

Accountability to Beneficiaries – January 2011 Update

Emergency Response and Recovery Program, Pakistan

Introduction to our Accountability to Beneficiaries System

Save the Children’s Malakand Response Program (in response to the conflict and displacement in northwestern Pakistan) designed a complaints and response system in December 2009, and began piloting this system the following month in order to improve accountability to beneficiaries. After successful piloting of this system, it was replicated in three more districts. The success of this complaint handling system was based on valuable feedback received from beneficiaries, who helped identify gaps in program delivery and guide us in terms of introducing strong internal control mechanisms to enhance transparency.

The complaint and response system was channeled through i) hotline numbers listed on program ‘site standards’ posters, displayed at different program sites, and ii) proactively soliciting and collecting beneficiary complaints/feedback on a feedback form. The latter mechanism was added because some beneficiaries have limited access to telephones; in addition, literacy is quite low in rural Pakistan, so not all beneficiaries can read the site standards posters. Along with introducing this complaints and response system in static program delivery sites, SC also applied this system to mobile interventions, e.g. cash for work sites, mobile health facilities, and ambulances.

Expansion of SC Accountability to Beneficiary System to Flood Affected Areas

SC is currently engaged in its largest ever emergency response for flood affectees in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Sindh and Punjab provinces. To ensure accountability to beneficiaries and designing programs which truly address the needs of affected communities, SC involved affected communities at the onset of the emergency response by i) consulting affected communities through our field staff, ii) carrying out needs assessments with affected communities, and iii) strengthening coordination mechanisms both at the head office and field office level. Lessons learnt from the Malakand Response Program were applied, including the expansion of the complaints and response system to all thematic and geographic areas of interventions.

The rapid expansion and induction of a large number of new staff members (the team grew from 200 to 1600 emergency response staff) did pose challenges. Initially a feeling emerged among some newly hired staff members that the complaints and response system was not ‘accountability to beneficiaries’ but ‘scrutiny of SC staff members’. This misconception is now being diffused by a series of orientation sessions about accountability, and introducing minimum standards for each program intervention, in close collaboration with program staff. Currently, the complaints handling system is a key instrument for increasing accountability and ensuring beneficiaries’ right to be heard, especially in such critical areas where aid involves financial, food, or material support. Through this system, beneficiaries are helping to identify critical gaps in program delivery, which ultimately contributes towards program and system strengthening.

The following table lists complaints received and addressed through the complaints and response system in all three provinces from January to December 2010:

KPK	Sindh	Punjab
117	101	124

The Way Forward

The M&E and Accountability team is in the process of revising the complaints database and complaints handling mechanism based on learning and experiences from 2010. Moreover, SC is strengthening its accountability to beneficiaries system by deputing at least one “Accountability Assistant” in each of its target districts. Capacity building for M&E and Accountability staff on accountability is one of SC’s main objectives in early 2011.