



Accountability Lab

Independent Review Panel Feedback

Accountability Report 2022

Review Round June–July 2024



Accountability Lab

Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

Review Round June-July 2024

15th July 2024

Dear Blair, Jean and Cheri,

Thank you for submitting your accountability core report using the new framework. 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.

The report demonstrates several strengths in its approach to accountability and transparency. It usefully provides supplementary information through numerous hyperlinks, allowing the panel to access further details to produce the report. The use of concrete examples throughout the document helps to illustrate key points and practices effectively; although the Panel would still encourage Accountability Lab to include more throughout the report. The report offers a comprehensive overview of activities and practices across the organisation, spanning from country cohorts to Country Directors, giving a holistic view of accountability measures at various levels. Notably, accountability priorities are fully integrated into the organisational strategy, indicating a strong commitment to these principles.

However, there are areas where the report could be enhanced. While maintaining its concise nature, the inclusion of more specific details would enable the IRP to conduct a more substantive and meaningful assessment of accountability. This could include survey results, the number of participants involved in surveys, examples of qualitative feedback, and vignettes highlighting good practices (for example, with work alongside partners or about staff's feedback). Additionally, future reports would benefit from discussing how the organisation has learned from and adapted to feedback, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to stakeholder input.

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





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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?

In 2022, Accountability Lab (AL) remained focused on its three core areas of work around campaigning, equipping people with the right knowledge production for better governance and collective action, and influencing upwards through communities. The report furthermore mentioned new partnerships at multiple levels, alongside the [Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement](#), the U.S. Embassy and the [Love Foundation](#) in Belmopan, the Bureau of Democracy, Rights, and Labor at the U.S. Department of State, and the [Manshur Jono Foundation](#). AL Global also continued work with the [C20](#), [TAP Network](#), and participated as a key convener for civil society for the [Summit for Democracy](#).

The report shares key achievements from AL's flagship programmes, showing how Integrity Icons, Accountapreneurs and Voice2Rep artists from its countries of operation have achieved recognition, sustainability, and long-term change through collaboration with the organisation. For Gov-HER-nance, AL Nepal and AL Nigeria were able to put women in the lead to demonstrate the gendered impact of climate change and promote inclusive governance respectively.

The response noted that AL has received positive feedback from donors, partners, beneficiaries, and Network Lab teams for their bottom-up approach. More specifically, positive feedback from HackCorruption participants validated the outcomes and impact of the program. Other impressive recognition came from USAID Administrator Samantha Power, AL Mali Country Director Doussouba Konate being invited to speak on a panel moderated by former President Barack Obama at the [Democracy Forum](#), and AL Nigeria Country Director, Odeh Friday speaking on a panel at the IACC and the African Leaders Summit.

The Panel notes the organisation's achievements positively, especially around the strong validating feedback from participants in the HackCorruption programme. Are other programmes achieving similar levels of feedback from participants too? Additionally, it would be good to include a quick link to annual financial reports per the guidelines in future iterations.

PM The response **partially met** the guideline, with **minor improvements** needed.

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

Note: While Accountability Lab did not respond to this question explicitly, the Panel is categorizing its feedback regarding the new strategy under this area. For future reference, the Panel would consider a new strategy a significant internal change.

The new strategy ([2023-2026](#)) is a continuation of the organisation's previous strategies, emerging after a year-long development process, that incorporates feedback



	from all levels within and external to the organisation. The process of creating this strategy is very impressive and constitutes a good practice . It's also important to note that the strategy is a living document, complemented by a clear Theory of Action that guides the organisation's mission, vision, value, and purpose.
-	Given that the organisation did not explicitly respond to this question, no grade has been given.

3	<p>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.)</p> <p>The response from this year, alongside responses from previous years (pg. 32, 2021 Report), demonstrates that the organisation has clear structure, policies, and processes in place to respond to a range of external and internal complaints and whistleblowing actions. The structure for mediation, and the role of AL Global in mediating country-level disputes, are clearly clarified. The role of mediation is also a very interesting practice.</p> <p>At the same time, some examples of complaints received by AL internally, and at country levels are included. The response furthermore explained how certain complaints have led to change, including in AL South Africa.</p> <p>While some solid practices, mechanisms and one example regarding how an <i>internal</i> complaint has been resolved are provided, the response did not provide any indication of the number or a generalised nature of the <i>external</i> complaints received, and how the organisation or its national-level Labs have dealt with them. Potentially, the number of substantive complaints may be quite low, but it would be great to showcase how the organisation's external complaint mechanism currently works in practice, noting that an online complaint mechanism is still to be established. Lastly, it may be good to provide an additional whistleblowing and complaint route that is not channeled directly to the Executive Director, in case complaints are made against them.</p> <p>For future reports, it would be great to focus more on the external complaints received, and how those have shaped the way Accountability Lab worked. Another area where the Panel would like to learn more about is the organisation's ability to receive anonymous feedback currently, and if there have been any lessons learned so far from them. Additionally, the Panel looks forward to learning more about how the online complaints mechanism shapes up.</p>
PS	The response partially met the guideline and significant improvements are still needed.

4	<p>Internally, how has your organisation practised a more dynamic approach to accountability?</p> <p>The response outlines that Accountability Lab has many avenues to engage staff across their different Labs, including regular team learning sessions (after each programme) and a distributed leadership structure to support local decision-making. The inclusion of staff-wide feedback in the development of the new strategy is well-noted.</p> <p>Elsewhere in the report, the organisation also mentioned that AL Pakistan runs a twice-yearly anonymous staff feedback process. The Panel wonders if similar processes are replicated at other Labs/the global level.</p>
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	<p>Reflections on how the organisation is aiming to lead in the accountability ecosystem building are well received. At the same time, it would be great to focus further on the actions being advanced internally to ensure that this goal is met. From our quick scan of the website, Accountability Lab has a range of initiatives that it provides for its staff, including the Junior Staff Council and its strategy also mentions various actions being undertaken to centre the well-being of staff members. It would be great to unpack and reflect on these types of initiatives in this section and include how staff and colleagues have responded to those types of actions.</p> <p>Moreover, careful reflections on how staff has directly led change within the organisation, or been empowered would be appreciated here. For example, what has been the key feedback received internally over the reporting period? How had the organisation responded to this feedback, and what commitment to change has been made as a result? Some vignettes and selected quotes from qualitative feedback can be great to lend further color and evidence to the report, alongside quantitative data that has already been provided.</p>
PS	The response partially met the guideline and significant improvements are still needed.
5	<p>How has your organisation worked towards being dynamically accountable to your external stakeholders (i.e. partners, communities, programme participants, etc)?</p> <p>The response showcases how the organisation translates values of transparency into action, which includes a suite of financial information and other policy documents being available on their website; furthermore, Board meeting minutes and post-programme surveys are also easily accessible to external stakeholders.</p> <p>Moreover, positive results from a recently conducted organisational assessment also demonstrate that the organisation has a strong positive impact on programme participants, and created shifts in “behaviour and policy at an organisational and community level”. The response noted that feedback and results of the assessment enabled the creation of the new 2023-2026 strategy.</p> <p>Reflections from the strategy development process, including how leaders from Country Labs have been able to shape the way the organisation responds to external pressures and demands, are well received.</p> <p>Moreover, it would also be really good to include feedback and reflections from participants and partners directly, when possible, on the organisation’s work. Elsewhere in the report, reflections from HackCorruption participants and successes from Voice2Rep and other programmes were shared. However, was there any feedback from local partners that the Accountability Lab received? How did the different programmes change and modulate according to participants' or partners' feedback or inputs? What are the available channels for partners to equitably provide feedback and what does work alongside them look like? Examples and additional results that speak to the above themes would be very welcomed.</p>
PS	The response partially met the guideline and significant improvements are still needed.



Key	Explanation (See expanded guidelines)
<i>FM</i>	The response fully met the specific guideline.
<i>PM</i>	The response partially met the guideline, with minor improvements needed.
<i>PS</i>	The response partially met the guideline and significant improvements are still needed.
<i>NM</i>	If the response has not met the specific guideline.