



Research Report Series

**INGO ACCOUNTABILITY: KEEPING FAITH WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS
A MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY
OF TWO INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS
IN HEALTH**

Marianne van der Wel

**Research Centre for Health Promotion
University of Bergen
Norway**

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II. ABSTRACT

Background

International non-governmental organisations (INGOs) are increasingly involved as actors in the public health arena. Accompanying INGO growth and increasing influence, questions about their accountability have emerged. Because INGOs have multiple stakeholders, they have a diversity of accountability obligations. In this regard, among the main challenges facing INGOs are the balancing of multiple accountabilities and the minimisation of inequity in to whom, and for what, they are accountable. Calls for research on INGO accountability have appeared in literature and in popular media in recent times. So far, however, few have critically examined the state of accountability of INGOs.

Methods

This research examined the state of accountability of two INGOs in health promotion by mapping their accountability systems, using a case study design. The data sources included all statutory documents and minutes of meetings of governing bodies, and in-depth, unstructured interviews with both INGO's Executive Directors. The data analysis involved cross-case synthesis. Each case was examined against the One World Trust GAP accountability framework. Triangulation of data sources was used in order to identify coherent accountability themes, focused on comparison of the information in the various documents and the interviews. The study also used member checking in order to ensure the accuracy of findings.

Results

The results revealed two well-developed accountability systems. However, neither accountability system was fully developed in terms of the GAP framework guidelines. Ways in which more robust accountability systems could be structured included these: increase the visibility and clarity of already-existing accountability mechanisms; develop mechanisms to prevent the development of potential accountability gaps; develop clear statements and policies for ensuring commitment to accountability; develop ways to assess performance against over-ordinate organisation aims, such as those stated in mission statements.

Conclusions

Enhanced INGO accountability should have the aim to keep faith with all stakeholders, and an accountability system analysis can be a useful first step. This research contributes to the INGO accountability literature by showing how the extent and nature of accountability systems can be documented using the GAP framework and proofs from statutory documents and interviews. Accountability assessment and strengthening is obviously an ethical matter, but may also have practical implications. Strengthened accountability of health promotion actors may help attract new and valuable partners, sustain existing partnerships and collaborative efforts, and thereby contribute to the quality, effectiveness and equity of health promotion.

1. INTRODUCTION

The field of health promotion places value on enabling interaction across sectors and between different levels of society for attaining interventions that are sustainable, effective and equitable. Accountability has in many contexts been associated with such efforts, however, in health promotion the concept is scarcely addressed.

Accountability exists between actors. It may describe positive interactions and trust, or, on the contrary; may refer to interactions of deteriorating quality, fostering distrust and disharmony.

Accountability implies assessing some action against some standard, norm or expectation. Accountability may be connected to our own consciousness and morality, with professional codes of conducts, or with national and international laws and regulations. In the context of health promotion, accountability may be linked to the principles laid down in the Ottawa Charter adopted at the first World Health Organization Global Conference on Health Promotion, and reinforced by further conferences in Adelaide, Sundsvall, Jakarta, Mexico, and Bangkok. The Charter sets out a clear agenda to pursue health for all by addressing the broad determinants of health including peace, sustainable resources, social justice and equity (World Health Organization, 1986).

This broad conceptualisation further assumes that: “all structures and systems which govern social and economic conditions should take account of the implications of

their actions in relation to the impact they have in both individual and collective health and well-being” (Nutbeam, 1998:351). Accountability is intrinsically related to health promotion action. The concerted efforts of governments, non-governmental organisations, private sectors, grassroots groups, and all other actors that in one way or another interact in health promotion action, need to be based on certain agreed upon terms in order to fully achieve their potential. Without such terms of engagement, imbalances in power, illusions of partnership or other factors easily may disturb, and even distort the efforts. The Alma Ata Declaration identified coordinated efforts and partnership as means for achieving the goals of Health for All by the year 2000 (World Health Organization, 1978). Knowing how to interact, or how partnership functions is essential. It is also important that when a partnership is entered into the parties will act in good faith and in agreement with what was defined at the outset of the engagement. Having a system for keeping good faith with all parties is essential to accountability.

In so far as accountability has been applied to the context of health promotion, it is perceived in relation to the public sector and their accountability towards the people served. For instance, in defining healthy public policy, the World Health Organization states that: “Healthy public policy is characterized by an explicit concern for health and equity in all areas of policy, and by accountability for health impact. (...) One important element in building healthy

public policies is the notion of accountability for health. Governments are ultimately accountable to their people for the health consequences of their policies, or lack of policies. A commitment to healthy public policies means that governments must measure and report on their investments for health, (...), in a language that all groups in society readily understand” (World Health Organization, 1998:14). With the structural changes in global governance with the resulting dispersal of responsibility between several actors, there is a need to focus on the so-called new actors (Newell and Bellour, 2002). In the context of health systems, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (at both national and international levels) play an increasing role (Brinkerhoff, 2003; World Health Organization, 2002). The reasons for their increased role are varied: the rise in contracting out of health service delivery, increased numbers of public-private partnerships and NGO participation in policy networks (Cornwall, Lucas and Pasteur, 2000).

NGOs thus play an increasing role in health system accountability (Brinkerhoff, 2003). In health systems, accountability has been used as a means for improving the quality, the effectiveness, and the equity in health services and the responsiveness to the public needs (ibid; Emmanuel and Emmanuel, 1996). Accountability is vital for health systems in at least three areas of concern: the declining quality and access to health services, the power health care actors have to affect people’s lives and well-being and the need for proper accounting of resource use, as health is a major budgetary expenditure (Brinkerhoff, 2003; World Health Organization, 2001).

However, the usage of accountability is perhaps more often associated with politics

and how to restrain power, prevent abuses and keep in line with established rules (Schedler, 1999). Further, in sociology, it has been associated with communication, and semantic devices for building bridges between the promised and the performed (giving excuses and justifications) (Scott and Lyman, 1968). Social psychologists have applied experimental design techniques to explore how individuals behave under various scenarios and situations that demand accountability (Tetlock and Skitka, 1989). Recently, accountability has increasingly been associated with strengthening the legitimacy of international institutions (Grant and Keohane, 2005).

Whether as a means for building trust between partners, for preventing abuse of authority and mandate, or as a means for providing proofs of effectiveness, accountability concerns health promoters – either individually or collectively in, for example, professional health unions and NGOs. However, few have so far critically examined how accountability actually operates in health (George, 2003). For instance, in strengthening health systems it has been observed that the intervention designs and strategies employed do not use accountability as the organising theme, but that they rather focus on “one or another aspect of health system reform, and treat accountability (if mentioned at all) as a secondary or corollary dimension” (Brinkerhoff, 2004:376).

In regard to NGOs specifically, accountability has for the most part been the object of a normative discussion: should NGOs be held accountable – if so, to whom and for what? Although there seems to be a development in agreeing that accountability is needed, there are few suggestions for effective intervention design for how to

operationalise accountability. Literature on accountability has emphasised approaching accountability from a stakeholder perspective (Blagescu, de Las Casas, and Lloyd, 2005; Brown and Moore, 2001; Edwards and Hulme, 2002). This perspective is inherently more appropriate to apply to the NGO sector, for a number of reasons.

With the above considerations as its point of departure, this thesis endeavoured to carry out a critical evaluation of the state of accountability in two international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) in health promotion by mapping their accountability systems using the Global Accountability Project (GAP) framework (Blagescu et al, 2005). The purpose was three-fold. First, it was to provide the Board of Trustees, the Officers and the key administrative staff of the two organisations with information to enable the organisations to improve their stakeholder accountability systems. Second, it was to stimulate the organisation in critically assessing its role and effective functioning in society and in health promotion. Third, the study was conducted to benefit scholars and practitioners of INGOs on how to approach accountability by contributing a multiple-case study to the literature.

The study was commissioned by the International Union for Health Promotion and Education (the IUHPE), about which more is said later. The system of governance of the IUHPE has been under review and revision for several years, and plans to continue the process of review and revision of governance are a priority for the IUHPE's Board and management. As an embedded part of these efforts, the organisation wanted to learn about how it is managing its multiple accountabilities.

The second organisation included in this study shared the particular character of the IUHPE, and will in turn be further described.

1.1 Study objectives

The objectives of this multiple-case study were to:

- Map the approach to accountability of two global INGOs
- Compare and contrast the approaches with one another
- Compare and contrast the approaches with relevant theory

2. BACKGROUND

This chapter intends to explain why accountability is essential for INGOs, the recent developments in the accountability construct, and how interventions aiming at operationalising INGO accountability may be designed.

2.1 Defining international non-governmental organisations

A defining characteristic of all NGOs, local, regional, national and international, is that they are non-profit, voluntary entities which provide services to their member-base and/or to the public (Brown, Khagram, Moore and Frumkin, 2000; Kaldor, 2001; Uphoff, 1996). NGOs may have roles as service providers (instrumental functions), and as proponents of values/ideals/beliefs (value-based function), see Frumkin and Andre-Clark (2000). Through the latter function, NGOs enable people to demonstrate commitment to social goals and values (Salamon, Hems and Chinnock, 2000). The expressive dimension is what significantly differentiates these NGOs from each other, as well as from other organisation types.

International NGOs (INGOs) are a sub-type of NGOs with organisational structures/operations in more than one country (Brown et al, 2000; Kaldor, 2001; Kovach, Neligan and Burall, 2003). Differences in scale between NGOs and INGOs may further turn on issues of budget, staff size, membership reach, political influence and responsibility (Anheier, 2005). Their organisational assets can be described in terms of universalism, individualism, voluntary authority and human purposes (Boli and Thomas, 1999). Universalism refers to the fact that any interested person may become a member and that anyone anywhere is a potential beneficiary of INGO activities. Universalism is also evident in the breadth of what INGOs claim to do. For instance, providing health services is a universally valid undertaking. Individualism refers to the characteristic that most INGOs only accept individuals or associations of individuals as members. It also relates to its structure, as many (but not necessarily all) INGOs have a democratic one-person one-vote decision-making procedure, and often downplay national and corporate identities in their conferences and publications. Voluntary authority means that INGOs employ limited resources (which includes the voluntary dedication and effort of its members), in order to collectively and through rational procedures make rules, set standards and spread principles. As INGOs have limited sanctioning power, this informal authority becomes their strongest means of influencing other actors and policies. Last, human purposes refer to aims are broadly social (as they do not seek economic growth, for example).

INGOs may in turn be divided into several sub-sets, according to what type of activities they primarily carry out, their type of membership, degree of linking-up with other

organisations, etc. In chapter 3, a definition of the two cases of this study will be presented.

2.2 Accountability rhetoric

Despite its popularity, accountability is poorly understood. This may be explained by “the chameleon quality of accountability” (Sinclair, 1995: 219) and seen as resulting because “its field of application is as broad as its potential for consensus” (Schedler, 1999: 13). Understanding accountability is thus shaded by both its multiple meanings, and its multiple settings.

Accountability may take on various forms and this is evident from how it has been defined as a means, a process, a commitment, or some combination of these. Closer scrutiny of these definitions suggests, however, that the discrepancies represent differences in emphasis and perspective, rather than fundamental conflicts in substance. (The different perspectives will be elaborated on in section 2.3)

In the first sense, accountability is “the means by which individuals and organizations report to a recognized authority, or authorities, and are held responsible for their actions” (Edwards and Hulme, 1994, 2002:192). This definition emphasises being held responsible by others which have the *right to require* accountability. Such rights may be derived from structures or hierarchies, from particular acts of delegation, but also from more diffuse expectations and commitments (Leat, 1990). To this effect, accountability is linked up with control, surveillance, monitoring, punishment and public exposure (Schedler, 1999).

Accountability thus may be associated with differences in power (Newell and Bellour, 2002). An actor may be perceived as more powerful by virtue of his position or ability to voice his needs and expectations. Lack of power, however, expresses itself as the inability to hold someone to account (ibid). There is an essential difference in using *right to require* and *ability to require*. Ability is less rigid, and opens up for that accountability is adaptive. An actor's accountability practice needs to be heedful to its environments, and in turn responsive in both reactive and proactive terms (Kearns, 1996). As such, some see responsiveness as the central tenet of accountability (Brinkerhoff, 2003).

Accountability exists between actors, as a "moderator" or "referee" of the dynamics in two-way relationships, such as between service-providers and patients, elected representatives and voters (George, 2003:161). The stakeholder construct may add more preciseness to where parties may stand in accountability relationships. Stakeholders, as the term is used here, are not merely those with formal authority over an organisation and its assets, but all actors that affect or are affected by the organisation's activities (Freeman, 1984). Stakeholders may be internal or external to an organisation. The former refers to individuals or groups that are formally a part of the organisation (members, employees, trustees), whilst the latter refers to individuals or groups who are affected by an organisation's decisions and activities but who are not formally part of the organisation (funders, supporters, beneficiaries, partners, governments, peer organisations). Crucially, stakeholders have the ability to either help or hinder the organisation in its activities, depending on their interests in the

organisation's achievements (Blagescu et al 2005).

As an actor enters into a larger system of interrelated accountability relationships, accountability creates a 'reciprocating matrix' (Emmanuel and Emmanuel, 1996). This further creates a situation in which who is accountable to whom, for what and how becomes hard to determine.

Therefore, accountability is increasingly perceived as an interactive process. Definitions on accountability as a process focus on how an actor "(...) builds and maintains a relationship with stakeholders based on transparency and influence" (Lewis, 2001:201); makes a commitment to "respond to and balance the needs of stakeholders in its decision-making processes and activities, and delivers against this commitment" (Blagescu et al, 2005:20); and "(...) holds itself openly responsible for what it believes, what it does and what it does not do in a way which shows it involving all concerned parties and actively responding to what it learns" (Slim, 2002: 10). Intrinsic to these definitions is the assumption that an actor may be "taking responsibility" for itself (Cornwall, et al, 2000:3).

To summarise these deliberations: accountability implies being open and transparent; responding to accountability requirements and enabling engagement with all affected parties; monitoring and evaluating own performance in those regards; as well as being sanctioned.

2.3 Accountability and INGOs: keeping faith with stakeholders

In recent times, the number and impact of international non-governmental

organisations in health has increased significantly. From 1357 in 1990 to 2036 in 2000, INGOs in health increased by 50 % (source: Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor, 2001 in the Human Development Report 2002:103). INGOs in health have been recognised by the World Health Organisation as partners to develop equitable health systems that respond to the needs of the people and to sustain the political will to reach universal coverage (World Health Organization, 2002). Accompanying this growth, questions of the accountability of INGOs have emerged (although, as will be seen, perhaps mostly with respect to development and humanitarian INGOs). Further, there has been a growing interest in the role and impact of INGOs and other organisations considered as being a part of a global civil society³. The rapid growth in the number, activity and visibility of NGOs has been termed an 'associational revolution' (Salamon, 2001). As actors in this 'revolution', INGOs have, over the last two decades, come to the fore in global decision-making, together with state and commercial actors (Anheier, 2005; Brown et al. 2000; Chabbott, 1999; Edwards and Hulme, 2002; Kaldor, 2001; Kovach et al, 2003; Schofer, 1999). This has happened in the context of the emergence of the 'new policy agenda', referring to political inclinations following from confidence in ideas from economic neo-liberalism and liberal democratic theory (Eade, 2000; Edwards and Hulme, 2002).

³ Examples of research centres in this area are Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations at Harvard University, USA and The Center for Civil Society Studies of the Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies, USA. The Union of International Associations, Belgium, publishes the Yearbook of International Organizations.

Influenced by ideas of economic neo-liberalism, national governments and international governmental organisations have tended to reshape their role in the provision of social services from provider to funders and regulator, partly because NGOs have a growing reputation as being more efficient and cost-effective service providers for some niches of the public. Some NGOs, for example, receive support from official agencies to deliver welfare services to those left uncovered by the market. While NGOs have long been active in service delivery, they have come to be seen in recent years as among the preferred channels, sometimes in substitution for the state (Edwards and Hulme, 2002). The increased government funding accompanying these trends has offered opportunities to scale-up NGO size and operations, but as NGOs grow closer to donors, so does the risk of co-optation by those that pay the bills (Edwards and Hulme, 2002; Pearce, 2000). In an atmosphere permitting such role blending, heightened vigilance to accountability, performance monitoring and strategic planning is seen by many as essential to the ethical management of NGOs (Edwards and Hulme, 2002). These developments generate debate, especially within development circles, about NGOs and their place in society: can they function as part of civil society while also having some of the characteristics of market-based institutions? (Edwards and Hulme, 1997; Pearce, 2000).

The second force for change -- liberal democratic theory -- relates to the expressive function of NGOs; they are seen by many as a means to strengthen democracy by acting as counterweights to state-power (Edwards and Hulme, 2002). Through their democratisation role NGOs are expected to contribute to pluralism and diversity as well as unity. By encouraging social interaction,

NGOs are expected to help to create habits of trust and reciprocity that contribute to a sense of community (Salamon et al, 2000). This relates directly to the issue of accountability, since NGOs aim above all to be a representative voice for their constituencies' concerns and interests.

Globalisation processes have also been fuelling the growth of NGOs, especially INGOs (Brown et al, 2000). With the 'shrinking' of the world, the formation and operation of INGOs is becoming easier and less expensive, information is more easily exchanged, and INGOs can engage problems for which they may have particularly relevant solutions (e.g. promoting learning, analysing and collecting evidence, and deciding and advocating policy alternatives) (Brown et al, 2000). INGOs with social purposes have grown from having almost no presence at all before 1945 to being central actors on the international stage today (Schofer, 1999). In the health arena, they share with international governmental organisations, such as the World Health Organization, and with multi-national commercial entities, such as drug manufacturers, the ability to shape and change the agendas of governments. They command human resources for health promotion that are unique. They have a wide range of internal and external stakeholders, which increases the complexity of balancing accountability to all stakeholders. The danger of co-optation and mission distortion due to influence by governments and commercial organisations is ever present. INGOs that drift into becoming mostly service providers for governments can also be controlled by governments. The value of such arrangements for governments is so obvious that some governments are even spinning-off public health units into something new – NGOs that have outside

management, but are wholly owned, financed and directed by the government. In this fast changing landscape, with ever more complex forms of INGOs emerging, issues of accountability are becoming more complex. Today, scrutiny from both within and without makes accountability management a central issue and task for INGOs (Brown and Moore, 2001).

What to do about accountability is not necessarily obvious. In the past, INGOs were able to claim that good intentions and moral values provided sufficient proofs of accountability (Blagescu et al, 2005). Such proofs are hardly sufficient in the present political environment within which INGOs are working. Accountability is in many minds associated with punishments that are meted out for bad acts. Such a perception may have unfortunate consequences, should an INGO decide to manage its accountability by minimising risks and conforming to financial or procedural rules, at the expense of innovation and performance (Behn in Brown, Moore and Honan, 2003). Managed this way, accountability practices could actually hinder NGOs in achieving their missions (Ebrahim, 2005).

Fortunately, accountability is increasingly perceived as beneficial and crucial for NGOs, as a means for strengthening organisational performance and avoiding abuse or misuse of power (Blagescu et al, 2005; Brinkerhoff, 2003). It is perceived to enhance the organisation's ability to gain staff, power and legitimacy (Blagescu et al, 2005; Edwards and Hulme, 2002; Kearns, 1996; Ospina, Diaz, O'Sullivan, 2002).

Understanding the value of strengthened accountability is one thing. It is another thing to understand what should be strengthened. Calling for 'more'

accountability has the potential to focus attention on quantitative aspects rather than qualitative aspects of accountability. Quantitative thinking encourages a concept of accountability that is unidimensional and linear, and that has been warned against (Romzek, 2000). The fact that NGOs are facing multiple demands is additionally problematic because such competing demands can actually lead to poorer performance – satisfying clients and donors can sometimes be in conflict with the organisation's long term goals and may impede organisational learning (Brown and Moore, 2001; Ebrahim, 2005). In fact, thinking of accountability in linear terms has been and still is common. A prime example is the principal-agent model of accountability in which a principal gives authority to an agent to act in the principal's interests (Blagescu et al, 2005; Brown and Moore, 2001; Fama and Jensen, 1983). In such relationships, only those with formal authority have the right to require the accountability of others (Leat, 1990), and the more information the agent provides, the more accountable she is. Accountability in principal-agent terms is very often used to describe accountability relationships between politicians and the electorate, or company directors and shareholders (Blagescu et al, 2005).

The principal-agent model of accountability clearly has relevance to NGOs, as when a manager is responsible to her board of directors, and her staff is accountable to her. However, principal-agent accountability practices alone are too narrow and even misleading in conceptualising the full range of accountability issues that NGOs face (Blagescu et al, 2005; Brown and Moore, 2001; Kearns, 1996). From the stakeholder perspective, NGOs must respond to multiple expectations and claims. Each stakeholder of

an NGO plays an integral role in the organisation's operations (Blagescu et al, 2005). The donors provide funds, the government provides legal legitimacy, the supporters give their time and money and the beneficiaries provide the organisation with purpose and legitimacy. These stakeholders have varying vested and ideological interests in the organisation, and varying capacity, access and opportunity to express their expectations (Blagescu et al, 2005; Edwards and Hulme, 2002). Effective accountability therefore requires that all stakeholders fully understand and agree their obligations and rights, and believe that the others will act accordingly (Cornwall et al, 2000). This describes an ideal, and reality may be far from the ideal. Accountability management, therefore, has more to do with a constant effort to improve accountability performance, than with achieving perfection.

Responding to all stakeholders all the time is of course not feasible. Certain stakeholders are involved at various times in various aspects of a NGOs decision-making processes and operations (Blagescu et al, 2005; Ospina et al, 2002; Brown and Moore, 2001). Stakeholder analysis, or the mapping of linkages between stakeholders, is a widely recognised tool for identifying and prioritising stakeholders (Blagescu et al, 2005; Brown et al, 2003; Brinkerhoff, 2003). The main purposes are to clarify who the key stakeholders are (and their interests and characteristics), assess how they affect the organisation and are affected by it, map the relationships between the stakeholders; anticipate potential conflicts, and assess the capacity of different stakeholders to participate in the decisions of the organisation (Blagescu et al, 2005).

Subsequent to the mapping of stakeholders is the task of prioritising them (Blagescu et al,

2005; Brown et al, 2003). There are various criteria for weighting stakeholders, however, key considerations are: influence, responsibility and representation (Blagescu et al, 2005). The influence a stakeholder exerts may create disturbances for the INGO, as it may under-account to less powerful and over-account to the more demanding stakeholders (Edwards and Hulme, 2002). The organisation has different sets of responsibilities (financial, regulatory and ethical/moral) and needs to consider for what and to whom it is responsible for each practice or policy it develops or implements (e.g. performance). Questions about representation have to do with whether all affected parties have a say (exit/access), and whether the stakeholders truly represent their constituencies (e.g. voice). INGOs in particular need to be concerned with representation not only in terms of gender, age, race, disability, but also in terms of culture (Blagescu et al, 2005). This is crucial for organisations that base their legitimacy on speaking on behalf of international affiliates.

Yet there are biases in actual NGO accountability practices that raise caution signs. Research has shown that NGOs tend to respond to their stakeholders differently, and in ways that favour some stakeholders over others. For example, to the “upwards” set of stakeholders (governments and institutional donors), NGO responsibilities are clear and the mechanisms for ensuring accountability are strong. On the other hand, to other sets of stakeholders, NGO accountability lacks clarity and strength. These are “downwards” stakeholders (beneficiaries, clients or constituencies), “inwards” stakeholders (organisational mission, values, members, supporters and staff) and “horizontal” stakeholders

(peers/other INGOs) (Blagescu et al, 2005; Ebrahim, 2003; Ospina et al, 2002). This asymmetry is referred to as the ‘accountability gap’ (Salamon et al, 2000). This gap is encouraged by a view of accountability that over-emphasises the principal-agent relationship that a NGO has with its “upwards” benefactors. The financial aspect of accountability is important, but other aspects of accountability also have importance, with implications for accountability towards the stakeholders that are not upwards. Various accountability forms are described next.

Accountability is often associated with financial issues; however the demand for NGO accountability is much wider, including reporting on relationships, intentions, objectives, methods and impact. Accountability thus deals not just with information which is quantitative, hard and empirical (finances), but also with information that is qualitative, soft and speculative (Slim, 2002).

Financial accountability involves procedural compliance using mechanisms such as auditing, budgeting and accounting (Brinkerhoff, 2003). This is also commonly called functional accountability: accounting for resources, resource use and immediate impacts (Avina in Ebrahim, 2003; Edwards and Hulme, 2002). For NGOs that are funded by others, this kind of accountability is particularly relevant to their role as service providers. However, for INGOs which have a due-paying member base, functional accountability also relates to the management of the members’ money. Besides functional accountability, NGOs have also to be concerned with accountability related to performance measurement, evaluation and service delivery improvement (Brinkerhoff, 2003).

NGOs working in the health arena are accountable that the services they provide are of sufficiently quality and quantity, and that they achieve the results they have planned for.

In addition to functional and performance accountability, NGOs face accountability issues related to their expressive function as described earlier, that is their function as advocates of specific values/ideals/beliefs. NGOs are accountable not only for service delivery, but must also ensure that their advocacy, lobbying and watchdog activities are conducted in an atmosphere of citizen participation, transparency, openness, responsiveness and trust (Brinkerhoff, 2003). INGOs with advocacy functions in particular are accountable not only for what they do, but also for what they say and how they say it. They must strive to maximise the veracity of their pronouncements by referring to empirical evidence, and to their moral and professional authority, from which they derive their power to speak (Slim, 2002). Accounting for the expressive function includes attention to the impacts that an organisation's activities have on the actions of other organisations as well as on the wider environment (Avina in Ebrahim, 2003; Edwards and Hulme, 2002).

As described above, NGO accountability must be approached in a broad sense. However, up until now NGOs have not coalesced around a common conceptualisation that operationalises the various aspects of accountability that need consideration (Ospina et al, 2002). In a vacuum, NGOs may tend to focus on either a wrong set of stakeholders, or on one set at the expense of others (Blagescu et al, 2005; Brown et al, 2003; Edwards and Hulme, 2002). When NGOs are focused mostly on upwards stakeholders, their accountability

may become disconnected from their legitimacy, the source of which is primarily downwards stakeholders (Blagescu et al, 2005; Tandon, 2002). The key challenge is therefore to achieve more balanced, or negotiated, accountability (Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Ospina et al, 2002). For an NGO, managing this well “not only ensures that decisions are effective in meeting the needs of those it affects, but also that decision-making processes are more equitable” (Blagescu et al, 2005:19). So, it is recognised that calling merely for more accountability is not helpful. In order for accountability to inform action, both a conceptual and an analytical clarification is required (Brinkerhoff, 2003). Conceptual clarification has been addressed above, and in the next section analytical clarification is in focus.

2.4 Accountability systems

Accountability management systems (e.g., models, approaches) provide the means for NGOs to be responsive to their stakeholders. A number of models appear in literature from various disciplines. In public administration, Romzek (1996) has assessed the many ways in which public administrators may respond to multiple demands for accountability, and presented a framework where four accountability relationships (hierarchical, legal, political and professional) are associated with the degree of simplicity of the administrative task and the type of behavioural expectation. Within the context of governance, Dubnick and Justice (2004) suggest that mapping accountability implies multiple level analyses (individual and collective); arenas of social (inter)action (cultures, institutions, political economies, organisations, etc.), practices, processes, conditions, and mechanics, as well as interrelationships

among these elements. In the literature on strategic management, Kearns (1996) applied a model originating from military contexts to the NGO setting. The primary instrument is the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, and the framework construes accountability as something that can be managed strategically.

One identified weakness of these frameworks is that they do not cater for the likely differences facing the stakeholders to hold the organisation to account, and subsequently; can not adequately address accountability issues.

A fourth model does, however, partly take account of this challenge. It was developed by researchers at the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations, Harvard University and focused on the processes that NGO leaders need to incorporate into accountability systems; including assessing how stakeholders affect and are affected by the organisation and its operations (Brown et al, 2003). This model encourages NGOs to reflect upon their role, performance and representativeness, with due attention to downwards stakeholders.

Yet another framework, discussed here in slightly more detail than the others, is appealing due to its comprehensive view of accountability, and how it operationalises accountability by focusing on specific tasks within four overlapping dimensions. The framework is outlined by Blagescu et al (2005) for the One World Trust, as a part of their Global Accountability Project (GAP). The authors explain that the GAP framework is not meant to provide a specific approach to accountability, as accountability very much depends on the context, issues and stakeholders involved. Thus, they recognise

that a universal approach is unrealistic. Rather, the GAP framework presents some common factors organisations should, at a minimum, reflect upon in order to increase accountability towards stakeholders. It is also stressed that even though some of the factors already may be in the governance and management structures of INGOs, this framework may open up for increasing the value of these by applying them in the accountability context (Blagescu et al, 2005).

The framework includes two essential elements: 1) the four dimensions as independent measures/entities (with specific tasks subordinated for each); and 2) their interplay, the mutual strengthening (or weakening) of the dimensions. The latter is thus to be considered the overall approach to accountability.

First, the four dimensions will be described in brief terms. The complete guideline of the GAP framework including the specific standards and tasks is enclosed as Appendix 1.

Transparency relates to openness about organisational activities and operations. A flow of information is not sufficient; the organisation must open up for dialogue with stakeholders. This involves answering the following question: what information do stakeholders need to make informed decisions? The diffusion of information needs to take into account the likely capabilities of stakeholders in relation to access to information and abilities for understanding it. Transparency also relates to openness about how stakeholders may input decision-making processes.

Participation refers to the process whereby stakeholders are enabled to play an active

part in the organisation. Participation should relate to policies and activities, and must lead to change. A passive variant of participation is, in other words, sub-optimal. Of practical limitations, participation should at a minimum mean greater or lesser participation of the various stakeholders at various stages of the decision-making processes and activities. This implies that the organisation needs to prioritise stakeholders, preferably based on some guideline in order to ensure equity in representation. In order for stakeholders to participate, the organisation needs to clearly describe its decision-making structures and procedures and how stakeholder engagement relates to these. The terms of the engagement must be mutually acknowledged.

Evaluation refers to a process whereby the organisation, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, monitors and reviews progress and results against goals and objectives, feeds learning from this back into the organisation, and reports on the results. Evaluation should not be confined to end-results. The organisation needs to evaluate its progress on an on-going basis in order to be able to make adjustments which in turn may lead to improvements of results. As such, evaluation contributes to increased organisational learning and responsiveness to stakeholders. Crucially, in order for evaluation to strengthen accountability, it is needs to be combined with participation. In addition to evaluating activities, the following should be accounted for: financial performance, social and environmental impact, employee rights and conditions, and compliance with relevant codes of conducts.

Complaint and response mechanisms refer to mechanisms whereby stakeholders may address complaints. Complaints enable stakeholders to hold the organisation to

account for decisions and actions, and should not be confined to results. Stakeholders should be able to address complaints against practice and policies. This dimension refers to non-judicial means of dispute resolution between stakeholders and the organisation. There may be great variations between the complaints; as a consequence, the process of administering them may vary accordingly in formality. In any case, the organisation should have a guideline for how it will receive, investigate and respond to complaints. The organisation needs to ensure that complaints are properly reviewed and acted upon and it should not allow accountability gaps by responding to only ‘critical’ complaints at the expense of others. Finally, complaint mechanisms should lead to corrective action and organisational learning.

Second, the framework focuses on the interplay between these dimensions. Above, some linkages have been mentioned. Essentially, whilst each dimension makes independent and important contributions, none is sufficient alone. According to the authors, meaningful accountability demands that all four are active. Inactiveness in one dimension may affect the other dimensions negatively. For instance, disclosing information loses its value if there is no opportunity to make a comment and react on what was disclosed (e.g. no means for participation). Where the dimensions stand or is positioned vis-à-vis the others is important. Blagescu et al summarise by stating that where there is overlap, there is strengthened accountability. The framework is presented in figure 1 (see the next page). This figure represents an ideal, in a real-life setting; the picture may be quite different.

Blagescu et al describes the framework as a “voluntary measure”, and as an “enabler” for

accountability (ibid, 2005:11). The drive for accountability must ultimately come from within the organisation, and is in turn fuelled by key conditions such as commitment, embeddedness, and responsiveness (ibid).

The GAP framework addresses INGOs, international governmental organisations (IGOs) and transnational corporations (TNCs), and as such, it may be susceptible for the same type of criticism as the Global Accountability Report (Kovach, et al, 2003), produced by the same organisation. Specifically, treating NGOs alike with IGOs and TNCs is criticised since NGOs play quite different roles in society, and because companies “seek to avoid accountability where possible” (Tilt, 2005:4).

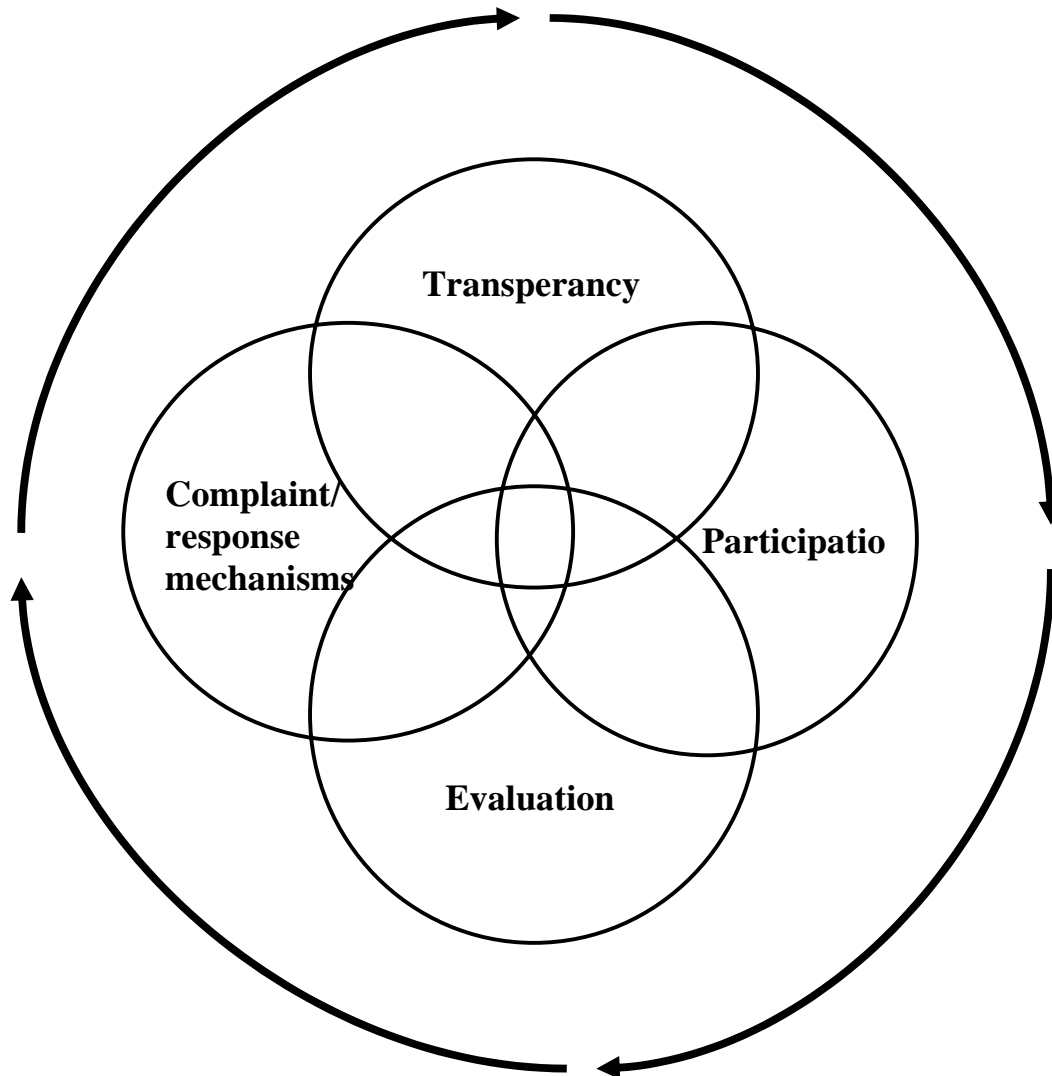


Figure 1: Blagescu et al (2005)

2.5 Research on INGOs and accountability

There has been a call for research on the level of accountability of INGOs in recent times, in literature as well as in newspapers and NGO monitoring agencies, such as NGO Watch. To claim that INGOs today are unaccountable would be a misjudgement. In fact, INGOs are already accountable in various ways (Blagescu et al, 2005; Tilt, 2005). Several sprouting accountability

mechanisms and processes have been reported on. For example, Humanitarian NGOs have developed a Code of Conduct, a Humanitarian Charter, and a Humanitarian Accountability Project (HAP). Further, they have placed emphasis on the quality and transparency of evaluations and created a learning network gathering and sharing lessons learnt from humanitarian operations, and more (Blagescu et al, 2005; Slim, 2002).

These developments are however sector-wide and not individual practice.

Another example is the Global Accountability Report (Kovach et al, 2003) which surveyed seven INGOs (as well as five IGOs and six TNCs) on the level of their performance in two aspects of accountability: member control of governance structures and access to information. Member control was not found to be a problem within INGOs, as they employ mechanisms to ensure that a minority of member cannot control the executive. For instance, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) employ formulas to ensure geographic representation of the membership as a whole. In regard to access to information online, however, it was found that less of half of the INGOs studied publish annual reports online, and only IFRC, Oxfam International (OI), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) provide financial information within their annual reports. Provision of evaluation material was also found to be inconsistent (ibid). Despite these emerging efforts, few examples of comprehensive evaluations of the state of accountability of INGOs were identified in literature.

With the emphasis that health promotion places on effectiveness, equity and quality, this study not only identified a need to critically examine the state of accountability of INGOs in health, it also applied the broad conceptualisation of accountability, which involves that the INGOs need to take account of the qualitative aspects of accountability (e.g. equity in representation, evaluation of impact on broader social and environmental conditions, enabling stakeholders to complain, etc.).

3. THE SAMPLE

The cases that were investigated in this study were defined as a specific sub-set of INGOs⁴. The process of approaching the definition included specifying the organisational features of the IUHPE such as scope and sectoral belonging, structure and activities, and comparing these with existing classification schemes and definitions. This definition was in turn used to select the second organisation involved in this study.

3.1 Scope and sectoral belonging

The IUHPE has an overt focus on improving the quality and effectiveness of health promotion. It is in other words an organisation focusing on a scientific discipline.

Organisations of such purposes emerged after the Second World War, when private philanthropies introduced the idea of development based on science, in addition to development based on moral principles, and religion (Chabbot, 1999). This was to be a lasting transition and with the tremendous expansion of science, the founding rate of science INGOs increased quite rapidly after 1945 (Schofer, 1999).⁵

Some of these are called socially oriented science INGOs, dedicated to the advancement of science in order to address social problems such as the promotion of peace, economic development, health, ethics, and so on. This sub-set of INGOs

⁴ The definition was developed through a collaborative effort of the researcher, a fellow researcher, and the research supervisor.

⁵ However well before the War, there also existed science INGOs of and for scientists and technologists, having the primary purpose is primarily to generate benefit to research/discipline/profession. Science NGOs often are isolated, and many only rarely establish formal links with other organisations (Schofer, 1999).

particularly responded to the special character of the IUHPE, however, as the IUHPE works in health, the above definition was delimited to include socially oriented science INGOs whose main interest focus is on health. Here, these are termed 'health arena socially oriented science INGOs', hereafter termed HASOSINGOs.

3.2 Structure

According to the definition, socially oriented science INGOs often have memberships that include policy professionals and interested citizens (sometimes to the exclusion of scientists), and they tend to link up with other like-minded organisations (Schofer, 1999). The structure of socially oriented science INGOs tends to involve a quite dense network with multiple accountability relationships. The IUHPE network involves stakeholders such as board members, individual members, local governments, international organisations, and national agencies. The IUHPE structure will be described in detail in chapter 5.

3.3 Main activities

Socially oriented science INGOs often undertake activities that include bringing scientific information to the citizenry or policymakers (advocacy), promotion of science or science policy that directly ameliorates social problems and promotion of ethics in the application of science (Schofer, 1999). The IUHPE activities involve all of these elements.

To preserve confidentiality, the identification markers of the two cases have been made anonymous and for ease of comparison their structure has been denominated using the same terms. The organisations are termed INGO1 and INGO2 from this section and onward.

4. METHODS

The choice of study design needs to reflect the study objectives and assist the researcher in achieving these. In this study, the objectives were partly defined⁶ by a commissioning unit, which influenced the study in two regards:

- 1) It had an intended audience (the decision-making bodies of the organisations)
- 2) It had an intended use (to inform future decision-making and action on the subject of accountability)

With the above considerations as a framework, this study selected its study design in the tradition of utilisation-focused evaluation. This tradition involves the research participants in defining the study objectives, and in deciding the study design (Patton, 1997). This enabled the researcher to be pragmatic in carrying out the research and to respond to the particularities of the organisations involved in such a way that the results would produce useful and tailored information about how the organisations are approaching accountability.

The choice of study design for this research was case study. Case studies are defined as the investigation of a social phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly where the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. A case study design was selected because it is an appropriate means to answer "how" and "why" research questions. It was also selected since the method makes it possible for the researcher to retain the

⁶ In his proposed plan for the period 2004-2007, the President of INGO1 framed this study as one focusing on governance. The study objectives were later amended to the present ones in a collaborative agreement between the President/the research supervisor and the researcher.

holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2003).

Since this study involved more than one case, it used a multiple-case design. Multiple-case design is seen to produce more compelling results than single-case design and it entails specific procedures for case study methodology (Yin, 2003). The methodology of this study is explained in the next section.

In carrying out either a single or a multiple-case study the researcher deals with a variety of data including observational, audio-visual, interview, and document data (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2003). Using observational data was constrained by lack of opportunity of being present in activities or meetings in which the organisations' accountability practices would have been observable. Another difficulty of observational data was that these would have left out accountability mechanisms which were not acted upon, but existed on paper. Audio-visual data would have, if they existed, entailed similar constraints. The study thus applied document and interview data.

4.1 The multiple-case study methodology

Multiple-case study investigates multiple (more than one) cases where each case serves a specific purpose within the overall scope of the inquiry (Yin, 2003). The present research investigated two cases with the objective of understanding more about how INGOs are approaching accountability by comparing and contrasting two cases with one another, as well as with theory on accountability. Due to constraints in resources and time, the number of cases investigated in this study was confined to not more than two cases.

4.2 Case selection

The second case, INGO2, was selected based on theoretical sampling. In a theoretical sampling, the groups or categories selected for investigation are those of relevance to the research question (Silverman, 2000). Multiple-case studies follow replication logic which means that after having carried out the first case study, the researcher carries out a "whole" new study on the next case, and that both the individual cases and the multiple-case results are focused on in the conclusion of the study (Yin, 2003). The second case was selected carefully in accordance with this rationality.

The study used snowball sampling in order to establish links with cases which would be relevant to the study objectives. The researcher asked INGO1 to nominate other similar organisations. On the basis of these nominees, the researcher selected the case based on the criteria explained below.

4.2.1 Case selection criteria

The researcher identified the following criteria for case selection:

- 1) The case needed to be an HASOSINGO (in accordance with the explanation provided in the previous chapter)
- 2) The headquarters of the case needed to be in a relative short distance from the headquarters of INGO1 in order to arrange and coordinate the field trip to both headquarters
- 3) The operating language of the case needed to be in English
- 4) The case needed to be willing to provide access to internal documents and to be disposed to participate in the interview

4.3 Research participants

Both cases involved several stakeholders whose interests or areas of responsibility

may be influenced by the results the study generated. These stakeholders include the members, the donors, the executive- and decision-making bodies of INGO1 and INGO2. The two latter groups were chosen as the research participants since these stakeholders were considered to be in a position to implement the study results.

The Executive Directors of both organisations were the key informants in this research project. They provided the researcher with documents, and were also interviewed by the researcher. Other staff members of INGO1 were primarily included in discussions of background papers, such as an interim report finalised in January 2006. The report included theory and current thinking on accountability and was provided the participants in order to set the scenery of this study and introduce the participants to the subject. Further, another research associate contributed in the formative stages of the study with classifying INGO1 as an HASOSINGO in collaboration with the researcher and the President of INGO1, who also supervised the research.

4.4 Data collection

The researcher collected data that demonstrated how the two organisations are approaching accountability. The researcher was aware that the liaisons between the research supervisor and INGO1, and between INGO1 and INGO2, eased the access to the data collected.

4.4.1 Documents

Documents were considered as an adequate means to collect data as these enabled the researcher to obtain the language of the cases selected, afforded access to them at a time convenient to the researcher, and represented so-called “thoughtful data”,

which refers to the idea that a higher level of consideration was involved in the production of it (Creswell, 2003).

The data collection excluded documents that were not produced on a regular basis, or that were not of a formal/official nature. This meant that documents such as membership reviews or specific activity evaluations were not included even though they may have shown examples of relevant accountability mechanisms. The documents used in this study included mission statements, bye-laws, constitutions, strategic directions, the minutes from the meetings of the executive and the governing bodies, as well as the general assemblies, activity reports, and journals (both electronic and paper version). In addition, the organisational web-sites were used as a data source in order to obtain information on the types of documents made publicly available. Due to differences in practice, the types of documents were slightly different represented in the two cases.

Prior to the data collection INGO1 agreed that it was acceptable to have the researcher present at the site during the data collection. The types and numbers of documents to be collected were proposed by the researcher and were decided on in agreement with the key informants in the study. Documents that were difficult to access or that were expected to be treated confidential were identified at the outset of the data collection. INGO2 specifically requested the minutes from meetings of the executive and decision-making bodies to be kept confidential, and the researcher complied with this request.

Data providing information about the accountability mechanisms and processes of INGO1 and INGO2 was provided by the key informants in this study, as well as from other staff members of INGO1. In collecting the documents, the informants were invited

to make suggestions for additional types and the potential contribution these documents might have had to the study was assessed by the researcher in collaboration with the informants.

Whilst collecting documents, the researcher reviewed the evidence and asked questions about their content. These questions were written in a separate note-book. In reviewing documents the researcher needs to be a good 'listener', which entails worrying whether there is any important message between the lines (Yin, 2003). The researcher marked where such messages were believed to be found, took note of the inference and later sought to corroborate it with other sources of information (the other documents or the notes from the interviews).

4.4.2 Interviews

After having scanned most of the documents, interviews were carried out with the key informants in the study. In qualitative studies, documents are often used to corroborate and augment data from other sources (Yin, 2003). The purpose of the interviews was to gain information from the informants⁷ about the accountability policies and practices in their respective organisations, and to investigate inferences found in the documents.

Interviews in case studies tend to be guided conversations rather than structured queries, and questions are of an open-ended nature (ibid). A semi-structured interview guide was used based on the accountability components in the framework which was explained in chapter two. Semi-structured interviews involve certain themes and questions that are set in advance but allow

⁷ Yin (2003) argues for the use of 'informants' rather than 'respondents' when their role in assisting the research exceeds merely responding to questions.

the order and content to be changed during the interaction between the interviewer and the informants in line with the interviewer's tact and judgements (Kvale, 1997). The guide used in this study was amended as improvements emerged.

Four key themes formed the structure of the interview⁸:

- 1) Transparency
- 2) Participation
- 3) Evaluation
- 4) Response and complaint mechanisms

The informant of INGO1 requested a copy of the interview guide in advance, and the researcher complied with this request.

4.5 Settings

The documents that were available at the organisations web-pages were electronically collected prior to the field visit. The other documents were provided during the visit at the headquarters of both organisations. The interviews were partly carried out on site, and partly over telephone after the researcher had returned to Norway. The reason for the deferment was time management.

4.6 Data recording

The procedure for data recording was to make notes from the documents. This often involved taking notice of both the content and structure (Creswell, 2003). In this study, it was also recorded whether the documents were available online, and/or distributed to members (and other stakeholders) via other means and which documents were of restricted accessibility.

The researcher prepared the documents in the following manner. Each document was

⁸ These themes were derived from the GAP framework (Blagescu et al, 2005)

given a name: Constitutions were named Con, Bye-laws were named BL, mission statements were named MIS, strategic directions were called SD, the minutes from the decision-making bodies' meetings were named DMM 1, 2, 3 (...) and the minutes from the executive bodies' meetings were named EXM 1, 2, 3 (...), the minutes from the general assemblies were named GAM 1, 2, 3 (...), the paper journals were named J1 and the electronic J2, the activity report AR and the notes from the interviews were named ExD1 for INGO1, and ExD2 for INGO2. In compliance with the request for confidentiality, the researcher rendered the information free from any identification markers.

Notes were taken during the interviews, and the informants were made aware of this. They were also informed that anything they said during interviews was not quoted.

4.7 Data analysis

Doing data analysis is not a fixed stage of the process of treating data. Rather, the researcher continuously interacts with or reflects on the data in order to make sense out of it. It is recommended to blend what is called the more generic steps with those tailored to the specific design chosen (Creswell, 2003). This study followed such a formula.

The procedures involved in the recording of data are considered as the first step in the analysis (ibid). The preparation of the material through the processes described above assisted the researcher in getting a preliminary overview of the extent of the study. Having this done, the researcher read through the data, made comments in the documents and notes in a separate notebook of what was perceived to be examples of accountability mechanisms and processes.

Next, the more specific analysis was conducted. In a multiple-case study design, one of the analytical techniques is to do a cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2003). In this study, the researcher first conducted the analysis of the first case, and described the findings, and then the same procedures were repeated with respect to the second case. Finally, cross-case conclusions were drawn.

The following describes more detailed how the analysis was conducted:

The GAP-framework was used as a frame of reference with which the content in the documents and the notes from the interviews were critically examined. A table was created using Microsoft Excel, in which the data was organised and recorded. The researcher looked for both actual accountability mechanisms and intentions for such. Where these were found, the sentence indicating the accountability mechanism was cited in the table with the exact location in the original document stated. The table displayed the data from the individual cases according to the uniform standards in the framework. It included one column for the GAP-framework, and a column for each of the cases.

Next, the researcher described the findings of each case individually and chronologically. The description was detailed and made effective use of citations in order to reference the findings accurately. Based on these descriptions, the researcher drew conclusions for each of the individual cases. These were then compared and contrasted. Both the individual and the cross-case conclusions are later presented in the discussion chapter.

4.8 Conditions influencing the study

In qualitative research validity, reliability and generalisability do not carry the same connotations as in quantitative research.

Instead, criteria such as accuracy, trustworthiness and credibility are often used (Creswell, 2003).

The following strategies for determining the accuracy, the trustworthiness and the credibility of the findings were used and will be further reflected upon in the discussion chapter:

- 1) Triangulation of data sources was used in order to build coherent justification of themes (Creswell, 2003), and involved comparison of findings of one document with other documentary sources, as well as with the interviewee.
- 2) The study also used member-checking in order to ensure the accuracy of its findings.
- 3) Detailed description of findings.
- 4) Presentation of negative or discrepant findings.

In addition to these strategies, the study was also assessed based on its expected utility. In the tradition of utilisation-focused evaluation, these criteria are referred to as threats to utility and include for example failure to focus on the determined use of the study, or inadequate involvement of the key stakeholders of the study in making methods decisions (Patton, 1997).

Potential bias in relation to the study was that the study objectives and the methodology were partly defined by the commissioning unit and that this may have entailed some constraints on the researcher. Another and related bias was that the research supervisor also was the President of INGO1. He may have had anticipations of outcome that influenced the researcher's work.

4.9 The role of the researcher

Potential biases in relation to the role of the researcher were:

- 1) The researcher had no prior experience with research projects
- 2) The researcher was aware that her conception of INGOs and accountability derived from theory was a potential source for preconceived notions
- 3) The researcher was more familiar with INGO1 than INGO2 at the outset of the study
- 4) The researcher was aware that the study and its results would later be presented at a research conference

4.10 Ethical considerations⁹

The researcher obtained informed consent from the participants in written form. The application for consent provided information of the goal of the study, expectations of the participants and their contribution, and the intended use of their contribution. Case number two was made aware of that the study was commissioned. Both participating organisations were invited to discuss the content of the study and the ways in which they were contributing. The participants were informed that they could discontinue their participation at any time with ease, and without being sanctioned. They were also informed that the researcher would conduct the study with respect for the values of the organisations, and with proper treatment of their internal documents so it did not cause the participants strain. The researcher informed that the results would be described in general terms, without jeopardising confidentiality. The participants were also informed that the researcher intended to disseminate the results of the study in an international paper, due to the international relevance and scope of the study.

⁹ In writing the ethical considerations of this study, the researcher used the "Guidelines for ethics in the social sciences, law and the humanities", developed by the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH, 2001), as a frame of reference.

4.11 Timeline of Study

The research project was proposed and initiated by the President of INGO1 in his work plan for the period 2004-2007, and was presented to the Board of Trustees in May 2005. The researcher was recruited as a research associate to the project prior to this. The research proposal was finalised in August 2005 and the researcher presented the project to the Executive Committee of INGO1 in December 2005. In February 2006, the researcher conducted a field trip where INGO2 was included in the study and the data collection took place. The project was completed in November 2006.

5. RESULTS

The main objectives of this study were to map the approach to accountability of the two cases and to identify for what, to whom and how the organisations are accountable. Therefore, this report on the results of the two cases will identify the types of mechanisms, the group(s) of stakeholders they addressed and linkages between the mechanisms as represented in the data collected.

In reporting the results, the data will be organised according to transparency, participation, evaluation and complaint/response mechanisms. The results revealed that neither of the two cases had developed a defined approach to accountability, consequently; the results represent accountability mechanisms that were *explicit* (the data clearly indicated that the mechanism had an influence on the organisation's accountability), and accountability mechanisms that were *intentional*, but not explicitly stated (the data contained accountability mechanism, but did not recognise it as such). The findings do, however, for the most part represent intentional accountability mechanisms.

5.1 Case one: a global network of health promotion and health education practitioners

INGO1 is an organisation of and for health promotion and health education practitioners and organisations working in and/or supporting health promotion and health education. However, any individual who supports the mission, goals, and objectives of the organisation may become a member. The mission of the organisation is to promote global health and to contribute to the achievement of equity in health between, as well as within countries. INGO1 pursues its mission by undertaking activities that include advocating for actions that promote the health of populations, improving and advancing the quality and effectiveness of health promotion and health education practice and knowledge, and strengthening and building networks of people and institutions involved in health promotion and health education. The organisation combines, in other words, a membership focus with a socially oriented purpose.

INGO1 operates at both global and regional levels. It is a democratic organisation, where the general membership elects representatives for the decision-making bodies, the membership has certain rights, duties and privileges, and a constitution defines basic principles of the organisation. The membership comprises five categories; 1) Organisations of national scope which are responsible for organising and/or supporting health promotion and health education activities in their country, state, or province; 2) Organisations of international, national, sub-national or local scope which undertake, teach, research or promote one or more aspects of health promotion and health education, which focus on specific themes, target groups, or settings; 3) Individuals who support the mission, goals, objectives of the organisation; 4) Individuals or organisations

that make a special contribution to the mission of INGO1, or to the development of its goals and objectives; 5) Students members.

The governing body is the General Assembly and all membership categories are entitled to have a voice, and vote in this forum. Its meetings are organised in intervals of three years, and it decides on policies, activities and approves amendments to governing articles. The General Assembly elects, based on nominations from the general membership, a global decision-making body. This body comprises the President, forty elected members, an accredited representative of each member of category 1, regional vice presidents who are elected and regional directors who are appointed by their constituencies. In addition, one member category (number 1) is entitled to appoint an accredited representative, sitting ex-officio (without voting rights). The executive body of INGO1 is composed of the President, the global and the regional vice presidents drawn from the decision-making body, and the Executive Director sitting ex-officio. Each vice president is delegated a specific area of responsibility, defined by the decision-making body. INGO1's administrative unit is the Headquarters, with a staff that could be counted on one hand.

The funding sources of INGO1 are mainly membership fees, members from category 1 who provides financial and in-kind support and specific project funding from public and private organisations.

It has three official working languages; English, Spanish and French.

5.2 Results of case one

The results of case one revealed an unequal development of accountability mechanisms

between the four dimensions. Each mechanism will be presented in turn and its implication for the overall approach to accountability will be described.

5.2.1 Transparency

The central tenet of transparency is information provision. The results identify for what purposes, and to whom INGO1 provides information and take account of structure, finance, activities, decision-making processes, and socially responsible and ethically responsive conduct. However, a flow of information is not sufficient for being transparent, as discussed in section 2.5. The data revealed examples of mechanisms which demonstrated general openness towards stakeholder input and willingness for being transparent in actions, decisions, and processes.

INGO1 does not have a written policy on transparency, but it has a mode of practice which shows a general commitment to transparency.

The structure of INGO1 involves a web of different types of members and coalition partners, in addition to its governing bodies and its administrative unit. The data repeatedly described this network in terms like:

“It is an open and inviting organisation, providing an opportunity to build an international network that encourages the free exchange of ideas, knowledge, and experiences, as well as facilitating the development of relevant collaborative projects at global and regional levels” (SD)

As such, one of the objectives, and priorities (as will be addressed in section 5.2.2) of INGO1 is to facilitate communication between members through developing

mechanisms for exchange. In one of the statutory documents it is specified that the Executive Director in collaboration with appropriate vice president have the responsibility for global information and collaboration, and that regional information and communication are the joint responsibility of regional vice president and regional director (Section 37, B-L). The current means for internal and external communication are two journals produced by INGO1 (one in paper and one on-line, both trilingual), two other official journals produced by an external publisher, various electronic communication mechanisms such as a global trilingual website, a global electronic distribution list for the decision-making body and other tools linked to specific projects. Via these tools, INGO1 renders peer-reviewed articles and information about the inner workings of the organisation readily available to a wider audience. Most of these means for communication may primarily serve the exchange among “experts”, at the expense of providing practitioners and individuals “on the ground” with a voice. The on-line journal, however, serves as a prime example of a forum in which any member is invited to send a reaction to published reviews, as well as papers on:

“(...) current ‘hot’ topics in our field (...). Just click on the guidelines for the details on how to send a paper and partake to the debate!” (J2, front page)

This is also an example of openness and an accommodating attitude towards stakeholder input, which is essential to accountability, and transparency. But first, the structure of INGO1 will be further addressed.

The statutory documents provide in separate sections clear descriptions of the organisational structure. In addition to informing on the role, the power, and the

procedures of the governing units, the various member categories and officers and staff are described in terms of scope, responsibilities and duties.

Rights and privileges of the membership are disclosed and include number of votes in the General Assembly, as well as privileges such as discounts on conferences, and journals (Section 1, B-L). This information enables these stakeholders to hold the organisation to account for the implementation of their rights and privileges. In return, it is brought to the members’ attention that INGO1 expects that the general membership accept certain duties, and that they may be held to account for the non-observation, neglect or violation of these:

“Duties:

To uphold and promote by all means possible the good reputation of (INGO1) and its worldwide membership.

To avoid association with organisations, sponsors, and funders whose interests conflict with health in general and with (INGO1)’s mission, goals, and objectives in particular

To pay membership fees promptly on request (...)” (Section 1, B-L)

Memberships are terminated (by):

“(...) (b) by non-payment of dues for two consecutive years; (c) by decision of (decision-making body) for bringing (INGO1) into disrepute. Any excluded member is given an opportunity to appeal to the General Assembly” (Section 2, B-L)

For members in category 1, as well as officers and staff, tailored information is provided in regards to responsibilities and tasks (B-L). There is, however, dimness in regards to how elected members may be dismissed. This may represent an accountability gap, as there are no means

available to the general membership to hold their representatives accountable if they feel that these do not act or represent the organisation in line with their responsibilities and duties.

INGO1 discloses name and position of officers and staff at the web-page, as well as in the journal (paper version). The web-page also presents contact information of the Regional Offices, and identifies partner organisations.

Information in regards to what funding sources INGO1 accepts is disclosed in general terms in the Constitution:

“(INGO1) may accept contributions and assistance in any form from members, individuals, public or private bodies, according to the specific guidelines laid down in Annex D of the Bye Laws. (INGO1) may accept, as agent or trustee, funds or property in trust or earmarked for particular use provided that such use is within the general scope of (INGO1) mission, goals, objectives and powers.”(Article 27, Con)

In addition to declaring funding sources, the quotation exemplifies how INGO1 throughout its activities and processes is accountable towards its mission. This will be further exemplified in section 5.2.2. Annual budgets and financial statements are reviewed and adopted at all levels of the governing structure including the General Assembly, the decision-making and the executive bodies. In addition, members are provided with information on financial matters on request (ExD1). INGO1 fails to make financial issues known to the general public this includes financial reports and information on staff salary.

The activities of INGO1 were described in general terms above (section 5.1). This

information is available through the statutory documents, the strategic directions, and the web-page. More detailed information on where the projects are taking place, who has the responsibility for it, what the assigned budget is et cetera, was not found to be compressed into one document. The data revealed inconsistency in production of reports of activities. The web-page provides links to action plans and past reports of activity; however, there seems to be a break in the production of these. It is plausible that the reason is lack of resources and time. The informant recognised this limitation, and particularly stressed the need for more resources in relation to developing the web-site and other means for communication (ExD1).

Detailed information about activities and priorities of the organisation is, however, disseminated through the web-page, the journal, and at meetings of the General Assembly. This includes for example projects undertaken by individuals and institutions in INGO1 network, and video conversations with people who influence INGO1 thinking. Officers and staff circulate activity reports and regional up-dates at each meeting of the governing units; however, these are not available to the other stakeholders.

In the statutory documents, however, it is presented an opening for other stakeholders to observe the meetings of the decision-making body:

“Any individual (INGO1) member or a nominee of (membership category 2) is entitled to attend meetings of (decision-making body) as an observer. In addition, (...) observers may be invited from international organisations, whether governmental or non-governmental” (Section 15, B-L)

All subscribers of the journal are provided with INGO1 leadership work plans, where information on current priorities of each officer is disclosed (J1#1). This implies a certain degree of supervision and control over how INGO1 is performing and what priorities it makes in its decision-making processes. The members are encouraged to:

“(...) visit (INGO1) website at (web address) to read the responsibilities of Vice Presidents and their principal duties, which are detailed in (INGO1) Bye Laws (Annex B)” (J1#1, p.23)

This quotation is an example of how INGO1 invites members to hold officers and staff to account, by investigating their mandate and comparing their work plans with the premises laid down in the statutory document. But, the lack of sanctions remains a challenge to INGO1.

The statutory documents provide clear descriptions of how decisions are made at each level of the governing structure, and identify how stakeholders relate to these. Prior to the triennial General Assembly meetings, notice of meeting and a provisional agenda shall reach the membership, in addition to:

“(...) appropriate supporting documents, (which) is prepared by (vice president in charge of communications) and (ExD1), in consultation with the President, and dispatched in time to reach the members of the General Assembly two months before the opening date of the session” (Section 5, B-L)

All members are provided with the opportunity to submit observations, amendments, and additions to the provisional agenda. The same procedure is implemented in regards to the decision-making and the executive bodies. In

addition, these members are also provided with information on the outputs of the decision-making processes (the minutes of meetings). The informant stated that INGO1 has no desire of restricting information, but that the minutes of meetings were considered as being of minor interest to the general membership. If a member requests such information, however, the ExD1 would comply with the request (ExD1).

Members are also invited to propose resolutions for adoption in the General Assembly, and they may put forward a proposal for an advocacy activity (B-L). There is clarity around what such proposals should include, and the procedures for submission. This is what is described in relation to proposing advocacy activities:

“Advocacy activities are defined as: the production and distribution of letters, statements, press releases, announcements, speeches, testimonials, and other written, oral, and electronic communications that address advocacy issues in which (INGO1) has interests; the formation of, or joining with, organisations, coalitions, conferences, alliances, unions, task forces, working groups, and other collaborative groups that address advocacy issues in which (INGO1) has interests (...)

Any (INGO1) member may put forward a written proposal for an advocacy activity to be approved by (decision-making body) on behalf of the membership. Proposals for advocacy activities must provide:

- *a statement of the issue*
- *a review of the problem*
- *specific proposed actions*
- *specific proposed actors*

- *cost implications and funding sources*
- *analysis and assessment of risk to (INGO1)” (B-L, Section 38.2 Advocacy Activities)*

The quotation exemplifies how INGO1 is accountable for the provision of user-friendly information. It ensures that any stakeholder is aware of the process of proposing an activity, and clearly defines advocacy – a concept that, yet its wide adoption in the health promotion vocabulary, may be understood in many different ways. Explaining jargon facilitates equal understanding by all stakeholders (also those external to academia), and will in turn enable all to participate in the organisation’s activities and decision-making.

The data revealed that INGO1 has developed a statement outlining the principles and codes of practice that guide partnerships, collaborations and sponsorship. This statement is a prime example of how INGO1, through information provision, sets the scenery for stakeholder interplay. The statement explains that:

“For (INGO1), it is a fundamental requirement that all partnerships will advance the mission, goals, and objectives of (INGO1), and:

- *Be openly acknowledged,*
- *Have clear shared objectives,*
- *Be transparent in reporting and clearly accountable to all partners,*
- *Acknowledge their funding sources,*
- *Have values consistent with (INGO1)’s mission, goals, and objectives,*
- *Be committed to building trust among partners”*

And it continues:

“General Principles.

- *The criteria for successful partnerships must include transparency, accountability, mutual benefit and ethics, and commitment to the highest standards of professional and scientific practice.*
- *The main aim of partnership and collaboration will be to add demonstrable value to the contribution of all the partners. This needs to be shown by:*
- *Open acknowledgement of the contribution and key responsibilities of each partner,*
- *Fully and openly sharing of all relevant information, and whenever possible managerial; technological, training and financial resources,*
- *Maintaining open dialogue in the spirit of understanding with the aim of reaching agreement on joint values, joint responsibilities and joint action plans (...)” (B-L, Annex D: Guidelines for Collaboration, Partnership and Sponsorship)*

The demands and expectations INGO1 here presents in relation to the interaction with a partner (or sponsor), could with advantage be applied to a broader set of situations and stakeholders. For example, the data did not show evidence of a code of conduct or ethical statement with efficacy for all the members of the INGO1 network. For instance, such a code of conduct could include general principles that the entire network sought to follow in the formulation of policies, planning and implementation of activities and projects. The informant confirmed the lack of ethical statements, and said that INGO1 only has produced a statement of non conflict of interest when

required by collaboration partners. For downwards and sideways stakeholders (e.g. individual members, officers and staff), the only current means is trust (ExD1).

INGO1 only does evaluation with partners and after conferences, and these evaluation reports are not publicly available (ExD1). Evaluations will, however, be further addressed in section 5.2.3.

5.2.2 Participation

Participation is the process through which the organisation learns about and understands the needs and interests of its stakeholders. The results identify how INGO1 engages with its different sets of stakeholders, how stakeholders may input into decisions that affect them and what mechanisms and processes the organisation have developed in order to dampen the different opportunities of its global membership to partake in the organisation's activities and decision-making.

INGO1 has not developed a written statement committing the organisation to actively involve key stakeholders in decision-making processes and activities that affect them. It does, as with transparency, have a mode of practice which demonstrates a general commitment to participation.

The INGO1 network consists of different types of stakeholders, whose input, time and responsibilities differ significantly. Therefore, the manner in which INGO1 engages with stakeholders differs accordingly.

INGO1 focuses throughout its operations on its members and sees their contribution as:

“The organisation’s major strength lies in the quality of the skills and knowledge of the membership, and the capabilities of the Headquarters and Regional Offices in securing

partnerships and resources to enable the organisation to pursue its goals. (INGO1) needs to unlock this potential by enlarging and involving its membership” (SD)

The organisation's means for communication with stakeholders were reported on in section 5.2.1, and thus overlap with this section. Participation, however, requires that the organisation engages with its stakeholders beyond the diffusion of information.

The general membership is provided with an opportunity to participate in the decision-making through the General Assembly's meetings. Members may participate through submitting observations, amendments or additions to the provisional agenda (as mentioned in section 5.2.1), proposing resolutions in advance of the meeting and voting on motions and decisions during the meetings. In regards to proposing resolutions, the following requirements are laid down:

“Resolutions may only be accepted in writing by the President for debate at the General Assembly in the names of individuals who are members or accredited representatives, up to 24 hours before the opening of the General Assembly.

(...)

Resolutions cannot be proposed from the floor during the General Assembly (...)" (B-L, Section 7)

This delimits the exchange between the members and the organisation, formalises stakeholder input and renders the organisation less open for the spontaneity and the creativity which interactive processes may generate. The organisation did, however, consider this loss in the development of the decision:

“The (decision-making body) is committed to democratic process and wishes to encourage members to take an active part in the affairs of the organisation. However, there is little satisfaction for members if the organisation is unable to take significant action to further the intent of their resolutions. (...) Experience has also demonstrated that the General Assembly has not enough time to assess the seriousness and relevance of some issues and therefore finds it difficult to vote in favour or against in an informed manner.” (DMM1)

The quotation shows a situation in which the organisation had to negotiate stakeholders’ needs and rights with demands for effectiveness. It also reflects an important issue in regards to participation: there is no point in consulting stakeholders, if it makes no difference. INGO1 is committed to advance quality and effectiveness in health promotion and as the quotation demonstrates; it is concerned about making informed decisions.

Besides the triennial General Assemblies, general membership is provided with the opportunity to participate in the regional and global Conferences, which are open to all people with an interest in health promotion and health education. The data did not provide clear description of how members may participate, other than how members of category 1 and 2 may proceed if they wish to invite the conference to convene in their country (Section 32, B-L). It was, however, suggested at a meeting of the decision-making board that membership engagement at conferences could be facilitated by:

“ (...) including "voices of the unheard" at the beginning of every conference day. These may be village

*health workers, traditional midwives, local council officials, unionists, etc. in planning the Conference, it was seen as a means to an end, and not an end in itself to attract new members, to provide a great service to existing members, and not only to expand the discipline of health promotion, but also the practice of health promotion (...)
 (...) innovations and new emphases in the Conference included the youth involvement, indigenous stream which, to be successful, have to involve inclusion and consultation and equal decision-making from the beginning (...) (DMM3)”*

The data revealed that the organisation works with finding ways to better involve members. The following was stated in a discussion over membership development issues and strategies:

*“(...) (INGO1) must be more proactive in better using the expertise of the membership outside of the (decision-making body), and create opportunities for members to be more engaged (...)
Benefits to the membership should rather be seen as opportunities, and (INGO1)’s niche is in facilitating these opportunities and encouraging members to then take the lead. Potential increased services in this respect could include the following:*

- *Professional development opportunities (i.e. training)*
- *Greater (INGO1) presence at relevant conferences*
- *More products and resources*
- *Increased on-line services*
- *Facilitated regional exchange*
- *More network development*
- *Looking at the needs of individuals, and students in*

particular (exploring possibility of student representation from each region on the (decision-making body)” (DMM1)

Although it was not clear from the data how the organisation furthered these suggestions, the quotation indicates important mechanisms for stakeholder engagement. The services include making INGO1 more available to stakeholders through conferences and on-line services, as well as proactively seek out the needs of individual members, a member category that may experience more difficulties than others in speaking their needs. The quotation also indicates that INGO1 is willing to, and even sees it as its “*niche*” to facilitate stakeholder engagement.

Another example of improving the opportunities of members to input and partake in the organisation’s decision-making emerged from one of the minutes of meetings of the executive body:

“In response to the issue of communication with the membership, (a member of the decision-making body) will develop a flow-chart that demonstrates “how to influence (INGO1) policy-making”, providing a route for members to take in light of the various circumstances or conditions under which s/he would like to propose something” (EXM1)

Whether or not such flow-chart was produced and provided to the membership, is not clear from the data investigated. The suggestion is, however, an example of how INGO1 takes account of the likely capabilities and capacities of stakeholders to participate.

The informant explained that in principle there is no limitation for membership participation. Effective governance,

however, involves that all members cannot be consulted (ExD1). As the organisation operates on representation, the elected and appointed members are more frequently engaged in participation. The informant explained that due to constraints in time and resources, stakeholders are prioritised after who brings what and that the mode of engaging with stakeholders normally include the following priority: the President, the members of decision-making and executing bodies, the members of category one and two, outside partners, and local and individual members (ExD1).

The data showed that the elected and appointed members at the global level are expected to collaborate closely:

“Global vice presidents (...) b) regularly liaise with vice president (with responsibility for coordination and communication), and (ExD1), for the purposes of good coordination. They ordinarily request assistance from any member of (decision-making body)” (B-L, Section 20)

The informant confirmed the frequency in communication among the members of the executive body, and added that the organisation seeks to reach the broadest consensus on issues, as it has no single view (ExD1).

The data revealed different practices for informing stakeholders on what roles they were expected to play, the purpose of the partnership and the length of the association, depending on the group of stakeholder and type of engagement in question.

Members of the governing bodies are provided with detailed information in the statutory documents, as reported in section 5.2.1. In addition, the organisation has developed a mechanism providing an

orientation to the INGO1 structure for newly elected members:

“(ExD1) introduced (INGO1) Orientation Handbook for newly elected (decision-making body) members and Regional Offices. The purpose of this document is to clarify the organisational structure of (INGO1), distinguishing political and executive functions, and the role and functions of (decision-making body) members individually and collectively to bring them efficiently and directly into (INGO1) business, and in the policy and decision-making of the organisation” (DMM3)

Engagement with partners, collaborators, and sponsors must be framed in a contract, an exchange of letter or similar document which specifies:

“

- *The objectives,*
- *The terms and conditions,*
- *The resources provided by both parties (both human and financial),*
- *The length of the association with clear start and end dates,*
- *That a breach of the agreed terms and conditions can result in immediate termination of the partnership*

(...)

(INGO1) will at all times retain control of its corporate identity and logo, including their use in conjunction with those of other organisations” (Annex D, B-L)

This quotation not only represents a system for clarification of terms of reference for partnerships, it also involves a sanction mechanism enabling the organisation to bring the engagement to an end if the stakeholder fails to meet the requirements.

It was not found a statement committing the organisation to make all views represented during the participation process public except where there are clear reasons to protect confidentiality, and these reasons are provided. The organisation did, in regards to engagement with partners, collaborators and sponsors state:

“(INGO1) will unreservedly respect all commercial information which is shared with it in confidence” (Annex D, B-L)

INGO1 also initiates stakeholder engagement through the establishment of working groups. The informant added that the organisation never develops a project without constructing such a group (ExD1). The terms of reference of working groups should include:

“The construction of working groups should be centred on specific technical or strategic issues and remain very task centred, focusing on specific responsibilities rather than ad hoc discussion and participation. (...) Each working group assigned will establish precise criteria, terms of reference, timetables and staff facilitators” (DMM1)

The data demonstrated that INGO1 has developed mechanisms for ensuring that stakeholders are balanced in governing bodies, working groups, and conferences. In regards to the decision-making body it is stated:

“The (decision-making body comprises: (...)

- *a maximum of forty global members, elected by the General membership with due consideration given to the reflecting geographical distribution of the members of (INGO1).)” (Article 8, Con)*

In order to ensure geographical representation, INGO1 has developed regional quotas for the elections of members to the decision-making body (DMM2). It was not clear from the data whether INGO1 also gives consideration to equity in representation of gender and age in the composition of its governing bodies.

In the planning of conferences, it is clarified that:

“The list of key-note speakers will be approved by (the decision-making body of INGO1). The list will cover the geographic and linguistic distribution of potential participants, giving attention to gender and ethnicity” (Annex B, B-L)

The organisation has developed a specific programme focusing on young professionals, which:

“(...) include enhancing their participation by providing opportunities, such as co-chairing sessions with someone more senior. This programme will be further intertwined with membership development at the conference, and a special introductory session will be organised to support these members in making the most of their first (INGO1) conference” (EXM1)

INGO1 clearly communicates reasons for the decision not to engage outside parties as stakeholders. In regards to partners, collaborators and sponsors, it is stated that:

“(INGO1) is unable to work with any product or services which damage mental or physical health; for example tobacco or armaments. Other partnerships will not be considered appropriate where there is a fundamental mismatch of goals and objectives with those of (INGO1)” (B-L, Annex D)

If any stakeholder groups should decide not to engage in the organisation’s activities, their reasons are currently not made public. It was, however, suggested in the latest amendments of the organisation’s bye-laws that the following could be added to the section describing advocacy:

“Any (INGO2) (decision-making body) member may indicate in writing the right to refuse participation in advocacy issues” (Section 38, B-L)

The data did not clearly state that the organisation would make the results of its engagement processes public available, so that stakeholder may learn how their input has been used and how it affected the decision-making process. For example, it does not produce minutes from General Assemblies.

The data revealed various mechanisms that INGO1 has developed in order to ensure that stakeholders are not prevented from participation due to for instance financial constraints.

One mechanism relates to whether there are any sets of stakeholders that face difficulties in becoming a member and upholding its membership. As stated earlier, INGO1 is an open organisation where any individual or organisation supporting the mission of INGO1 may be a member. One of the duties, as described in section 5.2.1, is to pay the membership fee on time. For some members of organisations like INGO1 expensive membership fees may result in the inability for some to become a member, with the loss of support in finance and patronage this causes the organisation. The data revealed that INGO1 has developed a system with the purpose of achieving equity in membership fees, a mechanism that counteracts such an effect. The system was developed using the World Bank’s World Development

Indicators Database and calculated the membership fees according to the differences in the economic situation of the countries in which the membership lives and works. In the development of this system, it was recognised that the system:

“(...) does not only reflect (INGO1) commitment to equity, but also offers huge opportunities for membership development, establishing a system that is inherently more equitable” (DMM1)

As such, the organisation proactively ensures that a larger set of stakeholders may be involved in the organisation, whilst at the same time promoting its own financial well-being.

One barrier for stakeholder participation was identified by the informant. Members of the decision-making body from the developing countries may be short on resources, however, INGO1 sometimes pay travel expenses for members of developing countries when their participation at meetings is essential (ExD1).

The data also showed that members of category 1 on occasions provide financial support to disadvantaged groups:

“(...) (INGO1) recognises and appreciated (category 1 member) commitment to equity by ensuring participation of five (decision-making body) members from developing countries, from different regions, through the provision of bursaries to attend the meeting” (DMM1)

INGO1 manages communication barriers by operating with three official languages. The main tools for communication (the web-page, and the journals) make effective use of all three. In addition, the language policy is addressed at all meetings of the organisation, including the General Assembly, the

meetings of the decision-making, the executive body, as well as the Conferences. In regards to the General Assembly, it is noted that:

“The working languages for the purpose of the meetings of the General Assembly are English, French, and Spanish. Interpretation services should be available. Other languages may be used by members, on condition that they provide for interpretation into Spanish, French or English” (B-L, Section 9)

The informant added that the official papers of the organisation also cater for differences in language. The constitution is produced in all three languages and the strategic directions are produced in English and Spanish (ExD1). The minutes from meetings and documentation presented at the meetings of the governing units are, however, only produced in English.

In regards to resolutions for the General Assembly, the following was stated:

“Consistent with (INGO1) language policy, the working languages for resolutions are English, French and Spanish. Interpretation services being available at the General Assembly, each resolution will be read aloud and simultaneously translated. The Resolution Committee will also be comprised of members with the capacity to provide translation of the text to the other members of the committee. When feasible, submissions are encouraged to be submitted in two of the working languages of (INGO1). Following the acceptance of a resolution by the General Assembly, resolutions will be translated into all three working languages for broader distribution, and in line with (INGO1) policy on equity, wider translations into

national languages will be encouraged to be undertaken by key members upon the request of (INGO1) Headquarters” (Annex E, B-L).

The data collected was not written in an overtly technical language, which assist all stakeholders in understanding the content.

5.2.3 Evaluation

The primary metaphor for evaluation is goal achievement. However, as stated in section 2.5, this should not be pursued at the expense of evaluation for organisational learning. Evaluation enables stakeholders to hold the organisation to account for what it said it would do. The data collected provided limited information on how INGO1 conducts evaluation. On the other hand, it identified to whom INGO1 provide evaluation reports and to a certain extent for what INGO1 undertakes evaluations.

The need for evaluation is recognised by the organisation; both in regards to advancing the field of health promotion and health education, and monitoring its own performance. In regards to the former, one document stated that:

“In face of the growing pressure on public investment across the globe, there is an urgent need for high quality evidence of the effectiveness and efficiency of health promotion and health education. This will require the investment of significant resources in the development and investment of ‘scientific methods’ to enable the evaluation of the complex set of interventions that comprise effective contemporary health promotion and health education” (SD)

The complex set of interventions relates to the contingent nature of social change: INGO1 works in an environment where the relationship between inputs, outputs and impact is complex. The process of change is rarely linear but dependent on multiple, interrelated factors that shift as the organisation interacts with the problem. In advocacy, which is one of INGO1 main strategies, external factors outside the organisation’s control influence the outcomes and impact.

According to the informant, the purposes of evaluating the organisation’s performance are to know the direction the work is taking, to demonstrate that resources are spent appropriately, that activities are implemented appropriately, and whether the performance of experts was satisfactory, and further than that, whether the kind of actions undertaken by the IUHPE are those effectively needed to impact positively on health, well-being and equity in health globally (ExD1).

In section 5.2.1 it was reported that a break in the production of activity reports caused that the information about achieved results and impact of the organisation was not assembled in one document easily available to all stakeholders. It was also reported that information on progress and activity reports circulated at the meetings of the decision-making and executing bodies only were available for the members of these bodies, as well as the administrative unit. Evaluation thus seems to be a matter reserved to the governing units. However, it is laid down in the statutory documents that the decision-making unit not only is responsible for reviewing activities and policies, but that it also is responsible for reporting on the work of INGO1 at the General Assemblies:

“(..) it reviews, approves and disseminates position statements which clarify and promote the

policies of (INGO1), it reviews and approves the reports of the vice presidents and agrees proposed programmes (...) it reports to each ordinary session of the General Assembly on the work of (INGO1) since the last ordinary session” (Article 9: Powers of (decision-making body), Con)

This includes presenting a report of activities as well as a financial report which compile three years of information regarding operations of the organisation, programmatic activities, membership trends, etc. (ExD1).

As such, reports about the activities of the organisation are supposed to reach the general membership, which may in turn hold the organisation to account for its performance. The effectiveness of this accountability mechanism is however weakened by factors that will be addressed in the next section (infrequency of General Assembly meetings, logistical limitations et cetera).

General information about activities is, as mentioned in section 5.2.1, provided in the journal’s info section.

Project funders and partners are normally provided with reports on evaluations (ExD1).

The evaluation practice of INGO1 thus creates an imbalance in what groups of stakeholders that automatically and normally are provided with reports. It could be, as with the minutes of meetings, that the general membership is considered as not being interested in such detailed information, or that the information is considered confidential. If one of these reasons (or any other reason) is the case, the data should have provided evidences of the reason and

that the relevant stakeholder was consulted in the matter.

Little information was available from the data on how INGO1 undertakes evaluations, e.g. what the objectives and parameters of the evaluation was and what stakeholders were engaged in defining these, what methods it uses for data collection, how the data is checked for errors, whether results and recommendations from the evaluation were implemented, and so forth. If, however, the organisation produces evaluation reports, this information could have been available.

In relation to resolutions, however, the organisation has a process for reviewing and evaluating, which entails that a distinct Resolution Committee considers all resolutions submitted. Its tasks are to:

“

- 1. Receive proposed resolutions, review them, endorse them when appropriate and facilitate preparation of those endorsed for presentation at the General Assembly*
- 2. Present proposed resolutions for debate and voting at the General Assembly meetings*
- 3. Recommend action to the incoming (decision-making body) with respect to the resolutions approved at the General Assembly meetings*

(...)

All submissions will be considered by the Resolution Committee. The Committee will decide whether or not the submission will be accepted for presentation to the members attending the General Assembly. The Committee can reject resolutions if they are not consistent with the goals, objectives and strategies of (INGO1), if they do not involve action that needs to be taken and if the

resolutions are not relevant or have been presented in a similar manner before at a General Assembly meeting of the organisation” (Annex E, B-L)

The minutes of meetings of the decision-making and executing bodies demonstrated that suggested actions or policies often are requested to be followed up and reported on at the next meeting. This reflects that the frequency of consultations between the members of the executive body ensures that a level of overview of the organisation’s policies and practices is intact.

The informant informed that INGO1 uses a frame of reference for evaluation which was presented in a report the organisation developed on a project which focused on providing evidences for health promotion effectiveness (ExD1). However, the use of this frame of reference was not provided evidence for in the documents outlining INGO1 policies and practices.

It appeared from the data that conferences often are the object of evaluations. One example that demonstrated some of the considerations INGO1 makes in regards to evaluation is the following, extracted from a minute of the executive body’s meeting:

“In order to ensure harmonisation of (INGO1) Conferences, both at the Global and Regional levels, (INGO1) needs to achieve a certain form of standardisation, while maintaining the cultural flavour of each of them. A set of best practice elements are needed in order to better monitor the (INGO1) conferences and evaluate how (INGO1) can extract more value out of the existing conferences”

Based on this issue, it was decided that:

“In order to build collective knowledge, an ad hoc group will be established to

work until (date), in the first instance, and report to (decision-making body) with a proposal on the following set of tasks (...)

- 1. to review the existing quality criteria in broad consultation;*
 - 2. to examine a flexible evaluation framework and tool;*
- (...)*
- 5. to develop ideas on technical assistance and knowledge transfer of lessons learned from one conference to another;*
 - 6. to consider intellectual integration from Global Conferences to Regional ones, and vice versa (strategic planning of the (INGO1) Conferences)” (EXM2)*

The quotation shows a long-term focus in the planning of conferences, whilst at the same time emphasising that each conference must be responsive to local variations. It also demonstrates that the organisation seeks to evaluate in order to learn or “*seek more value out of the existing conferences*” and takes proactive steps in preparing a plan for improving evaluation.

In carrying out evaluations, INGO1 takes account of ethical issues, effectiveness, participation, geographical distribution, and equity in representation and gender; all depending on the issue or the activity (ExD1).

The data did not provide any evidences of an external review of the organisation, or that the organisation has evaluated the impact its work has on its broader social, economic and political environment. The informant confirmed this paucity (ExD1).

5.2.4 Complaint/response mechanisms

The purpose of developing complaint and response mechanisms is to provide stakeholders with a channel through which they can voice their grievances and receive an appropriate response, if the organisation should fail to deliver on any of the previous points (e.g. being transparent, engaging with stakeholders and evaluating performance and impact). The data revealed little information on the state of complaint and response mechanisms.

The informant stated that INGO1 generally is open to criticism (ExD1). The organisation does not receive a lot of complaints, and the informant saw this as a result of it being a voluntary organisation: if any dislike is felt, the person is free to leave the organisation.

The data identified some channels through which stakeholders may voice their complaints.

Even though meetings of General Assemblies provide members of all types the opportunity to give feedback directly to all other stakeholders, this means of providing critical feedback may be insufficient due to the infrequency of General Assemblies, the small number of stakeholders that are able to attend, and the unwillingness of some to confront leadership in open fora.

Other likely channels for communicating complaints are the organisation's email address, which is provided at the web-page, the journal, as well as in other publications of INGO1.

In the context of the planning and implementing of INGO1 conferences, a mutual forum for addressing complaints is agreed on:

“In the unexpected event of any dispute occurring between the parties, it is agreed that the matter shall be submitted to an arbitration committee consisting of three persons, one nominated by (INGO1), one by (name of sponsor) and the third by mutual agreement of the two parties” (Annex B, B-L)

As mentioned, any complaints made against the members, shall be channelled by the decision-making body, which decides whether or not the membership should be terminated, for example:

“(c) (...) for bringing (INGO1) into disrepute. Any excluded member is given an opportunity to appeal to the General Assembly” (Section 2, B-L)

It was not clear from the data how the organisation receives, investigates, and responds to complaints and whether a complaint would lead to corrective action. The informant, however, informed about how s/he normally handles complaints. This procedure is dependent on the person sitting with the executive responsibility, and thus may be arbitrary.

If a complaint is received, it is investigated and the complainant is provided with a response and explanation. All complaints are responded to, but the manner in which it is done is not framed within a policy or in any other written form. The organisation endeavours to respond to all complaints continuously and to avoid that a stakeholder feels that its complaint is not given proper attention. However, some complaints are more serious than others and demands full attention, including from the decision-making bodies (ExD1).

5.3 Case two: a global network of health professionals engaged in disease prevention

INGO2 is an international organisation of and for health professionals and health organisations engaging in technical assistance, education and research in order to mitigate the effects of the disease in question, and who share the aims of the organisation. Any individual who supports the aims of INGO2 may become a member. The mission of the organisation is to prevent and control the disease and its resulting health problems at a global level, and particularly in low income countries. Further, it is to promote national autonomy with due consideration to the priorities of each country by developing, implementing and assessing programmes for disease prevention and health promotion.

The aims of INGO2 are four-fold: 1) to gather and disseminate knowledge about the disease and its related community health problems; 2) to warn doctors, decision-makers, and the general public about the risks presented by the disease to health and to communities; 3) to co-ordinate, assist, and promote the work of its constituent members; 4) to establish and maintain close links with its partner organisations, governments and other NGOs. INGO2 pursues these aims by undertaking activities that include: 1) technical assistance (which refers to supporting and assisting technology transfer, and transfer of skills and knowledge between technically advanced countries and others less so); 2) education (which refers to the diffusion of information, training of health personnel, decision-makers and the general public by arranging conferences and other meetings and courses, publishing journals and scientific papers, and participating in national and international meetings); and 3) support for research (which refers to assistance and collaboration

with affiliated research units, and co-operation with external research units and organisations). INGO2 combines support and co-ordination of its membership with a socially oriented purpose.

INGO2 operates at regional and global levels and it is a democratic organisation, where members of the governing bodies are elected. Members enjoy certain rights and duties, and a constitution defines basic principles of the organisation. INGO2 is composed of the following membership categories: 1) health organisations dealing with the disease in question (the number of this membership category is confined to one per country); 2) organisations and foundation other than category 1 which deal with the disease in question; 3) individual members, who are affiliated Scientific Section(s), described later; 4) individuals who provide particular assistance to INGO2 for a predetermined period; 5) individuals or legal entities who demonstrate their support for the activities of INGO2 by a grant or donation; 6) individuals who provide or have provided valuable services that are known to INGO2.

All members are organised in geographical sections (or regions) which can define their own functioning in a regional charter. All individual members are grouped within specific sections called Scientific Sections, and may be affiliated with one or more sections of their own choice, but each individual member only has a single vote (which is in the first section chosen). The Scientific Sections meet each year before the General Assembly and the chairperson represents the individual members of the Section at the General Assembly.

The structure of INGO2 is as follows¹⁰. The General Assembly comprises all membership categories (represented either by elected representative or in person), except number 5. It meets at least once a year and it receives reports of management, approves accounts and votes on budgets, and modifies governing articles. The General Assembly elects a global decision-making body which exercises the power and executes the tasks assigned by the General Assembly. This includes 12-15 members, and its meetings are organised every 6 months. Five to seven of its members are elected by the General Assembly from the general membership following proposals from a Nominating Committee. Six members representing each Region of INGO2 are elected following proposals put forward by the regional governing bodies and after consultation with the Nominating Committee. In addition, the past President and the chair of the Coordinating Committee of Scientific Activities also have a seat at this unit. From this unit, four members are elected to form what here will be called its executing body. These include a President, a Vice President, a Secretary General, and a Treasurer. This body meets regularly between the meetings of the decision-making body.

INGO2 establishes Committees which carry out specific responsibilities in line with the mission of the organisation. In addition to the two already mentioned, a third permanent Committee is the Communications, Membership and Fundraising Committee. INGO2 also

¹⁰ INGO2 applies slightly different denominations to its governing bodies. In order to facilitate ease of understanding, however, the bodies will here be denominated using the same terms as used with respect to INGO1. The composition and role of the governing units of INGO2 will be described in detail.

establishes Committees of more provisional character.

The Headquarters of INGO2 is managed by an Executive Director, who is appointed by the decision-making body, and it employs 45 staff and 30 consultants.

The funding sources of INGO2 are the income from its assets, membership dues and subscriptions, state subventions and co-financing from regions, departments, communes, public establishments and public or private, national or international, financing institutions, income from sales and remuneration of services, and contributions from donors.

INGO2 has three official languages: French, English, and Spanish.

5.4 Results of case two

The results of case two revealed mechanisms that were well-established and developed, however, shortcomings and potential gaps were also identified. The results of the second case are organised in the same manner as the results of INGO1.

5.4.1 Transparency

Transparency is not addressed in a separate policy, or statement of commitment, however, INGO2 has a mode of practice which shows a quite strong commitment to transparency.

The INGO2 network is composed of multiple stakeholders with dense responsibilities and accountabilities. This section endeavours to describe the quantity and quality of the information provision and exchange within this network. Also, it will take account of the degree to which INGO2 is open to stakeholder input and how (including through what media) their stakeholders learn about how they may input

into INGO2 decision-making processes and activities.

Communication is recognised by the organisation as a means for “*building a stronger union*” and as “*critical for keeping everyone informed and connected*” (AR # 3). The current means for internal and external communication of INGO2 are the official journal of INGO2 (paper and on-line version), a trilingual organisational web-site, biannual print newsletters and monthly e-newsletters for all members of INGO2, as well as other electronic and telephonic communication tools for exchange within the governing bodies.

Via the web-page, the organisation distributes information about the organisation (statutory documents and other official documents such as priorities for activities, policy on scientific statements, activity reports, and financial reports); structure and regional outspread; events such as conferences and courses; educational materials (the journal, technical guides, power point presentations, and audio visual material); information on the diseases the organisation combats (educational material organised under topics such as bacteriology, epidemiology, interventions, control, research and more); and advocacy events. The organisational web-site also contains a “*contact us*” link where interested stakeholders may request information on how to become a member or a subscriber, or request specific information in regards to, for example, conferences and courses. In addition, the web-site gives members access to a large number of links to other web-sites, including the sites of other INGO2 members, partners, projects and educational resources. The web-site of INGO2 was found to be particularly user-friendly and rich with information.

The journal is, as mentioned, the official publication of INGO2. It is published monthly and distributed world-wide to health professionals, researchers, decision-maker, libraries, hospitals, among others. It is published principally in English with French and Spanish summaries, but selected articles are translated into French and distributed on CD-ROM and online. Additionally, a Chinese version is distributed three times a year, a Russian version has been produced twice over the three last years, and the first Spanish version was produced in 2005, with the second one in preparation. The following indicates the role the journal has in the INGO2 network:

“The Journal represents an important educational tool. At the present time about 2000 individuals and libraries receive the journal and a Chinese version benefits 4000 colleagues in China. Other language versions are underway.” (GAM#1)

The journal covers all topics that reflect the scope of the activities of INGO2 and its members. Back issues of the online journal are free to all, and current issues are available to fully-paid up members and subscribers. Non-members/subscribers have a pay-per-view option.

Stakeholders interested in submitting articles to the journal are provided with clear instructions on the web-page. INGO2 makes use of a manuscript central for submitting articles. This automated system has the perceived benefits of providing faster response time for editors and reviewers who can consult the article from anywhere at any time, and easing communication with authors. Authors may follow the whole review process of their article on-line. The web-page provides clear instructions for usage of the manuscript central and for manuscript requirements. It was also clear

from the web-page that stakeholders may make suggestions for review articles.

The latter is a good example of how stakeholders may submit their requests and input their expertise into the organisation, although writing scientific papers requires a certain level of educational training and competences on the stakeholder's part. Later, we will address how stakeholders may give input into decision-making processes.

The structure of INGO2 is described under separate articles in the statutory documents. In addition to informing on the role, power and field of responsibilities, the descriptions take account of rights, privileges and duties.

In regard to the general membership, the rights, privileges and duties include number of votes in the General Assembly, procedure for resignation and dismissal, as well as more general expectations, such as the following:

“The members of (INGO2) shall refrain from holding any political and religious discussions or events within (INGO2)” (Con, Article 3)

The number of votes of the different member categories is distributed according to the following conditions:

*“(Member category 1), represented by a maximum of two delegates, have 10 votes.
(Member category 2), represented by one delegate, have 1 vote.
The Chairs of each Scientific Section, representing (member category 3 and 4), have a number of votes proportional to the number of fully paid-up members in their section.
The number of votes is determined as follows:*

- *from 1 to 49 members in the section 1 vote*

- *from 50 to 199 members in the section 10 votes*
- *from 200 to 500 members in the section 20 votes*
- *more than 500 members in the section 50 votes*
(Member category 6) have 1 vote”
(Con, Article 10)

The quotation illustrates that INGO2 has employed a fair system for distributing number of votes in the General Assembly. It tackles the challenge of administering high numbers of votes from individual members by grouping them together under Scientific Sections. What effects such chain of representation may have on participation will be further addressed in section 5.4.2 Participation.

It was not made explicit in the statutory documents what other privileges the different membership categories enjoy, such as discounts on events, journal subscriptions et cetera. Such information was, however, easily available and described in details on the organisational web-site (at the date of the inquiry), as well as in the activity reports. Privileges include (although they vary slightly according to membership category): reduction of rates for attending conferences and courses, linking up with peers and colleagues in Scientific Sections as well as receiving scientific publications and newsletters (AR#4). These privileges will be further expanded on in the next section (5.4.2 Participation). In addition, INGO2 also provides members with the opportunity of sponsoring a colleague from a developing country. This is a good example of how the organisation operationalises its commitment to developing countries. By encouraging members residing countries with more financial wealth to contribute to so that individuals of low income countries can partake, the organisation not only

strengthens its membership and its regional representation; it is also ethically responsive.

A member may be dismissed based on the decision of the decision-making body for the non-payment of contributions or for any other serious motive. Serious motives refer to:

- “
- *Non observation of the Constitution or Bye-Laws*
 - *Any action likely to directly or indirectly prejudice the moral and financial aspects of (INGO2) activities or damage its reputation*
 - *Penal conviction for a crime or offence” (B-L, article 3)*

In all cases, the member is provided with a possibility of presenting a defence. After presentation, the administrative unit makes a decision by a majority of vote (B-L).

Positively, the data revealed that INGO2 has developed a norm for what should be expected as a minimum of the members of the decision-making body. It was found in one of the statutory documents that:

“Any member of (decision-making body) who fails to attend (decision-making body) meetings during two consecutive meetings without a valid justification shall cease to belong to (decision-making body)” (B-L, article 6)

As such, in cases where the members of the decision-making body should fail to comply with their duties and responsibilities, the general membership has a governing article with power to dismiss the member in question.

Two additional aspects were particularly addressed in regard to the members of the

governing units. The first relates to representation and to reducing the likelihood of a conflict of interest/vested interest:

“The members of (executive body) cannot represent (membership category 1) at the General Assembly. If they have such responsibilities during their election, they shall resign from any such posts involving national representation. During their mandate, they shall only act and speak in the general interests of (INGO2)” (B-L, Article 7)

This is an important accountability mechanism that not only guarantees that members of the governing bodies do not talk in their national interests, but it also ensures cohesion and sense of unity within the organisation. As mentioned in section 2.1, downplaying national identities was seen as one of the characteristics of INGOs, which gives their goals and activities universal validity and emphasises the individual (by its own virtue).

The second aspect relates to dampen expectations of what ‘benefits’ being a member of the governing bodies may involve. It is made explicit that the members of the decision-making body:

“(…) shall receive no remuneration for the functions entrusted to them. Repayment of expenses is the only exception.” (Con, Article 9)

As such, it is clarified that the members are not motivated by financial motives. Other motives may come into play; however, this will not be further addressed here.

In summarising the information provision on the rights, duties and privileges of the different membership categories, a stylistic remark will be added. The information provided in the statutory documents was found to be addressed in a slightly

unsystematic manner, which in turn hinders the ease of comparing and contrasting the differences between the various member categories. A table would have served this purpose well.

Name and position of each member of the governing bodies are openly shared on the organisational web-page. This includes name, position, as well as a picture of each of the members of the decision-making and the executing body. Name and contact information of the editorial board of the journal are also provided on-line. Names of the staff at the headquarters are not disclosed through this media. In the activity reports, however, such information is provided. In addition, the organisation discloses name and national affiliation of core funding agencies and individuals. The informant added that the different departments of the headquarters and names of staff are disclosed in the activity reports, and that the organisation is working on an alphabetical list of staff and departments (ExD2).

Another example of disclosing contact information was found in one of the minutes of meetings of the decision-making body:

"Members were provided with a handbook, organized by (name), containing history, constitution, bye-laws, policies, terms of reference for the Co-ordinating Committee of Scientific Activities (CCSA). General Assembly reports, (executive body) contact details regional representatives, Scientific Section contact details, committees' contact details (...)" (DMM#1).

In regard to disclosing information on financial matters, the statutory documents specify sources of annual income, and financial management. The latter involves that:

"The accounts shall be submitted for inspection to the Préfet in the area in which the headquarters of (INGO2) are located, as well as to the Minister of the Interior, the Minister in charge of Health and the Minister in charge of Co-operation, and showing the employment of all funds arising from subventions granted during the previous financial period" (Con, Article 19)

In addition, it is specified elsewhere in the same document that:

"The Annual Report and the Accounts, which figure in the bulletin of (INGO2), shall be sent to all members each year. An integral copy shall be sent free of charge to anyone requesting it" (Con, Article 10)

The activity reports provide detailed description of the financial affairs of INGO2, including income statements, figures and charts of expenditure and revenue, donor acknowledgements, the external auditor's opinion (photocopy of original letter), as well as a separate section where all members who contributed with support are recognised by name (AR).

General descriptions about INGO2 activities (see case description above) are made public through statutory documents. More detailed information about activities are provided to the general membership, as well as the public in general (via the organisational web-page), in the activity reports. These reports are produced regularly¹¹ and include information on: new initiatives (description of project, donors, purpose, areas of implementation, collaborators); reports on

¹¹ Some of the activity reports cover a calendar year, some one and a half year. It was not, however, found to be a break in the production of these, at least not in recent years.

projects already in place (e.g. educational programmes, educational material such as the journal, overview of courses, conferences and publications); collaborations (information on current collaborative efforts; mission, contributions of members of the INGO2 network, new goals etc.); research (current projects and publications); regional reports; as well as advocacy activities (AR). As such, this document is a powerful and effective mechanism for opening up the activities and priorities of the organisations for all interested stakeholders' assessment.

Further, at the General Assemblies the attendees are provided with additional reports:

“The General Assemblies receives reports of the management carried out by (decision-making body), and on the financial and legal situation of (INGO2)” (Con, Article 10)

This practice was confirmed in one of the minutes of meetings of the General Assembly:

“A summary of the Activity Report and financial documents were sent to all members of the Union as part of the invitation to the General Assembly one month prior to the General Assembly meeting. The full Activity Report was distributed during the conference and will be sent to all members not able to attend. ” (GAM#2)

In regards to the members of the decision-making bodies, reports from the executive body, as well as the Executive Director are provided to them at its meetings. In addition, these members also receive reports from the various Committees and Commissions of the organisation (described in more details later).

For members of category 5 (individuals or legal entities who demonstrate their support for the activities of INGO2 by a grant or donation), it is specified in the statutory documents that:

“(INGO2) undertakes to keep them informed of the actions it carries out” (Con, Article 3)

As such, INGO2 provides all stakeholders information on its activities and operations on a regular basis, and in line with statutory articles.

The statutory documents provide clear descriptions of how decisions are made at the various levels of decision-making (such as voting conditions, field of responsibility, and organisation).

The different member categories are provided with the opportunity to make amendments to the agenda of the General Assemblies meetings:

“The Agenda, along with any enclosed documents, shall be sent by the Secretary General to all members one month before the date set for the General Assembly. Any member of the General Assembly of (INGO2) may submit observations, amendments or additional points for the Agenda, up until 15 days before the opening of the General Assembly.” (B-L, Article 5)

It was not clear from the data how the different member categories may give input into the actual meeting. It was only found that:

“Each member in good standing may assist as an observer in the General Assembly (presentation of (INGO2) membership card required) with the right to speak by prior consent of the President.(...)” (B-L, Article 5)

This may represent an accountability issue which the organisation needs to further address and improve. The issue of participation will however be further elaborated on in the next section (5.4.2).

The statutory documents stressed that minutes of meetings of all decision-making levels should be kept. According to the informant, only the minutes from the General Assembly reach all members (ExD2). It was found, however, that INGO2 provides all readers of the activity reports with ‘*Reports from the Board Meetings*’ (AR).

The data did not reveal a code of conduct or similar document in which the organisation openly shares its values and principles. It was found at the web-page that the INGO2 staff is guided by the organisations core values which, of particular interest to this evaluation, means that the staff needs to be “*accountability-meeting*” its obligations to the scientific community, to members and to the communities that the organisation serves. This could, with advantage, be framed more explicitly, and extended to include all individuals working in/representing the INGO2 network.

Further, it was also found unclear what principles and values the organisation holds important when engaging with collaborators and partners. The minutes of meetings of the decision-making bodies made mention of terms of references in regards to Collaborating Centres, however, these terms of references were not found to be easily available for public access.

The informant explained that INGO2 produces ethical statements in relation to clinical trials, for the affected stakeholders. It was also stated that INGO2 has a guideline for how to deal with corporate sector

(ExD2). The data investigated did not, however, show evidence of such guideline.

5.4.2 Participation

This section reports on how INGO2 engages with its stakeholders, how stakeholders may give input into decisions that affect them and what mechanisms and processes the organisation has developed in order to dampen the different opportunities of its global membership to partake in the organisation’s activities and decision-making processes.

INGO2 has not developed a statement committing the organisation to participatory approaches in its operations and decision-making, however, the data revealed that the organisation has a general commitment to the notion of participation.

The INGO2 network consists of individuals and organisations/institutions whose input, responsibilities and time differ significantly, as do the type of decisions and processes in which they participate. In other words, to expect equal participation would be wrong; the issue is rather whether INGO2 enables stakeholders to partake when their participation is essential. The fundamental accountability requirement in regards to participation thus reads equity in participation.

INGO2 firmly recognises the value of its membership and the data demonstrated this appreciation in number of settings, and especially in the activity reports:

“(...) While many (INGO2) activities are managed through (Headquarters), the 1204 members around the world also play a critical role.” (AR#4)

As we later will see, one critical issue in regards to participation as identified from the

data was how to improve the participation between the Headquarters and membership. Firstly, however, the different ways in which members may participate will be reported on.

In one of the documents examined, the following was said in regard to how the different member categories may participate:

- “Professional opportunities (INGO2) member activities include:*
- *Networking with colleagues from other countries*
 - *Participation in research projects with other members*
 - *Presenting results at conferences*
 - *Attending regional and international conferences at a discounted rate” (AR#4)*

These opportunities will be elaborated on: Members of category 1 and 2 work together by affiliating with one of INGO2’s regions, that meets annually at the world conference, as well as during regional conferences. Individual members, as mentioned, also join one of the organisation’s Scientific Sections. The sections are responsible for planning and presenting the scientific content of INGO2 regional and international conferences, and they also undertake other activities. Within the sections, specific working groups may take on various projects (AR#4). As such, the organisation has arranged for its members to act in concert and produce something concrete.

In regard to participation at the General Assemblies, however, the practice of INGO2 is slightly different. Individual members elect one representative from their Scientific Section who attends the General Assembly meetings on behalf of this Section. This may be perceived as having an unfortunate effect on the opportunity of this stakeholder group to partake for at least two reasons: 1) farer

distance to the decision-making centre; 2) the accountability of the representative is more critical¹². Having that said, the data revealed that the organisation has implemented a procedure for diminishing such effects (although the data did not recognise the potential unfavourable nature of this aspect):

“As stipulated in Article 10 of the Constitution, Individual Members are represented within the General Assembly by the Chairs of the Scientific Sections. Each Individual Member votes during the section meetings that take place prior to the General Assembly, and which are governed by the same Agenda.” (B-L, Article 5)

Firstly, this modifies the fact that individual members are not all present in person at the General Assemblies, as they already have voted on the same agenda, and communicated their views via their representative. Secondly, all members are provided with minutes of meetings of the General Assemblies (as mentioned in the previous section), which imply a certain degree of supervision/control. Thirdly, in the statutory documents, it is laid down that the Chairperson is elected for a period of one year, which involves a replacement practice and a division of responsibilities (Con). The data did not, however, indicate what individual members might do in cases where they feel that their views do not enter the discussions at the General Assemblies. This will be further addressed in section 5.4.4 Complaint and response mechanisms.

¹² It will be further addressed whether or not it is appropriate to identify this issue as a shortcoming to participation. For organisations of such magnitude as INGO2 is, participation unavoidably becomes an issue of representation, and delegated authority. Whether or not the organisation is accountable thus depends on other means that may enable stakeholders to influence.

For members of category 1 and 2, the voting at the General Assembly also is on delegation of voting authority, and the name of the person holding the mandate must be communicated to the executive body prior to the General Assembly meeting (Con).

In line with this, the informant also identified the inability of the General Assemblies to assemble all members as a problem. The informant further stated that the participation of those that do attend often is reduced to giving consent and approvals (ExD2). This represents a shortcoming to participation. As stated in section 2.4; this type of participation is sub-optimal. In regard to conferences, it was not clearly described how members may participate, other than what already has been mentioned.

The minutes of meetings revealed that the organisation is working with finding better ways to strengthen the membership:

“(Decision-making body) agreed that (INGO2) needs to improve membership development and communication (...)” (DMM#3)

One barrier to membership engagement was identified as lack of communication between the Headquarters and the Scientific Sections. One suggestion for strengthening this linkage was:

“It was reiterated that a liaison person for all committees, for regions and for scientific sections needs to be available at all times to improve communication from the Secretariat to the members and vice versa.” (DMM#2)

It was not clear from the data whether such a liaison person was appointed; however, the meeting that followed further addressed this shortcoming to participation:

“(...) the membership part of (INGO2) has been a failure with a

minimum input from the Sections towards activities of (INGO2). Collaboration between Sections and (HQs) is minimal” (DMM#3)

One year later, it was realised that:

“(...) (INGO2) needs to make members feel that we are achieving something together and that they are a part of the success” (DMM#4)

At this meeting, the discussion over Scientific Sections resulted in the following:

“(...) Scientific Section meetings are now very administrative and too short (one and a half hour per year) with an important agenda (GA matters, election of officers, reports). There is a need for longer meeting to address all relevant issues. (...)” (DMM#4)

It was determined that there was a need to:

“1) define clear terms of reference for each section, 2) agree on task assignment, 3) evaluation of assignment. Scientific Sections will be better served by (HQ) if these three points are clear” (DMM#4)

As these selected quotations indicate, INGO2 is concerned with how to comply with its responsibilities as a membership-serving organisation.

Another impression from the data investigated is that the organisation is balancing the financial situation against its role as a membership organisation. Too much of contract-based operations (often encouraged by easier access to restricted funding) may distort mission and objectives:

“(...) (INGO2) is not a service providing organization, and that there is a need to keep its focus and therefore occasionally it declined

contracts because of the need for too much compromise” (DMM#2).

This quote further demonstrates the organisations intentions to be accountable to the needs and concerns of its members, as it seeks to avoid being too dependent on tied monies and commissioned work.

The data revealed that INGO2 provides the different stakeholder groups with information on what role they are expected to play, the purpose(s) of the engagement, length of association and so forth. The type of information is tailored to the stakeholder group in question.

The statutory documents revealed that each post of the executing body was described in terms of field of responsibilities and length of mandate. The decision-making body is likewise described.

In regard to the regions, their role was clearly described as being:

“(…) The role of the regions is to permit actions and approaches to be suitably adapted to the specific needs of each zone, as well as co-ordinating the actions of members within the corresponding geographic sector.”

And further that it was expected from the regions that:

“All the Regions must submit an activity report at least one each year before the voting in the General Assembly; this activity report submitted to (decision-making body) shall include an operational and financial report. (...)” (B-L, Article 9)

The purpose of setting up committees was also found clearly defined in the data:

“The (decision-making body) may set up any committee or commission of its choice, these may be permanent or otherwise, and the (decision-making body) shall decide upon their composition and responsibilities, which shall always be consultative, in order to obtain assistance in its assignment” (Con, Article 8)

In addition, the data contained clear descriptions of how the length of engagement and function of members will be determined, and that the meetings and actions of these committees are subject to a written report to be made to the President (who in turn is responsible to communicate the content of these reports to the decision-making body). With respect to the permanent committees, clear descriptions of the objective and tasks of the different permanent committees and the person whom will be chairing the committee is fixed (B-L, Article 8).

INGO2 is open to stakeholder initiatives. For example, it is stated in relation to support for research in the mission statement of the organisation that:

“(…) members and scientific groups of the organisation may initiate research with a view to promoting collaborating links among members and external groups” (MIS).

The informant confirmed this and exemplified it by referring to a specific member of category 1 that initiated a project in a developing country (ExD2).

The data revealed that the organisation has implemented several mechanisms and processes for ensuring equity in representation. This involves both the ability of becoming and maintaining membership status, as well as considerations the

organisation makes in the composition of its governing units.

First, the organisation calculates the contributions of the various membership categories differently. In the statutes, the manner in which the contributions are calculated is described. For instance, with respect to member category 1, the organisation makes use of a sliding scale in which each member is allocated a given number of quota points, and that their contribution is calculated by multiplying this number by the value of one quota point (as set by the General Assembly) (B-L).

In regard to the other categories, the contribution is determined by the General Assembly according to proposals made by the decision-making body (B-L).

It was not clear from the statutory documents how the organisation responds to the different economic situations of the countries in which the membership works and lives. A closer investigation of the organisational web-site, however, did reveal that INGO2 offers reduced fees for members of low-income and middle low income countries (defined in accordance to the World Bank list of economies). This membership option only involved the subscription to the online version of the journal. This was found to be a bit confusing, as it did not say whether membership of low income countries wishing to be an individual member with all benefits (e.g. also paper version of the journal) would be available with a lower membership fee.

INGO2 sees that the governing bodies have equity in representation as indicated in the following article:

“As stipulated in article 5 of the Constitution, (decision-making body) will be formed by 12 to 15 members.

Five to seven Individual Members are elected by the General Assembly from among (INGO2) members following proposals from the Nominating Committee. Such Individual Members shall be selected according to criteria of competence and expertise in relation to the aims and objectives of (INGO2). It is desirable for each of the Individual Members of (decision-making body) to be a member of a different country. Particular attention shall be paid to ensure parity between the sexes in (decision-making body). (...)” (B-L, Article 6)

This quotation not only illustrates INGO2’s commitment to equity in regional and gender representation, but also its commitment to upholding scientific standard. As the organisation is a professional organisation, it needs to be able to deliver on expectations of quality in research and methods, which thus requires sufficient expertise at the decision-making level.

This commitment was further found in regard to how the organisation set up its committees and commissions:

“(...) To implement (INGO2) programme, several Committees/Commissions shall be established. Membership of the Committees shall be based on:

- *experience and abilities*
- *geographic and regional representation*
- *seniority in (INGO2)*
- *rotation of posts*
- *parity between the sexes*

All nominees must be members in good standing.” (B-L, Article 8)

Disadvantaged groups are given special support, for example to attend conferences,

given that their attendance is relevant for a project/issue that will be debated/voted on (ExD2)

INGO2 does not communicate reasons for neglecting outside parties as stakeholders. For instance, the data did not reveal a statement identifying what types of institutions the organisation cannot work with. If it did have such a description in place, its commitment to only engaging with stakeholders who supports the mission of the organisation would have been strengthened. However, the informant informed that in membership application and renewal forms, members need to confirm that they do not have any connection to the tobacco industry (ExD2).

In regard to whether or not the organisation makes results of engagement processes public available, the informant stated that reports of engagement processes are generally provided one-to-one. They are not provided to the general membership due to the fact that the reports may not be of interest to all members, as they are technical of content and specific to projects (ExD2).

INGO2 tackles communication barriers by operating with three official languages. As mentioned, the web-site as well as several of its publications and educational materials are produced in all three languages. It was less clear from the data how the organisation operationalises this language policy at meetings and conferences. For example, the documentary data did not say that the organisation makes use of interpretation services to facilitate understanding of all stakeholders present at the meetings of the governing units. It was only found that:

“(...) In case of conflict, the English version shall prevail.” (B-L, Article 4)

The informant, however, added that simultaneous translation English/French is provided at the World Conferences in Paris (ExD2).

The informant identified another barrier to stakeholder participation regarding the financial situation facing the membership, as some members may not have the ability to travel. However, stakeholders may send their vote or vote by proxy and they receive annual reports (ExD2)

5.4.3 Evaluation

This section reports on what role evaluation plays within the INGO2 network. The data collected generally provided good information on for what, to whom, and to a certain extent, how INGO2 conducts evaluations.

The informant confirmed that the organisation lacks a written policy on evaluation, but added that INGO2 has a commitment to conduct evaluation for its activity (ExD2). The main purposes for doing evaluations were identified by the informant as being to focus work, have a direction, guide action, a means for sustaining funding, and for developing strategies (ExD2).

As reported in section 5.4.1, INGO2 has well-developed and effective means for communicating with its stakeholders – at least in terms of providing interested stakeholders with information on activities and research within the network. The activity reports are particularly powerful for serving this purpose. In these publications, the organisation provides its stakeholders with diverse information. For instance, in regard to technical assistance related to one of the main diseases that INGO2 combats, it has a separate “*Featured projects*” section where it disseminates information on how many projects it has launched, where, what

criteria a country needs to meet in order to be eligible for funding, as well as the main results of the projects. Other sections present information on educational programmes and courses, research and partnerships, conferences, reports from the last meetings of the Scientific Sections (including number of attendees, formation of working groups etc), reports of regions and decision-making bodies (as mentioned earlier), as well as financial reports and highlights (AR#4).

This enables the stakeholders to hold the organisation to account for its performance. The evaluation practice of INGO2 did not appear to discriminate any stakeholder groups. The informant did however specify a difference among the stakeholders. According to the informant there are two sorts of stakeholders: 1) Stakeholders that are not necessarily members, but whom the organisation works with in the country in question. These are provided with a copy of the evaluation report; 2) General membership. They are provided with activity reports, which are mainly snap-shots of activities undertaken (ExD2). Even though this practice may not be based on a stakeholder analysis where the needs of the various stakeholders were investigated and the provision of evaluation reports were accordingly customised; it is likely that this practice serves the needs of the stakeholders well.

Another particularly powerful aspect of accountability, as represented in the activity reports, is that they start by presenting a message/summary from the President and the Executive Director. As such, all readers of the report are provided with a 'personal' comment from the leadership of the organisation which, to a certain degree, influences the authenticity and sincerity of what follows in the report. This is additionally an effective means for

disclosing main events/priorities of the organisation. Readers may for instance learn:

"(...) However, like any well-functioning organisation, (INGO2) must be guided by a clear vision and strategy for the future. To this end, (INGO2) is developing a long-term strategic plan to ensure that the grants we receive fit not only a particular project, but also with the overall plan and the mission of the organisation. (Decision-making body) has commissioned an independent evaluation of (INGO2) for the period 1992-2004, and the findings of this evaluation will then form the basis for the development of a strategic plan for 2005-2009. (...)" (AR#4)

Elements of evaluation were also identified in the statutory documents under articles describing the field of responsibilities of one of the committees:

"
a) *To review scientific activities, projects, national and international courses and studies of (INGO2) as to content, focus quality and ethical principles.*
b) *To review the applications of Collaborating Centres. Each Collaborating Centre will describe the details of the collaboration project in their application. They can be designated for a certain period of time as a Collaborating Centre after the approval of the (decision-making body), and will have to report back periodically about the outcome of their activities.*
(...)" (B-L, Article 8)

Evaluation thus seems to be an integral part of the INGO2 network, and which is reported on to all stakeholders (in varying degree and form).

The quotation from the activity report cited above revealed that the organisation is undertaking a large evaluation of its organisation in order to focus future priorities. The considerations involved in the planning of this evaluation were reflected in the minutes of meetings of the decision-making body and included development of terms of references, appointment of the consultant and so forth (DMM3).

INGO2 does, however, mainly do technical and financial evaluations of its projects, which the minutes of meetings provided evidences of:

“(Member of the board) asked about monitoring of the projects. (Another board member) has created a team which will undertake technical and financial evaluations” (DMM#2)

The informant specified that the organisation does evaluation of every project and the reports of these evaluations are provided to the decision-making body. For instance, with respect to educational activities such as courses, the organisation does a pre- and post-evaluation where the participants are given the opportunity to feed-back on their perceptions on the content, structure and outcome of the course. The research activities of the organisation are evaluated in articles and reports in various official papers and journals (ExD2).

The minutes of one of the decision-making body meetings also revealed another purpose for which the organisation evaluates:

“(...) Evaluation of (INGO2) (HQs)’s work (ExD2) will develop terms of reference for this evaluation as soon as possible. There are several examples of TOR [terms of references] that can be adapted to the needs of (INGO2). (ExD2) warned that a proper

evaluation costs quite a lot of money and will need to be funded from unspecified funds.” (DMM#2)

The quote also reflects the difficulties facing a non-governmental organisation in being accountable for evaluating its activities and functioning. The challenge of having too little resources available from the “unspecified” or unrestricted fund was addressed throughout the data and inevitably effects how the organisation approaches accountability. This will be further addressed in the discussion chapter.

The organisation also makes use of a membership management system in order to monitor and evaluate membership trends, which include a number of the different member categories, and how many of those are active, e.g. have paid their dues (DMM#3).

Which stakeholders are involved in carrying out the evaluations differ in accordance with type of evaluation and field of responsibility, however, the informant specified that responsibility for evaluations is always allocated (ExD2). Evaluations of technical activities, for example, involve stakeholders in the country in which INGO2 has implemented the programme. With respect to the organisational evaluation referred to above, the involved parties will be board members, donors, technical agencies which whom the organisation works, as well as an external evaluator (ExD2).

The informant explained that the organisation has processes for feeding information and learning from the monitoring and evaluation back into the activity, with the purpose of improving effectiveness and success of the activity. Evaluation reports may primarily serve as a source of information, and it is not always the case that the recommendations are followed up on (ExD2).

It was not clear from the documents investigated how the organisation carries out its evaluations (e.g. objectives and parameters of the evaluation, what stakeholders were engaged in defining these, methods for data collection, how data is checked for errors, and so forth). The informant stressed that evaluation follows a standard, and that a manual for how to conduct evaluations is available on the website (ExD2). In addition, examples of evaluation reports of specific projects were provided by the informant for the researchers' information, however, these reports will not be commented upon as it would exceed the scope of this study. Such information would probably be available in these reports.

The informant added that INGO2 does evaluations of conferences and performance of staff (as reflected above), and that it has done an independent impact analysis of major activities/models developed by INGO2 (ExD2). INGO2 has not, however, done an evaluation of how its activities and operations impact on broader social and environmental conditions (ExD2).

5.4.4 Complaint/response mechanisms

Complaint and response mechanisms refer to channels through which stakeholders can voice their criticism or disappointment and receive an appropriate response. This dimension was found to be less developed than the preceding three dimensions. The data provided little information on the state of complaint and response mechanisms of INGO2.

The informant stated that INGO2 seldom receives complaints and that the organisation, therefore, does not have a procedure for how to receive, investigate and respond to complaints. From the informant's perspective, defining a policy/fixed

procedure would be difficult due to the variations in complaints. Currently, complaints are responded to on an ad-hoc basis. The informant further explained that INGO2 tries to build consensus and build partnerships, and avoid an antagonistic way of doing so (ExD2).

Complaints that have been addressed by the general membership have had to do with the fact that most documents are published in English. Donors may request improvements of financial reports or similar, however, other stakeholders seldom ask questions (ExD2).

The channels whereby stakeholders may voice their complaints are at the Scientific Sections, and the General Assembly (via their elected Chairperson), or directly to the Headquarters by electronic mail.

These channels, or fora, may be unsatisfactory due to limitations such as the infrequency of meetings of the Scientific Sections, the limitations in time and logistics of such meetings, as well as the accountability of the Chairperson (as reflected upon in the Participation section).

In the statutory documents, it is laid down that members of all categories have the opportunity to make an appeal in relation to resignation and dismissal:

“Exclusion or dismissal shall be pronounced only after the Member in question, having been informed of the complaints against him/her, has been invited to explain them. (...)” (Con, Article 4)

This means that the opportunity of the general membership for voicing complaints is confined to their own membership status, and not to the activities of the organisation, for instance. For employees and staff, the complaint mechanisms are tied up with the

laws and regulations in the country in which the Headquarters are domiciled (ExD2).

6.0 DISCUSSION

Accountability is increasingly perceived as a means for improving the effectiveness, quality and equity of institutions at national and international levels. As a consequence of circumstances accompanying the massive growth in the NGO sector over the last two decades, the accountability of NGOs has been questioned. The dominant argument has been that these organisations are being held accountable to the wrong set of stakeholders, or to one type of stakeholder at the expense of others. In recent times, however, suggestions for how accountability may be more equitably managed have emerged.

This thesis endeavoured to carry out a critical evaluation of the state of accountability in two INGOs in health promotion by mapping their accountability systems using a framework found in literature. The results reported on to whom and for what the organisations were accountable, and illustrated conditions and considerations involved in responding to multiple stakeholders.

6.1 The state of accountability as represented in the two cases

This section presents the two accountability systems as mapped in this study. The figures are designed using the original layout of the GAP framework as presented in section 2.4. Meaningful and strong accountability was previously characterised by active and overlapping dimensions. When presenting the accountability systems of the two cases, a modification of the original framework has been made in order to display areas in which the organisations need to strengthen their

accountability conduct. The modification was based on the manner in which the results of this study aligned with the two essential elements of the framework; e.g. the specific standards of each dimension and the interplay between the four dimensions (see section 2.4).

This implies that the assessment of the accountability conduct of the two cases involved to judge the presence of the specific measures of each dimension and to identify how a well-developed (or under-developed) dimension affected the overall approach to accountability. The figures (and the subsequent case conclusions) illustrate this by: 1) Indicating positive findings as well as deficiencies in regards to the content of each dimension; 2) Indicating how each dimension is positioned vis-à-vis the other three by discriminating between overlapping, tangent and isolated dimensions.

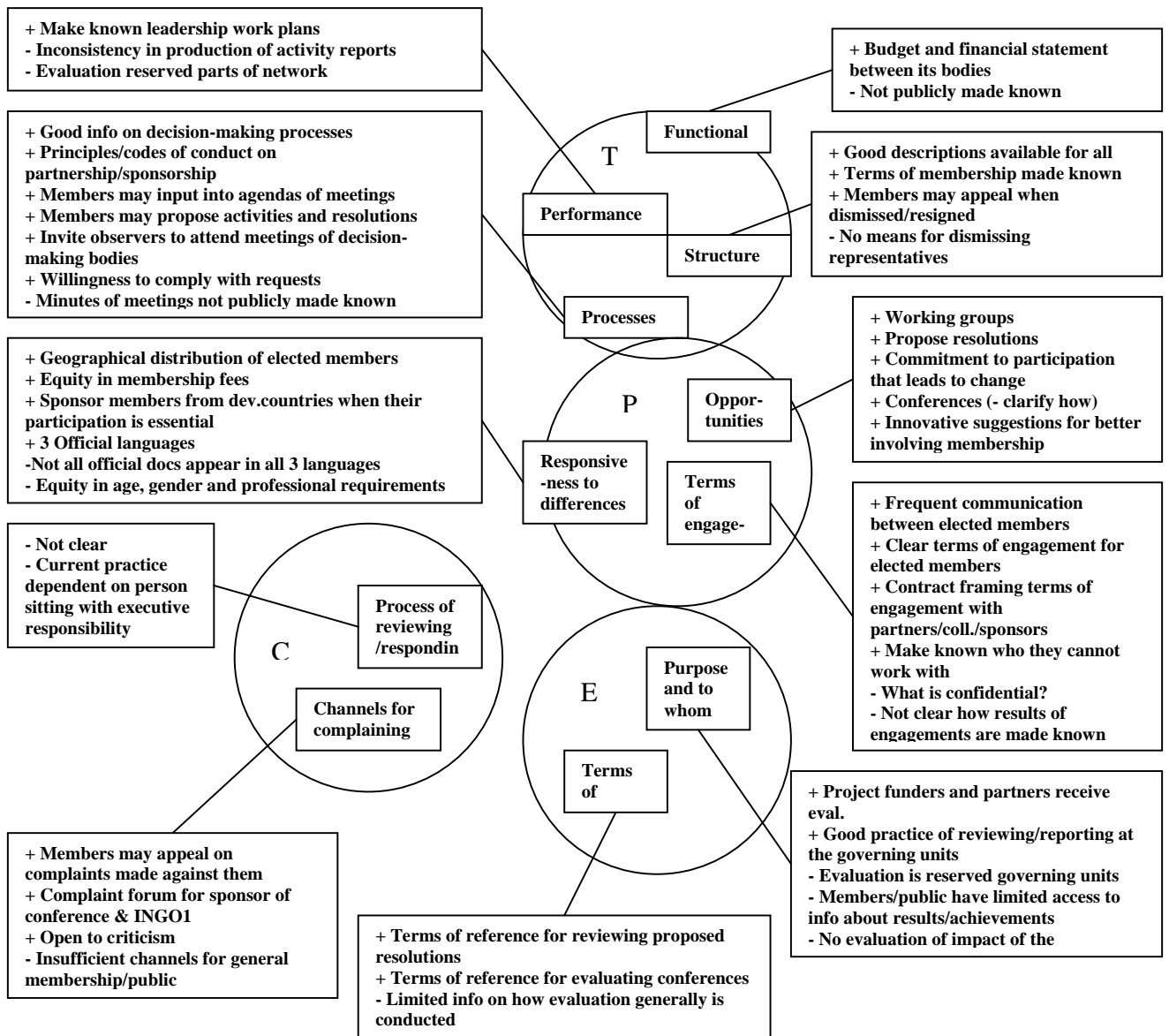


Figure 2: INGO1

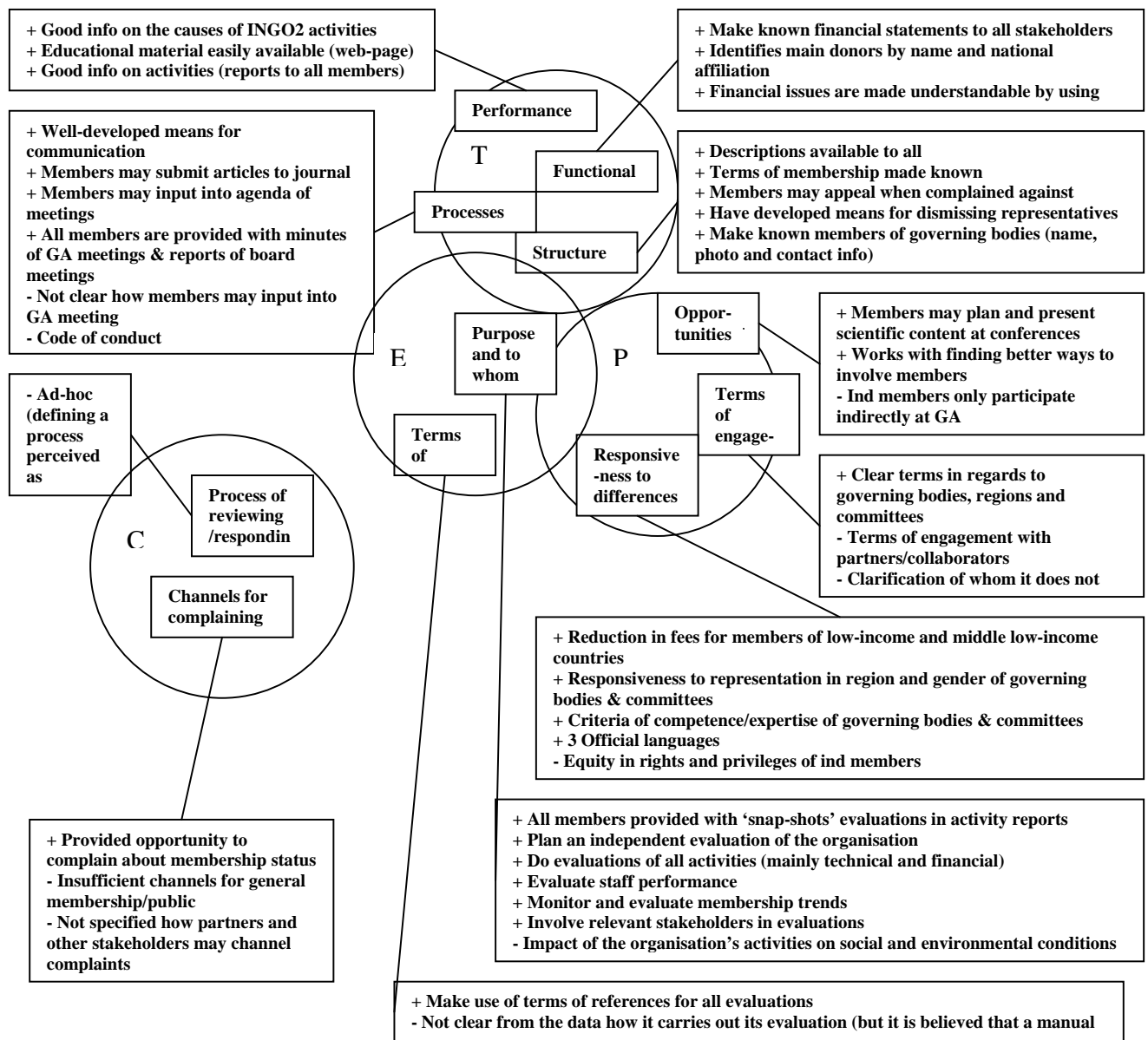


Figure 2: INGO2

6.1.1 INGO1 and accountability

The accountability system of INGO1 as mapped in this study is presented in Figure 2: INGO1. The following was notable in regards to how INGO1 approaches accountability: ‘transparency’ and ‘participation’ overlaps, ‘evaluation’ is tangent to ‘participation’ but does not touch upon ‘transparency’, and ‘complaint and response mechanisms’ is not in contact with any of the three.

Overlapping dimensions

In the figure, the first two dimensions of the GAP framework are organised as overlapping dimensions. This means that this is the organisation’s stronger area in terms of accountability conduct. Areas of improvements were certainly identified from the data, however, the organisation tends to be open about how stakeholders may input into the organisations decision-making (Processes) and how the different stakeholders relate to the organisation (Structure).

From the ‘participation’ point of view, this openness contributes to stakeholders that are enabled to partake in the organisation. The organisation has developed multiple and innovative ways in which stakeholders may participate (Opportunities), and it is particularly responsive to the differences in regional diversity facing the various stakeholders (Responsiveness to differences). This is particularly evident in that it has developed equity in membership fees and in its composing governing entities with due consideration to regional representation.

Having said this, the organisation should be more transparent for functional purposes, e.g. regarding sources of income, resource use and immediate impacts (see chapter 2). The accountability conduct in this regard is

currently limited, with imbalances in what stakeholders are provided with good information on these matters. Being a membership organisation, the organisation needs to provide members with sufficient information on how their contributions were spent, as well as informing where the major sources of income come from (Functional). Additionally, the organisation could put further effort in finding ways in which the general membership (and other relevant stakeholders) can hold the elected representatives to account (Structure). It also could invest in specifying criteria for how to better respond to gender, age and professional requirements in setting up the governing bodies, committees and working groups (Responsiveness to differences). The downside of both of these dimensions is the communication of end-results of activities, engagements, and advocacy campaigns (etc), which will be discussed in the next section.

Tangent dimensions

The third dimension ‘evaluation’ is in the figure tangent to ‘participation’. This intends to illustrate that the evaluation practice of INGO1, to a certain extent, takes account of necessary considerations of ‘participation’. For example, the organisation usually produces evaluation reports of activities that involve some type of engagement with partners (that may be internal or external to the INGO1 network), such as conferences and partnerships/collaborations. As little information is made known in regards to how the organisation carries out its evaluation, as well as the results of the evaluation, and the actual reports, the ‘evaluation’ dimension does not touch upon the ‘transparency’ one. The organisation should consider investing in producing activity reports, considering the value such a device may have on the broader accountability environment of the organisation. With sufficient access to evaluations, stakeholders are able to make

informed decisions about the organisation, its performance and impact. As a first step, the lack of activity reports could be listed as one of the discussion items on the next meeting of the General Assembly in order to determine the need for such reports.

Isolated dimension

The fourth dimension ‘complaint and response mechanisms’ is not in contact with any of the three other dimensions. The purpose of isolating this dimension was to illustrate two issues: 1) the scarce development of mechanisms/processes for such purposes; 2) the potential irrelevance of this dimension to INGOs such as INGO1.

The channels for voicing a complaint and receiving a response were perceived as not taking sufficient account of the different stakeholders within the INGO1 network. Generally, one could say that the manners in which stakeholders may complain are not appropriately made known and the opportunity to address complaints as represented in the General Assemblies were weakened by a number of factors.

The organisation could benefit from entering into dialogue with its main stakeholders, such as the general membership and other partners in its network, on the state of complaint/response mechanisms in the organisation and to discuss whether or not developing a procedure for how to receive, investigate and respond to complaints is perceived as necessary/desirable.

6.1.2 INGO2 and accountability

The accountability system of INGO2 as mapped in this study is presented in Figure 2: INGO2. The following findings were perceived noteworthy: the dimension ‘transparency’ overlaps with ‘evaluation’, but is only tangent with ‘participation’. ‘Participation’ does, however, overlap with

‘evaluation’, whilst ‘complaint and response mechanisms’ is not in contact with any of the three dimensions.

Overlapping dimensions

In the figure, the dimension ‘transparency’ overlaps with the third dimension ‘evaluation’. An overlap is also found between the dimensions ‘evaluation’ and ‘participation’. These illustrate the areas in which INGO2 has developed strong accountability mechanisms/processes.

The ‘transparency’ – ‘evaluation’ linkage represents how the organisation is accountable for providing information prior to and after its decision-making processes and its activities. Differences among stakeholders were found, but these were also found to be consistent with what is likely to be expected. For instance, an individual member is perceived to be best served with receiving so-called ‘snap-shots’ evaluations for the benefit of the detailed activity report that a sponsor might receive (Purpose and to whom).

The transparency practices of INGO2 also involved being open about financial statements and minutes/reports of decision-making bodies (Functional) and (Processes).

In regard to evaluation, it was found that the organisation also takes account of its functioning; as it carries out evaluations of overall performance, staff performance and membership trends (Purpose and to whom). What the organisation could invest in is to develop clear principles/codes of conduct.

‘Evaluation’ also overlaps with ‘participation’. This was primarily due to the fact that INGO2 makes evaluation an organisational matter. In its evaluation processes and procedures it involves relevant stakeholders, and evaluation does not tend to be reserved for the governing bodies, as

evaluation is shared with a number of stakeholders (Purpose and to whom).

Tangent dimensions

In the figure, ‘transparency’ is displayed as tangent to ‘participation’. This was done with hesitation, as the organisation does have several mechanisms developed in this regard. For instance, it is transparent about terms of membership, and it has developed means for dismissing representatives (Structure). However, further attention can be made to improve this linkage.

It appears as if participation is more related to the operations of the organisation (e.g. activities) than to policy and decision-making processes (Opportunities). Further, the organisation could be more transparent about considerations and principles in working with partners, and external actors (Terms of engagement).

Isolated dimension

‘Complaint mechanisms’ is illustrated as the isolated dimension of the organisation. Little information is available on the state of complaint and response mechanisms of the organisation, and there are few opportunities for stakeholders to voice their complaints. For instance, there is dimness in regards to how breaches in partnerships may be addressed (Channels for complaining). When complaints are received, these are managed on an ad-hoc basis (Process of reviewing/responding).

6.1.3 Cross-case conclusions

What the two figures do not tell, but what is important to add to this context is that in mapping the accountability systems of both organisations, few explicit accountability mechanisms were found. Most of the mechanisms and processes described above should in other words be understood as what was defined as *intentional* accountability

mechanisms (see the first section of chapter 5).

This observation fosters the following preliminary suggestions to the two organisations: accountability should and could be more clearly addressed. It ‘should’ be, because accountability is an important aspect of governance. Further, as both cases are organisations of global outreach, and as they influence scientific development, health professionals and practitioners, and not least the health and quality of life of many people, they have an obligation to take account of their actions (or inactions). They ‘could’ be more explicit about their system, as they already are accountable for many purposes (as evident from the two figures).

In line with this, another finding of relevance to the accountability system of both organisations is the absence of a policy or statement committing the organisation to be accountable for its decision-making processes, activities and impacts. The absence of such a device may lead to ineffective accountability and, in the worst case, to accountability gaps. Ineffective accountability means that there is too much room for discretion and individual judgement. It also means that it becomes difficult to monitor and review practices, since the goals against which they are supposed to be evaluated are not clearly defined. Of course, accountability needs to be responsive to the context and issue in question, and too much standardisation could undermine responsiveness. However, the absence of a statement of commitment disempowers stakeholders to hold the organisation to account, as they do not have the possibility of referring to a statement of what the organisation said it would do.

Accountability is and should be an investment, but it need not be a costly one. By playing with the structures and

mechanisms that already exist, moving them around and seeing whether one mechanism might apply to several stakeholders and their expectations, the organisation is already being more responsive and accountable. For example, the code of conduct which INGO1 developed in relation to partners, collaborators and sponsors, could advantageously be adjusted to fit several stakeholders.

As apparent in both figures, the dimension 'complaint and response mechanisms' tends to be isolated from the other three dimensions. This is an interesting finding which needs further attention. One plausible explanation is that both organisations have failed to develop such mechanisms, and that they need to put further effort into this. Another plausible explanation is that this dimension is not as relevant to organisations such as the two cases investigated. As the informant in INGO1 stated, the small number of complaints they receive may be seen as a result of it being a voluntary organisation: if any dissatisfaction is felt, the person is free to leave the organisation. Or, as the informant of INGO2 stated, defining a policy/fixed procedure would be difficult due to the variations in complaints which the organisation receives. This issue will be further discussed under section 6.2.

Differences between the two cases may turn on resources, in both human and financial terms. INGO1 employs far less staff than INGO2, and this of course should be considered as a factor influencing for instance the ability to produce activity reports. In terms of funding, it is beyond the scope of this study to make an assessment of which of the two organisations makes the most of its income. It seems as if both organisations are struggling with finding ways to avoid being too dependent on a small number of funders or funders of restricted/ear-marked contributions. Another

discrepancy that may have influenced the mapping of the accountability systems of the two cases is the type of activities the organisations are carrying out. It may be the case that some of the activities of INGO2 (such as technical assistance) are easier to monitor and measure, than those of INGO1.

6.2 Conclusions

Revisiting the literature in chapter 2, the present study may contribute three essential findings: first, accountability implies providing proofs; secondly, enhancing NGO accountability implies keeping faith with all stakeholders; and thirdly, accountability implies resource generation and commitment.

Proving accountability

Accountability may carry with it certain rewards, in the context of NGOs these have been perceived an enhanced ability to gain staff, power and legitimacy (Blagescu et al, 2005; Edwards and Hulme, 2002; Kearns, 1996; Ospina et al, 2002). Such rewards will not come to an actor unless sufficient proofs of accountability are identified, and communicated in a clear, accessible and understandable manner.

This study uncovered the proofs of two INGOs. At this stage, a number of these are proofs are on the level of intentions, yet, they are proofs of reflective accountability practices. Blagescu et al's detailed guideline for accountability identified a number of indicators of accountability practice, and by addressing these; the state of accountability of an actor may be assessed. The present study experienced the guideline as more and less relevant to the cases investigated, and thus it is best applied in accordance with Blagescu et al's suggestion; namely as a voluntary measure and an enabler for accountability (Ibid: 11). It may apply more or less well to other sub-types of NGOs.

Enhancing accountability: keeping faith with all stakeholders

Enhancing accountability may easily be construed as doing more of the same. Perceiving accountability in quantitative terms has been discouraged, mostly because it encourages a view that is unidimensional and linear (Romzek, 2000). Accountability is shaded by contexts and by judgement, and with regard to NGOs this is evident in how they respond to their multiple accountabilities. Some stakeholders may be obvious; others may be less obvious to consult. The results of this study illustrate the vast number of stakeholders integral to the operations of two global membership organisations. Any effort of enhancing accountability of these organisations needs to address all stakeholders (through various forms and to various degrees).

The literature put forward various proposals for how NGOs may enhance accountability and avoid ignoring some stakeholders for the benefit of others. These include understanding who has a stake in the organisation's operations (e.g. stakeholder analysis) (Blagescu et al, 2005; Brown et al, 2003; Brinkerhoff, 2003); making sure these stakeholders understand their obligations and privileges (Cornwall et al, 2000); and finally prioritising stakeholders based on their influence, and on responsiveness to representation and responsibility (Blagescu et al, 2005; Brown et al, 2003). Elements of each were reflected in the present study.

The literature reports disparities in NGO accountability practice. Toward upwards stakeholders (governments and institutional donors), accountability mechanisms are strong and responsibilities are clear. Toward other sets of stakeholders, accountability lacks strength and clarity. These are downwards (beneficiaries, clients, etc.); inwards (mission, values, members, staff); and horizontal (peers, other NGOs)

(Blagescu et al, 2005; Ebrahim, 2003; Ospina et al, 2002). This study uncovered a more nuanced picture. Both cases tended to be quite accountable towards their mission and values, and in many contexts these were used as point of reference for developing and implementing accountability mechanisms of various forms. Strong accountability mechanisms in terms of clarifying engagement with peers/partners were found in one of the cases. Accountability towards members was found to be more complex, and dependent on the contributions of each category to the organisation. Nevertheless, the study corroborated on the tendency of skewed accountability towards those stakeholders whose contributions were 'greatest' (e.g. in terms of finance, authority etc). Yet, the study also revealed examples on how both cases aim at achieving greater equity in how they engage with their stakeholders.

Capacity and commitment: resources, policies and sanctions

Accountability demands resources. According to Blagescu et al (2005), capital and training are essential prerequisites for implementing and sustaining reorganisations that are necessitated when enhancing accountability. Others have pointed to the high costs attended with some accountability mechanisms, and that organisations thus may be hindered in implementing these (Ebrahim, 2003), and a further practical implication could be that money is taken from running projects to be spent on analysing them (Wenar, 2006). This study suggests that resources did have an impact on the state of accountability of the cases, but it was not able to cover the comprehensiveness of this relationship.

Accountability can be seen to exist between actors as a moderator or referee to the dynamics of two-way relationships (George, 2003). In the context of NGOs, framing

accountability in a policy or commitment would empower this mediation function. Diverging and opposing conduct would be easier to identify with agreed upon terms of references. The study revealed few evidences of policies.

Accountability entails being evaluated, either positively or negatively. Complaint mechanisms are perceived as the “last resort” for stakeholders to hold an organisation to account, and for the organisation to become aware of an issue that requires a response (Blagescu et al, 2005:24). The study revealed few effective channels through which stakeholders may voice their complaints, complaint mechanisms were seldom encountered and suggested less relevant to both cases.

6.3 Methodological considerations

In qualitative approaches to research, the validity of a study may be weakened by so-called ‘anecdotalism’, referring to the idea that a researcher does not provide sufficient basis for her findings (Silverman, 2000:176). The present study countered such a threat by triangulating various data sources, validating the findings by consulting the informants (member-checking) and aiming at providing detailed descriptions including negative/discrepant findings.

The study was carried out with due consideration to its intended audience (the IUHPE). Its findings suggest recommendations for improving their accountability system, in accordance with what was agreed upon in the outset of this study.

It should be noted that the analysis carried out had limitations. Key documents such as an organisation’s Constitution, By-Laws, planning documents and progress reports, and Executive Committee and Board

meeting minutes certainly provide glimpses into intentions but not necessarily into actual practices. An assessment of the degree to which accountability intentions, plans and commitments are translated into adequate action will be a matter for the organisation itself to tackle.

The bias represented by the researcher was to some degree factual. The researcher’s conception of INGO accountability as derived from theory was a potential source for preconceived notions, but it also enabled the researcher to critically evaluate the state of the two organisations against the critical elements of accountability. The liaisons with INGO1 and the research supervisor did not constrain the researcher, as it was in the organisation’s own interest to uncover potential weaknesses and areas for improvements.

6.4 Implications

The present study has focused on technical aspects involved in enhancing accountability within two INGOs in health promotion and disease prevention. In addition, it has stressed the need for critical self-assessment of the equitable functioning of similar organisations of similar magnitude.

On the more general level, the present study provides insight into understanding, operating and assessing NGO accountability. To health promotion, increased knowledge about accountability may contribute to planning and sustaining new initiatives and partnerships, as well as attracting support for health promotion at local, national and international levels. First and foremost, however, this study has prepared the ground for further research efforts (internal to the organisations and external – to health promoters in general). Increased knowledge is needed on the relationship between resources and accountability; ways to

increase participatory approaches; and ways to create effective channels for recognition/complaints.

The relationship between resources and accountability was only briefly reflected upon in the present study. Will high costs (in human, financial and managerial terms) outweigh the benefits of strengthening accountability? Can enhancing accountability be morally irresponsible due to the costs attended with it? Can an actor short on resources be able to implement accountability systems? How would the state of accountability be evaluated within cases of different structure, funding sources and activities?

With regard to participatory approaches, this study revealed several good examples. Exploring ways in which affected stakeholders can be assembled and actively partake, in person, on matters that concern them, could be an issue for future research. Or, is it the case, as suggested in this study, that INGOs participation inevitably becomes a matter of representation and delegated authority?

Finally, finding effective channels for stakeholders to voice their complaints and address issues that organisations need to respond to remains an under-explored task. Such mechanisms need to be available, and stimulate constructive and critical feed-back. How can organisations encourage and motivate their stakeholders to contribute their opinions?

This thesis was commissioned; however, it is believed that its objectives and conclusions are of relevance to a wider field of health promotion actors and professionals.

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APPENDIX 1: THE GAP GUIDELINES

(Source: Blagescu et al, 2005)

TRANSPARENCY

Organisational policy and capacity

T1 Policy development

T1.1 The organisational policy on transparency is developed in consultation with stakeholders and relevant experts, and reflects the needs of stakeholders.

T2 Policy content

T2.1 The organisation has a disclosure policy that outlines the rules related to access to information.

T2.2 The policy provides a clear statement committing the organisation to the release of information in the absence of a compelling reason not to disclose and a clear statement on what constitutes a compelling reason.

T2.3 The policy provides a clear statement on issues of confidentiality. It states what information it regards as confidential, and why (this might relate to third party confidentiality, commercial confidentiality, staff confidentiality, etc).

T2.4 The policy provides a clear description of the information disclosure process and the process guarantees to which the organisation can be held to account. This should include:

- How to make an information request
- Timeframes for dealing with information requests
- Details of how the response will be made
- Details of the rules governing decisions
- Costs of obtaining information (if any are incurring).

T3 Governance

T3.1 Responsibility for oversight and implementation of the transparency policy is assigned to a member of the Board, and responsibilities are cascaded throughout the organisation as appropriate, to ensure the policy objectives are reflected in goals and activities at all levels of the organisation.

T3.2 A system of incentives and sanctions for employees is operated to ensure compliance with the organisation's policy on transparency.

T3.3 Evaluation of the transparency policy and process occurs on a regular basis in consultation with stakeholders.

T3.4 An appeal process exists, which allows stakeholders to appeal when they feel they have wrongly been denied access to information. This process conforms to the guidelines set out in the Complaint and Response Mechanisms section.

T4 Resources

T4.1 Resources are assigned for the implementation of the transparency policy throughout the organisation, which cover staff and operational costs.

T4.2 Relevant staffs at all levels of the organisation are trained in how to respond to and/or refer an information request.

T4.3 Within the organisation expert resources are available to advice on transparency and information disclosure.

T5 Accessibility: information availability

T5.1 Information on the organisation's transparency policy is actively disseminated in a clear and easily understandable manner to key stakeholders in appropriate forms and through appropriate media. Appropriate form may include catering for different languages, visual impairment, deafness, etc; appropriate media may include print, the World Wide Web, video, audio, public meetings, etc.

T5.2 Information on the organisation's transparency policy and the process for filing a request is easily available to stakeholders in appropriate forms and through appropriate media.

T5.3 Contact details for a relevant person in the organisation are provided.

T6 Accessibility: user-friendliness

- T6.1 The process for filing an information request is easily understandable by stakeholders.
- T6.2 Requirements for filing an information request take into account the likely capacities of stakeholders.
- T6.3 Stakeholders are not prevented from accessing information due to financial constraints.
- T6.4 Ideally, the organisation facilitates stakeholders' access to independent support when necessary.
- T6.5 The process of filing a request uses appropriate media.

Specific information requirements

The following must be made available in appropriate forms and through appropriate media (see T5.1)

T7 General institutional information

- T7.1 Details of the organisation's operations. For each activity this includes a description of the activity, where it is taking place, when it is taking place, what the objectives are, what the assigned budget is and who has responsibility for it.
- T7.2 All policies relating to an organisation's commitment to accountability (such as policies on transparency, participation, evaluation, complaints, conflict of interests, ethical conduct, etc).
- T7.3 Policy and activity evaluations and annual reports.
- T7.4 A clear description of the organisational structure. This should include details of any subsidiaries, holdings in other organisations, and partners.
- T7.5 A comprehensive list of key staff, specifying their contact details and the scope of their responsibilities.
- T7.6 Annual budgets and financial statements that provide information on the organisation's income, sources of income and expenditure broken down to department level, balance sheets, and interests in subsidiaries.
- T7.7 Reports detailing the organisation's impact (environmental, social).
- T7.8 Political and charitable contributions.
- T7.9 Any codes, partnerships or coalitions to which the organisation is a signatory.
- T7.10 Details of third party advisors to the organisation.

T8 Governance structures & decision-making processes

- T8.1 Members on the executive and governing bodies are identified and there is clarity about how they can be contacted. Their interests in other organisations are declared in relation to the conflict of interest policy, to make it clear how the organisation deals with actual and potential conflicts of interest.
- T8.2 The number of votes held by each member in the executive and governing bodies is disclosed.
- T8.3 A clear and meaningful description of how decisions are made at the operational, policy and strategic levels of the organisation is provided.
- T8.4 The outputs from, records of, and information that informed the, decision-making processes are made available. This may include transcripts, summaries, minutes and agendas of meetings and background documentation.
- T8.5 There is openness on how stakeholders can input into the different levels of decision-making.

PARTICIPATION**Organisational policy and capacity****P1 Policy development**

- P1.1 The organisational policy on participation is developed in consultation with stakeholders and relevant experts, and reflects the needs of stakeholders.

P2 Policy content

- P2.1 The organisation has a clear statement or policy on the role of stakeholder engagement and participatory processes in decision-making, which ensures that key stakeholders will be represented and their interests taken into account.
- P2.2 The policy explains organisational decision-making structures and how stakeholder engagement relates to them.
- P2.3 The policy clarifies the principles that guide decisions.
- P2.4 The policy stipulates how outcomes of any given engagement process will affect decisions and translate into practice.
- P2.5 The organisation allows key stakeholders to initiate engagement.
- P2.6 Comprehensive stakeholder analyses are undertaken on an ongoing basis to inform participation processes.

These occur both at organisational level and for each individual policy or project, and map out the relationship between the organisation and stakeholders, indicating:

- The person(s) in the organisation directly responsible for the decisions on any given issue
- The stakeholders affecting decisions
- The stakeholders affected by the decisions on any given issue
- Groups and organisations currently working or that have worked on similar issues
- When, to what extent, and on what terms stakeholders are involved.

P2.7 The policy stipulates that each participation process has clear terms of reference that answer the following questions:

- Who decides which stakeholder groups are involved
- What influences the decision on which stakeholder groups will be prioritised over others
- How the decision is made and through what process
- The reasons for selecting certain stakeholder groups over others
- How representatives from stakeholder groups are selected.

P2.8 The organisation ensures that stakeholder groups that are engaged are balanced and relevant to the issues discussed.

P2.9 Mechanisms are in place to ensure that those representing other stakeholders are legitimate representatives.

P2.10 The policy needs to be explicit about how it will address costs incurred by stakeholders during engagement.

P3 Governance

P3.1 Responsibility for oversight and implementation of the participation policy is assigned to a member of the Board, and responsibilities are cascaded throughout the organisation as appropriate, to ensure the policy objectives are reflected in goals and activities at all levels of the organisation.

P3.2 A system of incentives and sanctions for employees is operated to ensure compliance with the organisation's policy on participation.

P3.3 Evaluation of the participation policy and participatory processes occurs on a regular basis in consultation with stakeholders.

P3.4 An appeal process exists, which allows stakeholders to appeal when they feel they have wrongly been denied access to engagement processes. This conforms to the guidelines set out in the Complaint and Response Mechanisms section.

P4 Resources

P4.1 Resources are assigned for the implementation of the participation policy throughout the organisation, which cover staff time and operational costs.

P4.2 Relevant staff at all levels of the organisation understands the decision-making structures and processes that guide stakeholder participation, and are trained in participatory practices.

P4.3 Independent advisors and facilitators are used when appropriate.

P5 Accessibility: information availability

P5.1 Information on the organisation's participation policy and about individual stakeholder engagement processes is actively disseminated in a clear and easily understandable manner to key stakeholders in appropriate forms and through appropriate media. Appropriate form may include catering for different languages, visual impairment, deafness, etc; appropriate media may include print, the World Wide Web, video, audio, public meetings, etc.

P5.2 Information on the organisation's participation policy and about individual stakeholder engagement processes is easily available to stakeholders in appropriate forms and through appropriate media.

P5.3 Contact details for a relevant person in the organisation are provided.

P6 Accessibility: user-friendliness

P6.1 Key stakeholders are not prevented from participation processes due to lack of physical access, communication barriers (language or expert terms) or financial constraints.

P6.2 Disadvantaged groups are given special support and encouragement when their engagement is appropriate.

P6.3 The confidentiality of stakeholders during an engagement process is guaranteed by the organisation where appropriate.

Participation practice

P7 Setting the context

P7.1 The organisation will clearly state the purpose and reasons for engaging stakeholders in any decision-making process.

P7.2 Each engagement process has a clear vision and purpose.

- There is clarity on what is negotiable and what type of changes will be accepted as a result of the engagement process
- Stakeholders' concerns, issues and what it is that they are interested in are identified prior to engagement.

P7.3 The type and level of participation is made clear before each engagement process (information, consultation, involvement, partnership/collaboration, empowerment) and stakeholders are informed about what role they are expected to play.

P8 Timing

P8.1 Participation takes place prior to, and during, the decision-making process.

P8.2 The duration of the process is made clear and the timetable of decision-making is provided.

P9 Reporting

P9.1 The stakeholder analysis is publicly available.

P9.2 The organisation's reasons for deciding not to engage with certain stakeholder groups are listed, explained and communicated.

P9.3 Stakeholders' reasons for non-engagement are listed, explained and communicated, where available.

P9.4 All views represented during the participation process are made public except where there are clear reasons to protect confidentiality, and these are provided.

P9.5 The results of the engagement process are reported back to stakeholders and made publicly available, clarifying what stakeholder feedback has been used and how it affected the decision-making process.

EVALUATION

Organisational policy and capacity

E1 Policy development

E1.1 The organisational policy on evaluation is developed in consultation with stakeholders and relevant experts, and reflects the needs of stakeholders.

E2 Policy content

E2.1 The organisation has a policy on the need for evaluation of activities, and its role in increasing accountability to stakeholders.

E2.2 Evaluation takes place for key activities, with the objectives of:

- Providing information to report to key stakeholders on progress against goals agreed with these stakeholders
- Providing information to feed into management and learning, both throughout and at the end of the activity.

E2.3 The policy states that key stakeholders should be involved in evaluations.

E2.4 The organisation has a policy and processes for ensuring learning from evaluations is used within the organisation:

- Processes exist to feed information and learning from the monitoring and evaluation back into the activity, to contribute to activity effectiveness and success
- Mechanisms exist for feeding back information and learning from the monitoring and evaluation into the organisation.

E2.5 The organisation has a policy that evaluation results and recommendations are reported on fully.

E3 Governance

E3.1 Responsibility for oversight and implementation of the evaluation policy is assigned to a member of the Board, and responsibilities are cascaded throughout the organisation as appropriate, to ensure the policy objectives are reflected in goals and activities at all levels of the organisation.

E3.2 A system of incentives and sanctions for employees is operated to ensure compliance with the organisation's policy on evaluation.

E3.3 Evaluation of the evaluation policy and evaluation processes occurs on a regular basis in consultation with stakeholders.

E3.4 An appeal process exists, which allows stakeholders to appeal when they feel they have wrongly been denied input to evaluations. This process conforms to the guidelines set out in the Complaint and Response Mechanisms section.

E4 Resources

E4.1 Resources are assigned for the implementation of the evaluation policy throughout the organisation, which covers staff and operational costs.

E4.2 Relevant staff at all levels within the organisation is trained in evaluation and monitoring procedures and the use of results.

E4.3 Within the organisation, expert resources are available to advise on evaluation at all levels.

E4.4 Evaluators, both internal and external, are trusted, credible and impartial.

E5 Accessibility: information availability

E5.1 Information on the organisation's evaluation policy, engaging with evaluations and accessing results of evaluations is actively disseminated in a clear and easily understandable manner to key stakeholders in appropriate forms and through appropriate media. Appropriate form may include catering for different languages, visual impairment, deafness, etc; appropriate media may include print, the World Wide Web, video, audio, public meetings, etc.

E5.2 Information on the organisation's evaluation policy, engaging with evaluations and accessing results of evaluations is easily available to stakeholders in appropriate forms and through appropriate media.

E5.2 Contact details for a relevant person in the organisation are provided.

E6 Accessibility: user-friendliness

E6.1 Key stakeholders are not prevented from participating in evaluation for reasons of physical access or communication barriers.

Evaluation practice

E7 Stakeholder involvement

E7.1 The evaluation for an activity meets the informational needs of key stakeholders:

- An analysis is undertaken for each planned evaluation to identify key stakeholders and their information needs
- The evaluation is designed to ensure all identified informational needs are met.

E7.2 Relevant stakeholders are involved in the evaluation of a specific activity:

- Defining the objectives and parameters of the evaluation in the planning stage
- Participating in data collection and analysis if appropriate
- Forming conclusions and recommendations
- Ensuring appropriate changes are made and learning processes are initiated
- Ensuring appropriate reporting of the evaluation.

E7.3 Clear and comprehensive information on the evaluation is provided to stakeholders throughout the evaluation:

- Evaluation objectives and parameters prior to evaluation
- Evaluation design prior to evaluation
- Results and recommendations from the monitoring and evaluation
- Progress on implementation of the recommendations from the evaluation.

E7.4 Stakeholder involvement in the evaluation conforms to the guidelines in the Participation section.

E8 Evaluation set-up & planning

E8.1 The purpose and objectives of the evaluation are communicated clearly.

E8.2 The evaluation is designed so that outputs meet stakeholder needs.

E8.3 The methodologies identified for use are appropriate to the situation.

E8.4 Identification of indicators considers data sources and availability, feasibility of data collection, data accuracy and reliability.

E8.5 The plan for evaluation is feasible in terms of budget, capacity and timescales.

E8.6 The timing of monitoring and evaluation outputs is planned so as to feed into decision-making processes.

E8.7 Clear responsibility is allocated for the delivery of the evaluation.

E9 Data collection & analysis

- E9.1 Appropriate methods of data collection are used.
- E9.2 Data is checked for errors.
- E9.3 Data is systematically analysed.
- E9.4 Conclusions and recommendations are justified from the data.
- E9.5 Outputs from the data analysis enable action.

E10 Monitoring & learning

- E10.1 Results are processed and released on a regular basis to inform the ongoing development and decision-making within the activity.
- E10.2 Adjustments to the activity are made as needed during the monitoring process.

E11 Reporting

- E11.1 An accurate report of the evaluation process is made available to describe objectives, participants, methodology and approach, results, conclusions and actions to be taken. Confidentiality is protected when necessary, and reasons for this are provided.
- E11.2 Evaluation reports are disseminated to key stakeholders on a timely basis.
- E11.3 Evaluation reports are made publicly available.

E12 Specific evaluation

- E12.1 In addition to evaluating specific activities, the organisation will evaluate the following: organisation performance with respect to its mission and objectives; financial performance; social impact; environmental impact; compliance with legal requirements; employee rights and conditions; compliance with human rights; compliance with relevant internal and external voluntary codes of conduct.

COMPLAINT/RESPONSE MECHANISMS**Organisational policy and capacity****C1 Policy development**

- C1.1 The organisational policy on complaints and response is developed in consultation with stakeholders and relevant experts, and reflects the needs of stakeholders.

C2 Policy content

- C2.1 The organisation has a policy that it will receive, investigate and respond to complaints from stakeholder groups. A response should include corrective action where appropriate.
- C2.2 The policy contains a clear definition of what constitutes a complaint and how validity of complaints will be assessed.
- C2.3 The policy does not allow accountability gaps; complaints can be filed in relations to any stage of an activity – before, in the planning stage, during consultation, during implementation, and post-implementation.
- C2.4 The organisation enables complaints to be received and processed at a level appropriate to the complaint, and also provides a route for escalation of complaints.
- C2.5 The terms of reference for the mechanism covers the scope and powers of the mechanism, a definition of what constitutes a complaint, and who can file a complaint.
- C2.6 A description of the complaint process is provided, which includes an outline of the process stages (which include complaint filing, acknowledgement, assessment on validity of complaint, investigation, judgement, implementation of response and corrective action), timeframes for each stage of the process, rules governing decision-making, and responsibilities for the process.
- C2.7 Identities of complainants and information relating to the complainant can be kept confidential where appropriate.
- C2.8 The organisation has a non-retaliation policy towards complainants.
- C2.9 It should be possible for complaints to be filed on behalf of affected parties where necessary, but this must be only with the affected parties' proven consent.

C3 Governance

C3.1 Responsibility for oversight and implementation of the complaint and response policy is assigned to a member of the Board, and responsibilities are cascaded throughout the organisation as appropriate, to ensure the policy objectives are reflected in goals and activities at all levels of the organisation.

C3.2 A system of incentives and sanctions for employees is operated to ensure compliance with the organisation's policy on complaints and response.

C3.3 Evaluation of the complaint and response policy and the effectiveness and impact of the mechanism occurs on a regular basis in consultation with stakeholders.

C3.4 The mechanism provides access to an appeal process for both parties. This can be an internal appeal (e.g. the Board) and/or access to an independent external process (e.g. an Ombudsman), where one exists.

C3.5 The complaint mechanism and the people involved in assessing, investigating and responding to the complaint are independent from the subject of the complaint and the complainant. Consideration should be given to past, present and future affiliations.

C4 Resources

C4.1 Resources are assigned for the implementation of the complaint and response policy throughout the organisation, which cover staff and operational costs.

C4.2 Relevant staff at all levels of the organisation is trained to be able to respond to and/or refer complaints.

C4.3 Members of staff are able to bring in, or refer to, additional resources in situations where specific expertise is necessary.

C5 Accessibility: information availability

C5.1 Information on the complaint mechanism is actively disseminated in a clear and easily understandable manner to key stakeholders in appropriate forms and through appropriate media. Appropriate form may include catering for different languages, visual impairment, deafness, etc; appropriate media may include print, the World Wide Web, video, audio, public meetings, etc.

C5.2 Information on the complaint policy (the terms of reference) and the process of filing a complaint is easily available to stakeholders in appropriate forms and through appropriate media.

C5.3 Contact details for a relevant person in the organisation are provided.

C6 Accessibility: user-friendliness

C6.1 The design of the mechanism caters to the situation and needs of the stakeholders for which it is intended. In particular the mechanism meets the needs of the most vulnerable.

C6.2 Requirements for filing a complaint take into account the likely capabilities of the complainants, and consider minority and disadvantaged stakeholders.

C6.3 Independent support is available to help stakeholders understand whether their complaint is valid and to provide technical/legal advice if necessary.

C7 Assessment of complaint validity

C7.1 Validity of complaints is assessed against a clear, published definition of, and criteria for, a complaint.

C7.2 The decision on acceptance or rejection of a complaint is transparent, and the decision and reasons for making the decision are communicated clearly to the complainant.

C7.3 In the case of a complaint being rejected, advice is provided to the complainant regarding how and where to progress/refer the complaint.

C8 Process of investigation

C8.1 The investigation team has the appropriate skills and knowledge to investigate the complaint.

C8.2 The investigation plan is agreed in consultation with the complainant.

C8.3 Clear timelines for the investigation and decision of the complaint are produced and communicated, and the investigation is completed on a timely basis.

C8.4 The investigation team is able to undertake the full range of investigations desired (including accessing internal documents and making site visits), including consulting with key stakeholders.

C8.5 The investigation is conducted in a sensitive and appropriate manner, dependent on circumstances, and taking into account cultural, gender, religious and other matters where necessary.

C8.6 Information gathered is treated confidentially.

C8.7 The investigation team ensures comprehensive documentation and records of the investigation.

Outcomes

C9 Redress for the complainant

C9.1 Decisions on appropriate response are taken with reference to published guidelines, take into account the situation and local conditions, and are determined in consultation with the complainant.

C9.2 Responsibility and timelines for the implementation of the response are assigned.

C9.3 Agreement is reached that the complainant is satisfied with the outcome.

C10 Organisational corrective action

C10.1 The outputs from the mechanism include recommendations for corrective and preventative action within the organisation.

C10.2 The organisation has processes and responsibilities in place for assessing complaints cases, identifying causes, drawing lessons from these, and feeding this back into the appropriate part of the organisation.

C11 Post-resolution follow-up

C11.1 The implementation of actions (both response and corrective action) is monitored by the complaint mechanism (it could also be monitored by an independent, external third party).

C11.2 A process is in place to enable complainants to appeal if the recommendations are not satisfactorily implemented.

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Transparency

- What would you say is the organisation's commitment to/policy on transparency?
- Who developed this commitment/policy?
- What types of information does the organisation disclose?
- What type(s) of information does the organisation not disclose?
- To whom is the organisation transparent?
- What stakeholders ask for information?
- How does the organisation facilitate stakeholder input?
- Who, internal to the organisation, is responsible for communicating with stakeholders and providing information?
- How may stakeholders appeal when they feel they have wrongly been denied access to information?
- What do you see as the main challenges to transparency?
- For what purposes is the organisation transparent?
- What information does the organisation disclose with respect to:
 - Members at the executive and governing bodies?
 - Number of votes held by each member in the executive and governing bodies?
 - Decision-making processes at the operational, policy and strategic levels?
 - Information that informed the decision-making process and outputs? (Minutes and agendas from meetings)
 - How stakeholders can input the different levels of decision-making?

Participation

- What would you say is the organisation's commitment to/policy on participation?
- Who developed this commitment/policy?
- What stakeholders are represented and engaged in decision-making processes?

- How do the various stakeholders learn about their role in decision-making?
- How does the organisation allow key stakeholders to initiate engagement?
- How does the organisation find out whom affect or are affected by decisions?
- How does the organisation decide to what extent and on what terms stakeholders are involved?
- What terms of references does the organisation have, with respect to deciding who should be involved, how some stakeholders groups are prioritised over others, how representatives from other groups are selected etc?
- Who, internal to the organisation, is responsible for implementation and maintenance of the organisations commitment to engage stakeholders?
- What sanctions exist to ensure that the organisation complies with its commitment to participation?
- How may stakeholders appeal if they feel they have wrongly been denied access to engagement processes?
- What do you see as the main challenge(s) to participation?
- For what activities do you see stakeholder participation as important?
- In what activities does the organisation involve stakeholders?
- How does the organisation inform stakeholders on their contribution in decision-making processes?
- What information does it provide?
- What information about the engagement does the organisation provide?
- When, in the course of a decision-making process, does participation take place?
- How does the organisation report on participation processes?

Evaluation

- What would you say is the organisation's commitment to/policy on evaluation?
- Who developed this commitment/policy?
- For what purposes does the organisation evaluate?
- In what areas/activities does the organisation evaluate?
- What stakeholders are involved?
- How are these identified?
- How does the organisation report on evaluation results and recommendations?
- Who, internal to the organisation, is responsible for evaluation and reporting on evaluation's outcomes?
- What sanctions exist to ensure that the organisation complies with its commitment to evaluation?
- What do you see as the main challenge(s) to evaluation?
- What considerations are taken when evaluating an activity?
- How are stakeholders involved in evaluation?
- How are stakeholders provided with information about evaluation processes?
- What kind of information is provided?
- What information does the organisation provide with respect to evaluation set-up and planning?
- What considerations are made in evaluation set-up and planning?
- In what ways does the evaluation inform decision-making and learning?

- What routines does the organisation have for reporting on the evaluation process?
- What stakeholders receive reports?
- For what specific activities does the organisation evaluate?

Complaint and response mechanisms

- What would you say is the organisation's commitment to/policy on complains and responses from stakeholders?
- Who developed the commitment/policy?
- What is the organisation's standpoint and practice on receiving, investigating and responding to complaints from stakeholder groups?
- What considerations does the organisation make in terms of responding to complaints from the different groups of stakeholders?
- What information does the organisation provide in terms of the complaint process?
- With what cautions does the organisation treat a complaint?
- Who, internal to the organisation, is responsible for oversight and implementation of the organisation's commitment to compliance?
- What sanctions exist to ensure that the organisation complies with its commitment to complaints and responses?
- What do you see as the main challenge(s) to complaint/response mechanisms?
- What frames of references does the organisation have in terms of assessing complaint validity?
- What considerations does the organisation make in terms of processing the investigation of a complaint?
- What considerations does the organisation make in terms of the outcomes of the investigation?
- What is the outcome of an investigation?
- What post-resolution follow-up responsibilities exist?