

## 2008 Peer Support Group Meeting

### Notes captured on flipcharts from Block I: Quality and accountability in emergencies

**Session 1:** Quality and Accountability in the Nargis Response  
Presentations from Jock Baker (CARE International) and Meri Ghorkhmazyan (SCUK)

**Session 2:** Liberia and the Cyclone Sidr Response  
Presentations from Kate Bowen & Amy Rowlands (Tearfund) and Hamid Azad (Muslim Aid)

Guiding questions for presenters and for the group discussion:

- Accountability measures put in place after the emergency, noting context specific interventions
  - Enabling factors for such accountability measures
  - Some of the perceived benefits, if any
  - Key learning points
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#### **Session 1:** Quality and Accountability in the Nargis Response

The Real Time Evaluation report has just been finalised.

- What seems to have worked well:
  - Humanitarian coordination and the UN cluster worked well at Yangon level; health cluster was the better of them: strategic, inclusive, regular field visits, government representation
  - Funding
  - Principles of Partnership
- Accountability focus – a novelty in the response.
  - the HAP and Sphere joint deployment
  - deployments of member agencies' quality and accountability advisors

*Accountability systems in place:*

- Committees, focus group discussions, open communication
- Rapid assessment survey done by local organisations
- Collection of information

*Following areas require further attention:*

- Comparability of data collected in different ways
- Information flow from Yangon back to the field (local clusters and communities themselves)
- Feed beneficiaries' views into higher level decision-making fora such as ASEAN and the UN
- Clarify who makes what decision within agencies: this is key to making accountability happen
  - Tension between sector expertise and management control

*Key learning points:*

- Essential: staff awareness, ongoing agency support and existing organisational approach to accountability
- Agencies must enable a process through which local and international staff jointly clarify what accountability means for them in the particular context; this way, staff will be able to develop a locally owned accountability system which builds on their respective agency's accountability framework

## **Session 2: Quality and Accountability in Liberia and in the Cyclone Sidr Response**

### *Activities and measures put in place*

- Accountability focus at all stages of the response: e.g. through an MOU with the community and dissemination of the accountability framework
- Accountability focal points at each site (one focal point for 40 staff)
- Workshop for all staff; responsibility of quality standards (related to organisational values) included in each job description
- Community notice boards
- Community made aware of agencies' commitment to beneficiary accountability
- Consultation with staff and with beneficiaries, particularly on policies (information disclosure) and frameworks (anti-fraud)
- Venues for communities to raise complaints:
  - contact numbers made public, including the head office number
  - pictures explaining the complaint handling process
- Complaint and response data reported to UK Board on a regular basis
- Joint committees of beneficiaries and staff overseeing local complaint handling procedures

### *Enablers:*

- Leadership: accountability framework that is adaptable locally
- Budget: accountability officers, complaint boxes, etc
- Time: one person takes responsibility to oversee the agency's quality and accountability
- Consultation processes embedded so that beneficiary selection is understood
- Reporting structure changed: field reports included data on accountability, complaint responses in particular
- Focus on values for staff at all levels: 3-month consultant who kick-started the process, staff training and oversight
- Integration of accountability processes into disaster preparedness

### *Benefits and learning:*

- Feedback from communities
  - Ensured no conflict
  - Reduced fraud
  - Enhanced capacity of communities to resolve own conflicts
- Partner organisations have good understanding of accountability
- Agency's understanding of community improved
- Trust and good track record recognised by donors
- Project ownership by community (following consultation regarding project design and costs)
- Accountability officers: risks around them being perceived as policing; need to be in place early
- Knowledge of standards in the community resulted in the community taking on accountability monitors role in relation to other agencies
- Right questions to be asked at needs assessment stage, e.g. how do you want to be informed about different details? How do you want to be engaged in the process?
- Prioritisation of beneficiary needs over local political interference