

## Workshop Follow-up note

# Improving Accountability to Beneficiaries: what evidence is needed?

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*Co-hosted by:*



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## Conference

In the weeks following the Workshop, the planning phase for the 1<sup>st</sup> Accountability to Beneficiaries Conference will focus on developing a concept note and drafting suggestions for main themes, building on the discussion on the 29<sup>th</sup>. The HAP Secretariat is proposing to set up an Advisory Group – drawn from policy-makers, researchers and practitioners – to contribute to organising the event.

We will keep you updated as this work progresses. In the meantime, if you have any specific suggestions of topics to be considered during the conference and of individuals or organisations that HAP should contact while planning it, please let us know.

Topics that have emerged from the workshop are presented below.

### *Answering the question: What don't we know?*

Workshop participants identified the following questions as requiring further research. Most of these are seeking to address a normative analysis, aimed at finding out not only how things *are* (the state of things), but above all how they *should be* (improving on the state of things). One possible method for addressing these questions could be descriptive analysis (such as case study, comparison, classification, etc.), with an added normative dimension into the analysis.

1. How can humanitarian agencies best measure accountability in a systematic manner?
2. Within agencies, who defines accountability to beneficiaries? Do different levels of management define it differently? Related to this, which level bears the responsibility for humanitarian accountability within the agency; is it head office management, country management or programme site staff?
3. As different response phases of humanitarian action require different types of accountability and evidence collection, what methodologies are best suited to the different response phases?
4. What does accountability to beneficiaries mean for agencies working in multi-layered partnerships?
5. How do we measure agencies' motivation to improve accountability? (Is it possible to use a motivational spectrum from desire to uphold dignity of disaster survivors to seeking financial support from donors?)
6. What happens to agencies that are unaccountable? Does the sector need punitive measures in such cases?
7. How do we measure adherence to humanitarian principles and different agencies' accountability to affected populations in areas that are controlled by non-state actors?

Four areas were highlighted by Oliver Jütersonke, *CCDP*, as possible research topics for collaboration that match with the current *CCDP* research activities. These were:

- Mapping the accountability chain of multi-layered organisations (such as the ACT Alliance) and networks

- Exploring the impact of an increasing visibility of and reliance on self-regulatory systems in the not-for-profit sectors
- With the increasing role of corporations and other non-state actors in the delivery and supply of aid, how might these actors be held accountable to their intended beneficiaries?
- What is the role of mutual accountability in the aid sector? How accountable are agencies to one another?

One final area for possible exploration was raised by Jock Baker, *CARE International*, which was focused on developing, in partnership with aid agencies, means to improve the interaction between humanitarian coordination and accountability during emergency responses.

#### *HAP's contribution to research*

One of the Workshop's objectives was to promote collaboration and identify potential areas of joint research on topics relevant to HAP's mandate. The questions highlighted above move in this direction. The Secretariat will continue to seek out research institutions interested in further addressing the above questions and to facilitate researchers' access to interested member agencies where appropriate. This will form part of a two-year research strategy, structured along the following proposed approaches:

- Research Advocacy: HAP will continue to collect and disseminate findings from relevant secondary sources as well as research needs identified by members and other humanitarian agencies, with a three-fold purpose:
  - to inform humanitarian stakeholders of current accountability trends and effects. The annotated bibliography that HAP maintains and disseminates via its website will be continuously updated, alongside a literature review on key topics.
  - to highlight questions relevant to HAP's mandate and place these in the public domain for the reference of researchers and research bodies who may have the capacity to address them; the session at ALNAP's 2009 conference and the workshop on January 29<sup>th</sup> are first steps in this direction.
  - to advocate with specific researchers or research bodies to undertake studies of relevance to HAP's mandate. The current activities with HHI falls under this category.
- Capture and document learning: HAP maintains a database of case studies, success stories, testimonials from humanitarian staff and disaster-affected communities. While this will be further developed, based on contributions from member agencies, a more structured framework for collecting and documenting learning will also be proposed. With support from members, other interested agencies and research bodies, the Secretariat plans to focus on three main areas in 2010 and 2011:
  - *Engage members and other agencies* to organise learning activities with a view of assessing the impact of capacity building and organisational development support offered by HAP and of activities undertaken by different agencies, including in new emergencies.

- *Capture and document good practice case studies*: Based on consultation with members, HAP will design flexible methods for capturing in real time the practice of interested agencies. To maximise their use, the case studies will use a consistent framework to present and analyse good practice on accountability and quality management alongside challenges and results. This approach will enable users to review the set of case studies and draw lessons that are applicable to their own organisation and in their own context, as appropriate.
- *Document and share costs and benefits of quality assurance*: The proposal is to identify indicators and collect data for five interested agencies that will work with HAP to capture the costs and benefits of programme quality assurance through certification. Human, financial and other resources invested by the agency in the quality assurance process will be presented and analysed alongside possible variables, which may include but not be limited to:
  - General satisfaction levels of beneficiaries with the quality of the programmes that they receive
  - Quality of the relationship with intended beneficiaries
  - Staff satisfaction, security and retention levels
  - Abuses of power including instances of fraud and corruption
  - Donor perceptions and public image
- Commission Research: The Humanitarian Accountability Report has become one of the key annual reviews of the sector. The Report includes an overview of progress made on accountability to beneficiaries, which is prepared by an independent consultant. (A chapter summarising the findings from the annual perception survey on accountability and one on voices of beneficiaries will continue to be prepared by the Secretariat). HAP may also commission specific studies so as to provide evidence of practice on topics within its mandate; for example, progress in implementing measures to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers.

This approach recognises that HAP's ability to be seen as a source of credible and independent research is limited by its very mandate; a challenge that was emphasised by various speakers and in relation to different sectors, during the workshop on January 29<sup>th</sup>. This credibility will therefore come from having an authoritative and objective voice derived from the value-added nature of undertaking research collaborations and providing support for external research on topics relevant to HAP's mandate.

In order to solicit feedback and support, a draft Research Strategy will be shared with member agencies and other stakeholders in the coming weeks. A series of regular follow-up meetings will be organised with the purpose of charting progress made, addressing challenges and continuing to explore areas that require further research.