

## Webinar Outcome Summary

“The Global Standard for CSO Accountability and its relevance for Charter Members”

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### Topic Experts

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### Background and Objectives

The *Global Standard for CSO Accountability* project fits well into the three key objectives of Charter:

- Strengthening ICSO legitimacy
- Improving ICSO accountability
- Reducing multitude of reporting requirements

Nine well-established civil society accountability networks from around the world get together to systematically cooperate over the course of three and a half years to exchange expertise, improve their codes and agree on what constitutes the core elements of good CSO accountability globally. The result will be a collectively agreed *Global Standard for CSO Accountability* with the following goals:

- Improve accountability codes and practice
- Reduce transaction costs
- Contribute to a more enabling CSO environment

### Project Partners:

- [Australian Council for International Development \(ACFID\)](#)
- [Cooperation Committee for Cambodia \(CCC\)](#)
- [INGO Accountability Charter, Europe](#)
- [InterAction, USA](#)
- [Philippine Council for NGO Certification \(PCNC\)](#)
- [NGO Quality Assurance Certification Mechanism \(QuAM\), Uganda](#)
- [Rendir Cuentas, Latin America](#)
- [Viwango, Kenya](#)
- [Voluntary Action Network India \(VANI\)](#)

Senior representatives of all nine Project Partners have met for two face-to-face meetings in 2014 to agree on the *process* of their collaboration and the *format* of a collectively developed *Global Standard for CSO Accountability*.

An initial mapping by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) of the overlaps and gaps of all Project Partners' frameworks as well as the [Istanbul Principles](#) and the [Core Humanitarian Standard](#) showed solid content overlap despite differences in formats and languages. Built on the existing substantial overlap of all these codes, the *Global Standard* will not be a new standard, but will reflect the core parameters for CSO accountability that have been developed across the world over the past decades. It will summarise CSOs' provisions in simple language and function as a *reference* standard, which civil society networks, peak bodies, governments and other stakeholders are invited to use as a global benchmark.

All Project Partner constituencies, amounting to 1,500 CSOs across the world, will be actively engaged in developing, testing and implementing the *Global Standard* parameters.

Additional Consultative Partners such as CIVICUS, Bond and the West African Civil Society Centre will also be engaged in the *Global Standard's* development to broaden its ownership.

### Potential benefits for Charter Members

During this webinar, the project was well received by representatives from ActionAid, Greenpeace, Oxfam, Transparency International, World Vision and others. Specifically, they saw the following potential benefits:

- World Vision and Oxfam highlighted that the current multiplicity of reporting requirements in a globally operating ICSO is an increasing burden. Too many frameworks used in parallel have become confusing in particular for officers in the field. A *Global Standard* which would help streamline these requirements would be very welcome.
- Oxfam and other Charter Members are undergoing significant structural change to become truly globally operating organisations - with one vision, one voice, shared values and shared resources. This also necessitates greater simplicity and a common vocabulary useful for the sector to unite and present our collective strength which is core to the *Global Standard* project. A common set of accountability indicators across a single federation would already be hugely beneficial. If this also emerged as the most commonly used standard across the sector it would add even more value as we gain more external recognition, synergies, cooperation and collaboration. A globally developed and legitimised accountability concept would therefore be very helpful to further support this development.
- Charter Members also expect that a *Global Standard* which is developed in particular by Project Partners from the Global South will help to further strengthen their accountability to beneficiaries and partners.
- A *Global Standard* can also help support the legitimacy of CSOs operating in very difficult political circumstances, i.e. in shrinking political space.

### Challenges we need to overcome

- The *Global Standard* needs broad global ownership and support to fulfil its promise of becoming the accepted global reference standard.
- It should gain acceptance by donors and optimally also relevant UN agencies.
- It must not be an additional standard with additional reporting requirements, but substitute existing requirements.
- It should look at the accountability of an organisation's *strategy* as much as accountability for its *operations*.
- It must be concise, succinct and written in plain language, which can be a challenge given the multitude of different partners from around the world.
- It has to be developed in a way that is useful to organisations – they must not be convinced to use it but they should *want* to use it.
- It needs to address the multiplicity of accountabilities a CSO faces: beneficiaries, staff, donors, governments etc.
- It has to have a focus on results and impact, as this is the aspect which the public is mostly interested in.
- It needs to be ambitious to avoid the trap of agreeing on the lowest common denominator.
- It has to be ensured that the *Global Standard* has an inherent commitment to continuous improvement.