Accountability to Affected Populations

Analytical Paper on WHS Self-Reporting on the Agenda for Humanity

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Executive Summary:

This analysis took into consideration self-reports on progress toward commitments to improve accountability to affected populations and to ensure people-centered approaches, pledged at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS). The analysis focused on achievements, challenges and gaps as well as good practice in the context of these commitments.

Significant progress was noted on strengthening institutional and staff capacity on accountability to affected populations. Increased attention was given to involving at-risk groups and affected people in the design of humanitarian programmes; working with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs); ensuring that people affected by crises received coordinated, complementary assistance; strengthening systems to create awareness around rights and entitlements and access to information; and participation in decision-making fora. Limited progress was noted on safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints.

This paper highlights good practice on vulnerability data collection, funding of local actors, disaster risk management policies and training of first responders, among a range of community-led processes, communication and community engagement initiatives, resilience programming and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence activities included in self-reports. Challenges include poor communication and coordination structures; varying levels of technical capacity; inadequate human and financial resources; and insufficient systems for data collection and management. Recommendations focus on encouraging stakeholders to adopt the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) assessment tool to track and report performance and integrate it in operational guidelines and local training; improving country-level mechanisms for partner collaboration and coordination; pursuing an inter-agency collective approach for communicating and engaging with affected populations; investing in research, monitoring and evaluation; and harmonizing data and information management.

Introduction

Stakeholders at the WHS committed to put people affected by crises at the center of humanitarian action through a variety of ways, including by aligning to the CHS to ensure principled, accountable and high-quality

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AGENDA FOR HUMANITY
5 CORE RESPONSIBILITIES
24 TRANSFORMATIONS

humanitarian action.[2] Stakeholders were invited to report on progress through self-reports for the June-December 2016 reporting period. More than 70 stakeholders provided 250 report inputs on progress toward improving accountability to affected populations and related topics according to information available on the Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformations (PACT).[3]

Most significant progress made across reporting on accountability to affected populations

Most stakeholders focused on strengthening staff capacity and knowledge of people-centered approaches through the development of guidelines and training in line with the CHS. For example, The Humanitarian Leadership Academy developed a 'Humanitarian Essentials Learning Package', an online learning platform that attracted 6,360 learners from over 163 countries. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) began its 'Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Capacity Building' project to provide technical assistance to humanitarian country teams (HCTs) and PSEA networks to establish and/or strengthen their joint PSEA initiatives.

There was increased attention to involve at-risk groups and affected people in the design of humanitarian programmes and to work with local humanitarian actors. For example, Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe reported identifying and training community mobilizers on a range of topics including leadership, peacebuilding, prevention and mitigation, and income-generating activities. CARE International reported increasing support and creating space for local women's groups to participate in humanitarian action.

Progress has been reported around ensuring that people affected by crises received coordinated, complementary assistance with most information provided by United Nations entities and NGOs. ActionAid reported on advocacy for representation, collaboration, coordination and partnership of local organizations with government, UN, and international NGO platforms and networks in Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya and Pakistan. Forums were put in place to ensure that affected people are aware of their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decision-making, mainly in the design, implementation and monitoring of humanitarian programmes. Although self-reports contained limited information on complaints mechanisms, a notable example was INTERSOS' pilot mission to systematize feedback collection in Jordan and Lebanon, where beneficiaries share feedback through various means including social media and dedicated staff.

There was insufficient reporting on how stakeholders supported affected people to access humanitarian assistance in a timely manner and adapted response plans to the needs of affected people. Monitoring of the humanitarian response was not reported. In its report, the Humanitarian Leadership Academy noted the lack of comprehensive data on effectiveness and efficiency, and the absence of a unified and structured approach to reinforcing community systems to enhance timely crises response.

Information also was limited on how documentation of humanitarian response effectiveness, efficiency and integrity was shared with the affected population despite reports that stakeholders conducted real-time evaluations, midterm reviews, third party monitoring and end-of-programme

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[2] CHS Alliance et al., Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability, 2014 Edition Accessed from https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard
[3] The self-reports on the WHS commitments can be found on: http://www.agendaforhumanity.org. The information in this report is as of 7 June 2017.

evaluations of humanitarian responses, for example, in Haiti after Hurricane Matthew and in the Pacific after Cyclone Pam.

The main barriers/ challenges to progress

Most stakeholders pointed to limited involvement of local organizations in coordination structures as a barrier to ensuring that affected populations, particularly the vulnerable and marginalized, are included and involved in humanitarian response. For example, CBM International noted that working with local grassroots organizations including organization of persons with disabilities or self-help groups requires their inclusion in coordination mechanisms and decision-making. Some stakeholders reported that coordination meetings are held in the capital where most local NGOs are not present, thus minimizing their participation and involvement in key decisions.

> *"It is not straightforward to leverage donor resources for localization programming. In spite of the Grand Bargain commitments, donors have concerns around capacity, due diligence, risk, terrorism and trust which restrict available funding for national NGO response or capacity building."*
> **Christian Aid**

A good number of stakeholders reported limited collaboration toward ensuring complementarity of feedback and complaints from the affected population. This was mainly attributed to reluctance by stakeholders to share data across organizational boundaries which hinders big-data analysis as noted by Australia, Belgium, and the United Kingdom.

> *"The challenge for us is how to effectively communicate with the affected youth, children and women as we were born and raised in different cultural and political settings."*
> **Geomatic Engineering Society**

Reports also pointed to unpredictability of multi-year financing, limited unearmarked funding to local humanitarian organizations and their low access to country-based pooled funds as resulting in delayed delivery of humanitarian response to the affected population. This was acknowledged by NGOs like Humanitarian Aid International and Christian Aid.

Measuring progress

Very few stakeholders reported developing frameworks to measure progress towards ensuring accountability to affected populations, although many committed to the CHS as the standard to measure quality and accountability. The World Food Programme (WFP) developed and tailored existing tools, including on accountability to affected populations, to ensure that they are included into emergency preparedness and response, which is essential to economically, efficiently and effectively save lives and reduce hunger in times of crisis. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported leading a communication and community engagement interagency initiative that focuses on strengthening accountability to affected populations and which will contribute to measuring progress.

Highlights of good practice

- In Jordan, INTERSOS supported the development of an innovative database to adequately collect data and feedback about vulnerabilities directly from the affected population. Data is collected through tablets and a vulnerability scoring system is automatized so as to guarantee fairness and consistency of aid. Data is then analyzed and feeds regular reports about specific challenges linked to the status of refugees in

Jordan. The reports are shared with donors and other humanitarian partners to bring attention to less visible concerns and challenges of the affected population.

- The European Union, through the Disaster Preparedness ECHO programme (DIPECHO) supported the START network to enable local actors to respond in anticipation of crises. This helped nine disaster-prone regions increase community resilience through training, local early warning systems and contingency planning, prepositioning stocks of emergency and relief items, and small-scale infrastructure and services. Strengthening local systems to ensure timely response to crises supports accountability to affected populations.

- In the context of disaster risk reduction training, Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe, a faith-based organization, worked closely with community members to mark evacuation routes, provide basic technical equipment for early warning, first aid training for communities, schools, local authorities and conduct simulation exercises. The community members were trained as 'multiplicators' who serve as sources of knowledge and skills for the community, strengthening community-based disaster risk reduction institutions, and increasing awareness of disaster risk prevention and mitigation.

Recommendations

1. Humanitarian actors should adopt and operationalize the CHS assessment tool to track performance and accountability, increase reporting on the CHS commitments (as applicable), and develop (or operationalize existing) guidelines and local training tools that would ensure results for affected people.

2. Humanitarian actors and donors should improve country-level mechanisms for collaboration and coordination to fully implement the Principles of Partnership to enable local organizations and frontline responders, including young leaders and women's groups, to participate in coordination platforms.

3. Humanitarian actors and donors should establish a system for communicating and engaging with affected populations that allows safe, responsive and inclusive mechanisms and channels for information seeking and feedback, and opportunities to develop capacities, participate in bottom-up decision-making, and mobilize their own communities for appropriate response.

4. Humanitarian actors and donors should improve information management to create effective country-level structures that enable local humanitarian organizations and actors to collaboratively develop insights for decision-making and planning toward better coordinated humanitarian and development efforts.

About this paper
All stakeholders who made commitments at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in support of advancing the Agenda for Humanity were invited to self-report on their progress in 2016 through the Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation (PACT) (agendaforhumanity.org). The information provided through the self-reporting is publicly available and forms the basis, along with other relevant analysis, of the annual synthesis report. The annual synthesis report will be prepared by OCHA and will highlight trends in progress, achievements and gaps that need more attention as stakeholders collectively work toward advancing the 24 transformations in the Agenda for Humanity. In keeping with the multi-stakeholder spirit of the WHS, OCHA invited partners to prepare short analytical papers that analyze and assess self-reporting in the PACT, or provide an update on progress on initiatives launched at the World Humanitarian Summit. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Secretariat.

Photo credit: OCHA/Gemma Cortes