

AIUK RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SECTIONS AND THE HUBS (ORG 30/005/2013)

AIUK welcomes the consultation on the relationship between sections and hubs. This is a positive development in the Moving Closer to the Ground process.

We shared the document with AIUK staff, via our Management Team, emailed it to approximately 1,000 leading activists and specifically sought the views of our Country Coordinator network. Responses were received from the Coordinators and from individual members of staff and teams in our Campaigns and Marketing Departments. The Director has authorised this response, which will be passed to our Board for their information and will be available to our members on request.

The position of AIUK's Board on the Global Transition Programme should be stated at the outset of our response. They support its direction, they accept that the process will encounter problems, that there will be uncertainties and ambiguities and that change on this scale will encounter criticism. However, they wish to avoid undue delays. At the same time, they acknowledge the impact that this process will have on staff at the International Secretariat and wish the International Executive Committee to proceed with sensitivity as well as purpose. They believe that the Reference Group report offers important recommendations, which they hope to see translated into the practice of implementation. They hope to see thorough consideration of the process at the 2013 International Council Meeting.

However, this response is not a report of the Board's position. Instead, it tries to represent a range of comments arising from our consultation, although it has been impossible to include every point that was raised.

This process affects sections. We appreciate that staff at the International Secretariat will feel the impact of this organisational change most keenly and there is concern for their situation within AIUK. However, the global transition will have implications for AIUK's staff and activists. These implications are not clear and this is causing anxiety and fuelling call for the process to slow down. Clearly there will be opportunities and challenges. It is very important that communication and dialogue are maintained as we move forward.

The remainder of this response begins by setting out comments in response to the two sets of questions specified on page 2 of the consultation paper. We then proceed to broader comments.

Phase 1 Hub Design

The benefits of a distributed presence and integrated teams are stated on page 14 and on page 17. However, a number of respondents are not convinced. They feel that these sections of the paper simply assert that the benefits will automatically follow multifunctional hubs being established "closer to the ground". They note that cultural issues and processes (including but not restricted to approvals) can impede speed and responsiveness. Some did conclude that the presence of researchers, law and policy advisers and Hub Director will enable local approvals. However, they felt that this should be explicit.

A number of contributors believed it was difficult to comment on the structure diagrams when it is not clear what organisational functions sit underneath job titles like "International Mobilisation Coordinator" and "Regional Growth Coordinator". Indeed, there was a request

for the IS to describe the major (and not necessarily most senior) roles within the organisation, as a way of helping us to understand how the institution works and how Amnesty seeks change. However, the following comments on posts did arise:

- Will a single Senior Campaigner for two global campaigns suffice? Some felt this to be a particular issue in Johannesburg, Nairobi and Hong Kong, where responsibilities include the line management of functions that are likely to go beyond the agreed global campaigns.
- It is not clear which post (or posts) will be responsible for lobbying/political advocacy – an important question, given the importance attached to engagement in political discourse and sustained political advocacy. It was noted that political analysis and advocacy skills are not necessarily subsumed in the skill sets for research or legal/policy advice. Hub Directors may assume responsibility for high level advocacy but they will face other demands on their time and not all advocacy can be or should be at high level. Are the resources for this function adequate to deliver the envisaged benefits?
- A specific question arose (regarding the Nairobi office) about the posts of Research & Policy Adviser for Individuals at Risk and the Relief Coordinator. The current posts serve a global/international function and their London location facilitates contact with human rights defenders passing through London, Geneva and Brussels. The rationale for moving these posts to Nairobi is unclear to some within AIUK (other than having the obvious merit of being closer to African human rights defenders). Will their international role continue and what might be the implication of performing this role from the Nairobi hub?
- Similarly, although the emphasis on working with human rights defenders in the Africa strategy is welcome, it is not apparent how this is delivered from within the Jo'burg, Dakar and Nairobi structures. The previous Human Rights Defender Coordinator post within the Africa Programme was perceived (within AIUK at least) to have fulfilled a positive function that is not easily replicable through integration into other staff roles.

A general concern arising from the paper is the lack of clarity around fundraising functions within the new model. In terms of hub design, the development of regional fundraising strategies and coordination of foundation/major donor relations is described as a responsibility for hubs. However, there appear to be no regional or subregional fundraising posts in Africa and just one in the East Asia hub. Not only has this prompted the question of whether such resourcing is adequate, it also begs the question of the relationship between hubs and sections in the north and the role that both can play in helping to deliver the global fundraising strategy.

Similarly there is a concern that whilst the importance of activism is emphasised in the paper, mobilisation, activism and wider membership relationship management is not covered within the summary of work division that is set out in the table under section 4. It is of course possible that some concerns raised within AIUK's consultation about this apparent gap might be allayed by a deeper understanding of the "membership support" and "campaigning" functions within the hubs. However, there is a perception that the needs of activists, members and supporters (and the potential for deepening their commitment to the movement) are underdeveloped within the vision and the structure.

Whilst these questions and observations arise from specific functions at AIUK, there is a general anxiety about the extent to which sections outside the region/sub-region will be able to draw on IS staff within the hubs. This is a core concern of our country coordinators for whom the relationship with researchers and regional campaigners is key –and which drives low-cost supporter mobilisation and communication within AIUK. However, the concern is also felt by staff who need access to IS researchers for a range of functions, including media

work, refugee casework support, political work and access to fundraising collateral. The assertion that “sections will continue to have access to all IS teams relevant to their work regardless of where they sit in the world” provides some reassurance but fears persist that this may not be the case in practice. Further and ongoing reassurance is desirable.

Broader commentary on regional working and relationships between hubs and sections

One or two commentators in AIUK’s consultation asserted that Amnesty International does not currently work on a regional basis. They argue that although regional programmes might be a core organising feature of the IS, research and campaigns tend to be oriented towards the local/national or the global. More regional/sub-regional planning and execution is therefore seen as a new departure with implications for all parts of our movement. Some see this as positive, others fear it may undermine international solidarity, with consequences for our human rights work?

The concept of Regional Advisory Groups provoked a mixed reaction within AIUK. Some feel that they offer the opportunity to broaden the perspectives that feed into IS planning and will be invaluable to the production of better, more responsive plans. Others feel that they will complicate the governance and accountability structure for hubs and sections.

A few respondents also identified the danger that one set of power relationships, siloes and fiefdoms arising from the IS’s current structure will be replaced with another set. They feel that the structures may create new sets of tensions and conflicts (hubs v London; local sections v hubs; international sections v hubs, etc). It was suggested that lateral communications between IS hubs and their local sections might improve but there would be a negative impact on section-to-section communications and collaboration, involving participants outside the sub-region.

Questions also emerged about the lack of reference to members in the hub design and relationship mapping. For example, Regional Advisory Groups appear to have a very important role in advising on strategy and human rights content. However, it is unclear how AI members (including international members) can influence their thinking.

A number of contributors felt that the consultation paper had not been successful in describing how relationships would change. They felt that the table set out on page 12 was ambiguous, in terms of decision-making responsibility.

Feedback on the principles and assumptions set out in the Roadmap

A significant number of people who contributed to AIUK’s consultation felt that the Principles and Assumptions section were written from a distinct IS perspective and reflected a desire and possibly an intent to accumulate more power over the movement’s plans. If so, this would contradict a direction that seeks greater empowerment for entities and more responsiveness to local and developing circumstances.

Concerns were also raised that this very important section of the paper failed to pay any serious attention to accountability of AI entities to rights holders, or a commitment to participation and partnership.

Principles and Assumptions for Amnesty International

Assumptions about project planning could include an emphasis on the need for quality in project planning. This is not about an IS quality assurance role but about steps to progressively enhance project management, from planning to exit and evaluation. AIUK undoubtedly can make improvements in this area, as can other sections, as can the IS.

Principles and Assumptions for the International Secretariat

A view was expressed that it is necessary to clarify that leading and developing *global* political strategy is matter for the IS, whilst national political strategies would be set by national entities. The attention to impact monitoring and reporting was welcomed. However, there was a view that the International Executive Committee should also be covered within this section of the roadmap. For example, page 24 describes how the IS is responsible for implementing ICM decisions, whereas this responsibility is rather more distributed around the movement (depending on the decision) and culminates in the IEC. It was also suggested that this section should be revisited to take into account relevant recommendations of the Reference Group report, including principles of transparency, commitments to union agreements and collective bargaining.

A key assumption (or principle) should refer to IS responsibility for global brand management. The term 'brand' in this context is used in its broad sense and goes beyond trademark registration, fonts, colours or guidelines for reputation management.

There also appears to be very little attention paid to fundraising, either in the table relating to the IS or to those relating to hubs and sections. A number of individuals feel that this is a significant oversight, given the centrality of fundraising to our movement. They feel that general references to growth and major donor relationships are not sufficient and that this gap in the principles and assumptions section reflects a more general lack of clarity about fundraising across the paper. In some cases the paper appears to suggest that IS fundraising remains centralised, in other cases hubs appear to have a significant role. Some feel that the paper should have committed to the global fundraising strategy but, in any case, more attention is needed in order to clarify relationships and responsibilities.

Principles and Assumptions for the Regional Advisory Groups

A key principle is that the Senior Director of Global Operations "will actively seek input from relevant staff from each directorate at the global level responsible for each geography". Whilst it is clearly desirable that regional plans are informed by relevant perspectives from staff in the global hub (including functional as well as geographic experts), there is uncertainty about why this point is located under the RAG structure, rather than under RAG remit (where reference to consultation with other entities is provided).

Clarification would also be appreciated over the principle that the RAGs act as "a primary interface" between sections and hubs. Some assume that this refers to planning and strategy, whilst operational interfaces will be direct and frequent. Is this understanding correct?

The assumption that RAGs will eventually be sub-regional (one per hub) was mentioned as positive. However, some doubts were expressed whether the overall skill set specified in the RAG remit would be achievable. All of the AI participants will be entity/hub Directors, plus a Research Director. Is it realistic that they will include expertise in fundraising? Furthermore, where are skills in political analysis and advocacy, or communications?

Principles and Assumptions for Sections

We believe it is a principle that Boards are democratically elected, *not* that they are elected by an Annual General Meeting. AIUK's Board, for example, is directly elected by the

membership and whilst we would not prescribe this approach to other sections, we do feel it is appropriate to our circumstances (and enables greater participation).

General Comments

During AIUK's own change process, the Board and Senior Management Team have been justifiably criticised for failing to use clear and precise language that is easily understood. This is often characterised as "management speak" (but the critique also extends to the use of NGO terms of art and obscure AI phrases). A significant number of comments suggest that the roadmap has fallen into the same trap. This matters because (as AIUK's leadership knows to its cost), obscure language can mask relatively clear issues and tends to build opposition and cynicism, rather than aiding comprehension or enlisting support.

Certainly, a significant number of comments that we received say that the structure appears to be very complex. The use of language does little to dispel this impression. However, the question of complexity is not purely linguistic, since the proposal encompasses hierarchical and matrix relationships, as well as a web of roles and relationships between sections and other entities. AIUK's consultation reveals criticism of this complexity and incomprehension as to what it really means in practical terms.

Some contributors said that this process should not have proceeded without much clearer ICM approval. They feel it is not simply an operational restructuring but a question of significant and strategic movement change.

Background and Case for Support

A number of contributors to AIUK's consultation felt that the case for change was well articulated and persuasive. They agree that there are imperatives for change arising from the shifting political landscape (in particular), technological development and social change (including the rise of dynamic rural movements, as well as a growing middle class). We also received feedback acknowledging the benefit of Moving Closer to the Ground in enhancing AI's legitimacy and combatting the perception that AI and human rights are western constructs.

Some agreed that there are significant risks in failing to change. Indeed, it was suggested that AI has been trading on its powerful reputation for a number of years, whilst failing to connect with people who don't understand how we work and how they can help. They would like to see the GTP case for change developed further and articulated from the basis of Amnesty's fundamental model for human rights change.

Support was also expressed for AI moving its thinking beyond the BRICS countries. Some of the emerging powers do not have a history of AI presence, others do (e.g. Turkey). There is some appetite for further information on how the development of Amnesty sections is a complementary means of meeting the imperatives that underpin Moving Closer to the Ground.

However, the consultation also revealed significant doubts about the case for change. Several people felt it was built on assumptions that Moving Closer to the Ground was the only or most appropriate response to the changing global landscape. They question the degree to which "presence" is necessary in an age of instant communication and note that it will not necessarily lead to improved access to some human rights trouble spots.

There is particular concern about the relationships between a distributed Amnesty and local organisations. At a basic level, some respondents suggested that there was a lack of evidence of any demand from human rights organisations for a closer Amnesty presence. They would have liked to have seen a clearer account of their voice in any consultation process. They are further concerned that a sub-regional Amnesty presence could lead to tension and competition with local organisations, revolving around political/media attention, funding and divergent priorities.

Nobody within AIUK questioned the establishment of hubs as multi-functional teams. Nor did anyone question the importance of integration. However, questions were raised about how integration (or perhaps coherence) can be better served through a distributed Amnesty presence.

A number of people noted that hubs or new entities are being established in places where previous attempts to establish an Amnesty presence have failed. This challenges any assumption that presence alone will lead to growth, efficiency and impact. It also led to questions of whether any lessons were learnt and how these new approaches would ensure that we didn't fail again.

Repeated comments arose on the subject of impact, which is the fundamental basis for the global transition. They note that impact assessment is underdeveloped at Amnesty and do not see or cannot accept that a distributed presence will lead to greater impact. At a minimum, they suggest a need for a persuasive and evidence-based description of how the new structures and relations will work in practice to deliver more impact.

Finally, the financial basis for the global transition was questioned by some during our consultation (unsurprisingly, given the cost reduction process taking place at AIUK). These challenges had three dimensions:

- The global transition is itself very expensive and disruptive (and the case for change is insufficiently evidenced to justify the investment)
- The assumptions of increased northern section payments to the international budget are excessive and risk-laden, with key sections struggling to meet existing assessment payment and some making cuts that could impact on their own campaigning and fundraising capacities;
- The new structure will inevitably be more expensive than the current one, diverting money into overheads, rather than human rights work.

However, we also received positive comment on the clarity of the timeline and budget, which demonstrates the scale of north-south redistribution.

One or two contributors also alluded to logistical and other difficulties in the Johannesburg pathfinder, leading to questions of whether lessons have been adequately learnt. This was accompanied by a suggestion that the pace of change should be slowed to ensure that the pathfinder experiences can be fully evaluated and to provide more time for consultation with members.

Vision for sections

Some participants in the consultation accepted that the paper primarily addressed sections in Africa and East Asia, others felt that paper was intended to be more generally applicable. This coloured comments on the vision for sections.

In general, the acknowledgement of the importance and centrality of activism was widely welcomed. However, a number of comments suggested that the vision for sections should not begin and end with activism.

Some respondents also welcomed the assertion that “the current dynamic where sections feel an element of over control and centralisation at the IS will shift to a model where sections are more directly involved in the planning and implementation of human rights and growth work.” However, they also feel that many aspects of the paper suggest that there will be no diminution of IS control, that it will be felt more keenly as hubs are created in proximity to sections and that in some cases, control may be extending.

There was also a widespread sense that the vision for sections did not address northern/funding sections. The response from the IS might be that this paper was not intended to do so. However, the number and depth of comments suggested that there is a need to address this question sooner rather than later. This is not solely a question of discussing and agreeing regional arrangements for Europe (or North America) but of assessing the roles and needs of these sections more generally.

Some also felt that the vision for sections failed to represent their potential contribution to “One Amnesty”, through the application of expertise and capacities (including but not limited to centres of expertise), as well as being potential drivers of a presence that is closer to the ground.

Resource Allocation Mechanism

A number of comments about the RAM were included in the consultation responses. These included questions about plans for centres of expertise and more clarity over how the different funding streams will work. We note the intention to consult further on this issue.

Planning

Consultation responses suggested quite widespread support for potential improvements in planning processes, noting that the movement is deficient in this area and that this is a cultural issue, as well as a structural one. There is clearly some interest within both the staff and activist movement in the UK in how planning can develop as the global transition takes place. There was support for integrated project groups involving both section and IS staff and an evident desire for more developed theories of change, strategy development priority-setting and tactical decision-making. Better planning, one comment suggested, will lead to more enthusiasm.

There were questions about how prioritisation might work if several sub-regional hubs are working up their own plans and strategies and whether this would lead to a clearer set of prioritised “asks” to the wider movement, or not. There is also some anxiety about future demands on AIUK to undertake much more work on Europe (as a European hub and RAG takes effect) and the consequential displacement of wider international solidarity work. This anxiety was not universal; some people did favour more work on Europe.

Transition issues

A number of contributors felt that the consultation paper should have discussed transitional issues, including problems that might arise. For example, it seems inevitable that some staff

will be lost to the IS, leaving gaps to fill and the need for a significant investment in training and relationship building across the movement. There was also a concern that some section-to-section partnerships might be impacted by the new structures and a general unease about transitional disruption that will impact on the operations of national sections (staff and country coordinators).

Risk Assessment

A number of people commented on the lack of any risk assessment (or impact assessment) within the hubs consultation paper or the GTP roadmap. Clearly there are risks and in the absence of evidence that they are actively being considered, they were widely raised in commentary on the change process. Risks raised during the consultation included:

- Reduction in quality of research
- Threats to physical security of IS staff
- Threats to IT and infrastructure security
- Approvals process becomes even more sclerotic, as it now has to content with time zones and distributed offices
- Loss of international coherence, as AI becomes regionalised
- Restrictions on AI's freedom to manoeuvre due to legal and administrative constraints.

This last point was placed in the context of the wider implications of legal and regulatory restrictions to harass and constrain human rights defenders and non-governmental organisations. The observation was accompanied by a recommendation that the global movement develop a strategic response to this growing problem.

Conclusion – from AIUK's Senior Management Team

When increased assessments were first mooted and then agreed in principle, there was no accompanying vision for how they would be used to deliver the long-standing aim of a more global and more responsive movement. The Global Transition Plan does offer that vision.

However, it is controversial. AIUK's consultation did not produce a consensus view but aroused a range of questions, concerns and support. We have decided to describe the wide range of views provided to us in this consultation exercise not only because of our undertaking to staff and activists to represent this range of opinion but because we feel that it will be useful to assist both the planning of the GTP, its execution and the communications that must accompany it. Some of the views we agree with and some we do not.

We are deeply conscious of the impact that this change process will have on staff at the International Secretariat and that there are requirements to consult most deeply with those who are most deeply affected.

However, changes to the IS on this scale will have inevitable and significant implications for operations across the movement. Anxieties, concerns and criticism are inevitable, as is hope and expectation. However, it is clear from our own experience of the past twelve months that a communication vacuum will cause problems. We therefore welcome the hubs consultation and hope that it signals further consultations ahead and more communication.

Critically, this communication should serve the needs not only of senior section staff and governance leaders but also supporters and activists who help to finance our work and play

a key role in our campaigns. For example, we detected real eagerness to learn more about IS thinking on plans relating to Moscow and the former Soviet Union, Indonesia and Turkey. We do of course understand the challenge faced by the Senior Leadership Team and the IEC in having to address both the staff of the IS and the wider movement, as the change takes place.

Moving forward, we obviously agree with our Board that implementation should commence without undue delay. However, we also agree with a number of comments in our consultation that reveal an anxiety about the vision for northern sections and their relationship to hubs (including the global hub) and southern sections.

This is not just a question of fundraising (although it is of pivotal importance) it is also an anxiety about the role of activism, campaigns, communications and international solidarity within the context of a membership and audience for whom the “global” is as relevant and inspiring as the “local”. The creation of a distributed IS offers significant opportunities as well as challenges that we need to clarify and address.

The need for risk analysis was mentioned repeatedly. Although we do believe that risks are being considered and addressed by the SLT, demonstrating this attention will alleviate concerns raised by activists and staff alike.

Structural change does not necessarily lead to cultural change but it can help. We are therefore keen to support and work with the IS leadership on developing planning, impact assessment, performance indicators and monitoring and feedback processes. We state this conscious of our own need to improve in all respects but aware of the need to do so in concert with the IS and other parts of the movement.

This will be particularly important as we seek to demonstrate the positive impact of Moving Closer to the Ground, which will be very important as section assessment payments continue to climb. If we are to maintain support for this within AIUK, we will need KPIs, demonstrable impact and a sense of nearness to the hubs, southern sections, new entities and to everything they achieve. Global transition will not end once all of the hubs are established!