

METHODOLOGY CASE STUDY: Self-assessment methodology used by agencies responding to Cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh

In November 2007 Cyclone Sidr hit southern Bangladesh leaving thousands of people in need of assistance. 2 ½ months after the cyclone, during the relief phase, six agencies began a process of field self-assessments in order to review their agency's humanitarian accountability and quality during the response, and identify good practice and areas that could be strengthened in the subsequent rehabilitation and reconstruction phase. The self-assessments focused on reviewing practice against the HAP Standard Benchmarks in particular information dissemination, community engagement, and complaints handling.

Summary of methodology

Each self-assessment was led by a designated staff member from the agency with hands-on guidance from the HAP Field Team. The self-assessment focused on one field location in the Sidr affected area, providing a snapshot of the agency's humanitarian accountability and quality at that particular site. Generally the self-assessment took place over 4 days, during which the following activities took place:

- Introduction of self-assessment process for field staff.
- Identification of current practice
- Planning of field-site activities (including data collection methods and questions).
- Field-site activities to collect information
- Daily team debriefs to share site findings, reflect on progress to date and discuss discrepancies between data collected from different sources/communities.
- Action planning—identify recommendations and specific action points for taking these forward.
- Field staff debrief to share findings

Information was collected through a combination of reviews of existing policies and procedures, semi-structured interviews (SSIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with disaster-affected communities (including both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries), facilitated discussions with local staff, and field level observations.

Community Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Semi-Structured Interview (SSI) participants

FGDs and SSIs were held with men and women, beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in both mixed and segregated groups. Participants were selected through a variety of approaches:

- Community transit walk - informal SSI were held with people met on route.
- Opportunistic events – e.g. SSIs held with beneficiaries waiting in line at a distribution point.
- Household groups were 'randomly' selected – if they had time household FGDs were held.
- Beneficiaries were invited to participate in FGDs.

Community conversational tools

Guiding open questions were developed using the Benchmarks in the HAP Standard as a framework – these questions were often developed at the field location with field staff, taking into account existing accountable practices. These open questions provided a tool to generate discussion, facilitators were encouraged to follow the flow of the conversation, adapting the question order and asking additional relevant questions as needed.

Notes were taken to remember key points, and opinions of participants. After each day of the team debriefed to discuss findings against the benchmark, based on this recommendations and action points were jointly identified.

Golam Billah from Christian Aid conducting Semi-Structured Interviews with beneficiaries waiting at a distribution point:



Example questions – main questions are in grey, optional follow-up questions to be used if needed in white:

How do you engage with the project? ('Terms of relation' with the project)

- When and how?
- What was the purpose of this engagement? (e.g. beneficiary selection, monitoring, identifying needs etc)
- If through meetings what was discussed?
- Do you feel your views were taken into account when decisions about the project were made? Why do you feel this?

How were you selected as a beneficiary? (*adapt if speaking with non-beneficiaries*)

- Were you, or do you know anyone from this community, who was involved in selection of beneficiaries?
- Why do think you or others were involved?