Humanitarian Accountability in EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Community Engagement 101 Training
By the end of the session:

- Understand **Humanitarian accountability standards**, its principles and the various approaches integrated to Communicating with Communities methods, systems and processes.

- Articulate what the communities and people affected by crises expect from the humanitarian community, decision makers and duty bearers in meeting **accountability commitments**.
By the end of the session:

• Review and finalize Rapid Information, Communication and Accountability Assessment tool (RICAA)

• Identify steps to integrate accountability approaches and mechanisms in the assessment phase of an emergency response
Take a Step
4. Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback

5. Complaints are welcomed and addressed

6. Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary
* Joined forces to seek greater coherence for users of humanitarian standards, harmonisation of standards
What is Accountability?
What is Accountability to Communities?
Upward Accountability
- Donors
- Government
- Board/Management

Peer Accountability
- Other Agencies, Business, Research or Government Partners
- UN Clusters
- WV Partnership Entities

Downward Accountability
- Accountability to Communities
- Local Partners
Being accountable to communities’ means to respect the needs, concerns, capacities and disposition of those with whom we work and to answer for our actions and decisions including the way we communicate to the affected population. “Accountability is doing the right thing in a right way”

Being accountable to communities requires effective communication with communities to lead people affected by crises to know their rights, entitlements, accessing life-saving information and participate in decisions that affect them. “Accountability is seeing to it that communities and people affected by crisis are not harmed by what we do”
THE BASIC ELEMENTS
of Humanitarian Accountability
Who has the power in an emergency response?
How do we give back power to communities and ensure that we are not taking it away?

- Consult Communities
- Provide Information
- Promote Participation
- Feedback and Complaints system
Exercise 2:

Instruction:
Information/Consultation: “Chinese Whisper Game”

Feedback & Participation:
• Freedom Wall
• Help Desk
• Hotline #
• Feedback box
The elements of Accountability helps to improve communication and give more power to communities so that -
- vulnerable people trust us and know how they can benefit from our activities
- activities target those most in need
- we can learn if something is not working and fix it
- activities are appropriate and more likely to be continued by the community after we leave
Key Message

Communication is aid. Thus, communicating with disaster affected communities is important from the earliest stage of a response most especially during assessment, monitoring and evaluation phase. As the communication sector expands, the need for coordination is growing.

As part of humanitarian community, we are accountable to close the communication loop which includes the need to address feedback/complaints of the affected communities in the most efficient, transparent, and time-bound approach. Technology has the potential to revolutionize communication but at the same time can also do harm if not appropriately used.
Provide public information to affected communities and other stakeholders on their organisation, its plans and relief assistance entitlements.

Information is aid. It is as vital as shelter or livelihood. Sometimes we forget to ask people what information need after a disaster happens. We only focus on what was lost or damaged. Information can help people make important decision in order to save lives. **Know what format or platform** to use in communicating your message to communities. Ask people’s preferred mechanisms (e.g. Radio, Tarp or posters, Bulletin, Video, Rekorida). Include this in assessment. Get reference from authorized agencies.
Conduct ongoing consultation with communities. This should occur as soon as possible at the beginning of a humanitarian relief operation and continue regularly throughout it. “Consultation” means exchange of information and views between the agency and the disaster affected community.

Involve people at every stage. Sometimes we get so boxed with the tools used but always remember that your knowledge of the local situation, resources, security and “good enough approach” can help you decide what other tools to use. Be intentional in conducting community consultations. Facilitating a community conversation is very enriching.
The usual gap in conducting consultation is the proper documentation and how the result is being communicated within the organization and back to communities. As a staff, always prepare the communities for a consultation. We should avoid subjecting the communities to “consultation fatigue”.

Establish systematic feedback mechanisms that enables community to raise their concerns openly and without fear.

Inform community how to provide feedback, what it is for, who manages feedback system and what is being done about it. Treat feedback as confidential. Always welcome it and respond to it. Response is not always yes. But community should know why we can’t respond. Ask communities’ preferred method to give feedback or complaints during assessment. A feedback mechanism varies for every phase of the response because of the changing context.
HOT TIPS

Respond, adapt and evolve in response to feedback received and explain to all stakeholders the changes made and/or why change was not possible.

We can change or adjust our programme or activities based on community feedback. Always know what feedback are recurring, significant, red alert (protection issues). Identify feedback trends always because it has something to say about how we do our programme.
Disaster Preparedness Report – East & West Leyte (December 3 – 5, 2014)

Feedback promotes accountability and respected community

Key issues
Evacuation
- Evacuation is being done by some community areas.
- Identified evacuation areas: Schools, Day Care, Hall

Weekly Feedback Status
- Issues raised are addressed on a timely manner, and improves programme quality.

Feedback Source by Mechanism

Feedback Resolution Rate
- Total Needed resolution
- Resolved
- Unsettled
- Referred
Why should any emergency response start with an assessment?
Rapid Information, Communication, Accountability Assessment (RICAA)

• **Purpose:**
  
  **Before:**
  
  To know the information/communication landscape
  
  **After:** To identify immediate communication and information needs of disaster-affected communities and preferred methods of providing feedback to agencies before and after a disaster
Findings suggest that communities affected by Typhoon Haiyan felt they needed information to be provided via multiple channels from humanitarian agencies, with face-to-face communication the strongest preference.

The importance of communicating via locally preferred and well-understood channels was highlighted.

Communication solely via elected community officials was not acceptable to many community members.

The opportunity to remain anonymous was valued by community members when giving feedback as communities expressed concerns around losing support or assistance if they complained to humanitarian or government agencies.

Being able to express concerns or ask for information or support that was outside the boundaries of agencies established programming was highlighted as very important.
Appreciating more Humanitarian Accountability

1. THR Accountability Video