine countries where Educo operates. The report also outlines how Educo is planning to conduct a study on the result of the programme in the following year. If possible, it would be great to elaborate more on the goals as well as the indicators for measurement of the results from the programme. Additionally, the response is unclear on the direct audience of the programme - is it designed for children? volunteers? or staff?

Furthermore, the response noted that the organisation carries out an annual organisational culture survey with its staff, which is anonymous, voluntary and confidential. While this is a great annual practice that enables staff to provide feedback in carefully considered ways, what were some learnings and areas of improvement that were identified through the last survey? What shifts were made as a result? And how is



staff given the opportunity to hold the organisation to account to improvements overall beyond receiving results? For the next report, it may be good to consider sharing a couple of examples of the feedback received internally over the reporting period.

A practice that Educo may find interesting comes from the Taiwan Fund for Children and Families, which invites its staff to suggest five priorities or deferrals each year, which were categorised into areas such as professional services, fundraising, HR, and financial management, leading to cross-departmental meetings in the following year to resolve the issues raised (see more in their latest accountability report - Q4).

**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 shares about a range of practices which Educo uses to ensure that children’s voices are included throughout its programmatic work.

These include examples of Open Days and how they have been adapted or may differ in two of the many countries that the organisation works in (India and Guatemala). The examples shows how children are involved in programme design and presentation.

Secondly, the response also shows how children are involved in different accountability moments within the programmatic cycle. In Bolivia, children are shown to be very involved (in carefully considered ways) in terms of design and decision making; notably, the in-country Children Advisory Councils, a platform to further child participation in decision making, is being replicated elsewhere. Potentially, as the Educo develops this aspect further, it may find [this resource](#) about integrating young people and children into governance and decision making bodies useful (the resource was created in response to a Helpdesk Request from another Accountable Now member).

It’s also interesting to learn about how children and young people participating in Educo Benin’s programme are able to contextualize the organisation’s Suggestions, Complaints and Commendations policy to better suit their needs. Furthermore, in the Phillipines, the organisation carries out an Annual Participatory Program Review event with community participants to co-identify lessons learned and areas for improvement.

The Panel recognises the great work that the organisation is implementing to centre children, communities, and families’ voices in its work. For the next reporting period - and in light of the organisation’s drive for localisation, the Panel nudges Educo to focus on local partners and external collaborators in this section.

**FM**

The response **fully met** the specific guideline.

Key	Explanation
<b>FM</b>	The response <b>fully met</b> the specific guideline.
<b>PM</b>	The response <b>partially met</b> the guideline, with <b>minor improvements</b> needed.



<b>PS</b>	The response <b>partially met</b> the guideline and <b>significant improvements</b> are still needed.
<b>NM</b>	If the response has <b>not met</b> the specific guidelines.

## Action Plan

**1 Action**      **Develop a guide for child participation in the project cycle to guide the implementation of Educo's new Child Participation Policy.**

### Involved Steps (as taken from the action plan)

- Carry out consultations with children on their participation in the project cycle, in Bangladesh, the Philippines, Benin, Mali, Spain, El Salvador and Bolivia.
- Review existing documentation (guides, manuals, etc.) on this topic.
- Develop, validate and translate the guide.
- Carry out presentation sessions by region.

### IRP Feedback

The item lays out the pathways that the organisation will take to develop a new guide for their new Child Participation Policy. The action includes concrete and co-consultative steps alongside country offices and children and adolescents in their charge as part of the development process.

We understand that this will complement the roll out of the policy, and therefore is an important resource that will support the organisation to streamline its child-centric practices more thoroughly. From our end, we have a couple of questions and nudges for the organisation to consider: We understand that the scope of the guidelines will cover [the policy](#) - but will it have the same coverage too? If so, will Educo support its partners to adopt the guidelines? Will the guidelines be further contextualised for each country? Are there plans to revise and revisit the guidelines after roll out? And whether the organisation considered to use such a guide as a syllabus for future trainings on the new policy?

**2 Action**      **Consolidate Educo's impact measurement system to better understand, adjust and account for the impact of our work.**

### Involved Steps (as taken from action plan)

- Socialisation of the updated version of the questionnaire
- Finalisation of the data model and digitalisation
- Sampling of projects that will apply impact measurement in 2024 and 2025
- Technical support and training for teams
- Data processing, quality review
- Analysis of the information

### IRP Feedback



This action item relates to Educo's Social Impact Measurement System, with the next steps being finalising the digitalisation and visualisation aspects of the system. The purpose of the impact measurement system is well explained in terms of the information provided for future design of programmes. So far the organisation has tested the platform for 40 of its projects. More information can be found in the response to the first core question.

The steps listed within the action seems logical and purposeful. The Panel would be interested in learning more about the end users of the system, although for now we assume that this will be for internal use. From our understanding of the system, we are assuming that communities, children, and local partners will have a say in validating the findings - although we would still be curious to know about how Educo will ensure that communities will also learn alongside the organisation.

### 3 Action

**Define and adopt Educo's localisation model through a process of reflection that will conclude with institutional positioning and implementation of a roadmap for the entire organisation.**

#### Involved Steps (as taken from action plan)

- Global reflection on localisation through surveys and focus groups
- Development of an internal position on localisation and decolonisation
- Development of a work plan to guide decentralisation actions and transformation of internal relations
- Sharing of the position paper and work plan
- Updating of the relevant documents and tools to align them with Educo's positioning

#### IRP Feedback

This action item relates to Educo (and the wider ChildFund Alliance's) efforts to reflect further on what decolonisation and localisation may look like for their organisation. Given the push to further reflect, the Panel recommends the organisation to review (if not already) the existing approaches and networks focused on localisation and decolonisation of other humanitarian work, to build on the experience of others such as like NEAR, RINGO, and the START Network.

On this end, many of AN's members have also been on a journey to reconsider the models through which they operate and decentralise their operations away from the dichotomy of global vs. national. An example comes from Accountability Lab, whereby the network takes a [translocal approach](#), being collectively led by all country directors. In doing so, they meet twice every week to make decisions for the network together, although each Lab remains autonomous and accountable to their respective country Boards. At the same time, the network is able to leverage the power of the collective for cross-country learning, fundraising and operations. Underpinning this collaboration is a commonly signed agreement that relates to shared principles between each and every Lab.

Another example comes from Restless Development, which has decentralized its Global Hub function, from a model where a lot of operational support was housed in their UK team,





to a model in which these functions are dispersed throughout different offices within the network (learn more in their [2023 Core Report, pg 3](#)).

**4 Action**      **Launch the implementation of Educo's new Transparency Policy, with the aim of promoting transparency and access to information for all our stakeholders.**

**Involved Steps (as taken from action plan)**

- Addition of new members to the Commission
- Updating of the Commission's terms of reference
- Development of the 2025 action plan for the Commission Accountability Report 2023
- Coordination with relevant teams to ensure that key actions are incorporated into their action plans.

**IRP Feedback**

This action item lays out the steps entailed towards a successful implementation of Educo's new [Transparency Policy](#). Part of the process includes an update to the Transparency Commission and coordination with relevant teams. While not mentioned here, the new policy outlines the role of the Transparency Commission, notably that it will incorporate staff from country offices as well as head office.

Beyond the process listed, the Panel would like to understand how the Transparency policy may relate to the new Conflict of Interest policy, if there is any relation between the two at all. Furthermore, the Panel is interested in learning more about whether the previous work of the Transparency Commission will be taken forward, and whether the first key piece of work for this Commission will be an action plan? Furthermore, how will legislations such as GDPR requirements (which may impact data transfers, especially as Educo is based in Spain) or other more local data protection policy frameworks be integrated into the roll out of the Transparency Policy?

**5 Action**      **Integration of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Framework into Educo's organisational culture**

**Involved Steps (as taken from action plan)**

- Translation and design of the DEI Framework
- Digitalisation of training on the DEI Framework
- Launch of the new e-learning platform, Campus Educo
- Sharing of the Framework through institutional channels
- Global launch of training on the DEI Framework
- Inclusion of the DEI Framework in the induction process for new recruits to the team.
- Follow-up of training courses and awarding of diplomas



## IRP Feedback

This action presents the plan of Educo for the development of a new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework. The framework outlines an overall approach to diversity, equity and inclusion and the promotion of a safe and inclusive work environment for all staff. The framework reinforces the Code of Conduct, PSHEA policies, and the gender equality policy structure.

Beyond what is detailed in this action, the Panel would nudge the organisation to share plans for measuring DEI internally (alongside indicators for success, where possible). Moreover, it might be good to also share - in the action report or through the follow up call, about how the new DEI framework is informing recruitment, or other People and Culture related processes within the organisation