

Amnesty International members only
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2022 GLOBAL ASSEMBLY MEETING PAPER

AMNESTY CORE STANDARDS WITHIN AN ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

AI Index: ORG 50/5515/2022

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Aim:

- The aim of this paper is to present the Core Standards principles and assessment process based on review findings and regional forums feedback and how these are being integrated within an Accountability Framework to improve collective accountability by the movement.
- The Core standards are mandated in our global Statutes and as such require movement approval at the global assembly in order to update them.
- The intended outcome for this paper is to get an agreement to adopt an Amnesty integrated accountability framework with the core standards. This is relevant to human rights work because ensuring good governance and respect of organisational and financial standards enable better focus on sustained human rights impact.

How to use this paper:

- Colleagues in national entities should consult their board and management and staff as well as those who are responsible for monitoring core standards and discuss the motion.

Please see the Executive Summary for recommended actions

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Background papers

| Paper title | AI index number |
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| Reviewing the Core Standards | ORG 50/4240/2021 |
| Developing a movement-wide performance and accountability framework – July 2019 | ORG 41/1121/2019 |
| Review of Accountability and Performance at Amnesty International – December 2017 | ORG 41/4031/2018 |
| ICM 2013 Decision 6 Core Standards | ORG 53/006/2013 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Objective and intention

This paper is in support of the 2022 GA International Board motion on presenting the Amnesty core standards within an integrated accountability framework. It recommends that the core standards are simplified and updated as 20 principles within 4 accountability clusters and recommends a process for progress, learning and support, and compliance, so that Amnesty can meet and excel in its organisational accountability and governance. External threats and protracted internal challenges compel us to strengthen our organisational effectiveness; revised standards within an accountability framework will support all Amnesty entities to deliver on the strategy and human rights impact in the face of these challenges.

Background

This motion is based on GA 2021/02 motion on the Core standards review. Following the 2021 GA, a review of the core standards was launched with a global survey and 5 focus group discussions. The consultations have resulted in recommendations which have been presented back to the movement through the 2022 regional forums.

The discussions confirmed:

- The need for feedback and capacity development;
- The need for simplification of standards and stress on the baseline requirements that all must develop and comply with; this is especially important in areas such as anti-racism; environmental sustainability where concrete tools and support will be essential;
- The need to measure performance and progress; and
- The need to adapt to national capacities and contexts of the entity.

The regional forums discussions have provided further insightful recommendations on:

- More training and engagement on core standards during Board inductions so that changes in board members do not compromise on knowledge and compliance in implementing the core standards, respecting the capacities of the entity; and
- Clarifying how the global accountability framework and process mesh with the national accountabilities to members and local authorities.

All these have been integrated in the draft framework presented at the end of the paper. A set of entities have volunteered to join a working group that will be formed to help finalise the detailed indicators under each principle. They will finalise the 'minimum' indicators for the standards as well as 'good to have' indicators which have been drafted and test the process for assessment and progress reporting before the process being rolled out in full.

While the core standards have served to help us improve our governance over the years, Amnesty has been missing an overarching accountability framework linked to this process so that there is clarity on Amnesty collective accountability as a global organisation to which all entities belong. There is an appreciation for the need for continued learning and the ability to discuss challenges and failures together with peers as well as getting feedback from the IS on areas of the assessment. Linking learning and feedback on assessments, transparent and user-friendly reporting tools, process for progress respecting the entity capacity and priorities as well as investment in support and capacity building and the potential creation of a peer working group will be important for the successful implementation of the framework and standards.

Summary recommendations

This paper recommends the Global Assembly delegates to pass the motion on the updated core standards principles within an accountability framework and process for progress.

MOTION ON THE CORE STANDARDS AND THE ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

WHY IS THIS MOTION IMPORTANT AND WHY NOW?

The motion on a simplified set of core standards within a Global Accountability Framework is a follow-up to the motion on the Core Standards Review of GA 2021/2 which set forth a review and consultation with the movement on how the core standards could be improved and how can learning and accountability be strengthened further. Ultimately this will help achieve our global strategic goals as healthier organisations have more impact and generate less stress.

The feedback from the global survey and 5 focus group discussions with 46 participants in late 2021 as well as the recent 2022 regional forum discussions on the motion has resulted in changes:- to simplify the core standards into principle-based standards, with guidance on minimum and additional practices that would meet the standards, as well as clarifying who is accountable for each standard. There is a strong stress on accountability and transparency, dignity and equality. Amnesty has been missing an overarching accountability framework until now to align and bring all standards together. Please see the proposed framework and summary of the core standards review in the appendices.

This motion is strategic given the current context of increased threats to Amnesty presence and very expensive and time-consuming internal conflicts and breaches due to failures in governance and management practices. Feedback is not optimal and consequences and corrective measures are often based on a “legalistic” approach. Moreover, better linking accountability to learning processes and progress will help to make decisions through an integrated approach which brings together the shared standards in a way that can be used by all levels of the movement.

We hold governments to account and Amnesty needs to be able to do the same in a spirit of respect and learning and in how the new strategy will be delivered. A clear framework and simplified standards will help national Boards and senior leadership navigate ways to improve. It can also be shared with all staff, members and volunteers so all parts of Amnesty can refer to the framework. The implementation of the framework will be key in making improvements through more contextual, peer led learning processes and support from IS on feedback to assessments and transparency in sharing results and coordinating the process will help to strengthen trust.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS MOTION AND HOW WILL IT HELP ENTITIES?

This motion asks the global assembly to adopt a global accountability framework with the core standards being integrated in three clusters: Governance and leadership; Finance and Growth; Organisational Health and a fourth cluster on Enabling Human rights impact has been aligned with the global strategy framework for enhancing our collective accountability to implement the global strategy. For human rights impact cluster, the indicators will be aligned to the measurement framework of the strategy and its enablers. This will need close alignment with the strategy indicators. The International Board's core focus is aligned on this framework and principles. Therefore, this should provide all national boards with a clear guideline for their own areas of focus to ensure governance and accountability in their entities and across the movement.

Ultimately by adopting this new framework and updated standards, the Global Assembly will enable the IB through the IS to implement processes to use this framework for decision-making, both at the global level and at the national level when it comes to assessing organisational performance, and offer learning in key areas to strengthen Amnesty and hold each other accountable.

This will mean that the IS will invest in further resources to move the self-assessment process online; coordinate feedback on entities' assessments and link that to support and learning resources and corrective plans on each of the accountability areas the national entity will prioritise according to its capacity. Peer learning groups and other ways to ensure that improvements are made would be based on evidence. This will also help in the long run to affect a culture of learning and being open to discuss failures and improvements.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN FRAMEWORK AND STANDARDS?

The Framework has three components. These have been shared in the Appendix below. The Framework contains:

- a definition statement on what Accountability is in practice which recognises our collective accountability on the national level with entities' membership and rights holders and also globally to our movement as all entities belong to Amnesty as a global organisation.
- 20 principle-based standards within four clusters of Governance and leadership; Finance and Growth; Organisational Health and Enabling Human rights impact.
- the methodology for assessment; learning and compliance. This sets out the overall process by which assessments would be completed, feedback provided and learning and compliance being met.

A set of detailed standards have been drafted and will be finalised with a working group of entities on what would be the 'must have' practices and what are the 'good to have' practices under each of the standards and who is accountable for it. Wording on each standard has been reviewed and simplified; duplication have been removed and standards that are similar have been merged. These standards will be tested with those entities who have shown an interest in being part of the working group during the regional forum discussions so that issues in adaptation to national contexts and capacities can be piloted in order to ensure that the detailed assessment process works well.

Changes proposed in the process for monitoring progress have been that the assessment will no longer have binary questions but a graded scoring to assess degree of progress and have more qualitative element of identifying learning gaps and needs in order to comply. In addition, it is proposed the assessment process would be followed by a corrective action plan and peer learning groups around key topics of interest so that there are practical steps for progress and coordination in between the two-year cycle to implement changes.

A key point is a requirement for Boards to make a commitment to uphold the principles in the core standards contained in the framework and to engage in the corrective plan they identified according to their capacity. The proposal is that board members sign up through letters of commitment. Other methods for compliance include publication of each entity's results and peer organisational review. Some consequences for continued or acute failure have also been outlined which are in keeping with current global regulations. The IS also

needs to provide support through learning initiatives for national boards and directors, make training resources and templates available and to make sure that the standards are introduced in all inductions. These will be implemented following the motion and after the new self-assessment process is tested and launched in late 2022/early 2023.

NEXT STEPS: WHAT IS NEEDED FROM THE MOVEMENT

The next steps in order to adopt this framework are:

- for the global assembly to pass this motion. This will enable the International Board and the secretariat to finalise the detailed indicators, ensuring alignment and consistency with the implementation plan for the Global Strategic Framework, and other global initiatives (like becoming an anti-racist organisation, ensuring wellbeing, safeguarding etc) through a peer led consultative approach and then develop the online assessment process.
- The new assessment process will be tested and rolled out in 2023 followed by implementation of learning action plans.
- In tandem, the secretariat will work to develop guidance and induction modules on the standards which can be tested with movement colleagues through a working group and work on a process of a deeper review every 6 years through a peer learning network.

APPENDICES: THE ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK AND CORE STANDARDS PRINCIPLES

Accountability Definition statement: “Accountability in the AI Movement is understood as the responsible use of resources and action taken to deliver our vision and strategy. By this, we honour and celebrate the worldwide joint impact of our work in Human Rights. We are accountable to rights holders on whose behalf we work, to Amnesty International Members, Supporters, Volunteers, Donors and fellow entities within the Amnesty movement. This means that all entities and groups are accountable to each other in a spirit of mutual respect of each other’s authority and purpose. We commit to meeting our human rights objectives, agreed Core Standards in governance, organisational health, financial management and growth by monitoring our performance in an integrated methodology; by sharing information transparently; by listening through consultation and learning by feedback.”

Core Standard Principles

Enabling Human Rights Impact Standards

- Commitment to deliver on Strategy in accordance with the Global Strategy Measurement Framework
- Planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes
- Investing in learning and capacity development
- Developing Members, Supporter Growth and Engagement

Finance and Growth Standards

- Compliance to financial regulations
- Financial due diligence: controls and Risk management
- Sustainable funding
- Diversification of income
- Anti-corruption/bribery

Organisational Health Standards

- Progressive employer -respect for labour rights
- Respecting Racial and Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Promoting Communication, Feedback and complaints mechanism
- Prioritise Health and Wellbeing
- Mitigating Risks, Ensuring Security and Safeguarding
- Environmentally sustainable

Governance and Leadership standards

- Democratic and accountable Board, Leadership and members
- Commitment to excellence and performance
- Clear roles and responsibility for Feminist and Anti-Racist Leadership
- Duty of Care to staff and volunteers
- Transparency and Integrity in Decision-making

National and Global Accountabilities

- National entities’ accountability rest on the national level with their membership and the rights holders they serve through their national projects, campaigns and programmes. Global accountability to reporting on core standards takes into account the national legal and membership obligations and will be reported to the global assembly.

- Both these accountabilities are not mutually exclusive, they rest on each other and adoption of this framework is a recognition of Amnesty's collective accountability at both levels as a mechanism to strengthen Amnesty as a global organisation.
- National entities are accountable for ensuring that they meet any national level legislation that govern them. All attempts will be made to integrate the core standards within the national context and capacity. Where national level legislation does not exist; the core standards allow Amnesty to strive for global benchmarks and good practices through the adoption of this framework.

Assessment

- The assessment process on meeting standards will continue to take place every two years as per Decision 6 ICM 2013 but it will be done through an online survey. The Enabling Human Rights Impact cluster may be assessed through annual reporting as per the Global Strategy. All efforts will be made to reduce duplication in reporting, and integration with other processes like the RAM. Entities will be supported through sessions on the new assessment process from 2023.
- The core standard practices will be assessed through questions on the degree to which practices are being implemented from a scale of 0-5. The scale's meaning will be explained and there will be guidance.
- Each Cluster will have an overall score calculated based on the scales. This will enable a Red Amber Green (RAG) rating for each cluster and so entities will easily be able to see which area they are strong on and which area they need more learning and emphasis.
- A working group comprised of entities and IS will be formed to finalise the assessment process which agrees to the minimum and additional adaptable requirements with clear measurement methodology for progress and performance and this will be tested by volunteer entities before being launched for all. Once the assessment process is finalised and implemented, a table of results with the RAG rated self-assessment of all entities will be made available to the movement, including the results of the IS. This is to encourage transparency and open discussion on progress.
- Assessment will include areas for further development and learning action plans for outlining learning support that is needed. Feedback will be provided on the assessments by the IS and specifically how the learning or templates / tools needs of the entity could be met through Amnesty Leadership and other available resources.
- The IS will globally assess and analyse the outcomes, the trends, the progress to ensure global compliance and progress. This may include more in-depth analysis of a selection of assessment submissions and cross verification with other data points and evidence; this will enable the IS to coordinate an assurance process on self-assessment submissions and provide more feedback and/or request more information where assessment data is not clear.

Learning & support

- The emphasis of the core standards assessment is for learning and development and becoming more accountable. Therefore, the assessment will be followed by a period of feedback and links and access to learning and support in the following year, to

encourage genuine self-assessment.

- While the assessment will be an online survey, it provides a critical reflection moment for entities to assess their organisational performance and will be an opportunity to engage in internal conversations and workshop their learning before capturing these in the survey. A participatory inclusive approach will be recommended in the guidance provided.
- A peer learning network or working group can be facilitated around thematic areas of the framework where there are weaknesses and also good practices to share. This will be to share practices and learn from each other.
- The implementation of each assessment cycle will be followed by implementing learning action plans linked to it which can be supported by the IS regional and global teams.
- A database on online capacity building trainings, templates for policies and processes in 3 languages, will be offered and subject to funding, online courses and modules on standards developed. There will be linkage to RAM process so that there can be funding made available where additional language translations and capacity development are required.
- The new assessment process along with the learning network will be tested in early 2023 before finalisation so that there is feedback before full implementation.
- The assessment process can be used as part of a larger recognition process, where entities could undergo a deeper peer review every 6 years, every 3rd cycle of assessment would become a peer review process. This would mean, each assessment cycle would have 1/3 of the movement undergoing a peer review assessment. This is subject to availability of resources for the IS to facilitate this review process.

Compliance

- All entities' Boards sign every year a letter of commitment to core standards and accountability framework to ensure that each Board member is aware and receives induction on this need for compliance.
- All entities must comply to the minimum requirements, while other 'good to have' practices are for what all aspire to fully implement.
- Where the entity fails to submit their assessments or to meet the Finance core standards and submit financial reports, the entity's voting rights may be suspended for the following global assembly and the global assembly will require the entity to submit the assessment or financial reports before voting rights can be re-instated. This is in accordance with the global governance rules.
- Where there are Red flags and failures to comply the movement building programme and regional IS support will assist the entity to implement plans to meet the standards, according to the entity capacity. This might include supporting through peer support network, trainings, resources and funding.
- Where there is consistent failure across 2 or more clusters, the International Board may take further action in cooperation with the entity to undergo an organisational review and take urgent steps to learn and rectify practices.
- Where there are breaches of core standards related to legal, financial fraud, or security and safeguarding failures and reputational damage, the International Board will take action in accordance with Amnesty's Statutes to institute sanctions such as fund withdrawal; suspend the entity in order to protect Amnesty from any further damage.
- Recognition/accreditation process every 6 years can be implemented for further in-

depth review depending on available resources.

SUMMARY OF CS REVIEW FINDINGS FROM GLOBAL SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUPS

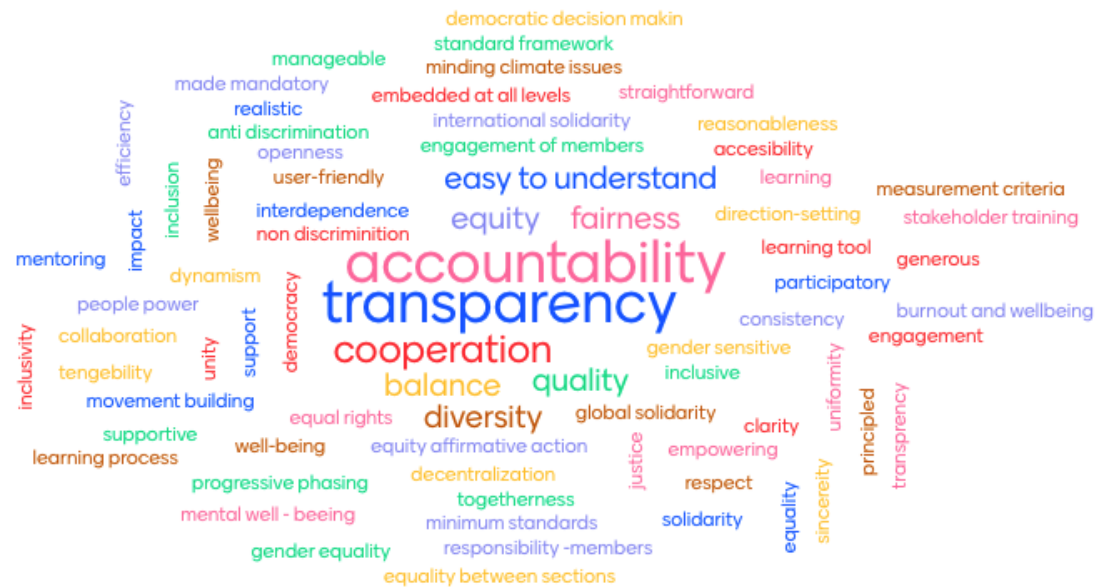
The global survey had a 71% response from national entities. The majority of the respondents either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that:

- a. The 29 Core Standards could be simplified and made more accessible by re-categorising them in a simpler way to highlight the value behind the Standards.
- b. There could be clear processes for showing how compliance can be achieved in key areas with measurements of progress.
- c. Training and development opportunities can be linked to assessment of gaps and more targeted based on results.
- d. The results of each entity's self-assessment can be shared transparently with the movement so that there is opportunity for peer-to-peer comparison and learning.
- e. There should be an effective, accountable and transparent process for dealing with breaches of core standards, with consequences for continuous breaches.
- f. It would be better to complete the core standards self-assessment through an online survey/form.

Majority of respondents (29) discuss the core standards assessment every two years before the assessment is due, while 15 discuss it annually. Similarly majority think that the two yearly assessment is the right frequency for assessment. Currently 33 entities report core standards as part of board inductions but 18 do not include any core standards in board inductions.

Main recommendations from respondents for improvements to the core standards are around simplifying the core standards and making the way we monitor progress more contextual and qualitative, linking to more training¹ and resources. Another strong feedback was for the need for learning from each other, either through a peer group or network and making resources more accessible, simpler modules that could be integrated into inductions at the national entity level. There is an expectation from national entities that the International Secretariat play its role as the coordinator and capacity builder so that feedback is provided to national entities on their progress and also provide more capacity development to ensure that those behaviours and principles in the standards are implemented and come to life in everyday reality.

The Focus groups were attended by a total of 46 participants². There was rich discussion on why and what we need to change about the core standards and what principles and commitments are needed in a more simplified and re-organised set of standards. The word cloud below captures some of the key ideas that participants noted.



The feedback from the focus groups and survey supports the broad recommendations built by the Governance Innovation Group and the Accountability project board to align the core standards within an integrated framework and have a more qualitative assessment process that is linked to learning and measuring progress with more contextualised information. Participants also noted that given the diversity of capacity and challenges in implementing such standards, a way of regular sharing on core standards as well as better and more accessible learning modules should exist. An important point has also been to take roles and responsibility into account for a standard to be implemented, eg, what is the role of the director vis a vis a board member vis a vis a member to ensure that standard is integrated in behaviour and operations. There was also a desire to have a clearer prioritisation of which standards are more critical for all to comply with. While noting the need for compliance, there was also a caution about avoiding sticks and punishment but rather support with learning and encouragement for excellence.

Participants really appreciated discussion on the core standards and many noted that such a dialogue needs to continue with a permanent working or peer group to support the process. Having accessible and language specific communication and training on core standards is key. Any learning initiative around a revised set of standards has to include multi-media training and communication on them in different languages so that this can be shared to all at the national entities and not just stay as an excel sheet to complete every two years by a few people. Reducing complexity will be the first step but then making communication and learning products that explains what each standard means in practice will really help in embedding practices.

1 Policies and training around Conflict of Interest; Conflict and dispute resolution; security, safety and risk management; Nominations process and assessing board skills; Environmental impact/climate change markers for this; practical steps to gender and diversity mainstreaming with anti-discrimination.

² The break-up of the participants per region is: AFRICA 7; AMERICAS 7; ASIA-PACIFIC 9; EUROPE 19; MENA 4