

Health Check Results - Retrak

Report, November 2014

1. Introduction

Bond's Health Check tool is intended to provide organisations working in international development with insights into their strengths and weakness across 11 broad areas (or 'pillars') that affect their organisational effectiveness. This is the first time that Retrak has used the Health Check as an aid to planning.

This report describes how the Health Check was used, provides a brief summary of results, and then provides more detailed results for each indicator within the 11 pillars that Retrak assessed. Finally conclusions are provided, with a focus on key issues Retrak may wish to address to improve its organisational effectiveness.

2. Methodology

Data collection

The Health Check was carried out within Retrak as an online survey primarily of staff members in the UK, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and Malawi (one Trustee also participated). Individuals completed the survey anonymously from October 27th to November 18th. Of the 68 staff and Trustees who were invited to complete the Health Check, 47 did so (a 69% response rate).

Respondents were requested to reflect on Retrak's practices across 11 key 'pillars' which correspond to the core functions of an international development organisation. All respondents were invited to share their reflections on the following pillars: 'identity and integrity', 'leadership and strategy', 'people' and 'internal communications'. Respondents were asked to complete additional pillars depending on their roles within the organisation.

Each pillar is broken down into a number of indicators, and each indicator has five levels representing the different stages of an organisation's development. Respondents are invited to decide which level best describes their organisation. A 'don't know' option is also available, allowing respondents to skip questions where they are uncertain of their answer.

Subjectivity

The Health Check aims to remove subjectivity and bias as far as possible by having descriptors for the five levels of each indicator, and by asking for examples of evidence to justify scores. However, the Health Check as a self-assessment tool ultimately relies on honesty of respondents, and there is always scope for some judgement in answers as practice in organisations may vary across teams or offices. Respondents supported their scoring with more than 8,000 words of comments and evidence, providing additional context for the scores.

In section 4, the data for each indicator is examined via a graph of scores, a brief discussion, and illustrative comments from respondents. Average scores for each indicator are provided, along with the Standard Deviation, which describes variance in answers. For the Health Check, a rule of thumb is that a standard deviation of <0.7 suggests a lot of agreement among respondents on scores, while >0.8 suggests a lot of difference of opinion.

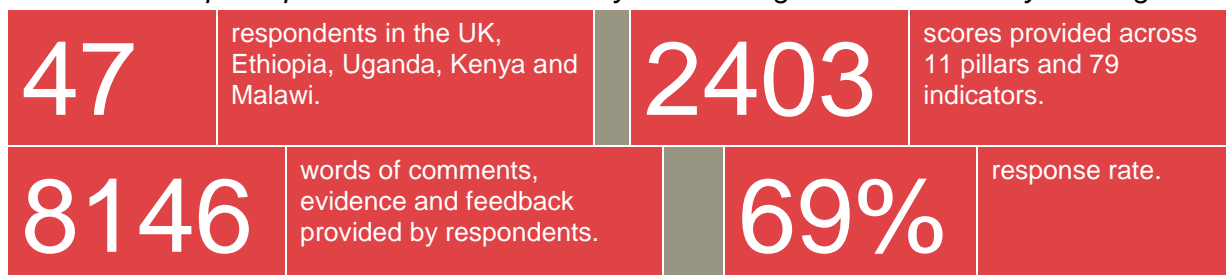
The Health Check tool allows analysis to be disaggregated by teams and location. However this report concentrates on Retrak's results at the organisational level.

Interpreting the results

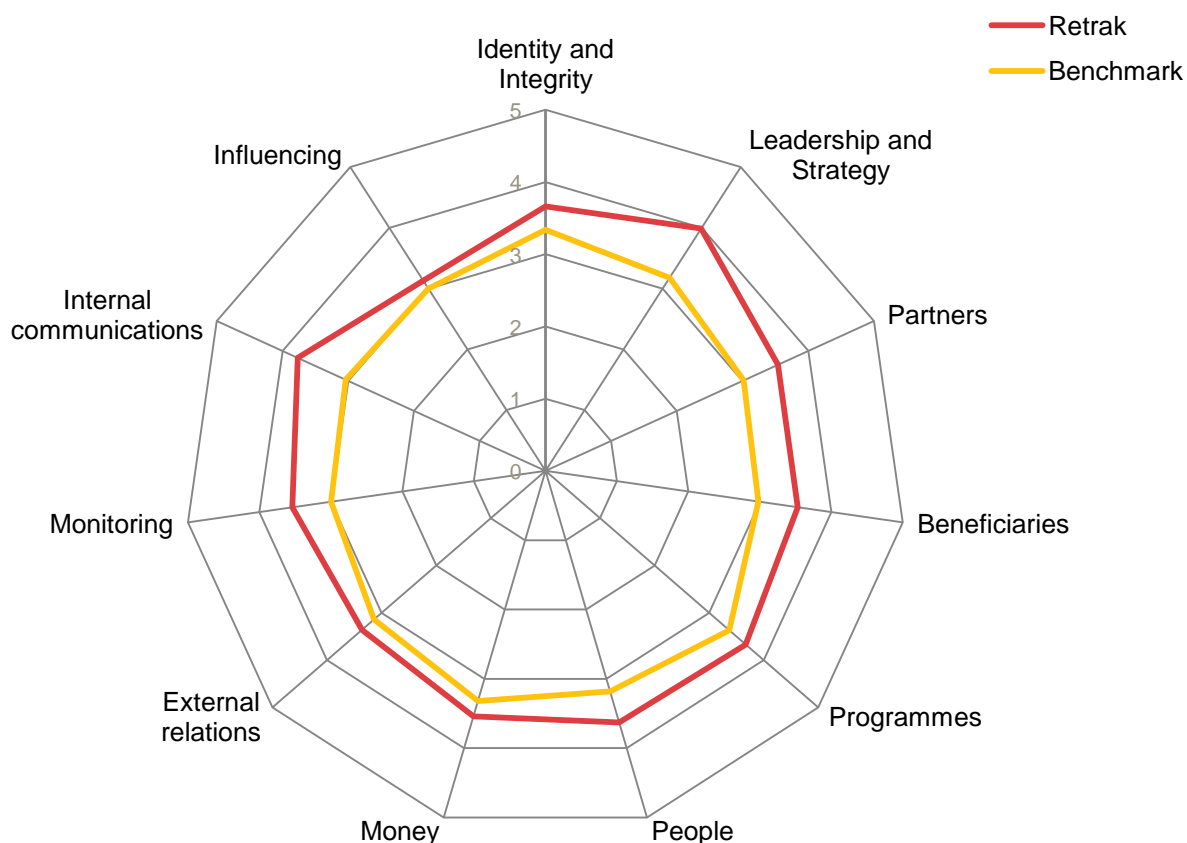
There is no expectation that organisations should reach level 5 for all of the indicators. The Health Check was designed to be used by organisations of all sizes and complexities and for some indicators the highest levels may be more relevant for larger organisations. It has been designed so that level 3 reflects a good benchmark for any organisation operating in the international development sector and should be attainable irrespective of size.

The benchmarking data is drawn from more than 50 NGOs who have completed the Health Check, and provides a unique opportunity to get a sense of where Retrak sits in relation to the average scores among other NGOs. It is important to view the benchmarking data as providing an indicative picture - it is not a scientific comparison group!

Health Check participation in numbers: thank you for taking the time to share your insights!



3. Summary Results by Pillar



Pillar	Retrak (average)	Standard deviation (average)	Benchmark (average)	Comparison to benchmark
Identity and Integrity	3.66	1.09	3.34	+0.32
Leadership and Strategy	3.99	1.11	3.18	+0.81
Partners	3.54	1.13	3.02	+0.52
Beneficiaries	3.53	1.10	2.98	+0.55
Programmes	3.67	1.08	3.37	+0.30
People	3.63	1.03	3.18	+0.45
Money	3.54	0.98	3.32	+0.22
External relations	3.36	0.95	3.14	+0.22
Monitoring	3.54	1.02	3	+0.54
Internal communications	3.77	1.04	3.04	+0.73
Influencing	3.13	1.10	3	+0.13

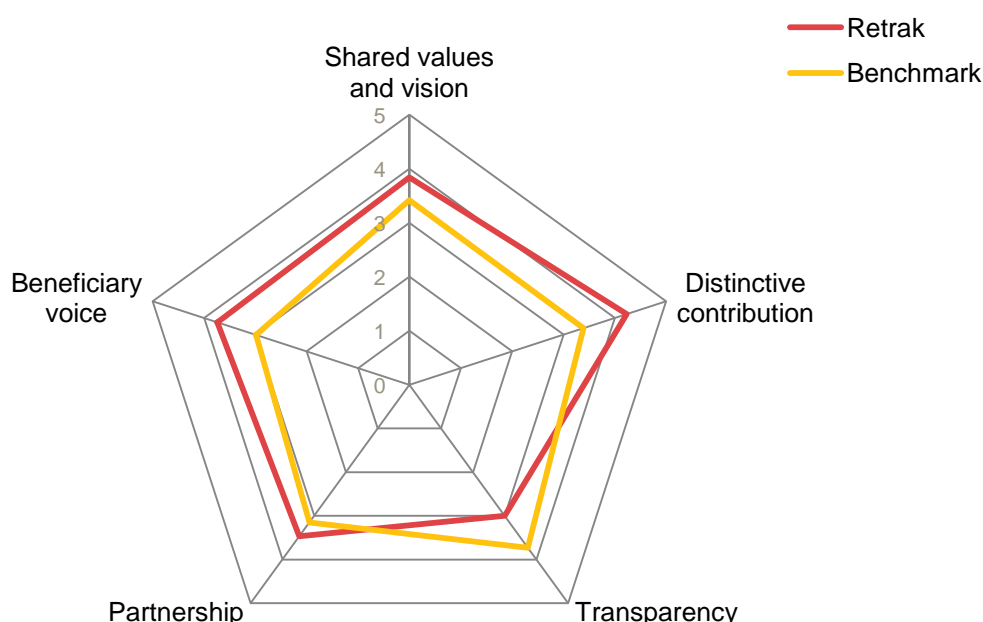
Retrak scores higher than the benchmark for each of the 11 pillars and on all but 10 of the 79 indicators. The highest scoring pillar was 'Leadership and Strategy' (3.99) and this also had the highest variance from the benchmark (+0.81). Other high scoring pillars included 'internal communications' (3.77), 'Programmes' (3.67) and 'Identity and Integrity' (3.66).

Whilst it is beyond the remit of this report to conduct an in-depth analysis of the data disaggregated by region, team or seniority, initial analysis suggests that in all but a few cases, UK respondents scored the Health Check lower than their colleagues working in the field. The most significant perception gaps relate to the ‘partnership’, ‘beneficiaries’ and ‘internal communications’ pillars

The remaining sections of the report go into detail on each pillar and indicator, synthesising respondents’ feedback and illustrating the scores with example comments. To ensure the report is readable and accessible, the analysis is kept brief.

4. Detailed Results by Pillar

4.1 Pillar 1: Identity & Integrity



Pillar	Retrak (average)	Standard deviation	Benchmark (average)	Comparison to benchmark
Shared values & vision	3.84	1.11	3.42	+0.42
Distinctive contribution	4.23	0.98	3.39	0.50
Transparency	3.00	1.10	3.73	-0.73
Partnership	3.47	1.03	3.15	+0.32
Beneficiary voice	3.74	1.24	2.99	+0.75

In the 'Identity and Integrity' pillar Retrak scored highest for its 'Distinctive contribution'. Respondents commented that Retrak is recognised as "ahead of the game" by some outside agencies and highlighted that larger NGOs, government ministries and other bodies often approach and partner with Retrak due to the specific work that it does with street children. However, one respondent cautioned that Retrak appears more distinctive at the local level than it does at the global level.

On the organisation's shared values and vision, respondents noted that "the vision, mission and core values are well known to staff, clear and easy to remember". Several comments highlighted that these are "visibly posted at all our sites and get referred to during decision making, programme planning and strategic planning processes". Respondents noted that staff had been engaged in defining the organisation's values and vision during a recent strategy review, and that senior leadership had visited field offices to build a shared understanding across teams. Two respondents emphasised the need for organisational change to be explained with reference to the values and vision.

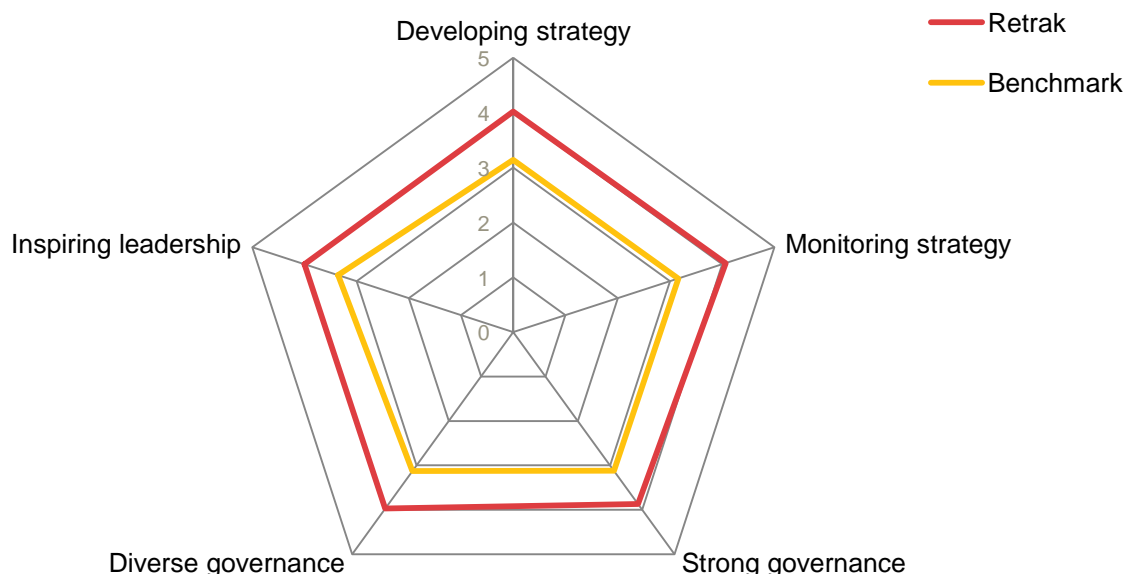
Transparency was the lowest scoring indicator on this pillar. Although level 3 (designed to be attainable by all organisations) was achieved, Retrak fell 0.73 below the benchmark. Several respondents felt that the website would need to be improved in order to facilitate stronger transparency. A recent 'Transparency Review' of Retrak's website, conducted by Bond, supports this finding. Achieving higher scores on Transparency also requires an organisational policy on transparency and some publishing to the International Aid Transparency Initiative.

Respondents' feedback on 'Partnership' pointed towards the challenges that exist in seeking to engage partners early on in strategy and planning. For example: "partners are perhaps not involved as much as they could be when it comes to planning ... the process is more like Retrak choosing them because they fill in certain gap in our service delivery rather than them participating fully". One respondent highlighted that relationships with partners were sometimes held by individuals, meaning they are vulnerable to staff turn-over.¹

Comments on 'Beneficiary voice' highlighted that there are measures in place to enable children's participation (evidence cited included the existence of 'children's councils', their meaningful involvement in the recruitment of staff, and annual beneficiary surveys), however several respondents questioned how consistently existing practices are implemented. For example: "there are forums and they are able to express ideas/voice quite actively in some areas but are not consulted on other areas - i.e. they can be involved in interviews of senior staff... [but are] not involved in basic programming decisions - it's a bit ad hoc. Staff are perhaps not always equipped in *how* to get beneficiaries involved more".

¹NB: The wording used in the Health Check - notably references to 'partners in the South' - caused confusion for a number of respondents in Retrak field offices, who consequently did not respond to this question. Bond will review the wording for future Health Checks in light of this.

4.2 Pillar 2: Leadership & Strategy



Pillar	Retrak (average)	Standard deviation	Benchmark (average)	Comparison to benchmark
Developing strategy	4.02	1.22	3.14	+0.88
Monitoring strategy	4.07	1.07	3.16	+0.91
Strong governance	3.87	0.92	3.12	+0.75
Diverse governance	3.97	0.96	3.13	+0.84
Inspiring leadership	4.00	0.99	3.36	+0.64

'Leadership and Strategy' was the highest scoring pillar overall (3.99) and also had the highest variance from the benchmark (+0.81). Within the pillar, 'developing strategy' and 'monitoring strategy' were the highest scoring indicators. On 'developing strategy' respondents agreed that recent processes have been participatory and consultative. However, several respondents emphasised the need to apply the strategy in practice: "we do have a strategy that is grounded in an understanding of the external environment and builds on our distinctive contribution... but it has not been translated into an operational plan." One respondent noted that "we are in the middle of this process right now and we therefore will have a Business Plan in place... that links directly to strategic aims, and is owned by staff." To sustain a shared understanding of the strategy, it was highlighted that new staff, not part of the consultations, need to be thoroughly inducted.

'Monitoring Strategy' was the highest scoring indicator and also had the highest variance from the benchmark within this pillar. Respondents highlighted that "monitoring and evaluation is a key part of the work of our field teams. Their data is also collated centrally by dedicated M&E specialists in the field and Head Office, then reviewed by the M&E sub-group

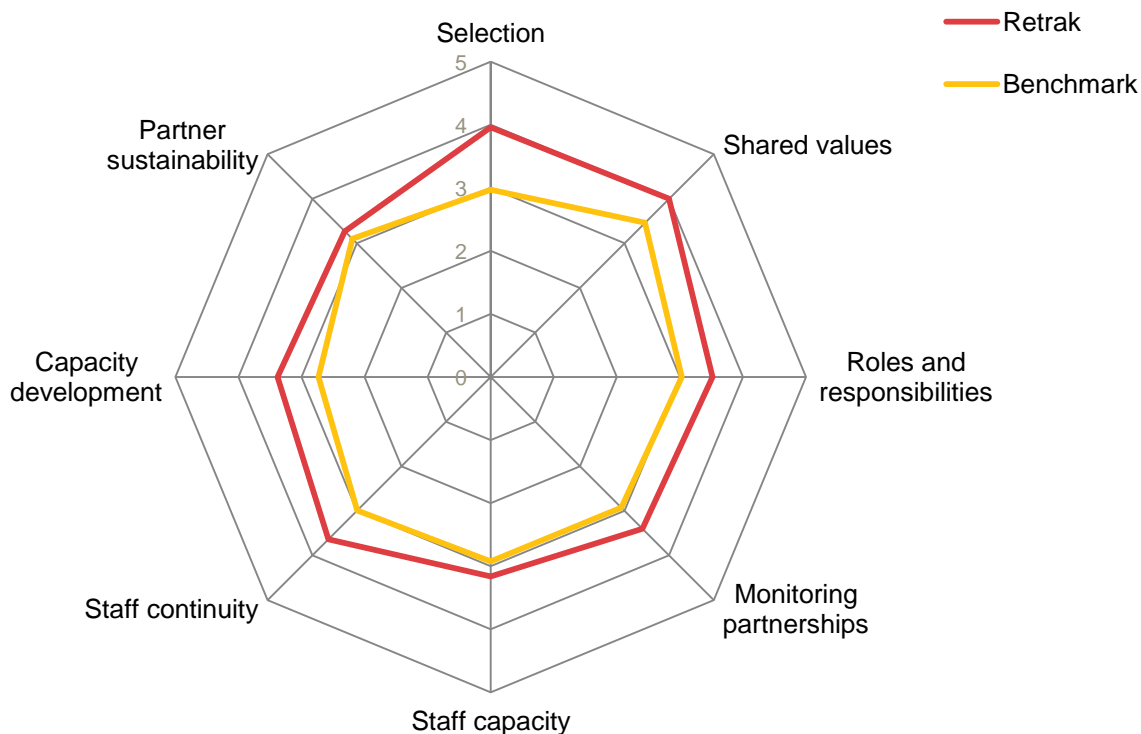
of the board prior to discussion at every board meeting". It was recognised that Retrak has invested resources in this area, and that it is moving from a focus on output data towards evidence-based impact data. However, some respondents were unsure whether the tracked indicators link explicitly to the organisation's strategic aims.

On governance, respondents fed back that the Board is effective. Evidence included: "the Board has clear Terms of Reference and a good understanding of its key functions. These key functions (strategic oversight, fundraising, financial oversight, executive recruitment and guidance) are consistently carried out. Board meetings are well planned, regular, documented and with good attendance. The members display strong commitment to understanding the organisation, its operations and issues". Similarly, "each Board member has KPI's & we have written a Board Governance Handbook to help the Board know & discharge their role." A recent skills audit enabled gaps to be identified, and these are being addressed through the recruitment of new Board members.

Whilst it was acknowledged that "Board members promote the organisation by hosting/managing or speaking at large fundraising events and speaking to external stakeholders' meetings", external promotion was identified as an area where the Board could play a more active role. Several respondents emphasised that awareness of the Board's contribution was limited among staff: "there is little interaction between board and the rest of the organisation to really know what they do". This was born out in the Health Check, with significantly more staff selecting 'I don't know' in response to questions about the Board, than for other indicators within the 'Leadership and Strategy' pillar.

On 'Inspiring Leadership' respondents praised the vision and drive of the Executive Team, whilst noting that leadership responsibilities are shared across the organisation: "Input from staff and beneficiary is actively sought, respected and incorporated into the decision making process. This results in a shared sense of responsibility, accountability and ownership of the decision making process. The retention rate of employees is very high with a high number serving for more than 5 years".

4.3 Pillar 3: Partners



Pillar	Retrak (average)	Standard deviation	Benchmark (average)	Comparison to benchmark
Selection	3.96	0.95	2.97	+0.99
Shared values	4	0.94	3.46	+0.54
Roles and responsibilities	3.52	1.26	3.03	+0.49
Monitoring partnerships	3.4	1.08	2.93	+0.47
Staff capacity	3.16	1.25	2.92	+0.24
Staff continuity	3.64	1.04	2.99	+0.65
Capacity development	3.38	1.13	2.73	+0.65
Partner sustainability	3.27	1.28	3.1	+0.17

In the 'Partnership' pillar Retrak scored highest for 'Shared values' (4) and 'Selection' (3.96). Few substantive comments were provided to support these scores, but Retrak's 'Due Diligence' process was cited as evidence for a systematic selection process. Regarding the 'roles and responsibilities' indicator, respondents reported that all partners have contracts, but that they were unaware of a partnership policy. One respondent suggested that contracts were usually clear, but was less confident in proclaiming them 'balanced'.

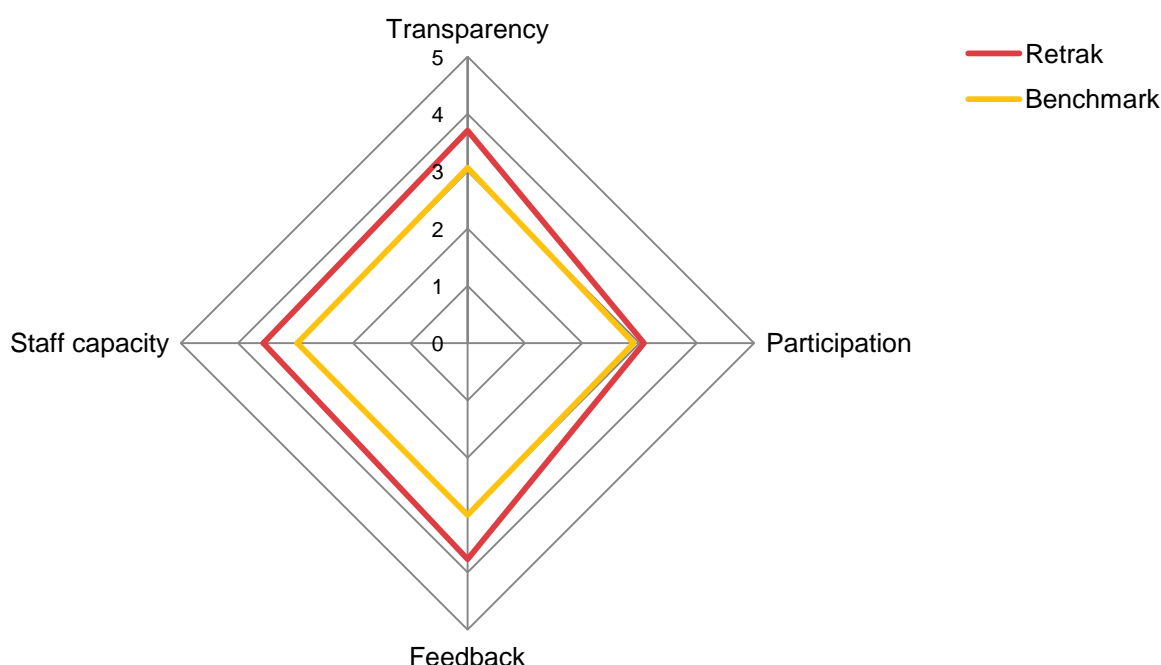
Despite the relatively high score (3.4) for 'Monitoring partnerships', some respondents expressed concerns that monitoring is not done in a structured manner, and that communication with partners suffers due to being 'short staffed'. Few substantive comments

were provided to support the scores on ‘staff capacity’ (the lowest scoring indicator in this pillar) or ‘staff continuity’.

On capacity development, the single comment observed that this often depends on whether donors will allow for capacity building to be included in their grants. It also suggests that Retrak should take a more collaborative approach to designing their capacity building plans with partners at the proposal stage.

Across all of the partnership indicators respondents in field offices scored between 0.7 and 1.39 levels higher than their colleagues in the UK office. This perception gap is most acute for the ‘partner sustainability’ indicator, which was scored an average of 2.2 by UK respondents and 3.59 by respondents based in field offices. ‘Partner sustainability’ was consequently the second lowest scoring indicator in this pillar (3.27).

4.4 Pillar 4: Beneficiaries



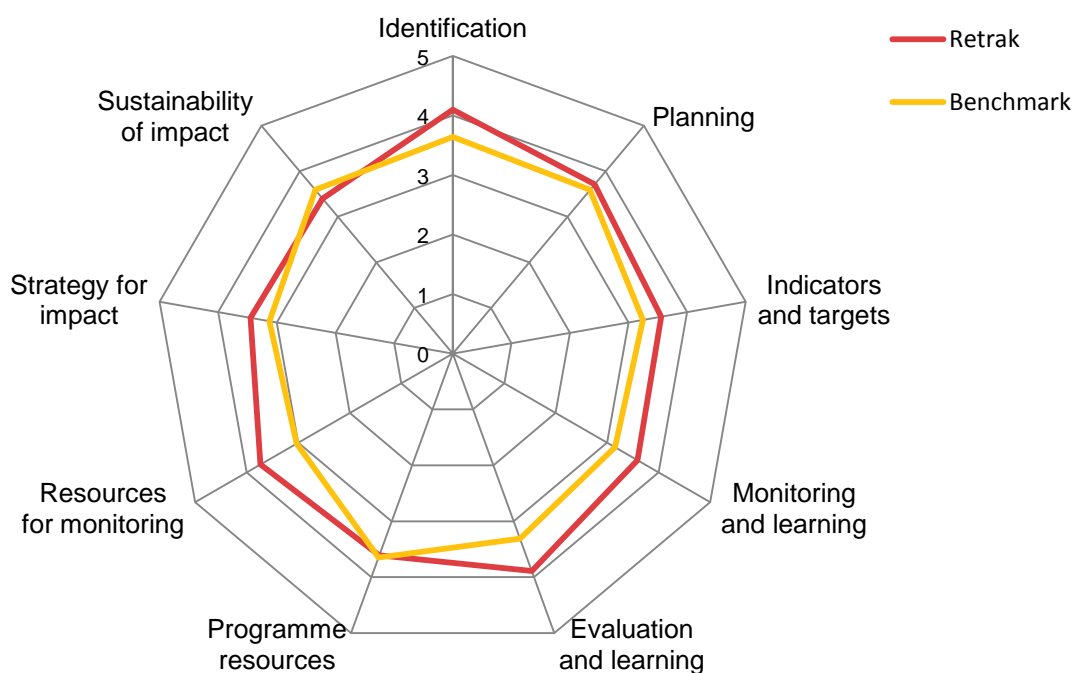
Pillar	Retrak (average)	Standard deviation	Benchmark (average)	Comparison to benchmark
Transparency	3.71	1.25	3.06	+0.65
Participation	3.08	1.02	2.9	+0.18
Feedback	3.77	0.96	3	+0.77
Staff capacity	3.56	1.13	2.97	+0.59

Feedback was the highest scoring indicator in the ‘beneficiaries’ pillar (3.77). Evidence cited by respondents included the use of surveys, workshops and Q&As to enable feedback. Similarly, respondents pointed towards the role of drop-in centres, outreach visits and the

Children’s parliament to ensure transparency to beneficiaries, although one respondent suggested there remains a tendency to tell beneficiaries “information that we think they need to know ... rather than ask them what they need/want to know”. Participation was the lowest scoring indicator within this pillar (3.08); respondents highlighted a need to be practical, in a context where beneficiaries are often minors: “For smaller local decisions at project level their voice is heard more”. There were no substantive comments provided on the ‘Staff capacity’ indicator.

Initial analysis suggests that UK-based staff perceive practice in the beneficiaries pillar to be weaker than their colleagues in field offices. On average they scored the ‘transparency’, ‘feedback’ and ‘staff capacity’ indicators more than 1 level lower than their colleagues in field offices, and rated current practice across all of the beneficiary pillar’s indicators at less than ‘level 3’ (designed to be attainable by all sizes of organisation).

4.5 Pillar 5: Programmes



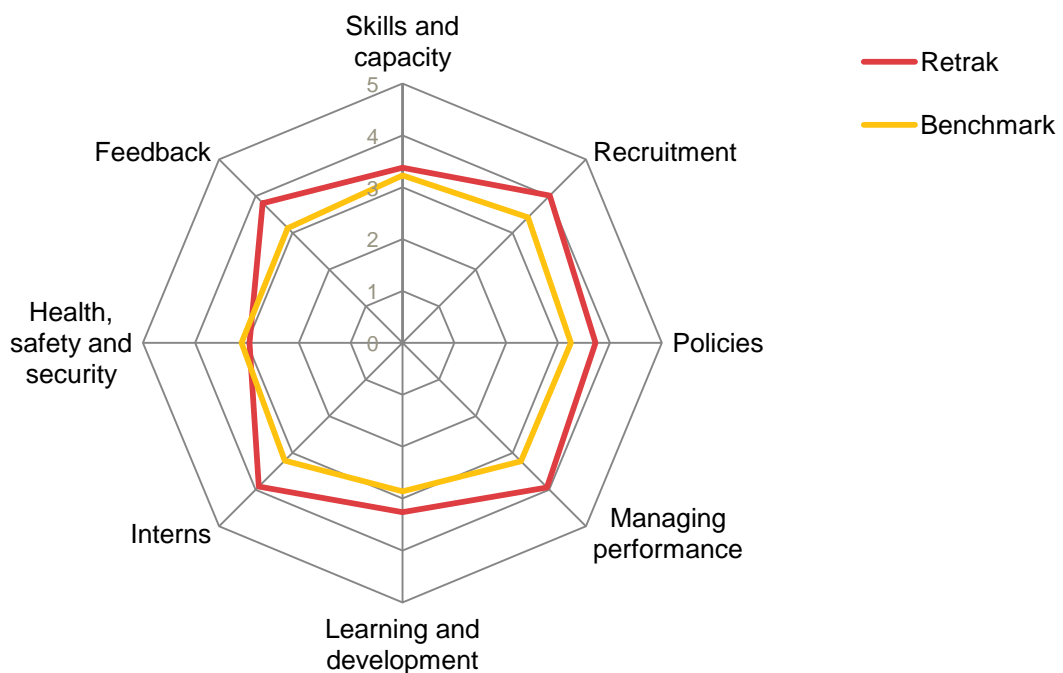
Pillar	Retrak (average)	Standard deviation	Benchmark (average)	Comparison to benchmark
Identification	4.1	0.86	3.64	+0.46
Planning	3.71	0.99	3.59	+0.12
Indicators and targets	3.56	1.00	3.25	+0.31
Monitoring and learning	3.59	1.14	3.15	+0.44
Evaluation and learning	3.89	0.83	3.31	+0.58
Programme resources	3.61	0.92	3.65	-0.04
Resources for monitoring	3.73	1.07	3.03	+0.70

Strategy for impact	3.45	1.11	3.13	+0.32
Sustainability of impact	3.4	1.01	3.59	-0.19

Within the programmes pillar, 'Identification' was the highest scoring indicator (4.1). Respondents reported that Retrak is 'reasonably strong' in this area, taking a systematic approach that includes undertaking 'needs assessments' and 'situational analysis'. Planning also scored highly (3.71), but there appears to be a perception gap between respondents based in the UK (who scored an average of 2.83) and field offices (3.86). 'Indicators and targets' was scored at 3.56, but few substantive comments were offered to support this assessment. Of the 5 comments offered on the 'Monitoring and learning' indicator, one emphasised the need to spend more time "collectively reflect[ing] on the meaning of the data we collect and what it is telling us and how this can inform better our decision making" whilst another cited the recent introduction of "mini project reviews" as evidence that this is beginning to happen.

Few comments were offered to support the scores given for the 'Evaluation and learning' indicator, but one respondent suggested that Retrak could do better at sharing findings with others. Despite a score of 3.61 for 'Programme resources' (only marginally below the benchmark), multiple respondents identified challenges associated with funding. Whilst processes around budgeting were seen to be strong ("All projects have activity-based budgets. Budget performance is reviewed every month and budget revision is carried out mid-year"), funding gaps nonetheless arise due to challenges associated with fundraising. Few substantive comments were offered to support the scores given for 'resources for monitoring', 'strategy for impact' or 'sustainability of impact'.

4.6 Pillar 6: People



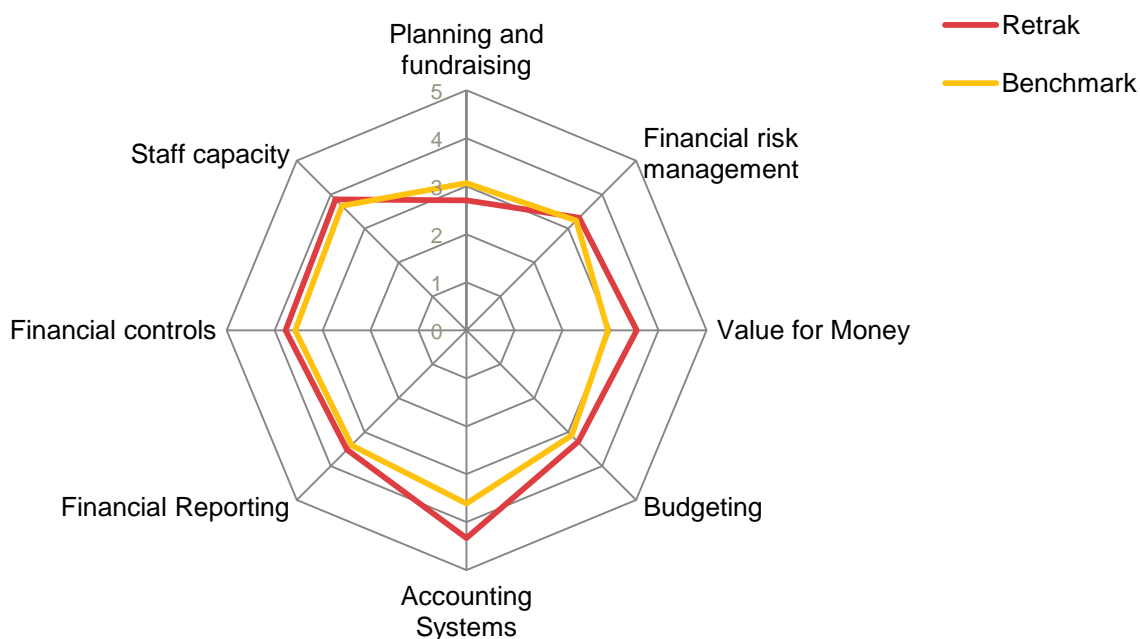
Pillar	Retrak (average)	Standard deviation	Benchmark (average)	Comparison to benchmark
Skills and capacity	3.38	1.23	3.23	+0.15
Recruitment	4.02	1.23	3.42	+0.60
Policies	3.72	1.15	3.25	+0.47
Managing performance	3.94	1.03	3.23	+0.71
Learning and development	3.26	1.15	2.86	+0.40
Interns	3.92	0.92	3.21	+0.71
Health, safety & security	2.95	1.24	3.1	-0.15
Feedback	3.81	1.35	3.13	+0.68

Within the ‘People’ pillar, the highest scoring indicators were ‘Recruitment’ (4.02) and ‘Managing performance’ (3.94). ‘Managing performance’ was acknowledged to have improved after being prioritised in recent years. Regarding the ‘Learning and Development’ indicator, respondents pointed towards staff training as evidence of the organisation’s commitment to this area. However, several respondents cited resourcing challenges, which had resulted in learning and development initiatives being cancelled or scaled down (e.g. the Leadership Academy).

Only two comments were offered in support of the ‘Interns’ scores: both acknowledged that interns “fulfil stimulating and valued roles in the organisation” and often go on to fulltime posts, but one expressed concern that “this has the potential to act as a barrier for entry into our sector” with the result that only wealthier people will be able to join NGOs. The ‘Health, safety and security’ indicator scored marginally lower than the benchmark; only three comments were provided in support of the score, but their diversity – together with the relatively high standard deviation – suggests that practice and/or perception varies across the organisation. Few substantive comments were offered for the ‘feedback’ indicator.

All of the scores within the ‘people’ pillar had a relatively high standard deviation, suggesting that perception and/or practice varies significantly across the organisation.

4.7 Pillar 7: Money



Pillar	Retrak (average)	Standard deviation	Benchmark (average)	Comparison to benchmark
Planning and fundraising	2.71	1.08	3.07	-0.36
Financial risk management	3.32	0.95	3.23	+0.09
Value for Money	3.55	1.02	2.95	+0.60
Budgeting	3.29	0.94	3.1	+0.19
Accounting Systems	4.33	0.68	3.61	+0.72
Financial Reporting	3.52	1.08	3.39	+0.13
Financial controls	3.77	0.82	3.57	+0.20
Staff capacity	3.86	0.95	3.67	+0.19

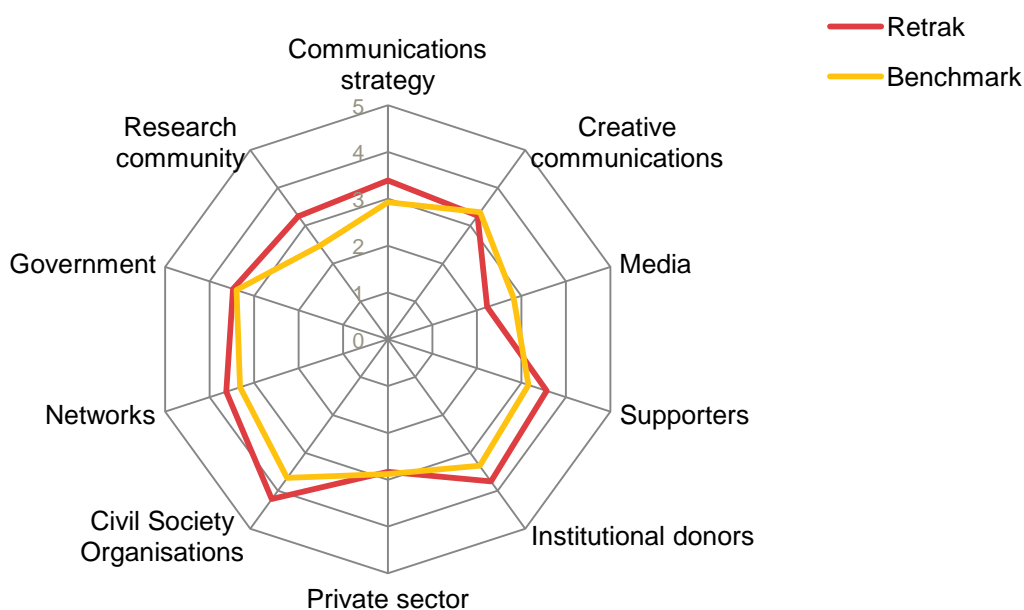
Within the 'Money' pillar, 'Planning and Fundraising' was scored at 2.71 (below the benchmark). Respondents suggested that despite a systematic approach to identifying and analysing funding opportunities, Retrak is struggling to expand its funding base, leading to over-reliance on a relatively small number of major donors.

Comments given in support of the 'Financial risk management' indicator (3.32) suggested that there are processes in place for reviewing risk, but it was questioned whether these equipped the organisation to control and manage risk. Regarding 'Value for Money', recent measures, including support from *Pro Bono Economics*, are reported to have improved the organisational approach, but it was recognised that there is still "a long way to go".

On the 'Budgeting' indicator, respondents suggested that processes were adequate – but that budgets had occasionally relied on over-optimistic fundraising targets, “which can result in living beyond our means”. In support of the scores given for the 'Accounting systems' indicator (4.33, with a low standard deviation of 0.68), respondents pointed towards a number of processes, policies and guidance that were seen to contribute to an effective system, although one respondent suggested that cash-flow issues could sometimes confound the system, resulting in the organisation “borrowing [from] Peter to pay Paul”.

'Financial Reporting' was seen to have “consistently improved” in recent years, although there was uncertainty on Retrak’s engagement with the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). Regarding 'Financial controls' respondents recognised existing measures used by the Finance staff, and suggested these could be augmented with broader quality assurance mechanisms such as spot checks. No substantive comments were offered on the 'Staff capacity' indicator.

4.8 Pillar 8: External Relations



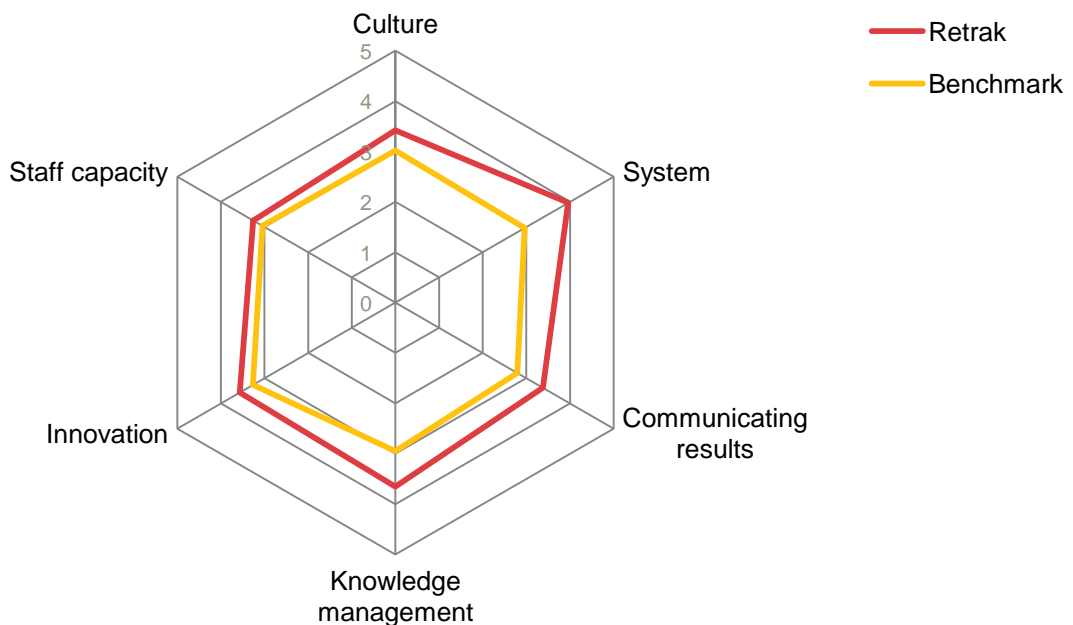
Pillar	Retrak (average)	Standard deviation	Benchmark (average)	Comparison to benchmark
Communications strategy	3.39	1.08	2.93	+0.46
Creative communications	3.26	1.29	3.36	-0.10
Media	2.23	1.11	2.83	-0.60
Supporters	3.57	0.84	3.16	+0.41
Institutional donors	3.75	0.94	3.34	+0.41

Private sector	2.83	1.15	2.88	-0.05
Civil Society Organisations	4.22	0.70	3.66	+0.56
Networks	3.63	0.69	3.32	+0.31
Government	3.48	0.63	3.4	+0.08
Research community	3.25	1.03	2.47	+0.78

The 'External Relations Pillar' was the second lowest scoring pillar of Retrak's Health Check, however it attracted few comments. The comments that were shared suggested that Retrak "needs to improve" its communication's strategy: "[I'm] not sure I could clearly identify our Comms plan". Media relationships (2.23) scored lower than the benchmark and less than 3. Respondents reported that Head office held stronger media relationships than field offices. Few substantive comments were offered for the other indicators, although the scores suggest that 'private sector' (2.83) engagement is also an area of weakness.

This data dovetails with findings in Pillars 9 (Monitoring and Evaluation) and 11 (Influencing) which highlight challenges around communicating results and influencing external stakeholders. Achieving level 4 and 5 scores across the external relations pillar typically requires relationships to be formalised or otherwise well-established, and for your organisation to play a recognised leadership role or to be considered influential.

4.9 Pillar 9: Monitoring and Evaluation



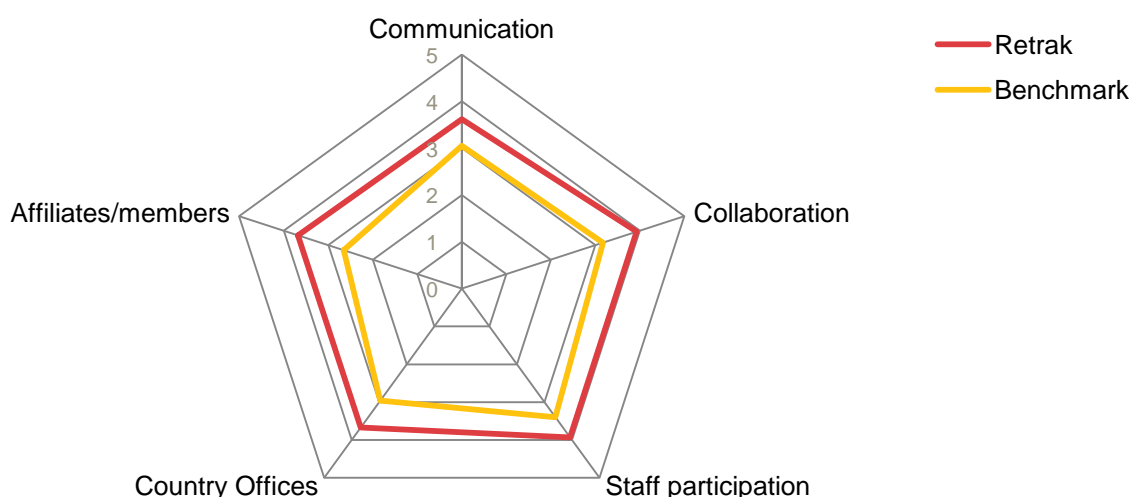
Pillar	Retrak (average)	Standard deviation	Benchmark (average)	Comparison to benchmark
Culture	3.42	0.97	3.02	+0.40

System	3.96	0.71	2.96	+1.00
Communicating results	3.38	0.86	2.79	+0.59
Knowledge management	3.65	0.88	2.95	+0.70
Innovation	3.57	0.75	3.27	+0.30
Staff capacity	3.26	0.86	3.05	+0.21

Average scores on the ‘Monitoring and Evaluation’ pillar were consistently above the benchmark, although respondents reported that ‘Communicating results’ is an area where “we could do much more”. The particularly strong scores for monitoring and evaluation ‘systems’ and ‘knowledge management’ suggest that Retrak should be well positioned to improve its communications, drawing and acting on the data that is being generated.

‘Staff capacity’ was the lowest scoring indicator in this pillar, with comments highlighting that more advanced competencies were held in Head office rather than among field staff.

4.10 Pillar 10: Internal Communications



Pillar	Retrak (average)	Standard deviation	Benchmark (average)	Comparison to benchmark
Communication	3.62	1.19	3.05	0.57
Collaboration	3.93	0.99	3.17	0.76
Staff participation	3.93	0.96	3.4	0.53
Country Offices	3.67	1.06	2.96	0.71
Affiliates/members	3.68	1.22	2.65	1.03

Average scores across the ‘Internal communications’ pillar were above the benchmark, however the high standard deviations reflect significant disparity between respondents based in the UK and those based in field offices. Average scores from UK-based

respondents were at least 1 level lower than their field office counterparts across every indicator – and the average score of UK-based respondents for all indicators other than ‘collaboration’ (which scored 3) was 2.88 or below. By way of contrast, the average score given by respondents based in field offices was 3.82 or above.

The comments point towards a wide range of communication methods that are being utilised including “the Coffee Cup update; ET Feedback; Board Feedback; SMT’s informing ET; Friday Bullets; Senior Staff Briefings; Retrak Newsletters; Regular Skype Calls; [and] Strategy Roadshows”. The comments do not reveal the reasons for the perception gaps between UK-based staff and field staff, however poor internet connectivity and language differences are cited as barriers to effective planning and communication between offices.

4.11 Pillar 11: Influencing



Pillar	Retrak (average)	Standard deviation	Benchmark (average)	Comparison to benchmark
Strategy	3.24	1.14	2.90	0.34
Evidence base	3.89	0.66	3.63	0.26
Context analysis	3.25	0.79	3.23	0.02
Planning	2.74	1.28	2.78	-0.04
Monitoring and learning	3.07	1.22	2.58	0.12
Evaluating and learning	3.17	1.27	2.95	0.31
Staff capacity	2.78	0.81	2.86	-0.62

Collaboration	3.60	0.94	3.40	0.82
Public mobilisation	3.12	0.86	2.78	0.36
Beneficiary involvement	2.68	1.25	2.76	-0.49
Policy influence	2.90	1.00	3.17	-0.27

Influencing was the lowest scoring pillar of Retrak’s Health Check, with illustrative comments including “we are not strong in advocacy work” and “it is not a priority”.

On average UK-based respondents scored the influencing indicators consistently lower than field staff (scoring 2.67 or below for 7 of the 11 indicators). Across all offices, staff scored ‘Planning’, ‘Staff capacity’ and ‘Beneficiary involvement’ at less than 3 on average. Together with ‘Policy influence’ these areas fell below the benchmark group.

The high score (3.89) and low standard deviation (0.66) for ‘Evidence base’ suggests that Retrak has a robust approach to informing its advocacy positions: “when we do it ... we do this [well] ... we just don’t do it enough!”

The few comments that were provided to support the Influencing scores suggested that Influencing (advocacy and campaigns) is not a strong priority for Retrak. One comment suggested that Field offices’ mandate and scope for influencing was limited.

Conclusions

Top level conclusions from Retrak’s Health Check are highlighted below:

- The general picture is very positive: Retrak scores above the benchmark for 69 of the 79 indicators. Particularly notable is the performance in the 'Leadership and Strategy' pillar, where high average scores – both from respondents in the UK and in field offices – led Retrak to outperform the benchmark by +0.81.
- Whilst it was beyond the remit of this report to conduct an in-depth analysis of the data disaggregated by region, team or seniority, initial analysis suggests that UK respondents often score the Health Check significantly lower than their colleagues working in the field. There is a need to better understand why this is the case.
- Fundraising emerges as a concern. This is foundational to ensuring that Retrak can continue to deliver on its strengths. The Health Check data indicates that Retrak has a positive story to communicate to potential donors. Moreover, high scores in the ‘Monitoring and Evaluation’ pillar suggest that it should have the data necessary to tell this story. Weaknesses in relation to ‘communicating results’, ‘communications strategy’, ‘creative communications’ and ‘transparency’ may be a limiting factor in conveying Retrak’s added value to potential donors and other external stakeholders.

Bond’s experience of using the Health Check with almost 60 of its members is that when organisations draw on the data to identify their priorities for improvement, and engage their Trustees and staff in developing improvement plans, they can achieve significant positive change.

Annex 1: What kind of organisation is Retrak according to the indicator scores?

This annex provides a description of Retrak using the nearest indicative statement in the Health Check to the average score given for Retrak. For example, if the average score was 2.7, the indicator statement for level 3 has been selected. As such the statements below should only be seen as indicative: they do not capture the nuances of respondents' feedback, which is better reflected in the analysis above.

Pillar	Indicator	Perception
1	Shared values and vision	We all have a shared understanding and strongly identify with our organisation's core values and vision and can explain them to others. For most of us the connection is usually clear between our values and vision and what the organisation does and how it does it.
	Distinctive contribution	We have a widely shared understanding of the distinctive contribution our organisation makes in our area of work. We can demonstrate that this forms the basis for most of our activities.
	Transparency	We publish a selection of information about our organisation, its activities and its results through our website and other channels, but we do not have an organisation wide approach to transparency.
	Partnership	The majority of our staff have a shared understanding of why and how we work with partners in the South. This understanding is consistent across most of our activities. We try to ensure the views of partners are reflected in the development of our strategies and policies as well as project activities.
	Beneficiary voice	Beneficiaries are involved in project level decisions, and their views are reflected in the development of our strategies, policies and governance.
2	Developing strategy	Our strategy presents a path towards achieving our mission. It is grounded in strategic choices around where we will focus resources, an understanding of our external environment, and builds on our organisation's distinctive contribution. It is translated into an operational plan with shorter terms goals. Our strategy is collectively owned by staff and guides our day to day work and decisions.
	Monitoring strategy	We have output and outcome indicators and targets in place for monitoring progress against most parts of our strategy. We collect and review this data and make adjustments to our strategy when necessary.
	Strong governance	We have a committed and effective governing body. Working well as a team, it provides strategic oversight, monitors our overall effectiveness, and reviews its own performance. Board

		members try to promote our organisation externally.
	Diverse governance	Our governing body has a strong mix of skills, experiences and perspectives. We conduct audits to identify existing skills gaps that need addressing.
	Inspiring leadership	Our leadership (leader, senior management team and governing body) are passionate and committed to our mission. They provide strategic direction and drive in our organisation. They regularly delegate responsibilities to and develop the leadership skills of others in the organisation.
3	Selection	We have an assessment process for choosing our partners which we use consistently to ensure that our choice of partners fits in with our strategy. We regularly obtain the perspectives of others (CSOs, beneficiaries, government etc.) as part of the assessment process to ensure an informed decision is made. We offer some opportunities for potential partners to better understand and assess if they wish to partner with us.
	Shared values	We and our partners have a shared vision, values and objectives. We recognise the benefits our partners bring to our projects and organisation and the benefits we bring to theirs. We identify how we can build on each others' respective strengths.
	Roles and responsibilities	We have an organisation-wide approach to working with partners (e.g. partnership policy/principles) and agreements for all of our partnerships which set out the rights and responsibilities of each side in relation to the contracted project activities and the functioning of the partnership.
	Monitoring partnerships	We monitor and review our partners' projects and the quality of our relationships with partners. We see this as an important opportunity to discuss how our relationships with partners are working and identify what we can improve.
	Staff capacity	Some staff have the necessary skills and knowledge needed to manage high quality partner relationships. They have knowledge of a range of tools and practices for managing conflict, building trust, ensuring openness etc.
	Staff continuity	We consistently manage staff changes through a combination of handover and debriefing processes, strong teamwork and documentation of knowledge to prevent disruption to our relationships with partners.
	Capacity development	We and our partners jointly assess their capacity needs and design and implement an appropriate capacity development plan. We provide capacity building to enable better implementation of project activities, but also regularly respond to the wider organisational needs and priorities of our partners. Progress is regularly monitored.
	Partner sustainability	We engage in a balance of short term and long term

		partnerships. At the outset of a project we discuss how we can contribute to helping most of our long term partners move towards sustainability.
4	Transparency	We always ask beneficiaries what information they need in order to effectively participate in the project and would like to know about our organisation and this is made available to them. We are working with beneficiaries to identify how to communicate the information in the most accessible ways given their context.
	Participation	We always consult beneficiaries throughout the project cycle (planning, implementation and monitoring, evaluation). We use their views to inform our plans and decisions.
	Feedback	We systematically collect, record and respond to feedback from beneficiaries. We use a range of mechanisms for collecting feedback and complaints, and have ways of protecting the confidentiality of beneficiaries where appropriate. We have evidence of feedback from beneficiaries being used to improve our work.
	Staff capacity	All relevant staff are skilled facilitators of beneficiary participation and feedback and use a range of tools and approaches. We have integrated responding to beneficiary feedback into the performance reviews of relevant staff.
5	Identification	All of our projects are based on a detailed analysis of the context. We clearly identify our target group and develop a detailed understanding of how and why they are marginalised. We do this jointly with partners, beneficiaries and other local actors.
	Planning	We have plans for all our projects that clearly identify the short and longer term outcomes that are needed to bring about our desired impact, the activities we will undertake to bring these changes about, how our project relates to the work of other actors and our assumptions. Our plans are often informed by learning from past experience and developed jointly with partners and beneficiaries.
	Indicators and targets	All our projects have quantitative and qualitative indicators for key outputs and outcomes, developed jointly with partners and beneficiaries. We always collect high quality quantitative and/or qualitative baseline data and set targets based on this.
	Monitoring and learning	We collect data on outputs and outcomes for all of our projects. We work jointly with partners and beneficiaries to collect data from a range of sources and perspectives and triangulate the results. We always make the time to review the monitoring data and use it to inform our internal decision-making.
	Evaluation and learning	We conduct evaluations of our projects whenever we can find the resources (not just when donors require them). When conducting evaluations we always define clear evaluation questions and ensure appropriate methods are used to answer

		them. We review evaluations, take action based on the findings, and refer to them when designing new projects. We often share the findings with others.
	Programme resources	We rarely fail to implement our plans because of a lack of funds. Most projects have activity-based budgets, with assumptions and explanations. Project staff review budgets and actual expenditure and adjust as necessary.
	Resources for monitoring	We always include appropriate levels of resources in our project budgets to enable us to collect and store high quality monitoring data (including a baseline), conduct appropriate evaluations, and support learning and the dissemination of lessons learnt.
	Strategy for impact	We use tried and tested approaches to ensuring the sustainability of project impact in most of our projects and we are having some success.
	Sustainability of impact	Beneficiaries sustain some elements of our projects after we leave, although they lack the necessary skills and resources to do this well. There are some longer term impacts.
6	Skills and capacity	All of our staff have the skills and experience needed to implement our current activities.
	Recruitment	Our fair and transparent recruitment policies and practices are consistently practiced at headquarters and are being adapted for field use. They take into account equal opportunities. The effectiveness of our policies is regularly monitored and reviewed.
	Policies	Staff are familiar with the employment policies and practices that affect them and managers are fully aware of their responsibilities to implement these policies. Our policies and practices are regularly monitored and reviewed.
	Managing performance	All staff have relevant, clear, attainable and time-bound objectives that reflect their job description. Most staff have regular supervision and formal appraisals to review performance and set new objectives. Most managers consider supporting staff performance to be an important part of their role and they follow our policies and procedures when assessing performance. Managers receive information and some support relevant to their people management responsibilities.
	Learning and development	Our performance assessment guidelines include a section on training needs. These are usually followed by managers. Relevant training support is available to many of our staff and staff regularly make use of it.
	Interns	We provide a clear description of an intern's rights, responsibilities and tasks in our job advertisements. We try to ensure interns get valuable experience and skills and that their work includes some challenging and stimulating tasks. We provide appropriate support and supervision and provide an exit interview with an appraisal of their performance.

	Health, safety and security	We have a policy framework and procedural guidance notes and our working practice meets all basic legal requirements. We identify major health, safety and security risks in the areas where we work. We have basic security and evacuation plans. Staff are always informed of the risks and plans before departure.
	Feedback	We regularly conduct assessments of staff satisfaction, discuss the results openly and jointly agree action points with staff.
7	Planning and fundraising	We have an organisational financial strategy that has been developed to ensure longer-term financial stability. We have targets for raising funds and identify funding opportunities for the year ahead. We have plans for improving our reserves and overheads allocation. We are starting to diversify our funding base.
	Financial risk management	We regularly identify and assess financial risks and keep a record of this process in a risk register to help manage them, including key actions required to address the risks. Our senior management and governing body use their regular meetings to monitor the progress of actions required on controlling and reducing our organisations most critical financial risks as highlighted by our financial performance indicators.
	Value for Money	We have evidence that we are making improvements in economy, (e.g. through procurement), and efficiency, (through improving the quality of outputs). For some of our programmes we can confidently explain and justify internally and externally the cost of achieving particular outcomes and can show how cost considerations informed choices in programme design and implementation.
	Budgeting	We have a budgeting process where finance and programme staff work on developing project budgets together. The organisational budget is clearly linked to organisational priorities and project budgets link to activity plans; all budgets are regularly monitored and reviewed. Budgets are broken-down into distinct programmes and projects with a named individual responsible for the budget they manage.
	Accounting Systems	Our accounting procedures are documented in a finance manual, clearly communicated across the organisation and consistently implemented. There is a timetable of monthly accounting routines. Managers understand and regularly compare the financial information against the budget to inform their decision making processes, and take corrective action as necessary. We always comply with the terms and conditions in grant agreements with donors.
	Financial Reporting	We produce financial reports on a regular basis that meet the needs of different internal and external stakeholders (trustees, senior management team, budget managers, donors) and effectively support operational and strategic decision making. Our reporting to donors is always in the appropriate format and

		on time and financial and narrative reports are always consistent and clearly linked to each other. We always ask for and incorporate feedback on the quality of our financial reports received from trustees and budget holders. We produce some financial information in an International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) compliant format.
	Financial controls	We have a robust system of internal financial controls to safeguard assets, ensure accounting records are comprehensive and up-to-date and prevent fraud or errors. We have clear levels of delegated responsibility for who can set up and authorise payments and who ensures compliance with the controls. The system is periodically reviewed through an internal audit self-assessment to ensure controls are being implemented effectively and adapted to reflect changes in the legal and regulatory environment (e.g. anti-bribery legislation). Our financial controls include whistleblowing policies for staff.
	Staff capacity	We have a finance team that includes qualified accountants. Our finance staff work well with budget managers in budget monitoring and payment processing. They provide timely financial information for project managers, senior management and trustees. Most staff receive the training and support they need to carry out their financial management responsibilities.
8	Communications strategy	We have developed a communications plan which includes our target audiences, key messages and channels and have put together a communications schedule to ensure that our communications are timely and relevant.
	Creative communications	We regularly update our website and are trying out ways to use social media to communicate. Our communications are a two way process: our target audience engages with us as well as us engaging with them.
	Media	We do not have a media plan but we do respond to media enquiries when we receive them. We recognise the importance of media engagement and are starting to build relationships with key media contacts.
	Supporters	We are effective at recruiting and retaining a committed supporter base. Our supporters are engaged in a range of activities to support our work, including fundraising, advocacy and public education and take action with some guidance from us. They have a good understanding of what we do and communicate this passionately to others.
	Institutional donors	We receive financial support from a wide range of donors and have good working relationships with a wide range of donor staff. Our donors regularly consult our organisation on relevant issues, and sometimes we collaborate to identify shared interests and goals.
	Private sector	Private sector organisations provide us with donations and pro

		bono support, and share their skills and expertise.
	Civil Society Organisations	We have strong relationships with other CSOs/NGOs working towards similar objectives. We share expertise and information and work to coordinate our efforts. We participate in and sometimes lead on joint activities.
	Networks	We are active members of the relevant national and international networks and alliances that share our objectives. We regularly collaborate on joint projects with other organisations. We suggest new areas of work on which to collaborate.
	Government	We are building good informal relationships with key government officials. We are sometimes invited to engage with them on relevant issues.
	Research community	We are recognised within the national research community working in our area. We participate in meetings and conferences.
9	Culture	Reflecting and learning from our experience and from evidence (e.g. evaluations, monitoring data, research) on what works and what doesn't in our area of work is encouraged and time is prioritised for this. We always try to act on what we are learning.
	System	Reflecting and learning from our experience and from evidence (e.g. evaluations, monitoring data, research) on what works and what doesn't in our area of work is encouraged and time is prioritised for this. We always try to act on what we are learning.
	Communicating results	We communicate publicly on our outputs and outcomes for a range of activities which enables stakeholders to see how we are doing in relation to the objectives we set. We are proactive in making some evaluations public.
	Knowledge management	We share our knowledge and learning widely within the organisation and externally by networking, making our documentation widely available and contributing to discussions on policy and practice with others working in our area.
	Innovation	We actively encourage innovation and there is evidence of it happening frequently. The development and testing of new approaches has improved our activities and/or organisational capacity.
	Staff capacity	Some staff have the basic skills and competencies needed to conduct monitoring and evaluation work and we are trying to build the capacity of others. Relevant staff have monitoring and evaluation as part of their personal objectives.
10	Communication	We have set up internal communication systems to enable regular dialogue, sharing of information and learning across different groups in the organisation. These are being used regularly by staff. We have good informal communication. Staff feel well informed of relevant issues, developments and

		decisions.
	Collaboration	Departments, teams and functions within our organisation collaborate regularly and share information and resources. Joint planning and working has improved our impact and organisational capacity.
	Staff participation	Consultation is consistently encouraged and it is clear to most of our staff how, and when, they can engage, with some take-up on these opportunities.
	Country Offices	We communicate relevant information to our country offices clearly and regularly. We have a system for coordinating requests for information from country offices to ensure offices are not overloaded. Our different roles and responsibilities are clear and understood by both parties. Decisions are always taken at appropriate levels.
	Affiliates/members	Collaboration with our affiliates/members is part of our organisational strategy. We systematically collaborate on activities and programmes and build on each others strengths, skills and expertise in a way that adds value to our ourselves, other affiliates and the family/network as a whole.
11	Strategy	We have an organisation-wide approach to advocacy and advocacy is included in our organisational strategy.
	Evidence base	We use a range of primary and secondary sources to inform our advocacy position. Where possible we draw on the perspectives of our partners and beneficiaries.
	Context analysis	We have a good understanding of the political context of our advocacy work. We have identified key audiences and targets and have mapped the roles of other actors working in the area.
	Planning	We have plans for our advocacy work that identify the short and longer term outcomes that are needed to bring about our desired impact, the activities we will undertake to bring about these changes and indicators for tracking progress. We try to consult with partners and allies in our planning.
	Monitoring and learning	We monitor outputs for all of our advocacy work, and outcomes for most of our advocacy work. We make the time to review the monitoring data and use it to inform decision making.
	Evaluating and learning	We conduct evaluations of our advocacy when it is required by donors, but view them as important opportunities for understanding and improving our work. We always review evaluations and take action based on the findings.
	Staff capacity	Some staff have the basic skills and knowledge needed for good advocacy work in our area, and we are trying to build the capacity of others.
	Collaboration	We have strong relationships with other actors working towards similar advocacy objectives. We share expertise and information

		and work to coordinate our efforts. We participate in and sometimes lead on joint activities.
	Public mobilisation	We have had some success in mobilising the public in support of our advocacy objectives. We have a small group of supporters that take action in support of our advocacy objectives with guidance and close support from us.
	Beneficiary involvement	We formally consult beneficiaries and partners on the design and implementation of our advocacy work, and they sometime take part in the implementation of our advocacy activities. We work jointly with beneficiaries to identify our advocacy priorities.
	Policy influence	We are starting to see changes in the attitudes and behaviours of decision makers as a result of our advocacy work. We are sometimes invited to engage with decision makers on our advocacy issue.