

Webinar Outcome Summary

Building the Charter Brand

Identifying key Charter benefits for each function in our organisation and the public

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Topic Experts

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Why build the brand?

While most Charter Members value the Charter as a driver to improve their accountability, they miss greater recognition for this work. They would like to see a stronger Charter brand:

- ◆ To increase the legitimacy and the credibility of the Charter.
- ◆ To position the organisation clearly vis-à-vis its stakeholders.
- ◆ To enlarge the Charter network and strengthen our collective voice.

In a nutshell: the Charter needs to be well known and understood to achieve its ultimate ambition of *driving ICSSOs' positive impact on people's lives and the environment*. Against this background a group of branding and communication experts from Charter Members met with the Secretariat, representatives from the Charter Board and the Independent Review Panel in July 2015 in London to develop a first draft of the Charter's positioning.

What's our value proposition?

The group identified the Charter's

1. *unique features* (cross-sectoral, global, comprehensive etc.)
2. *advantages* it offers (well tested frame, effective process, credible platform etc.)
3. *benefits* it brings (credibility, driving quality of work, risk management etc.)

You can find a summary outcome of the meeting attached in [Annex I](#). All taken together this leads to a draft positioning statement which currently reads as follows:

For CSOs who wish to build and demonstrate their ability to delivering optimal work for stakeholders, the INGO Accountability Charter offers an effective and credible framework to realise their mission. It is a recognised, comprehensive and independent system developed by the leading CSOs.

This positioning statement is work in progress and it will only be complete if it resembles Charter Members' beliefs. You need to own it for it to be successful. We therefore ask you to **please take a close look at the attached outline and give us your views** whether we got it right and where you see it differently from your organisation's perspective.

How to increase Charter recognition?

The best way to achieve greater recognition for the Charter is if Members themselves proudly communicate their membership within the organisation and externally. This is more credible than communication from the Secretariat and it has a greater reach. For if the fundraisers, campaigners, CEOs, programmers and others in the organisation talk about the Charter as a helpful tool to raise funds, support the credibility of campaigns, improve the quality of work or support global management decisions – that is the best way to build knowledge, ownership and ultimately a recognised brand.

It is the Secretariat's role to provide our Members with all you need in communication tools and messages to do this successfully. We will work on this as soon as the positioning has been collectively agreed.

How does the Charter help to manage my daily tasks?

Unless people understand how the Charter adds very concrete benefit to their daily tasks, uptake and communication will not be strong. We therefore asked our Members how the Charter concretely helped CEOs, fundraisers, programmers, HR, campaigners etc. You can have a look at their answers in [Annex II](#). **Please let us know your views – good or bad – on how the Charter adds most value to your specific work.** This will give us a good indication of how you use the Charter and what we can do to improve its value for you.

Some suggestions on **how to use the Charter well** in Members' everyday work include:

- Making Charter Membership and commitment to the Charter visible when applying for funding;
- Using the Independent Review Panel's feedback constructively: keeps one's focus on accountability towards beneficiaries as well as supporters in programmes and use the feedback to steer internal discussions and progress;
- Using the Charter and accountability as a management tool to actively drive strategic decisions;
- Making use of Charter Member peers' expertise in order to keep up to date about cutting edge developments in the field;
- Engaging with Charter peers in internal discussions about improving your overall transparency and organisational development; and
- Communicating the Charter's added value directly to your stakeholders - e.g.: to the people you serve, to donors and to the media.

Challenges and Potential Solutions

#1 *The Charter is not well known across functions and regions of my organisation*

Organise internal meetings to raise awareness of the Charter, its vetting mechanism and key projects. Distribute Charter key documents and materials such as the organisation's Accountability Report to the Charter – build knowledge and expertise based on the Independent Review Panel's feedback. Find additional tips [here](#) and [here](#).

#2: *The credibility of the Charter would improve if it was recognised as a "seal"*

Option A) The Charter logo tells the onlooker, that this CSO is part of a network that is adamant to establishing high levels of accountability in the sector and its Members in particular.

Option B) The Charter logo tells the onlooker that this CSO has been thoroughly vetted and reached a very high standard of accountability.

Option A describes a membership based organisation that helps and pushes the sector to significantly improve its accountability. The downside is that it is not a clear cut promise on the achieved and audited level of quality of Charter Members.

Option B is more like a quality seal – easy to recognise and use – good for communication purposes. The downside is:

- Our focus will be on a pass or fail exercise and no longer on a continuous journey of development.
- Indicators will have to be more streamlined and qualitative to allow for a comparable and factual audit.

- We need to be ready to outsource the vetting process to achieve full credibility / this evidently also changes our business model.
- There is a risk that if Members do not perform well – that the seal reputation is undermined.

Based on the above considerations the Charter Board has decided for Option A. While acknowledging that the two options need not be mutually exclusive, being Option A gives us the opportunity to be clear about having already reached a high standard that we strive to maintain. It will be also up to us to communicate that this commitment to high quality is backed with evidence of achievements.

#3: Members do not display the Charter logo prominently on their landing page

It is understood that our Members are very keen to keep their landing pages to key messages of their own organisation. It was suggested however that creating a “We are accountable” tab which, by clicking leads the user/reader to the specific sub-page which reports on the organisations accountability would be a practical approach to solving this.

Next steps for the Charter:

1. Refine the brand positioning statement.
2. Develop the corporate descriptor (short and long narratives of our value proposition)
3. Determine which brand elements need to be further developed or not (e.g. tagline, name, logo, visual graphics etc.)
4. Review and implement communication strategy

Annex I Draft Charter Brand Architecture

Outcome London Meeting, 24 July

Unique Features	Advantages it offers	Benefits for Members	Improves Impact for Stakeholders
Cross sector code Relevant for CSOs operating in development, human rights, anti-corruption, humanitarian, environment etc.	Comprehensive and tested framework to benchmark and demonstrate your accountability to key stakeholders such as beneficiaries, donors, staff governments etc.	Saves resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - offers a ready-to-use, well-tested and continuously improved framework - its comprehensiveness allows streamlining multiple accountabilities against <i>one</i> systematic, global frame of reference 	
Signed by leading CSOs in the respective fields of work	Effective process focused reporting, individual feedback and peer exchange offer an effective way to drive your accountability performance	Improves the quality of your work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Charter regularly monitors progress in the development of your structures, processes and policies to create optimal stakeholder value - learn from the expertise of leading CSO peers and benchmark your performance 	
Strong compliance & vetting process	Credible platform Charter membership builds trust in your organisation as you prove to be transparent, effective and responsible	Enhances credibility & trust in your organisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - which in turn improves your access to supporters, donors, governments etc. - strengthens the messages you want to get across 	
Global focus	Global network of CSO practitioners that help you build globally shared best practices within and beyond your organisation	Underpins your global aspirations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Charter's global focus and network of practice support CSO strategies focused on globalisation and movement building with an adequate accountability approach 	
Suggested Positioning Statement "For CSOs who wish to build and demonstrate their ability to delivering optimal work for stakeholders, the INGO Accountability Charter offers an effective and credible framework to realise their mission. It is a recognised, comprehensive and independent system developed by leading CSOs."			

Annex II

Function	Benefit	Members' quote on Charter's added value to functions/Teams/ Evidence
Primary Circle		
CEO	Charter membership helped improve governance, Board performance and management structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOS: "As a result of the feedback received from the Charter's Independent Review Panel we have made some significant improvements to our management structures and decision-making processes."
Campaigners / Advocacy staff	Charter membership strengthened our public policy positions as we prove to <i>walk our talk</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amnesty International: "It's an important tool for advocacy. Sometimes people we are opposing would like to undermine us but they can't because they are aware that we are independently accountable."
Communications staff	The Charter helped manage reputational risk and build public credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency International: "The Charter has helped us in several instances to fend off unfounded external criticism." • World Vision: "We have highlighted Charter membership in our annual reports to prove we are accountable, as we call for more accountability of others. If the Charter brand was better known this would be even more helpful." • Amnesty International: "The Charter helps improve public confidence in us as we publicly demonstrate our achievements and challenges in our reports to the Charter." • TFCF: "Being an INGO based in Taiwan, Charter's membership will help tell the world that we are accountable and help gain a global recognition."
Marketing / Fundraising	Charter membership helped to acquire external funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sightsavers: "Charter Membership helped Sightsavers to gain greater recognition with DFID." (Caroline Harper, CEO) • SOS: "Charter Membership was key to obtaining a large grant from a German insurance company." • World Vision: "We have used the Charter logo on our website to underpin our reputation. An easy to grasp trade mark like Fair Trade would be a really powerful tool for communication and marketing."
Accountability staff	Charter membership drives strong accountability practice across the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ActionAid: "Independent Review Panel feedback and peer comparison has helped us to significantly improve in several areas of accountability within Action Aid." • World Vision: "It is a very good standard to compare with how well we do in transparency and accountability compared to peers and help us think how to advance." • Amnesty: "It's good to have an external standard reporting system. It stops us tinkering with them internally."

Secondary Circle		
Programmers	Charter membership helped strengthening the beneficiary /supporter perspective in programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Vision: “The Charter has helped to keep our focus on accountability towards those we serve. CSOs need to be world leaders in accountability if they wish to convince governments and business to do likewise.”
Finance director	Charter Member peers keep us up to date about cutting edge developments in our field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBM: “Direct contact with other Charter Members was hugely helpful to develop a framework for integrated financial reporting across the entire CBM federation.”
Environmental sustainability staff	Charter membership has significantly improved our environmental management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paolo Ferrari, University of Bath, found in 2014 that Charter Members did much better than the rest of NGOs in his research sample in regard to environmental management. • Oxfam: “We learned a lot from our colleagues at Green-peace on how to improve environmental management.”
ME+L staff	Charter membership helps developing ME+L at the strategic level i.e. reshaping management decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency: “The charter provides an opportunity to reflect on and constantly improve our internal accountability mechanisms.” • TFCF: “From reviewing the guidelines and policies made by the Charter, it is essential to make an assessment and evaluation on the work. It will strengthen us to provide more efficient services to donors and needy people.”
Organisational development staff	Charter membership is valuable in sparking internal discussions about improving a CSO’s overall transparency and organisational development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOS: “It has been valuable in sparking internal discussion about ways we can improve our transparency and overall management. So it’s not just a communications tool; it’s a management tool as well.” • EEB: “Charter membership helps to further the EEB’s organizational development.” • Transparency: “The INGO Accountability Charter is unique in providing a quasi-universal accountability framework on a broad range of issues for the highly diverse international CSO sector. Asking tough questions particularly on legitimacy and impact, and equipped with an independent review mechanism whose findings are publicly disclosed, it covers the full accountability cycle and helps improving performance.”
Human Resources	Charter Membership has helped improve our Global Talent management – to ensure we have the right people at the right places tomorrow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TFCF: “HR Management has covered many issues and reminds us of the importance to empower staff capacities. Through the experience sharing from Charter Members, it will help enrich our training programs and contents.”