

“An Overview of Humanitarian Accountability in 2008”

Main Points from Chapter 1 of the
Humanitarian Accountability Report

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Approach and Methods

Purpose

- to provide an annual review of progress towards HAP's vision of a humanitarian system championing the rights and dignity of disaster survivors
- Or expressed another way to provide an overview of the principal developments and apparent trends during 2008 in relation to accountability within the humanitarian system
- A desk review of publications, document sources and information on relevant developments supplemented by a dozen interviews
- Material reviewed included 22 evaluations that had been placed on ALNAP's Evaluative Reports Database during 2008
- Attempted to be as comprehensive as possible for inevitably some developments or documents may have been missed.
- Please notify myself or HAP staff where this is the case so that we can improve our monitoring of publications on accountability

Section 1.3 Further Evidence Of The Need And Justification For Improved Accountability

- Separate studies by HAP and Save UK provided powerful evidence that, despite all the efforts since 2002 to address the issue of child sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers, that such exploitation and abuse
 - a) continues
 - b) is substantially underreported due to a widespread reluctance to complain
- The final report of research sponsored by Transparency International and undertaken by Tufts and ODI which involved the participation of seven NGOs of which 4 are HAP members.
 - Showed that corruption is a significant threat to the humanitarian system and that greater priority should be given to prevent corruption
- The 2008 Global Accountability Report by One World Trust surveyed the accountability capabilities of 30 organisations of which 8 may be regarded as significant actors in the humanitarian system. As a group, the humanitarian agencies did not score well in relation to transparency capabilities or complaints handling and response. However, they did score strongly in relation to participation capabilities, and in relation to evaluation capabilities

Section 1.3 Further Evidence Of The Need And Justification For Improved Accountability

- The Listening Project produced four issues papers based on the results from 1,500 conversations with approximately 3,500 people in 13 country studies so far completed
Four themes emerged strongly
 - International assistance as a delivery system emphasizes speed and efficiency;
 - The importance of agency presence at the community level;
 - The weakness of current approaches to participation and partnership;
 - The dominance of external agendas and priorities
- Such findings were supported by material in several of the 22 evaluations reviewed in preparing the chapter
- Listening Project will be completed and publish a book on its results during 2009.
 - Interesting to see how the response to the book is managed by different groups and agencies within the humanitarian system

Section 1.4 Principal developments within the humanitarian system: NGOs

Organisations and initiatives working to improve accountability through approaches including third party compliance verification and certification

HAP:

- 9 new Full Members (= 50% increase)
- DCA and Tearfund successfully completed the HAP Certification process bringing to the number of HAP members who are “HAP Certified” to 5
- Publication of *The Guide to the HAP Standard*
- Continued implementation and development of the New Emergencies Policy including the joint deployment with Sphere in Myanmar

Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC):

- established 1998
- Demonstration of reaching minimum criteria for financial management and accountability in order to qualify for tax deductions on charitable donations
- 858 organisations certified 1998-2007
- October 2007 a new Executive Order divested PCNC of this role. But after intensive negotiation it was reconfirmed in its role by another Executive Order issued in April 2007

AMAN: the Palestinian Coalition for Accountability and Integrity

- completion of the pilot phase of the Nahaza Project which resulted in three national NGOs being awarded Good Governance Certificates

Section 1.4 Principal developments within the humanitarian system: NGOs

Organisations and initiatives working to improve accountability through approaches including third party compliance verification and certification

Charities Evaluation Service CES (UK)

- PQASSO Quality Mark

Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC)

- Code of Ethical Principle and Minimum Standards for NGOs in Cambodia which includes a certification process.
- Seven agencies received certification in 2008.

Credibility Alliance, India

- Accreditation process introduced in 2007 and 21 member organisations had received accreditation by March 2009

Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy (PCP)

- Certification regime modelled on the PCNC launched in 2003
- By end 2008 140 organisations had achieved certification

People in Aid

- 11 members “Committed” against the People in Aid Code of Good Practice
- 8 members have been “Verified” against the Code by an external social auditor

Section 1.4 Principal developments within the humanitarian system: NGOs

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

UK Disasters Emergency Committee

- launch and initial operationalisation of the new Accountability Framework

Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB)

- funding secured for second phase covering five years

Listen First (Concern/MANGO)

- Research project that developed a framework and tools for operationalising downward accountability

VENRO (the German NGO Platform)

- new Code of Conduct adopted

Sphere Project

- Companion Standards - INEE Companionship Agreement
- Nargis joint deployment with HAP
- Sphere Revision Process

Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR)

- Peer Review of Accountability to Disaster Affected Populations
- 2 of the 9 organisations have completed their peer review processes during 2008 and the others and UNHCR will complete in 2009
- Decisions as to how the results will be communicated to be decided in June 2009

Tanzanian Council for NGOs (NACONGO)

- NGO Code of Conduct

Other developments/events

- International Conference on NGO Accountability in China in April 2008

Section 1.4 Principal developments within the humanitarian system: UN and multilateral organisations

The Humanitarian Reform Process

- rollout of the cluster approach and financing initiatives continued during 2008
- Cluster approach formally adopted in 19 countries and 26 countries have a Humanitarian Coordinator
- Cluster approach evaluated in 2007 and will be evaluated again in 2009

CERF evaluated during 2008

- Risk of diffusion of accountability lines as result of establishment of CERF
- Performance and Accountability Framework for the CERF currently being developed

Other studies of humanitarian financing mechanisms

UNICEF

- draft Report on the Accountability System of UNICEF presented to Board November 2008. Final version during 2009

UNHCR

- Accountability Framework for Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming in 2007. First global analysis completed during 2008
 - Remarkably the framework does not provide for any input or voice by any of the 'persons of concern' to UNHCR

Section 1.4 Principal developments within the humanitarian system: UN and multilateral organisations

Donor organisations

OECD DAC

- four countries peer reviewed during 2008

Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD)

- fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship

European Union/Commission

- The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. represents the first comprehensive joint EU policy statement on humanitarian aid and sets out common objectives, common principles and good practices and a common framework to deliver EU humanitarian aid.

World Bank Independent Evaluation Group

- Disaster Risk Management: Lessons from Evaluation. 51 evaluation lessons – third most broadly supported statement was the “beneficiary participation during the design and implementation stages is essential to success

DARA Humanitarian Response Index (HRI)

- Second in this annual series monitoring indicators of donor performance against the GHD Principles
- Refinement of methodology but retention of ranking of donor countries
- Considerable differences between donors and room for improvement at all levels

Cross Sector Networks

ALNAP

- Seventh Review of Humanitarian Action,
- Humanitarian Performance Project
- First ‘State of the System’ report in 2009

Section 1.5 Accountability ‘on the ground’: Cyclones Sidr and Nargis response operations

- Sidr** Bangladesh 27th November 2007 4,400 dead/missing.
- Comparatively good forecasting and warning system, cyclone shelters and embankments
- Nargis** Myanmar 3rd May 2008 138,000 dead/missing.
- Severity of the event and general lack of preparedness by Government and communities

Selected Points

Bangladesh

- evidence of competition between agencies forcing some agencies to spread themselves thinly over very large areas
- Some evidence of lack of preparedness, contingency planning and lack of adequate consultation with beneficiaries on assistance packages
- CARE-B complaint boxes at distribution sites, initially overwhelmed but good results and feedback from local authorities

Myanmar

- Limitations on number of international agencies and personnel allowed to enter Myanmar – “higher level of professionalism compared to Tsunami response”
- IASC RTE valuable in providing overview assessment
- Joint deployment by HAP and Sphere – a very significant development.
- Positions HAP and Sphere in a supportive relationship alongside hard-pressed response teams and facilitates cross-agency learning

Reflections on Some Themes and Challenges:

Encouraging evaluations to give more explicit consideration of accountability

- It appears that there has been significant improvement by evaluations in consulting beneficiaries and/or affected populations as part of the evaluation process.
- Of the 22 evaluations reviewed 16 (68%) indicated consultation with beneficiaries and/or affected populations
- However, of the 22 evaluations reviewed none systematically assessed the accountability systems in place
- 10 (45%) explicitly considered aspects of accountability such as the operation of beneficiary selection procedures and village relief committees
- 9 (41%) did not explicitly consider any aspects of accountability
- In 3 cases (14%) it was unclear or difficult to determine whether accountability issues had been considered on the basis of the reports alone
- There would appear to be a good case for HAP and its members to advocate for more explicit consideration of accountability and accountability systems in evaluation practice

Section 1.6 Reflections on Some Themes and Challenges:

The challenge of accountability in operations with significant organisational interdependence

- Humanitarian agencies very often reliant on each other to achieve their overall objective.
 - Often dependent (in an upward sense) on other organisations to provide them with critical resources (funding, relief commodities, equipment)
 - Often dependent (in a sideways sense) on each other to provide complementary services without which the effectiveness of their own intervention will be reduced (e.g. a nutrition intervention that is not complemented by shelter, water and sanitation and health interventions).
- Efforts to improve accountability in the humanitarian system have so far been largely focussed upon the development of accountability systems **within** organisations.
- As a growing number of organisations improve their accountability systems (as a result of efforts by HAP and others), so there is a need to increase efforts to improve systems of accountability **between** organisations.
- HAP is gaining valuable knowledge and experience on accountability and partnership as members working with and through local implementing partners undertake their baseline analyses and certification process.
- This is likely to place HAP in a potential leadership/influential position on efforts to improve inter-organisational accountability

Section 1.6 Reflections on Some Themes and Challenges:

The benefits and opportunity costs of multiple approaches to accountability

- Recent years have seen the development of a number of different accountability initiatives and their use (or at least advocacy for their use) within the humanitarian system.
 - HAP 2007 Standard, which was specifically designed for use as a compliance verification tool for independent quality assurance and certification
 - Global Accountability Framework developed by One World Trust,
 - the Good Enough Guide on Accountability and Impact
 - the DEC's Accountability Framework.
- In addition, a number of national level NGO accreditation schemes have come into operation in the last year or two with implicit approaches to quality and accountability systems within agencies
- All show a significant degree of commonality – transparency, participation, complaints handling and learning are all present even if treated somewhat differently.
- However there **are** differences between them and there is a potential for confusion and perhaps competition between the different approaches and frameworks
- Desirable for the organizations concerned to agree to manage the potential for confusion and competition as transparently and as collaboratively as possible
 - perhaps agreement on a common statement as to what their respective approaches do and do not offer

Section 1.6 Reflections on Some Themes and Challenges:

The potential implications of country-level NGO accreditation and certification schemes

Country Level Schemes noted

- Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC)
- AMAN: the Palestinian Coalition for Accountability and Integrity
- Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC)
- Credibility Alliance, India
- Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy (PCP)

- Quite conceivable that within the next few years the respective country programmes on international NGOs will be required to participate in such schemes

- To what extent will national schemes are able to recognise and take account of international certification schemes such as HAPs?

- HAP has begun work on developing an Accreditation Standard. But might there be a need for a framework or a body to facilitate discussions on accreditation standards – for example an ‘international association of NGO accreditation bodies’

Section 1.6 Reflections on Some Themes and Challenges:

The need for more research

- World Vision study of the work of its Humanitarian Accountability Team in Sri Lanka demonstrated the efficiency gains and cost savings of improved accountability.
- Two particular areas where rigorous research would be desirable:
 1. Demonstrate whether there is a clear business case for agencies to make investments in improved accountability
 2. Comparison of the performance of agencies that have achieved HAP certification and those that have not/have not begun the certification process
- To undertake rigorous research on these questions would require a link up and collaboration with university-based research groups. This is in the Medium Term Strategic Plan. I would strongly encourage development of such links. e.g. UK higher education research councils ELHRA (Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance)

The need for an agreed framework for assessing ‘progress’ in relation to accountability and quality in the humanitarian system

- Remarkable breadth of what is relevant or potentially relevant
- Difficult to know whether a development will gain or lose significance over time
- How to assess the significance of developments in a systematic and objective way?

Possible categories for assessing ‘progress’ in relation to accountability and quality in the humanitarian system	
Category	Reference Score
Developments having a direct, positive effect on accountability and quality	+3
Developments having an indirect, positive effect on accountability and quality	+2
Developments of relevance to accountability and quality and capable of having a positive effect	+1
Developments of potential relevance to accountability and quality and capable of having a negative effect	-1
Developments having an indirect, negative effect on accountability and quality	-2
Developments have a direct, negative effect on accountability and quality	-3

Feedback and Discussion