

Humanitarian Accountability in 2009: Preliminary Findings

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Purpose and Method

Purpose:

- to provide an overview of the principal developments and apparent trends during 2009 in relation to accountability within the humanitarian system.

Method:

- desk review of
 - published sources
 - agency documents available on websites
 - information on relevant developments during 2009
 - review of 23 evaluations of humanitarian action
- supplemented by a dozen interviews.

Differences in source material between 2008 and 2009

2008: produced a rich crop of source material

- One World Trust's *Global Accountability Report*
- Listening Project's four issues papers
- Transparency International's *Preventing Corruption in Humanitarian Assistance*
- The reports by HAP and Save the Children *To complain or not to complain* and *No One to Turn To* which together provided powerful evidence of continuing sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers and/or peacekeepers from humanitarian operations in six different countries

2009: noticeably fewer 'substantive' contributions to the literature

- No Global Accountability Report in 2009 (being reviewed and modified)
- Listening Project concentrated on finishing the country listening exercises and preparing three more issues papers to be published soon
- TI preparing Handbook on Preventing Corruption in Humanitarian Operations to be launched next week
- HAP and Save the Children – Global Inspectorate Project

A narrative theme for 2009 was therefore more one of “**consolidation and follow-up**” rather than “significant new evidence”.

Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)

Global Inspectorate Project established by HAP and Save the Children

- “to provide accessible support to all agencies and to ensure that children and women who are abused by humanitarian staff will have someone to turn to and complain knowing that abuse will not be tolerated and will be acted upon”.

Keeping Children Safe Coalition (17 agencies)

- dissemination and use of the ***Keeping Children Safe Toolkit for Child Protection*** (including the Standards for Child Protection) in many countries
- Training by KCS in selected countries in West Africa

ECHA/ECPS PSEA Task Force

- Commissioned stock-taking review of implementation to date, identification of challenges, benchmarks for measuring progress and overall assessment and recommendations. Report due April 2010.

Organisations/initiatives working to improve NGO accountability through approaches including third party compliance verification and certification – International Level

HAP

- Rapid increase in membership - 13 new Full Members and 3 Associate
- Increase in number of members completing Baseline Analyses
- CAFOD and Christian Aid both achieved HAP certification
- Standards Review process – very wide consultation and greater engagement from agencies and communities
- Evaluation undertaken to be published early 2010
- HAP Roving Team deployed to Sri Lanka to support members and other agencies support included 9 guided self-assessments and tailored support to 3 agencies
 - HAP 2007 Standard translated into local languages
 - After Action Review favourable
- Collaborative research agreement with Harvard

People in Aid

- Save the Children and World Vision International awarded Quality Mark 2 “Verified”
- 12 agencies now “Verified” and 13 “Committed” (Quality Mark 1)
- HAP/People in Aid collaborative relationship strengthened – signing of MoU
- Joint audits (service for common members) undertaken of Merlin and Christian Aid

SGS NGO Benchmarking Service

- New or repeat certificates awarded to 21 organisations (total since 2004 now at 71) 18 Red Cross/Crescent societies certified (“Organisation” = national offices of INGOs)
- Revised version of benchmarking tool (101 indicators instead of 108)

Organisations/initiatives working to improve NGO accountability through approaches including third party compliance verification and certification – National level

AMAN – Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (Palestine)

Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC)

- 8 agencies certified

Charities Evaluation Service (CES) UK

- First PQASSO Quality Mark

InterAction PVO Standards

- Self Certification Plus to be reviewed in 2010

Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy

- 18 agencies certified

Philippine Council for NGO Certification

Swiss NPO-Code – Corporate Governance Guidelines

UK Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) Accountability Framework

- second year results showed across-the-board improvements but two of the five priority areas remain the most challenging areas for members – “accountability to beneficiaries” and “learning from our experience”

Organisations/initiatives working to improve NGO accountability through approaches other than third party compliance verification and certification

Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB)

- Phase 2 2008 to 2013 – 3 Objective areas and three cross-cutting themes
- Consortia Engagement Plans developed in the six focus countries/areas: Bangladesh; Bolivia; Horn of Africa; Indonesia; Niger
- Good Enough Guide dissemination and Training of Trainers courses
- Joint review of response to Cyclone Alia in Bangladesh

Sphere Project

- Revision process launched in May 2009 and will continue till March 2010
- Publication of Sphere Handbook (2010 Edition) towards end of year
- Publication of “Taking the Initiative: Exploring quality and accountability in the humanitarian sector: an introduction to eight initiatives” (ECB; Synergie Qualité; HAP; INEE; Quality COMPAS; Sphere Project; ALNAP; People in Aid)

Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR)

Peer Review of Accountability to Disaster Affected Populations

- Completion of the second and third review groups work during 2009
- Paper on generic lessons on accountability and the peer review process to be published in early 2010

Organisations/initiatives supporting NGOs in improving NGO accountability

One World Trust

- Online Database of CSO Self-Regulatory Initiatives launched in June. By end of year 320 initiatives in 80 countries listed

Inter-Agency Working Group on Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC)

- Formed during year, draft workplan considered in December

Red Cross

ICRC

- Draft accountability framework prepared. Should be released mid-2010

IFRC

- Strategy 2020 approved in November 2009 in Nairobi
- Contains commitments on “our accountability” to “meaningful beneficiary participation”
- Reference to “Federation-wide peer review mechanism to accredit well-functioning National Societies”

Increased activity around professionalization and leadership

Professionalization

Tufts and RedR scoping study

- Identify agreed set of core competencies
- Develop a certification system for professional qualifications from entry level through to professional Masters
- Explore potential professional structures e.g. professional association for humanitarian workers

RedR/Oxford Brookes University

- RedR courses earn transferable credits for degrees

PM4NGOs

- launched – offering three level online certification sequence

Leadership

Tulane University

- launched Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy
- Collaborative research programme with People in Aid and ALNAP announced

People in Aid/Cranfield University

- Identifying current gaps and future needs in leadership development and management

Humanitarian Reform Process

NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project (2008-2011)

- Synthesis report + 5 country studies published in October
- Critical of the very limited attention so far given to accountability to crisis-affected communities within the humanitarian reform process
- Cogent summary of the case for improved accountability to affected populations
- Signalled intention of the project to maintain a focus on downward accountability

Clusters

Cluster Leads Retreat – “Improving cluster accountability and performance”

Global Clusters-Donor Meeting – “Accountability within the Cluster System”

- But focus largely on clarification of roles and responsibilities within the cluster system and upward accountability to donors

WASH Cluster Accountability Project – A good news story!

- Steering Group of CARE, IRC, Oxfam, Tearfund
- Excellent report by Suzanne Ferron and development of practical tools
- A model for other clusters?

Humanitarian Reform Process

Improved Humanitarian Leadership

- Revision of HC ToR
- Development of matrix of roles and responsibilities within the humanitarian architecture
- Expansion of HC pool
- Frank and insightful paper presented to Annual HCs retreat
 - Human financial and political resources invested in leadership has been “exceedingly modest”
 - Efforts mostly focussed on individual level variables but management and institutional level variables need equal attention

Humanitarian Financing

- CERF Secretariat developed a draft performance and accountability framework to be finalised and approved in early 2010

OCHA

- Joint Impact Evaluation process established

UN Agencies

UNHCR

- Global Strategic Priorities revised – frequent mention of responsibilities towards ‘persons of concern’
- Second annual review of progress towards compliance with the accountability actions for Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming
- Participation in Group 2 (with Oxfam and LWF) of the SCHR Peer Review process
- HQ HAP baseline

• UNICEF

- Accountability Framework finalised and approved by the Executive Board
- Definition of accountability remarkably narrow:
“the obligation to demonstrate that work has been conducted in accordance with agreed rules and standards and that performance results have been reported fairly and accurately”
- Accountability to beneficiaries/target populations/groups barely mentioned
- E.g. The three main dimensions of accountability in UNICEF are:
 - Organisational accountability
 - Programmatic accountability
 - Staff accountability

UN Agencies

WFP

- 2009 represented the first full year of the Strategic Plan (2008-2011) with its theme of transforming WFP from a food aid agency to a food assistance agency
- First food voucher operation in Africa (Burkina Faso)
- New Strategic Results Framework approved by Executive Board at beginning of year
- Remarkable lack of reference to accountability to beneficiaries and affected populations
 - Annual Performance Report 2008 “the main accountability tool and primary oversight mechanism for the Board and donors” mentions “accountability” only 3 times and none of these in relation to its 100 million or so beneficiaries
 - Only 2 of the 7 WFP evaluations reviewed contain a substantive discussion of accountability to beneficiaries
 - Zimbabwe case study of NGO’s and Humanitarian Reform Project critical of WFP’s Vulnerable Group Feeding programme
- Why?
 - Might it be the case that because final delivery is undertaken by 2,800 NGOs and WFPs direct contact with communities is limited that this somehow absolves the agency of paying greater attention to downward accountability?

Donors

GHD Group

- Indicators Report 2009 covering 17 indicators of GHD Principles (prepared by Development Initiatives)
- Mapping study of donor coordination at the field level (ECHO commissioned)
- Netherlands leading GHD group in oPt
- Denmark, Australia and Sweden in process of revising their Humanitarian Aid Policies

DARA's Humanitarian Response Index 2009

- Gaps in donor understanding of GHD Principles

Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action

- Mutual accountability “donors and partners are accountable for development results”

World Bank

- Scaling-up social accountability approaches in its strategies and programmes

Donors

Joint Evaluation of Citizens Voice and Accountability

- Seven bilateral donors (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and UK)
- Work undertaken 2006-2008: 7 case studies (Benin, Nicaragua, Bangladesh, DRC, Indonesia, Mozambique and Nepal). Synthesis published late 2008 and ODI Briefing Paper February 2009
- Greater focus by donors on voice interventions than on accountability ones
- Tension between long-term processes of transforming state-society relations and donors' desire for quick results

USA

- Steady stream of developments in relation to foreign assistance reform and strengthening of State Department and USAID
- Strengthening of accountability and transparency in the initial Aid Reform Bill

UK

- Grant to large NGO consortium for response capacity development – continued outsourcing of management roles

Cross Sector Networks

ALNAP

- Increase in the range of issues being engaged with and range of products
- Review of Humanitarian Action
 - Performance and effectiveness
 - Humanitarian impact assessment
 - Innovations in humanitarian action
- The State of the Humanitarian System: Assessing performance and progress - a pilot study. To be launched in February.
- Innovations initiative – sharing and supporting innovation
- Leadership - collaborative research effort between ALNAP, HFP, and Tulane University's Disaster Management Leadership Academy (DMLA).

Quality and Accountability (Q&A Group)

- Number of members has grown to 11

Evaluation of Humanitarian Evaluation and Accountability to Beneficiaries and Communities

- Last year 22 evaluations reviewed and none were judged to have “systematically assessed accountability to beneficiaries”
- This year 23 evaluations reviewed (more UN and fewer NGO evaluations in the sample)
 - 17 (three-quarters) had interviewed beneficiaries as part of the evaluation
 - 3 (13%) judged to have explicitly considered accountability to beneficiaries (CARE Myanmar; WFP Livelihoods and Save the Children Myanmar)
 - At least 3 didn’t use the word “accountability” once in the report!
 - 1 (4%) judged to have systematically considered accountability to beneficiaries (Save the Children Myanmar evaluation)

Why so poor?

- Fewer NGO studies in sample?
- “Accountability” still be widely regarded as being principally about accountability to donors and minimising diversion/corruption
- DAC criteria don’t make consideration of accountability to beneficiaries explicit
- Significantly to my mind the one evaluation that was judged to have systematically considered accountability to beneficiaries was the one that included accountability as a separate criteria

Apparent Themes

- Year of consolidation and reflection
- Continued proliferation of initiatives
 - NGO's and Humanitarian Reform Project
 - CDAC
 - Raises questions about the role of donors in supporting proliferation
- Increased attention to aspects of HR – professionalisation/leadership
- Three particular “challenge areas” (i.e. where there is a significant challenge in achieving accountability to beneficiaries and affected populations)
 - Clusters
 - UN agencies
 - Evaluation
- But fortunately within each of these challenge areas there is good practice which can serve as a model or beacon for others within that challenge area
- Clusters – WASH Accountability Project
- UN agencies – UNHCR
- Evaluation – Save the Children Myanmar evaluation

Feedback Welcome!

- Chapter at draft stage so not yet finalised
- Any significant events, developments, publications in relation to accountability within the humanitarian system that have not been mentioned?
- Any corrections?
- Any other themes that you may have detected?