

act:onaid



Accountability in Emergencies

Resource Book

Learning and good practice from across the ActionAid federation on promoting accountability to disaster-affected communities

act!onaid

Accountability in Emergencies Resource Book

Learning and good practice from across the ActionAid federation on
promoting accountability to disaster-affected communities

Published by ActionAid International
Website: www.actionaid.org

Editor: Stephanie Ross
Design & Layout : Sande Dengall

ISBN : 978-9945-134-07-9
©ActionAid International, 2014

Photocopies of all or part of this publication may be made provided that the source is acknowledged. ActionAid International would appreciate receiving details of the use of any of this material in training, research or programme design, implementation or evaluation.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to representatives from the five ActionAid countries involved in developing this Resource Book.

Technical working group:

Clement Chesire, ActionAid Kenya
Karen Jorgensen, ActionAid Denmark
Marie Andree St Aubin, ActionAid Haiti
Rosie Oglesby, ActionAid International
Saw Lin Htet, ActionAid Myanmar
Tasadduq Rasul, ActionAid Pakistan
Tauhid Ibne Farid, ActionAid Myanmar

Steering group:

Bijay Kumar, ActionAid Kenya
Ifeoma Charles-Monwuba, ActionAid Haiti
Jesper Lauridsen, ActionAid International
John Abuya, ActionAid International
Makena Mwobobia, ActionAid Kenya
Paras Mani Tamang, ActionAid Pakistan
Shihab Uddin Ahamad, ActionAid Myanmar
Yolette Etienne, ActionAid Haiti

The group is also grateful to colleagues from across the ActionAid federation who reviewed and provided comments on drafts, in particular Ana Akhvlediani, Emma Pearce and Jake Phelan.

Additional case studies and materials were contributed by ActionAid Ethiopia, ActionAid Philippines, ActionAid Arab Regional Initiative, ActionAid Zimbabwe and ActionAid Nepal.

Other agencies have kindly allowed us to feature their accountability practices and case studies: thanks to Internews, Danish Refugee Council, CDA Listening Project, World Vision, Oxfam, Save the Children and Church of Sweden. In this document and in the online Resource Library we have also featured reports and guides developed by many other agencies, including HAP, ALNAP, Infoasaid, FrontlineSMS, MANGO, ECB and CDAC Network.



Contents

Accountability in Emergencies Resource Book

PG. VI	Introduction
PG. 01	Section 1: ActionAid's approach to accountability in emergencies
PG. 04	Section 2: Integrating accountability into programming
PG. 11	Section 3: Guidance on key areas of accountability and suggested tools

Annexes: Tools and Case Studies

PG. 34	Transparency, Information Sharing and Two-Way Communication
PG. 46	Participation and Inclusion
PG. 55	Complaints and Resolution
PG. 59	Financial Accountability
PG. 64	Community Led Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
PG. 70	Holding other Stakeholders to Account
PG. 82	Online Resource Library

Introduction

This document is designed to support people working on emergency preparedness, response and recovery to integrate accountability to disaster-affected communities into their programmes. It is intended for ActionAid programme staff and partners, but we hope it may also be useful to staff from other agencies looking to incorporate new accountability approaches.

This document is not written as a manual – we do not feel that giving prescriptive instructions to be followed in every context is the most useful way to improve accountability in our work. Instead, it sets out key principles and broad guidance on how ActionAid approaches accountability in emergencies, and describes a selection of tools that have proven valuable in different countries where ActionAid works, as well as some tools developed by other agencies that we feel are exciting additions to our own experience. Guidance is also provided on how these could be used in different contexts, and we have included case studies documenting the practical experience from those who have used them in emergency programmes (including challenges as well as positive experiences!). We hope this will be a living document, which will continue to build on ActionAid's ongoing experience in strengthening accountability to disaster-affected communities. At the end of this document you will find details of how ActionAid members and country programmes can share case studies and tools from their own experiences.

This document was developed by a group of five ActionAid countries, who came together to take leadership for the wider ActionAid federation on accountability in emergencies. These countries are ActionAid Denmark, ActionAid Haiti, ActionAid Kenya, ActionAid Myanmar and ActionAid Pakistan. Representatives from these countries worked together to develop this document, as well as piloting new accountability tools in their own programmes as a way of generating learning for the wider federation. Consultation on the Resource Book was carried out with colleagues across the ActionAid federation, including accountability focal points, colleagues working on Reflection-Action, EFAST roster members, and other relevant communities of practice.

How to use this Resource Book

This Resource Book is intended to be an introduction – it provides ideas and guidance, and points you towards further resources you might find useful.

The main document provides guidance and key principles on addressing accountability in emergency programmes, and describes some of the main components of accountability to communities. It suggests a number of tools and approaches (many drawn from our Reflection-Action toolkit) you could use to roll this out in emergencies, and provides top line information on each one. This is to give you some ideas about how to get started – they are by no means the only approaches, and you'll find lots of other examples in the Annexes and online.

An Annexes section accompanies the main text. Here you will find more detailed guidance or instructions on implementing each of the tools featured in the Resource Book, and examples of how this has been done in different ActionAid countries. The Annexes also suggest further resources that will help you explore more deeply.

Finally, we have developed an *online Resource Library* on the ActionAid extranet (available to external partners as well as ActionAid staff) where you will find a large number of resources – these include full versions of the case studies mentioned in this Resource Book, films, audio clips, cartoons, reports, toolkits and links to useful organisations and networks working on accountability. These resources will be regularly updated and we encourage you to share your own case studies and materials so they can be used by ActionAid colleagues and partners.

This document complements existing ActionAid materials including the guidance on accountability in the *Emergency Preparedness and Response Handbook*, our *Accountability Charter*, *Alps* and *Reflection-Action* resources.



SECTION 1

ActionAid's approach to accountability in emergencies

SECTION 1

ActionAid's approach to accountability in emergencies

What accountability means to ActionAid

Accountability is central to our human rights-based approach (HRBA) and our theory of change.

ActionAid HRBA principles

1. Putting the active agency of people living in poverty first – and building their awareness of rights.
 2. Analysing and confronting unequal power.
 3. Advancing women's rights.
 4. Building partnerships.
 5. Being accountable and transparent.
 6. Monitoring, evaluating and evidencing our impact.
 7. Linking work across levels to address structural change.
 8. Being solutions-orientated and promoting credible and sustainable alternatives.
- (People's Action in Practice)

'Being accountable and transparent' requires that:

- We can show evidence that our primary accountability is to people living in poverty.
- We are satisfying all relevant secondary accountabilities.
- We can show the impact of all our work on children.
- We have fulfilled the requirements of our open information policy, by making information about our programmes and budgets available to all stakeholders in accessible formats.
- We are using our own accountability as a foundation for strengthening people's ability to hold their governments to account on their rights obligations.

ActionAid's approach to accountability is outlined in our Accountability Charter, the overarching document defining our commitment to accountability and the rationale behind this commitment.

"ActionAid's approach to accountability is embedded in our vision and mission as well in our theory of change and in our strategic plan. We consider accountability to be an integral part of how change happens – and therefore essential to achieving positive impact. We believe that one crucial element to achieve change is that people living in poverty are able to hold duty bearers to account. We also believe that people living in poverty must be able to hold us, as a federation, accountable for the work we do, how we do it and for our achievements and failures. As we manage resources on behalf of people living in poverty, which are entrusted to us by donors, sponsors and supporters, we are therefore accountable for the management of those resources. We aspire to the same standards and practices that we demand of others and this is reflected in our behaviour and attitudes as ActionAiders". (*ActionAid accountability charter, 2013*)

In ActionAid we have multiple accountabilities – to the poor and excluded people, groups and partners with whom we work, to our supporters, volunteers, staff and board members, and to our donors. *Our Accountability, Learning and Planning System* (Alps) guides us to mainstream accountability into our planning and reporting processes through setting the principles and necessary personal attitudes and behaviours. Alps defines standards on what to do and how to do it in order to apply our human rights-based approach. Alps as a system emphasises accountability to all our stakeholders while also making it very clear that our primary accountability is to poor and excluded people, especially women and girls who bear the brunt of poverty and injustice. We are also accountable to our mission, strategy and policies, to which we hold ourselves mutually accountable in the federation. This Resource Book aims to complement Alps, by suggesting practical ways that the principles of Alps can be applied in emergency contexts.

What is accountability to disaster-affected communities?

When we brainstormed the phrase 'accountability in emergencies' in a workshop of ActionAid staff from over 15 countries, participants defined it as: transparency, empowerment, trust, information, proper use of funds, responsibility, openness and rights. To sum this up, ActionAid uses the definition from the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP): accountability is the 'means through which power is used responsibly'.

In an emergency context aid agencies can hold considerable power through their control over funding, information and decision-making, but there are rarely significant consequences for any failure to fulfil commitments and deliver results. This is of course also true of development contexts generally, but is often exacerbated in emergencies when large amounts of money are being spent rapidly, where normal social structures, support networks and sources of information are disrupted, and where people find themselves in extremely vulnerable situations.

To be accountable ActionAid has to use this power responsibly, by putting people affected by disasters (especially women) at the centre of decision-making by sharing information, being transparent about our use of funds, opening ourselves up to scrutiny by communities, and learning from our past experiences. ActionAid promotes women's leadership in all of these processes.

We have defined six key areas that are essential components of our accountability to disaster-affected communities, which are explained in detail in Section 3:

1. Transparency, information and two-way communication.
2. Participation and inclusion.
3. Complaints and resolution.
4. Financial accountability.
5. Community-led monitoring, evaluation and learning.
6. Holding other stakeholders to account.

These six key areas were developed by drawing on the principles contained in ActionAid's Accountability Charter and with reference to the six HAP benchmarks¹. This Resource Book focuses specifically on our accountability to disaster-affected communities – it aims to provide practical guidance to put into action this aspect of our Accountability Charter. Where necessary we have expanded and added additional information relating to emergency contexts in particular. For example, Section 3 suggests ways to carry out our commitments to share the information stated in our transparency principle. But it also goes beyond the commitment to share organisational information, and looks also at other types of information that we should be sharing in emergencies: including lifesaving information, information about the aid process and where people can access support, people's rights and entitlements etc. Similarly, we have decided to add a specific section on financial accountability to communities in this document, as this is an important point relating both to transparency and participation and inclusion, and one that rarely receives enough attention in emergencies.

ActionAid Accountability Charter

Five key principles guide our accountability in ActionAid

1. Participation and inclusion
2. Evaluation and learning
3. Transparency
4. Complaints and resolution
5. Monitoring our commitments and ensuring compliance (ActionAid Accountability Charter, 2013)

For ActionAid, accountability is not only a quality assurance tool but also a political process. By holding ourselves open to community scrutiny and being accountable to them for our work in emergencies, we aim to achieve two things. First, we believe that doing this will improve the effectiveness and impact of our programmes², and will make us better able to protect people's rights and save lives in emergencies. Tools and approaches integrated in the emergency response can also lay a strong foundation

¹ The HAP benchmarks are: establishing and delivering on commitments; staff competency; sharing information; participation; handling complaints; learning and continual improvement.

² ActionAid has a strong commitment to accountability as a non-negotiable element of our human rights-based approach and our values as an organisation. We believe we have strong examples and case studies from practice demonstrating how this leads to better programming. At the same time we are working to generate more robust evidence exploring the links between programme effectiveness and accountability.

for accountability in our longer term programmes.

Second, by encouraging communities to hold ActionAid and our partners to account through the tools and mechanisms included in our programmes, we help them gain the skills and confidence they need to hold others (such as other humanitarian agencies, governments and corporates) to account in the future. Without strong accountability practices, our programmes will lack quality, and are likely to actually increase

Case study:

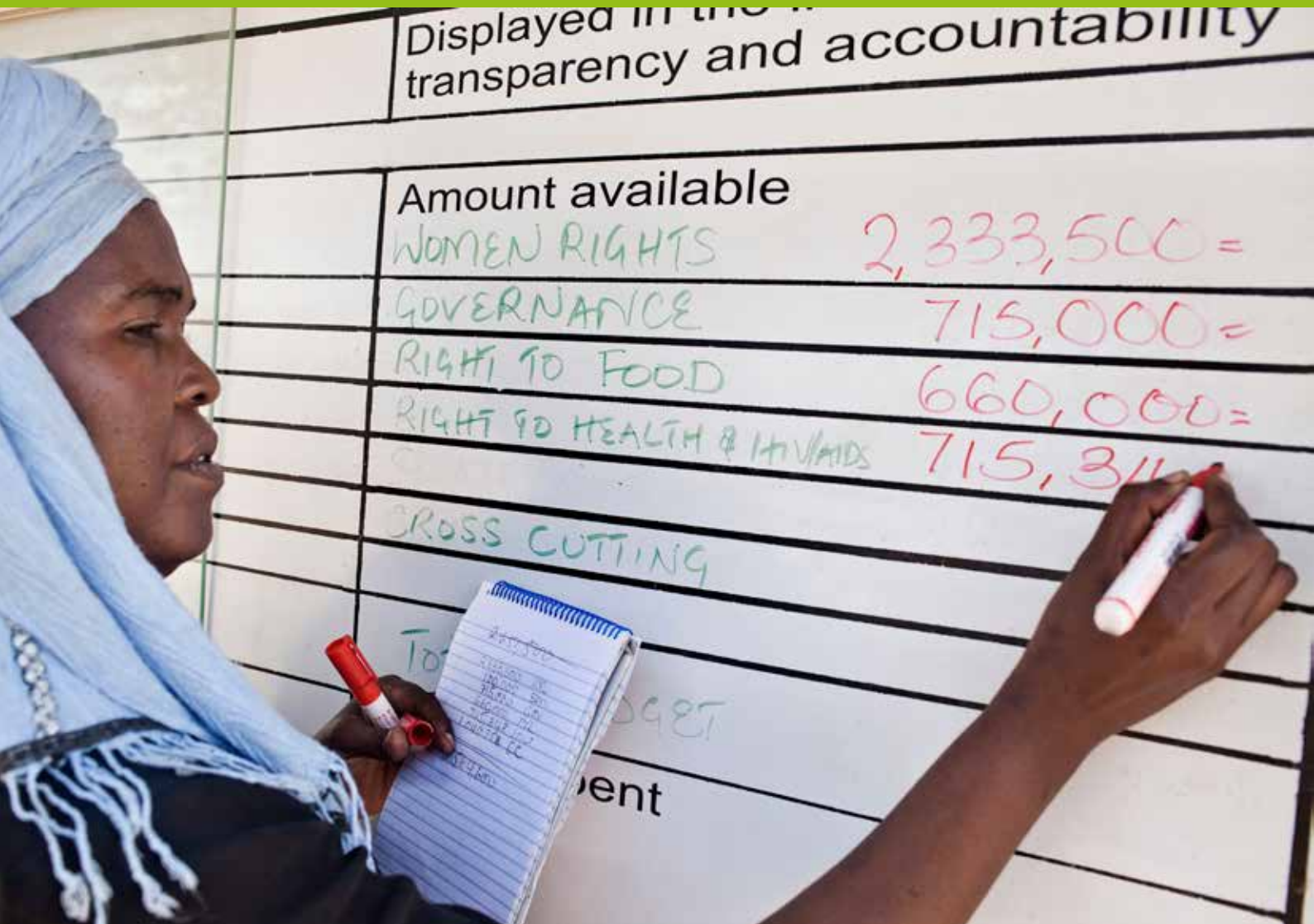
See online Resource Library for a case study and film from ActionAid Pakistan featuring Sonia and her journey from disaster to rights. Sonia is a sanitary worker in Pakistan, living in hard conditions. Her community was affected by earthquakes and flooding in 2010 and she was left homeless. This case study describes how Sonia was involved in the community-led response organised by ActionAid Pakistan and partners, and from there went on to participate in training and campaigns for the rights of sanitary workers. As a result, the government allocated land, shelter, electricity and sanitation. The group is continuing to campaign for social services for workers.

community vulnerability. For example, the risks increased by a lack of accountability include:

- Sexual exploitation and abuse of affected communities.
- Security risks increased by a lack of trust and community participation.
- Corruption and wasted resources.
- Aid failing to reach the most vulnerable.
- Inability to learn from our mistakes quickly enough.
- Lack of programme sustainability and weak links to longer term change.
- Reputational risk at community level and externally.

We see accountability to disaster-affected communities as non-negotiable, not as an added extra to programmes. We are accountable to communities for the quality and appropriateness of our programmes – the support we provide and the way that it is provided. Without strong accountability to disaster-affected communities, we cannot be fully accountable to other stakeholders for our work, including our donors and supporters, or to the international accountability standards and other external accountability commitments we adhere to. These include the Sphere Standards, Red Cross Code of Conduct, Humanitarian Accountability Partnership, People in Aid and INGO Accountability Charter (for more information on these standards see the *Emergency Preparedness and Response Handbook*). There are also important accountability standards required by major donors in emergencies, such as the DEC Accountability Framework.

Accountability to disaster-affected communities is a critical component of meeting these broader accountability commitments.



SECTION 2

Integrating accountability into programming

SECTION 2

Integrating accountability into programming

What to do when – integrating accountability into the programme cycle

This diagram lists some simple activities and things to consider at each stage of the humanitarian programme cycle, to make sure accountability to communities is being addressed. The specific tool mentioned are described in more detail in Section 3.



Making sure accountability is integrated into emergency programmes

Accountability tends to get forgotten at the beginning of an emergency response, and is often not integrated until after much of the initial work has been done. To really be accountable to communities, it is important to consider how we can work in an accountable manner right from the start. It is also important to involve not only programme teams, but also finance, M&E and proposal writers etc.

Preparedness: accountability should be part of ActionAid and partners' emergency preparedness plans. Gather data in advance about communications channels and ways of communicating with communities, and consider how these may be affected by emergencies. Make sure you understand the government landscape, including people's rights and entitlements to support following a disaster. Work with communities as part of preparedness planning and training to identify accountability mechanisms they can put in place before a disaster – and consider how accountability mechanisms you are already using in development programmes can be adapted in emergencies.

Needs assessment: integrate accountability component into needs assessment – for example, include questions about people's information needs and communication preferences, ask about existing community structures for participation and information sharing, and explore the government provisions that people are entitled to. See further information on conducting information needs assessments in Section 3.

Programme design: include actions around each component of accountability in your response plan (consider having a specific objective or outcome around strengthening accountability; and/or integrate activities such as transparency boards, social audit etc into programme activities).

Budget: one reason why accountability sometimes gets forgotten is the absence of budget allocations for specific activities ensuring accountability. So include a budget line for integrating accountability (including additional staff costs where necessary) in programme budget and funding proposals.

M&E: design specific indicators for measuring progress for each component/key area of accountability (e.g. how would you know you are sharing timely, understandable and necessary information to people living in poverty? How would you know if people feel they own the decisions made?) Include these indicators in the monitoring and evaluation framework, and ensure accountability is prioritised in the TOR for evaluations.

Fundraising: advocate for including accountability in funding proposals – donors often will not mention it as a specific budget line, but some will look positively on

projects that proactively highlight this area of work in the activity-based budget. It is also seen globally as an area where ActionAid is a leading agency, so it may help to strengthen proposals.

Capacity development: provide orientation and training to emergency programme staff, volunteers and partners on accountability. It may be quite a new area for some (particularly those new to ActionAid), but it is important for all staff to have an understanding of accountability. There are lots of training resources and modules already developed that you can use – contact IHART for support on this. In addition to training, consider other approaches like peer-to-peer support, exchange visits, mentoring and immersions.

Job descriptions: build accountability into job descriptions and performance management criteria for staff working on the emergency response programme.

Documentation: make sure innovative accountability work is captured through case studies, blogs and communications work so that it can be promoted internally and externally.

Coordination: make a plan from the beginning to engage in relevant clusters and working groups relating to accountability so that ActionAid can build credibility and visibility in this area of the response. These groups are also important ways to advocate for accountability to be included in inter-agency needs assessments, response plans and funding appeals.

Learning: at key points in the response, assign time to review progress on accountability. Together with communities, consider what is working well, which commitments we are meeting and where the gaps might be, identify learning and document good practices and lessons. This can be integrated into the Participatory Review and Reflection Process (PRRP).



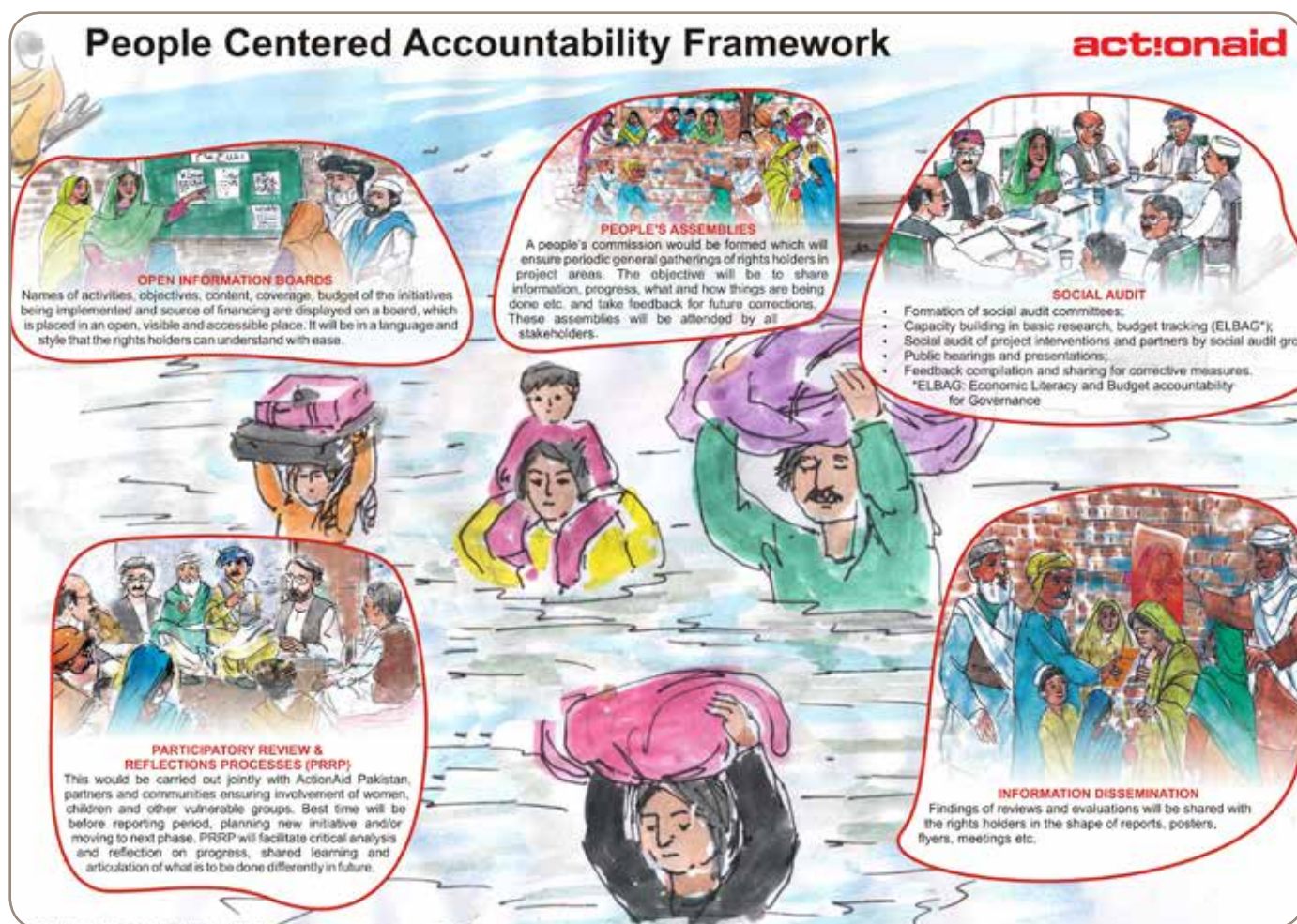
Holistic accountability processes

This Resource Book contains guidance on specific sectors of accountability. It is important to remember that accountability should be seen from a holistic perspective – these tools need to be linked together, and also to be an integral part of programming. Here are a couple of examples to demonstrate.

A simple **accountability framework** is a useful tool to articulate the basic accountability practices to be implemented in an emergency response. Below is a visual representation of ActionAid Pakistan's accountability framework. ActionAid Pakistan has also developed a guidance document for staff and partners that sets out the minimum standards and indicators for accountability in programming- you can find this on the *online Resource Library*.

You can also look at a top-line guidance document developed for ActionAid partners in the Philippines, which sets out minimum standards in accountability in the response- see *online Resource Library*.

Remember that there are international standards, as well as internal policies, principles and standards in ActionAid relating to accountability. Make sure you refer to key policies (such as our Accountability Charter, Alps, Open Information Policy, Complaints and Response Mechanism Framework, Whistleblowing Policy, Child Protection Policy and Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy) and make sure the activities and systems you are designing are in line with these. All these policies can be found on the HIVE.



Guidance on adapting tools for different contexts

The tools in this document have all worked well in various contexts. In adapting them to different contexts, there are some things to bear in mind. The most important is to apply the key principles in the most effective way for your own context, and consider the best way to adapt the detailed implementation for your situation.

For instance:

Literacy rates: when using transparency boards, posters, leaflets etc to share information, consider levels of literacy. If literacy levels are low, using symbols or pictures might be more appropriate, but if most people are literate they may see this as patronising or childish. Also consider different literacy levels amongst specific groups (women, elderly people) to avoid excluding vulnerable groups.

Languages: materials (written or audio/video) should be in languages people understand- this is not about visibility to the media or donors! As well as the majority/national language, consider different languages that might be spoken by minority groups or people who have not had access to formal education.

Scheduling: when arranging public meetings, focus groups etc, consider what time of day and what place people feel most comfortable to meet in this community. Consider in particular accessibility for women.

Cultural practices: particularly when setting up things like complaints and feedback mechanisms or public reviews, understand people's cultural and social practices and how they feel comfortable expressing their views. Is it acceptable for people to raise issues in front of others, or only in private? Will women feel more comfortable expressing themselves in mixed groups or women only groups? Is it necessary to first express a number of positive things before raising the real issues that people want to talk about? Do people only express negative views indirectly or in unspoken ways that require reading between the lines?

Level of understanding: consider whether people are familiar with NGOs and the way projects are operated. If people have no clear concept of what a budget means, they will not be able to engage in a meaningful way without support and explanation. Consider how to make it relevant to their own experience (such as household budgeting that women are already familiar with) and how to share information in ways that are easy to understand (such as breaking budgets down to amount per household, rather than just showing large figures in overall budget lines). Similarly, if people don't understand what an NGO is, the concept of the Red Cross Code of Conduct will mean little to them!

Power, local hierarchy, allies and networks: Analysing and confronting unequal power is one of our HRBA principles. When working with communities it is important to understand the power structure and hierarchy within the community. Who is allied and how are these networks making some people more powerful and others marginalised? The right kind of power can make things happen, but it can also prevent groups from having their voices heard and influencing decisions important for their lives. It is important to separate between visible, hidden and invisible forms of power. See the Reflection-Action toolkit for tools such as Chapatti (Venn) diagrams for analysing power relationships, and *Reflection Action HRBA* resources for more information on understanding different types of power.

Understand and manage the risks: as part of our overall programme design, it is important to understand and analyse the context. ActionAid has several key areas of assessment within our HRBA, which includes risk assessment. In emergencies –particularly in conflict situations – it is crucial to assess and address the risks (to communities, ActionAid staff, partners and other stakeholders) associated with our programmes. We have an obligation to ensure that our work will not cause harm or expose people to unacceptable risks in all contexts, but particularly in conflict or insecure environments. The same applies to the accountability components of our work – it is important to make sure you understand the context, assess the risks and take this into account when deciding how to integrate accountability into the programme. The context and the potential risks could influence the tools and approaches you select, and the way they are contextualised and explained to people. Communities should be involved in these decisions. There are lots of resources available to support conflict sensitive programming (see for example the 'How to guide to conflict sensitivity' developed by the Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, which you can find in the *online Resource Library*).

Reflection-Action resources: Reflection-Action resources provide lots of useful guidance for working with communities and participatory tools. You'll find ideas here about designing processes and making sure they are appropriate for different contexts and linked to ongoing processes.

Reflection-Action

ActionAid has a long history of using participatory methodologies such as Reflect, Participatory Vulnerability Analysis (PVA) and Stepping Stones (STAR) for raising awareness and analysing power. While each of these has its strengths, they all draw on the same core tools and theories. By using separate names we have fragmented our approach, even to the extent of organising separate groups within a single community. In line with our strategy we are now building a single harmonised approach that draws on best practice from all of these.

Reflection-Action is the result of this, and is the foundation for all our work with communities. We have developed new Reflection-Action resource materials, bringing all our knowledge together into a new 'one-stop shop' on the Hive and the Reflection-Action Basecamp online forum. Where appropriate these materials also point towards existing resources that might be useful to support work in a particular context.

We are also working with colleagues to develop Reflection-Action resources linked to each of ActionAid's strategic objectives and multi-country campaigns.

To view these materials visit the *Reflection-Action* pages on the HIVE.

Top tips for programme staff: attitudes for accountability

Accountability is not just a technical process – it is not enough to simply take a tool off the shelf and follow the instructions. Our attitudes and behaviour as aid workers matters. Here are some top tips from programme staff based on their experience of working on accountability at community level.

- **Humility:** implementing accountability mechanisms effectively means handing over control and opening yourself up to scrutiny. Remember that you don't have all the answers – be open to input from the community even if it means adjusting the programme you have carefully developed!
- **Don't be defensive:** don't be afraid or defensive about any criticism or problems that might emerge. The point

is that you find out about them early and can adjust the programme accordingly. These problems probably exist in all programmes – it's just that agencies don't always find out about them because we don't have effective ways to listen to the communities we work with...

- **Be open to new (or traditional) tools:** when you explain to people what the purpose of accountability mechanisms is, you might find that there are already things that exist in local communities that serve similar purposes. Consider whether you can integrate these as well as, or instead of, setting up new mechanisms. For example, if there are already strong women's groups, can these take on the function of a vigilance committee? Or if there are traditional forums for communities to come together and discuss plans and problems, can they be used to share project plans or community reviews? It is important to consider though, whether these mechanisms are representative – in particular are they accessible to women and the poor/excluded in the community?
- **How to understand and deal with conflicts:** there are three main types of conflict you should be aware of. 1) Conflicts about problems – often a discussion/conflict about how to best solve a problem; these are usually ultimately constructive if both parties are really interested in solving the problem. 2) Conflicts based on rights (i.e. rules, laws, policies, traditions and beliefs). This conflict is about the criteria used to justify actions or behaviours. Negotiations to solve these types of conflict are often based on discussing the relevance, applicability and fairness/justness of the criteria (i.e. the rules, laws, policies, traditions and beliefs which underpin the action). 3) Conflicts based purely on power (i.e. the person controlling the action simply has the raw power to do that). The conflict resolution approach in this method is to try to de-escalate, e.g., if the problem is raw power, can this conflict be de-escalated to a conflict about rights? Can a conflict about rights then be de-escalated to a conflict about problems?

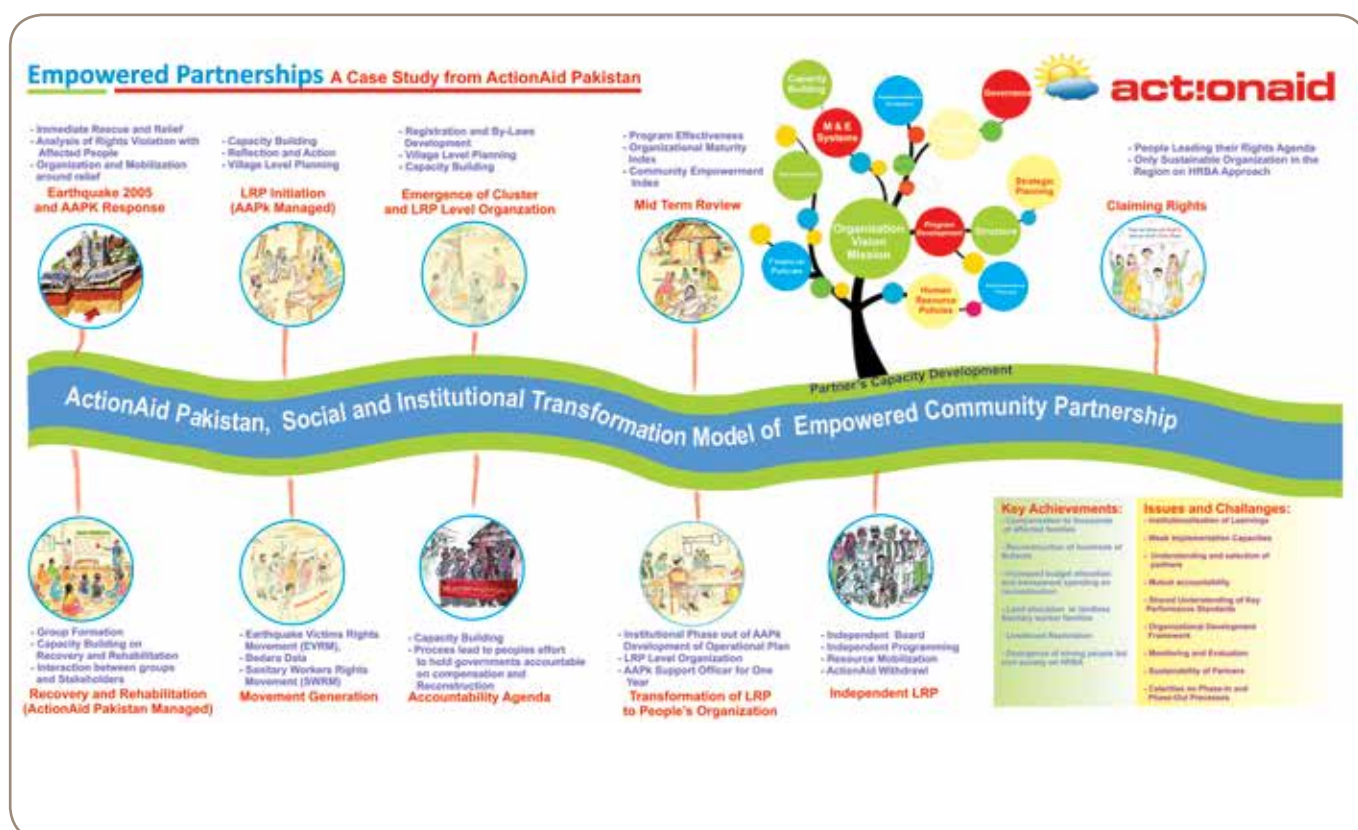


Accountability and partners

The majority of ActionAid's emergency work is implemented together with local partner organisations. Supporting these partners to understand and roll out accountability is critical to making sure we can deliver on the commitments we make as ActionAid. ActionAid has an International Partnership Policy which guides our engagement with partners, and which contains useful information on overarching principles and mutual accountability.

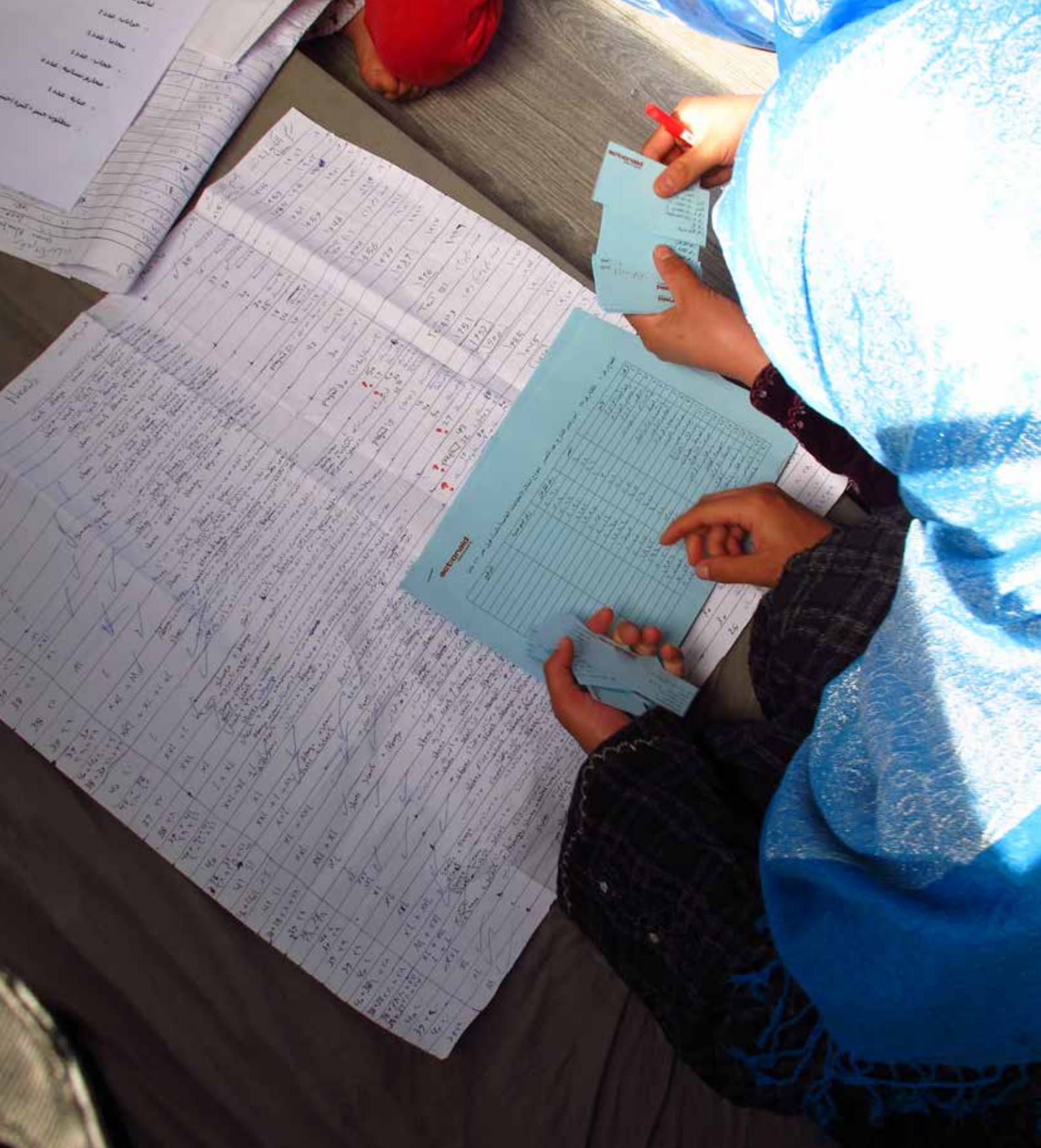
In a partnership we will have to discuss how we are accountable to both our partners, and to the people and communities with and for whom we work. At the beginning of a partnership it might be important to establish mechanisms for frequent dialogue, reviews

and strategic discussions which strive at openness and honesty. ActionAid and programme partners have a mutual interest in demonstrating impact and in designing accountability systems – financial administration and accountability is obviously crucial to all involved. Accountability practices also have an important role to play in supporting mutual accountability between ActionAid and our partners, and in our longer term aim to support and empower local organisations.



Case study:

Following the 2005 earthquake in northern Pakistan and Kashmir, ActionAid Pakistan's emergency response was based on an approach of supporting local partners. This case study describes how ActionAid worked with a range of local social movements, many of whom have gone on to become formal partners of ActionAid. See *online Resource Library* for a case study and a poster documenting ActionAid Pakistan's approach to Empowered Partnerships.



SECTION 3

Guidance on key areas of accountability

SECTION 3

Guidance on key areas of accountability

1. Transparency, information and two-way communication

Information is a right, and in many cases can be lifesaving in itself. Having access to information is essential for communities to be able to participate in decisions and hold humanitarian agencies to account. Having effective ways to share information with communities and to facilitate two-way communication between communities and aid agencies (and other stakeholders) is an important starting point for accountability. This section highlights some ways of doing this in emergencies. Sharing information in itself does not equal participation – it is an important step, but it is important to move beyond simply providing information. Meaningful participation is supported when people have a say in deciding what information they want, and can engage in a dialogue.

Key principles:

- Information is a right in itself and is key to community empowerment.
- Communication can be lifesaving – see why in this short animation on *#commisaid*.
- Information needs to be timely, accurate and provided in appropriate ways.
- Information must be accessible to all, including the most vulnerable and excluded.
- Communication is a two-way process – we also need to find ways for communities to share information and concerns with us and other stakeholders (see *Infoasaid E learning course*).
- Communication with communities is an important part of the emergency response – it is not an optional extra.
- Ask communities what information they want and need – don't assume!
- Programme activities may be needed to support information and communication, for example, distribution of radios or phones, support to local media organisations.
- It is important to assess and review the effectiveness of the information provided and to make adjustments if necessary throughout the response.

What information should I share?

- Lifesaving information, such as hygiene messages, actions communities can take to protect themselves, alerts about approaching hazards (earthquake aftershocks, storms etc).
- Information about the aid process, such as when and where distributions will happen, how to register, what government compensation is available.
- Updates on how the response is progressing

(e.g. when electricity is likely to be restored, how long food distributions will continue).

- Information on people's rights (aid should be free and impartial, the right to protection) and international humanitarian standards (e.g. Sphere, HAP, Red Cross Code of Conduct).
- Who ActionAid and are partners are, contact details, how to request information from us, how to make a complaint.
- Information about the results of the consultation with communities and the agreed planned projects implemented by ActionAid/partners (what the agreed activities are, when will they be carried out, who will receive assistance, what are the criteria for selection, what is the budget and source of funding, update on progress and changes etc).
- Ask people what they want to know, and what information they want to share!

Information needs assessment

In an emergency it is important to consider people's information and communication needs.



(Photo: ActionAid)

This includes: what information they want to know and what they want to share with humanitarian agencies; the communication channels they have access to (and which they trust); how information is traditionally shared in their communities; and what impact the disaster has had on communication channels. You can find a lot

using secondary data, and by linking with other actors. The information can be used to design response activities to improve people's access to information and communication, ensure our accountability and communications activities are appropriate, and for advocacy.

More info: see Annex 1.1 for detailed guidance including: what information to collect in an information needs assessment, ideas for how to collect it, collaborating with other actors, and links to further resources and assessment guides.

Transparency boards

A transparency board is a way to share information on the emergency response, including activities, dates, selection criteria, budget, progress and contact details. The transparency board forms part of the social audit process – based on information shared, community monitoring committees will monitor project progress and scrutinise bills and vouchers for money spent.



(Photo: ActionAid)

Transparency boards should be established at the very start of the programme and updated regularly. It is an important start to the accountability process, demonstrating that communities have a right to information, and to ask questions about the project. Specific information posters can also be displayed, for example listing the contents of relief kits or details of activities such as training.

More info: see Annex 1.2 for detailed guidance including: what information to include on a transparency board, a suggested template you can adapt, ideas for how to work with the community to design and set it up using local materials, and link to Reflection-Action resource sheets.

Case study: ActionAid Ethiopia uses transparency boards in all their programme areas – this case study explains how they have become a tool for community empowerment, encouraging communities to demand similar information from the government and other NGOs.

Poster or leaflet on people's rights in emergencies

People should be aware that they have rights in emergencies and that there are clear guidelines and standards that govern the way aid workers behave. Posters displayed in public places can be a simple way of sharing this information so that it is easy to understand and engaging. You can include information on Codes of Conduct, key humanitarian standards, behaviours that people can expect from aid workers, and how to complain if there are problems. Similar information can be shared through leaflets placed inside relief packs.



(Photo: ActionAid)

More info: see Annex 1.3 for more guidance on what information you could include, how to design and contextualise it, and an example from ActionAid Philippines that you can adapt and use.

Community theatre and puppet theatre

Community theatre and puppet theatre can be powerful ways of communicating with people in an accessible and engaging way. It can be a good way to tackle sensitive topics and get people interested in subjects that they might otherwise see as boring or complicated. It is accessible to all, including people who can't read and write and children, and can reach a large audience in one session. For children in particular, puppet theatre can be used to communicate information in engaging ways, and to start a discussion on rights and humanitarian standards, or subjects they might find difficult.



(Photo: World Vision)

More info: see Annex 1.4 for detailed guidance and practical tips on community drama and puppet theatre, including a resource guide from World Vision about how to use puppets in programming.

Case studies:

Following major floods in Pakistan in 2010, ActionAid Pakistan used street theatre to raise awareness of policy issues relating to a lack of compensation for women. Watch a film showing how the women used theatre to demand their rights. As part of the Ebola response in Sierra Leone, ActionAid has been working with local drama groups, choirs and local radio stations to raise awareness of Ebola and share key health messages. See also a film showing a Gomvira (traditional folk art) performance from the Emergency Capacity Building project (ECB) in Bangladesh, which explains about accountability and people's rights.

Using SMS for two-way communication

SMS (mobile phone text messages) can be an effective means of rapid communication between communities and aid providers. It can be used to provide immediate life-saving information and alerts before and after emergencies, and to communicate important information about the relief process. As a two-way communication tool, it also provides a way for communities to share information they think is important for NGOs and other aid providers, and to have a means to communicate with the outside world.



(Photo: Søren Bjerregaard /ActionAid)

More info: see Annex 1.5 for detailed guidance including information you could communicate by SMS, ideas on how to design an SMS programme, links to technical guidance, and free software and information about message libraries with pre-agreed and translated information messages on various topics.

Case study: this case study from ActionAid Kenya details the innovative use of SMS for two-way communication between ActionAid and community relief committees during the 2010 east Africa drought. SMS was used to share information on crop prices, relief distributions and security issues.

Radio and radio listening groups



(Photo: Aubrey Wade /ActionAid)

Radio is often one of the most accessible sources of information for people in rural areas and those with limited literacy. Radio can get information out to large numbers of people quickly, alert people to approaching disasters, keep them informed about the relief process, and provide accurate information to counter rumours and misinformation. It can also become a tool for two-way communication, by using SMS or phone in slots, featuring

pre-recorded content from communities, having regular slots to respond to questions posted on bulletin boards, or by facilitating community radio listening groups.

More info: see Annex 1.6 for guidance on using radio in emergencies, including information on working with radio stations and media partners, designing messaging and programmes, distributing radios as part of relief goods, and facilitating radio listening groups.

Case study: radio stations played a key role in the response to typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013-14. This case study from the Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities Network (CDAC) and Internews describes how a radio station, Radio Bakdaw, was established with local journalists to help share information, support two-way communication and connect communities.



2. Participation and Inclusion

Accountability is about putting people at the centre of emergency programmes. Creating spaces for people's participation is essential so that they are the ones to decide what is needed, and they can design and lead the programmes designed to serve them. Strong community participation from the start of a response can lay the foundation for community empowerment and longer term change. This section highlights some ways of doing this in emergencies. There are lots of further resource ideas and ideas in the *online Resource Library*.

Key principles:

- People have a right to participate in decisions that affect them.
- Women's leadership is a key priority for ActionAid, and emergencies are an opportunity for women to take on leadership roles.
- Participation goes beyond just consulting people – it means passing over control so that they can decide on the kind of response they want and lead the implementation.
- We need to consider the participation of all, including women, elderly people and other vulnerable groups.

Where does participation come in to the process?

- Include community representatives in the rapid/needs assessment (reviewing questions, being part of assessment team).
- Community participation in emergency response and recovery programme design.
- Community leadership of response activities (community relief committees, designing distribution process, using locally appropriate approaches).
- Community participation in monitoring and evaluating response programmes, and being able to shape decisions about incorporating any necessary changes in future activities.
- Remember, participation goes beyond programme and policy activities – consider also how community participation can be promoted in communications and fundraising activities.

Participatory needs assessment

Community participation in needs assessments ensures we are asking the right questions and getting the right information to design an appropriate response programme that meets people's needs. It also sets the stage for community participation right from the beginning of the process and demonstrates that we are working in a different way. Participation happens in two ways: first, participatory exercises can be used to allow people to share their views and priorities with the needs assessment team. Second, community representatives can be part of the needs assessment team itself. The assessment should take into account the views of marginalised groups. Feedback should be shared with the community on the findings, and decisions that are taken as a result.



(Photo: ActionAid)

More info: see Annex 2.1 for detailed guidance on designing a participatory needs assessment, sharing information with communities on findings, and involving communities in the process. Specific guides are available on participation and needs assessment.

Case study: in the Kayin floods response, ActionAid Myanmar worked with community volunteers to conduct a needs assessment. Volunteers were given an orientation on the needs assessment process, and were then responsible for collecting data house-to-house in their community.

Community-led relief distributions



(Photo: ActionAid)

Distributions of relief goods can be organised and led by the community themselves.

Community relief committees work with ActionAid/partners to develop criteria for receiving relief, prepare distribution lists, design the distribution process, arrange security, share information with the community, organise the distribution, keep records and do post distribution monitoring.

At each stage, it is women who should be taking the lead in the process – this doesn't mean they have to do all the work, but they should be the ones to decide how the process is organised and who does what.

More info: see Annex 2.2 for detailed guidance on selection criteria, establishing a relief committee, and designing and implementing a community-led relief distribution.

Case studies: in Jordan ActionAid supported women's groups to organise relief distributions in Za'atari camp for women Syrian refugees. In the Kenyan drought, women led relief committees to organise food distribution, using SMS to communicate with ActionAid's partners. See also ActionAid Myanmar's report documenting their approach to a community-led response in Cyclone Nargis, and a photo case story from the Philippines showing their community-led distribution process.

Community change plans

A community change plan is a participatory process where people develop their own solutions to problems in the community. They can be used to design longer term response and recovery programmes, or to identify solutions during protracted crises. Using participatory tools, people identify and prioritise problems in their community, analyse the underlying causes and develop a community level plan with the solutions they want to implement. The plan can then be presented to humanitarian and development organisations, local authorities and other stakeholders to secure support for implementation. It is a powerful way for the community to decide and articulate their own priorities for emergency response and recovery, and to ensure they are actively controlling programmes in their communities instead of being passive recipients of aid. The analysis can also act as a baseline for participatory monitoring and evaluation, and assessing change.

More info: see Annex 2.3 for detailed guidance on developing a community change plan and suggestions on participatory tools to use, and links to Reflection-Action resources on dream maps and the Village Book approach developed by ActionAid Myanmar.

Case study: story of Ta Ma Pin village in Myanmar, which describes the community change plan process. See also ActionAid Myanmar's film 'The Village Book'.



(Photo: ActionAid)

Listening exercise

A listening exercise is a tool to understand the views of communities about the emergency response, and aid process. It uses unstructured conversation to create a space where people can openly share their views, frustrations and questions. Local 'listening volunteers' are trained to facilitate conversations, which are then transcribed and summarised. It is a great way to hear people's views on the topics they want to talk about and not just the answers to questions that aid agencies think to ask! It would be a particularly good tool to do at an interagency level, to get people's voices onto the agenda of decision makers.



(Photo: CDA Listening Project)

More info: see Annex 2.4 for detailed guidance from CDA on developing a listening exercise. You can also download a free book from CDA, 'Time to Listen', which summarises people's voices from listening exercises in 20 countries.

Case study: read about how listening exercises were used to understand community concerns about relocation and resettlement following typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

Community review of communications and fundraising materials

People have a right to have information about, and to participate in, all stages of an emergency response. As well as participation in programme activities, we think this commitment should also be extended to informing and consulting people about the communications and fundraising products that we develop using their stories and images, and which are used to raise money and awareness in their names. People have the right to be portrayed with dignity, as active participants and not passive recipients of aid (Red Cross Code of Conduct) and we think communities themselves are the best judge of whether we are meeting this requirement. Focus groups can be held to share samples of fundraising and communications materials with communities and to seek their feedback and suggestions at various stages in the response.



(Photo: ActionAid)

More info: see Annex 2.5 for guidance on how to prepare and carry out a consultation on communications materials.

Case study: during the typhoon Haiyan response in 2013-2014, ActionAid and partners carried out community consultation on communications and fundraising products. People were generally positive about the way they were presented externally, but identified some images they did not feel were dignified. They also provided recommendations about less well-known stories they felt should be communicated to the outside world, and important questions about how we approach fundraising and funding allocation decisions.

Supporting community-based organisations

ActionAid has a commitment to working with, and building the capacity of, local partners. Community-based organisations have an important role to play in leading responses and linking those responses to longer term change. Through strengthening and supporting community-based organisations in our response, the foundations can be laid for strong rights-based programming.



(Photo: ActionAid)

More info: see online Resource Library for a poster story from ActionAid Pakistan describing the process of local partnership, and the role that accountability practices played in this empowerment process.

Case study: Following the 2005 earthquake in northern Pakistan and Kashmir, ActionAid Pakistan's emergency response was based on an approach of supporting local partners. This case study describes how ActionAid worked with a range of local social movements, many of whom have gone on to become formal partners of ActionAid. Watch a film about this in the Online Resource Library.



3. Complaints and resolution

Holding ourselves open to scrutiny from communities, and being held to account by them, requires that people are able to provide feedback about our programmes and to complain if they are not satisfied. Feedback is an important way to ensure the programme is meeting the needs and priorities of communities. Complaints can identify significant problems in the programme and make sure these are quickly and effectively addressed. Encouraging both negative and positive feedback and dealing with it properly, demonstrates that communities have a right to hold ActionAid to account – and that they can go on to do the same with other actors.

ActionAid is a member of Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), an independent organisation promoting accountability to communities. If someone makes a complaint to ActionAid or our partners but doesn't feel that it has been properly addressed, they can contact HAP directly by emailing: complaints@hapinternational.org

Key principles:

- People have a right to complain if there are problems and to have those complaints taken seriously and addressed.
- Feedback and complaints help us improve our programmes.
- There is a difference between feedback and complaints. Feedback can be general comments or suggestions about a programme that help us improve the design, adjust implementation or learn lessons for future response. It can be both positive and negative. Complaints are specific problems that people want to raise and which require specific responses. Complaints can include serious issues, such as financial corruption, sexual exploitation and abuse, and must be taken seriously. Often feedback and complaints will need to be handled differently – for example, in some cultures people may feel comfortable giving feedback collectively in public forums, but individuals with sensitive complaints to raise would need access to confidential channels.
- A key part of accountability is opening ourselves up to scrutiny and accepting that we won't get it right all the time.
- In order for complaint mechanisms to be used effectively, people need to be aware of their rights and understand the standards that humanitarian organisations can be held accountable to.
- ActionAid has an organisational Complaints Response Mechanism Framework and a Whistleblowing Policy. Complaints systems established in individual programmes and at country level should adhere to these policies. These policies contain important provisions for protecting whistleblowers and complainants from persecution and retaliation.
- As a Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) member, people have a right to raise complaints to HAP if ActionAid fails to deal with them appropriately. ActionAid should highlight this to communities – see below for standard text to use.

What are the main aspects of a complaints and feedback system?

- Distinguish between feedback (people sharing views, comments, suggestions) and complaints (instances where things have gone wrong and require the attention of the agency to correct or deal with it).
- Complaints can include serious issues that require clear procedures for investigation and in the most extreme cases may require referral to police and legal services. Have a range of different mechanisms in the same community for people to share feedback, making sure they are accessible and culturally appropriate.
- Publicise the mechanisms and explain the process for how complaints will be processed. A simple flowchart or picture charts are good ways of doing this.
- Have a clear system for processing complaints, and ensure that staff understand their roles.
- Feed back to communities on how issues have been addressed, and provide information about appeals processes if they are not satisfied.
- Make sure that the confidentiality and security of people raising complaints is respected.
- Have more than one mechanism in a community so that the system is accessible to all (e.g. people who are not literate, people who don't have phones) and that it is available even if mobile phone signal is lost.
- Publicise the HAP complaints mechanism as an escalation option – see text box above.

Setting up a complaints and feedback mechanism

There is lots of detailed guidance available on how to set up and manage complaints and feedback mechanisms. See for example, ALNAP/CDA's *Closing the Loop practitioners guide* on feedback mechanisms, *HAP guidance* on complaints handling, and ICVA's *Building Safer Organisations* guidance on receiving and investigating allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. These and other guides are available in the *online Resource Library*.

Complaints and suggestion boxes



(Photo: ActionAid)

These are physical boxes located in key places in the community where people can post written feedback for you to regularly collect and assess. Advantages are: they are cheap and simple to establish and use; they work in places without cell phone or internet coverage, and they allow people to make anonymous complaints. Disadvantages are: they are only accessible to literate people; they require field staff to physically visit communities to collect feedback, which could result in delays; and confidentiality is not guaranteed as people may be observed posting their complaints.

More info: see Annex 3.1 for more advice and guidance on complaints boxes.

SMS and phone complaints hotlines



(Photo: ActionAid)

A hotline is a phone number where people can give feedback by SMS (text message) or a phone call. Advantages are: feedback can be shared instantly; people can give feedback confidentially; there is a two-way channel where the agency can provide responses or mass messages. Disadvantages are: people need phones and electricity to charge them; it requires a reliable phone signal which may be disrupted after a disaster; people need money to send SMS or make phone calls (or you need to arrange a free phone number); and for a phone call system you need enough trained people to answer the phones.

More info: see Annex 3.2 for more guidance on SMS and phone hotlines, and links to further resources.

Case study: case study from Danish Refugee Council on use of online platform to manage SMS feedback in Somalia.

Community help desks



(Photo: World Vision)

Community help desks, operated by agency staff or community volunteers, provide a way for people to share feedback or ask questions face-to-face. They can be used at distribution points or when specific activities are going on (such as cash-for-work). In longer term responses they could also be set up on a more permanent basis in refugee camps or community sites so that people can give regular feedback. Advantages are: they are accessible to people who cannot read or write; they are free to use from the community perspective; they allow face-to-face interaction and are more personal than other mechanisms. Disadvantages are: they can be expensive if they are operated by agency staff (although volunteers can be used); guaranteeing confidentiality is difficult in public places; they rely heavily on the skill and training of frontline staff.

More info: see Annex 3.3 for more guidance on community help desks.

Case study: Watch a film by World Vision on setting up community help desks in Zimbabwe Credit: Joshua Pepall/World Vision

Community grievance committees



(Photo: ActionAid)

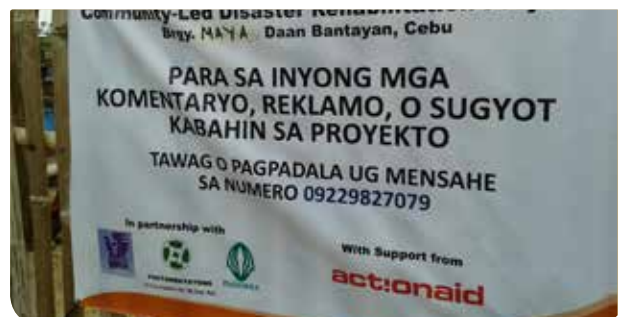
These are local committees, with members elected by the community, with a mandate to hear and try to resolve grievances and problems in the project. For example, in a community-led response, they may deal with issues about selection of participants, allegations of misuse of funds or resources, or disputes between families about the use of shared resources. They can be effective ways

Social media



Social media (such as Facebook and twitter) has potential to play an important role in complaints and feedback. As well as being a way to publicise complaints mechanisms, people can post or make comments on the NGO's Facebook page, or can tweet their views. This often happens anyway, regardless of whether NGOs coordinate it in formal ways! It is also widely used by private companies to interact with customers. In disasters in countries with widespread social media use this can be a way people are comfortable with, and in some contexts feedback is posted via relatives in the diaspora. However, these mechanisms clearly rely on reliable internet access (both for staff and communities), and social media would only work in contexts where internet access/smartphone penetration is high.

Publicising the complaints mechanism



Whatever mechanism you select for feedback and complaints, it is important to publicise it within the community and to encourage people to share their feedback. This can be done through posters, transparency boards, leaflets included in relief packs, community meetings – even car stickers and

More info: see Annex 3.4 for imaginative ideas on how to publicise your complaints mechanism, including business cards from Church of Sweden and car stickers from Save the Children Philippines.

So you've set up a nice complaints system, and publicised it, but your complaints boxes are empty, your help desk staff are lonely and your phone lines are silent. If you are not getting any complaints, it could be of course that your programmes are perfect and no one has any complaints to make. However, it might be worth considering the following:

Are you sharing information in the right places and in ways that people can understand (in local languages, using pictures if people are not literate)?

Are there cultural barriers around making complaints, or are people worried that it might negatively impact on their chances of receiving further assistance?

Consult with the community and get suggestions on how people might feel more comfortable providing feedback. You could consider having some sessions in the community to share information on rights and explain why agencies seek people's feedback.

Are there logistical barriers (such as a lack of phone credit, no phone signal, complaints boxes being located far from people's homes etc)?

Are people worried about confidentiality, or others finding out about their complaints?

Discuss with people to explain the system and see if there are things you could change to make them feel safer. Are the systems confusing? If there are a lot of NGOs working in the same area there may be multiple feedback lines – if this is the case raise it at the cluster level and see if agencies can coordinate on complaints mechanisms.

Are people confident that their complaints will be taken seriously?

4. Financial accountability

Financial accountability is an aspect that is often missed. To really hand over power to communities and ensure their effective participation throughout the process, it is essential that they have access to accurate and accessible information about the budget for the emergency response. They should have a role in deciding how it is allocated and monitoring how the money is spent. This is often the most problematic and challenging area of accountability in emergencies, but one where there is the most potential to shift power relations, lay the foundations for longer term change and help communities hold other stakeholders to account. This section describes some tools and approaches that can be used and provides suggestions and guidance from ActionAid programme staff on how to overcome challenges in this area.

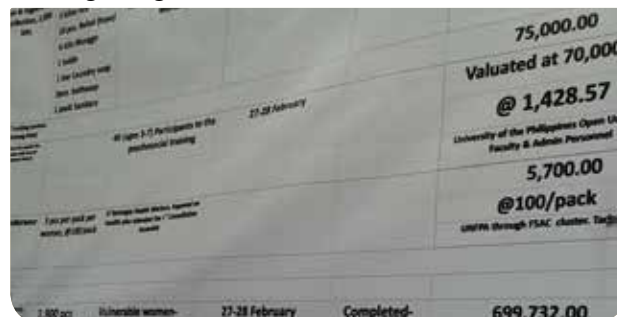
Key principles:

- People have the right to accessible and easily understood information about the budget – the money provided for an emergency response ultimately belongs to them, not the agencies that distribute and manage the aid.
- Budgets will need to be simple and displayed in ways that are accessible and understandable. Capacity building and explanation may be needed to make sure that information shared is meaningful.
- Budget information should be publicly available for all to see – it is also helpful to have a specific group tasked with scrutinising and monitoring the budget.
- Financial decisions at community level should be made with community participation: allocating budgets to activities at the village level, and community involvement in procurement decisions.

What are the main aspects of financial accountability?

- Sharing project budget information and funding sources with communities.
- Supporting communities to understand and analyse budget information.
- Sharing copies of bills and vouchers for public scrutiny. Establishing community vigilance committees.
- Involving communities in the procurement process (identifying needs, selecting samples, choosing suppliers, verifying products).

Sharing budgets



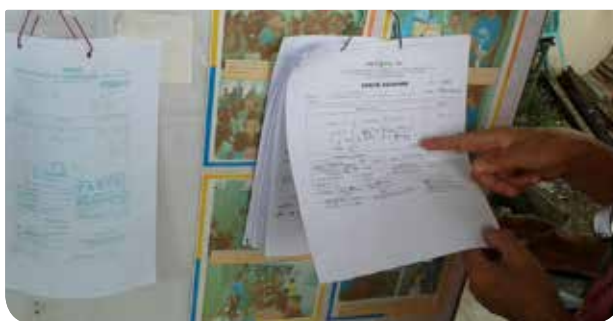
(Photo: ActionAid)

People affected by disaster have a right to know how much money is being spent in their community, where it comes from, and how it is being used.

This transparency about budget allocations is the first step in empowering communities to scrutinise the way money has been spent. Budgets should be displayed in accessible public places. Orientation on what the budget means and why it is being shared will help people to engage meaningfully. ActionAid should already be sharing budgets in communities as part of our Open Information Policy – in an emergency we also share the detailed activity budget for emergency response activities in each community.

More info: see Annex 4.1 for further information on what information to share, how to present it, and challenges you might face. See also resource guides on financial accountability.

Sharing bills and vouchers



(Photo: ActionAid)

Once the budget has been displayed, the next step is to provide communities with copies of financial documents to show how the money has been spent. This should include photocopies of receipts, invoices, vouchers etc for goods and services purchased. It could also include documents that evidence that assistance was provided, such as signature sheets from people who received goods or participated in cash-for-work, delivery notes, supplier quotes and procurement papers etc. The documents should be available for public scrutiny, but in addition it is normally best to have a community committee responsible for reviewing and approving them.

More info: see Annex 4.2 for more info on sharing financial information (including how to keep your finance department happy!).

Community-led procurement



(Photo: ActionAid)

Community involvement in procurement is key to them being able to lead and control the financial aspects of the response in their community. This involves having a community procurement committee to lead on canvassing quotes, selecting suppliers, scrutinising quality of goods delivered and maintaining records of the procurement process. The procurement committee will work closely with ActionAid/partner staff to ensure that community-led procurement is in line with procurement and financial processes.

More info: see Annex 4.3 for more information on what a procurement committee does, and how to establish and support a committee. See Reflection-Action tools for budget analysis.

Case study: Cartoon telling the story of community procurement committee in Philippines.

Challenges around sharing financial information



(Photo: ActionAid)

Financial accountability at community level is sometimes a difficult and controversial topic, and it can be an area that staff, partners and potentially communities are reluctant to take on. Common concerns include security issues, risk of corruption, speed, higher costs of procuring locally, and fears about misunderstanding or criticism from communities about budget allocations. We have collected responses and advice from experienced ActionAid staff on addressing some of these concerns.

For example:

“We don’t have time to involve the community in procurement in an emergency- it will slow the process down”

“The community are not interested in financial information, they don’t see it as a priority for us to share these documents”

“People in the communities we work with are illiterate. It’s not realistic to expect them to scrutinise our budgets”

“Sharing our budgets will create security risks because people will see how much money we have to spend and might see us as a target”

More info: see online Resource Library for answers from ActionAid programme staff to these and other FAQs on financial accountability in emergencies. You can also submit your own answers or comments!

5. Community-led monitoring, evaluation and learning

Agencies are often relatively good at encouraging community participation in programme design and implementation. However, the role of local communities in monitoring and evaluating programmes is often given less attention. But it's critical to ensure that the perspectives of the people for whom the programme is designed are the strongest voices in determining whether it was successful, and what should be learned to make improvements in the future. This section describes tools and approaches that can be incorporated to strengthen community participation in monitoring and evaluating emergency programmes. These tools help ensure we fulfil our commitment to people's participation throughout humanitarian programmes. They also ensure that we are accountable to communities for the conclusions that are drawn as a result of M&E processes, and the decisions made as a result.

Community monitoring, evaluation and learning (which is also referred to by many as participatory M&E) is a process where community members identify and track the progress of work carried out by humanitarian agencies, INGOs, government and others. The community may set their own indicators of success or anticipated changes, measuring, collecting, recording and analysing information and then communicating or acting on it to enhance performance and delivery. During emergencies, it may be difficult to put the full system in place, but some kind of feedback mechanism can be set up. For example, quality and quantity of relief products, the number of people reached and timeliness of deliveries can still be monitored by existing social structures/institutions in the community. Village leaders and volunteers can often also provide temporary community monitoring and evaluation.

The real strength of community M&E is that it is people-led, and not driven by development agencies- people can monitor their own changes and outcomes as a result of implementing projects.



Key principles:

- Community participation in the M&E process should be planned from the beginning. When you are developing your M&E framework in the programme design phase, think about how participatory approaches can be integrated.
- Build specific activities that will give people an opportunity to share their views, for example social audits, a participatory review and reflection process, community consultation at key points in the programme.
- Build participatory approaches into standard monitoring process and evaluations, for example by making the participation of affected communities a requirement in the TOR for evaluation consultants.
- Communities are not homogenous – think about how women and vulnerable groups (such as elderly people, people with disabilities, ethnic or religious minorities etc) can be involved in different ways in the project. It may be necessary to design different processes, or different tools, to ensure effective participation of different groups.
- Share the results of monitoring and evaluation processes with communities, and discuss the decisions to be taken as a result.
- Share evaluation findings and reports with the wider humanitarian community – through clusters, working groups, networks and the ActionAid website. This is a key part of being accountable for our work in emergencies, and being open about learning and challenges.

Participatory review and reflection process (PRRP)

PRRP is an ongoing participatory monitoring mechanism that helps to create democratic space for affected communities and other actors. PRRPs look at whether our chosen strategies and actions are working, how we can do them more effectively, or how to change them based on feedback from the community. In open meetings, community and other stakeholders review information, including monitoring data, case studies, budgets, success stories, best practice, learning and challenges. In addition to open forums, peer review is carried out of specific projects using Reflection-Action tools. Findings from PRRP inform changes to the programme design and implementation, and feed into ActionAid reporting systems.

More info: see Annex 5.1 for more information on PRRP, and links to Reflection-Action resources.

Case study: See a case study on how PRRP is used by ActionAid Pakistan across programming.

Community monitoring committees



(Photo: ActionAid)

Community committees can play an important role in monitoring emergency response programme activities in their community. Based on the information publicly shared at the start of the project, they can check that people entitled to support received the correct items. They can also track whether these have been used and if people are happy with the quality. This kind of post-distribution monitoring can help to identify any problems early on so that they can be corrected, and also sends a clear message from the start that the community is able to scrutinise the actions of ActionAid and check we are delivering on our commitments.

More info: See Annex 5.2 for more information on Community Monitoring Committees.

Case studies: ActionAid Myanmar have documented how community members were involved in distribution and monitoring of relief goods following Cyclone Nargis. Community committees also played a role in monitoring distributions following the 2014 floods in Zimbabwe.

Community score cards



(Photo: ActionAid)

Community score cards are a participatory tool for people to assess the public services that are supposed to be provided in their communities. Score cards can be used to evaluate projects ActionAid is implementing in emergencies. They could equally be applied in a post-disaster context to monitor government disaster response and recovery programmes, or the implementation of disaster management and disaster risk reduction policies.

Case study: film describing the *community score cards approach*, and how ActionAid Nepal used it to hold local authorities accountable for quality services in areas like health, agriculture and education.

Social audit



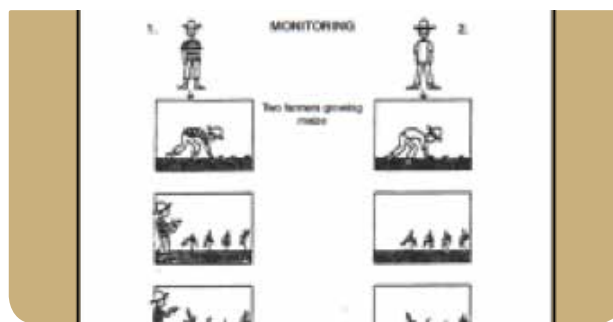
(Photo: ActionAid)

Social audit is a process where community members review and scrutinise project progress and the use of funds in their communities. ActionAid staff, partners or community committee members will present to the wider community what has been done, reporting against the commitments that were shared publicly through transparency boards and other mechanisms. They also share supporting documents and financial records, which community members are encouraged to review and challenge where necessary. It often involves three components: transparency boards, sharing financial information, and community monitoring committees. In addition to being a tool to track progress in ActionAid programmes, it can also be used to track government performance against commitments.

More info: see Annex 5.3 for more information and guidance on social audit and links to Reflection-Action resources.

Case study: see case study from ActionAid Myanmar documenting the process of social audit in Myanmar when a community decided to build a new road.

Explaining M&E through stories

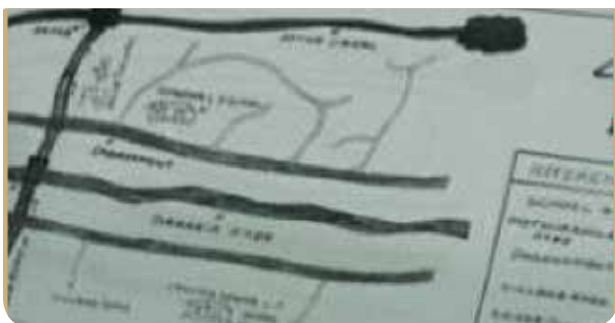


(Photo: ActionAid)

This is a useful way of explaining the concept of monitoring and evaluation to a group of people who are not familiar with the idea. The story of the two farmers can be acted as a drama by two members of the facilitation team, and can be an enjoyable way to introduce the subject in a workshop or community setting. In a way that avoids jargon, the exercise helps people to start to think about what monitoring and evaluation means and how it relates to them.

More info: see the Reflection-Action training guide.

Developing a baseline

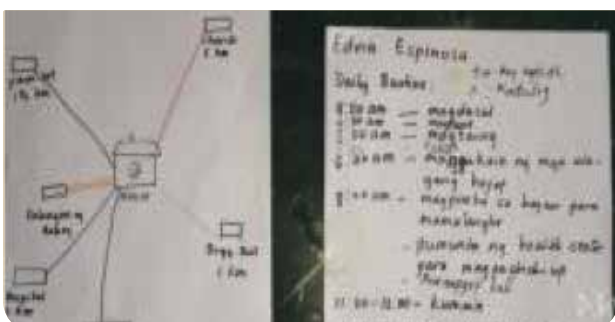


(Photo: ActionAid)

Many participatory tools can be adapted for use in an evaluation, provided that the same tool is used systematically at regular times during the life of the project (beginning, middle and end at the very least). If you are starting mid-term and don't have all the relevant baseline information, you can in some cases ask participants to create a map/calendar/tree, etc to show what the situation looked like before the project started. This won't be as accurate as one created at the time but will give you a good idea of the changes that the participants feel have come about since the beginning of the project.

More info: for detailed guidance see the [Reflection-Action training guide](#).

Measuring change



(Photo: ActionAid)

Community views of what changes have occurred as a result of the programme can be explored using different participatory tools. These include maps (showing the situation at key stages in the response), calendars (showing how people's routine or use of time has changed), and timelines/rivers (showing key events and achievements in the process). Other useful tools are 'most significant change' and 'reporting case studies'. These are exercises where people reflect on the most significant change they have seen as a result of the project, and share these with a small group. The group selects a few of the stories to document as case studies.

More info: for detailed guidance see the [Reflection-Action training guide](#).

Evaluating process



(Photo: ActionAid)

Tools such as evaluation bottles can be used to learn how people felt about specific events or processes such as workshops or training. Participants fill up three bottles representing different statements – for example 'I talked a lot', 'I participated a lot', 'I learnt a lot', according to how much they felt they had talked/participated/learnt. So an empty bottle would indicate no talking, a full one that you talked a lot. One chatty participant has even showed their bottle as overflowing! It helps participants think about their own and others' participation and often more outgoing participants consciously created space for less outgoing participants after seeing their self-evaluation.

More info: for detailed guidance see the [Reflection-Action training guide](#).

Sharing results and feedback



(Photo: Christopher Davy/ActionAid)

It is not enough just to involve people in collecting information to feed into monitoring and evaluation processes. We also have an obligation to share the key results and conclusions developed as a result and any changes we plan to incorporate in the programme as a follow up. This includes:

- Summarising the key messages and conclusions that have emerged from the discussion at the end of each consultation, to check that they accurately reflect what the community felt was communicated.
- Presenting key conclusions and recommendations from major monitoring and evaluation reports to the community (in an accessible manner). This should be built into the evaluation plan and TOR developed for consultants conducting the evaluation.
- Discussing with the community what should be done to address issues identified in the report, and feeding back information to communities in a timely manner to inform them about decisions that have been taken as a result of evaluations.

6. Holding other stakeholders to account

Accountability is part of a political process – as well as strengthening our own programmes, the end result is to help people hold their own governments (as the primary duty bearer) to account. This section suggests some tools and approaches for how this can be incorporated into an emergency response and recovery programme. In many contexts government mechanisms and systems are not responsive enough to enable community participation and influence in the decision-making process. While establishing community-based accountability mechanisms, we also need to create an overall analysis and understanding of the governance context. This will help us to design and implement accountability mechanisms together with local communities that lead to:

1. Creating critical awareness around existing mechanisms.
2. Creating a more strategic link with government mechanisms.
3. Making those mechanisms effective.
4. Gathering evidence from the field to support people's access to and use of services, to influence government.
5. Advocating and supporting the scale-up of successful approaches, and monitoring their effectiveness.

For more information and resources, refer to Reflection-Action and the *resource book on social accountability*.

Reflection-Action tools to support budget analysis and advocacy

Key principles:

- Raising awareness of people's rights and assistance available in an emergency.
- Encouraging people to use accountability tools to scrutinise us, other agencies and government.
- Community-led advocacy to demand rights.
- Building capacity of local civil society actors to demand accountability.
- Accountability mechanisms in our own programmes can be a 'safe space' for communities to gain confidence in holding agencies to account, and to try out tools for doing this. Our accountability mechanisms should be seen as part of a wider process of empowerment, not only as an end in themselves.

Reflection-Action tools can help communities understand and analyse budgets and organise to demand proper implementation and monitoring of budget allocations. They link community level scrutiny with national and international processes. They can be a powerful way of linking an emergency response to longer term change, and supporting communities to demand accountability from other stake-

holders. In emergency contexts where huge amounts of funding flow into affected countries in a short period of time, community scrutiny of the use of this money is crucial.

More info: see Annex 5.1 for more guidance on how Reflection-Action budget analysis tools can be used in emergency contexts, and links to ELBAG training manual.

Case study: film case study of how budget analysis tools were used to support accountability following the 2010 Haiti earthquake.

People's assemblies



(Photo: ActionAid)

People's assemblies are face-to-face meetings that provide a forum for communities to discuss their concerns and demands on a specific issue with representatives from local government or other duty bearers. Community groups identify an issue of concern and carry out research and evidence gathering; this is then presented to decision-makers in a public forum, as a way to create dialogue and discussion to resolve the issue. It has been effective in promoting social accountability of public institutions.

More info: see Annex 5.2 for more information on the people's assembly approach.

Case study: ActionAid Pakistan has adapted the traditional Rubroo forum approach to provide a space for people to engage in dialogue with the authorities in post emergency contexts.

Participatory filmmaking/multimedia for change



(Photo: ActionAid)

Participatory filmmaking is a great way to get people's voices heard by decision-makers and to enable a dialogue on key issues, even in remote areas. It is similar to people's assemblies, but in place of direct interaction between communities and decision-makers, a series of short films are made to create a virtual conversation. The films are screened and discussed, and the responses in turn filmed and shared. This allows the community to receive first hand information and feedback from decision-makers, and to express themselves directly rather than being represented by humanitarian agencies. It can be used in contexts where it is not feasible for people to travel to meet with government officials.

More info: see Annex 5.3 for more information on participatory filmmaking.

Case study: case study from ActionAid Pakistan on use of participatory filmmaking.

Budget tracking: public expenditure tracking surveys (PETS)



(Photo: ActionAid)

In ActionAid's own emergency response work, we share financial information and encourage communities to scrutinise the use of ActionAid funds in their communities. PETS is a tool that can help to take this to the next level, by helping communities hold government or other duty bearers to account. PETS provides a methodology to analyse budget allocations and track whether the money has actually been spent on public services on the ground. It involves training a group of community members as social auditors, who then conduct surveys on the ground to monitor the delivery of public services in their districts.

More info: see Annex 5.4 for more information on how to implement a PETS exercise, and suggestions for how it can be used in emergency contexts.

Case study: watch a film about how PETS was used to track use of government funds in Kenya.

Community-led policy and advocacy



(Photo: ActionAid)

Meaningful participation of local people at all stages of the process is an important element of accountability. This extends to our policy work in emergencies – policy, advocacy and campaigning activities should be based on people's own messages and priorities, and should be led by them. We have gathered some examples of how this has been done by ActionAid in emergencies.

Citizens' report



(Photo: ActionAid)

A citizens' report is a process of documenting people's views and priorities around a particular issue, which is then used as a basis for community-led advocacy and campaigning. ActionAid has used this approach in east Africa drought, west Africa drought and 2004 Tsunami response.

People's caravan



(Photo: ActionAid)

The people's caravan is an approach that brings people directly to policymakers to state their demands. Following the 2010 floods in Pakistan, it was effectively used to highlight the challenges faced by vulnerable women in accessing compensation.

Je nan Je campaign



(Photo: ActionAid)

The Je nan Je (eye to eye) campaign was launched after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti to help people keep a close eye on how reconstruction funds were spent. Today it has nearly 800,000 members.

More info: see Annex 6.5 for more information on these community led policy approaches.

Case studies: Case studies on Je nan Je campaign in Haiti, People's caravan in Pakistan and examples of citizen's reports from different emergency contexts.

Supporting government accountability practices



(Photo: ActionAid)

As well as demonstrating alternatives in our own work and supporting communities to demand accountability from governments, ActionAid also works together with duty bearers to build capacity and support them to improve accountability in emergencies. This can involve sharing tools and helping government or other stakeholders to implement them, training and technical support, or contributing to government response and recovery plans.

More info: See Annex 6.6 for more information on supporting government accountability practices.

Case studies: Read about how ActionAid Philippines worked with government, NGOs and UN agencies to promote accountability through interagency accountability working groups. As a result, ActionAid was asked to develop an accountability framework for the provincial government's response and recovery strategy.

See also examples of how the government has set up strong complaints mechanisms in Punjab, Pakistan, and how these developments link to ActionAid Pakistan's approach to accountability.

Further resources

This Resource Book provides an introduction to accountability in emergencies, and sets out some of the key principles and ways of working. In order to keep the size of this document manageable, we have included only top line information on the tools and approaches – detailed guidance on each of these tools, together with links to templates and further resources on specific tools are provided in the Annexes.

There is an *online Resource Library* ([https://extranet.actionaid.org/Accountability in Emergencies Resource Book/SitePages/Home.aspx](https://extranet.actionaid.org/Accountability%20in%20Emergencies%20Resource%20Book/SitePages/Home.aspx)) on ActionAid's extranet, where you can find all the case studies mentioned in the Resource Book, as well as films, audio recordings and other resources, together with a library of the further resources suggested in each section. You can also download a PDF version of the main Resource Book and Annexes to read offline or print. ActionAid staff can access this using their existing HIVE passwords; partners and other external users are also welcome to access the site and can request free log in details by emailing emergencies@actionaid.org

If you would like to print high quality copies of the Resource Book and Annexes, high resolution copies for printing can be requested by emailing emergencies@actionaid.org

Please share your experiences.

This Resource Book collects a number of tools and case studies that have been tried by ActionAid countries and other agencies, including many drawn from Reflection-Action. We know, however, that this is just a start – if you have additional tools, approaches or case studies that you would like to share with other ActionAid colleagues, please share by uploading them to the online Resource Library.

If you have any questions about the tools included here, or would like support in integrating accountability into your emergency programming, contact details of the project team are included on the online Resource Library. Please feel free to contact any of us for advice. There is also a discussion forum in the online Resource Library where you can post comments and questions, and share your experiences with other ActionAid staff and partners.



Putting accountability into practice

ActionAid is committed to sharing budget information.

Below is a summary of how much we spent on developing this Resource Book.

	Amount spent (GBP)
Documentation of ActionAid accountability practices at country level (films, cartoons, case studies etc.)	£15,466
Editing and designing the Resource Book	£2,534
Printing costs: Printing is done at country level to minimise transportation costs, so prices vary. The figure given is an average cost for the main document and annexes.	£5 per copy

Source of funding: ActionAid Denmark (Danida funding)



Photo Christopher Davy/ActionAid

Accountability in Emergencies Resource Book

ANNEXES: TOOLS AND CASE STUDIES

Contents - Annexes

PG. 34	TRANSPARENCY, INFORMATION SHARING AND TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION
PG. 46	PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION
PG. 55	COMPLAINTS AND RESOLUTION
PG. 59	FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
PG. 64	COMMUNITY LED MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING
PG. 70	HOLDING OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO ACCOUNT
PG. 82	ONLINE RESOURCE LIBRARY

SECTION 1

TRANSPARENCY, INFORMATION SHARING AND TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Annex 1.1: Information needs assessment

Summary:

At the needs assessment stage, it is important to assess people's information and communication needs. This includes asking about what information they want to know and what they want to share with humanitarian agencies, what communication channels they prefer to use, how information is traditionally shared in their communities, and what impact the disaster has had on communication channels. This can be done by including questions on information and communication in rapid and detailed needs assessments, by using secondary data, and by linking with other actors. The information can be used to design response activities to improve people's access to information and communication, ensure our accountability and communications activities are appropriate, and for advocacy.



Above: Malik, a youth volunteer in Pakistan, uses megaphones to warn the community about floods (Photos: ActionAid).



Above: Sara, a relief committee member in Kenya, uses a mobile phone and solar charger to communicate with ActionAid (Photos: ActionAid).



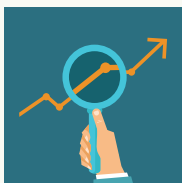
What information should I collect in an information needs assessment?

- What were the preferred ways of getting information and communicating with others before the disaster?
- What has been the impact of the disaster on these sources of information?
- What would it take to restore these sources of information (e.g. are people not listening to the radio because radio stations are down, or because they have lost their radios, or because they lack the money to buy batteries etc)?
- Where are people currently getting their information from (media, NGOs, traditional leaders, word of mouth etc) and which sources do they trust?
- What is the urgent information that people want to receive/communicate (e.g. weather information, details of relief distributions, communicating with family)?
- It is important also to understand how these things might be different for different groups (women, elderly people, children, people who cannot read and write, urban vs rural communities etc).



Guidance for implementation

- Include questions on information and communication in the rapid and detailed needs assessment template, and include a specific section in the needs assessment report. The further resources listed below include suggested standard questions.
- You could also consider doing a specific information and communications assessment, probably in collaboration with other agencies. See further resources below for a standard template for information assessments.
- Attend cluster meetings and lobby for information and communications questions to be included in interagency needs assessments (e.g. the Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment MIRA). This also helps to get information needs included in interagency fundraising appeals.
- Refer to existing media landscape guides (a tool developed by Infoasaid – see below) to understand the situation before the emergency.
- Talk to representatives from local media, phone companies and local authorities to understand the impact on communication channels and the likely time delay before they will be restored.
- Connect with other humanitarian actors on the ground active in this area (such as Internews, First Response Radio, BBC Media Action, Frontline SMS – the CDAC Network members are a good place to start, and IHART can help you make these connections). There may be a communicating with communities working group where these activities are coordinated – if there isn't you could lobby for one to be set up!



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including...

ActionAid

- ActionAid needs assessment checklist – see the Emergency Preparedness and Response Handbook.
- Reflection-Action 'communications map tool' resource sheet contains detailed guidance on needs assessments.

External resources

- Infoasaid media landscape guides – contain useful information on coverage and popularity of different communication channels in different countries.
- Infoasaid information diagnostic tool.
- CDAC guide for information needs assessment, and quick reference checklist.
- Watch the CDAC animation 'communication is aid'.

Annex 1.2: Transparency boards

Summary:

A transparency board is a way to share information on the emergency response programme, including activities, dates, selection criteria, budget and progress and contact details. Transparency boards form part of the social audit process – based on information shared, community monitoring committees will monitor project progress and scrutinise bills and vouchers for money spent. Transparency boards should be established at the very start of the programme and be regularly updated. It is an important start to the accountability process, demonstrating that communities have a right to information, and to ask questions about the project.



Above: Transparency boards can be set up anywhere prominent where people tend to gather – including in the village centre or even the shop. They can be made from different materials. The transparency board should use local language and budget should be displayed in local currency. You can also consider using symbols or pictures to make the information accessible to people who cannot read. (Photos: ActionAid)

تعداد	تاریخ	ساراں جوڑاؤ	بیرونی
450	05 جنوری	چائوٹر سپر مارکیٹ	1
575	05 جنوری	کشت	2
800	05 جنوری	دال (ماش، مک، مسور چٹا)	3
1025	05 جنوری	کھجور	4
620	21 جنوری	دھو	5
48	02 مئی	لوٹ (آؤ واٹر)	6
320	320 گرام	کڑھائی، حیدر گورجیہ	7

List of relief kit contents and prices displayed at distribution site in Pakistan. (Photo: ActionAid)

Example

ACTIONAID EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAMME: XX VILLAGE

[contact details] [complaints hotline]

Programme Objectives:

ACTIVITIES	SELECTION CRITERIA	WHEN	STATUS	BUDGET & SOURCE OF FUNDING
Food distribution – 2 week supply of rice and dried goods	All families	1-31 December	Completed	15,000 DFID (UK government)
Shelter repair kits for 100 families	Female headed households with partially/totally damaged houses	1-20 January	Planned	50,000 DEC (UK public)
Cash for work	15 days work per family	1-31 January	Planned	60,000 DEC (UK public)
Livelihoods support	Female headed households	1 February to 30 June	Planned	125,000 ECHO (European Commission)



What information to provide:

- Programme title, objectives, key activities and deliverable dates; who will benefit from each activity and what the selection criteria are; latest progress updates and information on any changes; budget allocated for the community for each activity; source of funding; contact details for the organisation, including how to make a complaint. See example below.
- Consider also displaying a poster during distributions, listing the contents of relief kits and the cost per item.



Guidance for implementation

- Discuss with the community and explain what the purpose of the board is.
- Agree a location to place the board, which should be public and easily accessible to all (for example, near water points, school, shops, tea houses, village meeting place etc). Think about the most appropriate materials (consider climate, ways that the information can be updated but also avoiding unauthorised changing of information)
- Agree the most appropriate way to provide the information. It could be in writing (and if so in what language/languages), using pictures or symbols, you could have regular public meetings to explain the updated contents for people who cannot read
- Work with community representatives, especially women's groups, to erect the board and fill in the information. Agree how often it will be updated and by who.



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including...

- ActionAid
- Case Study describing the use of transparency boards in Ethiopia.
- Reflection Action resource sheets offer further guidance.

Annex 1.3: Poster or leaflet on people's rights in emergencies

Summary:

People should be aware that they have rights in emergencies and that there are clear guidelines and standards that govern the way aid workers must behave. Posters displayed in public places in the community can be a simple way of sharing this information so that it is simple, easy to understand and engaging. This should be done as early as possible in the response – or even better in the preparedness phase!



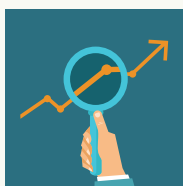
What information to provide:

- The behaviour and attitudes that can be expected from aid workers, and behaviours that are always unacceptable e.g. sexual exploitation or abuse by aid workers, corruption, giving aid for personal gain, targeting aid for political reasons etc. You can draw on Red Cross Code of Conduct and UN SG Bulletin on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.
- People's rights in emergencies e.g. the right to receive humanitarian assistance, the right to protection, the right to information, the right to participate in decisions, the right to complain etc. You can draw on the Humanitarian Charter in Sphere standards.
- How to complain/raise concerns if rights are violated – include agency specific complaints mechanisms, and also information about HAP complaints mechanism (see main document and Annexes 3.1-3.4 for more information on complaints).



Guidance for implementation

- Discuss with local partners about appropriate language and visual images.
- Show a draft to community members and get feedback before publishing.
- Use local languages and use visual images/symbols to ensure the information is accessible to people with limited literacy.
- Consider different designs for different groups (e.g. a child friendly version).
- Agree with communities the most appropriate place to display it.
- Consider holding community meetings to have a discussion around the information in the poster.
- Find out if there is a specific code of conduct developed by the UN for the response (this is sometimes done based on the UN SG Bulletin on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse), as this can be a useful source of information. You can also consider translating and sharing the code of conduct directly with the community.
- Similar information could also be shared in the form of a simple leaflet or information sheet, to be placed inside food or NFI packs being distributed.



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including...

ActionAid


- See versions of this poster in local languages. You can request a high resolution of the poster from the Philippines, which you are welcome to adapt and print for your own context.

External resources

- Red Cross/Crescent Code of Conduct
- UN Secretary General Bulletin on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
- Example of the code of conduct for aid workers developed by the UN for the Typhoon Haiyan response in the Philippines.
- Sphere Standards (Humanitarian Charter)

Typhoon Yolanda response in your community:

▶ WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW



Organisations working for the Typhoon Yolanda response should act in a proper way and treat communities with respect. You can expect aid workers to be:

- Respectful
- Independent and impartial
- Gender-sensitive
- Fair
- Competent
- Transparent
- Corruption free
- Accountable to the communities they work with

Some things are never acceptable behaviour by aid workers:

- Accepting or asking for money, gifts or favours in return for relief items or services
- Abusing people, through physical violence, threats, sexual or emotional abuse
- Using abusive, threatening or disrespectful language
- Sexual activity with a child under 18 years old
- Asking for sexual favours in return for relief items or services
- Paying for sex or asking others to arrange sexual services for them

Remember people affected by disaster have rights, including...

- Right to receive humanitarian assistance, based on need
- Right to live a life with dignity
- The right to protection and safety
- Right to information you need to make informed decisions. You should receive information about the relief and recovery projects, where they are located, who the organisations are who are providing aid, and who the organisations are who are receiving aid.
- Right to participate in decisions that affect you
- Right to complain if there are problems with the way aid is being provided

If any of these things happen, you should make complaint. Organisations must take these complaints seriously and take action. These are details of the feedback and complaints mechanisms available here:

[Leave space for a sticker that each organisation can post with their own complaints mechanism details. Also include AA feedback/complaints number].

Produced by ActionAid and partners working in the Typhoon Yolanda response.

actionaid

Example of text for poster on rights:

This is an example of a poster developed in the Philippines. It has been translated into local languages for use in different locations.

Annex 1.4: Puppet theatre and community theatre

Summary:

Community theatre can be a powerful way in some cultures of communicating with people in an accessible and engaging way. It can be a good way to tackle sensitive topics and get people interested in subjects that they might otherwise see as boring or complicated. It is accessible to all, including people who can't read and write and children, and can reach a large audience in one session. It can be presented by professional actors, or can involve actors from the community or ActionAid/partner staff.

For children, puppet theatre can be used to communicate information in engaging ways, and to start a discussion on rights and humanitarian standards. This information is based on tools developed by World Vision (see links below for more information). They have found that using puppets helps increase children's interest and reduce anxiety in discussing difficult subjects. By using humour, they can also help adults talk about subjects more openly than they might normally.



Above: Puppet theatre on humanitarian standards developed by World Vision (Photo: Joshua Pepall/World Vision).



Above: Local actors perform a drama to raise awareness of the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone (Photo: ActionAid)



What information you could communicate using puppets or community theatre:

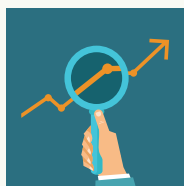
- Raising awareness of codes of conduct and standards that organisations should meet (e.g. Red Cross Code of Conduct, HAP Standards, Sphere Standards). For example you could allocate one of the standards or key principles to each puppet character to explain and answer questions.
- Starting a discussion about people's rights in emergencies.
- Introducing your organisation (who you are, where you're from, who funds you) and the projects you are going to be implementing in the community.
- Issues around corruption and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Publicising complaints mechanisms, or explaining accountability processes such as sharing financial information.
- Explaining how agencies work and what the emergency response process is. For example you could show why only some people are targeted for assistance.



Guidance for implementation

- Consider whether you need to bring in professional actors/puppeteers (or volunteers with this expertise such as drama students), or whether staff or community volunteers have the skills and enthusiasm to perform!
- Make sure the language is appropriate (local language, avoiding jargon). Identify a few key messages that you want to convey, and keep it simple.
- Consider making it interactive – could you involve members of the audience?
- Try to use local props and costumes so people can identify with it and connect with their own community.
- Find ways to make it interesting – for example using music, humour, incorporating aspects of theatre that are familiar to people (e.g. traditional characters, local references).
- Are there traditional/local forms of theatre that people are familiar with? You could consider using these familiar formats to make the performances more engaging.

- Make sure it is culturally appropriate and will not be offensive to people, even if you are tackling controversial topics (for example, is it acceptable for women to appear on stage? Is it acceptable to play music, particularly if people are grieving?).
- After the performance, facilitate a discussion to explore the issues raised. You could hand out simple leaflets for people to take home with key messages.
- Puppets can be ordered online – or you can ask tailors or local handicraft makers to produce them locally. You can order/make t-shirts or hats that identify puppets as characters to represent specific standards or principles.
- Consider having children make their own simple puppets during the session so that they have something they can take home afterwards, along with key messages for them/their parents (see World Vision's ideas for making simple sock puppets).



Further information - see online Resource Library for additional materials including...

ActionAid

- Film from ActionAid Pakistan showing use of community drama in a people's caravan following the 2010 floods.
- Listen to songs recorded by local choirs and community groups to raise awareness of the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone in 2014, which were broadcast over local radio stations as part of ActionAid's emergency response programme. The messages in the songs, which are performed in local languages by local choirs and community groups, focus on what not to eat, avoiding bodily contact, and seeking medical advice if you have symptoms. Listen to the songs in our online Resource Library, and see also films and pictures of street theatre performed by local comedy actors.

External resources

- See the original guidance document from World Vision in Cambodia.
- Search online also for suppliers selling low cost puppets, or instructions on how to make your own (there are lots on YouTube).
- Film on Gomvira (traditional folk art) from Bangladesh explaining people's rights and how agencies work in emergencies.

Annex 1.5: Using SMS for two-way communication

Summary:

SMS (mobile phone text messages) can be an effective way for rapid communication between communities and aid providers. It can be used to provide immediate lifesaving information and alerts before and after emergencies, and to communicate important information about the relief process.

As a two-way communication tool, it also provides a way for communities to share information they think is important to NGOs and other aid providers, and to have a means to communicate with the outside world.



Luija Lesuuda uses her phone to help ActionAid with food distribution in northern Kenya. (Photo: Søren Bjerregaard/ActionAid).



A Member of the relief committee reads livestock bulletins in Kenya (Photo: Jean-Baptiste Lopez/infoasaid/ActionAid)



What information you could communicate using SMS

- Early warning alerts for upcoming disasters, weather forecasts, security alerts etc.
- Information as immediate aid – health and hygiene messages (e.g. cholera control advice, first aid advice, hygiene promotion messages), search and rescue information, evacuation advice.
- Information on when and where distributions will happen.
- Communities can share damage and needs assessment data rapidly, often before the agency can reach the area.
- Communities can share feedback, complaints and suggestions.
- Once the system is in place you will probably find that the community use it in unexpected ways!



Guidance for implementation

- First, assess whether SMS is the right tool for the context – is SMS popular in this area? What is the cell phone coverage in the area? How many people have cell phones? What are the literacy rates?
- To be effective, an SMS system needs to be set up before the emergency. Think about distributing low cost and durable phones and solar chargers, having designated community volunteers/committee members and agreeing systems for disseminating information, providing training, and having a designated staff member to coordinate messaging.
- Consider partnerships with telecoms providers to reduce the cost of SMS.
- Consider how you will provide sufficient credit so that people can communicate effectively with us.
- There are various technical systems available to process and manage SMS into databases for easy compilation, analysis and sending of mass messages. There are also systems that translate SMS into voice messages – this can help for people with limited literacy or vision problems.
- SMS is a really valuable tool – but cell phone coverage often goes down after a disaster. Think about what alternative methods and back-ups could be put in place. Also consider including SMS and solar chargers in relief distribution kits if people have lost these in the emergency.
- Think about who will have access and control of the phones – can you give them directly to women?
- If providing cell phones and chargers, which are often high value items, consider the security risks for people receiving them. Consult with communities first to ensure the models are appropriate and there is community acceptance of the selection criteria for people receiving them.

- Solar powered or wind-up radios and torches often come with cell phone charging facilities – consider items that are multipurpose.
- Think about how information can also be accessible to people without phones- for example having bulletin boards that are regularly updated by those with phones.



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including...
ActionAid

- Case study from ActionAid Kenya on the use of SMS for two-way communication between ActionAid and community relief committees during the 2010 east Africa drought. This project was conducted in collaboration with Frontline SMS and Infoasaid.

External resources

- CDAC Network 101 Seminar Series on use of SMS in humanitarian response.
- Organisations such as [FrontlineSMS](#) provide free open source software for managing SMS communications.
- Infoasaid media landscape guides contain useful information on coverage and popularity of different communication channels in different countries.
- Infoasaid message library, with ready to use messages on topics such as disease prevention, earthquakes, early marriage, mines etc. Many of these messages have been translated into different languages already.
- [Translators without Borders](#) have a network of volunteer translators to provide free translation in humanitarian operations, and may be able to assist with translating messages in emergencies. IHART can put to make this connection through the CDAC Network.

Annex 1.6: Radio and radio listening groups

Summary:

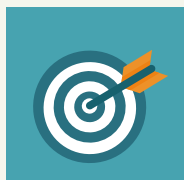
Radio is an important communication channel in many countries, often one of the most accessible sources for people in rural areas and those with limited literacy. Radio stations can be a way to get information out to large numbers of people quickly, to alert people to approaching disasters, keep people informed about the relief process, and provide accurate information to counter rumours and misinformation. It can also become a tool for two-way communication, by using SMS or phone in slots, featuring pre-recorded content from community level, having regular slots to respond to questions posted on bulletin boards, facilitating community radio listening groups etc. In addition to working with commercial or state radio stations, community radio stations can be a way for people to develop and communicate the information that they think is most relevant.



Florence and Susan, from Women's Action for Human Dignity, discuss domestic violence on the radio in Sierra Leone (Photo: Aubrey Wade/ActionAid).

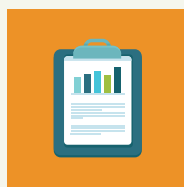


Discussion of how to prevent Ebola in Sierra Leone. (Photo: ActionAid)



What information you could communicate using radio

- Early warning alerts for upcoming disasters, weather forecasts, security alerts etc.
- Information as immediate aid – health and hygiene messages (e.g. cholera control advice, first aid advice, hygiene promotion messages), search and rescue information, evacuation advice.
- Information on when and where distributions will happen.
- Information on rights and what people can expect from aid agencies.
- Discussions on key issues and challenges in the response.
- Listeners can share their views on the response, gaps, challenges and suggestions.
- Providing a way for people to share their stories and experiences, and feel connected to the wider world, can have an important psychosocial benefit.



Guidance for implementation

- Consider distribution of low cost solar powered or wind-up radios, either during preparedness work or as part of relief distributions. Include questions around availability of radios/ access to information in the needs assessment (and make sure you understand what kind of radios are required – AM/FM, individual sets or those suitable for group listening).
- Consider what support can be provided to local radio stations to restore radio coverage quickly after the emergency (e.g. funding to cover fuel or generators, or helping radio stations access fuel from humanitarian providers).
- Solar powered or wind-up radios and torches often come with cell phone charging facilities – consider items that are multipurpose.
- Support community organisations, especially women's groups, to organise listening groups. These are a forum for people to discuss the information provided through radio programmes and consider its implications. It can also serve a psychosocial purpose by providing a group recreation activity.
- When designing material for radio programmes, remember that you need to make it engaging and interesting – just because an NGO thinks information is important doesn't automatically mean people are willing to listen to dull public information messages! Consider using music, poetry, drama, humour, community vox pops, competitions etc to keep people engaged.

- Remember also that commercial radio stations need content that will be interesting to their audiences – while they may be willing to help, make sure you talk to them about appropriate style and what kinds of programmes they would be interested in including in their schedules.
- Include ways to make radio a two-way communication tool – include phone ins/SMS slots, recorded messages or features from communities affected, competitions etc.



**Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including...
External resources**

- Case study on Radio Bakdaw, a radio station established by Internews as part of the Typhoon Haiyan response in the Philippines.
- Infoasaid media landscape guides contain useful information on coverage and popularity of different communication channels in different countries.
- CDAC Network 101 seminar series on humanitarian broadcasting.
- There are various suppliers who sell low cost radios appropriate for humanitarian contexts, many of which include solar powered batteries, mobile phone charging sockets and flashlights. These include Freeplay Energy (<http://www.freeplay-energy.com/>) and Lifeline Energy (<http://lifelineenergy.org/>) amongst others.
- There are specialist agencies working to support radio in humanitarian situations, who may be able to provide and support if you are considering including radio in your programmes. These include First Response Radio, Internews and BBC Media Action. Humanitarian coordination mechanisms and specialist working groups on Communicating with Communities if these exist are good places to engage with these actors on the ground- or IHART can help you make these contacts through the CDAC Network.

SECTION 2

PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

Annex 2.1: Participatory needs assessment

Summary:

People's participation in the needs assessment ensures that we are asking the right questions, and getting the right information to design an appropriate response programme that meets communities' needs. It also sets the stage for people's participation right from the beginning and demonstrates that we are working in a different way. Participation happens in two ways: first, participatory exercises can be used to allow people to share their views and priorities with the needs assessment team. Second, community representatives can be part of the needs assessment team itself.



Writing the names of the flood-affected households during an emergency rapid needs assessment in Siem Reap, Cambodia (Photo: Savann Oeum/ActionAid)



The community participates in an ActionAid needs assessment in Leyte, Philippines (Photos: ActionAid).



Guidance for implementation

- These are some simple ways to strengthen community participation in needs assessments:
- **Checking questions and assessment design:** before starting the needs assessment, share the assessment questionnaire or checklist with community representatives (especially women) and explain the process you are planning to use. Ask them to give you feedback and suggest improvements. For example:
 - Are the questions culturally appropriate? Are they insulting/embarrassing?
 - Are there important issues missing that people are concerned about?
 - Who are the distinct groups in the community that should be consulted (there may be ethnic divisions, language groups, social status groups, people living in remote parts of the village that you might not be aware of)?
 - What time of day is best to ensure participation of maximum number of people, particularly women?
- **Involving community volunteers in gathering information:** community volunteers can play an important role in collecting information. With basic orientation, they can conduct house-to-house surveys using a simple questionnaire format. To avoid bias, it is important to have simple control mechanisms: cross checking of a sample of households by ActionAid staff or partners; displaying the results of the needs assessment publicly so that people can check the data; having a feedback and complaints mechanism for people to raise concerns.
- **Training in the preparedness phase:** as part of disaster preparedness work, you can establish committees or identify volunteers who will assist with needs assessments in the event of a disaster.

Training can be provided to help them understand the needs assessment process and the tools they can use. Having this capacity established at community level can also mean that a rapid assessment can start even if ActionAid staff and partners are unable to reach the affected community. Community volunteers can have an agreed system to share basic information with us, for example by SMS.

- **Participatory tools:** participatory tools should be included in the needs assessment process, to understand the situation from a wide range of people in the community. In the first few days after a disaster it is probably difficult and not appropriate to do this (although tools like transect walks and focus group discussions may be possible). In the longer term, tools such as social maps, resource maps, daily activity schedules, seasonality calendars, mobility maps etc are a useful way to understand the situation and uncover issues that people may not automatically tell you. Remember that participatory tools are ways to help you have a productive conversation with communities – be sensitive to context and situation and don't be tied to using a tool just because it is on your needs assessment checklist!
- **Talking to vulnerable groups:** make sure in the needs assessment you create spaces where different groups can share their views, including the most vulnerable and excluded. You should try to have separate discussions with women, and to make sure that elderly and disabled people are able to participate. Be sensitive also to ethnic or social divisions in the community (for example are low caste people participating in the discussions?). Consider how the location, time or language of the discussion or the presence of certain community leaders might be restrictive to some people.
- **Sharing results with the community:** an important part of our accountability to disaster-affected communities is to share the findings of needs assessments, and explain the decisions that have been made as a result. Even if the result is a negative one for the community (e.g. ActionAid is not going to provide a response in this village) it is important to explain this and tell them why. A common complaint from communities is that NGOs come to do assessments and then never return. As a guide, you should be sharing the results of needs assessments with the community within one month of the assessment.



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including...

ActionAid

- Case study on community participation in needs assessment from Myanmar.
- Reflection-Action resources on participatory tools.
- See Annex 1.1 for guidance on information needs assessments.

External resources

- ECB Good Enough Guide, including tools on profiling needs and involving people at each stage
- ALNAP guide on participation.

Annex 2.2: Community-led relief distributions

Summary:

Distributions of relief goods can be organised and led by the community themselves. Community relief committees work with ActionAid/partners to develop criteria for receiving relief, prepare distribution lists, design the distribution process, arrange security, share information with the community, organise the distribution, keep records and do post distribution monitoring. At each stage, women should be taking the lead in the process – this doesn't mean they have to do all of the work, but they should be the ones to decide how the process is organised and who does what.



Women's NFI committee volunteers check the recipient list in Za'atari camp, Jordan (Photo: ActionAid)



Distribution of tokens prior to relief distribution in Pakistan. (Photo: ActionAid)



Guidance for implementation

- 1. Develop criteria for who will receive relief items:** hold community meetings making sure that as many people as possible are present and that vulnerable groups are represented. Ask the group to think of particular individuals or families who are especially vulnerable/in need of support and explain why (e.g. an elderly woman living alone with no relatives, a family who doesn't own land, a person with disabilities). Note down the characteristics of each family and draw out the criteria for those who need support the most. Summarise these and seek agreement of the group. You could hold separate meetings with different groups and share compiled criteria with the community.
- 2. Forming a relief committee:** hold a community meeting and explain what the relief committee will do. Agree criteria for selection (e.g. husband and wife from one family cannot both be members, representation from each area of the village). Ask for volunteers/nominations and ask the group to endorse the decision. The committee should be led by women and have majority women membership. It may be necessary to have separate women and men's committees and strategically assign different roles to each one to ensure that women play an active role.
- 3. Mapping and prepare distribution lists:** the relief committee conducts mapping of the community to identify those households who meet the criteria and will receive relief items. ActionAid/partner staff may cross check the data by visiting a random selection of households. The results of the mapping and the selection criteria should be publicly displayed (on the transparency board for example) prior to the distribution so that people understand who has been selected and why and can identify people who have been missed out or wrongly included.
- 4. Procurement:** community representatives should be involved in selecting items, choosing suppliers and procuring items. See Annex 4.3 for guidance on this topic.
- 5. Design the distribution process:** the relief committee should decide how to manage the distribution – where, what time of day, how to organise a queuing system etc. They should consider accessibility for women and other vulnerable groups (e.g. allowing family

members to collect items on behalf of elderly or disabled relatives, having separate queues for women. They should work with ActionAid to arrange security based on the local context (e.g. volunteers to oversee queuing and guard supplies, involving local police/military).

6. **Share information with the community:** before the distribution, information should be shared with the community so that everyone knows when and where the distribution will take place, who is on the list, and what items they will receive. This could be through transparency boards, posters/bulletin boards, SMS, radio, house-to-house visits etc.
7. **Running the distribution site:** relief committee members organise the distribution process, including checking people against lists, collecting vouchers/signatures, making sure people receive the correct items etc. Make sure that there is a feedback mechanism such as a Q&A desk at the distribution site, SMS/phone line or complaints box (see complaints section for ideas).
8. **Post distribution monitoring:** following the distribution ActionAid/partner should work with the relief committee to review the process and whether people are satisfied. This could be via public review meetings, house-to-house surveys or SMS feedback.



Relief committee members in Isiolo, Kenya, organise the unpacking and distribution of food aid (Photo: Natalie Curtis/ActionAid).



Distribution organised by a women's group in Samar, Philippines (Photo: PKKK/ActionAid)



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including...

ActionAid

- Case study on women-led relief committees in Kenya
- Case study on women-led distribution committees in Jordan.
- Photo case study of community-led distributions in Philippines.
- Report on community-led emergency response in Myanmar.

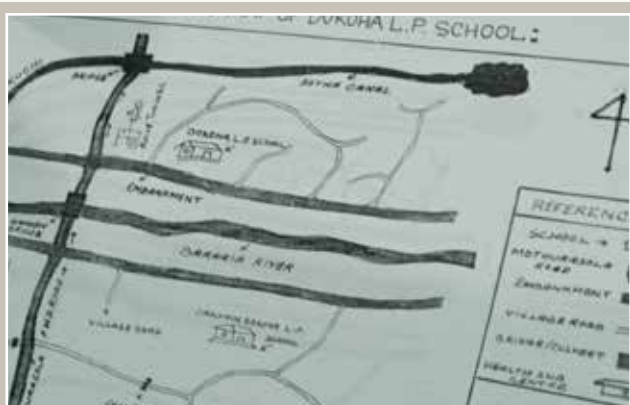
Annex 2.3: Community change plans

Summary:

A community change plan is a participatory process where people develop their own solutions to problems in the community. They can be used to design longer term response and recovery programmes, or to identify solutions during protracted crises. Using participatory tools, people identify and prioritise problems in their community, analyse the underlying causes and develop a community level plan with the solutions they want to implement. The plan can then be presented to humanitarian and development organisations, local authorities and other stakeholders to secure support for implementation. It is a powerful way for the community to decide and articulate their own priorities for emergency response and recovery, and to ensure they are actively controlling programmes in their communities instead of being passive recipients of aid. The analysis can also act as a baseline for participatory monitoring and evaluation, and assessing change.



Women in Myanmar show their village dream map
(Photo: ActionAid).



A mobility map from Assam, India.
(Photo: Silva Ferretti/ActionAid).



Guidance for implementation

These are the main steps in developing a community change plan:

- 1. Rapport building/preparation:** meet with the community and other local stakeholders to explain the process, identify local facilitators and gather secondary data.
- 2. Training volunteers:** the process should be facilitated by community volunteers. They will need some orientation and training on their role.
- 3. Village/community analysis:** use participatory tools to understand the current context and the issues that people would like to address. Tools include: social maps, resource map, mobility map, historical transect, transect walk, wellbeing analysis, case studies etc.
- 4. Sharing findings:** following the analysis, the findings of all groups will be collated and presented back to the village as a whole. At this point, the broader community will be given the chance to reflect on the analysis, and any additional comments from the community are incorporated. This is repeated at each stage of the process.
- 5. Marginalisation process analysis:** this will be conducted separately with each of the identified vulnerable groups. Tools include wellbeing analysis, seasonality calendars (to look at fluctuations in food availability, health, income, employment and other relevant factors), access and control matrices (to understand how available resources are used and managed).
- 6. Problem analysis:** key issues identified in the community analysis (for example, water scarcity) are explored in more detail to understand the problem and its underlying causes. Tools include: flow diagram, force field analysis, pair wise ranking, preferential ranking.

7. **Collective dreaming:** a process of collective visioning and goal setting, to facilitate discussion around a shared vision for the village. These will be prioritised, with a focus on prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable groups.
8. **Formulate projects:** based on prioritised needs, specific projects are identified. Available resources and community contributions will be established, any necessary feasibility studies will also be conducted (either by the community, ActionAid or a third party). The proposed projects are shared back with the whole community for comments.
9. **Setting out roles and responsibilities:** here the emphasis is on what the community can do themselves, what people can do with a little help from NGOs, and what they can access from the government.
10. **Presentation of plans to stakeholders:** the community change plan is presented to local government authorities, NGOs and other stakeholders to request support to work alongside the community for implementation.
11. **Action: implementation of the projects starts!** This is led by the community with support from other stakeholders as appropriate.
12. **Participatory M&E:** regular community-wide monitoring meetings need to be held with the communities. At this, those engaged in the projects will be required to present their work vouchers, bills and any other relevant documentation. Also at these community meetings, villagers will be encouraged to raise any questions.



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including...

ActionAid

- Case study from Ta Ma Pin village, Myanmar, describes the community change plan process. See also ActionAid Myanmar's film 'The Village Book'.
- Reflection-Action resources on participatory tools.

External resources

- ALNAP guidance on participatory tools
- ECB Good Enough Guide tools on community participation

Annex 2.4: Listening exercises

Summary:

A listening exercise is a tool to understand the views of communities about the emergency response and aid process, developed by the Listening Project. It uses unstructured conversation to create a space where people can openly share their views, frustrations and questions. Local 'listeners' are trained to facilitate conversations, which are then transcribed and summarised. It is a great way to hear people's views on the topics they want to talk about – not just the answers to questions that aid agencies think to ask! It would be a particularly good tool to do at an interagency level, to get people's voices onto the agenda of NGOS, clusters and the government. This tool was developed by CDA who kindly wrote this section for the Resource Book.



Listening Exercises facilitated by CDA in Afghanistan, Thailand, Ethiopia (Photo: CDA Listening Project).

What is a listening exercise?

Most listening exercises are held with one or two individuals, but in some cases larger groups form and the conversation becomes a free-flowing group discussion. In most cases, conversations are not pre-arranged (except for appointments with government officials and other key stakeholders). A listening team travels to a community and strikes up a conversation with whoever is available and willing to talk, speaking both to people who have and have not received assistance. It's important to use open-ended questions that cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no', and facilitate in a way that encourages participants to direct the conversation towards issues that are important to them. Often, it helps when listeners share what they have heard from other people in other areas as a way of making it more of a conversation than an interview. It's important to remember that a listening exercise is not an evaluation to determine what actually happened. It works best to listen for and understand people's opinions, ideas, analyses, judgments, and beliefs about the impact of assistance, and what evidence they cite as shaping their beliefs. Whether their evidence is 'true' is less important than the fact that they believe it to be true.

End the conversation by asking, "is there anything else that we have not discussed that you want us or others to know?" It is not uncommon for listening teams to learn about sensitive issues such as protection problems, sexual exploitation or corruption, when people are given the chance to bring their concerns to the forefront in this way.

Key principles

- **Recognition and respect for local knowledge.** Engage a broad range of local people to discuss their opinions and experiences as observers of and participants in multiple assistance efforts.
- **Go beyond your projects.** Do not treat each conversation as part of the evaluation process for your own projects and programs. People are rarely asked to step back and give commentary on impacts on both tangible (infrastructure, food security, services) and intangible (empowerment, increased local capacity) long-term effects.
- **Broad exploration with focused conversations.** Listening conversations follow an open-ended, unscripted process. Let the people bring up the issues that matter most to them. Explore certain themes and issues in-depth as they come up through follow-up questions. Even if you choose to focus your exploration on a specific project or sector, keep your questions open-ended.

- **Engage people in analysis.** Listening conversations differ from structured surveys in that they invite people to share their insights and analysis using their experiences and observations as evidence. Asking “why” will engage people in a more analytical way and invite them to share their views.
- **Actively seek recommendations.** Be open to criticism. Engage people in critical thinking about what can and should be done differently (and by whom) to better address the concerns they have raised.

“Donor agencies need to come down to the villages, come to the rural areas and talk to the people. Donors are ‘out there’ and not knowing what’s going on and need to listen further, past the liaison officers, to grasp the real views from the rural communities.” (*Female hospital worker, Solomon Islands*).

“A local CBO funded through foreign donor funds has been surveying the surrounding communities in preparation for upcoming ‘peace committees’. We have no idea what these are, and what they will do. We are not sure if this is something we need, we are just waiting to see what will come out of these surveys. I am baffled about how projects like this are decided on.” (*Woman in a village, Sri Lanka, Time to Listen, CDA listening project*).



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including... External resources

- This material was kindly provided by CDA Listening Project. You can download the full document online.
- See further guidance from the [listening project](#) website.
- Download a free e-book ‘*Time to Listen*’, which discusses the challenges of listening and summarises almost 6,000 people’s perspectives from listening exercises in 20 countries.
- See a case study on listening exercises done with communities in the Philippines following typhoon Haiyan.

Annex 2.5 Community review of communications and fundraising materials

Summary:

People have a right to have information about, and to participate in, all stages of an emergency response. As well as participation in programme activities, we think this commitment should also be extended to informing and consulting people about the communications and fundraising products that we develop using their stories and images, and which are used to raise money and awareness in their names. People have the right to be portrayed with dignity, as active participants and not passive recipients of aid (Red Cross Code of Conduct) and we think people themselves are the best judge of whether we are meeting this requirement. Focus groups can be held to share samples of fundraising and communications materials with communities and to seek their feedback and suggestions at various stages in the response.



Sharing samples of typhoon Haiyan materials with communities in the Philippines. (Photos: ActionAid)



Guidance for implementation

- Gather samples of fundraising and communications materials developed in-country and internationally. IHART can help to gather materials developed by affiliates across the federation. You could include case studies, content from ActionAid websites, twitter and facebook content, fundraising appeal letters, fundraising posters and external media coverage of the ActionAid response. As well as printed material, you could consider fundraising appeal films, documentaries, radio coverage etc.
- Gather a sample of popular photos that ActionAid has used externally. A good way to do this is to search Storyshub for photos relating to the response and sort them by popularity to identify the most frequently downloaded.
- Print out materials (using colour if possible as it gives people a better idea of how they are used).
- Translate key documents into the local language – much of it will be visual but there may be fundraising appeal letters etc that need translating.
- Organise focus group discussions with a representative sample of communities ActionAid is working with. This should ideally include communities that feature in the materials directly, as well as places not featured.
- In the focus group discussion, explain briefly about ActionAid's fundraising and communications work in this response. Share the materials with people and seek their feedback and views. Questions you could use include:
 - Are the people and communities featured shown with dignity?
 - What do you like about the materials? What do you dislike?
 - Are these materials an accurate representation of your experience of the disaster?
 - What is missing? What other stories would you want to share with the outside world?
 - If possible try to find individuals who are featured in case studies, films etc. Ask for their feedback separately on how they have been represented. Offer people a copy of photos or other materials they are featured in to keep. (The communications team will always be interested in a before and after story/update on how people's lives have changed.)
- At the end of the discussion, offer to leave any materials people want with the community.
- The discussions may take on an unexpected psychosocial element, as the photos and case studies are likely to bring up painful memories of the disaster. Make sure you are prepared to handle this and think about how the discussion can be sensitively handled.
- Share a summary of community feedback with communications and fundraising colleagues at country level and also internationally (please send feedback to IHART who will circulate it within the federation), as there may be learning that can be taken on by other ActionAid members.
- Consider scheduling a community review of communications and fundraising products at key points in the response (for example, at the end of Phase 1, at key 'anniversaries' such as six months or one year).



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including... ActionAid

- Case study on community review of fundraising and communications products from the Philippines.

SECTION 3

COMPLAINTS AND RESOLUTION

Annex 3.1: Complaints and suggestion boxes

Summary:

These are physical boxes located in key places in the community where people can post written feedback. This is then collected and processed on a regular basis by the NGO. Advantages are: they are cheap and simple to establish and use; they work in places without cell phone or internet coverage, and they allow people to make anonymous complaints. Disadvantages are: they are only accessible to literate people; they require field staff to physically visit communities to collect feedback, which could result in delays; confidentiality is not guaranteed as people could be observed posting their complaints.



Suggestion box made by community members in Antique, Philippines, and displayed at the cash-for-work site (Photo: ActionAid)



A complaints box and banner advertising a complaints line in Pakistan. (Photo: ActionAid)



Guidance for implementation

- Agree with the community where to place the boxes. They should be in accessible places where people frequently go such as schools, meeting places, shops, roadsides, next to transparency boards. Try to avoid places associated with those who have power in the community (local council buildings, house of local leaders).
- The boxes should normally be locked and attached securely to a wall or permanent structure. This is to give people confidence that their complaints will not be removed or tampered with by anyone other than those authorised to process them. Exception may be a mobile feedback box at temporary sites, such as cash-for-work locations.
- Have some simple instructions that describe the process of handling complaints, and make clear what the scope for complaints is (e.g. can people only make comments about ActionAid and partners, or about the emergency response in general?). Have a process for referring complaints that fall outside the scope of your complaints mechanism.
- Consider providing pens and paper (or pre-printed complaints forms – see below) to encourage people to share feedback and ensure a lack of basic resources is not a barrier.
- Consider ways to make the system accessible to people who cannot read or write. You could have nominated volunteers who will write messages on their behalf.
- Establish a regular schedule for the boxes to be emptied by field staff and have a clear procedure for processing the feedback.



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including...

- ActionAid
- Example of pre-printed complaints form from ActionAid Pakistan

Annex 3.2: SMS and phone complaints hotlines

Summary:

A hotline is a phone number where people can give feedback by SMS (text message) or a phone call. Advantages are: feedback can be shared instantly; people can give feedback confidentially; there is a two-way channel where the agency can provide responses or mass messages. Disadvantages: people need phones and electricity to charge them; it requires a reliable phone signal which may be disrupted after a disaster; people need money to send SMS or make phone calls (or you need a free phone number); operating a hotline can be time-intensive.



Rahab Mburunga coordinates the ActionAid SMS project in Isiolo, Kenya (Photo: ActionAid).



Online SMS complaints system established in Somalia by Danish Refugee Council (Photo: Danish Refugee Council)



Guidance for implementation

- Before starting, assess whether SMS/phone is an appropriate mechanism – do a quick survey of how many people in the community have access to a mobile phone, find out if there is a phone signal, and if not how long it is likely to take before it is restored.
- Consider whether SMS or phone calls will be most appropriate. SMS is normally cheaper and simpler, and easier for the agency to manage and respond. However, it can only be used by people who have mobile phones and who are literate.
- Consider using two or three numbers from different phone networks, as there is better signal coverage in different areas. People may also have free calls/SMS to certain networks.
- For complaints that come through an automated system, you will need some way to screen them and make sure they are genuine.
- Complaints data (with confidential information removed) can be an important source of information on problems faced by communities, and can be a basis for advocacy.
- For phone hotlines, you can have a recorded information message with answers to common question and an option to leave messages. For SMS consider an automatic response confirming the message is received and explaining what will happen next.



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including... External resources

- Case study of a pilot project from Danish Refugee Council on using online platforms to analyse and process complaints submitted by SMS in Somalia.
- Infoaid media landscape guides, containing information on mobile phone coverage and usage in different countries.

Annex 3.3: Community help desks

Summary:

Community help desks, operated by agency staff or community volunteers, provide a way for people to share feedback or ask questions face-to-face. They can be used at distribution points or when specific activities are going on (such as cash-for-work). In longer term responses they could also be set up on a more permanent basis in refugee camps or community. Advantages are: they are accessible to people who cannot read or write; they are free for users; they allow face-to-face interaction and are more personal than other mechanisms. Disadvantages are: they can be expensive if they are operated by agency staff (although volunteers can play a role); guaranteeing confidentiality is difficult in public places; they rely heavily on the skill and training of frontline staff.

Guidance for implementation



Community help desk set up by World Vision in Zimbabwe (Photo: World Vision).



Right: Members of a community grievance committee in Philippines (Photo: ActionAid)

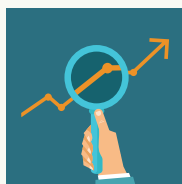


- Clearly mark the helpdesk and make it visible and welcoming to people. Make sure signs are in local languages. Try to have both male and female staff at the desks.
- Make sure it is clear who the people staffing the desk represent – are they agency staff? Community volunteers? Independent representatives? This might make a difference to people's willingness to share feedback openly.
- Have a clear procedure for desk staff to receive, record and process complaints. Explain this to people and make sure they understand what will happen next.
- Make sure all complaints/questions are logged so that you can keep track of how the complaint is dealt with, and also analyse trends and common concerns.
- Provide training to desk staff, particularly on how to listen and get relevant information without judging or influencing people.
- Have a sheet of frequently asked questions and answers so that desk staff are able to respond to basic queries then and there. Make sure they know what their mandate is to answer questions – and when they need to escalate it to others.
- Think about the security of desk staff – provide orientation on basic safety and security and have a clear plan of action if people are aggressive or the situation becomes dangerous.

Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including...

External resources

- Film on [community help desks in Zimbabwe](#) from World Vision.
Credit: Joshua Pepall/World Vision



Annex 3.4: Publicising the complaints mechanism

Summary:

Whatever mechanism you select for feedback and complaints, it is important to publicise it at community level and encourage people to share their feedback. Below are some ideas on how this could be done, from ActionAid and other agencies.



Banner displayed at distribution site (ActionAid)



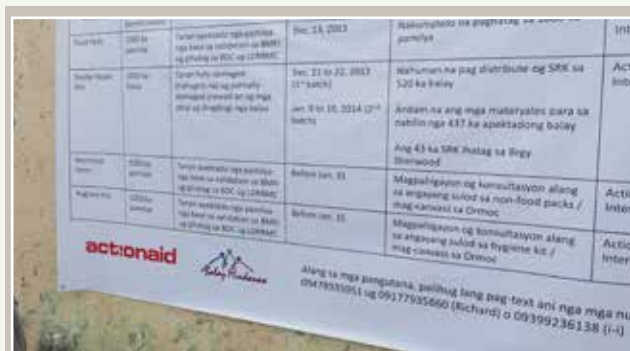
Poster displayed on village street (ActionAid)



Sticker in NGO car window (Save the Children Philippines)



Info printed on registration card (Oxfam)



Information printed on transparency board (ActionAid)



Business cards distributed to community (Church of Sweden)



Other ideas

- Including leaflets/cards inside NFI or food packs.
- Community volunteers doing house-to-house visits.
- Community theatre, puppet theatre and radio shows (See Annex 1.4 and 1.6).
- Public meetings to explain the complaints process
- See online Resource Library for a case study from Oxfam on publicising complaints lines in Somalia

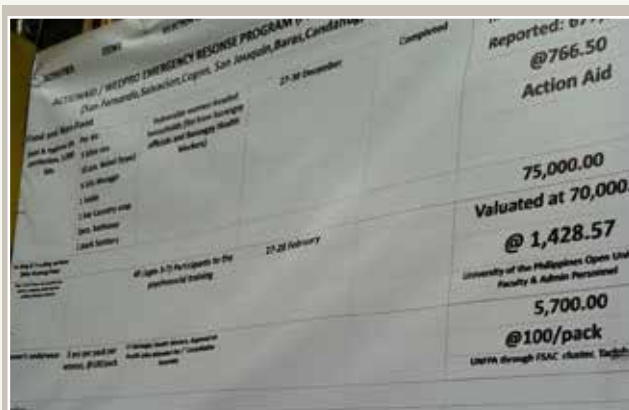
SECTION 4

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Annex 4.1: Sharing budgets

Summary:

People affected by disaster have a right to know how much money is being spent in their community, where it comes from, and how it is being used. This transparency about budget allocations is the first step in empowering communities to scrutinise the way money has been spent in their local area. Budgets should be displayed in accessible public places, and it will probably be necessary to do some orientation for communities on what the budget means and why it is being shared. ActionAid should already be sharing overall budgets for the LRP – in addition to this in an emergency we ask country programmes to share the detailed activity budget for emergency response activities in each community.



Budgets for relief distributions for typhoon Haiyan displayed in the Philippines (Photo: ActionAid).



AA Partner staff explaining emergency response budget to communities in Philippines (Photo: ActionAid)

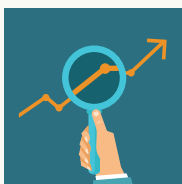


Guidance for implementation

- Prepare a simplified version of the budget at community level and make sure it is translated into the local language and local currency.
- Display it in a public place that is easily accessible to all. Financial information could be integrated into the transparency board, or could be printed/ written separately on a tarpaulin, paper covered in plastic etc.
- Overall budgets (for district level, country level) are likely to be less relevant and harder for communities to understand. It is more important to share the budget allocated at village level as this is what they will be able to monitor and scrutinise.
- At a minimum share activity costs (e.g. relief goods distributed, training conducted, cash-for-work budgets, transportation costs). It may be more sensitive to share overhead costs and staff costs so it is up to ActionAid and partners about whether this can also be shared (it could be that activity costs are shared in the first instance and full budgets shared in the longer term once relationships and capacity has been built with the community).
- Break costs down as far as possible so that they become meaningful for people to monitor. For example instead of having a lump sum for 'emergency response', break it down into NFI kits, shelter kits, hygiene kits, cash-for-work etc. State the unit cost (e.g. one NFI pack) and how many are to be distributed. You can then also list the price for each item included in the kit, or include a leaflet in the kit itself with this information.
- State the source of the money for example, DFID (UK government), donations from the Danish public, European Union. In some contexts people may be suspicious about the motivations behind aid, and sharing this information may help to reassure them. In extreme cases, people may choose to refuse assistance funded by particular groups or nations – this is of course their right.
- Include in-kind or financial contributions from the community (and local authorities if appro-

prate). This could include transportation, packing, distribution, contribution of local materials, labour etc. If possible make an estimate of the financial value of this work to emphasise that community participation is important and that our assistance is not a 'gift'.

- Financial information should go beyond just being an ActionAid initiative and should ideally be owned by the community so they can record funds from all agencies working in their community. In practice in an emergency it is likely that the information will only be for ActionAid's assistance, but it is important to work with the community to build community ownership and demand for other agencies to do the same.
- People are often worried that sharing the budget will make it difficult to change the project or budget in response to changing circumstances. Sharing the budget does not mean that it cannot be changed – but it does mean that the community needs to be involved. It is important to communicate with the community and discuss changes – these should be recorded on the budget so that people understand why the budget has been adjusted.



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including...

External resources

- Oxfam guidance on sharing financial information.
- MANGO guidance on financial reporting to beneficiaries.

Annex 4.2: Sharing bills and vouchers

Summary:

Once the budget has been displayed, the next step is to provide communities with copies of financial documents to show how the money has been spent. This should include photocopies of receipts, invoices, vouchers etc for goods and services purchased. It could also include documents that evidence the assistance was provided, such as signature sheets from people who received goods or participated in cash-for-work, delivery notes, supplier quotes and procurement papers etc. The documents should be available for public scrutiny, but in addition it is normally best to have a community committee responsible for reviewing and approving them.



Photocopies of receipts displayed in the Philippines after typhoon Haiyan (Photo: ActionAid).



Documents posted in information board in 2011 flood response in Cambodia (Photo: Silva Ferretti/ActionAid).



Guidance for implementation

- Make sure that documents shared with communities are photocopies – the originals will be required by the finance department for audit purposes.
- Documents should be left with the community – it is not about displaying them during distributions and then taking them away again! A community committee should be responsible for keeping and reviewing the documents, but they should also make sure that they are available to the whole community so that people can scrutinise them.
- Organise the documents in a way that it is easy for communities to understand – for example, they could be arranged by activity.
- Alert the finance department at the beginning of the response that these documents will be shared with communities – they may need to put systems in place to ensure that documentation relating to specific communities can easily be provided.
- When the documents are shared it is advisable for ActionAid/partner staff to sit with community members (the community monitoring committee if there is one) to talk them through the documents and how they relate to the budgeted activities.
- You could provide a simple financial report to make it easier for communities to understand the financial picture.
- If there are disparities between the budgeted amount and the amount spent, this should be explained and what is to happen with the unspent money should be agreed.



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including... External resources

- Oxfam guidance on sharing financial information.
- MANGO guidance on financial reporting to beneficiaries.

Annex 4.3: Community-led procurement

Summary:

Community involvement in procurement is key to those affected being able to lead and control the financial aspects of the response in their community. This involves having a community procurement committee to lead on canvassing quotes, selecting suppliers, scrutinising quality of good delivered and maintaining records of the procurement process. The procurement committee will work closely with ActionAid/partner staff to ensure that the community-led procurement is in line with procurement and financial processes.



Procurement committee meets to open bids for tender in Pakistan (Photo: ActionAid).



Cartoon documenting the role of procurement committees in Philippines (ActionAid).



What does a procurement committee do?

- Develop a list of the goods or services that are required, including specific technical specifications and requirements. This should be shared with and agreed by the wider community.
- Canvas quotes from at least three suppliers.
- Participate in the ActionAid/partner procurement committee to open quotes and select the appropriate supplier.
- Oversee the receipt of goods from suppliers, including checking the quantity and quality are in line with the agreed order and signing for delivery (or rejecting goods if quality standards are not met).
- Maintain records of the distribution of goods at community level, for example signature sheets from people who received items, physical monitoring of whether the goods have been received and used etc.
- Display financial records for the community to scrutinise.



Guidance for implementation

- Hold a public meeting to explain what the procurement committee will do. Together with the community agree the criteria for selection (for example, majority women, only one member of a family can participate, representation from different parts of the village etc). Ask the community to nominate members and have these endorsed by the community – depending on the context this may be done in the public meeting, through a secret ballot etc.
- Women's participation and leadership in the group should be prioritised.
- Display the names of committee members in a public place (for example on the transparency board), with a simple description of what their responsibilities are. Make sure people know how to make a complaint or give feedback if they have concerns about how the committee is operating.
- There is often an assumption that committee members need to be well educated and highly literate. Consider how membership can be opened up to the most vulnerable groups – additional training could be provided, people could be assigned to support members with understanding the quotes etc.
- Provide an orientation or training for the committee members to explain their role, and the main rules or restrictions that are required to meet ActionAid procurement processes. For example, information about how to select a supplier, what constitutes a conflict of interest etc. It is important that the partner also clearly understands these requirements so they can support the community committee.
- Support will probably be needed to enable community participation in procurement committee meetings to open quotes and select suppliers. Depending on the context,

the meetings could be held at the community level (i.e. ActionAid/partner staff travel to the community instead of holding the meeting in the office). Alternatively, transport support can be provided for people to travel to the partner office for the meeting.

- If ActionAid is working in several communities in the same area and will be providing similar support to each, the procurement process can be done collectively – each community in the district could nominate one or two people to represent the community in the selecting of suppliers.



Roselyn Payos from Tabagon municipality in the Philippines, is a member of the community procurement committee. The committee works with ActionAid's local partner, PFI, to identify suppliers and canvas quotes, compare quotes and select the best supplier, check the supplies and take delivery of goods.

"Being involved in all this process has helped me to learn something new. I feel happy and strong as I have a space to influence the recovery process. For example when a supplier gave us a substandard coco lumber, after inspection by a carpenter that we recruited, the committee refused to take it. We sent it back and asked the supplier to replace it, which they did. I feel empowered as based on our needs we are making decisions which PFI-ActionAid accepts and support us to implement."

Roselyn Payos from Tabagon municipality



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including...

ActionAid

- Cartoon showing how community committees led procurement in the Typhoon Haiyan response in Philippines.
- The ELBAG training manual has sections on reading and understanding budgets.

SECTION 5

COMMUNITY LED MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Annex 5.1: Participatory review and reflection process (PRRP)

Summary:

During programme implementation we need to continually review and reflect to ensure that we are on the right track and making progress. We need to continually question whether our assumptions are correct and whether wider changes in the context mean we need to revise our plans. This keeps us flexible and responsive to a changing world. The PRRP process is a good way of doing this, ensuring all stakeholders are involved.

“Participatory review and reflection processes (PRRP) are the core component of ActionAid’s approach to regular and ongoing monitoring of the progress and outcomes of our work. The term ‘PRRP’ refers to ongoing participatory monitoring mechanisms and to periodic moments of more in-depth review with key stakeholders on the progress of our work, where data collected through our monitoring processes are gathered, analysed and consolidated for learning and accountability purposes. PRRPs enhance our relationships with and accountability to primary stakeholders, keep us focused and energised and help ensure that we are on track in achieving our objectives.” [A/ps, 2011].



Community review progress in the emergency response programme in Philippines (Photo: Actionaid).



Monthly review meeting with community in Pakistan (Photo: ActionAid)



Guidance on implementation

PRRP will be an ongoing process in the existing ActionAid programmes. The emergency response should be considered as part of this process- but you can also establish PRRP specific to the emergency. You don’t have to wait until the regular PRRP is scheduled.

There are four levels of feedback that should be considered in the PRRP:

1. Context: what has changed in the context that we need to take into account? Are there new, or newly learned, factors? It is often useful to first ask what has changed (independent of our intervention) and see if it can be traced back to activities.
2. Activities: are we doing what we said we would? Are our resources invested? How can we improve efficiency and effectiveness?
3. Objectives: reviewed against outcomes and indicators, assessing both positive and negative, expected and unexpected.
4. Goal/impact: is there any feedback as to whether objectives are leading to intended impact? Are our assumptions and theory of change playing out in practice or do they need to be adjusted, and if so how?

Participatory review and reflection processes (PRRP) can use varied methodologies, modalities, and timelines with an enormous space for creativity based on need and nature of context in which programme is implemented. The process can include:

- Community review and reflection forums: meetings involving community representatives, partner organisation staff, ActionAid staff, and other stakeholders. Participants reflect on progress, budgets, success stories, best practices, learning, challenges and future plans. There should be enough space for people to raise any issues, suggestions or problems freely, rather than only sticking to a set agenda. These review and reflection forums can be conducted at various levels, from village level to national level.
- Peer review; representatives from community and AA/partner staff visit a project or programme and reflect upon progress and learning. This review can be guided by the HRBA programme principles as a check list for monitoring, as well as specific programme objectives. The process is carried out using participatory tools of reflection-action.
- De-briefing session with communities, staff and board members followed by an action plan to take appropriate corrective measures. The whole process is documented which is shared across participants. This can be a useful source to inform community monitoring, as well as reporting and planning.

Some important insights ActionAid has gathered over our years of supporting participatory review and reflections include:

- People living in poverty should be involved in the review and reflection processes wherever possible, as it is part of the empowerment process.
- As most of our work is with partners, we need to agree the parameters of PRRPs as part of our memorandums of understanding, so we are clear and transparent from the start about the processes we expect.
- The most common mistake is to see PRRPs as one-off moments once a year. You should see them as ongoing, with particular synthesis moments (at least twice a year) to inform planning and reporting.
- An ongoing process of evidence collection against agreed indicators is crucial to inform a good review and reflection process.
- PRRPs should include reflection on changes in the external context; on the relevance and effectiveness of our activities; on the progress made against our objectives based on agreed indicators; and on an analysis of our assumptions/theory of change. There should be some specific reflection on whether programmes have been designed and delivered in line with the eight principles/minimum standards of our HRBA programmes
- We can learn as much from failures as we can from successes. We need a culture that embraces failure and the drawing of learning from it. Every report should highlight at least one major failure and what we learned from it. As Laozi said, "Failure is the foundation of success; success is the lurking place of failure." We should always reflect on whether programmes have unintended impacts, and whether they are positive or negative.

Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including...



ActionAid

- Read a case study from ActionAid Pakistan documenting how PRRP has been used at different levels across their programmes.
- Much of the information here is taken from ALPS and People's Action in Practice. You can refer to these documents for more detailed guidance and suggestions.

Annex 5.2: Community monitoring committees

Summary:

Community committees (also called vigilance committees) can play an important role in monitoring emergency response programme activities in their community. Based on the information publicly shared at the start of the project, they can check that people entitled to support received the correct items. They can also track whether these have been used and if people are happy with the quality. This kind of post-distribution monitoring can help to identify any problems early on so that they can be corrected, and also sends a clear message from the start that the community is able to scrutinise the actions of ActionAid and check we are delivering on our commitments.



Community committee monitoring distribution of relief goods during ActionAid Zimbabwe 2014 flood response (Photo: ActionAid).

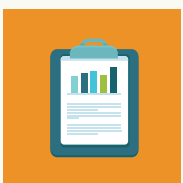


Community vigilance committee meeting in Sri Lanka (Photo: ActionAid)



What does a community monitoring committee do?

- Monitor how activities are being carried out- for example, house to house surveys after relief distributions to check that targeted families have been reached, that the items were appropriate, whether people are using the items provided.
- Keep track of programme implementation against targets, using the information shared on the transparency board. The committee can be responsible for updating the transparency board on a regular basis.
- Regular meetings with AA/partner staff to discuss progress and highlight any challenges
- Supporting procurement- for example checking the quality of items provided.
- Reviewing bills and vouchers for goods and services provided, to check they are in line with budgets and that all costs are accounted for. The committee can also review budgets and spending updates.
- Presenting findings in public assemblies, social audit exercises and PRRPs.
- Depending on the set up at community level, the community monitoring committee can play a broad role (for example also covering also procurement and complaints rather than setting up separate committees for these). It is important to discuss with the community and agree how they think it is most appropriate to design things in their context.



Guidance on implementation

- Women's participation- and crucially women's leadership- should be ensured in the committee. Consider having a minimum number of women members and specifying a woman chair.
- Make sure the committee members are selected by the whole community, and that there are clear criteria for selection. A simple way to do this is to hold a public meeting where criteria can be agreed and people can nominate themselves or others, to be voted on by the community. Discuss this process first- there may be different ways of doing this in different communities that are more culturally appropriate (and which may be more likely to encourage women's participation). The important thing is to have a clear and transparent process.
- Develop a simple TOR for the committee so that they, and the wider community, are clear about their roles and responsibilities.
- Provide an orientation, covering their role, the key aspects of the project, the role of AA and partner staff etc. It may be useful to cover things like dealing

with conflict, managing a committee, presenting in public etc.

- Make sure there is a way for the wider community to hold the committee to account, and to raise complaints if necessary. For example this could be through updating people at regular village assemblies, sharing simple reports and updates on bulletin boards about what they have done, key findings and evidence. If the community monitoring committee is responsible for complaints then you will need a way for people to raise or escalate concerns separately from this system.
- Agree a way for the committee to communicate with AA/partner staff, and to share findings and concerns on a regular basis. Make sure this process is a two-way process- ActionAid should also be reporting back to the committee on how their feedback has been addressed, changes made as a result, and likely changes or delays to the project.



Further information- see online **Resource Library** for additional materials including...

ActionAid

- Read a case study from ActionAid Zimbabwe describing the role of community monitoring committees in the 2014 flood response. The committee played a role in organising the selection of families to receive support, registration, and post distribution monitoring. The transparency and fairness in the process was acknowledged by the government.
- ActionAid Myanmar have documented the role of community members in distribution and monitoring of relief goods following Cyclone Nargis in 2008.
- See also Reflection-Action Resource Sheets.

Annex 5.3: Social audit

Summary:

Social audit is a process where community members review and scrutinise project performance and the use of funds in their communities. ActionAid staff, partners or community committee members present to the wider community what has been done, reporting against the commitments that were shared publicly through transparency boards and other mechanisms. They also share supporting documents and financial records, which people are encouraged to review and challenge where necessary. Three components are important in the social audit process: transparency boards (to share commitments and targets), sharing financial information (to provide evidence for the use of funds against plans and budgets) and community monitoring committees (to have a systematic way for the community to regularly monitor progress). In addition to being a tool to track progress in ActionAid programmes, it can also be used to track government performance against commitments.



Presenting social audit findings at public hearing in Myanmar (Photo: ActionAid).



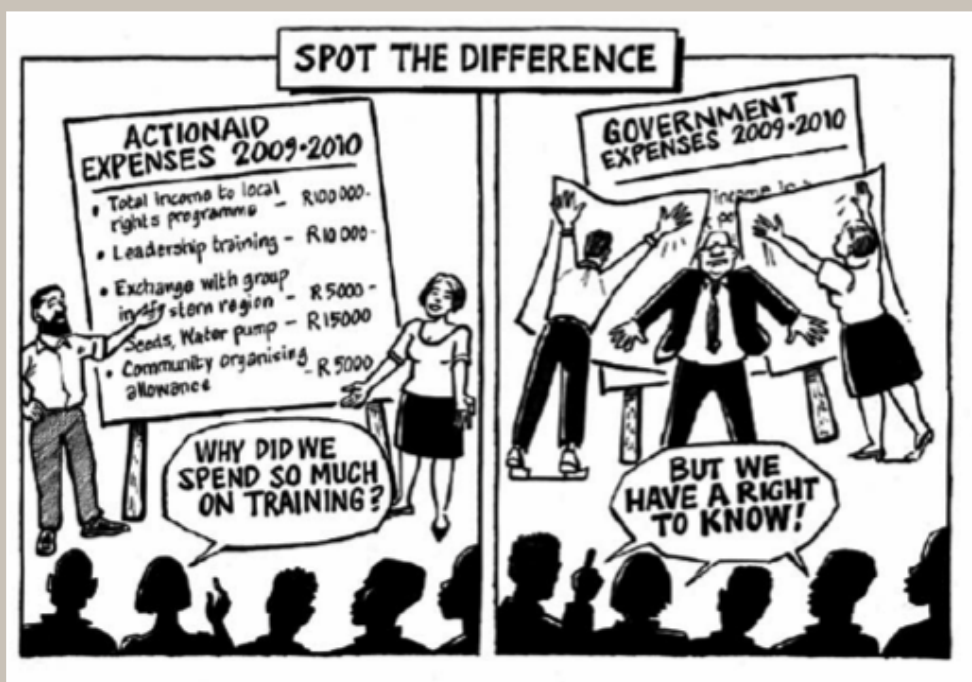
Social audit committee analysing findings from the audit in Myanmar (Photo: ActionAid)



Guidance on implementation

- Have a social audit team who can lead the social audit process in the community (this could include the community monitoring committee or an independent group, depending on what people feel most comfortable with). It is important to ensure women's participation and leadership in this team, as well as representatives from vulnerable groups.
- Provide briefings/orientations on social audit, to the wider community and the social audit committee. This should explain what a social audit is, its purpose, the process, what will happen with the findings and how people can get involved.
- The social audit team conducts audit with different groups involved in the programme to understand what has been done, what has changed as a result, successes, challenges etc. This should involve people not involved in the project or not selected for support, so that their views on the process can also be considered. There are lots of participatory tools that can be used to facilitate these conversations- see Reflection Action resources for suggestions.
- The social audit team reviews financial records and supporting documents to understand how the money has been spent against the budget.
- The social audit team audits activities, goods and services included in the project to see if has been delivered according to the plans. For example if the project involved building or repairing a school they would inspect the school to see if it exists, is functioning and has all the proper equipment. If the project involves setting up safe spaces or help desks to address violence against women, they would verify if these services are running regularly, if people are using them etc.
- The social audit team collates and analyses findings, and prepares summary to present to the public hearing.
- A public hearing is held, open to all the community, where the social audit team presents their findings. They also provide evidence they have gathered, such as financial records, photographic evidence etc. Key stakeholders can be invited to present or provide evidence, such as members of the procurement committee, distribution committees, AA or partner staff etc.

- Community members have an opportunity to ask questions, challenge and comment on the findings. If they are not happy with the responses from relevant committee members or others, they can request additional evidence or supporting documents.
- Document the process, including feedback and issues raised in the public hearing- the community should retain the original, with copies provided to ActionAid/partners.
- Agree action plan as a follow up to the social audit process. This would include decisions for how to address any challenges and improve the programme going forward, and lessons for the future. It is important for ActionAid/partners and the social audit team to provide regular feedback to the community on decisions that have been made as a result and changes implemented.



Cartoon from: People's Action in Practice (ActionAid)



Further information- see online [Resource Library](#) for additional materials including...

ActionAid

- See case study and a photo story from ActionAid Myanmar on the social audit process. These include learning and challenges faced in implementing this process at community level.
- See Reflection Action Resources for ideas about participatory tools.
- See People's Action in Practice for examples of how social audit has been used to hold government to account in different countries.

SECTION 6

HOLDING OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO ACCOUNT

Annex 6.1: Reflection Action tools for budget accountability

Summary:

There are many Reflection-Action tools that can help communities understand and analyse budgets and organise to demand proper implementation and monitoring of budget allocations. A process including social audit, transparency boards, budget tracking etc. link community level scrutiny with national and international processes. It can be a powerful way of linking an emergency response to longer term change processes, and supporting communities to demand accountability from other stakeholders. In emergency contexts where huge amounts of funding often flow into affected countries in a short period of time, community scrutiny of the use of this money is crucial, and these tools can help people to engage in a meaningful way. The ELBAG (Economic Literacy and Budget Accountability for Governance) training manual describes many of these tools and processes.



ELBAG training guide: ActionAid.



ELBAG training for camp residents after the 2010 Haiti earthquake (Photo: ActionAid)



What are Reflection-Action tools for budget accountability?

Reflection-Action is a process and methodological framework that combines organising people, developing grassroots monitoring mechanisms, democratising knowledge (particularly political economy and economics) and using participatory tools and methods for building public accountability and transparency to initiate people-centred advocacy processes. It creates space where people can discuss economics and use it as an entry point to build inclusive, democratic and just governance. It seeks to address the disconnect between the local, national and international levels. People and communities deal with economics on a daily basis in their lives – in their households, communities and markets. Economic literacy is about politicisation of this knowledge. It is about understanding how economic processes operate, asking questions about political economy and taking action. Economic literacy builds on the existing knowledge of the community.

There are four interlinked processes to support community involvement in budget analysis and advocacy:

1. Social mobilisation for monitoring governance and rights at the grassroots level.
2. Democratisation of knowledge and policy (through capacity building, public education and alternate media).
3. People-centred advocacy to make governance work at the grassroots level for poor people.
4. Methods and strategies to ensure people's participation and public accountability.

The ELBAG training manual contains detailed guidance and training resources for use at different levels.

How can budget analysis and advocacy be used in emergencies?

Budget analysis and advocacy is a longer term process and is probably best introduced once the initial phase of the emergency response is over. It can be a way to link the accountability work done in ActionAid's emergency response activities (such as community-led procurement committees, sharing budgets and receipts) to longer term change processes, by supporting people to demand similar accountability from their government. For example, it could be used to track aid flows in an emergency and how the money is being allocated and used.



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including... ActionAid

- Film case study of ActionAid Haiti using budget analysis and advocacy tools with communities affected by the 2010 earthquake, to help people living in camps monitor aid flows and demand government accountability.
- ELBAG training manual which is full of useful information and detailed guidance on relevant Reflection-Action tools.

Annex 6.2: People's assemblies

Summary:

People's assemblies are face-to-face meetings that provide a forum for communities to discuss their concerns and demands on a specific issue with representatives from local government or other duty bearers. It has been piloted by ActionAid Pakistan where it is referred to as a Rubroo meeting, after the Urdu and Pashto word for a face-to-face meeting. Community groups identify an issue of concern and carry out research and evidence gathering. This is presented to decision-makers in a public forum, as a way to create dialogue and discussion to resolve the issue. It has been effective in promoting social accountability of public institutions.



Above: People's Assemblies in Pakistan (Photo: ActionAid)



Above: People's Assemblies in Pakistan (Photo: ActionAid)



The people's assembly approach

These are the key steps that are involved in the people's assembly approach pioneered by ActionAid Pakistan:

1. A group, comprising community volunteers and activists, Reflection-Action group members, journalists and partner staff members, identify an issue and carry out research to produce evidence on the issue. This involves an informal process of gathering the relevant records, taking photographs, recording people's opinion, newspaper cuttings, correspondence, finding of discussions with people etc and analysing the data. The group prepares a small brief on the issue that is easy and understandable for everyone.
2. Next, the mobilisation process starts where the teams contact local people and duty bearers (including government and political leadership) to mobilise them to find solutions for the issue. At the same time the teams support the right holders to come together and approach the duty bearers and demand explanation and clarification on the highlighted issues.
3. Then, a people's assembly (or Rubroo forum) is convened, in which all stakeholders are invited and discussions are generated around specific issues. The documentary proof of the problem and people's perspective is also shared with all to substantiate the community's point of view.
4. The success ratio of this process has been quite encouraging. At times the issue is resolved in the first round, while at others; it may require follow up and repetition of the entire process. The volunteer teams remain active and vigilant until the issue is resolved to the community's satisfaction.

How can people's assemblies be used in emergencies?

This approach could be applied to many issues of concern to communities in emergencies. The key thing is that the community themselves – with strong women's participation and leadership – should be the ones to identify the issue they want to address.

For example, ActionAid Pakistan and their partner Research and Awareness for Human Development, Benefits and Rights, have used this approach in Buner, a conflict-affected district in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa. It has helped to address various issues facing local people during and after their internal displacement. Using the Rubroo approach, local communities were able to have their school buildings vacated by the security forces that had made them their temporary camps during military operations. As a result, the building once again became available for children's education.



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including...

ActionAid

- Case study from ActionAid Pakistan on the Rubroo approach.

Annex 6.3: Participatory filmmaking

Summary:

Participatory filmmaking is a great way to get people's voices heard by decision-makers and to enable a dialogue on key issues, even in remote areas. It is similar to people's assemblies, but in place of direct interaction between communities and decision-makers, a series of short films are made to create a virtual conversation. The films are screened and discussed, and the responses in turn filmed and shared. This allows the community to receive first hand information and feedback from decision-makers, and to express themselves directly rather than being represented by humanitarian agencies. It can be used in contexts where it is not feasible (due to security, cost or remoteness) for people to regularly travel to meet with government officials.



Above: Community attend film screenings in Pakistan (Photo: ActionAid)



Above: Community attend film screenings in Pakistan (Photo: ActionAid).



How does participatory filmmaking work?

- Low cost filmmaking and screening equipment are needed. For example in Pakistan, community coordinators have rigged up a rickshaw with a monitor, generator and video player!
- Community meetings are filmed, where people discuss issues of concern to them and share their key messages, concerns and questions.
- With community participation, the film is edited to highlight the main messages people want to communicate. In general the film should be no longer than 10-15 minutes. Community volunteers, particularly young people, can be trained to do the filming and editing of the film.
- The films are taken to relevant decision-makers (government, NGOs, UN agencies, clusters etc) and screened. Responses from the decision-makers are in turn filmed.
- The film of responses from decision-makers is played back to community members and follow up action is discussed. In this way communities are able to receive first hand information and feedback.
- The process can continue until the issue is resolved, or other policy and advocacy activities are agreed by the community to take the issue forward.
- Films of these community meetings can be stored as an ongoing record of the response, and community capacity building and influencing work.

How can participatory film be used in emergencies?

This tool can be used to start a dialogue on any issues that communities are concerned about in the response. This could include: locations missed out of funding allocations; problems with the way distributions are organised; lack of information provided to communities; issues with registration for relief support etc.

Participatory filmmaking has been used by ActionAid on many issues relating to emergencies, including:

- AA Pakistan use of participatory film making to highlight gaps and challenges faced by communities in emergency response.
- AA Nepal film on climate change and children's priorities.



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including...

ActionAid

- Case study on participatory filmmaking from ActionAid Pakistan.
- Case study from ActionAid Pakistan on 'multimedia for change' – using film to highlight rights violations and start debates at community level on key issues.
- Film on participatory filmmaking on climate change from Nepal.

External resources

- The CDAC Network can help you connect with technical agencies with expertise in film making, many of whom run training programmes for local film makers. These include BBC Media Action and Film Aid.
- Toolkit on participatory video.

Annex 6.4: Budget tracking: public expenditure tracking surveys (PETS)

Summary:

In ActionAid's own emergency response work, we share financial information and encourage communities to scrutinise the use of ActionAid funds in their communities. PETS is a tool that can help take this to the next level, by helping communities hold the government or other duty bearers to account. PETS provides a methodology to analyse budget allocations and track whether the money has actually been spent on public services on the ground. It involves training a group of community members as social auditors who conduct surveys on the ground to monitor the delivery of public services in their districts.



Mwanahamis (left) and Yahaya (right) carry out budget tracking in their villages in Tanzania. (Photos: Andrew McConnell/Panos Pictures/ActionAid)



Mwanahamis (left) and Yahaya (right) carry out budget tracking in their villages in Tanzania. (Photos: Andrew McConnell/Panos Pictures/ActionAid)



What is PETS?

There are four main stages in the PETS process. These are explained in detail in the film 'Where did our money go?', which documents the PETS process carried out by ActionAid Kenya (see further information).

1. **Preparation:** identify and train a group of social auditors.
2. **Collect evidence:** gather information on budget allocations (from government offices, websites, documentation etc) and compare this with the reality on the ground. This includes analysing and tracking the flow of money from national down to local levels. For example, if the project budget allocates money to build 100 schools, the social auditors would physically verify whether the school buildings have been built, whether they are in good condition and are being used for their intended purpose.
3. **Analyse and summarise** the collected data.
4. **Present the data:** determine the most appropriate way to present the data in the local context. For example, it could be through lobbying, media coverage, public forums.
5. **Follow up** to ensure that change is achieved.

How can PETS be used in emergencies?

PETS is a relatively long-term process, so would be more appropriate either during the recovery/rehabilitation phase, or during preparedness work. It can be an effective way to link the emergency response to longer term development work, by building on the accountability foundations laid in the response phase. PETS could be used to track the use of aid money for reconstruction and rehabilitation – for example, analysing the budget lines allocated for housing reconstruction or livelihoods support and then tracking whether these projects are effectively implemented on the ground. It could also be used during the disaster preparedness phase to track budget allocations

and spending for preparedness activities mandated in national or local disaster management acts. For example, in the Philippines context, 5% of village level council budgets are assigned for emergency preparedness and response, with 30% of this earmarked for preparedness. Implementation of this legislation is an area that ActionAid and partners are planning to focus on in our longer term response to typhoon Haiyan, and we are planning to use budget tracking as a tool to support this process.



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including...

ActionAid

- Film on budget tracking in Kenya: Where did our money go?
- Manual on financial accountability from ActionAid Denmark.

Annex 6.5: Community-led policy and advocacy

Summary:

People's meaningful participation at all stages of the process is an important element of accountability. This extends to our policy work in emergencies – policy, advocacy and campaigning activities should be based on people's own messages and priorities, and should be led by them. Below are some examples of how this has been done by ActionAid in emergencies – citizen's reports in east Africa, a people's caravan in Pakistan, and community-led campaigns in Haiti.



Women participating in the people's caravan in Pakistan (Photo: ActionAid);



Je nan Je (eye to eye) campaign in Haiti (Photo: ActionAid)



Citizens' report

A citizens' report is a process of documenting people's views and priorities around a particular issue, which is then used as a basis for community-led advocacy and campaigning. It is distinct from many humanitarian policy reports because it is based on analysis by the community themselves, not agency staff or consultants. The main steps are:

1. Analysis of existing policies, legal frameworks and laws currently in place at local, national or international level that are relevant to the particular issue. For example, in a food crisis you might look at agriculture policies, disaster management acts, social protection mechanisms. If the key issue is violence against women, you could look at VAW/domestic violence legislation, provisions in the constitution, whether the country is a CDAW signatory etc. This analysis can be carried out by staff or consultants – the idea is not to include lots of analysis, just a summary of the main elements of laws and policies.
2. Translation of these key points into simplified materials for the community. Depending on the context this could be simple leaflets, posters, drama, song, film, cartoons etc.
3. Community level consultations. Using the simplified materials, trained volunteers or partner staff facilitate discussions with communities to understand their perspectives on the policies and what their demands are for policy change. Questions include: which policy provisions benefit you? Which are against your interests? Which are currently not being implemented? What is missing that you would like to see in the policies and laws?
4. Compilation of people's demands into a citizen's report. The draft report should be shared back to communities to validate that it reflects their priorities and the messages they want to share.
5. Local level policy/advocacy work. Using the citizen's report, mobilise community groups (particularly women's institutions) to approach relevant local stakeholders to demand change.

6. National level policy/advocacy work. Linking community groups together, and connecting with existing local and national networks, to raise people's demands at national level. In an emergency context this could include cluster mechanisms.
7. International level policy/advocacy work. Drawing on the global ActionAid federation and solidarity networks, supporting communities to raise their voices and demands for change in international fora.



People's caravan

The people's caravan is an approach that brings people directly to policymakers to state their demands. Following the 2010 floods in Pakistan, it was effectively used to highlight the challenges faced by vulnerable women in accessing compensation, and to ensure appropriate implementation of the policy so that they received support. In Pakistan they did the following:

1. Women's circles at the community level (supported by ActionAid and partners before the emergency to work on women's rights) discussed the challenges facing women after the flood and identified several problems. These included compensation cards being denied to widows and other vulnerable groups who did not have national identity cards, and political favouritism in the aid distribution process.
2. Women approached local government officials to present their demands and advocate for vulnerable women to be included on the distribution lists. Some but not all of their demands were met.
3. Women's groups from affected areas linked together, and travelled to Islamabad (several hundred miles away) to campaign in front of the national legislature. This 'people's caravan' included protest marches, and street theatre to raise public awareness of the issues, as well as meetings with government representatives.
4. Having succeeded in securing changes to the policy allowing women to access compensation without national identity cards, the groups continued their campaign to demand women's participation in the development of community and district level preparedness plans.



Sonia Ambreen, a member of women's group who participated in the campaign, said:
 "Before, I never knew what rights are. I was a shy and introverted person that our society expects and wants women to be... I had only heard about Islamabad and never thought that I would ever visit the capital city.... I along with members of Tremat Sanjh (women's platform) led the rally to parliament shouting the slogans we created. The fact that they were out in the heat since morning, the fact that it was still hot and they were walking and walking and shouting without water till their way to parliament didn't stop them. No one was guiding us to what and where to talk to media, we were commander of our own little army of women and our passion, spirit and energy made us take a step ahead."

Sonia Ambreen speaking at the ALNAP Annual Meeting in Ethiopia in 2014 (Photo: ActionAid).



Je nan Je campaign

Following the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, Action Aid and partners launched the Je nan Je (eye to eye) campaign to push for transparency and accountability in the use of the aid funds that poured in from all over the world. Now with nearly 800,000 members, the campaign has focused on the allocation of land and housing for some of the thousands who were displaced and lost their homes. A particular push has been to get the government to allocate aid to the poorest and most vulnerable, not just to those who were already wealthy before the emergency. Now a strong and established presence, Je nan Je continues today to challenge decision-makers and the government about their long-term plans for the reconstruction of the country.



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including... **ActionAid**

- Listen to Sonia Ambreen's presentation on her experience in the people's caravan in Pakistan
- Read citizen's reports from east Africa and the 2004 tsunami response.
- Read a case study from ActionAid Haiti on the Je nan Je campaign.
- Watch a film from ActionAid Haiti about accountability in the earthquake response.

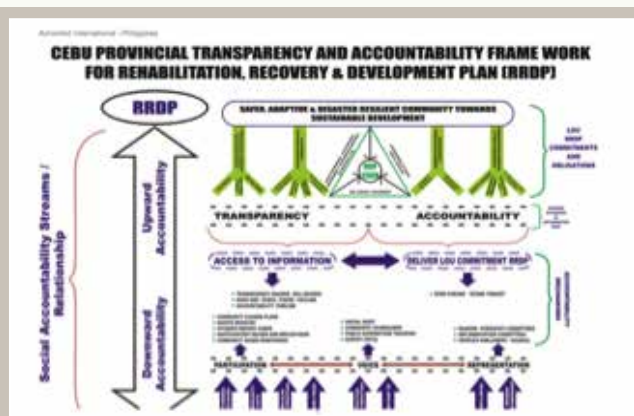
Annex 6.6: Supporting government accountability practices

Summary:

As well as demonstrating alternatives in our own work, and supporting communities to demand accountability from government, ActionAid also works together with duty bearers to build capacity and support them to improve accountability in emergencies. This can involve sharing tools and helping government or other stakeholders to implement them, training and technical support, or contributing to the government's response and recovery plans.



Accountability working group meeting with UN OCHA and the government in Cebu, Philippines; (Photo: ActionAid).



Accountability framework from Cebu Province (Photo: ActionAid).



How ActionAid can work with government or other stakeholders in emergencies – some ideas

- Training on accountability for government officials or other agency staff, particularly local organisations. In some emergency contexts, Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) will have a focal point agency responsible for accountability training; ActionAid could link with them to offer to share expertise and co-facilitate.
- Exchange visits for government officials to observe and learn from the accountability practices of ActionAid's response.
- Invite government officials to observe/participate in social audit meetings, public assemblies and people's assemblies.
- Participate in, or establish, an interagency accountability working group. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is probably the best place to start discussions about how to do this.
- If there are opportunities to provide feedback and input into the government's response and recovery plans, ActionAid can suggest accountability tools and activities that can strengthen people's participation and ownership of the process.
- Similarly, ActionAid could bring new perspectives on accountability into national/ regional response plans developed by the UN, or consolidated appeals. Attend cluster meetings/ humanitarian country team to engage in these processes.
- Offer to work with the government to organise consultations with communities on response plans or key policy issues – government officials may lack capacity (skills, budget, resources) to do this and may welcome NGO support. This obviously depends on the context!



Further information- see online Resource Library for additional materials including... ActionAid

- Case study on how ActionAid engaged with accountability working groups in the Philippines, and went on to support the Provincial Government to integrate accountability into the provincial response and recovery plan after Typhoon Haiyan.
- Case study from Pakistan on government accountability practices.



Online Resource Library

On ActionAid's extranet site there are lots more resources- including all the case studies mentioned in this document as well as films, podcasts, audio material, detailed manuals, reports and links to relevant external websites and organisations.

ActionAid staff can access the online Resource Library through the HIVE using their existing log in details.

Partners and other external users are also welcome to access the Resource Library - please email emergencies@actionaid.org to request a free user name and password.

You can find the online Resource Library here:

<https://extranet.actionaid.org/Accountability%20in%20Emergencies%20Resource%20Book/SitePages/Home.aspx>

act:onaid

© ActionAid International, October 2014.
www.actionaid.org