HAP 10 YEARS
Humanitarian
Accountability
Partnership

ACCOUNTABILITY

VALUE FOR MONEY

RESILIENCE

GOOD GOVERNANCE

QUALITY

DO NO HARM

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

FORMATIVE

CERTIFICATION

REAL-TIME EVALUATIONS

CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

SELF-REGULATION

COORDINATION

AFFECTED POPULATIONS

BENCHMARKING

PEER REVIEWS

RISK MANAGEMENT

MONITORING & EVALUATIONS

2013 HUMANITARIAN ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

ACRONYMS

AAP – Accountability to Affected Populations

ALNAP – Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance

BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation

BSO – Building Safer Organizations

CAAP – Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations

CBHA – Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies

CBO – Community-Based Organisation

CDA – Collaborative for Development Action

CDAC – Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities

CRM – Complaints and Response Mechanism

CSO – Civil Society Organisation

DARA – Development Assistance Research Associates

DEC – Disasters Emergency Committee

DFID – Department for International Development

DG ECHO – Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (formerly known as European Community Humanitarian Office)

DRC – Danish Refugee Council

DRC – Democratic Republic of the Congo

ECB Project – Emergency Capacity Building Project

ECHO FPA – ECHO Framework Partnership Agreement

ELRHA – Enhanced Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

GHD – Good Humanitarian Donorship

Groupe URD – Groupe Urgence Réhabilitation Développement

HAP – Humanitarian Accountability Partnership

HAR – Humanitarian Accountability Report

HC – Humanitarian Coordinator

HCT – Humanitarian Country Team

HERR - Humanitarian Emergency Response Review

HPG – Humanitarian Policy Group

HHI – Harvard Humanitarian Initiative

HRI – Humanitarian Response Index

IAAWG – Inter-Agency Accountability Working Group

IA-RTE – Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation

IASC – Inter–Agency Standing Committee

IATI – International Aid Transparency Initiative

ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross

ICT – Information and Communications Technology

ICVA – International Council of Voluntary Agencies

IDP – Internally Displaced Person

INGO – International Non-Governmental Organisation

JEEAR – Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda

JSI – Joint Standards Initiative

MANGO – Management Accounting for Non-Governmental Organisations

M&E – Monitoring & Evaluation

MSF – Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

OCHA – United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

ODA – Official Development Assistance

ODI – Overseas Development Institute

OFDA – Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance

PIA – People In Aid

RTE – Real Time Evaluation

SCHR – Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response

SRI – Self-Regulatory Initiative

TEC – Tsunami Evaluation Coalition

UN – United Nations

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

VOICE – Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies

WASH – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

WFP – World Food Programme

FOREWORD

Ten years ago, the humanitarian sector was just starting to acknowledge affected populations as a primary stakeholder, one which should be able to hold humanitarian actors to account. For quite some time then, while the word was extensively used in policy discourse, there was little agreement on what being accountable to crisis affected populations actually meant, only a sense that this was the "right thing to do". Today, it seems unthinkable to plan and lead a humanitarian response without putting crisis affected populations at the heart of programming, demonstrating the great leaps that the sector has taken in a relatively short period of time.

The 2013 Humanitarian Accountability Report, which offers an overview of the progress the humanitarian sector has made and the obstacles it has faced over the past 10 years, comes at an opportune time. Accountability is no longer just a fashionable term, there is now a shared understanding of what it takes to be accountable as detailed in the HAP Standard benchmarks or the IASC Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations. From changes at policy level, to concrete actions taken in the field, this report documents this sector-wide shift. It also shows that being accountable to the people we aim to serve is not just the right thing to do, it is also the best way to ensure programmes are relevant, effective, efficient and sustainable.

Can we then be satisfied with what we have achieved and consider this mission accomplished? Not quite. On the one hand, as this report also shows, practice is not yet on par with policy. On the other, being accountable is an ongoing task. It commits us to listen to the voices of our stakeholders and strive to ensure our actions are driven by needs as voiced by the people we aim to assist.

Switzerland, as demonstrated by its support of HAP and other quality and accountability initiatives, strongly believes in the need to empower beneficiaries of humanitarian aid and actively include them in decision-making processes. We believe this to be the most responsible way to express our solidarity with crisis-affected populations, and an ongoing duty.

The HAP Standard begins with a request to define commitments and an action plan, and concludes with learning and continual improvement. This report documents what has worked, but also outlines some of the shortcomings and obstacles that have prevented progress. It is now our responsibility to scale up best practice, remove the obstacles, and continue to deliver on our commitments to people affected by crises.

Ambassador Manuel Bessler
Vice-Director, Delegate for Humanitarian Aid and Head of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA)

CONTENTS

Askele Wetango is about 70 years old and a beneficiary of HelpAge's partner organisation - Mary Joy in Awassa, Ethiopia. Her daughter died of HIV leaving her with three grandchildren to support and she is photographed with them at her home in Awassa, Ethiopia in 2008

© Kate Holt / HelpAge International

The elderly of Kyrgyzstan
© Kate Holt/HelpAge International

1 HAVE WE LOST THE PLOT?
REVISITING THE ACCOUNTABILITY DEBATE

James Darcy warns against the dangers of taking too narrow a view of humanitarian accountability, and of privileging voluntary over official accountability.

BACKGROUND
HOW THE ACCOUNTABILITY PROBLEM IS UNDERSTOOD[1]

Much has changed in the ten years since the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership was established, including thinking about accountability itself. The fundamental problem as it appeared to those involved in HAP's foundation was the lack of attention given by humanitarian organisations to their accountability to aid recipients as compared to 'official' stakeholders – donor governments and others. In 2003 the balance of accountability seemed to many aid practitioners to be wrong not only on moral grounds but on practical grounds too: humanitarians were failing to learn the lessons from others in the public and commercial sectors about client satisfaction, about what kept service providers honest and made enterprises flourish. The lack of 'downward' accountability was perceived, in turn, to have a negative impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of aid programmes.[2] The reframing in the 1990s of the humanitarian agenda in rights terms, with 'beneficiaries' now understood as 'claimants', only served to highlight this accountability deficit.[3]

This concern led to what some referred to a decade ago as an 'accountability revolution,'[4] though we might question the term – it has sometimes felt more like an industry than a revolution. The change involved a number of elements, including the definition by organisations of standards and codes which in part addressed the question: "accountability for what?" The 'Good Humanitarian Donorship' initiative purported to do the same

for leading donors. These initiatives provided a self-imposed framework of responsibility against which the actions and decisions of the bodies concerned might be judged; but they left open the question of how organisations and donors were to be held to account against their commitments, particularly by aid recipients. The founders of HAP were concerned to plug this gap and to define in tangible terms how it was that organisations would hold themselves accountable to recipient communities and treat them as the primary stakeholders in aid delivery.

The attempt to correct the accountability deficit described above remains (rightly I believe) fundamental to HAP's rationale and real progress has been made, as described in the *2011 Humanitarian Accountability Report*.[5] This has a number of dimensions, including consultation with and involvement of aid recipients in the design and delivery of aid programmes, and the provision of effective feedback and complaints mechanisms. But an exclusive focus on accountability from an *agency* perspective and in *process* terms risks narrowing the discussion in damaging ways. For all the progress made over the past ten years, there has been a tendency to deal with accountability in increasingly technocratic, de-politicised and self-referential terms by humanitarian organisations. Put another way, there has been a shift in focus from macro- to micro-accountability, in ways that I believe leads to an impoverished – and

potentially distorted – understanding of the humanitarian accountability agenda.

In this chapter, I would like to question the way in which this agenda is framed. Not because the present agenda is in itself the wrong one, but because it seems to me to be radically incomplete in the way it is currently understood. Specifically, the accountability of humanitarian organisations to those they seek to assist tends to be seen in narrow programmatic terms; and it tends to be considered in isolation from the nexus of other (sometimes more fundamental) accountability relationships of which it forms part. Specialised humanitarian organisations are not the only humanitarian actors; and they are certainly not the only ones with humanitarian responsibilities. To illustrate this requires stepping back a little from the content and mechanics of organisational accountability and looking more broadly at the contexts where humanitarian action is carried out.

1/ As the next chapter shows, definitions of accountability are contested. For the purposes of this chapter, I assume a definition based on an 'accountability relationship' model that combines two elements (i) the responsibility of an individual or organisation to account for their actions and decisions, against defined criteria, to another party; (ii) the ability of that other party to call the individual or organisation to account, with the expectation that this will influence future actions or that sanctions for non-compliance will follow. In defining this relationship, the key questions are: accountability of whom, on what basis, to whom, for what, and how?

2/ On this point, see HAP's current 'strategic value proposition': "that quality, accountability and programme results are inextricably linked. By improving organisational accountability in a systemic way, programme quality, impact and outcomes will also be enhanced." www.hapinternational.org/about.aspx

3/ This shift to 'rights' language was reflected particularly in the Sphere Project and the framing of the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response.

4/ See for example http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-24/editors-introduction-the-accountability-revolution

5/ See http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/2011humanitarian-accountability-report.pdf

ORIGINS OF THE DEBATE

A decade ago, the accountability imbalance described above was only one element in a wider critique of international humanitarianism. Some laid emphasis on the lack of international organisations' accountability for the negative human and political effects of their interventions.[6] Industry insiders tended more often to stress the lack of accountability for the effectiveness of interventions,[7] and to see this – together with the uncoordinated and unregulated nature of humanitarian action, highlighted by the Rwanda crisis – as the fundamental accountability challenge. The wider critique of humanitarianism was summarised by Austen Davis in 2007: "Humanitarian action has been accused of prolonging wars and undermining governments' accountability to their people, destroying markets and creating dependency, failing to address the causes of crisis and so acting as a substitute for 'real' action,

failing to reach the neediest, being inequitable, corroding human dignity and providing poor-quality assistance in insufficient quantities to people in desperate need." [8] As Davis points out, these charges may sometimes be poorly evidenced or based on faulty reasoning; but they also contain elements of truth, and deserve to be taken seriously'.

Framed in these terms, the broader accountability problem is multi-layered. At one level it relates to the absence of political action to tackle the factors that create the need for humanitarian action in the first place, through such things as effective disaster prevention and restraint in the use of force.[9] The main problem of humanitarian action is how to ensure that appropriate and effective assistance and protection are provided to those who most need it, when they most need it, without causing too much harm in the process. Leaving aside the

political sphere of responsibility, this raises questions about individual and collective accountability of humanitarian agencies and donors for strategic decisions made about engagement or non-engagement.[10] For this there is no scheme of accountability – and indeed it is hard to imagine how such a scheme could be devised as things stand.[11] International organisations and donors have no formal responsibility to respond in particular ways to a given situation. Even within a given crisis response, organisations are generally accountable only for what they do, and how they do it; not for what they fail to do (though questions of neglect or negligence may form part of the evaluation of individual programmes).[12]

Petros Abyio grows apples in Boshe-Ilgira, Ethiopia. Church of Sweden supports several projects in rural Ethiopia to improve the poor people's abilities to support themselves and their families

© Magnus Aronson/Church of Sweden

WCC delegation at a residential street in Gori, Georgia, damaged in the August 2008 war over South Ossetia. In the foreground is Rev Laszlo Lehel, director of Hungarian Interchurch Aid, a member agency of ACT
© Jonathan Frerichs/ACT

We are left, then, with accountability for the fulfilment of commitments that humanitarian actors take on themselves, their conduct in attempting to fulfil those commitments, and the wider consequences of their actions. Translated into management speak, this equates roughly to accountability for outputs, processes and outcomes. In practice, the emphasis lies heavily on the first two of these. To the extent that organisations are held accountable for outcomes, it is very much in relation to the discernible short-term and direct effects of intervention.

The lack of accountability for strategic choices – whether and how to respond to particular crises – is one of the ways in which aid institutions are less obviously accountable than some other public sector bodies, where responsibilities for action are more tightly defined.[13] Moreover, the issue of lack of accountability for the more far-reaching outcomes of such choices – including negative effects – remains largely unaddressed.[14] But there is a second, even more serious problem with the way the agenda is currently framed. This concerns the de-emphasising of formal, political accountability in favour of informal, voluntary accountability. Consideration of both these issues requires some analysis of the relationship between humanitarianism and politics.

6/ See for example de Waal, A. (1997): Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa; African Rights & the International African Institute; Terry, F. (2002) Condemned to Repeat? The Paradox of Humanitarian Action, Cornell University Press.

7/ For example Jan Egeland (UN ERC) in 'Humanitarian accountability: putting principles into practice' (HPN Humanitarian Exchange – Endpiece June 2005). See now the language of the Transformative Agenda: "The IASC Principals are committed to the ultimate objective of accountability to beneficiaries by ensuring that the humanitarian response delivers life-saving assistance to those in need as the result of effective and timely decision-making and planning." (IASC Transformative Agenda – Chapeau Document 2012, p.2)

8/ Davis, A. (2007) Concerning Accountability of Humanitarian Action¸ HPN Network Paper No. 58, ODI.

9/ The disaster prevention agenda is not usually considered part of the mainstream humanitarian agenda.

10/ By 'strategic' questions I mean specifically, in this context, decisions about whether or not to intervene, the timing of intervention and withdrawal, which areas and communities to prioritise, the choice of programme approach and the 'mode' of delivery (how to work, with what types of partner, funding etc.)

11/ As Davis op. cit. points out, this is a serious gap in the humanitarian accountability scheme.

12/ The Guide to the HAP Standard quotes Molière as saying 'It is not only what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable'. We may agree with the sentiment, but it is not one reflected in the current scheme of humanitarian accountability. The UN-led cluster system – and specifically the notion of 'provider of last resort' – was in part an attempt to address this problem, but it lacks both specificity and sanctions for non-compliance.

13/ Consider, for example, of the responsibility of national health authorities in relation to disease outbreaks, both with regard to prevention and response.

14/ This is in part because of the problems of determining what caused a given outcome (causal attribution) as well as the ambiguity about the scope and nature of organisational responsibility.

HUMANITARIANISM AND
POLITICAL ACTION

The relationship between humanitarian action and political power lies at the heart of debates about international humanitarianism. Following the end of the Cold War in 1989, many felt that humanitarian action was in danger of being subsumed by the politics of increasingly interventionist foreign policies – most notably in Somalia, former Yugoslavia and Kosovo. The 'new humanitarianism' espoused by many organisations involved setting goals – including the protection of rights and contributing to conflict resolution – that went beyond the confines of traditional humanitarianism and took agencies into more political terrain.[15]

The blurring of lines between humanitarian and military-political objectives, leading to what many saw as a growing threat to 'humanitarian space', became increasingly marked in the post-9/11 era. Humanitarian concerns were cited in support of counter-terrorist, counter-insurgency and stabilisation operations; but the failure to protect civilians – and indeed the harm done to civilians – soon became part of the criticism of such operations, particularly in Iraq, Afghanistan and DRC.[16] At the same time, in contexts like Darfur (Sudan), Sri Lanka and currently Syria, where the international community has not been prepared to intervene with force, humanitarian action was severely constrained as governments that were involved in the violent suppression of opposition movements proved unresponsive to diplomatic pressures.

While these politically complex and conflict-related crises raised issues about humanitarian intervention and state sovereignty, international responses to natural disasters remained largely on a consensual footing: the international community acting (for the most part) at the invitation of the governments unable to cope with the scale and nature of needs following earthquakes and hurricanes, droughts and floods. The exceptions to this consensual picture – for example the 2005 food crisis in Niger, the 2008 cyclone Nargis in Burma, the 2011 Somalia famine – can be explained largely by the deliberate political isolationism of the controlling powers at the time.

In all of these situations, international organisations (UN and INGO) were instrumental in delivering humanitarian services in the context of agendas that were essentially framed by political actors. These cases raise a number of issues for humanitarian accountability understood in a broader sense:

- The accountability of governments themselves for the security and well-being of conflict- and disaster-affected communities, and the adequacy of their responses to crisis.

- International political accountability for the protection of civilians and the provision of funding for adequate relief assistance; and for the negative effects of armed interventions.

- The accountability of humanitarian organisations for the potential negative political, social and economic effects of their engagement – particularly in conflict situations.

These aspects of humanitarian accountability feature less in current thinking than they used to, and this seems to me a retrograde step. Limiting the discussion of humanitarian accountability to questions of aid organisations' accountability to aid recipients seriously distorts the broader picture. This has both a formal and a practical dimension. Formally, and in legal terms, the relationship of rights and duties is one that exists between people and the states in which they live.[17] Humanitarian organisations may take upon themselves responsibilities for the fulfilment of rights, but – at least in the case of INGOs – they do so on a voluntary and moral basis, not an official and legal one.[18] To suggest otherwise is to debase the concept of rights as formal claims, and to obscure the question of political and governance responsibilities.

More practically speaking, humanitarian outcomes depend in practice to such an extent on the acts or omissions of political actors, and on such a wide variety of social and economic factors, that the accountability of specialised humanitarian organisations can only be properly understood in a wider political and socio-economic context.[19] The experience of Rwanda and former Yugoslavia should warn us of the trap of thinking that aid organisation-delivered aid holds the key, when the fundamental humanitarian problem may be one of protecting civilians, something that at root can only be tackled by political actors. Yet even the more politically embedded humanitarian strategies in transitional contexts such as the DRC and Afghanistan tend to inflate the goals of humanitarian action; and to falsely characterise problems that are essentially structural (political and socio-economic) as problems that are amenable to short-term solutions delivered by humanitarian organisations.[20]

This raises a related point: if we focus just on accountability for the immediate effects of our interventions, we miss the question of accountability for medium and longer-term effects. In contexts of protracted crisis like Darfur and Eastern DRC, aid organisations have tended to continue the same short-term responses over many years. Much of this may have been necessary and justified on humanitarian grounds; but the mode of delivery as well as the package of assistance delivered often fails to develop over time, and few such programmes have defined exit criteria. Given the inevitable tendency of protracted aid programmes to become part of the local political economy, with potentially damaging effects, organisations whose programmes fail to evolve or to include plans for effective transitions should surely be held accountable.[21]

A farmer in Masowe, Zimbabwe, in 2009
© Kate Holt / HelpAge International

15/ See Macrae, J. and Leader, N. (2000) Shifting Sands: the search for 'coherence' between political and humanitarian responses to complex emergencies, HPG Report no. 8, ODI.

16/ While international forces remain largely unaccountable for harm done to civilians, of for failures of protection, the accountability of individual war leaders for war crimes and other crimes covered by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court has attracted growing attention, leading some to hope that the age of impunity for political and military leaders might be coming to an end.

17/ The international community of states, through the UN, has some supervening responsibilities to ensure respect for human rights. See in particular the UN Charter and the (non-binding) 'responsibility to protect' commitments adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2005.

18/ The ICRC and the UN organisations have a more formally mandated role, but it is nevertheless a secondary one. The role of international organisations is in that sense substitutory, compensating for the inability or unwillingness of the primary duty bearers to fulfil their responsibilities.

19/ This includes the granting by political and military authorities of secure access for relief services.

20/ I am thinking here in particular of the basic social protection function played by humanitarian aid in parts of DRC, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and elsewhere. These involve tackling what are essentially structural deficits of service provision with short term aid-funded solutions.

21/ One example of this can be found in the aid provided to Palestinian refugees in the Middle East, the political significance of which has sometimes outweighed its economic significance.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY RELATIONSHIP:
DEFINING RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE HUMANITARIAN SPHERE

Any discussion of accountability has to be rooted in an understanding of the relationships on which it is based. Accountability implies responsibility of some kind owed by one party to another, based on a relationship that may be contractual, 'principal-agent', political or other.

This suggests that at least eight such relationships exist, either mutual or unilateral (see page 13). Some of these arise from official responsibilities or are defined by partnership arrangements, others are voluntarily assumed. Certain accountability relationships are contractually based (e.g. donor-agency relations); while others are based on legal and political obligations

(state-citizen). Aid organisations' accountability to aid recipients generally has no such basis in a formal relationship: it arises out of self-imposed obligations with no formal consequences for non-compliance.[22] As such it represents a relatively weak form of accountability compared to some of the others in this picture. Its significance lies largely in the fact that there may be few (if any) means available to those affected by conflict and disaster to hold formal duty bearers to account.

One of the key issues for the humanitarian sector concerns the lack of mutual and collective accountability

for performance under these voluntary arrangements: for example, the accountability of the Humanitarian Country Team and of the Cluster Leads to the Humanitarian Coordinator.[23] The Inter-Agency Standing Committee's 'Transformative Agenda' makes reference to "enhanced accountability of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and members of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) for the achievement of collective results" and also to the need to strengthen mutual accountability.[24] But the means of achieving this remain elusive in practice: voluntary responsibilities tend to be 'trumped' by more defined forms of accountability, notably of agency staff to their line managers to deliver on organisational

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM

FINANCE

DONOR GOVERNMENTS
(Bilateral ODA)

COMMON FUNDS

PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

CORPORATE

IMPLEMENTATION

UN ORGANISATIONS

RED CROSS
CRESCENT MOVEMENT

INTERNATIONAL NGOs

priorities. Accountability for the former remains (perhaps deliberately) weak. Here, the issue of relative institutional power is a major factor. UN organisations are intergovernmental bodies that are ultimately the servants (agents) of UN member states; but they also represent powerful political entities in their own right, unlikely to subordinate their own power and mandates to the collective enterprise.

Elsewhere in the accountability picture, power imbalances are even more marked. _The Sphere Humanitarian Charter (2011)_ says this about the role of humanitarian organisations in relation to crisis-affected communities and host governments:

We acknowledge that it is firstly through their own efforts, and through the support of community and local institutions, that the basic needs of people affected by disaster or conflict are met. We recognise the primary role and responsibility of the affected state to provide timely assistance to those affected, to ensure people's protection and security and to provide support for their recovery. We believe that a combination of official and voluntary action is crucial to effective prevention and response[...] Where national capacity is insufficient, we affirm the role of the wider international community, including governmental donors and regional organisations, in assisting states to fulfil their responsibilities [25]

This acknowledges a hierarchy of responsibility and the distinction between official and voluntary responsibility. Yet in practice, the power – and money – is largely concentrated on the left-hand side of the diagram above. In market terms, the demand for services (from donors) and the supply of those services (from international organisations) is almost all within the international sphere. In contrast to the development sector, donors do not usually fund states to respond to humanitarian crises. In some cases, where the state is party to a conflict that is itself the cause of the crisis, this may be understandable. In the case of natural disasters it may be much less so. Yet international humanitarian action remains largely state-avoiding, despite the statement in the Humanitarian Charter that "As far as possible... we will support the efforts of the relevant authorities to protect and assist those affected".[26] This has major implications for the three forms of 'political' accountability described earlier.

22/ But see Nicholas Stockton on the duty of care owed by aid organisations to those they seek to assist: The Accountability Alibi, Humanitarian Exchange Issue 34, July 2006, HPN/ODI, London.

23/ See Featherstone, A. (2011) United we stand? Collective accountability in the humanitarian sector, Humanitarian Exchange Issue 52, HPN/ODI October 2011. See also the IASC Real Time Evaluation of the humanitarian response to the Horn of Africa drought crisis response (Somalia 2011-12, page 28) Valid International, 2012.

24/ Transformative Agenda, Chapeau Document op. cit., page 1. More specifically, the document says (page 3) "Mutual accountability will be enhanced within and between the HC, HCT members, Cluster Coordinators and other cluster partners, based on a clear, concise, time-bound and results-oriented strategy to deliver. Individual roles and responsibilities in contributing to the collective humanitarian response will be clearly outlined and can then be better communicated to all stakeholders, including donors[...] Implementation of the plan will be monitored, enabling feedback on the performance of both the HC and the HCT members."

25/ Sphere Humanitarian Charter, paragraph 2.

26/ Ibid., paragraph 3.

CRISIS CONTEXTS

COORDINATION MECHANISMS:
HCT, Clusters, etc.

> <

STATE

National and local government

Agents of the State
- Service authorities (health, education, etc.)
- Military, police

NON-STATE ACTORS

- Civil society (NGO, CBO, religious groups etc.)
- Commercial
- Other

CRISIS-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

RE-FOCUSING ON
OFFICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

One key problem with unofficial (voluntary) accountability is precisely that it is not based on formally defined responsibilities. For the most part, NGOs – private voluntary organisations – are free to come and go as they wish, to provide what services they determine to be appropriate, in ways that see fit. No official sanction follows for non-compliance with self-imposed responsibilities, though organisations may suffer loss of reputation and income.[27] The same is largely true of the intergovernmental organisations of the UN, whose formal mandates are not matched by equally formal accountabilities. This is why the definition of voluntary codes and standards for organisations is a necessary but insufficient basis for greater accountability to aid recipients; and why organisational accountability represents only one part of this agenda.

If we look for a moment to our colleagues in the development sector, the pressing issue is public sector accountability: particularly, state accountability for the delivery of public services like health, education, utilities and welfare. These, along with security, are perhaps the most important aspects of the social contract as far as most people are concerned. The current development emphasis is on making the social contract work through active citizenship, with an emphasis on transparency and on citizens holding governments (local and national) to account.[28] While this presupposes a politically responsive government, there are few – even in the most fragile states – that can afford to ignore the wishes of large parts of the population. From a humanitarian perspective, however, there are two major qualifications to this. Firstly, those communities that are most vulnerable to disaster and the effects of conflict are often the most politically marginal (e.g. pastoralists in the

Horn of Africa) and so least likely to receive the state assistance they need. Secondly, in conflict situations, the ability or willingness of the government to deliver services to all sectors of society impartially is often very much in doubt, especially where the population is divided along the same political lines that define the conflict.[29]

So it may be true that the existence of a responsive voluntary sector (local, national, international) is the best chance many victims of crisis have of receiving the assistance they need and finding advocates for their cause. International NGOs – and indeed UN agencies – are facing growing operational restrictions in countries like Ethiopia and Sri Lanka, from governments that have not always

proved willing or able to meet the needs of all their own people. But the ways in which the humanitarian system operates globally tend to undermine what chances there are of host governments being effectively held to account by their own people, by by-passing the state and substituting for its role without being politically accountable for the results. This is not a new charge.[30] But in a world where the role of the crisis-affected state is increasingly being re-emphasised by states themselves as well as by donors and aid agencies, I believe it is essential to take it seriously.

A man carrying fire wood in Treguine refugee camp along the Chad-Sudan border. LWF -Chad programme distributes fire wood for Sudanese refugees and has a well organised distribution system
© Anna Palmén / LWF Chad

27/ See Davis op. cit. This is not to suggest that non-compliance by official duty holders is itself always subject to sanction.
28/ See for example Ringold, D. et al. (2012) Citizens and Service Delivery: Assessing the Use of Social Accountability Approaches in Human Development, World Bank, Washington D.C.
29/ Consider, for example, Sri Lanka during the civil war, or Ethiopia under Mengistu in the 1980s.
30/ See for example de Waal, op. cit.

KEY ACCOUNTABILITY RELATIONSHIPS

Official donor assistance

1. **Donor to donor public** (unilateral): official/political
2. **Donor – international agency** (mutual): contractual
3. **Donor – recipient government** (mutual): contractual/political

National/local response

4. **Crisis-affected state and local government to affected communities** (unilateral): official/political
5. **Local/national non-state actors to communities** (unilateral): voluntary

International response

6. **International agency – agency** (HCT, etc.) (mutual): voluntary or MoU-based
7. **International agency to affected communities** (unilateral): voluntary
8. **International agency – national/local government** (unilateral or mutual): voluntary or MoU-based

Divided into groups according to nationality,
15,000 refugees from Bangladesh and a number of
African countries live at close quarters in Sousha refugee
camp, just a few hundred metres from the Libyan border

© ACT/NCA/Arne Grieg Riisnaes

LESSONS FROM
THE DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

The nature of aid modalities in the development sector is very different, with the bulk of funds going to recipient country governments who are themselves the primary authors and owners of the aid-related development agenda.[31] With the emphasis placed on country ownership, it is perhaps not surprising that accountability is seen rather differently by development actors. A 2009 ODI paper on this topic[32] noted that "as a result of the Paris and Accra declarations, over 100 countries have committed themselves to a new model of partnership, in which donors and partner countries hold one another mutually accountable for development results and aid effectiveness" – although as the authors point out, the practical implications of this have not been fully explored. The development aid effectiveness agenda, further defined in Busan in 2011, has mutual accountability of donor and recipient governments at its heart. This extends equally to fragile and conflict-affected states, as is affirmed in the 'New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States', which proposes new country-owned and -led aid modalities for the very contexts in which the bulk of international humanitarian action takes place.[33]

Given this, and the points raised above about protracted humanitarian aid, it seems time to re-visit the question of humanitarian accountability in the wider context of state accountability to its own citizens[34]. Here a good deal of work has gone into thinking about the nature of this accountability relationship, particularly with regard to the provision of services. The World

A woman stands near the destroyed Uzbek quarter in Osh, Kyrgyzstan
© Dimitry Motinov

Bank and others distinguish 'short' and 'long route' accountability,[35] and serious efforts have been made to make aid agency and government accountability mutually reinforcing. In many contexts, there is no reason in principle why such approaches should not be applied to the service-delivery role of international humanitarian organisations.

There are some suggestions that the current funding balance may shift and that perhaps crisis-affected states might themselves become 'purchasers' of the services of aid organisations.[36] In that case, organisations may find themselves acting as agents on behalf of the affected state on either a partnership or contractual basis. This would change the nature of the accountability relationship

between state, aid organisation and aid recipients. Humanitarian organisations may be uncomfortable with this – and in some contexts they would be right to be. But there is no basic contradiction here, as the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement recognises through its 'auxiliary' role, and international humanitarian action has always been based on negotiation with the authorities in question. Meanwhile, advances in the development of International Disaster Response Law hold the promise of a more clearly defined scheme of mutual responsibilities as between affected states and international organisations.[37]

---

31 / Based on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers or otherwise.

32 / Steer, L. and Wathne, C. (2007): "Mutual Accountability and Emerging Good Practice".

33 / See http://www.newdeal4peace.org/wp-content/themes/newdeal/docs/new-deal-for-engagement-in-fragile-states-en.pdf

34 / This point also extends to state accountability for the treatment of refugees and migrants.

35 / This is based on the distinction between direct ('short-route') accountability of service providers to service recipients, contrasted with indirect ('long-route') accountability via the political authorities for whom the service providers act as agents. See for example the World Bank paper cited above.

36 / See for example the 2009 challenge paper from the World Economic Global Agenda Council on Humanitarian Assistance (A new business model for humanitarian assistance?) which calls for rebalancing of funds towards prevention and recovery and substantial new investment in national and local response capacity.

37 / IFRC (2007): "Law and legal issues in international disaster response: a desk study" (http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/41194/113600-idrl-deskstudy-en.pdf). It is worth saying here that humanitarian action is often not state-avoiding as a matter of principle, but rather as a matter of established practice. Colleagues at the ICRC used to refer to a 'three-pronged approach' to working with the state: first responsibilisation, holding the duty bearer to account; second assistance, helping the duty bearer fulfil its responsibilities; third (and only third) substituting for the duty bearer in performing vital services. I think we would do well to remember this when talking about our responsibilities and our accountability.

A displaced man digs a trench to install a water distribution point in the eastern Congo village of Nzulu, which is hosting hundreds of families left homeless by war. Norwegian Church Aid, a member of Action by Churches Together, is providing safe water, latrines, and hygiene support for the displaced and residents of the host community

© Paul Jeffrey/ACT

A woman digs with a machete as she builds a temporary home in a spontaneous camp for quake survivors being established in Croix-des-Bouguets, Haiti, north of the capital Port-au-Prince. Quake survivors continue to move as aftershocks continue, and reports of aid deliveries in one camp will provoke families from other camps to migrate there

© Paul Jeffrey/ACT

WHERE DOES THE ACCOUNTABILITY AGENDA GO FROM HERE?

As I argue above, it is important not to define the humanitarian accountability agenda too narrowly in terms of aid organisations' accountability to aid recipients. While this specific agenda remains essential, and much remains to be done to achieve it, I have tried to suggest here that we risk missing some of the most fundamental accountability issues unless we locate it in a wider context. In particular this involves locating our own role in a wider sphere of responsibilities, and observing one key principle: that as aid and service providers we should as far as possible act to strengthen – and not undermine – the accountability of official duty bearers to crisis-affected communities.

So what does this mean in terms of policy and practice? First, I suggest that making aid organisations more accountable for strategic and policy decisions – rather than just programmatic or operational ones – depends on two things in particular: more clearly defined international commitments and greater transparency concerning the grounds for strategic decisions. This applies as much to UN-led coordination mechanisms like the IASC, HCTs and Clusters as it does to individual organisations. It has process implications, including transparency in communication of situational and needs analysis, better mechanisms for holding organisations to account for performance of commitments, and change in the kinds of questions that are asked by evaluations. The Transformative Agenda of the UN is partly an attempt to achieve this and deserves support; but it is only a partial answer to the question.

Second, the responsibility and accountability of official duty-bearers – notably the government and authorities of the crisis-affected state – needs to be taken more seriously by international actors. Assumptions about a lack of state capacity are often misleading, and in any case the question of capacity is distinct from that of responsibility. There is a strong case for changing over time the route by which funds are channelled, at least in the case of natural disaster responses in 'non-fragile' states, so that the affected state rather than international organisations ultimately becomes the recipient of the bulk of funds. States could thereby be held more directly responsible by affected communities for the use of aid monies received as well as for their response performance more generally. Such a shift would also require new ways of working to deal with new challenges: pre-established partnerships and tri-partite agreements (donor-agency-government) could help increase states' capabilities to manage responses and avoid the potential for bureaucratic delays; and greater efforts can and should be made to help build national and local response capacity.

Third, with regard to helping strengthen official accountability, I believe that organisations should to the extent possible – in non-conflict contexts – frame their activities in 'auxiliary' terms; that is, in terms of helping the government concerned do its job. To do otherwise is to de-link the aid agenda from political responsibilities in dangerous ways. In delivering and coordinating humanitarian assistance, organisations should always look for ways of 'binding in' government, of trying to ensure ownership by politicians and civil servants of a problem that is (formally) theirs, particularly with regard to the transition from relief to recovery. The humanitarian imperative remains, of course, the core guiding principle. But I believe this is too often used to excuse self-serving or unreflective practice by aid organisations, which need to ask where the medium and longer term interests of communities lie.

The ultimate test of any scheme of accountability is improved outcomes for crisis-affected people, and it is on this basis that any proposal should ultimately be judged. Aid organisations should be able to maintain their independence, insist on core principles of operation, and at the same time take a more realistic and politically-informed approach as to how responsibility – and hence accountability – should be properly shared. And as regards to their own accountability, all aid organisations have to recognise and take responsibility for the short and longer-term consequences of their own strategic choices. On both counts, it is time to see the accountability agenda in a wider perspective.

Tuma Galmuka Uka, 17 years old, engages in a tree planting initiative, which is part of a LWF and DCA, Folkekirkens Nødhjælp project, in Medo village, Borena, Ethiopia
© Mikkel Østergaard/DanChurchAid

2

ACCOUNTABILITY 10 YEARS IN REVIEW
HAS THE BALANCE OF POWER SHIFTED?

Jessica Alexander reports on the expansion of accountability discourse and practice within the humanitarian sector over the past 10 years. Drawing on the extensive literature on the subject, she explains how far the sector has come in being more accountable to affected populations – the progress made and challenges faced – as well as the remaining issues to tackle.

ACCOUNTABILITY
ITS ORIGINS IN THE SECTOR

As the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership celebrates its 10-year anniversary, it is an opportune time to take stock and reflect on how accountability has evolved within the humanitarian sector over the past decade.[1] Much has been accomplished during this time to enhance accountability to people affected by humanitarian crisis both in terms of policy development and field application. Since 2003, accountability has gained prominence, first in the discourse, and then in the practice of humanitarian actors, transforming from a vague concept of what seemed like 'the right thing to do' into a more concrete set of commitments towards affected populations. Today, these commitments have been acknowledged as drivers of quality programmes within the humanitarian community, from NGOs to the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, to donors and the United Nations.

Rationale

The underlying commitment to increase accountability to affected populations stems from two main rationales. First, the push for greater accountability is informed by humanitarian principles and a rights-based approach, which holds that the exercise of power without responsibility and accountability is an abuse of that power. Accountability to crisis-affected people means they can engage in decision-making processes, have greater voice and influence, and can access information, all of which helps fulfil their right to life with dignity – a fundamental human right at the heart of the international legal framework.[2]

The other main rationale for improved accountability is the argument that when programmes are accountable to aid recipients, they are ultimately of higher quality. According to the *NGOs and Humanitarian Reform* study of 2009, empirical evidence exists to show that accountability to affected populations enhances the effectiveness of response, mitigates the risk of corruption and positively impacts on people's lives.[3] A recent study carried out by Save the Children UK, Christian Aid and HAP has also found evidence of a link between effective accountability systems and improved programme quality.[4] Therefore not only is increasing accountability to affected populations considered 'the right thing to do' but there is evidence to suggest that it is a means to improving efficiency, sustainability, and to better meet the needs of those humanitarians aim to assist.

Beyond the rhetoric

Despite the advancements within the quality and accountability movement over the past ten years, humanitarian response is still faced with significant shortcomings and those who hoped that the 'accountability revolution' would be the silver bullet for the sector have been disappointed. Change has taken place, but slowly and with less visible impact than the pioneers expected. Some question the relevance of quality and accountability initiatives, pointing to the limited evidence base for their impact. Others complain that there are just too many initiatives and no incentive to comply. Finally, some point towards the very nature of emergency response and to

constraints in the humanitarian system itself – in particular with regards to funding cycles – to explain the limited change in practice. These obstacles notwithstanding, with the current efforts of HAP members to address the evidence gap, the commitment of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) to explore options for a wide ranging certification scheme, and the ambition of the Joint Standards Initiative (JSI) to provide the sector with a more coherent standards architecture, 2013 has enormous potential to further improve the humanitarian sector.

This chapter aims to document the developments and milestones that have taken place since HAP was founded in 2003 while also reflecting on shortcomings and obstacles, and offering some suggestions on ways forward. The chapter first looks at policy related developments before analysing practice, benchmark by benchmark, and concludes with reflections on achievements and the challenges that await the sector on its way to improved accountability.

A selection of relevant websites and articles written on quality and accountability over the past 30 years is available in the Resource section (from page 72).

1/ Knox-Clarke, Paul and Mitchell, John (2011): "Reflections on the accountability revolution", Humanitarian Exchange Issue 52.
2/ Borton, John (2009) "Humanitarian Accountability Report", HAP.
3/ Featherstone, Andy (2009): "Fit for the future? Strengthening the leadership pillar of humanitarian reform", NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project.
4/ Featherstone, Andy (2013): "Improving impact: do accountability mechanisms deliver results?". A joint report by Christian Aid, Save the Children, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP).

THE POLICY LANDSCAPE

WAKE UP CALL FOR THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM

Though the shift in institutional norms around accountability cannot be reduced to a single event, the Rwandan genocide was a watershed moment.[5,6,7] The failure of the international system to protect civilians launched greater scrutiny into the work of humanitarian aid organisations overall.[8,9] The shortcomings exposed in the _Joint Evaluation on Emergency Assistance to Rwanda_ (JEEAR) of 1996 – including poor coordination, low accountability to genocide survivors and aid being directed to perpetrators of violence – provided a strong impetus for the humanitarian community to professionalise its work, recognise the potential for abuse and adverse effects, and create mechanisms to promote and monitor positive outcomes. The Rwanda experience propelled NGOs and visionary individuals, with the support of donors, to move accountability beyond just a financial dimension. As a result, between 1997 and 2003, some pillars of the current quality and accountability system were launched, including the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP), People In Aid, the Sphere Project, Management Accounting for Non-Governmental Organisations (MANGO), HAP and the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative.

These developments intersected with pre-existing efforts focused on humanitarian accountability. In the late 1990s, a project had explored the feasibility of an ombudsman system for the humanitarian sector but concluded it was not a realistic approach.

Ombudsman systems, the project found, only functioned in societies with well-established public services and fair, effective and accessible judicial systems. The project was transformed into The Humanitarian Accountability Project, created to identify, test and recommend alternative approaches to accountability. After two years of field studies, pilots and research, it concluded that accountability would best be strengthened and implemented through the creation of a strong international self-regulatory body, able to insist on monitoring and compliance while providing strategic and technical support to member organisations. This recommendation was endorsed by the Chief Executive Officers of fourteen humanitarian organisations in January 2003. Two months later, HAP was formally registered as an association in Geneva.

> _A demand for accountability is a sign of pathology in the social system. Such a demand, each time it has occurred during the past century, has been a sign of discontent: those in charge of services are believed to be inefficient, insufficiently honest, or not self-critical_
>
> Lee J. Cronbach, 1980, _Toward Reform of Program Evaluation_

The timing was opportune. The previous year, another report had shocked the public and the humanitarian sector when Save the Children UK and UNHCR reported sexual exploitation and abuse of disaster-affected people by aid workers and peacekeepers in several West African countries.[10] The ensuing scandal highlighted the dramatic imbalance of power between aid workers and crisis-affected populations, and the resultant potential for humanitarian workers to engage in extreme abuses of power and egregious behaviour. As with Rwanda, the humanitarian sector formally acknowledged its need to guarantee improved accountability to crisis-affected populations, and numerous efforts were initiated to address this gap and realign the aid system. Two of the principal responses were the development of Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, and the establishment in 2004 of the Building Safer Organisations initiative (BSO). Hosted by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and subsequently by HAP, BSO's aim was to develop capacity within the humanitarian system at large to investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.[11]

More recently, accountability is back at the forefront of the humanitarian policy agenda. Discussions in the development sector about aid effectiveness have crossed into the humanitarian sphere, with demands

5/ Borton, J., Hallam, A., and Brusset, E. (1996): "Humanitarian Aid and Effects, Study III, International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience".
6/ Dabelstein, N. (1996): "Evaluating the international humanitarian system: rationale, process and management of the joint evaluation of the international response to the Rwanda genocide", Disasters, Vol. 20, No. 4.
7/ de Waal, A., Omaar, R. (1995): "The genocide in Rwanda and the international response", Current History, Vol. 94, No. 591, p.156-161.
8/ Donini, A. and Niland, N. (1994): "Rwanda: Lessons Learned, A Report on the Coordination of Humanitarian Activities".
9/ Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda (1996): "The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience: Synthesis Report".
10/ Naik, Asmita (2002): "Protecting Children from the Protectors: Lessons from West Africa", Forced Migration Review.
11/ InterAction (2007): "The Latest Issues and Trends in International Development and Humanitarian Assistance: NGO Accountability", Monday Developments, Vol. 25, No. 12.

A community health worker for Oganizasyon Sante Popilè (OSAPO), speaks to residents of Montrouis, Haiti, about steps they can take to prevent the spread of cholera, which appeared on the quake-ravaged Caribbean island nation in late 2010. OSAPO's work is supported by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and the Lutheran World Federation, both members of the ACT Alliance

© Paul Jeffrey/ACT

Agencies used to be scared of accountability, but they aren't anymore. There is a broad interest in finding ways to do it well. It would be rare to show up at an emergency today and not see some form of accountability in action

Andy Featherstone, author of "Improving Impact: Do Accountability Mechanisms Deliver Results?"

to demonstrate 'value for money,' something made even more pressing by the global financial crisis. Alongside the growing concern about value for money there is also a resurgence of interest in demonstrating results and impact.[12] This has been accompanied by questions about how well the humanitarian sector learns from its mistakes: although the sector is certainly not short of evaluations – there are over 1200 reports in ALNAP's Evaluative Reports Database (ERD), many of which are based on ALNAP's landmark methodology[13] – experience shows that lessons are more often 'identified' rather than 'learned.'

PUBLIC RESPONSE FROM UN OFFICIALS ON ACCOUNTABILITY

■ "Our ultimate accountability as humanitarians is to the people we serve. And we must serve them as people, in a manner that affirms individual dignity [...] 'accountability' must manifest itself in results on the ground that protect and improve the basic quality of life for those at risk from conflict or disasters." Jan Egeland, Emergency Relief Coordinator, Humanitarian Exchange, 2005

■ The UN system of funds, programmes and specialized agencies must all be clearly accountable "to both their governing bodies and the people they serve." Kofi Annan, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development*, *Security and Human Rights for All*, 2005

■ "Let's not forget that refugees and other persons of our concern come – always – first. Everything else should be a function of that [...] Accountability takes many forms, but our first responsibility is of course to the refugees, stateless, and internally displaced persons we are charged with caring for and protecting." Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2005.

12/ Knox-Clarke, P. and Mitchell, J. (2011): "Reflections on the accountability revolution", Humanitarian Exchange Number 52.
13/ ALNAP (2006): "Evaluating Humanitarian Action Using the OECD-DAC Criteria".
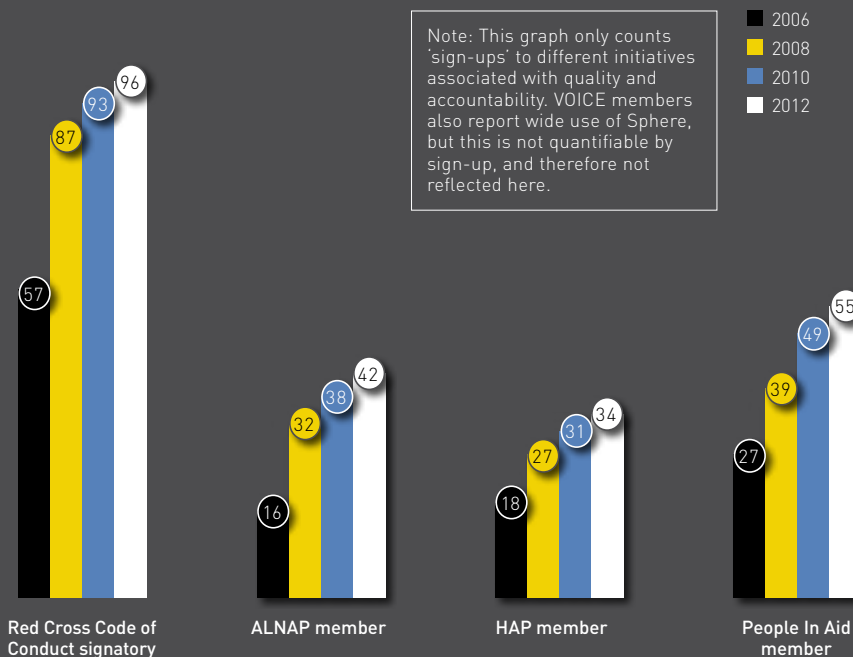
10 years later

Progress to date

As the demand for greater accountability has grown, so too has the commitment of humanitarian actors to improve their practice. VOICE, a network representing 82 European NGOs active in humanitarian aid worldwide, has tracked its members' involvement in accountability initiatives – ALNAP, HAP, and People in Aid – from 2006 to 2012 and has seen a notable increase over the years.

The 2010 ALNAP *State of the Humanitarian System* report and results from the annual HAP Accountability Perceptions Survey both demonstrate that humanitarian organisations have made progress towards greater accountability to the people they aim to assist, although ALNAP describes progress as 'patchy,' and the results are based on perceptions, which are only indicative of reality. Nevertheless, the Accountability Perceptions Survey showed that the level of perceived accountability towards all 'assisted populations' has increased over the last 8 years, as shown in graph B. In particular, the results highlight that while accountability to donors remained high, perceived accountability to affected populations has increased significantly between 2005 and 2012.

GRAPH

A

VOICE MEMBERS INVOLVEMENT IN Q&A

Note: This graph only counts 'sign-ups' to different initiatives associated with quality and accountability. VOICE members also report wide use of Sphere, but this is not quantifiable by sign-up, and therefore not reflected here.

■ 2006
■ 2008
■ 2010
□ 2012

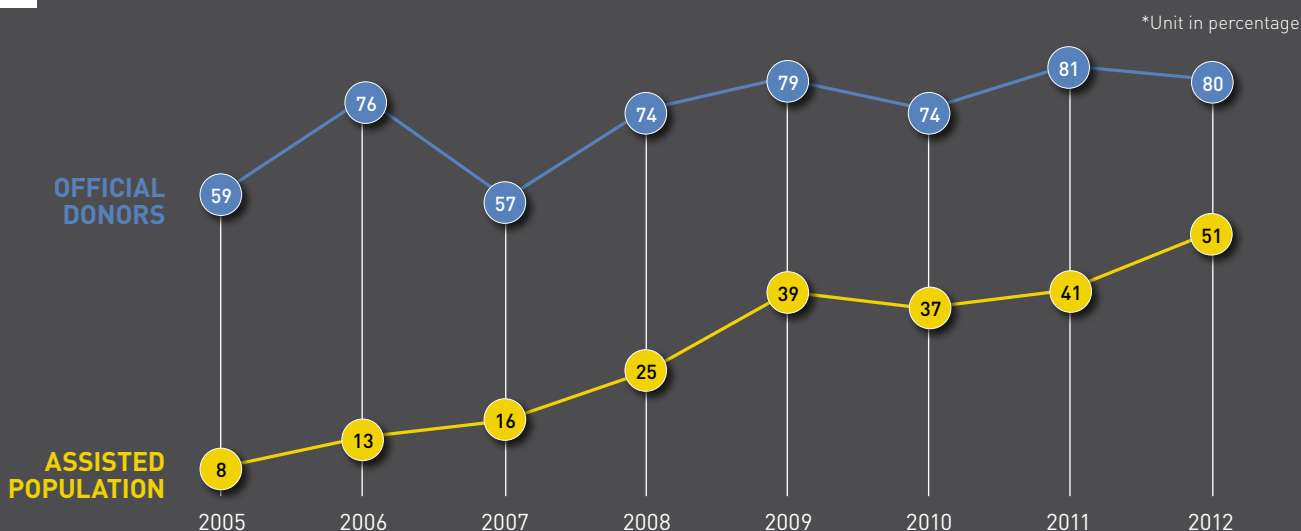|	2006	2008	2010	2012
Red Cross Code of Conduct signatory	57	87	93	96
ALNAP member	16	32	38	42
HAP member	18	27	31	34
People In Aid member	27	39	49	55

The annual HAP perception survey

The "Perceptions of Accountability in Humanitarian Action" survey, the only one of its kind in the aid sector, is a tool designed by HAP to monitor the evolution of perceptions regarding the accountability to affected populations of humanitarian and development aid organisations. The surveys have been conducted since 2005 and been answered by almost 4,000 humanitarian professionals in total. Though only indicative of a trend in the sector due to changing sample, the survey gives a sense of how perceptions of accountability have changed over the years.

Number of respondents per year: 2012 (509); 2011 (756); 2010 (781); 2009 (377); 2008 (658); 2007 (291); 2006 (165); 2005 (320); Total (3857)

GRAPH

B

EVOLUTION OF THE SHARE OF RESPONDENTS WHO PERCEIVED A HIGH LEVEL OF ACCOUNTABILITY TO ASSISTED POPULATIONS AND TO OFFICIAL DONORS

*Unit in percentage

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
OFFICIAL DONORS	59	76	57	74	79	74	81	80
ASSISTED POPULATION	8	13	16	25	39	37	41	51

Graph based on data from the HAP Perceptions of Accountability in Humanitarian Action Survey

The increased prevalence of policy discussions around accountability and the popularity of quality and accountability initiatives does not guarantee immediate results, as findings from responses to major crises of the past decade have demonstrated. The past ten years have also seen a dramatic increase in media coverage of natural disasters and conflicts, placing humanitarian work under increasing levels of global scrutiny. Media criticism of large-scale humanitarian responses has prompted demands for greater oversight within the sector. For example, after the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, the *New York Times* drew attention to humanitarian organisations for doing more harm than good during the highly funded and widely publicised response.[14] Similar remarks were aimed at the responses to the 2007 earthquake in Pakistan or the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. In all cases, the magnitude of the crises and the highly public media coverage exposed the inability of the system to work under certain circumstances, and highlighted the need for improvement.

An 'accountability revolution'?

An entire industry has developed to service the call for greater humanitarian accountability. Certification and rating systems, transparency schemes, evaluation techniques and audit schemes have multiplied. The expansion has been so prolific that it has been called an "accountability revolution"[15,16] and the trend has gained considerable momentum, to the extent that it is now considered a well-established approach to improving humanitarian action.[17] Looking only at initiatives

and documents, it certainly looks that way. But does everyone agree on what accountability means and what it is meant to achieve in practice?

Defining and unpacking accountability

Although there are many definitions of accountability, one that is more specific to crisis-affected communities says that "accountability is the responsible use of power,"[18] highlighting the imbalance between aid organisations and local communities in the context of natural disaster and crisis. A key achievement of the 2007 *HAP Standard*, and also of ECB's 2007 *Good Enough Guide For Impact Measurement And Accountability In Emergencies*, was to unpack accountability by defining benchmarks and commitments respectively. In 2012 the IASC adopted similar commitments, thereby further reinforcing the coherence around what the sector understands by accountability to affected populations. As can be seen in Table A, these benchmarks and commitments are hardly ground-breaking or controversial.

Despite this, many point out that the multiple definitions of accountability make it difficult to know how to implement it and what success looks like. As one interviewee put it, "accountability has now become part of our day-to-day jargon, but that's a disadvantage in many ways. Once you start asking staff from humanitarian agencies what they understand by accountability you quickly discover that comprehension varies a lot depending on who you are talking to."[19]

As recently as 2010, a Peer Review of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR)[20] came to the conclusion that "staff across all the organisations called for a more precise discourse on accountability to disaster-affected persons, unpacking the term and using explicitly the specific component elements that 'accountability' implies."[21]

This issue is critical because, as Paul Knox-Clarke and John Mitchell of ALNAP explain: "For the humanitarian system to be accountable everyone within that system must have a common understanding of what accountability to affected populations means. This requires a common understanding and set of commitments, as well as a practical way to take these commitments forward. Such commitments would provide [...] coherence and a clear understanding of what accountability to affected populations really means." [22] Statements such as these indicate that while accountability is much discussed, further action is needed to demystify what best practice actually is, and then communicate this.

---

14 /Wright, Tom (2005): "UN Failed to Coordinate Tsunami Relief, Red Cross Report Says", NY Times, October 2005; and Rosenberg, Tina (2013): "When Food Isn't the Answer to Hunger", NY Times, April 2013.
15 / Davis A. (2007): "Concerning accountability of humanitarian action", Humanitarian Practice Network, Paper No. 58.
16 / Andy Featherstone, interview.
17 / Borton J., Hallam A., Brusset E. (1996): "Humanitarian Aid and Effects. International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience".
18 / HAP definition.
19 / Jock Baker, interview.
20 / More information at www.schr.info
21 / SCHR (2010): "SCHR Peer Review on Accountability to Disaster-Affected Populations: An Overview of Lessons Learned".
22 / Knox-Clarke, P. & Mitchell, J.(2011): "Reflections on the accountability revolution", Humanitarian Exchange Number 52.

THREE PERSPECTIVES ON ACCOUNTABILITY

HAP first published its Standard in 2007, and revised it in 2010[A] to reflect the learning that took place in the first three years it was used by its members. The Standard comprises six benchmarks. The Emergency Capacity Building Project's five key elements of accountability[B] were formalised in their current form in 2010, and are mirrored by the IASC Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations adopted[C] in 2011. While the terminology referring to the different benchmarks and commitments differs, the requirements behind them are very similar and offer a common framework for the sector.

2010 HAP Standard benchmarks	Elements of accountability (ECB)	Commitments on accountability to affected populations (IASC)
BENCHMARK 1 Establishing and delivering on commitments	Leadership / governance:	Leadership / governance
The organisation sets out the commitments that it will be held accountable for, and how they will be delivered.	The extent to which leaders and managers in agencies articulate what accountability means to them and to the organisation; the extent to which policy and practice is explicit about expectations around accountability and the extent to which accountability is modelled and demonstrably valued by leaders and managers.	Leaders and managers demonstrate their commitment to accountability to affected populations by ensuring feedback and accountability mechanisms are integrated into country strategies, programme proposals, monitoring and evaluations, recruitment, staff inductions, trainings and performance management, partnership agreements, and highlighted in reporting.
BENCHMARK 2 Staff competency		
The organisation ensures that staff have competencies that enable them to meet the organisation's commitments.		
BENCHMARK 3 Sharing information	Transparency	Transparency
The organisation ensures that the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders have access to timely, relevant and clear information about the organisation and its activities.	The provision of accessible and timely information to stakeholders and the opening up of organisational procedures, structures and processes that affect them. To be transparent an organisation needs to do more than disclose standardised information. It also needs to provide stakeholders with the information they require to make informed decisions and choices. In this way transparency is more than just a one-way flow of information; it is an on-going dialogue between an organisation and its stakeholders over information provision.	Provide accessible and timely information to affected populations on organisational procedures, structures and processes that affect them to ensure that they can make informed decisions and choices, and facilitate a dialogue between an organisation and its affected populations over information provision.

2010 HAP Standard benchmarks	Elements of accountability (ECB)	Commitments on accountability to affected populations (IASC)
BENCHMARK 4 Handling complaints	Feedback (a subset of which is dealing with complaints)	Feedback and complaints
The organisation enables the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders to raise complaints and receive a response through an effective, accessible and safe process.	The systems, processes, attitudes and behaviours through which an organisation can truly listen to its stakeholders. Feedback is an essential part of the above three dimensions and essential for organisations to understand whether they are meeting the agreed needs / wishes or wants of their stakeholders. An organisation that actively seeks to improve policy and practice on the above three dimensions will decrease, significantly, the number of complaints it receives. Organisations should ensure that they have feedback mechanisms in place throughout their programmes, and that these are robust enough to support complaints about breaches in policy and stakeholder dissatisfaction. Oversight of these mechanisms allows the study of trends and/or areas of concern that will then allow appropriate corrective 'corporate' action to be triggered.	Actively seek the views of affected populations to improve policy and practice in programming, ensuring that feedback and complaints mechanisms are streamlined, appropriate and robust enough to deal with (communicate, receive, process, respond to and learn from) complaints about breaches in policy and stakeholder dissatisfaction.
BENCHMARK 5 Participation	Participation	Participation
The organisation listens to the people it aims to assist, incorporating their views and analysis in programme decisions.	The process by which an organisation enables key stakeholders to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them. It is unrealistic to expect an organisation to engage with all stakeholders over all decisions all of the time. Therefore the organisation must have clear guidelines (and practices) enabling it to prioritise stakeholders appropriately and to be responsive to the differences in power between them. In particular, mechanisms need to be in place to ensure that the most marginalised and affected are represented and have influence.	Enable affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them through the establishment of clear guidelines and practices to engage them appropriately and ensure that the most marginalised and affected are represented and have influence.
BENCHMARK 6 Learning and continual improvement	Design, monitoring and evaluation	Design, monitoring and evaluation
The organisation learns from experience to continually improve its performance.	Encompasses the processes through which an organisation, with involvement from key stakeholders, monitors and reviews its progress and results against goals and objectives; feeds learning back into the organisation on an on-going basis; and reports on the results of the process. To increase accountability to stakeholders, goals and objectives must be designed in consultation with those stakeholders.	Design, monitor and evaluate the goals and objectives of programmes with the involvement of affected populations, feeding learning back into the organisation on an on-going basis and reporting on the results of the process.

Too much of a good thing?

Is the sheer number of accountability initiatives, standards, guidelines and frameworks part of the problem? Many humanitarians – and particularly those working at the field level – say they are confused by the variety of approaches.[23] As the 2009 HAR reported: "New initiatives seem to be established with little apparent reference to, or coordination with, existing initiatives and programmes. Similarly, existing initiatives are being carried forward by different groups of actors often in parallel to, and with limited engagement with, initiatives that are quite closely related. Given the apparently high level of activity and effort underway, it is legitimate to ask what factors may be contributing to the 'disjointedness' and what steps might be considered for improving the situation."[24] It can be argued that a lack of communication within organisations and, sometimes, poor coordination between organisations has resulted in weak synergies. Yet the multiplication of new initiatives can also be a benefit. Competition triggers innovation and pushes everyone to perform at their best. It also provides a wider diversity of approaches, better able to fit the needs and sensitivities of aid organisations and the different contexts in which they operate.

GRAPH

C   EVOLUTION OF Q&A INITIATIVES AND INSTRUMENTS

■ Initiatives
■ Standards & guidelines
■ Codes of conduct & charters
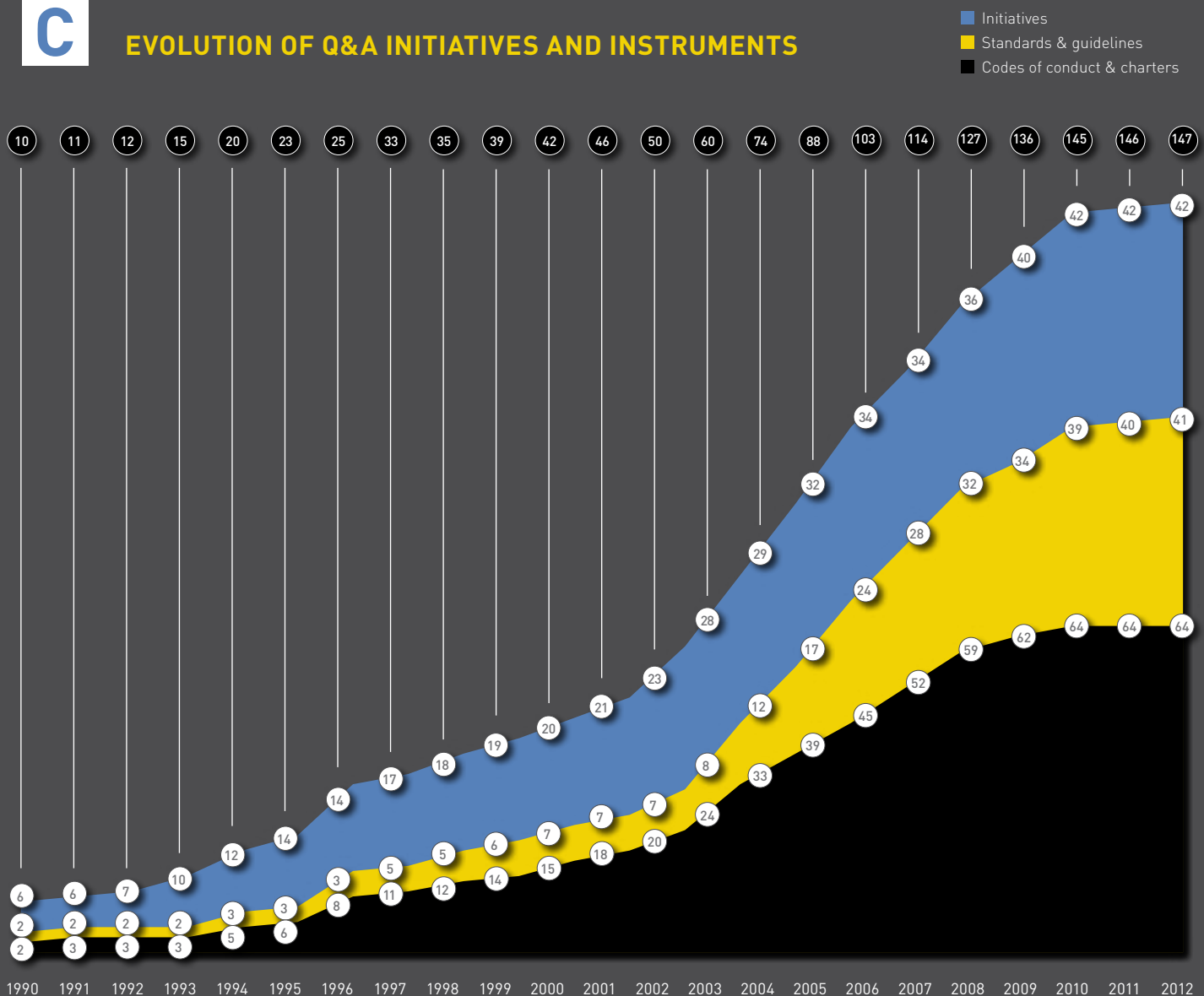
For the complete data from which this graph was derived, visit www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/total-number-of-q&a-initiatives-per-year.xlsx

23/ Knox-Clarke, P. and Mitchell, J. (2011): "Reflections on the accountability revolution", Humanitarian Exchange Number 52.
24/ Borton, John (2009): "Humanitarian Accountability Report", HAP.

POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

The accountability movement is situated within a decade of evolving policies and approaches to humanitarian work. In March 2005, the Paris Declaration was signed by over 100 countries and organisations. The declaration identified five fundamental principles for improving aid effectiveness: ownership, alignment, harmonisation, results, and mutual accountability.[25] Although the Paris Declaration and subsequent Accra Agenda for Action pertained more to development than humanitarian interventions, this was an important advance in acknowledging the link between improved aid effectiveness and accountability.

Accountability has featured prominently in publications over the past few years. In 2011, The Humanitarian Practice Network dedicated an entire issue of its *Humanitarian Exchange Magazine* to it. *Monday Developments*, InterAction's magazine, also had a full issue devoted to accountability in 2007, and VOICE also examined quality and accountability in one of its monthly newsletters, VOICE Out Loud, in October 2012. In addition, many academic institutions are studying accountability and its application in the humanitarian and development spheres. These include the Institute for Development Studies,[26] the Overseas Development Institute,[27] the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative[28] and the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University.[29]
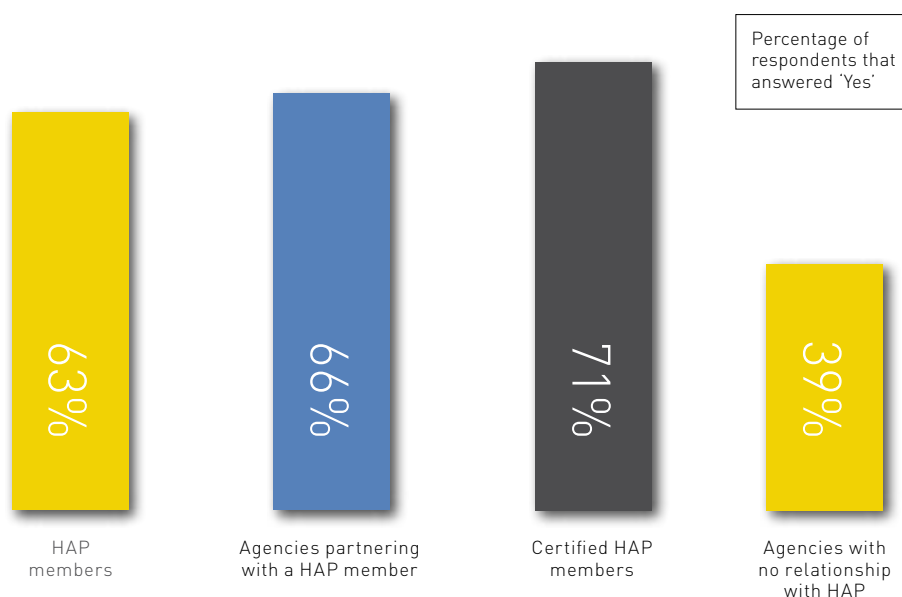
Accountability and the UN

Humanitarian reform

In 2005, the UN introduced the Humanitarian Reform Process to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response through greater predictability, accountability,

D DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR ORGANISATION IS DOING ENOUGH TO ENSURE HUMANITARIAN ACCOUNTABILITY?

Percentage of respondents that answered 'Yes'

63%	66%	71%	39%
HAP members	Agencies partnering with a HAP member	Certified HAP members	Agencies with no relationship with HAP

Graph based on data from the HAP Perceptions of Accountability in Humanitarian Action Survey, 2012

responsibility and partnership. Explicit reference to accountability to affected populations was not included in this policy; it focused more on accountability between cluster agencies (both within the cluster and among cluster lead agencies) and to host governments.

A year later the IASC Interim Self-Assessment of the Implementation of the Cluster Approach acknowledged this gap, stating that "there is concern among field staff that more needs to be done to ensure greater accountability to recipients of assistance and that this has not been adequately addressed within the cluster approach, to date."[30] This sentiment was reiterated in the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform study of 2009, which strongly criticised the humanitarian reform process for the limited attention given to accountability to affected populations.

The second IASC cluster evaluation in April 2010 found little evidence

of clusters actively promoting participatory or community-based approaches among their members. The review also found that clusters had not "been active or effective in strengthening participatory approaches, either by promoting participatory or community based approaches among their members, or through including affected populations in their own activities,"[31] and that most clusters failed to communicate their work effectively.

One year after the evaluation findings, the 76th IASC Working Group meeting in New York included a session on accountability to affected populations and concluded that "all IASC organisations, Clusters and IASC subsidiary bodies should give priority to exploring accountability to affected populations in their guidance and practice, in particular through better information sharing, increased participation and feedback complaints mechanisms."[32]

25/ The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008).

26/ Publications include: Newell, P. & Bellour, S. (2002): "Mapping Accountability: Origins, contexts and implications for development", IDS Working Paper 168; Newell, P. & Wheeler, Joanna (2006): "Making Accountability Count", IDS Working Paper; Eyben, R. (2008): "Power, Mutual Accountability and Responsibility in the Practice of International Aid: A Relational Approach".

27/ Publications include: Davis, A. (2007): "Concerning Accountability of Humanitarian Action", Humanitarian Policy Network Paper 58.

28/ HHI has been conducting research specifically on quantitative indicators and impact of humanitarian accountability. A formal research collaboration between the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), has been created.

29/ The Feinstein International Center is pursuing three critical lines of applied research. First to understand the role of empirical evidence in driving humanitarian assistance programming including researching how institutions evolve and adapt and how to promote better accountability and professional competency in the humanitarian field.

30/ IASC (2006): "IASC Interim Self-Assessment of Implementation of the Cluster Approach in the Field".

31/ Steets, Julia, François Grünewald, Andrea Binder, Véronique de Geoffroy et al. (2010): "Cluster Approach Evaluation: Synthesis Report".

32/ Borton, John (2010): "Humanitarian Accountability Report", HAP.

Transformative Agenda

The Transformative Agenda is broadly seen as the successor to the Humanitarian Reform process. In 2011, the IASC Principals adopted the five Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations (CAAP) as part of this agenda, and an Operational Framework developed by the Sub-Working Group on Accountability to Affected Populations. The Operational Framework is aimed at field practitioners and structured around different phases of the programme cycle. It provides guidance to improve participation, information provision, and handling feedback and complaints from crisis-affected people.[33]

The Sub-Working Group also developed a set of tools to assist organisations in meeting their AAP commitments[34] based on HAP, the Sphere Core Standards, the People In Aid code, the Do No Harm framework and the ECB *Good Enough Guide*. The CAAP and the tools go a long way in articulating a shared vision of what an accountable humanitarian system would look like. However, despite this rhetoric at policy and global level, effective communication is lacking, the roll out is slow and few UN staff have noted change in UN action or even heard of these policies at field level. As one interviewee close to the development of the tools said: "It's a positive step, but it hasn't been disseminated at all. If you go to the field, I would wager 99% of field staff haven't heard of it. So it's still a rhetorical instrument."[35]

NGOs and accountability

NGO legitimacy in question

As a de-facto partner in the establishment of global norms and standards, negotiating, influencing and proposing policy solutions to major international crises, NGOs wield significant power.[36] At the national level, many social services that traditionally were in the purview of government are today delivered through NGOs. In recent years, however, the legitimacy of NGOs has been challenged by the media and the general public, and questions about NGO effectiveness and appropriateness as social service providers have called into question their levels of accountability.[37] There has been increasing pressure on NGOs to provide evidence that they are having a positive impact and are effectively representing those they claim to support.[38]

In response to these concerns, a number of watchdog organisations have arisen to monitor the work of NGOs. These include NGO Watch, NGO Monitor (on the Arab-Israeli conflict specifically), Accountability Alert (in Sierra Leone), as well as rating systems such as Charity Navigator, Charity Watch, Guidestar, Philanthropedia and GiveWell. These have attempted to promote greater financial transparency within the NGO community. Charity Navigator is rolling out a Results Reporting dimension (referred to as Charity Navigator 3.0) which among other aspects, includes 'constituent voice' as one of the criteria by which agencies are rated. It will assess whether and how well a charity collects and publishes feedback from its primary constituents.[39] Although at the time of writing this has not been fully implemented, this initiative has the potential to push organisations to gather feedback from communities, use it to inform their programming and openly share it.

An array of approaches

Amidst this climate, NGOs have made strides in advancing accountability to disaster-affected populations. In the past decade, they have become more professionalised and instituted a multitude of tools, mechanisms, and standards to provide principled and effective aid. Many large international NGOs have adopted accountability frameworks, implemented information sharing practices, participatory methods, and complaints and feedback mechanisms. Some have had greater success than others, and a body of literature capturing NGO lessons and experiences implementing accountability mechanisms is featured on HAP's and ALNAP's websites. An analysis of these reports shows that there have been many perceived benefits of accountability including increased sustainability, empowerment, efficiency through better targeting, staff security, recipient satisfaction and ownership, reduced corruption, and improved organisation-recipient relations. However, with the exception of a few studies such as the Save the Children, Christian Aid and HAP research on the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms, the evidence linking accountability and quality of response is still minimal.

Donor policy

Balancing accountabilities

Traditionally, accountability has meant accounting for funding to donors. However, donors are increasingly supportive of mechanisms that seek input from crisis-affected people. Many have instituted funding policies that prioritise accountability to affected populations and request evidence of participation in project reports. Major donors such as OFDA, ECHO and DFID all have clear policy links between humanitarian intervention and accountability to affected populations, which frequently refer to participation as part of the means to achieve these objectives.[40]

Although donor rhetoric has changed for the better, it remains to be seen how much these policies are influencing organisations' behaviour and how these statements have

---

33 / IASC: "Key Messages: IASC Transformative Agenda".

34 / The tool was developed by FAO in consultation with the IASC Sub Group on Accountability to Affected Populations and with the input of participating quality and accountability initiatives and humanitarian agencies. For more details see

35 / Zia Choudhury, interview

36 / Jordan, Lisa (2005): "Mechanisms for NGO Accountability", GPPI Research Paper Series No. 3.

37 / Ibid.

38 / Lloyd, Robert and de las Casas, Lucy (2005): "NGO self-regulation: enforcing and balancing accountability".

39 / Charity Navigator (2013): "Results Reporting Concept Note: The Third Dimension of Intelligent Giving".

made any contribution to altering the uneven power structure within the aid industry. One donor initiative put into practice is the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)'s five-year partnership with Transparency International Pakistan (TIP) to establish an "Anti-Fraud Hotline" project to ensure transparency and the prevention of corruption in projects. Other donors such as DFID are conducting their own research on the effectiveness of complaints handling. The 2012 Review of Existing Practices to Ensure Participation of Disaster-Affected Communities in Humanitarian Aid Operations reported a number of examples of donors supporting an increasing diversity of initiatives that focus on different elements of participation. These included:

- DFID: Support to information and feedback work by CDAC and Infoasaid, a Danish Refugee Council (DRC) mobile phone aid recipient feedback project in Somalia

- OFDA: Capacity building for preparedness of Tearfund's local partners

- DG ECHO: Capacity building in the Global WASH Cluster which includes participation, pre-disaster and needs surveillance/contingency planning in Afghanistan [41]

While donors have improved policy, in practice, humanitarian staff often cite time consuming reporting requirements, financing constraints and tight deadlines for proposal submissions as factors which hinder participation
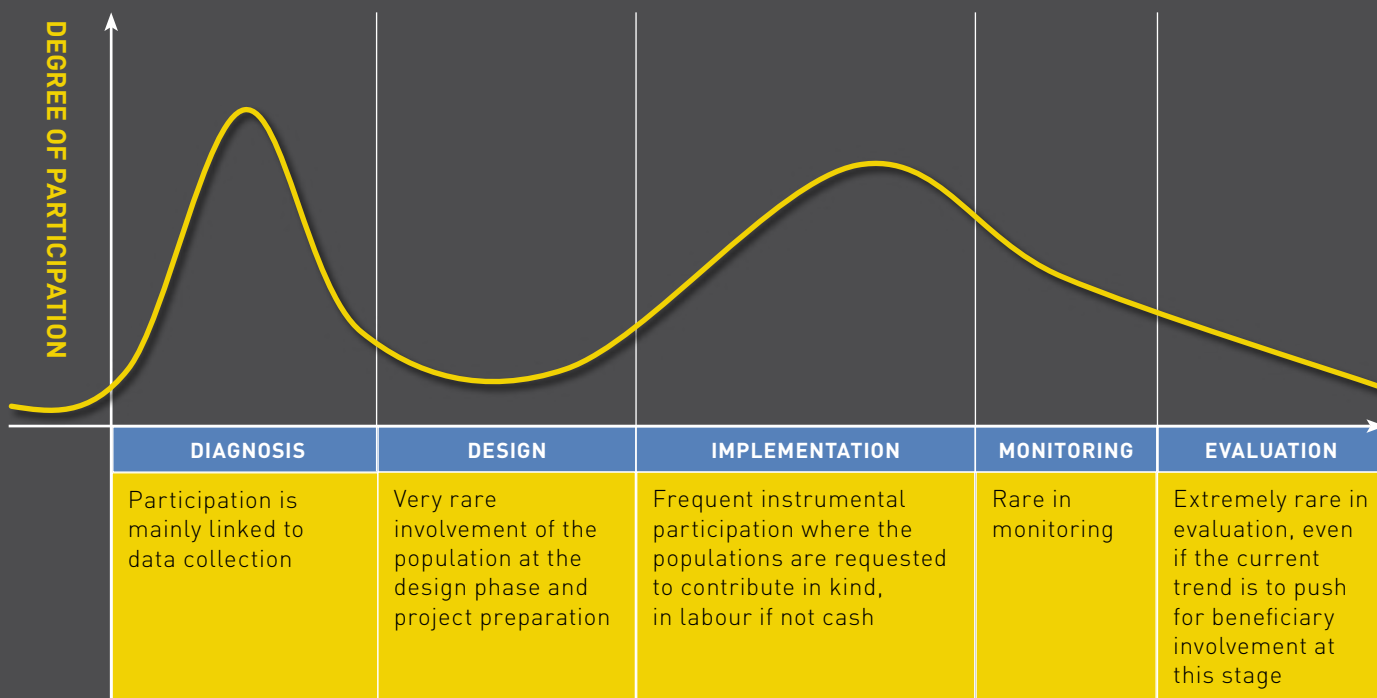
of affected populations.[42] While some donors have incorporated flexibility of grants into their funding approaches, it is not always easy for agencies to be able to enact programme changes that may emerge as a result of consultation with affected communities. This requires a good relationship with the donor, and to some extent depends on the level of risk that the donor is prepared to take in the initial stages of a proposal or programme.[43]

Donor commitments

There have been a number of initiatives over the past decade to create greater donor accountability towards aid recipients. In 2003, the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) meeting resulted in 23 Principles of Good Practice.

GRAPH

E

PARTICIPATION AND THE PROJECT CYCLE

DEGREE OF PARTICIPATION

DIAGNOSIS	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION	MONITORING	EVALUATION
Participation is mainly linked to data collection	Very rare involvement of the population at the design phase and project preparation	Frequent instrumental participation where the populations are requested to contribute in kind, in labour if not cash	Rare in monitoring	Extremely rare in evaluation, even if the current trend is to push for beneficiary involvement at this stage

Graph adapted from Grünewald, F., and de Geoffroy, V. 'Principle 7 of the Humanitarian Donorship Initiative,' Groupe URD, 2008

40/ Barry, N & Barham, J (2012) Review of existing practices to ensure participation of disaster affected communities in humanitarian aid operations
41/ Ibid.
42/ Ibid.
43/ Ibid.

Major donor policy statements relating to accountability to affected populations

Adapted from: Barry, N & Barham, J (2012) Review of existing practices to ensure participation of disaster affected communities in humanitarian aid operations

■ **The Australian Government Overseas Aid Program's (AUSAID)** *Humanitarian Action Policy 2011* states that humanitarian assistance: "requires the active participation of people affected by disaster in order to be effective" (p. 49). The core policy outcome is one that "meets the need and is accountable to affected populations." Performance evaluation on any accountable and inclusive humanitarian action will be judged on "detailed evaluations and external reviews of individual humanitarian responses that will include questions on the extent to which affected populations and vulnerable groups were involved in planning." (p. 58) Furthermore, their policy states that "Australia supports the involvement of affected people in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian action. We recognize that the best people to determine what is needed are the affected people themselves. Implementing agencies need to provide sufficient information, use participatory methods and offer opportunities for affected people to have their complaints heard and resolved safely."

■ **The Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA)** *Guidelines for Emergency Humanitarian Assistance Project Proposals and Reports 2006* explicitly states the value of participation which, "Seeks to to significantly involve targeted, affected populations in decision making relating to needs assessment, programme design and implementation. Special measures may be needed to gain the views and perspectives of minority groups, and of women and youth given that they are often excluded from decision making forums." (p.13)

■ **Denmark's** *Strategy for Danish Humanitarian Action 2010-2015 Addressing Vulnerability, Climate Change and Protection Challenges* states: "Denmark is committed to focusing on the impact of its humanitarian action and to ensuring accountability to its stakeholders. These include in particular those affected by humanitarian action but also parliamentary and public stakeholders in Denmark, as well as other national and international partners[…] Demark will[…] help strengthen accountability towards beneficiaries." (p.35)

■ **European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO)** established conditions that NGOs must meet in order to receive funding. ECHO requires all potential partners to sign a Framework Partnership Agreement, which commits them to meeting minimum standards in their internal procedures and programming before they can apply for funding. ECHO's Single Form 29 expects a stakeholder analysis to be carried out and asks the contracted organisation to "describe to what extent and how the direct beneficiaries were involved in the design of the Action." (p 2)

■ **The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs** *Aid for People in Need: Policy Framework for Humanitarian Aid 2012* includes a section on accountability to aid recipients. "Traditionally we associate accountability primarily with donors. The Netherlands will make humanitarian organisations more accountable for their communications with aid recipients. If these organisations fail to account for themselves adequately, ultimately the Netherlands' financial contribution will be called into question." (p.12)

■ **The Swedish International Development Agency's (SIDA)** *Strategy for Humanitarian Assistance 2011-2014* has as its 7th goal the increased participation of the affected population. "To achieve this goal, support will be provided to efforts that aim to enhance the capacity of the affected population to demand accountability from local and national authorities and institutions as well as humanitarian organisations. Through agreements with partner organisations, SIDA will ensure in particular that the affected themselves – vulnerable women, men, young people, boys and girls – are, as far as possible, involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of the support they are expected to receive." (p.10)

■ **The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)** is committed to enhancing its results orientation, learning and effectiveness through more responsive and accountable programming. Encouraging a culture in which citizens participate in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and country strategies is essential for achieving these aims. SDC uses beneficiary assessment (BA), an evaluation approach used to increase its responsiveness and accountability to the citizens who are the intended direct and indirect beneficiaries of its work. The policy has three essential ingredients – participation, learning and responsiveness. Therefore, at minimum, any BA exercise must seek to better understand different groups of peoples' perspectives on programme relevance and results to learn about effectiveness. Learning should lead to responses that improve SDC's and its partners' support for citizens' development initiatives.

■ **United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID)** *Humanitarian Policy 2011* One of DFID's primary humanitarian policy goals acknowledged: "The people who are on the receiving end of our assistance are rarely, if ever, consulted on how best their needs can be met or able to choose who helps them and how […] This has long been recognised as a problem, but little has been done about it." (p.16) DFID's new Humanitarian Policy of 2011 looks to upward and downward accountability; under policy 5, point 19 they aim to: "Make beneficiary accountability a core element of DFID's humanitarian work." (p. 21) Further, DFID state that it will focus on improved evaluations that include the views of affected populations.

■ **The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)** *Field Operations Guide for Disaster Assessment and Response 2005* stresses the important role of local participation: "Shelter needs should not be derived or assumed based on damage assessments alone, but also through interaction with affected populations. Therefore, timing, participation, and needs are critical elements of any intervention." (2005 pp. iii-93) The current USAID Policy Framework (2011-2015) aims to "build in sustainability from the start" (p. IV) and "develop best practices for evaluations to assess impact and effectiveness."(p. iii). USAID also places focus on improved evaluation via a new policy that states: "Evaluation in USAID has two primary purposes: accountability to stakeholders and learning to improve effectiveness."

The principles provide both a framework to guide official humanitarian aid and a mechanism for encouraging greater donor accountability. The GHD initiative includes two principles related to participation of crisis-affected populations:

- Principle 7. Request implementing humanitarian organisations to ensure to the greatest possible extent, adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response.[44]

- Principle 8. Strengthen the capacities of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises, with the goal of ensuring that governments and local communities are better able to meet their responsibilities and co-ordinate effectively with humanitarian partners.[45]

Three years after the launch of the GHD principles, however, the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) found the international appeals system to have delivered funding that bore little correlation with real needs on the global level. The TEC reported that "most donors did little to strengthen regulation and proved lax in delivering on their GHD pledges especially with regard to promoting accountability to beneficiaries."[46]

Rating donor performance

Every year since 2007, Spain-based Development Assistance Research Associates (DARA) has published the Humanitarian Response Index (HRI). The HRI ranks donors on their performance in relation to principles and practice of the GHD, with the aim of improving the quality, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of governments' aid.

The latest report from 2012 found limited progress in consolidating good donor practices and reforming the sector.[47] The report further stated that since 2007, most donors have not significantly altered their approaches to apply good practices. It found that the current pace of reform efforts is too slow for the humanitarian sector to be able to adequately meet current needs, much less prepare for, anticipate, mitigate and respond to a trend of increasingly complex crises in the coming decade.[48]

Furthermore, the HRI's research in Colombia, Haiti, Pakistan, Somalia and Sudan in 2012 found that decisions around aid allocations were not sufficiently transparent, and that donor governments are still inconsistent in reporting assistance. The research also found that funding decisions were not guided by humanitarian objectives, and that accountability was largely perceived by donors as an exercise on fiscal management and control of the partners they fund, rather than about meeting the needs, priorities and aspirations of affected populations.[49]

Similar trends were found by another organisation monitoring donor transparency, Publish What You Fund, which was launched at the Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2008. In 2010 it published its first assessment of donor behaviour on aid transparency, the Aid Transparency Assessment, concluding that the aid information currently made available by donors is poor.[50] Two years later, the assessment (by then changed to an index) found that although aid was becoming more transparent, progress was slow and uneven.[51]

In response to donor commitments made in Accra, a group of donors launched the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). By early 2011, IATI had developed a common

standard for publishing information. The emergence of a comprehensive and workable data standard made it possible to turn rhetoric on donor transparency into reality. The IATI notes that once humanitarian funds pass from donors to their first recipients, there is little transparency about the routes through which they pass to reach affected populations. Without better information on the flow through subsequent transactions, there is little scope to assess the efficiency of the system or to meaningfully hold the chain of delivery of assistance to account. As one respondent from the Time to Listen (see section on information sharing below) consultations said: "International aid is like a large ice cube. As it gets passed through many hands, it becomes smaller. Some beneficiaries get only a few drops."[52]

From self-regulation to certification?

In response to these shifts in the policy environment, there has been a corresponding growth in codes, standards and self-regulatory mechanisms that aim to verify the quality of humanitarian assistance. HAP and People in Aid are the most recognised at an international level. Other initiatives specifically address accountability to affected populations at a more local level. For example, the NGO Code of Conduct for Ethiopia and the NGO Code of Conduct for Afghanistan both state that accountability to crisis-affected people means involving them at all stages of a decision-making process, from design to implementation to evaluation.[53] Other codes such as the Nigerian Code of Conduct go even further, identifying the need for greater transparency to affected populations, and the importance of having complaints mechanisms through which concerns can be

---

44/ For more details, see Groupe URD (2008): "Principle of Good Humanitarian Donorship: A Policy Paper".

45/ Good Humanitarian Donorship (2003): "23 Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship".

46/ Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (2007): "Synthesis Report, Expanded Summary: Joint evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami".

47/ DARA (2011): "DARA/HRI Executive Summary/Summary of Key Findings".

48/ Ibid.

49/ Ibid.

50/ Publish What You Fund (2010): "Aid Transparency Asssessment".

51/ Publish What You Fund (2012): "Aid Transparency Index". http://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/index/2012-index/executive-summary

52/ Anderson, Mary B., Danya Brown, Isabella Jean (2012): "Time to Listen", p. 44.

53/ de las Casas, Lucy and Robert Lloyd (2005): "NGO self-regulation: enforcing and balancing accountability".

raised and addressed.[54] The Pakistan NGO Forum Code of Conduct even goes so far as to commit NGOs to communicate financial information in a way that is accessible and intelligible to the people they aim to assist.[55]

However, some have questioned whether accountability can truly be achieved through self-regulation and what has been achieved by these initiatives. As one interviewee stated, "A key challenge is that Self Regulatory Initiatives claim improved efficiency, effectiveness, and stakeholder satisfaction, and there are plenty of case studies that show that they do just that. However, I think in terms of moving forward, we need to better understand what and how SRIs achieve, before we try to create new initiatives and ask CSOs to invest more time and money meeting their standards."[56]

In 2010, shortcomings of the large-scale humanitarian interventions in response to the Haiti earthquake and the Pakistan floods resulted in calls for more rigorous certification within the humanitarian sector. The main argument behind this is that self regulation doesn't go far enough and that certification would ultimately improve the quality of humanitarian response. Opponents to certification believe it would add another bureaucratic layer and inhibit innovation. Given the wide range of humanitarian actors, they say, a one-size-fits all approach is not realistic.[57] Furthermore, certification systems may be unaffordable for small NGOs with limited resources, and create a barrier to entry. Finally they point out the lack of hard evidence demonstrating certification systems improve quality of aid delivery.[58]

SCHR certification project

Recognising these deficits in 2012 the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR)[59] launched a two-year certification project to explore

the viability of a certification scheme for humanitarian organisations. The project, which commits to build on the experience of HAP and the outcome of the Joint Standards Initiative, aims to identify the realistic components of a certification system and then pilot and test these different options. The ultimate objective of the certification system is to demonstrate which organisations are credible, reliable and trustworthy partners, committed to effectively meeting current and future humanitarian needs.[60]

This is particularly important given the emergence of multiple new actors in the humanitarian sphere, many with little or no knowledge of humanitarian principles or experience in humanitarian crises.[61] In addition, the involvement of the military – particularly the militarization of UN peacekeeping operations in Somalia, DRC and Mali – and private contractors in humanitarian operations has contributed to an erosion of 'humanitarian space' in some situations. The growing numbers of new and existing actors on the humanitarian stage, especially in

large-scale disasters, also poses a challenge to effective coordination and equitable distribution of assistance. John Holmes, the former Emergency Relief Coordinator, noted this after the Haiti earthquake response, stating: "The influx of many hundreds of humanitarian organisations, many of whom, while well-meaning, were not necessarily professional and well-informed in their approach, posed a huge challenge to coherence. A new system of certification of capacity and experience needs to be looked at."[62]

Although there are still many issues to resolve and many challenges in potentially undertaking a humanitarian-wide certification scheme, the mere fact that the weaknesses in the humanitarian sector are being publically noted and efforts are being made to find solutions to address them is a positive development. The results of the SCHR certification project will provide further insight into whether an independent certification system for the sector can ensure that aid efforts meet minimum requirements for quality, effectiveness and accountability.

International agencies can give information to the people and tell the whole village so all the people will have the information about the projects and budget. When so many people know the project, no one can manipulate it or do corruption. The information is open to everyone

Anderson, Mary B., Brown, D., Jean, I., 2013, *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid* CDA Collaborative Learning Projects

---

54/ Ibid.
55/ Ibid
56/ Christina Laybourn, interview
57/ Antoine-Hoffman, Charles (2011): "NGO Certification: Time to Bite the Bullet?", Humanitarian Practice Network Issue 52.
58/ Ibid.
59/ The SCHR is an alliance of nine of the world's leading humanitarian organisations. Members include: Care International, Caritas Internationalis, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Lutheran World Federation, Oxfam International, Save the Children, ACT Alliance, and World Vision International.
60/ SCHR (2013): "Overview of the SCHR Certification Project".
61/ Ibid.
62/ Holmes, John (2010): "Learning the lessons of Haiti".

ACCOUNTABILITY
IN ACTION

This section examines the progress made around accountability in light of practical tools and action. It is organised around the HAP benchmarks and provides a synopsis of the developments for each.

BENCHMARK 1: Establishing and delivering on commitments
The organisation sets out the commitments that it will be held accountable for, and how they will be delivered

BENCHMARK 2: Staff competency
The organisation ensures that staff have competencies that enable them to meet the organisation's commitments

BENCHMARK 3: Sharing information
The organisation ensures that the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders have access to timely, relevant and clear information about the organisation and its activities

BENCHMARK 4: Participation
The organisation listens to the people it aims to assist, incorporating their views and analysis in programme decisions

BENCHMARK 5: Handling complaints
The organisation enables the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders to raise complaints and receive a response through an effective, accessible and safe process

BENCHMARK 6: Learning and continual improvement
The organisation learns from experience to continually improve its performance

HAP BENCHMARK 1

ESTABLISHING AND DELIVERING ON COMMITMENTS

Transparency can be improved through a commitment by response actors to proactive transparency, not just passive publication of operational data, accounts and reports

Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami: Synthesis Report, 2006

Country evaluations conducted by the UNDP Evaluation Office have emphasized learning over accountability and have not measured performance against stated intentions. Validation occurs only through infrequent audits

Evaluation of Results-Based Management at UNDP, 2007

Early promises were made that tens of thousands of houses would be built in a few months' time [...] Disaster-affected people have shown a readiness to be patient in waiting for permanent housing, but they have been angered by false promises and the failure to plan for an inevitably protracted transitional period. This state of affairs is a reflection of how agencies' struggle for 'turf', by making grand promises, has superseded accountability to the affected populations

Links Between Relief, Rehabilitation and Development in the Tsunami Response, 2006

The culture will only reach full maturity when the senior managers set the tone at the top, bolstered with examples for all to see of holding themselves accountable. [...] In all of the organizations interviewed the study identified a gap in perception between the staff perception of the strength of their culture of accountability and management leadership and management's view on the culture of accountability. The review concluded that transparency and a culture of accountability were a necessity for the framework to move from paper to implementation

Accountability Frameworks in the United Nations System, 2011

Rather than merely forwarding recommendations/ complaints from the field, clusters need to improve their accountability systems so that they can monitor whether they have been acted upon and provide regular feedback to their counterparts in the field and communities

Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation of the Response to Cyclone Nargis, 2008

Successful management requires identifying stakeholders, defining objectives, planning activities to meet these objectives and disbursing resources accordingly. An accountability framework does just that by providing an overview of the standards, codes of conduct and other commitments of an organisation. Such a tool should be reported upon annually and be made public, in order to allow internal and external stakeholders to assess progress.

A range of frameworks

Over the past ten years, the humanitarian sector has seen a multiplication of new certification schemes and self-regulatory bodies, each with reporting formats for both internal and external regulation. It would be difficult for an organisation not to find a suitable way to map and report on commitments given the many existing standards and codes of conduct organisations can subscribe to.

In 2006, the INGO Accountability Charter was created. This codifies practices for INGOs in the areas of respect for universal principles, independence, responsible advocacy, effective programs, non-discrimination, transparency, good governance, ethical fundraising, and professional management.[63] The next year, HAP launched the _2007 Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management_, after a broad consultation with staff from humanitarian organisations, donors, disaster survivors and quality initiatives. The Standard was updated in 2010 in order to include requirements for organisations working through partners and to be usable for organisations working on development programs. A _Guide to the 2010 HAP Standard_, which explains the links between the different benchmarks and the rationale for adopting them as a coherent quality assurance system, was published in 2013.[64]

Humanitarian organisations can also chose to improve their quality and accountability through a wide variety of systems such as ISO 9000, the SGS NGO benchmarking certification audit, Quality COMPAS, the _People in Aid Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel_, or the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM).[65]

SOUTHERN-BASED INITIATIVES
ADAPTED FROM PREVIOUS HUMANITARIAN ACCOUNTABILITY REPORTS, HAP

■ **DENIVA –** Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA) and the NGO Quality Assurance Mechanism (QuAM) have been working in Uganda since 1989, making DEVINA the oldest national platform in Uganda. The Network has 800 members, 40 of which are certified.

■ **Tanzanian National Council of NGOs (NACONGO) –** In March 2008, NACONGO published an NGO Code of Conduct setting out the core values of member organisations and the standards they will be expected to maintain in relation to: financial transparency and accountability; human resources; communication and information sharing; relationships and networking. Responsibility for assessment against the Code rests with individual members.

■ **Viwango –** An independent, standards setting and certification organisation for CSOs in Kenya. Viwango is Swahili for "Standards". Their primary role is to promote the adoption of minimum quality standards by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Viwango aims to improve the performance of a community of CSOs through the promotion and application of minimum standards and voluntary, independent certification.

■ **Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC) –** The CCC Executive Committee first drafted the original Code of Ethics for NGOs in Cambodia in 1995. CCC has implemented the NGO Good Practice Project (GPP) since 2004, which aims to promote professionalism and good practice within NGOs operating in Cambodia. CCC has become widely supported throughout the NGO community, both within Cambodia and internationally.

■ **Pakistan Center for Philanthropy (PCP) –** In 2003 PCP developed a framework for promoting regulation among national philanthropy organisations in Pakistan. The centerpiece is a certification regime. By 2013, 200 organisations were certified.

■ **Philippine Council for NGO Certification –** Established in 1998, the certification process involves the review of audited financial reports, proof of compliance with government rules and regulations and field visits to the programmes of applicant NGOs which are undertaken by trained volunteers.

■ **Credibility Alliance –** A consortium of Voluntary Organisations (VOs) committed towards enhancing Accountability and Transparency in the Voluntary Sector through good governance, the Credibility Alliance aspires to build trust among all stakeholders through improving governance and accountable practices within the voluntary sector. It has developed an Accreditation System and Peer Group Review Model based on its Norms and Standards of Governance to strengthen and enhance the legitimacy and the credibility of individual organisations in the sector.

63 / International Non-Governmental Organisations Accountability Charter (2005).
64 / HAP (2013): "Guide to the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management".
65 / For a comprehensive list, refer to the One World Trust online database of civil society self-regulatory initiatives: http://www.oneworldtrust.org/csoproject

Information overload?

While frameworks may exist on paper, implementing them at field level can be challenging. High staff turnover, the need to rapidly train new staff in an emergency, and the wide variety of humanitarian organisations make it difficult to reliably and consistently apply the main standards across the system. Some note confusion by the number of handbooks, indicators and approaches, potentially leading to a 'pick and choose' attitude. Others observe inconsistent application of the standards due to competing time pressures and lack of accessibility and awareness.[66]

With the ever-increasing number of frameworks, some argue that humanitarian accountability is becoming the victim of its own success and that the multiplication of standards has resulted in duplication and an overload of information for practitioners.[67] The 2006 ECB-hosted conference in Rome on humanitarian accountability and standards acknowledged this problem, stating: "There are several quality and accountability initiatives, each with its own standards for accountability. The humanitarian sector needs better integration of these initiatives and standards." [68]

Greater coherence and consolidation of standards and certification may be coming in the near future. In 2009 the Sphere Project published *Taking the Initiative: Exploring Quality And Accountability In The Humanitarian Sector: An Introduction To Eight Initiatives*. This publication aimed to address the "dearth of materials that introduce the initiatives in an integrated manner, describing how they differ from one another, how they can be used together and/or how they overlap." [69] Two years later, HAP, People In Aid and the Sphere Project embarked on a project called the Joint Standards Initiative (JSI) with the stated objective to explore ways to achieve greater coherence between their standards.

As one interviewee noted, "the objective isn't that you take them and mush them into one. The important notion is to create an architecture using the strengths of each that moves the accountability initiative forward and creates a framework for greater professionalisation." [70] At a joint meeting of the boards of the three initiatves on May 16 in Geneva, the JSI initiatives agreed to the following:

■ The three initiatives will deliver a **verifiable Common Core Standard by the end of 2013**. This Common Core Standard will be based on humanitarian principles, will promote coherence and improved usability and access for aid workers and agencies, and will put the voices of affected populations at the heart of humanitarian action.

■ HAP, People In Aid and the Sphere Project will, through their global reach, **provide joint awareness-raising and support activities around the Standard**, aimed at aid workers and humanitarian agencies.

■ The three initiatives will **collaborate with other humanitarian actors to develop a new standards architecture**. This architecture will enable aid workers and agencies around the world to easily navigate and put humanitarian principles, the Common Core Standard and technical standards into practice.

Linked to the JSI initiative, and due to present its conclusions mid 2013, is the SCHR certification project, presented earlier in this chapter, which has the potential to make certification more mainstream and recognised in the sector.

Necessary, but not sufficient

Frameworks are a useful tool. When an organisation defines and summarises its commitments in one place, plans and allocates resources towards achieving its objectives, and makes itself accountable by publicising its framework and reporting on it, change can happen. However, some note that the humanitarian sector has to go beyond just setting standards and creating frameworks. As a 2010 review from Pakistan stated: "Standards alone are not enough. For accountability to be meaningful, it needs to be an approach – a guiding framework – and not simply a set of mechanisms, forms and statistics, no matter how efficient these may be." [71] This was reiterated in the SCHR review, which stated that "a systems approach to accountability is insufficient. It only takes an organisation so far down the road to being more accountable. Accountability is best addressed by inserting and embedding it in existing procedures and tools – to make it part of how an organisation works in all its facets, not just programming." [72] Turning the rhetoric into practice is the biggest hurdle and where much of the accountability progress ends to date.

66 / Schofield, R. (2012): "Joint Standards Initiative Introductory Materials for JSI Consultation".
67 / Knox-Clarke, P. & Mitchell, J. (2011): "Reflections on the accountability revolution", Humanitarian Exchange Issue 52.
68 / ECB (2006): "Translating Standards into Practice: NGO Accountability and Impact Measurement In Emergencies."
69 / Sphere Project (2009): "Taking the Initiative: Exploring quality and accountability in the humanitarian sector (an introduction to eight initiatives)".
70 / Peter Walker, director of Feinstein International Center (Tufts University), interview.
71 / Featherstone, A. (2010): "It's the thought that counts: Humanitarian principles and practice in Pakistan," ActionAid International.
72 / SCHR (2010): "SCHR Peer Review on Accountability to Disaster-Affected Populations: An Overview of Lessons Learned".

Kisumu Leonida Anyango, 84 years old, lives with
five children and had been targeted as a beneficiary,
but had not yet received any help, in 2007
© Kate Holt/HelpAge International

HAP BENCHMARK 2 STAFF COMPETENCY

Particularly during the first months of the emergency response, staff turnover was extremely high... [which] compromises the creation of context specific institutional memory

Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation in Haiti: 3 Months After the Earthquake, 2010

The constant turnover of international staff created difficulties for local officials and communities in terms of maintaining relationships and getting earlier promises implemented

Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami: Synthesis Report, 2006

Some of the staff deployed through these mechanisms did not have the necessary expertise, training and experience. Further, the high-volume of short-term assignments, from both internal and external surge capacity rosters, led to high turnover, which was disruptive to programming and created a heavy administrative burden that detracted from other tasks, such as identifying longer-term staff... It had also become clear that increasing numbers of staff were not necessarily resulting in better service delivery and programming, largely due to the lack of experience and knowledge amongst some staff... Although the team observed improvements over time in the living conditions of staff, their psychological welfare remained unaddressed, resulting in a high level of burnout, reduced productivity and tense working relationships. The needs and concerns of national staff were especially overlooked

Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to the Darfur Crisis, 2006

Interviews with national organizations and national staff of international organizations indicated that many lessons learnt from earlier humanitarian responses were re-learned after the cyclone, something that could potentially have been reduced if more experienced emergency responders had been involved from the outset

Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation of the Response to Cyclone Nargis, 2008

High turnover of staff in key positions was a problem

From Early Warning to Reinforcing Resilience: Lessons Learned from the 2011-2012 Sahel Response, 2012

Staff: an organisation's biggest asset

An organisation is only as good as its staff. The competencies they bring – knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours – are critical to the success of any organisation. Aid organisations need to ensure they recruit people who have the required skills, or provide them with the necessary training and an enabling environment. As highlighted in the *Guide to the 2010 HAP Standard*: "The competency of staff will greatly affect the quality of services received by crisis-affected people and determine to what extent the intentions of the organisation are reflected in practice. Good people-management processes are therefore critical to the delivery of quality and accountable services." [73]

The structure is in place

When compared to other benchmarks, it may seem there are fewer initiatives working towards staff capacity, best practice and training specific to the humanitarian sector, however, those that do exist are well established. People In Aid provides a widely endorsed Code of Good Practice against which organisations can be certified, while initiatives such as RedR, the Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA), and Enhanced Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (ELRHA), together with dozens of masters degrees and specialised training courses, offer both practitioners and students opportunities to acquire or reinforce the skills they need to be successful humanitarians. Expectations towards staff behaviour have also been codified. Since the adoption of the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief* in 1994, most aid organisations have adopted their own or subscribed to a regional or national code of conduct.

The People In Aid framework

People In Aid emerged as a result of a specific research project on the management and support of staff during the Rwanda crisis. Beginning in 1995, 12 organisations led a sector-wide collaboration and consultation from which the *People In Aid Code of Good Practice* was published in 1997 and revised in 2003.[74] The code is a quality tool which helps agencies improve their accountability to various key stakeholders and contains seven key principles:

1. Human Resources Strategy
2. Staff Policies and Practices
3. Managing People
4. Consultation and Communication
5. Recruitment and Selection
6. Learning, Training and Development
7. Health, Safety and Security

People in Aid has also been a driving force in the sector to organise training, learning events and research, covering issues directly impacting accountability, such as staff turnover, surge capacity and staff management.

Continued professionalisation

In 2009, the ELRHA was created with a vision of facilitating academic and humanitarian partnerships in order to focus research skills on issues relevant to aid organisations, and help develop highly professional responders. In 2010 ELRHA commissioned a study entitled *Professionalizing the Humanitarian Sector: A scoping study*. The paper documented the humanitarian sector's uneven provision of capacity building and fragmented and uncoordinated approaches to developing people and teams. Tellingly, in spite of everything that has already been done, over 90% of the 1,500 people providing input to the study wanted to see humanitarian work further professionalised. The study's two main proposals were that a system of certification be developed to be applied at the international level with capacity for national implementation; and that a truly international professional association for humanitarian workers and the necessary supportive academic and training infrastructure be established.[75] The study also recommended further support to enhance the promotion and professionalisation of national staff.

The Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA) was founded in 2010 to increase the number and competencies of potential leaders, as well as increase the skills and knowledge base of humanitarian staff already working in emergencies. In early 2012, the CBHA board approved a framework for core and leadership competencies[76] with the intention to improve human resource efficiences, contribute to professionalisation in the sector, reduce the cost of staff turnover, and assert an operational perspective on the design of academic and non-academic training programmes. To support the competencies framework, ActionAid, People In Aid and other CBHA members developed a guide that facilitates the use of the humanitarian core competencies framework.

Individual organisations are also investing in leadership development. Save the Children has developed a Humanitarian Leadership Programme with Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia, which offers humanitarian professionals from the Asia-Pacific region and beyond the opportunity to partake in a university-level graduate programme and receive an Endorsed Programmed Certificate. The programme is designed to enhance the skills, knowledge and leadership capability of current and future humanitarian leaders, and is run in conjunction with a number of large INGO partners.

Still some way to go

Investing in national capacity

Aid organisations have long recognised the need to train and develop. The tendency to work under short-term contracts, and the resulting high staff turnover (in particular for expatriates) has however been a disincentive for investing in staff training. In the past few years, the sector has tried to address this challenge by increasingly relying on local staff to deliver on its commitments. National staff have always comprised the majority of aid personnel, providing continuity in protracted crises where expatriate aid workers seldom remain more than one or two years. Today, national staff are also increasingly being promoted to roles outside of their own country and

---

73 / HAP (2013): "Guide to the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management".
74 / People In Aid website: http://www.peopleinaid.org/code
75 / Walker, P. & Russ, C. (2010): "Professionalising the Humanitarian Sector", ELRHA.
76 / The Competency Framework as well as the Guide can be found at: http://www.peopleinaid.org/cbha

in more senior roles, thus leveraging their institutional memory, familiarity with organisational culture, systems and procedure, and often longer-term commitment to the organisation. However, although the sector is more reliant than ever on local human capacities, the _2013 People in Aid Year in Review_ mentions frustration amongst local professionals who are overlooked for jobs while witnessing aid organisations hire foreign staff and consultants that are paid high fees as "experts", even though they are often not familiar with the local context.[77]

The Listening Project also cites numerous cases of local people being disturbed by this recurring trend. A community member in Sri Lanka expressed it concisely, saying: "Why don't you value local knowledge and capacity? We have engineers and experts too."[78]

Finding the right people

Participants at a 2009 ELHRA meeting recognised that the effectiveness of humanitarian services was negatively impacted by an 'immaturity' in the way the sector invests in the learning and development of aid workers. OCHA also acknowledged this gap and has called for "getting the right individuals in place – with the requisite levels of knowledge, skills, experience and motivation"[79] The 2011 Humanitarian Emergency Response Review (HERR) report declared the "uneven quality of personnel" as a "major limiting factor in humanitarian response" and that "overall the level of professionalism in the humanitarian sector needs to be raised through better investment in skills and training."[80] _People in Aid's Year in Review_ noted that often, the wrong people are sent to do the job.[81] This skills gap is most prevalent when responding to emergencies, when the system struggles – and organisations compete – to find people with the right skills, experience and availability.[82]

Towards a common framework

In spite of the work of CBHA and others to agree on a joint set of skills and a standard curriculum for aid workers, there is still insufficient agreement around what common skills, knowledge and competencies humanitarian aid workers should possess and a lack of established professional pathways. Additionally, while organisations can certify their human resources systems, there is no individual certification or universally recognised professional association for aid workers. The disconnect between the offering of academic training and the needs of the sector has grown over the past ten years. Today, academic programmes are mostly offered in the form of full time master's degrees in the global North, while aid organisations increasingly rely on their experienced national staff to provide leadership and respond to emergencies. This tendency has been reinforced by situations where insecurity limits the presence of international staff, and perhaps also by the difference in remuneration levels. The result of this gap is that it is increasingly difficult for young graduates to find work, while there is still a lack of training opportunities in the global South.

In response to the lack of agreed humanitarian occupational standards, several NGOs, INGOs, learning providers and universities have developed their own personnel training and capacity building approaches, and a number of independent initiatives have been created that provide training to humanitarian professionals. However, without an overarching framework to tie such initiatives together, the result has been ad hoc training offerings, with gaps in provision and a lack of pathways and progression routes, both for those wishing to enter the sector and those wishing to develop professionally.[83]

A boy plays on a tank captured by rebel forces in Misrata, the besieged Libyan city where civilians and rebel forces were surrounded on three sides by forces loyal to Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi
© Paul Jeffrey/ACT

77/ People In Aid (2013): "The State of HR in International Humanitarian and Development Organisations".
78/ Anderson, Mary B., Brown, D. & Jean, I. (2012): "Time to Listen", CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.
79/ OCHA (2009): "HC strengthening: unfinished agenda".
80/ Ashdown, Lord (Paddy) (2011): "Humanitarian Emergency Response Review".
81/ People In Aid (2013): "The State of HR in International Humanitarian and Development Organisations".82 / Baker, J. & Mbogha, E. (2009): "Final Evaluation of Oxfam's North Kivu Emergency Response", Oxfam.
83/ Russ, C. (2012): "Global Survey on Humanitarian Professionalism", ELRHA.

Challenges to professionalisation

Numerous factors have contributed to the sector's difficulty in improving staff competency. International personnel may lack contextual knowledge and appropriate language skills, as noted by OCHA in 2010.[84] Many aid organisations are still perceived as 'amateurish' when it comes to preparing staff about the political contexts in which they are going to work.[85] On a more systemic level however, evaluations repeatedly point to high staff turnover as a critical contributor to shortcomings in major humanitarian responses over the last ten years. It has negative impacts on institutional memory and relationships forged at community level. The rapid turnover of expatriates is also cited by partners and local staff as being demotivating and having a negative impact on the quality of programmes.[86]

Staff turnover not only makes it difficult to cultivate a professional workforce, it also allows people to easily move onto another job without taking responsibility for past failures, something clearly linked to People In Aid's observation that "organisations (particularly major international organisations) are not good at handling poor or inadequate job performance."[87]

Turnover in the sector has often been at least partly blamed on short funding cycles and the resulting job insecurity, and some donors have tried to address this, in line with their Good Humanitarian Donorship commitments towards "longer term funding arrangements."[88]

Possible ways forward

Structural issues specific to the humanitarian sector still pose a challenge to truly investing in staff competencies. One proposal is to move towards individual certification in the same way professionals within more established industries must be certified. This would provide a baseline minimum requirement that all aid workers must achieve. It could be a way to not only improve the skills and knowledge in the sector, but also demonstrate to affected populations that people working on their behalf have certified expertise. Yet applying a uniform certification across countries would potentially exclude those members of national staff lacking the educational background or technical expertise required, despite their considerable local knowledge and skill. Furthermore, there isn't a clear indication that this is feasible or even needed. While specific professions such as doctors, engineers, or architects are regulated, aid workers represent a variety of professions, from medical staff to engineers to managers, whose jobs often have little in common except for their adherence to a shared set of values.

Nevertheless, the sector must continue to professionalise, as well as limit and mitigate the effects of staff turnover. While preserving the identity and organisational culture of individual organisations, the sector should work to improve the coherence of approaches to make interagency dialogue easier and shorten the learning curve of staff when they move from one organisation to another. To achieve this, aid organisations need to continue building up the capacity of their staff, in particular national staff, and keep supporting efforts to work towards a more harmonised set of skills. Academic institutions should better adapt their offer to the changing realities of the job market by targeting more of their programs to field staff, and making them more accessible to national staff through distance learning and short-term programmes.

> *In order to ensure you can be accountable to beneficiaries and donors you have to be accountable to staff*
>
> Jonathan Potter, Executive Director, People In Aid

---

84 / OCHA (2011): "OCHA Evaluations: Synthesis Report, 2010", OCHA Occasional Policy Briefing Series Brief No. 5.
85 / Taylor, G. (2012): "The State of the Humanitarian System", ALNAP.
86 / People In Aid (2013): "The State of HR in International Humanitarian and Development Organisations".
87 / Ibid.
88 / Good Humanitarian Donorship (2003): "Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship".

HAP BENCHMARK 3 SHARING INFORMATION

Information flow to communities was quite weak. The evaluation team's extensive consultation with affected communities clearly showed that communities did not know what they could expect to receive or from whom

Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation of the Response to the February 2007 Floods and Cyclone in Mozambique, 2007

With few exceptions, there was little evidence during FGD with communities that they were aware of what agencies were planning to do with the information they had collected from assessments or indeed which organizations were planning longer-term engagements

Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation of the Response to Cyclone Nargis, 2008

If not aid, they at least wanted – and deserved – reliable information about recovery plans, resources and methods to allow them take their own decisions. [...] Reliable and timely information on programme criteria and content, planned activities, beneficiary rights and entitlements, budgets, expenditure, staffing, office location and accessibility and the expected duration of an agency's presence was rarely shared, despite having great potential impact on people's lives. Poor information flow is undoubtedly the biggest source of dissatisfaction, anger and frustration among affected people

Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami: Synthesis Report, 2006

Communication has been a general issue in the response as many affected people were not properly informed about what they were expected to receive, when, by whom and for how long

Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan's 2010 Flood Crisis, 2001

With the exception of the Red Cross Movement, some NGOs, private groups, and the church, few organisations consulted the affected population on what their needs were, and even fewer provided feedback or information to the affected population on what, how and when assistance would eventually be provided

Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Typhoons Ketsana and Parma in the Philippines, 2010

Information is aid

Increasingly, information and two-way communication is recognised as a key humanitarian deliverable. Indeed, sharing basic information with crisis-affected populations is a central tenant of humanitarian accountability. This is not just about passing on information about aid programmes, but about the humanitarian duty to share information that is life-saving and helps affected people to mitigate risks during a crisis. It is widely recognised that organisations should ensure that the people they aim to assist and other stakeholders have access to timely, relevant and clear information about them and their programmes not only to be more accountable but also as a way to empower crisis-affected communities, build trust and prevent or identify fraud. As was recently noted by OCHA: "Humanitarian organisations have an operational and moral obligation to incorporate information into their work. It is

demanded by the communities and individuals that humanitarian organisations serve. The freedom to seek, receive and impart information is part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."[89] Information shared with affected populations should typically include life-saving information and risk mitigation strategies, notification of organisations working in an area, their stated mission, the duration they will be present, specific plans, selection criteria and entitlements, progress reports, financial summary, and plans for transition at the conclusion of the project.

A number of noteworthy developments have taken place to improve practice in sharing information with disaster-affected people. The Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities (CDAC) Network, a cross-sector initiative between aid agencies, UN organisations, the Red Cross Movement, media development

organisations, and technology providers have worked to increase engagement with crisis-affected populations. Initiatives by CDAC Network members including Frontline SMS and BBC Media Action, and more technology focused initiatives such as Crisis Mappers, ICT4Peace, and Ushahidi are some of the key initiatives that have advanced the agenda on this issue, often leveraging technological advances to do so. Since the 2004 tsunami, Internews, for example, has worked in major crises to establish links between affected populations, local media outlets, and humanitarian service providers to ensure provision of and access to life-saving information and the effective set up of two-way communication mechanisms. Thanks to these and other communications-focused initiatives, such as the infoasaid project which closed in December 2012, there is a better understanding of the need to use a mix of the most appropriate communication channels and tools for analysis.

A woman receiving a free eye examination at a camp in Port-au-Prince, Haiti
© Frédéric Dupoux / HelpAge International

89/ OCHA (2013): "Humanitarianism in the Network Age".

Progress to date

Despite this progress crisis-affected people's knowledge of the aid process is often still inadequate, and people lack access to vital information about aid, such as who is entitled, what they are entitled to, how they can access it and who to contact if they encounter problems accessing it. Humanitarians struggle to share the most basic information about their interventions and generally don't share life-saving and risk-mitigation information. This problem was first highlighted in the tsunami response of 2005, where recipients told the consultants undertaking the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) that they were not adequately consulted and that large information gaps existed between organisations and communities.[90] The TEC report stated that "poor information flow is undoubtedly the biggest source of dissatisfaction, anger and frustration among affected people."[91] The _World Disasters Report_ of 2005 urged organisations to focus less on gathering information for their own needs and more on exchanging information with intended beneficiaries to promote transparency, accountability and trust.[92]

Year after year, evaluations have frequently noted bad practice with regards to sharing information with affected populations. A study from Afghanistan in 2007 found disaster-affected populations to be hugely ill-informed about their entitlements and about the work of aid organisations.[93] In 2008, a similar finding emerged in a Bangladesh evaluation, which found that households participating in an assistance programme were not informed about basic selection criteria.[94]

In August 2011, Internews conducted an assessment of humanitarian communications and information needs in Daadab refugee camp, Kenya.[95] The assessment concluded that serious communication gaps between humanitarian actors and refugees in Dadaab were increasing refugee suffering and putting lives at risk.[96] Two years later, similar results were observed after five pilot projects were implemented in East Africa in response to the drought emergency. Infoasaid, a project funded by DFID that was implemented through two media development organisations – Internews and BBC Media Action – deployed a team to assist the projects with communications. They found in all cases that communication mechanisms were slow and labour intensive; that systematic, timely mechanisms to relay urgent information were lacking; that mechanisms for soliciting feedback from recipient communities were underutilised; that there was limited engagement with communities; that communication focused on extracting data on project outputs rather than listening to needs or concerns; and that there was a general lack of access to information, particularly among women.[97]

Most recently, in 2012 the CDA Collaborative Learning Project published _Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid_, which makes similar observations. This publication, which summarises the experiences of nearly 6,000 people in 20 aid-receiving countries over four years (2005-2009) highlights the importance of information sharing in the accountability debate: "Improved accountability is one of the most frequently discussed outcomes of improved information sharing. Many people note that they need full information to hold aid providers and their partners accountable for where the money goes. They also note that knowing what aid organisations claim to be doing for them in their proposals, reports, and publicity would enable them – the receivers – to hold these donors accountable when they do not fulfil their claims."[98]

These findings suggest that too little has changed in the eight years since the TEC identified the lack of two-way communication as a common and glaring deficiency and a persistent problem that has been observed in many disasters.[99] The _Humanitarian Response Review_ undertaken by DFID reiterated this in 2012, stating: "The people who are on the receiving end of our assistance are rarely, if ever, consulted on what they need or are able to choose who will help them or how [...] Whilst this has been long recognised as an issue, too little has been done about it."[100]

> _People also say that aid providers often do not communicate clearly about decision-making processes, project plans, the selection of beneficiaries or participants, and actual results achieved—and that this leads people to speculate about what is being hidden and why_
>
> Anderson, Mary B., Brown, D., Jean, I., 2013, Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid CDA Collaborative Learning Projects

90/ Telford, J. Cosgrave, J. & Houghton, R. (2006): "Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami: Synthesis Report."
91/ Ibid.
92/ IFRC (2005): "World Disasters Report".
93/ Savage, K., Lorenzo D., Martin, E. & Ulfat, G. (2007): "Corruption perceptions and risks in humanitarian assistance: an Afghanistan case study", HPG Working Paper.
94/ HAP (2008): "HAP initiatives in Concern Worldwide: A Case Study of Bangladesh".
95/ Internews (2011): "Dadaab, Kenya: Humanitarian communications and information needs assessment among refugees in the camps (findings, analysis & recommendations)".
96/ As reported in: Borton, J. (2011): "An Overview of Humanitarian Accountability in 2011", in Humanitarian Accountability Report, HAP.
97/ Chapelier, C. & Shah, C. (2013): "Improving communication between humanitarian aid agencies and crisis-affected people: Lessons from the infoasaid project", HPN Network Paper.
98/ Anderson, Mary B., Brown, D. & Jean, I. (2012): "Time to Listen", CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.
99/ OCHA (2013): "Humanitarianism in the Network Age".
100/ Ashdown, P. (2011): "Humanitarian Emergency Response Review", DFID.

Technology's potential

The growing recognition of the importance of communication in disaster response has prompted an upsurge in discussions, publications and initiatives aimed at better understanding how organisations communicate with the people they aim to assist and, ultimately, how this enhances the quality and accountability of humanitarian assistance. The ability to effectively communicate with crisis-affected people has expanded significantly, driven by the increased and changing role of media, use of social media and developments in information and communication technology (ICT).[101]

The past decade has witnessed a dramatic increase in the availability and uptake of ICTs worldwide, providing unprecedented opportunities for individuals to access information, connect with one another and have their voices heard.[102] In 2012, global mobile phone subscriptions topped 6 billion – including more than 1 billion smart phones.[103] The GSM Association estimates mobile phone penetration in Africa to be about 70%, reaching 735 million subscribers in 2012 – up from 4 million in 1998. One third of the world's people are now online, and it is estimated that 50% of people in developing countries will use the Internet by 2015.[104] According to the UN's International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the total number of Internet users went from 44% of the global population in 2006 to 62% in 2011. This rapid development is forcing a paradigm shift in how the humanitarian industry uses communication tools to better understand and service crisis-affected communities.[105]

Social media has also penetrated many developing countries, and techniques such as crowdsourcing are now included as part of disaster assessments,

monitoring, and evaluations of humanitarian responses.[106] A review of the 2010 cholera outbreak in Haiti found that reports from Twitter and news websites not only correlated well with official government statistics, but that they were available up to two weeks earlier.[107]

Technology offers the potential to communicate with and get real-time feedback from people in affected communities in a way that was previously difficult or impossible to achieve. Aid organisations are experimenting with different types of communication tools, for different uses and in a variety of contexts. Aid organisations make more use of Short Message Services (SMS) to share information and seek feedback. The spread of mobile phone services also makes it easier to inform communities of the exact date and time of aid delivery, which allows people to minimise time spent away from their daily activities. Finally, now that tablets, smart phones and other mobile data devices have become more mainstream and affordable, it is bound to turn around the way organisations register and manage lists of aid recipients.

Last Mile Mobile Solutions (LMMS)[108], a World Vision supported initiative, uses mobile data devices that allow people to be registered for assistance directly from their location and subsequently integrated into humanitarian projects. This approach, to date primarily used to support food distributions, but with potential uses for other humanitarian services, reduces long wait times for beneficiaries, minimises fraud or errors in allocation to families and diminishes inaccuracies in reporting or tracking supplies. In Haiti, World Vision has used it with good results, including greater accuracy in monitoring and reporting, decrease in fraud and corruption, and more efficient and effective distributions.[109] Such an

approach not only has potential to make aid delivery more efficient and limit fraud, it can also help those on the receiving end of aid by directly integrating their feedback and making follow-up on complaints easier and more transparent. View World, a private company, has initiated a smart phone-based platform for M&E activities, which has already been used by the Red Cross and Oxfam. Their platform allows for real-time data and information to be streamed seamlessly, ultimately increasing information flow and transparency. These technological advances also reduce work being done on paper, creating more efficiencies within organisations. However, to date these technologies tend to be applied with an internal, systems and processes focus, and so far there are few examples of them being used with the specific objective of increasing accountability to crisis-affected people.

With the advent of new technologies, it is easier than ever to share information and communicate with communities, leaving organisations with few excuses not to do so systematically. While the application of technology has exciting implications for monitoring, gathering and analysing data, humanitarian organisations must equally recognise and make use of its potential to increase accountability through two-way communication with disaster-affected communities. In the age of connectivity, the concept of information sharing with communities – about humanitarian programmes and life saving information – can no longer be considered unimportant or extraneous, even in the initial phases of a sudden-onset disaster.

101/ Chapelier, C. & Shah, C. (2013): "Improving communication between humanitarian aid agencies and crisis-affected people: Lessons from the infoasaid project", HPN Network Paper.
102/ Borton, J. (2011): "An Overview of Humanitarian Accountability in 2011", in Humanitarian Accountability Report, HAP.
103/ OCHA (2013): "Humanitarianism in the Network Age".
104/ "Ibid.
105/ Borton, J. (2011): "An Overview of Humanitarian Accountability in 2011", in Humanitarian Accountability Report, HAP.
106/ ALNAP (2013): "Evidence & Knowledge in Humanitarian Action: Background Paper".
107/ Chunara, R., Andrews, J. & Brownstein, J. (2012): "Social and News Media Enable Estimation of Epidemiological Patterns Early in the 2010 Haitian Cholera Outbreak", American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, Vol. 86, No. 1.
108/ Last Mile Mobile Solutions website: http://www.lastmilemobilesolutions.com
109/ World Vision (2010): "Using the Last Mile Mobile Solution Device in Haiti".

Technology is not the silver bullet

Transparency and access to information is a hallmark of democratic societies. While aid organisations advocate for the very principles that underpin democracy, they often fail to be as transparent as the standards they promote. While it is true that in some situations confidentiality and security concerns may justify restricting the dissemination of some information, such cases do not explain all of the gaps between aspirations and reality. Technological developments offer opportunities in that respect, yet applying new technologies and advances offered by the network age has not been consistent across the humanitarian sector[110] and the uptake of new technology certainly lags behind that in the private sector. A 2010 review of the use of information and communication technologies in response to the Pakistan floods found that regardless of technological advances, information remained in silos (partly due to the cluster system) and that disaster-affected communities were not engaged in two-way communication or involved in decision-making.[111] If humanitarian assistance is to become more accountable in the era of mass communication, organisations must not only improve their capacity to gather information, but also their information-sharing practices, and be better at integrating and tracking feedback from the communities they aim to assist. Humanitarian organisations must adapt to the changing landscape and learn how to harness the increasing volume and complexity of information that is brought on through technological advances.[112] In order to do this, the humanitarian community will also have to build its internal capacity to analyse, understand and use information and new technologies to improve strategic planning and decision-making.

Technological progress has the potential to increase the accountability and transparency of humanitarian assistance in a crisis. However, these advances are not in themselves sufficient to alter the way aid organisations communicate with disaster-affected communities. For that to occur, organisational cultures and staff attitudes must also evolve.

Diama Hassimi of the Farha Group separates the rice harvest from the husk. Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world. Again and again droughts lead to famines
© Christoph / ACT / Brot fuer die Welt

110/ OCHA (2013): "Humanitarianism in the Network Age".
111/ Nethope (2010): "Information and Communication Technology Usage in Response to the 2010 Pakistan Floods".
112/ OCHA (2013): "Humanitarianism in the Network Age".

HAP BENCHMARK 4 PARTICIPATION

Some community leaders in Dadaab and in Mogadishu stated that they are not included and consulted when programs are designed, planned or implemented

IASC Real-Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to the Horn of Africa Drought Crisis: Somalia 2011-2012, 2012

Affected individuals felt 'assessed to death', too frequently interviewed and yet not truly consulted

Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami: Synthesis Report, 2006

With some notable exceptions, where beneficiary participation did constitute an aspect of the programming, UN agencies and NGOs alike tended to consult primarily with the traditional male leadership structures within IDP camps, and did not fully explore or build on either women's leadership and organizational capacities, or leadership structures outside of the camps. There was also little evidence that programming took into account the differential impact of the crisis on women and men, girls and boys

Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to the Darfur Crisis, 2006

The affected population was rarely consulted in any effective way. Consultation mainly took place with male leaders and not with the broader population or with women. The lack of consultation led to some inappropriate assistance

Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan's 2009 Displacement Crisis, 2010

While the potential for beneficiary consultation tends to be more limited during the initial phase of the response, the IA RTE team was surprised to learn that the original design of the Post-Nargis Recovery and Preparedness Plan (PONREPP) exercise that will develop plans for the next two to three years of recovery activities contained little scope for beneficiary participation during the design phase

Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation of the Response to Cyclone Nargis, 2008

Empowering people

Participation is the process through which crisis-affected people can actively exercise their right to informed consent, from the design through to the evaluation of a project. Information, empowerment and participation are closely linked, as people first need information to make their own choices, then a vehicle by which to speak out, and finally the ability to participate in decisions that affect their lives. In practice, many 'models' of participation comprise a progression which starts with the provision of information to the affected community and moves through a series of steps towards greater ownership of the project or intervention by the community.[113]

Progress to date

Unsurprisingly, there is almost unanimous opinion within the community of practice that the participation of disaster-affected communities in humanitarian programming brings significant benefits. In particular, organisations report that the inclusion of aid recipients in decision-making helps to address issues of Do No Harm, protection, human rights, inclusion, equity, and dignity and improves the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian programmes.[114] Participation also supports and provides natural links between emergency programming and disaster risk reduction, and helps link relief, rehabilitation and development. There is a great deal of momentum, at least in rhetoric, towards more participatory programming in humanitarian aid. Since its first edition, the Sphere Handbook has moved towards being more specific about participation by including it as a core principle.

French-based Groupe URD also developed, in collaboration with ALNAP, the *Participation Handbook for Humanitarian Field Workers*, which makes participation more explicit for humanitarian aid workers with the support of examples and tools.[115]
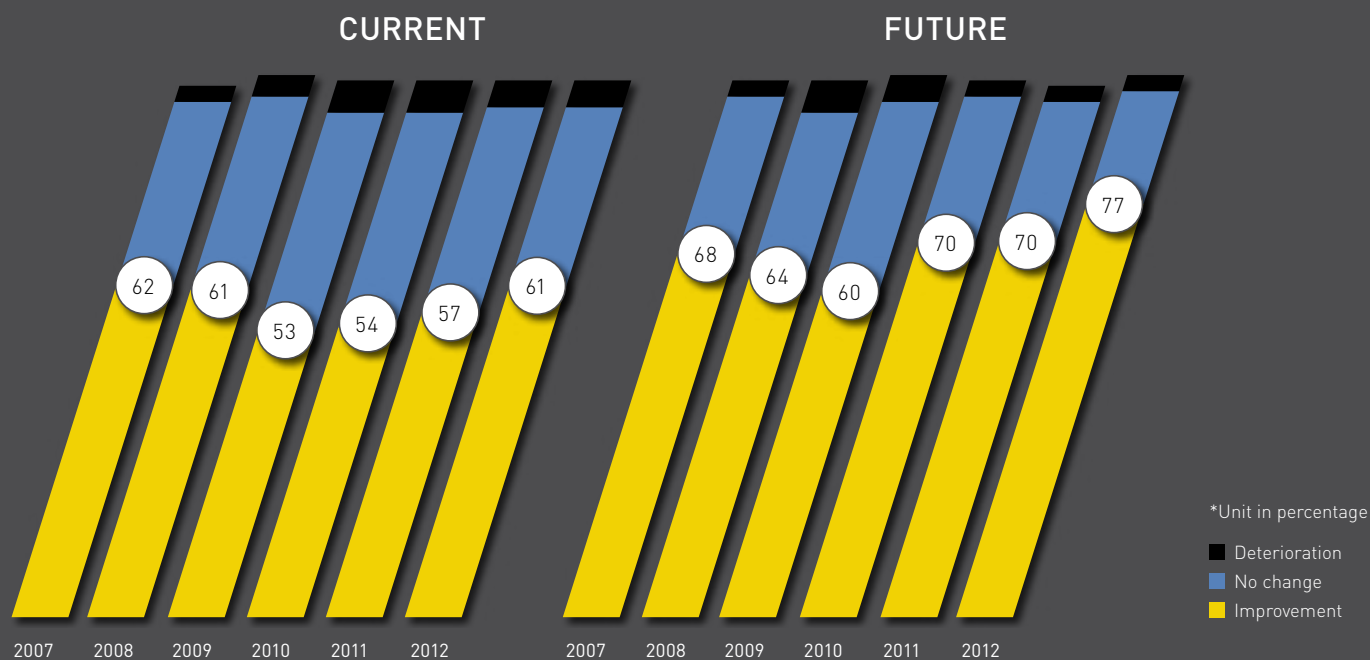
Not only are organisations increasingly trying to use participatory approaches, they are also seeking feedback to understand how they are perceived, so they can adapt accordingly. MSF for example, in 2012 published *In the Eyes of Others*, the result of an extensive effort to understand how the organisation was perceived by the people it has tried to assist. MSF says the process uncovered many lessons, and changed MSF's modus operandi as a result.

This is not to say that participation should be encouraged blindly and risks such as managing expectations, acknowledging traditional forms of communication and leadership, and working at scale should be considered.[116]

Although it is difficult to quantify whether there has been greater participation of disaster and crisis-

CURRENT

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
62	61	53	54	57	61

FUTURE

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
68	64	60	70	70	77

*Unit in percentage

■ Deterioration
■ No change
■ Improvement

Graph based on data from the HAP Perceptions of Accountability in Humanitarian Action Survey

113/ Barry, N. & Barham, J. (2012): "Review of existing practices to ensure participation of disaster-affected communities in humanitarian aid operations".
114/ Ibid.
115/ Groupe URD (2009): "Participation Handbook for Humanitarian Field Workers".
116/ Barry, N. & Barham, J. (2012): "Review of existing practices to ensure participation of disaster-affected communities in humanitarian aid operations".

affected communities in humanitarian assistance over the past decade, the annual HAP Perceptions Surveys show that between 2009 and 2012, respondents have not noticed a significant increase in the consideration given to affected populations when monitoring and evaluating performance. The 2010 ALNAP _State Of The Humanitarian System_ report also notes that no organisations were found to have established criteria of success through dialogue with communities.[117]

Consultations with affected communities repeatedly show that people want more meaningful participation in planning and implementation. But as the SCHR Peer Review of 2011 noted, "'Participation' is rarely fully realised. Meaningful participation emerges from the two-way dialogue that characterises feedback procedures. It requires that affected persons are involved in key decision-making, including validating operational successes and identifying failures."[118] Yet on the whole, participation tends to be extractive and limited to assessment processes. Much less effort is made to provide affected populations with feedback.

Most recently, Time to Listen reiterated the need for a far greater commitment to recipient-driven programming: "After 'participating' in many assessments, meetings, and activities planned by aid providers, recipients often say they are disillusioned. In virtually every conversation, they ask what these supposedly 'participatory' approaches have achieved. They see little evidence that their involvement shapes decisions or actions. They say that most externally initiated participatory processes fall short of what they, as aid recipients, would consider meaningful and constructive engagement."[119]

> _We arrive in an emergency and say 'here, this is what you need, this is what is good for you.' As long as we don't accept that opening the participatory process is opening ourselves up to things that are not in our recipe book, we won't be participatory. As long as we remain in that culture and don't move to one of exposing ourselves to new challenges, we won't be accountable_
>
> François Grünewald Executive and Scientific Director, Groupe URD

ACCOUNTABILITY TO 'BENEFICIARIES'
NGO AND DONOR PERSPECTIVES, KEYSTONE, 2006

In 2006, Keystone undertook a web-based survey to explore how NGOs, donors, and other capacity building institutions in development view and practice accountability to the people meant to benefit from their work. 404 individuals completed the survey from organisations in 20 countries across Europe, Asia, Africa and North and Latin America. Of these 238 responses were from civil society organisations, NGOs, social enterprises and activists, and 166 were from donors, philanthropy support organisations and other social finance providers. Findings reveal a great deal about the perceived importance of affected population views. Although this survey was conducted in 2006, it seems that little has evolved since then.

- Many donors admitted that they generally do not know how accountable their grantees are to 'beneficiaries.'

- 72% of NGOs and 65% of donors think it is 'critically important' to take the views of 'beneficiaries' into account when NGOs design strategy and plan activities.

- Only 26% of donors routinely ask that NGOs design their indicators of performance with 'beneficiaries'. Also, only 30% of donors expect to regularly see 'beneficiaries'' views translated into final reports.

- Only 22% of donors say they routinely discuss the feedback from 'beneficiaries' with their grantees. Only 5% of NGOs say that donors show an interest in doing so.

- 77% of NGOs wanted support from their funders on how to incorporate the views of their 'beneficiaries' into their evaluation of projects.

---

117 / Gostelow, L. (2010): "SCHR Peer Review on Accountability to Disaster-Affected Populations: An Overview of Lessons Learned", SCHR.
118 / Ibid.
119 / Anderson, Mary B., Brown, D. & Jean, I. (2012): "Time to Listen".

Meaningful participation is challenging

A number of factors hinder the use of participation to strategically improve humanitarian response. First, although participation is recognised as critical, competing priorities may impede organisations' efforts at gathering input from affected populations. In emergency situations staff may be under pressure from donors or headquarters to meet tight deadlines, limiting the time they have to meaningfully engage with the people they aim to assist. Communicating with people also requires appropriate skills, which some technical experts may not have.

From 2006-2008, Concern Worldwide and Mango carried out a research project called "Listen First" to develop systematic ways of managing accountability to affected populations. The project found that managers had many other priorities, such as getting project plans and budgets approved, completing activities laid out in project plans, and spending budgets within fixed timescales. Accountability to affected populations was sometimes in active opposition to these, as it required more time and bottom-up decision-making.[120] Many staff also note they are handed project plans that have already been agreed to by their organisation and the donor, and thus have limited ability for flexibility when considering inputs from communities. While some donors try to show more flexibility, humanitarian assistance is generally still characterised by short term planning cycles, pressure to demonstrate quantifiable measures and "value for money" to meet donor funding requirements.[121] Staff may therefore be incentivised to prioritise accountability to the system over the accountability to affected populations.[122]

A related structural issue is that organisations tend to come to emergencies with a ready-made toolbox of solutions. When they do a needs assessment, they are looking for problems that they can fix, whether or not they are the most relevant to the given context. As one respondent put it, "we have hammers, so we look for nails,"[123] an approach which by definition limits participation.

Changing mindsets

While donors support coherence in quality assurance and compliance mechanisms – as evidenced through support for the JSI and the SCHR project on certification – organisations continue to feel strain that the different donor requirements put on their resources. Some managers at field level justify the little time they spend in direct interaction with local communities by the time they have to spend reporting to while some progress in this regard has been made with the ICRC and UN agencies, INGOs largely operate under the same conditions as prevailed when the Good Humanitarian Donorship commitments were endorsed 10 years ago. Given the GHD commitments to both ensure adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response, and harmonise reporting requirements, now seems like an opportune time for concerned stakeholders to review the system. These efforts should make it easier to assess performance and address issues, diminish the workload associated with reporting requirements, and allow field workers to spend more time on accountability to affected populations processes.

While institutional donors can help drive the process, aid organisations also have work to do. A 2012 study on participation found that the development and application of specific tools and guidelines for participation are no guarantee of good practice.[124] Genuine participation of affected communities relies on a fundamental shift away from the traditional role of aid agencies as a 'benefactor' to one that transfers responsibility, decision-making and programme direction from the organisation to the affected community. In reality this is a considerable challenge for many agencies to embrace at an institutional level.[125] The humanitarian community must therefore go beyond creating further standards and tools around participation, to a change in mindset that truly embraces the input of crisis-affected people.

> *Just because you're busy during an emergency response doesn't mean that participatory approaches aren't possible. It just means you can't have everything that you'd like. We've found that it's always possible to involve people in some way and to improve the level of community participation over time*
>
> Jock Baker, Former Programme Quality & Accountability Coordinator for CARE International and now an independent consultant

120/ Jacobs, A. & Wilford, R. (2010): "Listen First: a pilot system for managing downward accountability in NGOs", Development in Practice, Vol. 20, Nr. 7.
121/ Barry, N. & Barham, J. (2012): "Review of existing practices to ensure participation of disaster-affected communities in humanitarian aid operations".
122/ Ibid.
123/ François Grünewald, Executive and Scientific Director of Groupe URD, interview.
124/ Barry, N. & Barham, J. (2012): "Review of existing practices to ensure participation of disaster-affected communities in humanitarian aid operations".
125/ Ibid.

HAP BENCHMARK 5 HANDLING COMPLAINTS

There has been a general lack of communication with the affected population – and despite individual project or sector or geographic efforts to improve accountability, there are no effective channels for people to voice their needs, suggestions and complaints. Ministries are consulted but there is no feedback to authorities once they have given their views. Authorities and national NGOs alike feel that there is no room for either genuine partnership or real participation

Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to the Earthquake in Haiti, 2012

Accountability and complaints mechanisms were initially established in only a few locations. (...) Despite these mechanisms, accountability and complaints mechanisms overall were not commensurate with the scale of the funding. They were largely ineffective in addressing the worst cases of inappropriate aid, wastefulness and negligence among internationally, nationally and locally managed recovery programmes. However, there is evidence that accountability has improved with time and agencies are now paying more attention to the views of affected populations

Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami: Synthesis Report, 2006

The majority of international aid agencies, together with their local partners, established feedback mechanisms to ensure accountability to targeted communities. Such mechanisms enabled the recipient communities to voice their own concerns and submit complaints on the quality of service they received, selection criteria and so on. That said, the agency focus on outputs rather than outcomes may mean that wider effects of aid interventions (positive and negative) are not adequately accounted for in the feedback mechanisms

IASC Real-Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to the Horn of Africa Drought Crisis: Somalia 2011-2012, 2012

Complaints and response mechanisms

The purpose of complaints and response mechanisms (CRMs) is to provide context-appropriate channels for affected communities to safely raise complaints about a program and receive a response. A community-based feedback mechanism is a process through which an organisation can get positive or negative feedback from the community, enabling them to redress issues that arise. These issues may relate to fraud and corruption, sexual exploitation, or the abuse of power. An effective complaints-handling procedure should be accessible to and safe for all stakeholders, including staff and humanitarian partners, as power dynamics will be at play within organisations as well. To this end, a grievance procedure should be in place to deal with staff complaints, and a system for dealing with problems and concerns between the organisation and its humanitarian partners should also be instituted.

I am concerned that although accountability is gaining prominence in programme design, it remains an 'add on', and I fear that it may become reduced to 'tick-box' mentality: we have our complaints boxes in place so that's our accountability sorted

HAP 2012 Accountability Survey respondent

Years ago it was rare to see a complaints mechanisms as a standard practice for communities working with aid providers. There was no way for them to say if the staff of an organisation was mistreating them or not working in a way that was good for the community. People assumed that since no one complained, there were no problems. But there was no way to make a complaint in the first place

Katharina Samara, Project Coordinator, ICVA

Genesis of humanitarian complaints mechanisms

Since 2006, and following Save the Children's report *From Camp to Community: Liberia Study on Exploitation of Children*, there has been an overall increase in attention to the importance of effective CRMs, not only for preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse, but for reporting on all forms of abuse and exploitation, including corruption.[126] In 2008 HAP published *To Complain or Not to Complain: Still the Question*, a study in which 295 humanitarian aid recipients in Kenya, Namibia and Thailand participated in consultations about their perceptions of prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse. The study found that although aid recipients know sexual abuse and exploitation is going on around them and perceive the risks, the vast majority of them said they would not complain about misconduct. Consequently, at the time, complaints were rare and investigations even rarer.[127]

There is an increasing body of evidence demonstrating that when complaints and response mechanisms do work well, they have benefits for humanitarian action. A 2009 study commissioned by HAP found that in cases where complaints mechanisms were well-managed, they could foster trust between organisations and communities.[128] Effective complaints mechanisms can also increase security for staff: in a 2011 study carried out by CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, several organisations noted that instances of violence against staff working in difficult environments were reduced after they improved their communication and feedback processes with communities.[129] The CDA study also found that organisations that have maintained on-going primary stakeholder feedback mechanisms throughout the cycle of a project reported greater results and higher satisfaction compared to prior projects that did not include as much feedback. Often, changes made to project operations based on feedback were not difficult to incorporate, and changes to some small details led to significant improvements in recipient satisfaction.[130]

Ten years ago, complaints mechanisms were essentially unheard of within humanitarian response. Now, organisations have created entire departments to effectively deal with complaints. Monitoring and evaluation units have incorporated feedback and complaints into their scope of work, and despite the varying effectiveness of complaints mechanisms, their growing prominence shows considerable progress in the approach and thinking of humanitarian organisations.

126/ Martin V. (2010): "Literature Review: Complaints Mechanisms and Handling of Exploitation and Abuse", Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Taskforce.
127/ Lattu, K. (2008): "To Complain or Not Complain: Still the Question", HAP.
128/ Banos Smith, H. (2009): "The right to say and the duty to respond: the impact of complaints and response mechanisms on humanitarian action", HAP.
129/ CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (2011): "Feedback Mechanisms In International Assistance Organisations".
130/ Ibid.

Complaints mechanisms – what result?

Despite this progress, in 2010 the SCHR found that aid recipients still lack a basic understanding about how the mechanisms work, do not trust the security of the process, fear retaliation for making a complaint, and have doubts about access and utility of the process.[131] These findings were reiterated in ALNAP's 2010 _State of the Humanitarian System_ report which highlighted that: "Evaluations continue to note limited effectiveness of the complaints mechanisms established (such as boxes that go untouched) as well as the capacity to properly follow up on and redress complaints. Complaints mechanisms in IDP camps in Uganda, for example, were found to be inadequate and inappropriate, where they existed at all. Beneficiaries often find it difficult to complain or communicate concerns to organisations and are reluctant to do so; partly because there are fears that this will negatively impact on assistance or just will not be acted upon."[132]

Challenges to complaining

Even though aid organisations have explored a variety of ways to register complaints, from human interaction to hotlines or SMS-based systems, too many in the sector still equate complaints handling (and sometimes even accountability) with setting up complaints boxes, an approach that fails to recognise the diversity of individuals in a given community as well as cultural and educational specificities. Such approaches hinder the potential effectiveness that complaints or feedback mechanisms can have.[133]

Another obstacle towards progress is the fear some organisations have that allowing people to complain will open a 'Pandora's box' of concerns with far-reaching consequences. Some organisations are unsure how to manage feedback that brings up issues beyond the organisation's control, or how to address expectations raised by community members who provide input, and then mitigate their potential disappointment when they cannot be met.[134] As Paul Knox-Clarke and John Mitchell of ALNAP noted: "The more we take the voices of affected populations into account, the more we are confronted by diverse needs and expectations." [135] Finally, staff may be reluctant to seek out feedback because they interpret complaints as a criticism of their performance.

Eight-year old Caitland Dirocher carries water home in a camp for families left homeless from Haiti's January 12 earthquake. The camp, in the Martissant section of Port-au-Prince, houses hundreds of displaced families who are receiving medical care and other services from Dominican solidarity groups supported by the ACT Alliance

© Paul Jeffrey/ACT

131/ Gostelow, L. (2010) "SCHR Peer Review on Accountability to Disaster-Affected Populations: An Overview of Lessons Learned", SCHR.
132/ Taylor, G. (2012): "The State of the Humanitarian System", ALNAP.
133/ Knox-Clarke, P. and Mitchell, J. (2011): "Reflections on the Accountability Revolution", Humanitarian Exchange 52.
134/ Ibid.
135/ Ibid.

Thinking outside the box

The experiences of humanitarian organisations with complaints and response mechanisms have shown that in order for these to work well, they must be based on careful analysis of cultural context and power dynamics within communities to ensure that more privileged community members do not dominate the feedback. Also, affected populations need to be involved in the design and set up of the complaints mechanism. Leadership and a positive organisational culture are also considered important factors in creating successful feedback and response mechanisms.[136]

Experience shows that, contrary to what some people fear, complaints mechanisms do not inevitably result in large quantities of complaints on issues beyond the influence of aid organisations. Only when accountability systems are limited to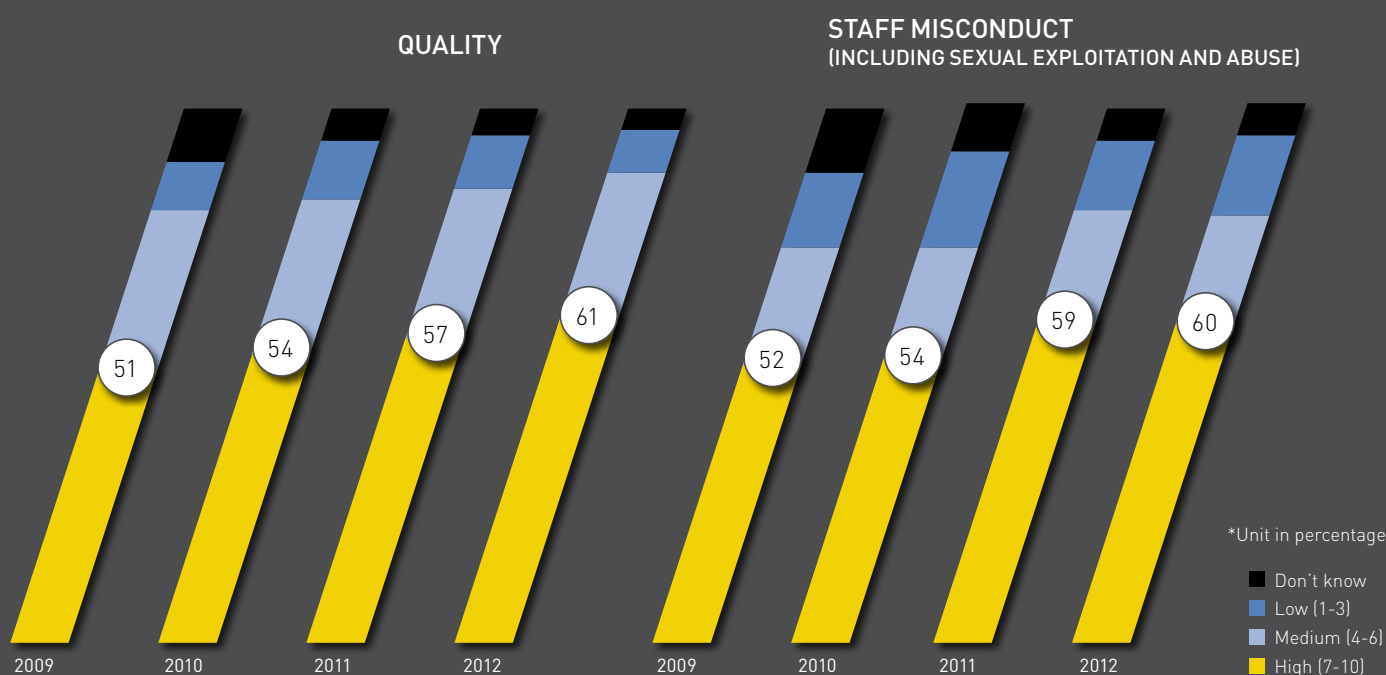 complaints handling, or when the scope of complaints is not appropriately explained, is this fear likely to materialise. Quite the opposite, feedback from recipients can be very useful in amassing evidence and triggering change. Current research being carried out by ALNAP and CDA on the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms with affected populations has shown that feedback can be very useful in creating a case for systematic change. When staff start hearing repeated feedback, they have a body of evidence from the community to go to management and advocate for a change in policy. Vouchers, for example, were a major shift in policy for WFP that were a reaction to a considerable amount of feedback from beneficiaries about their priorities. Without these mechanisms in place, this kind of change may not have been possible or could have taken longer to introduce.

Possibly as a result of these benefits, there has been gradual improvement of efforts by all agencies since 2009 to foster an environment where assisted populations can raise a complaint about the quality of programs. This is greatest within the INGO community.

Managers can play a key role in supporting such an environment, and in particular should take measures to ensure that staff do not take complaints personally and understand that allowing feedback into their programming will improve practices overall. Staff also need to have an option to lodge complaints themselves at organisational level. However, despite the potential benefits, a complaints handling mechanism is not a substitute for a more equal balance of power between aid organisations and the people they aim to assist. In the coming years, complaints handling, although important, should be considered a last resort after other accountability mechanisms – information sharing and participation in particular – have failed.

GRAPH
G

HOW DO YOU RATE YOUR ORGANISATION'S EFFORTS TO FOSTER AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE THE ASSISTED POPULATION CAN RAISE A COMPLAINT ABOUT:

QUALITY

STAFF MISCONDUCT
(INCLUDING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE)

QUALITY: 2009 – 51, 2010 – 54, 2011 – 57, 2012 – 61

STAFF MISCONDUCT: 2009 – 52, 2010 – 54, 2011 – 59, 2012 – 60

*Unit in percentage

■ Don't know
■ Low (1-3)
■ Medium (4-6)
■ High (7-10)

Graph based on data from the HAP Perceptions of Accountability in Humanitarian Action Survey

136/ Banos Smith, H. (2009: "The right to say and the duty to respond: The impact of complaints and response mechanisms on humanitarian action." HAP.

HAP BENCHMARK 6

LEARNING AND CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

The humanitarian community is suffering from a chronic amnesia as it does not take stock of lessons learned from prior evaluations. A more systemic follow up on previous recommendations is needed as it would help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian system's response to future disasters, both within Pakistan and globally

Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response
to Pakistan's 2010 Flood Crisis, 2001

Many lessons have been learnt and some of them have been implemented. But the system has rarely identified the need to match lessons learnt and recommendations with their specific area of application. Therefore, the implementation of certain recommendations has not always been successful. But often, lessons learnt are simply either ignored or not acted upon. There is still a tendency not only to reinvent the wheel, but also to turn it the wrong way

Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation in Haiti: 3 Months After the Earthquake, 2010

It is now fashionable for NGOs and donor agencies to claim or project that they are totally transparent, accountable and very much a 'learning organization', carrying out numerous 'learning' reviews and moderating workshops [...] designed to discover what worked and what did not and why? Yet [among] One-Year-After reports, only a handful are[...] prepared to actually [...] publicly admit [...] at least some [...] minimal [...] failings. What bombards us instead are 'sanitised' reports containing usually a lot of hype, (empty) rhetoric combined with (often misleading and meaningless?) statistics of aid delivery. Such deliberate policies of concealment create an overall (mistaken?) impression that their programs are unmitigated successes, free of controversies.

Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami: Synthesis Report, 2006

Learning and using lessons

A culture of learning and continual improvement should lie at the heart of a professional and committed organisation. Learning from past successes and failures and applying these insights to modify and adapt future work is therefore a cornerstone of accountability and quality management. Organisations should reflect on progress, document success and shortcomings and adapt activities. This is achieved through an effective monitoring and evaluation system, which ensures regular reviews of the work, impact and effectiveness of the organisation, and that identifies lessons for improving future operations.[137]

Beyond identifying lessons

Over the past ten years, much has been done to encourage a culture of learning and improvement in the humanitarian sector. In 2013, the Sphere Project launched an e-learning project focusing on the Sphere principles and standards, while HAP continually reflects with its members on their experiences operationalising the HAP Standard. ALNAP and Groupe URD in particular have contributed to the overall reflection, accompanied by more focused initiatives, including countless academic- and organisation-led research projects. The evaluative reports database maintained by ALNAP now contains more than 1200 evaluations of humanitarian action, and is growing every year.

It is still questionable however, how many of these have led to improved practice and what contribution they have made to improving the quality of humanitarian intervention. One comment from the 2013 ALNAP annual meeting on evidence and knowledge in humanitarian action

sums up the issue: "We are not good at learning lessons, and we do not systematically take on the findings and recommendation into our future responses."[138] Despite the volume of evaluations we now produce, it appears that the humanitarian system is still weak at channelling findings back to improve programming.

An evaluation of the UNICEF response to Cyclone Nargis, for example, noted that although a system was in place with results-based indicators, staff did not have the time or resources to analyse or use the data.[139] A 2009 DEC report reiterated this finding and stated that learning from experience tended to be the most challenging aspect of their accountability framework. DEC organisations confirmed that controls around learning from experience are more difficult to systematically apply and assure compared to financial and programmed management areas.[140]

Lack of input from affected populations

Another consistent finding is that many evaluations lack the perspective of aid recipients. For example, when Beck and Buchanan-Smith conducted meta evaluations for ALNAP, they found that almost three quarters of the evaluations reviewed between 2001 and 2004 had failed to consult programme recipients, or had only included minimal consultation.[141]

In a 2010 review of 40 evaluations on the Haiti earthquake response, relatively few evaluations focused on the views of aid recipients, and opportunities for joint or thematic evaluations appear to have been missed. Similarly, the Listening Project found that "dominant incentive structures do not generally reward more time spent with communities," and indicators used to track performance focus on outputs rather than on quality of relationships or processes.[142]

Some real time evaluations (RTEs) such as those for Myanmar, Haiti, Kenya and Pakistan stand out in that they specifically set out to include the views of aid recipients.[143] However, humanitarian evaluations overall still tend to underrate the experience of affected populations as a source of evidence. *2012 State of the Humanitarian System* report concluded that recipient consultation is one of the weakest areas of humanitarian performance assessment.[144]

Not safe to fail

What inhibits the sector from learning from past experience and applying lessons? Some of the key issues have already been mentioned in this report: high staff turnover, insufficient personal accountability and loss of institutional memory, the lack of feedback from crisis-affected populations, the difficulty staffing programmes with the right people in rapid onset emergencies, and also in some more demanding, long-lasting complex emergencies. Other issues are more specific. One obstacle is that because reporting is primarily donor-oriented and takes place in the midst of intense competition for humanitarian funding, aid organisations may be unwilling to admit failure or examine adverse impacts for fear of discontinued funding. Thus, mistakes are covered up or glossed over in reports, focusing instead on outputs and neglecting outcomes or impact.

Ways forward

If the humanitarian system is to progress, greater attention to the findings and recommendations within evaluations is needed. The industry spends considerable resources conducting evaluations to improve learning, but all too often reports end up on shelves or on websites without being translated into improved practice. This is

---

137 / HAP (2013): "Guide to the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management".
138 / Participant Observation, ALNAP Conference, Washington, March 2013.
139 / Taylor, G. (2012): "The State of the Humanitarian System", ALNAP.
140 / Ibid.
141 / Ibid.
142 / CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (2008): "International Assistance as a Delivery System", The Listening Project Issue Paper.
143 / Taylor, G. (2012): "The State of the Humanitarian System", ALNAP.
144 / Ibid.

especially true with joint evaluations, where oftentimes the diffusion of responsibility for the uptake of recommendations leads to poor follow-through. The sector needs to become better at institutionalising processes for learning lessons, and putting the plethora of findings and recommendations from evaluations into practice. These efforts are otherwise a waste of time and resources. If the humanitarian sector is serious about improving practice there must also be greater commitment to investing in what works and avoiding previously documented problems. Organisations must commit to building and utilising institutional knowledge of past mistakes and successes, and management must be held accountable for ensuring that lessons are acted upon. Organisational and donor leadership is therefore required to provide a 'safe space' to acknowledge mistakes and learn from these. Learning lessons is as much about trying to replicate what has worked as to avoid making mistakes in the future. Focusing too much on what doesn't work can detract from investing in what does.

> *We have some good recommendations from evaluations, but what happens is that few people read them, and those that do are often the programme managers who tend to explain away the problems and call into question the evaluation methodology – and sometimes the evaluators themselves*

Nicholas van Praag, Director, Ground Truth

Every day, Yeshi Demke in Tisabalima, Ethiopia, is walking 500 meters to fetch water. Church of Sweden supports several projects in rural Ethiopia to improve the poor people's abilities to support themselves and their families

© Magnus Aronson/Church of Sweden

THE NEXT DECADE

Progress and hope

The expansion of quality and accountability initiatives within the humanitarian sector over the past decade is laudable. As the HAR 2011 stated, "the range, significance, and likely impact of the developments point to the achievement of a 'critical mass' of activity within the humanitarian sector in favour of accountability to affected populations. The concept has infiltrated the thinking and approaches of all stakeholders – the UN's Transformative Agenda, NGOs' strategic priorities, donor policies and beneficiaries themselves who are more engaged in responses with the use of mobile technology and social media." [145]

The robust energy in response to greater demands for accountability has sparked innovations in the way in which humanitarians respond to and think about disasters. Many of these put aid recipients and crisis-affected communities at the heart of the accountability equation.[146] Today there are dozens of sector-specific approaches that did not exist a decade ago. Technological innovations have made two-way communication with affected populations simpler and more commonplace. Innovation in this direction is, however, still in its infancy and donors would serve all non-profits well by encouraging it.[147]

Overall, there is a positive trend with regards to accountability to affected populations and optimism about the future. Hopefully these trends will continue upwards as more research is done, further innovations occur and more accountability mechanisms are meaningfully put into practice. One key informant noted positively but realistically: "The movement is in its infancy but has a very solid backing from the top levels of the UN. Valerie Amos, the UN Emergency Response Coordinator, has talked about it in public and at the highest level people have taken an interest. But it will take time to see the rhetoric translate into real changes for affected people."[148]

Safrizal Toron lost his boat and all his equipment in the tsunami that hit Mentawai islands (Indonesia) in October 2010. Thanks to the local ACT member he has joined a local savings group and taken a loan to buy a new boat.
©Ulrika Lagerlöf/Church of Sweden

145/ Borton, J. (2009): "An Overview of Accountability in 2009", in Humanitarian Accountability Report, HAP.
146/ InterAction (2007): "The Latest Issues and Trends in International Development and Humanitarian Assistance: NGO Accountability." Monday Developments, Vol. 25, No.12.
147/ Ibid.
148/ Zia Choudhury, former OCHA consultant on accountability to affected populations, interview.

Power dynamics

Despite this progress, the sector still has work to do in terms of changing power dynamics and creating incentives to increase accountability to crisis-affected people. Even when humanitarian workers have the ability and time to listen to the people they aim to assist, the inherent power imbalance between aid workers and aid recipients often prevents honest communication. The humanitarian community must accept then that there are no easy solutions to achieving full accountability to crisis-affected communities, and that there will always be room for improvement.[149]

Evidence: making the case for accountability

Many stakeholders still perceive that there is a need for more evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms on improving humanitarian outcomes. One of the initial premises of the accountability 'revolution' was that improved accountability would also bring about better results, performance and impact. As Knox-Clarke and Mitchell put it: "There was little or no evidence to support the argument that better accountability would lead to more effective, secure programming at the time, but good sense told us it surely must be true."[150] Now that more organisations have taken up this 'good sense', they must translate this normative commitment into actual programming, confronting the problem of how exactly accountability fits into humanitarian practice and documenting whether it improves their work.

The accountability impact study and the development of a methodology for determining the effect that accountability has on the quality of programmes undertaken by HAP, Save the Children UK and Christian Aid are important initiatives. Funding for non-profit organisations prizes the use of evidence to guide priority-setting and programming. In such an environment, the absence of empirical evidence

for the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms can threaten their future, as potential donors may question whether these mechanisms are worth the resources required to sustain them.[151] The results of this research make a compelling case: the study has shown that accountability practices have, among other things, improved project targeting, strengthened the responsiveness to needs and quality of assistance, and built trust and galvanised relationships between recipients and aid providers. Given the research findings show improved accountability practices can contribute to higher-quality programs, project-level accountability should be considered an essential part of the aid process.[152]

These positive results are a good start, but the humanitarian sector must still strengthen efforts to understand the impact that accountability mechanisms have on aid programmes. The evidence gathered from these efforts will play an important role both in terms of ensuring the best possible outcomes for those in need of assistance, but also for creating and sustaining an enabling environment for assistance to be provided.[153]

Accountability as a way we do business

Pressure to improve practice and be more accountable is coming from multiple sources. New types of programming are pushing the boundaries of traditional power imbalances in the sector. The advent of cash transfers as a humanitarian response mechanism, for example, is in some cases considered by recipients and donors alike as a step towards putting the decision-making processes in the hands of affected populations.[154] The continued harnessing of technology is also providing affected populations with greater voice and input than they have had previously. Aid recipients themselves are demanding more involvement in the practices which impact their lives, and the NGO community is making great strides to be more accountable and

demonstrate the positive application of this accountability to programming. Although the UN has been seen as lacking in participatory and consultative processes, it is working to improve within the field. Staff throughout the system are acknowledging limitations and pushing for more meaningful input from crisis-affected communities.

Looking forward, accountability cannot be considered an 'add-on' and must become embedded into the way that humanitarian actors do business. We should strive to move away from the 'carrot and stick' mentality where agencies are rewarded for including community voice and have to create extraneous mechanisms to do so. Inclusion should be a natural part of how we respond. As one respondent noted: "In the future we won't have to go out and collect affected people's views to inform our work because they will be there with us sitting at the table participating in governance structures and decision-making processes."[155] Only then will the balance of power shift in such a way that humanitarian aid can truly be considered accountable to the people that it aims to assist.

The future is to enter into a dialogue, a relationship with the affected populations. People want to be consulted, respected, and accountability is one of the tools for that end. The future of accountability is dialogue and interaction, which takes time. If we push and do it wrong, we pay a high price later. Let's also not forget that acute emergency requiring urgent action represent only a small fraction of the global humanitarian aid sector, which is largely more implicated in protracted crisis, where we have time to dialogue, engage, and interact with the affected populations

François Grünewald Executive and Scientific Director, Groupe URD

149/ Anderson, Mary B., Brown, D. & Jean, I. (2012): "Time to Listen", CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.
150/ Knox-Clarke, P. & Mitchell, J. (2011): "Reflections on the accountability revolution", Humanitarian Exchange Issue 52.
151/ Obrecht, A. (2012): "Effective Accountability? The drivers, benefits and mechanisms of CSO self-regulation", One World Trust.
152/ Featherstone, A. (2013): "Improving impact: do accountability mechanisms deliver results?" A joint report by Christian Aid, Save the Children, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP).
153/ Ibid.
154/ Barry, N. & Barham, J. (2012): "Review of existing practices to ensure participation of disaster-affected communities in humanitarian aid operations".
155/ Dayna Brown, director of Listening Program, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, interview.

A pastoralist in search of water in Borena, Ethiopia
© Maria Kiani/HAP

3 COUNTING ON ACCOUNTABILITY: VOICES OF AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

After ten years of accountability discourse, have we done enough? **Maria Kiani** reports back from community consultations in Ethiopia and finds that, despite some positive shifts, practice on the ground has to yet match the rhetoric.

INTRODUCTION

In this year's *Humanitarian Accountability Report*, Jessica Alexander looks back at the evolution of accountability and quality over the last decade and points towards some of the structural and systemic issues which hamper progress, while James Darcy calls for broadening the way we look at accountability to include being accountable for political and strategic decisions. This chapter adds to the process of self-reflection by bringing forward the views of the individuals and communities who are at the receiving end of the services and assistance provided by humanitarian and development organisations. It offers a glimpse of how affected communities, whose views should matter the most, perceive aid organisations, and sheds light on some of their concerns and hopes. It presents a snapshot of how our actions and systems impact the well-being, self-esteem and survival of those who we seek to assist.

The findings and views highlighted in this chapter emerge from a HAP deployment[1] to Ethiopia undertaken from February to April 2013. The aim of the deployment was to support the Inter-Agency Accountability Working Group (IAAWG) in Ethiopia, UN agencies, and other international and national organisations to increase their awareness and practice of accountability issues.

During the deployment, the HAP Roving Team visited Dollo Ado refugee camps and the pastoral region of Borena, with the aims of supporting organisations working in these areas in their efforts to implement the HAP Standard,[2] and meeting community members in order to gather their perceptions on issues related to accountability. Unfortunately, due to security concerns, the HAP team was not able to hold direct consultations with community members in Dollo Ado. This chapter therefore presents the views of community members from and staff working in Borena.

The issues raised by the pastoralist communities in Borena and highlighted in this chapter, such as feelings of disempowerment, being treated as passive recipients, lack of information and participation, limited knowledge about rights and entitlements and the absence of avenues to safely raise complaints, are not isolated. Their concerns have been echoed in previous HAP Humanitarian Accountability Reports and by CDA's Listening Project[3] reports over the years, including in its most recent report *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid*.[4] This chapter adds to the growing body of evidence that highlights gaps between the accountability discourse in aid policy and the reality of humanitarian interventions as experienced by those they seek to assist.

The HAP team consulting community members in Gumi Gayo, Borena, Ethiopia
© Gregory Gleed/HAP
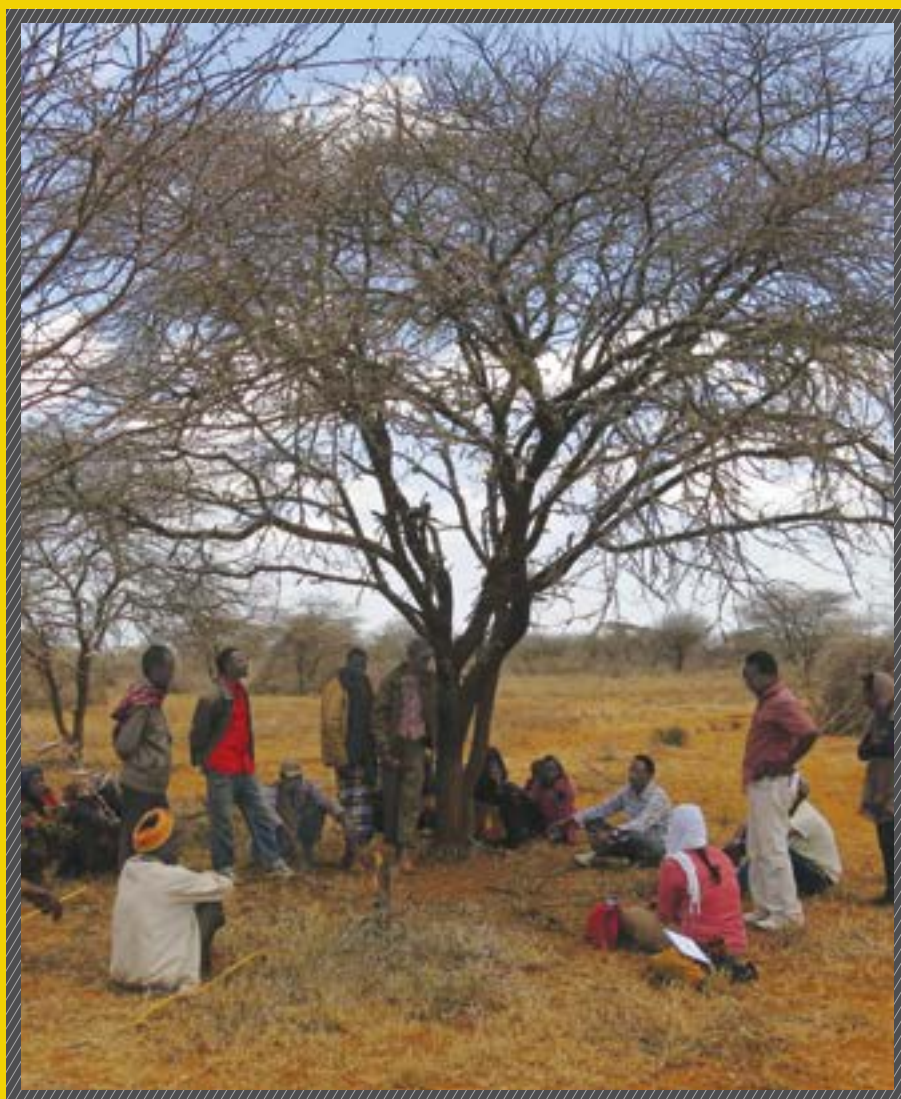
1/ Details of the purpose and work of the HAP deployments and its Roving Team can be found at: www.hapinternational.org/projects/field.aspx
2/ HAP (2010): "The 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management".
3/ http://www.cdainc.com
4/ Available at www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/book/time_to_listen_pdf_Pdf1.pdf

PURPOSE, METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

An integral element of HAP's deployment was to support organisations working with partners, national NGOs, and frontline staff to demystify accountability and strengthen practice. In Borena, activities are conducted through partnerships between international, national and local organisations. Towards this end, the HAP team conducted a workshop on "Accountability: challenges and solutions when working with partners." The workshop, attended by 28 participants from 20 organisations, provided an introduction to the HAP Standard.[5] As part of the workshop, staff working in the Borena region had a frank and at times heated discussion to identify the gaps as well as the contextual and structural challenges they face in increasing accountability to affected communities. They also shared their solutions and recommendations, which have been included in this chapter.

The HAP team, along with some participants from the workshop, conducted community consultations in the villages spread around the Borena area. This was also an opportunity for staff working in the area to examine programmes through an accountability lens and increase their own understanding of how communities perceive the issues. Borena was selected as a site for a field visit based on the recommendation and need for support expressed by the members of the IAAWG. The location presents a mix of humanitarian and development work, a range of national and international organisations, and was easy to access in order to conduct direct community consultations.

The HAP team visited four villages and held semi-structured interviews and group discussions with a range of community members. The questions were designed to be open-ended and general, as the purpose of the consultations was not to examine any particular organisation, but build an overview of how communities receiving assistance and support from organisations viewed these services and whether or not they were in line with good practices of accountability. Translators were used for all community consultations. Following the principle of informed consent, the purpose of the consultation, how confidentiality would be maintained and how information they shared would be used was explained to all those participating prior to seeking permission to conduct the consultation. Consent was also sought before taking photographs.

The views expressed by the communities in Borena have been grouped into themes and summarised in the sections below. While some trends and perceptions may be unique to Borena and the pastoralist context, many are loudly echoed in the wider-scoped Time to Listen report by CDA. Quotes from this report have been added to the chapter to illustrate how such perceptions are widely held across the globe.
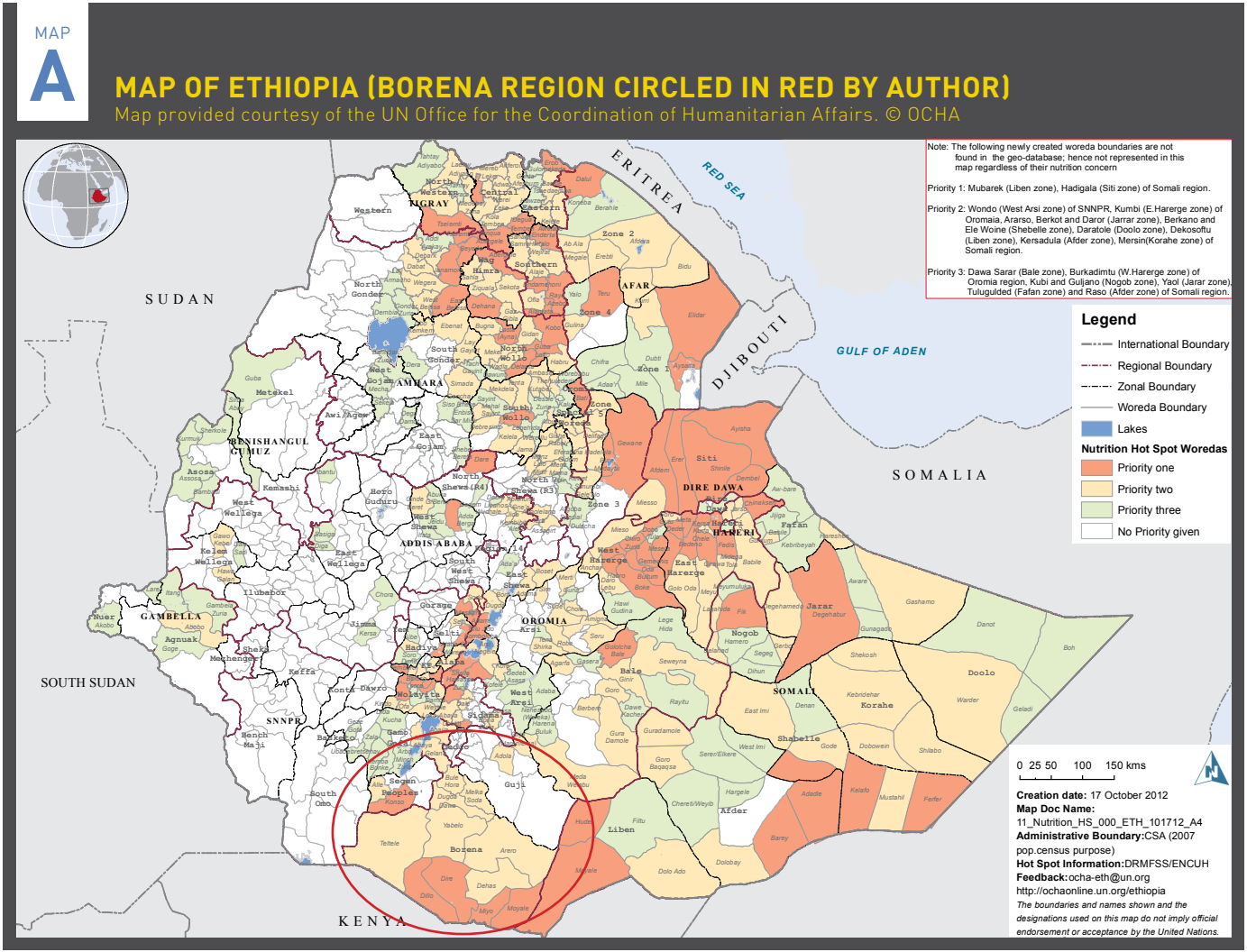
The primary purpose of the community consultations was to listen to the views of the Borena communities and bring them to the attention of organisations and staff working in Borena. The findings are not attributable to any one organisation. Rather, they are illustrative of some of the wider gaps in accountability and quality that need further consideration and action by the broader humanitarian and development sectors. In addition, the findings presented here do not provide an in-depth diagnostic of some of the larger contextual issues and the roles of other actors, nor does the chapter discuss other factors such as the limited development and humanitarian space available to organisations. This chapter focuses exclusively on pastoralist communities in Borena and how they view the relationship between themselves and I/NGOs, and examines how the benchmarks of the HAP Standard are being practiced, in particular those relating to sharing information, participation and handling complaints.

LOCATION[6]	NUMBER OF MEN	NUMBER OF WOMEN
Gummi Gayo	11 (including village administrator)	7
Darito Arero Wario	2 (village chief and elder)	1
	4	6
Sanke Dambala	7 (including village administrator)	3
Yabello village (Women's Saving and Credit Cooperative)	0	16
Total	24	33
Aggregated total: 57		

5/ The 6 benchmarks of the HAP Standard were discussed: 1) Establishing and delivering on commitments 2) Staff competency 3) Sharing information 4) Participation 5) Handling complaints 6) Learning and continual improvement.
6/ Spellings may differ.

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS ON AID: BORENA, ETHIOPIA

MAP A

MAP OF ETHIOPIA (BORENA REGION CIRCLED IN RED BY AUTHOR)
Map provided courtesy of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. © OCHA

Note: The following newly created woreda boundaries are not found in the geo-database; hence not represented in this map regardless of their nutrition concern

Priority 1: Mubarek (Liben zone), Hadigala (Siti zone) of Somali region.

Priority 2: Wondo (West Arsi zone) of SNNPR, Kumbi (E.Harerge zone) of Oromaia, Ararso, Berkot and Daror (Jarrar zone), Berkano and Ele Woine (Shebelle zone), Daratole (Doolo zone), Dekosoftu (Liben zone), Kersadula (Afder zone), Mersin(Korahe zone) of Somali region.

Priority 3: Dawa Sarar (Bale zone), Burkadimtu (W.Harerge zone) of Oromia region, Kubi and Guljano (Nogob zone), Yaol (Jarar zone), Tulugulded (Fafan zone) and Raso (Afder zone) of Somali region.

Legend

-·-·-	International Boundary
-··-··-	Regional Boundary
------	Zonal Boundary
------	Woreda Boundary
▣	Lakes

Nutrition Hot Spot Woredas

▣	Priority one
▣	Priority two
▣	Priority three
▣	No Priority given

0 25 50   100   150 kms

Creation date: 17 October 2012
Map Doc Name:
11_Nutrition_HS_000_ETH_101712_A4
Administrative Boundary:CSA (2007 pop.census purpose)
Hot Spot Information:DRMFSS/ENCUH
Feedback:ocha-eth@un.org
http://ochaonline.un.org/ethiopia
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

The Borena administrative zone is situated in Ethiopia's Oromia state. This zone is divided into 10 woredas (districts) and its capital is Yabello. It is bordered in the south by Kenya and Somalia. The majority of people in the zone are pastoralists or agro-pastoralists, and livestock holdings mostly determine the level of household wealth.[7]

According to the report *Climate-related Vulnerability and Adaptive Capacity in Ethiopia's Borana and Somali Communities,*[8] the agro-pastoralist communities of Borena identify the following consequences that they face as a result of drought, inadequate rainfalls and climate change:

- Decreased pasture availability (leading to shortage of pasture, overgrazing, and land degradation)
- Decreased water availability (water shortages)
- Emaciation of livestock (livestock weight loss)
- Death of livestock
- Decreased livestock productivity (milk and meat)
- Decreased livestock disease resistance
- Decreased livestock prices
- Reduced incomes
- Crop failure
- Food insecurity and malnutrition (mostly affecting children, pregnant women and old people)
- Increased school drop-out rates (due to migration)
- Interruption of development activities
- Women walking longer distances in search of water
- Increased human diseases and death
- Increased conflicts over scarce resources (in Borana)

To help communities address these issues, a number of international NGOs and UN agencies partner with local and national organisations in Borena. Alongside the long-term development work, a range of humanitarian and relief work was undertaken in Borena in response to the food crisis of 2011. The humanitarian response is closely managed and coordinated by the national and local administrative authorities, while development programmes appeared to have a freer sphere of action.

7/ Riché, Béatrice, Excellent Hachileka and Cynthia B. Awuor (2009): "Climate-related vulnerability and adaptive-capacity in Ethiopia's Borana and Somali Communities: Final assessment report".

8/ Ibid.

VIEWS, CONCERNS AND SUGGESTIONS FROM COMMUNITIES AND STAFF IN BORENA

Appreciation for humanitarian and development organisations for the support they provide:

All the community members who participated in the consultation expressed gratitude and appreciation for the support that humanitarian and development organisations provide. They said the organisations had **"relevance"** and **"help to generate income at household level."** They appreciated how organisations **"help us in the time of our need"** with **"priority being given mostly to children, women, and disabled groups."**

They also recognised the work done by staff and efforts that are made to bring change and improvement to their lives.

What makes a good NGO?

When asked what in their view makes a good I/NGO, community members unanimously and unequivocally stated that a good I/NGO is one that:

- ◾ "Responds to needs, for example introducing restocking and benefits that can improve our life"

- ◾ "Works in harmony" with the community

- ◾ "Keeps appointments and time"

- ◾ "Discusses, consults and shares ideas – everything should be based on consent and agreement"

- ◾ "Creates awareness and shares information through community gatherings"

Community members consistently repeated the importance of the values of working in harmony and collectively, based on principles of consent and agreement. Organisations which visited the community regularly, worked towards building a long term relationship with communities, discussed projects and sought their consent and approval before implementing them were viewed as and rated as the best ones.

Take into account what counts

Community members highlighted their dissatisfaction with the lack of understanding or recognition of the customs and context of the pastoralist communities in aid programming.

Community members felt that their mobility, livelihood patterns, needs, existing coping mechanisms and priorities were not fully understood, appreciated or given importance in programme design or implementation. This has led to frustration and lack of confidence in I/NGOs, and to feelings of being disrespected and losing autonomy. Many lamented how this lack of consideration has affected their ability to engage in the projects, resulting in lower levels of participation and support.

There was evident exasperation as to why programmes and activities were designed and implemented during times when they were away from their homes searching for grazing land, getting water from distant places or simply busy with activities to secure their food and livelihood.

> *NGOs aren't government. A good NGO is one that works in harmony with the society, culture and values of the community. It engages the community, does projects based on community interest and needs. It discusses with the community before an intervention*
>
> Village Chief of Arero

A paper by the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), "Social Protection in Pastoral Areas," points to this discord and calls for a thorough understanding of pastoralists' specific vulnerabilities. It cautions that "pastoralist livelihood strategies have a number of features fundamentally different to sedentary livelihoods. Therefore, the use of 'blueprints' for social protection instruments from sedentary areas is inappropriate in the region's pastoralist zones." [9]

Participants presenting challenges and solutions to working with partners in the HAP workshop, Yabello, Borena, Ethiopia
©Maria Kiani/HAP

For communities, the failure of organisations to fully understand and take into account their context and customs leads to a sense of imposition and poor identification of needs. Community members repeatedly highlighted **"don't impose – imposing is bad."** When humanitarian or development organisations decide for communities rather than with them, this results in actions that are based on perceived rather than real needs. As the HPG paper iterates:

"Eastern Africa generally lacks dedicated instruments to reduce discrimination and abuse of the most vulnerable pastoralists. The formal policies of state actors in eastern Africa also rarely reflect the reality of pastoralists' needs, but rather reflect what are perceived as their needs."[10]

Linked to this is the challenge of aligning real needs to the funds available. During the HAP workshop, staff of aid organisations acknowledged the lack of understanding of the pastoralist communities. They also expressed frustration about how projects came pre-designed and pre-decided according to donor priorities and government regulations, and mentioned their lack of power and flexibility to adapt these according to the needs and context. Many of them highlighted their own

<div style="background:yellow">

ACCOUNTABILITY IS...

- Taking account of the needs, concerns, capacities and disposition of affected parties
- Giving account of why certain actions and decisions are taken
- Being held to account for actions and decisions and safely report concerns and gain redress as and where appropriate and responding to any concerns and complaints.

Adapted from "What is accountability" http://hapinternational.org/other/faq.aspx#1

</div>

sense of disillusionment and questioned why donor priorities, deadlines and the need to spend available funds take priority over the contextual issues and needs. They believe that if improved impact and change is desired, then the humanitarian and development financing processes must more systematically and effectively take into account contextual variations and needs.

In *Time to Listen*, similar sentiments were expressed by local organisations in Lebanon: "Everything is decided before you start the project. Some donors come to us with ready-made objectives so we have to channel them into our objectives. Once you get funded as a local NGO, you are strangled by the conditions you imposed on yourself in the proposal." [11]

Frontline staff and local NGOs, who are at the receiving end of the

frustrations of communities, cannot be held responsible for wider structural and systemic gaps in humanitarian and development systems and processes. A broader rethink of how policies are formulated, programmes designed and funds disbursed and dispensed needs to take place so organisations are facilitated and enabled to be more accountable to affected communities.

Organisations don't understand how we live – they schedule meetings, activities at wrong times and don't take into consideration the seasonal calendar

Community members in Arero Wario

<div style="background:grey">

An example of how predetermined projects did not take into account the context and lifestyle patterns of agro-pastoralists. Communities had little ownership or interest in maintaining these.

Signboard telling communities to use pit latrines
© Maria Kiani/HAP

A pit latrine which no longer functions nor is used by the nomadic and highly mobile communities
© Maria Kiani/HAP

</div>

9/ Humanitarian Policy Group (2009): "Social Protection in Pastoral Areas, Synthesis Paper".
10/ Humanitarian Policy Group (2009): "Social Protection in Pastoral Areas, Synthesis Paper".
11/ Anderson, Mary B., Brown, D. & Jean, I. (2012): "Time to Listen", p. 69.

Deciding if assistance is worth it – the dilemma of opportunity cost

Communities in Borena highlighted the long distances they often have to travel to attend meetings or receive assistance which does not meet their needs. Their frustration is made even worse when I/NGOs do not keep time and arrive late for committed meetings, or do not keep their appointments at all.

One community member highlighted: **"We have to travel a long distance just for one goat. You should adjust the distribution point."** In contrast, this person pointed out his preference for **"saving and credit facilities (which) changed our life for the better."** The agro-pastoralists of Borena, like other crisis-affected communities, have to weigh the 'opportunity costs' of going to a distribution point, attending a meeting, or participating in an activity against those of searching for pastures, conducting livelihood activities or finding alternative and self-reliant means of survival. There are consequences for either choice they make: the distributed items obtained might not fulfil their needs, or might not be proportional to the time and effort expended in receiving them. On the other hand, not attending a community meeting convened by an I/NGO might mean being missed out or not being 'selected' for current or future assistance.

Stockton highlights these issues in his paper "The Accountability Alibi," saying that:

"Once the opportunity costs of queuing are more fully understood, so too is the anger of disaster survivors when relief agencies treat them as if they had nothing better to do. Such feelings are often exacerbated by the venues chosen for relief aid transactions. So often people have to walk for hours or even days to get to a distribution point, only to find that the distribution schedule has been changed, that they have missed a vital registration event, and that all their effort has been in vain. It is at

Women walk long distances to collect water in Borena, Ethiopia
©Maria Kiani / HAP

these moments when we can properly speak of 'disaster victims,' where the opportunity costs of choosing to depend upon an unaccountable relief agency can be truly deadly."[12]

While the opportunity costs in Borena might not be 'deadly,' taking into account the social and mobility patterns and survival strategies of agro-pastoralist communities is critical when designing and implementing projects. In any community, sound and culturally appropriate structures exist for sharing information. Alongside these, new and innovative means for reaching out to communities continue to be developed. All such avenues should be used to clearly and fully inform communities of the benefits and intended impacts of services, in order to enable them to make informed choices. This will also help to mitigate their sense of frustration and manage expectations.

Sustainable, life-changing versus 'hit and run' projects

The projects that were appreciated the most were those that brought the community and I/NGO together and enabled them to work jointly, gave new

ideas, and supplemented and improved the existing traditional systems.

Community members highlighted that **"trainings and awareness creation benefited us."** Projects and programmes that built the capacity of the community and had elements of **"behaviour change"** were perceived as life-changing, sustainable and having positive impact. Such projects provided new skills to community members, giving them a sense of empowerment and confidence, and instilling a belief in their ability to change and improve their lives. One example that was given was of trainings on water management which showed the community how they could save rainwater. Afterwards, the community constructed water tanks to put their new knowledge into practice. Other projects that were quoted included credit-saving schemes, awareness on family planning, livestock health and care, sustainable use of resources, and HIV awareness.

Interestingly, communities talked about project cycles and short-term discrete activities. Despite the fact that some organisations have been working in the Borena area for decades now, none of the community members mentioned an agreed and shared vision of how things would be changed over a period of time and how the communities and I/NGOs would work together to

---

12/ Stockton, Nicholas (2006): "The Accountability Alibi", Humanitarian Exchange Magazine Issue 34.

achieve it. There also appeared to be limited linkages between I/NGOs on how their respective activities tied together to deliver coordinated and long-term change.

Aid recipients in Kenya also highlighted the shortcomings of this 'piece-meal' approach and short-term mentality. As reported in Time to Listen, they **"criticized the 'project mentality' among donors and aid agencies, saying that it lacked a long-term vision and impact and that more money was wasted with short-term thinking."** [13]

Communities also emphasised self-reliance rather than over-reliance on I/NGOs. They preferred projects that changed lives and offered ways to overcome dependency through facilitating new ideas, approaches and meaningful changes. Community members also expressed their dislike for 'band-aid' approaches and pre-designed projects, and cautioned: **"Discuss together the creation and design of the programme, agree priorities and create an action plan so it can be done."**

Existing principles of equality, sharing and collective survival were found to be common among all the community members consulted. These are based on religious values and a sense of community and kinship, with resources being shared amongst the poorer and marginalised community members. Organisations have not fully understood or leveraged these aspects in programmes designs, whereas building on such principles offers the possibility of programming that is more sustainable, prioritised according to community needs and reinforces communal self-reliance.

Communities also recognise the limited funds available for I/NGOs. Suggesting how to use the limited resources more wisely so that there is greater impact, some members of the Arero Wario community said that I/NGOs should **"select few households and change their lives rather than give few things to the whole community. Prioritise the vulnerable groups."** This call for greater self-reliance and sense of collective good and sharing was echoed in the village of Sanke Dambala, where some suggested that **"awareness and**

WHAT WORKS: EXAMPLES FROM COMMUNITIES OF SUSTAINABLE PROGRAMMING

In separate discussions about sustainable projects, the community leader of Arero as well as the community members shared the same example of a traditional well-being repaired. The traditional well, which is dug deep into the earth, had become inaccessible due to a lower water table as a result of the drought.

Community members appreciated how the local NGO:

discussed with us the water management issue. They came with what they have, asked for a (labour) contribution from the community and addressed our need.

Through the discussion and cooperation of the community, the traditional well was repaired through a locally and collectively generated solution. This involved building a water trough, with the community contributing time and labour. The well was not only repaired, but it now only needs three people to function it whereas earlier it needed twelve. In addition, flood diversions were created.

The community's sense of collective achievement and ownership was evident. Maintenance and repairs of the well continue to be managed by the community. As one community member said:

The NGO assisted us and worked with us. A traditional well was improved through use of traditional and modern systems. The technical expertise given to the community is the legacy of the NGO and their work is unforgettable.

Members of a women's cooperative in a village on the outskirts of Yabello shared another example of a sustainable project that introduced them to credit and saving schemes. The scheme helped to create positive and long-term change for the women and their community. Incidentally this project was conducted by the same organisation which conducted the traditional well repairs. The members of the Women's Cooperative Society said:

The NGO called each one of us from our houses and taught us to manage the money from our credit and saving scheme. The NGO changed our minds by informal education. We collectively constructed the centre and the NGO employed the teacher. The credit and saving scheme changed our capacity and our lives.

knowledge creation is a must. Assign someone to live with us, to guide and support us so we can bring positive change to our lives."

Replacing dependency by an approach that empowers the community on a collective level and enables them to be self-reliant is a desire that

has been echoed by others across the world. In Myanmar the CDA's Listening Project was told that: "People want self-reliance and to focus on long-term development and planning after they have awareness and training." [14]

13/ Anderson, Mary B., Brown, D. & Jean, I. (2012): "Time to Listen", p. 74.
14/ Anderson, Mary B., Brown, D. & Jean, I. (2012): "Time to Listen", p. 17.

Caught between the humanitarian-development divide

Borena offers a mix of concepts, approaches and theories of development and relief work. In response to the 2011 food crisis, humanitarian interventions spiked and some development organisations and local partners changed gears and became 'multi-mandated,' providing humanitarian and development assistance simultaneously. This period also saw the arrival of new organisations and actors.

The influx of organisations and flurry of activities during the time of the food crisis appears to have left the communities bewildered. They cited a number of "hit and run projects" for which no consent was sought, no agreement with community members was negotiated nor was there any follow up or monitoring once items were distributed. Communities talked about how organisations "disappeared" and "staff never revisited to check the impact of their activities," or how they "never heard from some I/NGO again." The Time to Listen report highlights similar issues, and says that "people talked about how project timeframes are too short and long-term projects with community involvement in needs assessments, planning, and evaluation are necessary." [15]

In the aftermath of this wave of humanitarian interventions, the community in Borena has been left with partially met needs and unmet expectations about projects that have had little or no impact. This has left some of the I/NGOs that continue to be present there to bear the brunt of the lack of accountable practices of other organisations. Community members report feelings of powerlessness and inability to make decisions about their well-being. On the one hand this has given rise to deep frustration about the 'piece-meal' or 'hand-out' approach, with trust and confidence in I/NGO work diminishing. On the other hand, residual expectations for further relief distributions still exist, as highlighted by one community member: "There are no frequent or regular meetings. We don't know when the next distribution [of cattle and services] will happen."

The linear and bifurcated approach to relief, recovery and development appears to have increasingly become counterproductive. The divisions between humanitarian and development assistance are blurred and in some cases irrelevant. The contextual realities and needs of those affected by disaster and conflict are more complex and rapidly changing and do not fit into the artificially constructed and abstract divisions between humanitarian and development assistance. A more fluid and integrated approach is needed.

In the case of pastoralist communities, the failure to integrate different types of programming has led to an increase in vulnerability and a vicious cycle of dependency. The aforementioned HPG paper highlights that "the pastoralists are in a perpetual state of humanitarian crisis reliant on food aid" which is the "the negative impact of historical neglect and inappropriate or unimplemented policies in pastoral areas." This has wrongly led government and development practitioners "to continue focusing on the consequences of drought, rather than working to reduce vulnerability to it." [16]

The new 'resilience agenda' currently being put forward offers the hope of a potential bridge between emergency response and long-term development aid. However, there is no clarity on who is ultimately responsible for ensuring that humanitarian and development assistance can be better linked through the resilience approach.[17]

Though inhabiting different political and philosophical spheres, with one trying to assuage the immediate effects of a disaster or conflict and the other working to remove the structural and underlying causes of socio-economic inequalities, the focus of both humanitarian interventions and development assistance is one and the same: affected communities. To reflect this, a more seamless transition between, and integration of, the stages between relief, recovery, resilience and development is needed. This transition must be underscored and tied together by the fundamental principle of being accountable and putting the well-being of affected communities at the centre of all

actions and decisions, whether they are affected by disaster, conflict or poverty.

Information and transparency – the power to change and to hold to account

We have little information about our rights and are not informed that NGOs are answerable to us

Community members in Gumi Gayo

The consultations in Borena revealed that communities lacked detailed information about organisations' backgrounds or expected staff behaviours, and were not adequately informed about project life spans, with some expecting relief distributions to continue. Others highlighted that they were not informed about or explained their rights and entitlements.

Communities also repeatedly and strongly emphasised the need to have fuller details regarding the purpose and intended impacts of projects before they are implemented. As one community member in Arero Wario said: "They should ask, discuss before implementing and understand the pastoralist way of life."

The act of sharing information and seeking consent from the community restores the balance of power in favour of affected communities. Information provides people with the power to make informed choices about whether or not to engage with, support and participate in activities of I/NGOs, and also with the knowledge they need to hold these organisations to account. The responsibility to provide timely and relevant information lies with an implementing organisation. It is in essence a form of seeking permission or consent to intervene – the first and most basic

---

15/ Anderson, Mary B., Brown, D. & Jean, I. (2012): "Time to Listen", p. 17.
16/ Humanitarian Policy Group (2009): "Social Protection in Pastoral Areas, Synthesis Paper".
17/ Kindra, Jaspreet (2013): "Understanding Resilience", IRIN.

step even in providing first aid in most countries. Sharing information can help mitigate people's feeling of being passive recipients of aid, and replace it with a sense of agency and control, as it gives them the ability to make decisions and give consent to actions and decisions that will affect their lives and well-being. Communities in Borena remarked that this is also a critical aspect for the success of programmes, as highlighted by one community member in Arero Wario: **"Share information beforehand so we can be successful together."**

During workshop deliberations, staff working in Borena highlighted the challenges of sharing information within a highly mobile agro-pastoralist context. Staff stressed that the context should not be used as an excuse to justify the failure to adequately and appropriately inform communities. Rather, they acknowledged that it was the responsibility of organisations working in Borena to understand the agro-pastoralist context and adapt information sharing activities and practices appropriately.

Staff also highlighted challenges like a **"lack of transparency and openness"** and a **"culture of secrecy"** that was prevalent socially, internally within organisations and towards communities. This, they said, has shaped attitudes of staff and organisations, as well as the government, to be **"unwilling to share information."** As a solution, they emphasised the need for prioritising information sharing as a programmatic activity, backed by appropriate guidelines and policies.

Participation – imposition or agreement?

Sometimes participation will be reduced – sometimes I/NGOs impose ideas before discussion with us. When they impose ideas people lose interest and stop engaging with I/NGOs

Community member, Darito Arero Wario

VIEWS FROM THE MEN AND WOMEN OF ARERO WARIO VILLAGE:

HOW I/NGOS SHOULD BEHAVE AND WHAT THEY SHOULD DO TO IMPROVE:

- Introduce yourself
- Create awareness – explain to us what you want to do
- Work on behaviour change
- Find agreement from community
- It is not good if you come and deliver services without explaining
- Bring everyone together, and hold discussions in order to understand the seasonal calendar and which are the critical times for pastoralists
- Understand the dynamics of our way of life
- Share information
- Before you start anything, make sure that all members of the community are present
- Before any project, build an understanding and then find agreement on roles and responsibilities of each party
- Plan with us
- Everyone should participate and the community should also contribute
- Imposing your view is bad – don't impose

Interestingly, these recommendations highlighted by the community are encapsulated as requirements for being accountable in the HAP Standard benchmarks of sharing information and participation.[18]

Communities repeatedly highlighted the need for informed consent, agreement, discussion and participation before and during programmes, along with the importance of recognising their context and culture.

In one focus group, the HAP team met with a group of community members who were digging a water hole for preserving rainwater. During discussions they revealed that it was the wrong season to be digging a water hole and although they knew this, the I/NGO had a deadline to meet to do the project so they had to participate in the activity. In addition they highlighted that they had dedicated time away from other activities to dig the pond, and after it was completed they still had to travel long distances to fetch water.

This highlights the issue of opportunity costs, as discussed earlier, and also the misunderstanding or lack of consideration given to seasonal issues and patterns. These kinds of

programmatic misfits can only come from a serious gap in participatory planning: evidently, project timeframes and designs have been pre-established, and communities have to dramatically change their livelihood and survival patterns to conform to them. When asked how I/NGOs could improve, this group recommended:

- "Programmes should be participative and based on consent of people"
- "We should have community participation"
- "Discuss with us first and then implement"
- "Keep our recommendations"
- "Make an action plan with us"
- "Consider real season, situation and time before starting programmes."

At times, communities accept what is designed and implemented by I/NGOs, knowing well that in actuality the

18/ HAP (2010): "The 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management".

activity will have little or no impact, or is unsustainable. They acquiesce to the deadlines and deliverables set, in most cases unilaterally, by I/NGOs, with the hope of drawing some short-term or immediate benefit. In other cases, their acquiescence is due to the fear that questioning an activity might make the I/NGO "unhappy" or make them appear "ungrateful" and possibly lead to the withdrawal of the present and future assistance.

These testimonies reveal the underlying power dynamic which is that of a recipient–benefactor relationship, in which aid recipients are burdened with concerns that providing feedback or raising a complaint might lead to the suspension of support. This indicates the need to change the nature of the relationship, and for aid organisations to be more mindful of their inherent power and to use it in a more responsible manner. This, after all, is the essence of accountability to those who we seek to assist.

> *There are times that NGOs do not provide what people really need. For some NGOs, the projects come from above, top-down. They should listen to the people from the communities*
>
> Community members, Myanmar/Burma, the Listening Project [19]

Inadequate consultations with communities and 'cookie-cutter' or inappropriate programming are not intentional on behalf of staff working directly with affected communities. While reflecting on the challenges they faced and the existing gaps for improving participation, staff in the HAP workshop in Borena highlighted the following issues:

- Nomadic social and livelihood patterns of the communities: "communities are dispersed over large areas"
- "Misunderstanding of pastoralist system"

- "History of poor participation"
- "Limited awareness creation about the programme activities"
- The "need to provide incentives to participate"
- Prevalence of "dependency syndrome"
- Pre-set donor (including partner) prioritisation and "inflexibility to adapt to on-the-ground needs"
- "Community-based programming is poor or not existing"
- "No proper information sharing on time nor briefing on roles and responsibilities of I/NGOs"
- "Lack of organisational commitment and accountability"
- "Lack of awareness about how to communicate in line with culture, norms, values"
- "Lack of proper organisational supervision, monitoring and evaluation."

As these comments demonstrate, improved and meaningful participation by communities requires organisational commitment. In addition, if programmes aim to increase self-reliance and a sense of empowerment for communities, which can only be achieved through greater participation and a more even balance of power between aid providers and aid recipients, donors and governments must also look at their decisions, programming and funding policies through an accountability lens and shape these accordingly.

Complaints – thinking outside the box

As already highlighted earlier, communities said they were "**not aware of their rights or that I/NGOs are answerable to them.**" When asked if they raised concerns or complaints and if these were adequately addressed, they gave mixed responses.

One of the communities consulted highlighted that they had to travel approximately 100 kilometers to Yabello, the capital of Borena to put

their grievances in a complaints box. They were not clear on how the complaints were dealt with and addressed and said: "**We know there is a complaints box: we don't know how to use it, so we don't use it.**"

Other communities cited examples of sharing concerns and complaints with staff who visited their communities, with mixed success. The Yabello women's cooperative were satisfied with how their issues were dealt with, and cited an example of how a hut constructed by an I/NGO had some defects which were fixed once the issue was raised with the staff. In other locations, however, community members said that issues were raised but these were not addressed adequately, adding that: "**Follow-up is necessary. We give suggestions but there is no follow up – the I/NGO did not even come back.**"

These experiences show the importance of putting in place a complaints system that is appropriate to the context. Yet many organisations and staff still operate under the misconception that simply putting in place a 'complaints box' is enough to deal with grievances. Any complaints system put in place should be context appropriate, designed according to the preferences of the community, and be accessible to all groups within the community.[20] The organisation should also ensure that there are set procedures in place for dealing with and addressing the complaints, and that it provides multiple avenues through which concerns and complaints can be brought to its attention in a safe and timely manner.

During the HAP workshop, staff provided recommendations and actions to be taken forward to establish and improve complaints systems. These included "**empowering the community and creating awareness,**" "**building trust by giving feedback and taking action,**" and "**building awareness about accountability commitments and the rights of communities.**" They also highlighted that this should be done incrementally, harmonising new processes with on-going programmatic activities.

19/ Anderson, Mary B., Brown, D. & Jean, I. (2012): "Time to Listen", p. 39.
20/ The HAP Standard does not prescribe using a complaints box. The HAP Standard is formed on six integrated benchmarks that build on each other. Handling complaints is the fifth benchmark of the HAP Standard. It is preceded by benchmarks regarding sharing information and participation, which help to establish trust between an organisation and community, and decrease the number of grievances as well.

WHAT NEXT?

The issues raised in this chapter are not new or remarkable in themselves. What is remarkable is that after 10 years, the questions and criticisms raised by disaster-affected communities continue to be the same time and time again. Numerous reports and countless meta-evaluations of humanitarian responses ranging from the Rwanda genocide, Indian Ocean tsunami, Pakistan floods or Haiti earthquake [21] provide sufficient proof of how the humanitarian and development system at large continues to create and reinforce a recipient-benefactor relationship between affected communities and humanitarian or development organisations. While the discourse of humanitarian aid and development work has become increasingly politically correct, professing to uphold rights and put communities at the centre, our actions – collectively, organisationally and personally – by and large continue to be paternalistic. Cases of 'good practice,' unfortunately remain sporadic rather than systematic.

Meanwhile, affected communities continue to call for improved and accountable services that are not only life-saving but life-changing. We record the voices of those who we seek to assist in countless consultations, reports and evaluations. But are we acting on what they are saying? At times, we dismiss their views as being 'anecdotal,' or 'the grumblings of a disgruntled few.' More often than not, the opinions of those we seek to assist are seen to be 'insufficient evidence' to bring about policy or programmatic changes, and are not given enough weight to dedicate additional resources to meet their concerns.

This year's *Humanitarian Accountability Report* has highlighted that significant progress has been made over the years on issues of accountability and quality. It is critical that these efforts now translate into structural and system-wide improvements. Humanitarian and development actors should make increased efforts to comply to accountability and quality commitments they have made, and must not shy away from matching rhetoric with action on the ground. Only then can we systematically, effectively and truly put communities affected by disaster, conflict, poverty or climate change at the centre of our actions and decisions. The responsibility to ensure that our grandest policy and smallest action does not disempower or diminish the dignity and autonomy of those we seek to assist ultimately lies with us.

Walking towards an uncertain future, Ibrahim Osman Mohammed (in front) and his cousin Hassan Keyr Isaac cross a remote section of eastern Kenya near the Somali border

©Paul Jeffrey/ACT

21/ As highlighted in reports such as:
- Independent Evaluation of the DEC Tsunami Crisis Response
- The Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda: Study III Principal Findings and Recommendations
- The Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami: Synthesis Report
- Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Response to Cyclone Nargis
- Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation in Haiti: 3 Months After the Earthquake
- IASC Real Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to the Horn of Africa Drought Crisis 2011
- Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan's 2010 Flood Crisis

4 RESOURCES

The Resource section of the 2013 Humanitarian Accountability Report is a compendium of some of the most influential reports on accountability in the past 30 years, along with web addresses of numerous accountability-related initiatives. For the interactive version of this report, in which you can find the hyperlinks to all the documents listed, please visit www.hapinternational.org

129 DOCUMENTS ON QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY YOU SHOULD READ

Quality and accountability issues in the field of humanitarian action have long been discussed by practitioners and academics alike, questioning existing approaches, suggesting new ones and shaping both policy and practice in the sector. Over the past 10 years, HAP has compiled a resource library comprising of over 500 resources related to these discussions, with some articles dating as far back as 1978. In this section the HAP team has selected the documents most representative of discussions prevailing at the time, excluding tools and case studies. Looking back at some of these documents helps us identify how policy has evolved, understand why we are where we are now, but also realise that some things haven't changed that much. If you want to access the full HAP resource library, please visit www.hapinternational.org

HUMANITARIAN ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

The Humanitarian Accountability Report is published annually by HAP and contains an overview of best practice in accountability, along with key issues, emerging trends and some of the key policy decisions in the humanitarian and development sectors. Each issue of the HAR always contains a section dedicated to the voices of affected populations, along with the results of HAP's annual perceptions of accountability survey, which demonstrates trends in perceptions on accountability across the sectors. For all the previous reports, visit www.hapinternational.org/projects/publications.aspx

2013

Chapelier, Carole & Shah, Anita: "Improving communication between humanitarian aid agencies and crisis affected people: Lessons from the infoasaid project"

The infoasaid project, which came to a close in 2012, had two main objectives: To strengthen the capacity and preparedness of the humanitarian system to respond to the information and communication needs of crisis-affected populations, and to partner with aid agencies to help inform and support their communication response in emergencies. This Network Paper examines the strategies infoasaid adopted to achieve these objectives, outlining what was done, how it was done, what the challenges were and what was learnt from the perspective of the project and its partners.

Christensen, Stephanie, Fischer, Margeaux, Giacobbe, Enrica: "Improving Humanitarian Action: The Impact of Organisational Change Methodologies"

The humanitarian community has been increasingly focused on improving its accountability mechanisms since the failure of the humanitarian response in situations such as the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Rwanda. In this report three accountability methodologies are discussed: evaluation and learning, standardisation, and certification. The impact on organisational change and the resulting successes and challenges are examined.

Cosgrave, John: "Humanitarian standards - too much of a good thing?"

The author examines where the humanitarian community is now in terms of quality and accountability, how we got here, and what some of the challenges are for the future. The main focus of the article is on the use of standards for internal regulation. Furthermore, Cosgrave discusses the proliferation and complexity of standards, their diffusion, and potential costs.

Cosgrave, John: "Standards: A stick to beat us with?"

This paper reviews the use of humanitarian standards as part of an external regulatory environment for humanitarian action. The author discusses accreditation and certification, the advantages and risks of the current lack of regulation, and important decision areas regarding regulation, accreditation and certification.

Featherstone, Andy: "Improving impact: do accountability mechanisms deliver results?"

In spite of an assumption that the introduction of accountability mechanisms leads to more effective projects, little evidence exists to support this claim. Defining effective projects as those that are relevant, effective, efficient and sustainable, in line with the DAC Criteria, HAP, Christian Aid and Save the Children developed a methodology to examine whether accountability mechanisms to affected communities improve the quality and impact of aid programmes.

HAP: "Guide to the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management"

This guide puts the widely used 2010 HAP Standard into context and identifies challenges and solutions for organisations looking to instil accountability in their management systems. It also provides the user with a plethora of resources and case studies from HAP, its members and other organisations. The document provides practical guidance for implementation of the HAP Standard, the six benchmarks of which help ensure the needs of people affected by disasters drive humanitarian action.

OCHA: "Humanitarianism in the Network Age"

The first section of this report is divided into four chapters. The first chapter charts how new communications technologies are already affecting people's behaviour in emergencies. The second chapter lays out some of the most pertinent features of these new technologies, and identifies the opportunities and difficulties in applying them. The third chapter describes how many aid organisations are adapting to a more open, participatory way of interacting with people in crisis, and how this is affecting their activities. The fourth chapter proposes a plan for humanitarian organisations to adapt. The second section of this report presents country-level data and trend analyses relevant to humanitarian assistance.

People in Aid: "The State of HR in International Humanitarian and Development Organisations"

This report urges people to plan now for the future. The paper looks at human resources challenges in the humanitarian and development sector over the last 12 months. The report focuses on the changing landscape in times of recession and how this climate of uncertainty presents challenges to the sector.

2012

Abu-Sada, Caroline: "In the Eyes of Others: How People in Crises Perceive Humanitarian Aid"

The book is a result of MSF's attempt to better understand how its work and principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence are perceived by those who receive its emergency medical care. A variety of scholars, researchers, students and other humanitarians also

contribute essays expanding on issues of perception and exploring the many facets of humanitarian action today.

ALNAP: "The State of the Humanitarian System 2012"

The State of the Humanitarian System report is an ambitious snapshot of the entire humanitarian system. Commissioned by ALNAP, it outlines what's working, what's not, and how the sector has been performing in in the years 2009-2010.

Anderson, Mary B., Brown, Dayna & Jean, Isabella: "Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid"

This book captures the experiences and voices of over 6,000 people who have received international assistance, observed the effects of aid efforts, or been involved in providing aid. Over time, across very different contexts and continents, people's experiences with international aid efforts have been remarkably consistent. While there was a wide range of opinions on specifics, the authors were struck by the similarity in people's descriptions of their interactions with the international aid system. Their stories are powerful and full of lessons for those who care enough to listen and to hear the ways that people on the receiving side of aid suggest it can become more effective and accountable.

Barry, Neil & Barham, Jane: "Review of Existing Practices to Ensure Participation of Disaster-Affected Communities in Humanitarian Aid Operationst"

This review provides an overview of the most relevant policy, practice, literature and research concerning the participation of disaster affected communities in humanitarian action. It identifies key case studies and examples of best practice from a range of organisations and scenarios. The review also includes an analysis of donor funding policies and approaches, as well as the impact of 'lessons learnt' on future actions. This includes the way 'participation' is formulated in terms of policy and how it is carried out in practice in multiple contexts. The report provides a set of conclusions and specific recommendations for DG ECHO with the aim of further integration of participatory approaches in future humanitarian interventions.

FAO, WFP, gFSC: "Accountability to Affected Populations in Pakistan: Interagency mission report"

Rome based agencies FAO and WFP, along with the global Food Security Cluster, undertook an interagency mission to Pakistan in September and October 2012,

in order to support IASC activities on accountability to affected populations (AAP), investigate the current status of AAP amongst humanitarian agencies, with a particular focus on gender equality and protection programming, propose means to strengthen AAP at an interagency level, and to develop a model for an interagency level approach to AAP that could be applied in other situations and country programmes.

IRIN: "Are they listening? Aid and humanitarian accountability"

This is a report on the advancements in NGO Accountability in recent years. The authors also present various definitions of accountability and discuss issues such as the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), accountability in Islam, aid effectiveness in the Dadaab refugee camp, ActionAid's funding strategy, and the challenges faced when implementing accountability in practice.

Obrecht, Alice: "Effective Accountability? The drivers, benefits and mechanisms of CSO self-regulation"

The report critically reviews the current literature and available data on the effectiveness of civil society self-regulation. To support future research, this report identifies four key questions that an evaluation of self-regulation initiatives (SRI) effectiveness must answer, and provides a broad blueprint for assessing SRI effectiveness based on potential answers to these questions. This blueprint remains available to an iterative process of revision and modification on the basis of future empirical findings which, it is hoped, will shed further light on the valuable role of self-regulation in the not-for-profit sector.

Shutt, Cathy & McGee, Rosie: "Improving the Evaluability of INGO Empowerment and Accountability Programmes"

The main purpose of this document is to provide guidelines to enhance the evaluability of INGO Empowerment and Accountability (E&A) programmes. It is the output of what began as a scoping and analysis of INGO evaluation practice that aimed to enable Care UK, Christian Aid, Plan UK and World Vision UK to identify and test an approach to measuring the outcomes of empowerment and accountability (E&A) programmes. Commissioned by the four NGOs with funding from their DFID Programme Partnership Agreements (PPAs), it was conceived as a contribution to the work of the DFID PPA Learning Group on Measuring Results in Empowerment and Accountability.

VOICE Newsletter Issue 16: "What is Accountability in Humanitarian Aid?"

In the search for quality humanitarian aid, the word 'accountability' is often mentioned in the same breath as 'effectiveness' and 'efficiency', but what does it really mean? Through a variety of articles, this newsletter aims to broaden the perspective on this important topic, and the editors hope it will stimulate actors involved in different parts of the humanitarian endeavour to think through their own accountability in the widest sense of the word.

2011

ActionAid International: "Accountability, Learning and Planning System"

Alps is a framework that sets out the key accountability requirements, guidelines, and processes in ActionAid International. Not only in terms of organisational processes for planning, monitoring, strategy formulation, learning, reviews and audits but also personal attitudes and behaviours. Alps defines ActionAid's standards, not only about what they do but also how they do it. Alps requires processes and ways of working that are crucial to supporting and strengthening ActionAid's rights-based work.

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects: "Feedback Mechanisms in International Assistance Organizations"

A growing number of international donors and assistance agencies have made commitments to improve the quality and accountability of aid efforts by listening to the voices of recipients and affected populations. To this end, a number of international and local organisations are currently working to develop and improve their recipient feedback processes. In early 2011, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects conducted research on how recipient feedback is gathered and utilised to inform decision-making in international assistance efforts. This report presents the findings gathered through desk research and interviews with key informants in international humanitarian and development agencies.

DFID: "Humanitarian Emergency Response Review"

This review has found that DFID, the main conduit through which the UK government responds, is well respected and well regarded. Nevertheless, the review also concluded that in light of the potential needs in years to come, there will have to be a step change in the way DFID responds. The review makes a series of

high level policy, and some down to earth practical, recommendations intended to bring this change about.

Hammad, Lama & Morton, Bill: "Greater Influence, Greater Responsibility: are INGO 's Self-Regulatory Accountability Standards Effective?"

To address allegations of poor accountability, many INGOs have signed on to collective self-regulatory accountability standards as a means of ensuring that common principles are met, improving good practice, and restoring confidence among stakeholders. This paper investigates how much these self-regulatory standards have actually improved accountability among INGOs. This is a working paper to generate discussion and debate within the development community, and especially within INGOs themselves.

Hammer, Michael & Lloyd, Robert: "Pathways to Accountability II: The 2011 revised Global Accountability Framework"

This report summarises the results of the 2009-2010 review process on the One World Trust Global Accountability Framework and the piloting of the draft framework during 2011, and presents the full One World Trust Pathways to Accountability II indicator framework. The authors' work in this field is motivated by a concern about the persisting weakness and insufficient effectiveness of global organisations from all sectors in responding to the challenge of delivering global public goods to citizens and communities, the very people whom they claim to serve and benefit, and who are most often dependent on them.

Harvard Humanitarian Initiative: "Disaster Relief 2.0: The Future of Information Sharing in Humanitarian Emergencies"

This report recommends a five-part framework which entails a neutral forum to surface areas of agreement and conflict between the international humanitarian system and the V&TCs (volunteer and technical communities), an innovation space where new tools and practices can be explored as experiments, a deployable field team with a mandate to deploy the best available tools and practices from the V&TCs to the field, a research and training consortium to evaluate the work in the field and to train humanitarians and V&TCs alike in the best practices for information management, and a clear operational interface that outlines ways of collaborating before and during emergencies.

Hofmann, Charles-Antoine: "NGO Certification: Time to Bite the Bullet?"

The sector has developed a series of codes and standards to regulate itself. While these have gone some way to improve the quality and accountability of humanitarian assistance, there are limits to what can be achieved through self-regulation. As far back as 1996, the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda (JEEAR) clearly stated that the development of codes and standards is not enough: 'some form of regulation or enforcement is needed to ensure improvements in performance of NGOs'. Ten years later, the joint evaluation of the tsunami response made a similar recommendation.

HPN/ODI: "Special feature: humanitarian accountability"

This special feature, coedited with ALNAP's John Mitchell and Paul Knox-Clarke, is dedicated to accountability in humanitarian action. The authors discuss, among other things, accountability to affected populations, real time evaluations, NGO certification, staff issues in the accountability context, the role of donors, feedback and complaints mechanisms, sexual exploitation by aid workers, corruption, and sharing information in disaster situations.

IFRC: "Beneficiary Communication andAccountability: A responsibility, not a choice"
A good overview of the work that the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movements have been doing to communicate more effectively with beneficiaries, including: experimenting, training, and strengthening and building on already established two-way communication mechanisms.

Internews, Radio Ergo/International Media Support (IMS), Star FM of Kenya, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC): "Dadaab, Kenya - Humanitarian Communications and Information Needs Assessment Among Refugees in the Camps: Findings, Analysis & Recommendations"

This joint communication and information needs assessment led by Internews and conducted with Radio Ergo/International Media Support (IMS), Star FM of Kenya and with support from the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), aimed at understanding the information needs of refugees in Dadaab and exploring ways to improve the flow of communication between refugees, aid agencies, and host communities.

Jacobs, Alex: "NGO Partner Survey 2010: Public Report"

During 2010, Keystone, in association with Bond, InterAction and NIDOS, brought together a group of 25 northern NGOs based in Europe and the USA. As an independent agent, Keystone surveyed the southern partners of the northern NGOs, asking partners to rate and comment on different aspects of the northern NGOs' performance. They guaranteed that partners would be anonymous and the northern NGOs would not be able to identify who said what about them. This report presents what the respondents said. It presents benchmark data from across all 25 NGOs, setting out the range of performance ratings they received.

Kiani, Maria: "Collective efforts to improve humanitarian accountability and quality: the HAP deployment to Dadaab"

Kiani explains the role of HAP's Roving Team under the New Emergency Policy (NEP). She discusses the Inter-Agency Mapping and Action Planning Exercise and touches on the Dadaab Accountability and Quality Working Group as well as the challenges and solutions to collaboration.

Knox-Clarke, Paul & Mitchell, John: "Reflections on the accountability revolution"

In 2003 HPN published an edition of Humanitarian Exchange focused on humanitarian accountability, to assess what was known at the time as the 'accountability revolution'. The issue looked at why accountability had become so important to the sector; which actors should be accountable; what they should be accountable for; and what actions were being taken. Nine years on this new issue gives us a chance to review the current state of affairs. Has our understanding of accountability changed? Is it still as important as it was? Where have gains been made, and what are the challenges we face now and in the future?

Lingan, Jeannett & Hammer, Michael: "Empowering citizens: Realising service user involvement in UK Third Sector organisations through accountability principles in self-regulation initiatives"

This report presents a brief introduction to the different types of self-regulation and takes a look at self-regulation in the development and humanitarian sector. It explores some of the drivers that push the sector into working on improving its practices, the principles under which the sector defines effectiveness and accountability and some examples from a diversity of countries. The authors provide a landscape of self-regulation initiatives in the UK and dissect the content of these

initiatives according to the issues they mostly focus on and in which ways they encourage the participation of users. Finally, they provide some examples of initiatives in use in the UK.

Polman, Linda: "The Crisis Caravan: What's Wrong with Humanitarian Aid?"

In her controversial, no-holds-barred exposé Linda Polman shows how a vast industry has grown up around humanitarian aid. The Crisis Caravan takes us to war zones around the globe, showing how aid operations and the humanitarian world have become a feature of military strategy. Impassioned, gripping, and even darkly absurd, journalist Linda Polman gives some powerful examples of unconscionable assistance, a world where aid workers have become enablers of the atrocities they seek to relieve.

Satterthwaite, Margaret L.: "Indicators in Crisis: Rights-Based Humanitarian Indicators in Post-Earthquake Haiti"

With Haiti as a case study, this article examines leading standards and indicators developed by professional humanitarians in the last dozen years that have as their aim improving the quality, effectiveness, and accountability of their own response to disaster. The paper builds on analysis of human rights indicators previously carried out with AnnJannette Rosga. Understanding industry-wide humanitarian indicators as a "technology of global governance", the paper also draws on the theoretical framework set out by Kevin Davis, Benedict Kingsbury, and Sally Engle Merry in their work on indicators.

The Sphere Project: "Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response"

This Sphere handbook is one of the most widely known and internationally recognised sets of common principles and universal minimum standards for the delivery of quality humanitarian response. It puts the right of disaster-affected populations to life with dignity, and to protection and assistance at the centre of humanitarian action. It promotes the active participation of affected populations as well as of local and national authorities, and is used to negotiate humanitarian space and resources with authorities in disaster-preparedness work. The minimum standards cover four primary life-saving areas of humanitarian aid: water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion; food security and nutrition; shelter, settlement and non-food items; and health action. A first trial edition of this handbook was published in 1998, the first final edition was released in 2000,

the second edition in 2004, and this third edition in 2011.

Walker, Peter & Russ, Catherine: "Fit for purpose: the role of modern professionalism in evolving the humanitarian endeavor"

The humanitarian enterprise has grown in size and complexity over the past generation. Modern systems of scrutiny and accountability demand a higher level of accountability than ever before, both to programme beneficiaries and to donors. This, the authors believe, puts pressure on the system to become more professional and on aid workers to consider the establishment of a formal profession of humanitarian aid. This article reports on research carried out to test this hypothesis and on an approach that is presently being used to establish the necessary components of a professional system.

2010

Hammer, Michael, Rooney, Charlotte & Warren, Shana (2010): "Addressing accountability in NGO advocacy: Practice, principles and prospects of self-regulation"

Based on a world-wide survey of civil society self-regulatory initiatives undertaken by the One World Trust, this paper examines how NGOs have begun to address the accountability challenges they face in particular when engaging in advocacy and explains some of the strengths and weaknesses of existing self-regulation for NGOs engaged in advocacy. Research presented in the paper suggests that both normative and instrumental reasons account for the adoption of accountability principles by advocacy organisations through self-regulation, and that lessons learnt from the One World Trust's parallel work on accountability principles for policy oriented research organisations can be usefully applied also to strengthen accountability of advocacy NGOs.

HAP: "Change starts with us, talk to us! Beneficiary perceptions regarding the effectiveness of measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian aid workers: a HAP commissioned study"

This report was commissioned to gain further insight into how beneficiaries of humanitarian aid perceive the effectiveness of efforts undertaken to prevent SEA and to identify ways to improve outcomes. The main question the study sought to address was the

extent to which beneficiaries feel safer as a result of measures introduced by aid organisations, including both policies and response mechanisms. This highlights the fact that aid organisations collaborating in this study were making efforts to address SEA, and the findings herein offer assistance in improving systems and approaches in the spirit of continued adherence to zero tolerance stances.

HAP "The 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management"

The HAP Standard is a practical and measurable tool that represents a broad consensus of what matters most in humanitarian action. The Standard helps organisations design, implement, assess, improve and recognise accountable programmes. Being accountable to crisis-affected communities helps organisations to develop quality programmes that meet those people's needs, and reduces the possibility of mistakes, abuse and corruption. The first edition of the HAP Standard, the HAP 2007 Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management, was published in early 2007.

Jacobs, Alex & Wilford, Robyn: "Listen First: A Pilot System for Managing Downward Accountability in NGOs"

This article reports on a research project intended to develop systematic ways of managing downward accountability in an international NGO. Innovative tools were developed and trialled in six countries. The tools comprised a framework, defining downward accountability in practical terms, and three management processes. They were successfully used to (a) encourage staff to improve downward accountability in ways relevant to their context; (b) hear beneficiaries' assessments of the level of accountability achieved and the value of the NGO's work; and (c) generate quantified performance summaries for managers. Taken together, they form a coherent draft management system. Areas for further research are identified.

Lingan, Jeannet, Cavender, Amy, Palmer, Thomas & Gwynne, Beris: "Responding to development effectiveness in the global South"

This paper provides a picture of civil society self-regulation initiatives in the global South. Through an analysis of 90 initiatives across 54 countries it identifies some of the common principles that underpin southern effectiveness efforts through self-regulation, key characteristics of institutional design, and specific drivers and challenges.

Lloyd, Robert, Calvo, Virginia & Laybourn, Christina: "Ensuring credibility and effectiveness: Designing compliance systems in CSO self-regulation"

Drawing on the One World Trust's database on CSO self-regulation, this paper explores the different approaches that have been taken by initiatives to address the issue of compliance, the benefits and challenges associated with different arrangements, and the factors which shape their adoption. It shows that, problematically, less than half of all of the CSO self-regulatory initiatives (47%) that currently exist worldwide have any element of a compliance system, and among the most common form of self-regulation – codes of conduct – this percentage drops to 27%. The authors argue that this raises important questions about the effectiveness and credibility of many CSO self-regulatory initiatives.

Mango: "Accountability to Beneficiaries Checklist: how accountable is your organisation to its beneficiaries"

This tool is a self-assessment checklist to help NGO staff gauge how accountable they are to their beneficiaries. It is made up of just over 30 practical action points which describe best practice in this area. The checklist may be a useful starting point for discussion about the type of accountability that is most appropriate for the different situations that NGOs face.

McGee, R. & Gaventa, J.: "Review of Impact and Effectiveness of Transparency and Accountability Initiatives: Synthesis Report"

In the first section the authors delve into the conceptual issues and definitions which surround the transparency and accountability (T&A) debate. In the next section they examine the diverse assumptions and expectations of the T&A agenda, since analysis of actual impact calls for clarity about intended impact. In the following section they present the state of evidence as reflected in the background papers they have produced for each of five priority sectors. The final three sections address analytically methodological issues which contribute to success of T&A initiatives and key gaps that need to be addressed in the state of knowledge about impact and effectiveness of T&A initiatives.

Roche, Chris: "Promoting Voice and Choice: Exploring Innovations in Australian NGO Accountability for Development Effectiveness"

There is a growing critique of international aid which is gaining ground. At the heart of this critique is the contention that the aid system is not accountable to those it seeks to benefit, and that it distorts the accountability of governments to donors and away from their own citizens. This mirrors a critique of NGOs which has a long history. If civil society is to counter this critique and fulfil its promise as a vanguard of new forms of democracy, how might Australian NGOs contribute? This review explores some case studies of what Australian NGOs are currently doing in this area and the literature on this topic, as a first step in promoting a debate on the question.

SCHR: "SCHR Peer Review on Accountability to Disaster-Affected Populations: An Overview of Lessons Learned"

The Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) is an alliance of major international humanitarian organisations aiming to support increased quality, accountability and learning within the humanitarian sector. To this end it used a Peer Review process to strengthen and deepen efforts that demonstrate organisations' Accountability to Disaster-Affected Populations. This paper provides an overview of some of the key lessons that emerged.

Transparency International: "Handbook of Good Practices: Preventing Corruption in Humanitarian Operations"

The idea for this handbook came from the massive humanitarian response to the Asian tsunami, when the huge levels of resources committed by the international community created concern about new opportunities for corruption. Many international development agencies have put in place corruption prevention policies tailored to development programmes, but there was a noticeable gap in policies for preventing corruption in emergencies. Based on extensive research within and beyond the humanitarian sector, as well as detailed input from the humanitarian community itself, this handbook aims to fill that gap. It offers a menu of good practice tools for preventing and detecting corruption in humanitarian operations.

Turk, Volker and Eyster, Elizabeth: "Strengthening Accountability in UNHCR"

The dependency by populations of concern on humanitarian action and international protection creates a situation of power that requires a corresponding system of checks and balances. This needs to be balanced with the obligation of organisations like UNHCR to account for the use of financial, political, and material means that have been put at their disposal by states. Bearing in mind its various dimensions, accountability is defined by UNHCR as a commitment to deliver results for populations of concern within a framework of respect, transparency, agreed feasibility, trust, delegated authority, and available resources.

2009

Agyemang, Gloria, Awumbila, Mariama, Unerman, Jeffrey & O'Dwyer, Brendan: "NGO Accountability and Aid Delivery"

This report addresses the following five specific objectives: to identify characteristics of the key mechanisms of accountability employed in a sample of international and local NGOs in Ghana, to provide evidence of beneficial and dysfunctional impacts of the accountability mechanisms on the effectiveness of aid delivery, to explain why particular accountability mechanisms are considered beneficial or dysfunctional, to assess the extent of beneficiary involvement in the accountability mechanisms, and to suggest alternative mechanisms of accountability that may alleviate the potentially dysfunctional impacts of donor-led upward-accountability mechanisms.

ALNAP: "Counting what counts: performance and effectiveness in the humanitarian sector"

The ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action series aims to advance analysis and understanding of key trends and issues relating to humanitarian learning and accountability as a means of supporting improvement in sector-wide performance.

Groupe URD: "Participation Handbook for Humanitarian Field Workers"

The Participation Handbook for humanitarian field workers contains detailed practical advice on the participation of affected people in humanitarian action. It has three sections: Developing a participatory approach (main issues, key factors, building mutual respect, communication methods and advice on reviewing your approach); implementing your participatory approach at every stage of the project cycle (initial assessment, project design, implementation, monitoring and final evaluation); a list of tools and additional resources (books, internet sites, etc.).

HAP: "The right to a say and the duty to respond: The impact of complaints and response mechanisms on humanitarian action"

Limited research has been undertaken so far to collect evidence of the effectiveness of complaint and response mechanisms and their impact on service provision. To start addressing this knowledge gap, the report draws on a study of views and experiences of staff from four agencies and representatives of communities in Uganda and Bangladesh at locations where these agencies operate; additional interviews with staff from 17 agencies complement the four case studies.

IASC Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: "Guidelines on Setting Up a Community Based Complaints Mechanism Regarding Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN and non-UN Personnel"

This document provides guidance to UN agencies and NGOs on how to set up a simple, safe and accessible Community Based Complaints Mechanism (CBCM) for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA). Based on research which highlights the chronic under-reporting of SEA, and incorporating experts' advice, the suggested recommendations are deemed essential for breaking the silence surrounding SEA.

Lingan, Jeannett, Cavender, Amy, Lloyd, Robert & Gwynne, Beris: "Responding to NGO Development Effectiveness Initiatives"

The paper provides a picture of existing self-regulation efforts at international level and at national level in the global North. It describes their underlying principles, content, and compliance mechanisms; and reflects on the way in which NGOs may wish to engage with initiatives or to improve effectiveness by using the best and most relevant parts for their organisation's purpose. This briefing paper hopes to contribute to the debate on how self-regulation could strengthen the legitimacy and performance of the development sector.

Roche, Chris: "Oxfam Australia's Experience of 'Bottom-Up' Accountability"

Oxfam's experience suggests that 'bottom-up' accountability can be an important mechanism whereby men and women living in poverty can hold others to account. The first section of this article illustrates this with two examples of Oxfam's experience in Vietnam and Sri Lanka. The second section draws out some of the lessons from these examples and attempts to situate them within the broader debate about approaches to accountability. In the third section some suggestions are put forward about what would need to change if active citizenship and 'speaking truth to power' were to become the renewed focus of accountability.

Warren, Shana & Lloyd, Robert: "Civil Society Self-Regulation"

Despite the widespread proliferation of CSO self-regulatory initiatives over the past two decades, there has been no thorough stock-taking and analysis of existing initiatives. This first paper in a series on CSO self-regulation provides an overview of the state of CSO self-regulation worldwide. It examines the various types of initiatives currently in use and offers insights into current patterns at national, regional and international levels.

2008

Csaky, Corinna: "No One to Turn To: The under-reporting of child sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers and peacekeepers"

This report focuses on ways to improve the international community's response to the sexual exploitation and abuse of children by aid workers, peacekeepers and others acting on their behalf in emergencies. The report concludes that there are three important gaps in existing efforts to curb abuse and exploitation: 1. communities are not being adequately supported and encouraged to speak out about the abuse against them; 2. there is a need for even stronger leadership on this issue; 3. there is an acute lack of investment in tackling the underlying causes of child sexual exploitation and abuse in communities.

Grünewald, Francois & de Geoffroy, Véronique: "Principle 7 of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative: Request implementing humanitarian organisations to ensure to the greatest possible extent adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response"

This Policy paper and the related study were prepared by Groupe URD for the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative (GHDI), with the support of the Délégation à l'Action Humanitaire (DAH of the French Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs). It takes stock of the experience Groupe URD has accumulated over the years on this subject, from its early work in Central America following Hurricane Mitch to its recent work in Afghanistan and the Tsunami-affected area. It also builds upon the work done by Groupe URD when it was in charge of ALNAP's Global Study on Participation of Affected populations in Humanitarian Action, the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC), CDA's Listening Project, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) and other initiatives.

Hansen, Christian Jacob: "Complaints Mechanism Handbook"

The main objective of this handbook is to offer practical solutions to the challenge of setting up and managing a successful complaints mechanism (CM). The handbook provides a step by step guide, including a number of practical tools and exercises to facilitate the process, and it contextualises the concept of a CM and presents some of the added values and opportunities that a CM offers in a humanitarian context.

HAP: "To complain or not to complain: still the question. Consultations with humanitarian aid beneficiaries on their perceptions of efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse"

This report, based on consultations with refugees living in Kenya, Namibia and Thailand, provides insight into the barriers to complaining. It also highlights the changes that beneficiaries hope for in order to break their silence when it comes to misconduct by humanitarian staff. "To complain or not to complain" about sexual exploitation and abuse continues to be the dilemma faced by many disaster survivors. Despite several years of concerted efforts by humanitarian agencies, major progress is still required if organisations are to become truly accountable for preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries by humanitarian staff.

IRIN: "Beneficiary feedback: "thanks but no thanks"?"

The article explores the listening deficit in handling beneficiaries needs. "Participation', 'rights-based' and 'consultative' are all terms associated with NGOs as the paradigm for humanitarian aid has shifted from agencies thinking they know best, to trying to put affected people at the heart of their aid responses. But when push comes to shove, and beneficiaries are unhappy with what they receive, do NGOs listen? And if so, how?"
Listen First: "25 real-life examples of downward accountability in practice"

This document is a collection of 25 short examples to support the Listen First framework developed by Concern and Mango. These case studies demonstrate the variety, creativity and depth of good accountability practices that NGOs and public bodies have used around the world. This collection is a response to requests from front-line staff for examples of Listen First in practice.

Stobbaerts, Eric & de Torrenté, Nicolas: "MSF and accountability: from global buzzwords to specific solutions"

There is no question that humanitarian organisations must be accountable, both in the sense of 'giving account' and 'being answerable' for the choices they make, the work they do and the resources they use. Nor is it debatable, given the often poor response to crises and the lack of transparency about results obtained, that far more accountability is needed. The issue is rather to whom, about what and for what purpose. Accountability has become a global buzzword. MSF has looked into this issue with the conviction that a specific approach needs to be developed, reflecting the reality and the challenges of field-based medical humanitarian work. This article describes

this approach, as well as presenting MSF's present practice with regard to accountability.

Wall, Imogen & Robinson, Lisa: "Left in the dark: the unmet need for information in humanitarian responses"

This paper illustrates the critical need to mainstream information and communication both across the sector as a whole and within projects and agencies. It falls into three parts: The first part lays out the evidence to date that information is regarded by affected populations as a critical issue, and looks how they identify information needs. The second part explores how little demands are being met, why this is and what structures, systems and skills are missing. The third part suggests some clear steps that can be taken to resolve these issues.

2007

Austen, Davis: "Concerning Accountability of Humanitarian Action"

This paper asks whether initiatives designed to improve accountability really are the solution to the problems humanitarianism faces today. It does not aim to dismiss accountability; rather, it seeks to show that accountability is a procedural phenomenon, not a moral one. Imposing it in the absence of a more specific understanding of what it means is dangerous, and subject to manipulation. Accountability is not inherently a good thing, but simply a characteristic of relations of power.

Bemelmans-Videc, Marie-Louise, Jeremy Lonsdale & Burt Perrin: "Making Accountability Work: Dilemmas for Evaluation and for Audit"

Like honesty and clean water, "accountability" is invariably seen as a good thing. Conversely, the absence of accountability is associated with most of the greatest abuses in human history. Accountability is thus closely linked with the exercise of power and the legitimacy of policies and those pursuing them. This book looks at the role of evaluation and of audit as key elements in democratic accountability processes. The contributors explore the apparent paradox of there being more accountability-related activities today than ever before, at the same time as much public debate laments what is seen as a lack of actual accountability.

Bhattacharjee, Abhijit: "Common Humanitarian Accountability Framework for IWG Agencies, Inter Agency Working Group: Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB2)"

The ECB Project commissioned a consultancy to develop a common Accountability Framework in order to help members meet the increasingly strident calls for demonstrating accountability in their humanitarian operations. This report analyses the current understanding and practices within the member agencies in humanitarian accountability and examines how the agencies can take on board various existing international standards.

Brown, L. David & Jagadananda: "Civil Society Legitimacy and Accountability: Issues and Challenges"

This paper reports an effort to explore the issues of civil society legitimacy and accountability and the range of initiatives that have been created to respond to them. The paper concludes with an argument for the pivotal importance of improving civil society legitimacy and accountability given their growing roles in local, national and global governance and problem solving.

Cavill, S. & Sohail, M.: "Increasing strategic accountability: a framework forinternational NGO s"

INGO accountability falls into two categories: practical accountability (for the use of inputs, the way activities are performed, and for outputs) and strategic accountability for how INGOs are performing in relation to their mission. This paper presents a conceptual framework for exploring INGO accountability. It is based on information collected through a literature review and semi-structured interviews with representatives from 20 UK-based INGOs.

Emergency Capacity Building Project: "Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies: The Good Enough Guide"

The ECB Project's Good Enough Guide provides busy field workers with simple steps to put local people at the heart of emergency responses and measure programme impact in emergency situations.

Fox, J.: "The uncertain relationship between transparency and accountability"

The concepts of transparency and accountability are closely linked: transparency is supposed to generate accountability. This article questions this widely held assumption. Transparency mobilises the power of shame, yet the

shameless may not be vulnerable to public exposure. Truth often fails to lead to justice. After exploring different definitions and dimensions of the two ideas, the more relevant question turns out to be: what kinds of transparency lead to what kinds of accountability, and under what conditions?

Swarbrick, Alex: "Making a difference? Evaluating the impact of The People In Aid Code"

People In Aid's vision is of a world in which organisations work effectively to overcome poverty. This research therefore sought to understand the extent of People In Aid's impact through the Code of Good Practice, i.e. has it enhanced organisational effectiveness and/or increased the impact of programmes, directly or indirectly, and if so, "in what ways and by what measures." The research essentially explores three questions: How have People In Aid, and specifically the Code, made a difference? To whom? What are NGOs saying will help them still further?

2006

ALNAP: "Evaluating Humanitarian Action using the OECD-DAC Criteria"

This guide was developed after discussions within the evaluation community, and within ALNAP in particular, about how to strengthen evaluation of humanitarian practice, and how to foster more effective use of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria. The DAC evaluation criteria are currently at the heart of the evaluation of humanitarian action (EHA) - including within evaluations themselves and as part of agency guidance. However, several criteria are not well understood; their use is often mechanistic, and excludes more creative evaluation processes.

Bendell, Jem: "Debating NGO Accountability"

This is a UN Non-governmental Liasion Office document, included within a complete overview of accountability for NGOs, as seen by the NGLS.

Bond: "A Bond Approach to Quality in Non-Governmental Organisations: Putting Beneficiaries First"

The purpose of this document is to review current practice, experience, and needs in the area of quality standards, as well as to suggest the roles that Bond and its members could play in this area going forward. The research for this publication involved an analysis of the current approaches to quality used by NGOs,

an online survey of Bond members, a series of focus group discussions with Bond members, and interviews with key opinion formers and those responsible for the main standards.

Keystone: "Learning with Stakeholders: A Keystone Guide to Stakeholder Dialogue"

Keystone seeks to maximise the developmental impact (or value) of civil society organisations, business and government, through designing and promoting innovative, practical methods of planning, doing and communicating their work in ways that foster learning and accountability among all constituents. Keystone believes that organisations function best when they can effectively be held to account by those most affected by their activities. Its model of civil society accountability helps civil society organisations to be inclusive and responsive in their engagement with constituents, systematic in their learning, and transparent in their public reporting.

Lloyd, Robert & de las Casas, Lucy: "NGO self-regulation: enforcing and balancing accountability"

Increasing visibility and increasing criticism, among other factors, have led to growing pressure on NGOs to be more accountable, both from within and outside of the sector. One increasingly prominent means of doing so is self-regulation, but without means of enforcement how effective is this? And how can self-policing codes tilt the balance in accountability procedures away from the powerful (donors and governments) and towards the NGO's beneficiaries – those people on whose behalf an NGO claims to be working and who, after all, provide the rationale for its existence?

Pallis, Mark: "The Operation of UNHCR's Accountability Mechanisms"

This paper analyses the accountability mechanisms that currently operate within the UNHCR. It argues that these mechanisms do not render the UNHCR accountable to refugees, and that this situation should be rectified. It considers from a normative perspective the legal and political standards that should apply when the UNHCR is held to account.

Stockton, Nicholas: "The accountability alibi"

This article looks at the fact that accountability, or rather a lack of it, has become an alibi for humanitarian failure, and a polite way of asking for more money.

Swords, Sara: "Emergency Capacity Building Project: Staff Capacity Initiative (Humanitarian Competencies Study)"

This document explores the use of competency-based human resource management systems amongst members of the Interagency Working Group on Emergency Capacity, and identifies tools useful to those developing such systems for the recruitment, management and development of humanitarian professionals.

Telford, J. & Cosgrave, J.: "Joint evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami: Synthesis Report"

This Synthesis Report is based primarily on five thematic evaluations undertaken by TEC member agencies during 2005/06. These focus on coordination of the international humanitarian response, the role of needs assessment in the tsunami response, the impact of the response on local and national capacities, links between relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD), and the funding response to the tsunami. The Synthesis draws together learning and recommendations contained in these TEC studies as well as over 170 additional reports.

The Listening Project: "Report of Listening Project: Aceh, Indonesia, November 2005"

Informal, internal report on the results of casual discussions with 300+ beneficiaries. The focus is on what is distributed, who receives help, information and communication, and promises and perceptions.

Wenar, Leif: "Accountability in International Development Aid"

Concerns over aid effectiveness have led to calls for greater accountability in international development aid. This article examines the state of accountability within and between international development agencies: aid NGOs, the international financial institutions, and government aid ministries. The investigation finds that there is very little accountability in these agencies, and that the accountability that there is often works against poverty relief. Increasing accountability, however, is not always the solution: increased accountability may just amplify the complexities of development efforts. Only those reforms with real promise to make aid more effective in reducing poverty should be encouraged. One such proposal is set out here.

2005

Blagescu, Monica & Young, John: "Partnerships and accountability: current thinking and approaches among agencies supporting civil society organisations"

The first part of this working paper provides a summary of current thinking on issues of accountability, partnership and capacity-building among Northern and Southern agencies involved in collaborative work with NGOs and other CSOs in developing countries. A second part provides some examples of current practice among a number of Northern agencies engaged in work similar to that proposed under the Partnership Programme Agreement (PPA). The last part contains an annotated bibliography of the key texts consulted for this review, along with summary information and website addresses for other organisations involved in similar work, and sources of information about these issues.

Coordination SUD: "Guide Synergie Qualité: Propositions pour des actions humanitaires de qualité"

This guide is the result of a two-year collaboration with several French NGOs that have defined good practice principles and examples for five thematic areas that are essential for high quality humanitarian action: humanitarian ethics, governance, human resource management, project management, and participation of affected populations.

Ebrahim, Alnoor: "Accountability Myopia: Losing Sight of Organizational Learning"

This article challenges a normative assumption about accountability in organisations: that more accountability is necessarily better. More specifically, it examines two forms of "myopia" that characterize conceptions of accountability among service-oriented nonprofit organisations: (a) accountability as a set of unconnected binary relationships rather than as a system of relations and (b) accountability as short-term and rule-following behavior rather than as a means to longer-term social change. The article explores the effects of these myopias on a central mechanism of accountability in organisations—evaluation—and proposes a broader view of accountability that includes organisational learning.

Egeland, Jan: "Humanitarian Accountability: Putting Principles into Practice"

Egeland asks what is meant by accountability and transparency and how are they being applied and how do they contribute to the health, safety and physical well-being of beneficiaries. The author argues accountability must manifest itself as improved protection and quality of life on the ground.

Jordan, Lisa: "Mechanisms for NGO Accountability"

Jordan discusses the costs and benefits of ensuring NGO accountability, particularly with regards to the current practice emphasising upward and external accountability to donors. She proposes that NGOs and the academic community develop mechanisms that ensure NGO accountability to multiple stakeholders.

Shea, C. & Sitar, S.: "NGO Accreditation and Certification: The Way Forward? An Evaluation of the Development Community's Experience"

Recent initiatives to promote accreditation and certification mechanisms have produced valuable lessons about how to further accountability, particularly in the not-for-profit sector. This paper examines accreditation, certification, and self-certification programmes, with particular emphasis on those aimed at the not-for-profit sector. The study also includes several similar programmes (e.g., awards) having similar characteristics to others examined.

Venkateswaran, Sandhya: "Accountability Lessons from the Tsunami Response in India"

The author argues 'accountability should not just be about the final outcome, but also the degree of responsiveness of donors, the state and implementing agencies to the local context and the needs of the community, including ensuring communities have control over the rebuilding process'. 'Post-disaster rebuilding that is not carried out in partnership with affected communities, building on their knowledge and opinions, that does not involve a flow of information on entitlements, policies and processes, and which is not accountable is often misplaced, ineffective, and iniquitous.'

Walker, Peter: "Cracking the code: the genesis, use and future of the Code of Conduct"

This paper reflects on the genesis of the 'Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief', on the tenth anniversary of its adoption. The origins, usage and future of the code are examined with respect to three debates, current at the time of its inception, namely: the debate about the core content of humanitarianism; the debate about coherence and the consensual nature of the humanitarian community; and the debate about the need for, and the ability to demonstrate, accountability.

2004

Beck, T. & Borton, J.: "Learning by Field Level Workers"

In order to improve humanitarian response, it is important that individuals and organisations involved in humanitarian action learn. And as humanitarian action is largely dependent upon the ability of field staff to manage and implement humanitarian operations, this paper focuses on field level learning – the field of operation being the place where much learning crucial to the success of humanitarian action takes place.

Callamard, Agnes: "HAP International: A New Decisive Step Towards Accountability"

Callamard places the origins of accountability in the context of the 1996 Rwandan genocide and discusses the emergence of Sphere, ALNAP, People in Aid, and the Humanitarian Ombudsman Project. She cites a Peter Reynard (2000) study, which discusses the emergence of HAP as the sector's leading self-regulatory body. The findings of the pilot phase of HAP indicated accountability would best be strengthened and implemented through the creation of a strong international self-regulatory body recognising accountability is primarily the responsibility of operational agencies, with assistance and standards provided through HAP.

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects: "The Do No Harm Handbook: The Framework for Analyzing the Impact of Assistance on Conflict"

The Do No Harm Project deals with accountability in humanitarian action and seeks to identify the ways in which international humanitarian and/or development assistance given in conflict settings may be provided so that, rather than exacerbating and worsening the conflict, it helps local people disengage from fighting and develop systems for settling the problems which prompt conflict within their societies.

Chapman, Rhonda: "Strengthening Australian NGO s: The Australian Council for International Development"

Chapman details the attempts by ACFID and various sectors of the Australian government to regulate Australian NGOs, leading finally to the development of the ACFID Code of Conduct. She adopts Stewart-Weeks definition of accountability as 'securing a level of confidence and trust in an organisation's legitimacy' coupling it with Ebrahim's commentary calling accountability a dynamic concept.

Darcy, James: "Locating responsibility: the Sphere Humanitarian Charter and its rationale"

This paper considers the rationale of the Sphere Humanitarian Charter and the conceptual model that underpins it. It discusses the relationship between the charter and the Minimum Standards, and the sense in which the latter are properly called 'rights-based'. The author was closely involved in the conception and drafting of the charter, and this paper attempts to convey some of the thinking that lay behind it.

David, R. & Mancini, A.: "Going against the flow: making organisational systems part of the solution rather than part of the problem. The case of ActionAid's Accountability, Learning and Planning System"

The aim of this paper is to give an honest insight into organisational change; sharing with others the difficulties involved and the problems encountered. In doing so, the authors feel they inevitably have to discuss organisational politics. They try to do this in an appropriate, sensitive way while remaining honest to the overall analysis.

Dufour, Charlotte, Véronique de Geoffroy, Hugues Maury & François Grünewald: "Rights, standards and quality in a complex humanitarian space: is Sphere the right tool?"

Since Sphere's inception in 1997 several agencies expressed concerns regarding Sphere's approach, many of which were confirmed by the Sphere evaluation (2002/3). The present article restates these concerns, and addresses more fundamental issues regarding Sphere's cornerstone. It questions the validity of Sphere's rights-based approach, which consists of a tenuous link between the rights of affected populations and standards for technical interventions. Sphere is founded on 'the right to assistance', although this right does not exist in international law. It suggests that Sphere's approach and content largely reflect the concerns, priorities and values of technical professionals in Northern

agencies, leaving limited space to genuine 'participation' by affected populations and partners from the South.

Levine, Simon & Chastre, Claire: "Missing the Point: An Analysis of Food Security Interventions in the Great Lakes"

Levine and Chastre examine success rates of food security interventions in the Great Lakes. In studying seven cases they found that many of the interventions failed to address the needs of people affected. The interventions failed because the responses did not understand the real needs of the people and few attempts have been made to find out what those needs are. The authors call for agencies to recognise this as a problem and to increase their commitment to addressing it.

Rieff, David: "Tsunamis, accountability and the humanitarian circus"

What the tsunami has demonstrated is that, for all the conferences, internal reviews, pledges of accountability and transparency, codes of conduct and the like, the humanitarian circus is alive and well. For all the talk of coordination and accountability, the need to maintain market share continues to trump sound humanitarian practice – at least in crises like the tsunami, where the Western public and Western donor governments are attentive and engaged.

Stockton, Nicholas: "Misconceived Misconceptions: Accountability to Humanitarian Beneficiaries"

Writing in the special issue of Humanitarian Exchange on accountability, the director of MSF Holland launched a powerful broadside against quality and accountability initiatives such as HAP and Sphere. Stockton offers his perspective on the four "misconceptions" highlighted in the article, and refutes the argument that these organisations are easily manipulated by states and intergovernmental agencies.

Tong, Jacqui: "Questionable Accountability: MSF and Sphere in 2003"

Tong examines the relationship between MSF and the Sphere Project. She argues that NGOs are not homogeneous and should not be treated as such. She asserts such standards would be in contrast to MSF's independence, neutrality and creative humanitarianism. Tong argues participation by beneficiaries is 'laudable' but it is 'counter-productive in some contexts'. Also, she suggests beneficiary participation can be dangerous in deeply divided societies as it is difficult to determine who to consult.

Walker, Peter & Susan Purdin: "Birthing Sphere"

This paper tells the story of the initiation and first year of Sphere. It traces the history of how the project was started and its relationship to other major events of that time, principally the multi-donor Rwanda evaluation. The paper describes how the basic structure of the Sphere standards was agreed upon and discusses why some sectors were eventually left out of the standards.

2003

Ebrahim, Alnoor: "Accountability in Practice: Mechanisms for NGOs"

Ebrahim examines how accountability is practiced by NGOs. He reviews five broad mechanisms: 1) reports and disclosure statements, 2) performance assessments and evaluations, 3) participation, 4) self-regulation, and 5) social audits. He discusses each as either a tool or a process and measuring them along three dimensions of accountability: 1) upward-downward, 2) internal-external, and 3) functional-strategic. The study found upward and external accountability mechanisms are fairly developed, whereas downward and internal mechanisms remain underdeveloped.

Ford, Caroline: "The accountability of states in humanitarian response"

Are states currently responsible or accountable in any way for the quality and ethics of humanitarian action? Part of the accountability debate requires an analysis of who holds responsibility for what – recognising that NGOs and states bear different responsibilities – and then who is held to account for discharging their responsibility. Including assessments of state responsibility within the accountability debate can add and enrich the analysis of accountability: during the next decade, mechanisms that exist under international law for state accountability could be tightened and expanded in order to further their use for accountability for humanitarian action.

Herson, Maurice: "Putting the 'H' into humanitarian accountability"

The author writes about accountability in the humanitarian sector in general and reflects on the newest developments regarding the creation of the Humanitarian Accountability Project.

Macrae, Joanna & Harmer, Adele: "Good Humanitarian Donorship: a mouse or a lion?"

Donor governments have been strong supporters of the various initiatives aimed at strengthening accountability and improving performance within the international humanitarian system. The majority have, however, concentrated on establishing standards and codes of conduct for operational aid agencies. Less attention has been paid to how donors are held to account for their policies, and the implications of their decision-making. The research identifies the need to focus on strategic and political accountability, against clearly defined objectives and definitions of humanitarian assistance, in order to strengthen the checks and balances that govern donor behaviour.

Mitchell, John: "Accountability: the three-lane highway"

The means by which humanitarian agencies have chosen to improve accountability have been dependent on organisational mandates, identity and raison d'être. This has given rise to a rich, but sometimes confusing, array of initiatives and approaches. These approaches can be rationalised into three main areas, or 'lanes' on the accountability highway. The first concerns the rights and needs of the 'beneficiaries' or 'claimants' of humanitarian assistance. The second area emphasises humanitarian principles, codes of conduct, legal instruments and bodies of ethics and philosophy; and the third technical standards, performance indicators, impact indicators and results-based approaches. Broadly speaking, this typology represents a three-lane highway leading to the ultimate destination of improved accountability in the humanitarian sector.

Naik, Asmita: "The West Africa sex scandal"

The humanitarian world was rocked in 2002 by a UNHCR/Save the Children study which revealed a disturbing pattern of sexual exploitation of refugee children by aid workers and peacekeepers in West Africa. This article argues that the gaps in accountability revealed by the scandal point to the need for a humanitarian watchdog.

People In Aid: "Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel"

The Code of Good Practice is an internationally recognised management tool that helps humanitarian aid and development agencies enhance the quality of their human resources management. The Code provides a comprehensive and sector specific framework relevant to organisations of any shape or size. The Code is the result of years of international collaboration by a wide range of NGOs, international organisations, public bodies and private sector firms. The first edition

of the Code, called Code of Best Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel, was published in 1998.

Zadek, Simon: "In defence of non-profit accountability"

The author reflects on the upsurge of interest in the accountability of not-for-profit civil society organisations.

2002

Boyden, Joe, Kaiser, Tania & Springett, Simon: "Consultation with and Participation by Beneficiary and Affected Populations in Planning, Managing, Monitoring and Evaluating Humanitarian Aid: the case of Sri Lanka"

The present report, which draws on primary (aid recipient) and secondary (agency) stakeholder perceptions in Sri Lanka, is the pilot in a series of five country case studies. Testing the hypothesis that the active consultation and participation of crisis-affected populations in measures to assist them is (according to aid recipients and other key stakeholders) both feasible and beneficial in terms of project outcome, it investigates current policy and field practice in three locations affected by conflict in the north and east of the island.

Cronin, Donal & O'Regan, John: "Accountability in Development Aid: Meeting Responsibilities, Measuring Performance"

Cronin and O'Regan discuss issues of accountability in development organisation practice and how it can be defined, analysed, implemented, and enhanced. They emphasise accountability through a process of four stages throughout which transparency is vital. The stages are: 1) clear roles and responsibilities with compliance to standards, 2) taking action and evaluating that action, 3) reporting and accounting for that action, and 4) responding to and complying with agreed standards. The authors present their Framework of Accountability Indicators and Tools (FAIT) and argue different organisations need different systems of accountability.

Goetz, Anne Marie & Jenkins, Rob: "Voice, Accountability and Human Development: The Emergence of a New Agenda"

This paper defines accountability, setting out its multiple dimensions, contrasting the principle of accountability with its practical manifestations. It also demonstrates the variety of ways in which a lack of genuine accountability

has deprived disadvantaged people of the opportunities that a more democratised and globalised world has promised, but failed, to deliver. Furthermore, it details the distinguishing features of the new accountability agenda, surveying a range of experiments and innovations that have sought, with mixed results, to operationalise it.

Hilhorst, Dorothea: "Being Good at Doing Good? Quality and Accountability of Humanitarian NGOs"

The article explores how the last few years have seen a rapid increase in discussions, policy papers and organisational initiatives regarding the quality of humanitarianism.

Kapila, Mukesh: "Incentives for Improved Accountability"

Kapila argues that the reform of the humanitarian system is progressing too slowly and that the humanitarian sector needs to do more than reaffirm humanitarian values. He holds that accountability should be more than current monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and argues for informed consumers rather than accountability to beneficiaries.

Newell, Peter and Bellour, Shaula: "Mapping accountability: origins, contexts and implications for development"

This paper provides an overview of the political uses and applications of the term accountability in contemporary discourses and practices of development. The first part reflects on the historical origins of competing narratives of accountability and the processes of accountability in formal and informal arenas, assessing the role of law, protest and a variety of managerial approaches in the creation of mechanisms of accountability. The third section looks at how the narratives of accountability, manifested in these diverse practices of accountability, apply to key development actors, traditionally the nation-state, but increasingly also public authority at supra and sub-state levels and the private and non-governmental sectors.

Slim, Hugo: "By What Authority? The Legitimacy and Accountability of Nongovernmental Organisations"

The focus of this paper is on humanitarian, development and human rights INGOs. As groups who make it their business to demand accountability in others, it could be said that NGOs and human rights organisations have a particular responsibility to lead by example in this area and shine as beacons of legitimacy and accountability. This paper is in three

parts. First, it reviews the changing understanding of NGO accountability as it has developed in the last ten years. Secondly, it sets out a framework for identifying the main tangible and intangible sources of NGO legitimacy. Finally, it examines the mechanics of accountability.

2001

Harris-Curtis, Emma: "NGO Codes of Conduct: An Exploration of the Current Debate"

Harris-Curtis says a dichotomy has emerged between 'NGO bashers' and 'NGO supporters.' She says whether or not agencies are accountable to beneficiaries is debatable and there is no coherent reference point for overall NGO accountability. Furthermore, she agrees with Pratt (2001) in saying NGOs are self-interested and in order to keep them from becoming self-perpetuating, some form of regulation, whether internal or external, is necessary. She briefly outlines the pros and cons of the current codes of conduct, but states the current codes are not enough to reform the entire system. Finally, she recommends benchmarking but cautions that coverage of non-compliance may undermine public confidence in NGOs.

OECD: "Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability"

This publication is composed of two parts: The Workshop Report, based on the DAC WP-EV workshop in Tokyo on 26-28 September 2000 entitled "Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability", highlights the various issues raised, topics of discussion and different feedback systems, and outlines the areas identified by participants as most relevant for improving evaluation feedback. The Background Synthesis Report, intended as a starting point for discussion at the workshop, outlines the main concerns and challenges facing evaluation feedback and the means to address these. The report is based on an analysis of questionnaire results, and a review of previous initiatives.

2000

Bakewell, Oliver: "Uncovering Local Perspectives on Humanitarian Assistance and Its Outcomes"

This paper draws on a study of Angolan refugees in Zambia to suggest ways that the perspectives and interests of the local population can be included in

the assessment of relief interventions. Taking an actor-oriented approach, the paper suggests stepping back from the categorisation of the situation as an emergency and particular groups of people as the beneficiaries. Such categories are imposed from outside and may not reflect local people's outlook on the situation. The paper calls for evaluations of humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies to look beyond the 'beneficiaries' and to investigate the wider context of 'normality'.

Kaiser, Tania: "Promise and practice: participatory evaluation of humanitarian assistance"

This article is based on analyses of recent evaluation reports and consultation with evaluators and organisation staff. It indicates that although many organisations have prepared best practice evaluation guidelines, their use has not yet become common practice. This article is intended to contribute to a wider objective of generating recommendations for the field-testing of relevant and truly beneficiary-based evaluation methodologies.

Raynard, Paul: "Mapping Accountability in Humanitarian Assistance"

This study was commissioned by ALNAP as a preliminary attempt to consider and explore contemporary approaches to accountability. It draws on current practice of initiatives within the humanitarian sector and from the experience of other sectors in relation to efforts to enhance stakeholder accountability.

Van Brabant, Koenraad: "Regaining Perspective: The Debate over Quality Assurance and Accountability"

In response to criticism of accountability initiatives and accountability tools such as codes of conduct, Van Brabant summarises the key critiques, and reflects on the debate.

1999

Anderson, Mary: "Do No Harm. How Aid Can Support Peace - or War"

The author challenges aid agency staff to take responsibility for the ways that their assistance affects conflicts. Anderson cites the experiences of many aid providers in war-torn societies to show that international assistance, even when it is effective in saving lives, alleviating suffering, and furthering sustainable

development, too often reinforces divisions among contending groups. Anderson offers hopeful evidence of creative programmes that point the way to new approaches to aid.

Apthorpe, Raymond & Atkinson, Philippa: "Towards Shared Social Learning for Humanitarian Programs: A Synthesis Study"

This is an explorative study examining the 'actual and potential role of consultation with or participation by populations affected by emergencies in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs to assist them.'

Ntata, Pierson R.T.: "Participation by the Affected Population in Relief Operations: A Review of the Experience of DEC Agencies During the Response to the 1998 Famine in South Sudan"

Pierson attempts to identify when it is appropriate to use consultative participative approaches in humanitarian relief and when it is not. She then discusses the restraints to participation. Finally, she concludes with two participation recommendations followed by more good practice examples.

1996

Edwards, Michael & Hulme, David: "Beyond the Magic Bullet: NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post-Cold War World"

Experts review the issues of NGO performance and accountability, providing guidance through the process of NGO assessment. Case studies written by individuals who have been involved in NGO activities in Central America, Asia, South America, East Africa, and North Africa ground this discussion in the realities and complexities of international development.

Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda: "The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience, Synthesis Report"

The report summarises the main themes, issues and conclusions of each component study and presents the main findings and recommendations addressed to members of the international community. The four studies that make up the evaluation, synthesised in this report, are Volume 1 'Historical Perspective: Some Explanatory Factors', Volume 2 'Early Warning and Conflict Management', Volume 3 'Humanitarian Aid and Effects', and Volume 4 'Rebuilding Post-War Rwanda'.

1978

Ressler, Everett M.: "Accountability as a Program Philosophy"

This paper is an attempt to bring into perspective the issue of accountability to victims as it relates to relief and the provision of housing in disaster situations. It implies that making post-disaster housing programmes accountable to beneficiaries is a major departure from present practice. The author is further suggesting that accountability to victims should be both an operational method and a programme philosophy. After defining accountability, it will be examined how accountability relates to the practical aspects of disaster management, and guidelines and recommendations for making accountability to victims more than just a new cliche are explained.

55 WEBSITES YOU SHOULD VISIT

Numerous online resources exist today for those who need to develop, adapt or integrate a quality and accountability based approach to their work. This section is not exhaustive, but does provide an overview to those networks and initiatives that are most active on these issues, as well as providing an introduction to the main approaches to accountability. The categorisation of the following resources is merely for ease of navigation, and does not reflect the fact that many of those listed below span several categories and have a broad scope of activity.

STANDARDS

Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP): www.hapinternational.org

HAP is a multi-agency initiative working to improve the accountability of humanitarian action to people affected by disasters and other crises. Its mission is to make humanitarian action accountable to its intended beneficiaries through self-regulation by its members linked by common respect for the rights and dignity of beneficiaries.

Joint Standards Initiative (JSI): www.jointstandards.org

In response to the perceived confusion, lack of awareness and inconsistent application of standards, three of the leading standards initiatives (Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), People In Aid and the Sphere Project) have launched a process to seek greater coherence for users of standards, in order to ultimately improve humanitarian action to people affected by disasters.

People in Aid: www.peopleinaid.org

People In Aid improves organisational effectiveness within the humanitarian and development sector worldwide by advocating, supporting and recognising good practice in the management of people. It helps organisations whose goal is the relief of poverty and suffering to enhance the impact they make through better management and support of staff and volunteers.

Sphere Project: www.sphereproject.org

The Sphere Project is a voluntary initiative that aims to improve the quality of humanitarian assistance and the accountability of humanitarian actors to their constituents, donors and affected populations. The Sphere Handbook, Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response, is a set of common principles and universal minimum standards in life-saving areas of humanitarian response.

Sphere Companion Standards:

- **Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE): www.ineesite.org**
INEE facilitates collaboration, share experiences and resources, establish standards for the field, and engage in advocacy regarding the right to education.

- **Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS): www.livestock-emergency.net**
The LEGS are a set of international guidelines and standards for the design, implementation and assessment of livestock interventions to assist people affected by humanitarian crises.

- **Small Enterprise Education and Promotion (SEEP): www.seepnetwork.org**
The SEEP's Minimum Economic Recovery Standards provide strategies and interventions designed to promote enterprises, employment, cash flow and asset management among enterprises and livelihoods in environments affected by conflict or disaster.

NETWORKS AND CONSORTIA WITH A POLICY ISSUES FOCUS

Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct: www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct

ACFID unites Australia's non-government aid and international development organisations to strengthen their collective impact against poverty. The ACFID Code of Conduct is a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice that aims to improve international development outcomes and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing transparency and accountability of signatory organisations.

Bond: www.bond.org.uk

Bond is the UK membership body for NGOs working in international development.

It promotes, supports, represents and, on occasion, leads the work and interests of UK international development organisations. Bond enables the exchange of experience, ideas and information and supports members to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of the sector.

Confederation for Cooperation of Relief and Development NGOs (CONCORD): www.concordeurope.org

CONCORD is a European confederation of Relief and Development NGOs. It is made up of 27 national associations, 18 international networks and 2 associate members that represent over 1,800 NGOs, supported by millions of citizens across Europe. CONCORD was founded in 2003 by development NGOs to act as the main interlocutor with the EU institutions on development policy.

Coordination SUD (Solidarité Urgence Développement): www.coordinationsud.org

Coordination SUD facilitates the coordination of French NGOs. It promotes the professionalisation of French NGOs and represents their interests towards public and private institutions in France, Europe and the rest of the world.

Improving Accountability, Clarity and Transparency (ImpACT) Coalition: www.acevo.org.uk/impact

The ImpACT Coalition is a movement of over 400 third sector organisations that seek to improve accountability and transparency and increase public understanding of how charities work.

INGO Accountability Charter: www.ingoaccountabilitycharter.org

The INGO Accountability Charter is an initiative of International NGOs to demonstrate their commitment to accountability and transparency. The Charter's founding members developed the Charter as a response to increasing pressure from the media, businesses and governments for greater transparency.

InterAction: www.interaction.org

InterAction is an alliance organisation of US-based international organisations. Its members, more than 180 NGOs, work around the world. It serves as a convener, thought leader and voice of its community.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Accountability to Affected Populations (IASC AAP Task Force): www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc

The IASC AAP Task Force's role is to take forward its action plan, steer the implementation of the CAAPs, and further develop and roll out the Operational Framework. The 5 Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations (CAAPs) include: 1. leadership, 2. transparency, 3. feedback and complaints, 4. participation, and 5. design, monitoring and evaluation.

International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA): icvanetwork.org

ICVA is a platform for increased collaboration and coordination between NGOs and other humanitarian actors, which is crucial to improving the lives of communities affected by humanitarian crisis. It is a global network of NGOs whose mission is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective by working collectively and independently to influence policy and practice.

Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE): www.ngovoice.org

VOICE is a network representing 82 European NGOs active in humanitarian aid worldwide. Seeking to involve its members in advocacy, common positioning and information exchange, VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the European Union on emergency aid and disaster risk reduction and promoting the values of humanitarian NGOs.

NETWORKS AND CONSORTIA WITH SPECIAL FOCUS AREAS

Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP): www.alnap.org

ALNAP is a learning network that supports the humanitarian sector to improve humanitarian performance through learning, peer-to-peer sharing and research. It uses the broad range of experience and expertise within its membership to produce tools and analysis relevant and accessible to the humanitarian sector as a whole.

Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network: www.cdacnetwork.org

The CDAC Network is a unique cross-sector initiative that brings together leading humanitarian and media development agencies alongside

technology providers in a collaboration that recognises information and two-way communication as key humanitarian deliverables. The goal of the CDAC Network is that communities affected by, and prone to, crisis are better able to withstand humanitarian emergencies and are actively engaged in decisions about the relief and recovery efforts in their country.

Enhancing Learning & Research for Humanitarian Assistance (ELRHA): www.elrha.org

ELRHA is a collaborative network dedicated to supporting partnerships between higher education institutions and humanitarian organisations and partners around the world. Higher Education Institutes represent a phenomenal resource that can and should be harnessed to support the humanitarian endeavour. ELRHA has been set up to help meet this challenge and aims to provide a bridge between the humanitarian and higher education communities.

Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD): www.goodhumanitariandonorship.org

The GHD initiative is an informal donor forum and network which facilitates collective advancement of GHD principles and good practices. It recognises that, by working together, donors can more effectively encourage and stimulate principled donor behaviour and, by extension, improved humanitarian action.

International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI): www.aidtransparency.net

IATI is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder initiative that seeks to improve the transparency of aid in order to increase its effectiveness in tackling poverty. IATI brings together donor and developing countries, civil society organisations and other experts in aid information who share the aspirations of the original IATI Accra Statement and are committed to working together to increase the transparency of aid.

International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI): www.intosai.org

The INTOSAI operates as an umbrella organisation for the external government audit community. For more than 50 years it has provided an institutionalised framework for supreme audit institutions to promote development and transfer of knowledge, improve government auditing worldwide and enhance professional capacities, standing and influence of member SAIs in their respective countries.

Keeping Children Safe: www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk

Keeping Children Safe is a membership network of organisations working together to increase safeguards offered to children. Keeping Children Safe strives to ensure children globally are safeguarded and protected from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation.

APPROACHES, GUIDANCE TOOLS & SPECIALISED PROJECTS

Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS): www.acaps.org

ACAPS' mission is to support and strengthen capacities, in-country and within the humanitarian system in general, to carry out better multi-sector assessments before, during and after crises and to bring together practitioners who are dedicated to improving and sharing best-practice and innovative approaches to needs assessments.

Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP): www.cashlearning.org

There is a growing recognition in the humanitarian sector that in an emergency, cash transfers and vouchers can be appropriate and effective tools to support populations affected by disasters in a way that maintains dignity and choice for beneficiaries while stimulating local economies and markets. The Cash Learning Partnership aims to improve the quality of emergency cash transfer and voucher programming across the humanitarian sector.

Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA) Core Competencies Framework: www.thecbha.org/capacity/strengthening

The CBHA aims to strengthen the coordination and capacity of the NGO sector to deliver appropriate, high quality, and quicker humanitarian assistance to populations affected by disaster. It agreed a framework for core and leadership humanitarian competencies.

Crisis Mappers: crisismappers.net

The International Network of Crisis Mappers is an international community of experts, practitioners, policymakers, technologists, researchers, journalists, scholars, hackers and skilled volunteers engaged at the intersection between humanitarian crises, technology, crowd-sourcing, and crisis mapping. This network engages 5,000+ members in over 160 countries, who are affiliated with over 2,000 different institutions, including

over 400 universities, 50 United Nations agencies and projects, dozens of leading technology companies, several volunteer and technical community networks, and disaster response and recovery organisations.

Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) Project: www.ecbproject.org

The ECB Project aims to improve the speed, quality and effectiveness of the humanitarian community to save lives, improve welfare and protect the rights of people in emergency situations. The ECB Project focuses on staff capacity, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA), as well as accountability and impact measurement.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): www.fao.org/emergencies/fao-in-action/accountability-to-affected-populations/en

FAO's mandate is to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity, better the lives of rural populations and contribute to the growth of the world economy. As a matter of human rights and meaningful programming, FAO defines Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) as "an active commitment by humanitarian actors and organizations to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to and being held to account by the people they seek to assist".

FrontlineSMS: www.frontlinesms.com

FrontlineSMS lowers barriers to driving transformative social change using mobile technologies. It builds and distributes free and open-source software; provides support and resources to users, and draws on users' experiences to inspire others. By using available technology—affordable laptops and basic mobile phones—FrontlineSMS helps organisations in both economically developed and under-developed countries to overcome communication barriers they face.

GroundTruth Initiative: groundtruth.in

GroundTruth helps communities use digital media, mapping, and open data tools for greater influence and representation in development and democracy. It is a new media and technology consulting company specialising in community-based participatory technologies, especially mapping and citizen journalism, in poor and marginalised regions throughout the world.

ICT4Peace Foundation: ict4peace.org

The ICT4Peace Foundation aims to enhance the performance of the international community in crisis management through the use of ICTs that facilitates effective communication between peoples, communities and stakeholders involved in crisis management, humanitarian aid and peace building.

Infoasaid: infoasaid.org

Infoasaid, a project implemented by Internews and BBC Media Action, focused during its existence on improving the quality of humanitarian responses by maximising the amount of accurate and timely information available to both humanitarian responders and crisis-affected populations through enhanced information exchange between them in an emergency. On the one hand, the project worked to strengthen the capacity and preparedness of aid agencies to respond to the information and communication needs of crisis-affected populations. On the other hand, it partnered with a number of aid agencies to help inform and support their communications response in a variety of emergency contexts.

Last Mile Mobile Solutions (LMMS): www.lastmilemobilesolutions.com

LMMS is a stand-alone system that uses web-based mobile applications to better manage responses to disasters. The system enables digital registration of affected populations and automates how aid-agencies deliver humanitarian services, resulting in more effective, efficient and fully accountable practices.

Publish What You Fund: www.publishwhatyoufund.org

Publish What You Fund campaigns for aid transparency – more and better information about aid.

Transparency International: www.transparency.org

Transparency International's mission is to stop corruption and promote transparency, accountability and integrity at all levels and across all sectors of society.

LEARNING, RESEARCH, TRAINING & EVALUATION

Bioforce Institute: www.bioforce.asso.fr

The Bioforce Institute is an organisation which aims to increase the impact and the relevance of emergency action and development programmes by training and providing support to those involved. From international action to local initiatives, Bioforce creates links between different communities and cultures based on values of solidarity, competence and commitment.

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects: www.cdainc.com

CDA is committed to improving the effectiveness of international actors who provide humanitarian assistance, engage in peace practice, and are involved in supporting sustainable development. It operates on the premise that experience is a good teacher if we can take the time to learn its lessons. To that end, they organise collaborative learning projects to gather and analyse the experiences of international efforts and, from these, to identify patterns across contexts and types of programmes.

DARA: www.daraint.org

DARA is an independent organisation committed to improving the quality and effectiveness of aid for vulnerable populations suffering from conflict, disasters and climate change. It has published since 2007 the Humanitarian Response Index (HRI), an assessment of critical issues around the quality and effectiveness of aid. The HRI complements other monitoring tools and assessments that are used by the humanitarian community but is an independent exercise that is not funded by any government.

Evidence Aid Project: www.cochrane.org/cochrane-reviews/evidence-aid-project

The Evidence Aid project was established by The Cochrane Collaboration following the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in December 2004. It provides evidence on interventions that might be considered in the context of natural disasters and other major healthcare emergencies. Evidence Aid seeks to highlight which interventions work, which don't work, which need more research, and which, no matter how well meaning, might be harmful; and to provide this information to agencies and people planning for, or responding to, disasters.

Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA): www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org

The GHA programme works to provide objective, independent, rigorous data and analysis around humanitarian financing and related aid flows and has developed methodologies for calculating the true value of humanitarian assistance. GHA wants to enable access to a shared evidence base on resources to meet the needs of people living in humanitarian crises.

Groupe URD (Urgence, Réhabilitation, Développement): www.urd.org

Groupe URD is an independent institute which specialises in the analysis of practices and the development of policy for the humanitarian and post-crisis

sectors. Its role is to help organisations to improve the quality of their programmes through evaluations, research, quality support and training.

Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN): www.odihpn.org

HPN was established to provide an independent forum for policy-makers, practitioners and others working in or on the humanitarian sector to share and disseminate information, analysis and experience, and to learn from it. HPN's aim is to improve the performance of humanitarian action by contributing to individual and institutional learning.

Mango: www.mango.org.uk

Mango's mission is to strengthen the financial management and accountability of development and humanitarian NGOs and their partners. It helps NGOs achieve robust financial management through practical services, such as training, staff recruitment, consultancy and publishing best-practice guides.

One World Trust: www.oneworldtrust.org

The One World Trust is an independent charity that conducts research, develops recommendations and advocates for reform to make policy and decision-making processes in global governance more accountable to the people they affect now and in the future, and to ensure that international laws are strengthened and applied equally to all.

RedR: www.redr.org

RedR is an international disaster relief charity which trains aid workers and provides skilled professionals to humanitarian programmes worldwide, helping to save and rebuild the lives of people affected by natural and man-made disasters.

QUALITY ASSURANCE SCHEMES

Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC) Voluntary Certification System: www.ccc-cambodia.org/ccc-program/voluntary-certification.html

The CCC, a leading membership organisation for local and international NGOs in Cambodia, has played a unique role since 1990 as an enabling agent to facilitate CSOs to collectively, responsibly and accountably work together to effectively advance the pace of development in Cambodia. The Voluntary Certification System (VCS) is an important tool that helps to ensure accountability and good governance in the NGO sector.

Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA): www.deniva.or.ug/resource-centre/quam-resource-centre/quam.html

DENIVA is a network of non-governmental and community based organisations providing a platform for collective reflection, action and voice to voluntary local associations in Uganda. The NGO Quality Assurance Mechanism (QuAM) is a self-assessment initiative aiming to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of NGOs.

Pakistan Centre For Philanthropy (PCP): www.pcp.org.pk

The PCP runs a Certification Programme, the aim of which is to bring transparency, accountability and good governance to the non-profit sector in Pakistan. The first initiative of its kind in South Asia, it involves the evaluation of a non-profit organisation on standardised parameters of internal governance, financial management and programme delivery.

Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC): www.pcnc.com.ph

The PCNC is a private voluntary, non-stock, non-profit corporation that serves as a service organisation whose main function is to certify non-profit organisations that meet established minimum criteria for financial management and accountability in the service to underprivileged Filipinos.

SGS NGO Benchmarking: www.sgs.com/en/Public-Sector/Monitoring-Services/NGO-Benchmarking.aspx

NGO benchmarking certification audits from SGS provide an assessment of the compliance level of an NGO with international best practices and establish a framework towards continuous improvement.

Sigmah Project: www.sigmah.org/home

Sigmah is an open source software for the shared management of international aid projects. Managed collectively by eleven NGOs, it is coordinated by Groupe URD. The objective of the Sigmah project is to contribute to improving the service delivered to people in crisis situations by building the management capacity of aid organisations.

Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) Certification Project: www.schr.info

The purpose of the project is to consult with stakeholders and conduct research in order to identify what a viable certification system for the humanitarian sector could look like, and develop, pilot, and test different certification options for SCHR members and other humanitarian organisations.

Viwango: www.viwango.org

Viwango is an independent, standards setting and certification organisation for Civil Society Organizations in Kenya. Viwango is Swahili for "Standards".

James Darcy, writing here in his personal capacity, has a background in international law but has spent most of his career as a practitioner, researcher and evaluator in the humanitarian sector. He had ten years of operational experience as an Oxfam manager, co-ordinating programmes in Central Africa, the Balkans, the Middle East and South and East Asia. He went on to head the Humanitarian Policy Group at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and had lead responsibility for drafting the revised Sphere Humanitarian Charter. He currently sits on the Board of Oxfam GB as trustee and Vice-Chair.

Jessica Alexander has over 10 years of professional experience in humanitarian response in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. She has worked for various NGOs and the UN and is a former US Fulbright scholar. She has a dual Masters degree from Columbia University and is currently working toward her PhD on accountability to affected populations.

Maria Kiani is the Senior Quality and Accountability Advisor at HAP. She has over 10 years of experience and has worked with a range of I/NGOs, UN agencies, and the ICRC. At HAP she leads the Roving Team, which is deployed to escalating and new emergencies across the globe to strengthen accountability and quality of the ongoing humanitarian response. Over the years, Maria has led over seven deployments in response to refugee crises, natural disasters and conflict in Asia and Africa. She has also worked as the Accountability Advisor at UNHCR.

2013 HUMANITARIAN ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

" As long as emergency response consists of people from the North showing up and handing out goods from the North and then asking affected people what they think about it, we will never be accountable to them. Building local capacity as part of an effort led by disaster-affected countries is the future. But if the core model remains the same, with the same power dynamics, how can you meaningfully talk about accountability? "

Joel Charny, Vice President for Humanitarian Policy
and Practice, InterAction

HAP Humanitarian
Accountability
Partnership