

Beneficiaries' response on accountability and quality management

HAP Workshop in Dhaka, 31 May to 1 June 2006

Introduction: The following information is drawn from a group discussion (GP) on accountability and quality management in Dhaka on 1 June 2006. The GP was attended by four beneficiaries from 2 disaster prone districts in Bangladesh naming Faridpur and Sirajganj; of the beneficiaries two were female. The discussion was in Bengali and it was based on beneficiaries' practical experiences on natural disaster, especially flood. The flood of 2004 was the most recent one, so the discussion widely covered the most recent experiences.

Question 1: What information do you consider important to receive at the onset of a crisis?

In answer to this question and during discussion, the participants deeply realized that every disaster is a real threat of their life. During disaster they become so helpless that they can't survive without timely support from agency. Everybody in their community is affected by flood and everyone needs help on basic life-saving items such as:

- Quick communication and transport system to save lives
- Food and clean drinking water: how to get food and clean water during disaster, how to preserve food for future disaster. They think that agency may not be able to meet the total need to community people, so alternatively the community people should learn how to preserve food for disaster
- Fire wood and supply of fuel: agency can provide information on alternative sources of fuel
- Medicine and Treatment facility: how to get and where to get?
- Information about agencies: their disaster prevention and mitigation plan, how much support they can provide how much we can depend on them?

Question 2: Please advise how each of the five types of information could be delivered by the humanitarian aid agencies?

In answering this question, the participants' first concern was involvement of local leader (chairman and member) and political leaders in the relief or information sharing work. They are not trustworthy; agency must find some good and honest people from community. Here are some examples of good and honest people:

- By any wise and honest people in the village.
- By disaster protection committee formed by agency and community people together.
- By the school teachers and religious leaders.
- By women association of the village, who are involved in micro-credit programme
- Agency might announce publicly during the disaster.
- Pre-disaster training for household leads
- Communicate by the boat during the disaster.

Question No 3. The question is associated with an agency seeking consultation with beneficiaries: What type of advice should agencies seek from you?

Participants discussed in details about the above question and found that the following ways beneficiaries can advise agency:

- Distribution of relief items: how to distribute relief properly and impartially during disaster, their participation is important in the relief work
- Correct listing: by making a correct list of poor people in the village. Some time agency's staff as outsider cannot make the proper list. Community people understand inside reality better than outside expert.
- Beneficiaries can help conduct a primary assessment of total need (relief and humanitarian support) of the community.
- Beneficiaries can help in rescue and mitigation effort together with agencies.
- They can protect lives of most vulnerable group such as children, women (especially pregnant women), old citizens and sick people
- Distributing the medicine and humanitarian relief to the needy
- They can be involved in developing a long-term disaster mitigation plan with agencies
- Mobilize and encourage villagers to protect themselves
- Providing healthy sanitation and pure water.

Question No 7. (Transparency) What information should be made available to affected communities in the following categories – why?

About agencies:

- Agencies' disaster prevention and mitigation plan
- Agencies' principals and objectivities
- Agency's identity and underlying motive (are they here to convert us?)
- Duration of their work or support (their work must be long term)
- Complaints mechanism

About staff:

- Commitment of staff
- Are they willing to do good work?
- Staff's attitude
- Are they able to communicate well with the community people?

Resources and logistics:

- The source and amount of the money
- Transparency about their expenditure
- Must explain to community how much they get and how much they spend

Question No 8. Considering what you have listed as important to have access to about the aid agency (question 7), please advise how this information can be made available to beneficiary communities.

- Regular meeting with community people (at least one a month)
- Through Imam and school teachers
- Through local community representative (but not political or local leaders)
- By publish booklets in simple language (Bengali)
- By publishing poster.
- By arranging session on questioning and answering

Question No 9. (Participation) In an ideal world, who do you think should participate during each stage of the project cycle?

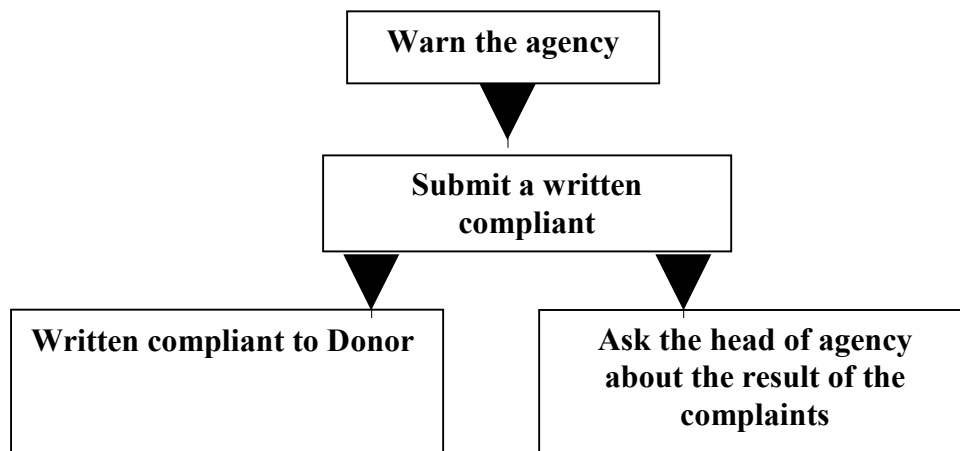
Planning

- Community relief protection community
- Household head, consist of both men and women
- The above people will work closely with agency to ensure fair distribution and monitoring of relief work. They also can help agency to get true and useful information about beneficiaries to make better planning.

Implementation

- The implementation must be done by the honest and wise people of the village
- The same village disaster committee can work closely with agency
- During implementation, many local resources can be used by and for the local people
- Distribution must be systematic, most vulnerable must get priority
- Selection the suitable places for distribution, avoid place of politically influenced people.
- Make sure that involved community people can communicate well with benefices during relief work
- Maintain the standard of humanitarian accountability

Question No11. (Complains Mechanism): Could you describe in what way you would like to see a complaints handling mechanism set up for your community?



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Question No 14. (Appropriate Reporting) What format of reporting is appropriate?

- Written report written in simple language
- Must be written in Bengali
- Giving the information briefly.
- Report can be made before and after the relief work
- The report can be submitted to the village disaster committee.

Question No 15. (Co-ordination): If there were a number of agencies serving the same community how would you ensure they co-ordinate effectively and efficiently?

- Agency, village disaster committee and local government will work together.
- Frequent meeting with above three groups
- Mention the HAP's principals consistently.
- Involve people of different occupational group to get their advise
- Ensure participation of women representatives or groups

Question No 16. (General): What do you think are the key factors that describe a well-managed NGO?

- NGO that respect right and participation of women in their work
- NGO that consult with beneficiaries regularly
- NGO that keeps its promise.

- NGO that has good manager.
- NGO that is Transparent.
- NGO that has educated and skillful staff
- NGO that implement pro- people humanitarian activities.
- NGO that share right information with its beneficiaries
- NGO that operate long term humanitarian support to the community
- NGO that sympathetic to the beneficiaries

Question No 17. What do you think makes good humanitarian programme manager?

- Honest and capable
- Good attitude, especially to women.
- Loving and kind to beneficiaries
- Sincere to everyone.
- Respectful to old citizens and pregnant women.
- Share true and useful information with the beneficiaries.
- Consistency between word and work.
- Able to deliver fast

Question No 20. (Identification): What do you think would be the most appropriate way to inform beneficiaries of this standard and how could we identify which agencies have adopted it?

- Meeting with beneficiaries
- Consult with beneficiaries
- By publishing poster and booklet
- Through school teachers
- By the mosque and madrasha/religious school.
- By the post office.
- By entertainment/fold media

Question No 22. Which values (if any) do you feel are vital for agencies to hold to in humanitarian aid provision?

- Able to warn early and responds rapidly to any disaster
- Able to work in rough weather and in risky places.
- Able to deliver in right time.
- Staffs should be honest.
- Distribute relief items impartially
- Respect beneficiaries' opinion
- Don't make beneficiaries dependant rather make them independent