



WASH Accountability Resources

ASK, LISTEN, COMMUNICATE

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Introduction

The WASH Cluster Accountability Project

The aim of the WASH Cluster Accountability Project was to identify some simple tools to help WASH fieldworkers understand the practical aspects of accountability.

Two main tools have been developed for the WASH Cluster Accountability Project:

- **The WASH Accountability Checklist (to clarify and remind WASH fieldworkers about accountable ways of working)**
- **Two Template Community Leaflets (to provide information to communities on what they can expect from WASH programmes and staff)**

This collection of WASH Accountability Resources represents an additional optional resource for those who are interested in finding out more. Existing materials that have been used in WASH programmes have been included but several have also been adapted from other sectors and a few developed as a result of the project.

Consultation with stakeholders formed the basis for the accountability project and showed that understanding of the terms accountability and even participation was limited both at the field level and even amongst some more senior staff in NGOs, UN and government. Recent reviews and evaluations of performance in the WASH sector also indicated that there has been a lack of progress in improving accountability to those affected by emergencies.

At the same time there are numerous agencies involved in WASH programmes that have made considerable efforts to formulate accountability frameworks and principles and to raise awareness amongst staff. There are several examples of good practice and some have been included in this collection of resources. However, a failure to identify, record and share good practice is often seen as a major deficit in the sector and identifying WASH specific case studies was challenging. It is hoped that this collection of resources can be developed further as progress is made in promoting greater accountability. The materials are available on the cluster website: www.humanitarianreform.org.

Several WASH agencies have collaborated on this project and it was managed by OXFAM GB. Funding and advisory support was received from UNICEF. The steering group included representation from Tearfund, IRC, World Vision, Oxfam GB and CARE. The materials were written and piloted by Suzanne Ferron: Suzanne.Ferron@gmail.com *November 2009*

Making use of this booklet

It has not been the intention to duplicate the many resources about accountability that are already in circulation. This booklet can be used in conjunction with The Good Enough Guide and The Guide to the HAP Standard on Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management as well as your agency specific accountability frameworks and policies, where these exist.

Five accountability dimensions described on page 5: (Participation, Transparency, Feedback and Complaints, Monitoring and Evaluation and Staff Competencies and Attitudes) are examined in turn and where available, mini case studies and examples from the WASH sector are provided. More generic case studies on these dimensions can be found in the Further Information section at the end of the book.

Example tools that could be employed in WASH programmes are also provided such as a community MoU and information on working with groups. The Focus Group Discussion Guide provides a list of the kinds of questions that could be used to assess the degree of accountable practice when monitoring or evaluating a WASH intervention. The training examples on page 42 provide some quick and easy to implement ideas for training. More comprehensive training manuals and resources are available from HAP and ECB (see References and Resources p.52).

The last section covers other relevant information for the sector such as corruption risks and vulnerability issues.

The minidisc that accompanies this booklet contains an electronic version of this booklet (for reproduction whenever necessary) and the following documents and resources:

- [WASH Community Leaflet 1 and 2 \(PDF High Resolution\)](#)
- [WASH Editable Community Leaflets 1 and 2 \(Word versions\)](#),
- [ECB Good Enough Guide](#)
- [The Guide to the HAP Standard](#)
- [Oxfam Building Trust in Diverse Teams](#)
- [ECB Global Diversity Game](#)
- [Revised Community Management Toolkit and Flash Cards](#)

What is accountability?

Improving accountability in humanitarian response requires action in many areas including improving co-ordination, leadership, the quality of programming and even the evidence base for interventions. However, in order to lay claim to being truly accountable it is necessary that WASH personnel accept responsibility for their actions and accept that they should be called upon to give an account of why and how they have acted or failed to act.

“The responsible use of power” (HAP)

Accountability comes in many shapes and forms: upward accountability to e.g. donors, lateral accountability to e.g. government and downward or forward accountability to e.g. beneficiaries. A useful definition that comprises these different levels is:

“Accountability is the process through which an organization makes a commitment to and balances the needs of stakeholders in its decision-making and activities, and delivers against this commitment... Accountability is based on four dimensions: transparency, participation, learning and evaluation, and feedback mechanisms that allow the organization to give account to, take account of, and be held to account by stakeholders.” (Adapted from One World Trust 2005).

Forward accountability (sometimes termed downward or downstream accountability) is both an attitude and an approach that promotes the dignity of those affected by enabling them to influence decision-making and play a more active role in their own recovery.

Challenging power imbalances is at the heart of forward accountability and some would argue that an emergency is not the place for seeking informed consent and that the fragile psychological state of a population necessitates strong leadership and top down decision making.

However, it is important to recognise that improving forward accountability is a process that starts with the capacity to listen and respond to those affected.

“Few practitioners would disagree that building the confidence and capability in disempowered communities to hold others more powerful to account is the essential cornerstone of social change” Keystone (2006)

People will respond in different ways to an emergency and some will be more resilient than others, providing ample opportunity to start the process of consultation. WASH personnel can and should nurture people’s capacity to overcome adversity by listening, providing clear and accurate information and opportunities for people to shape the responses and to feed back on actions taken.

Forward accountability means you have to:

- Explain and take responsibility for what you do and do not do
- Provide accessible and timely information on your actions and decisions to affected women, men and children
- Ensure ongoing dialogue with those affected and invite and seek out feedback and/or complaints
- Identify opportunities to enable those affected by disasters to make decisions about WASH interventions
- Monitor user satisfaction and learn from your work

Accountability dimensions

Accountability can be seen as having 5 dimensions:



Participation
Section 2



Transparency
Section 3



Feedback and
Complaints
Section 4



Monitoring and
Evaluation
Section 5



Staff Competencies
and Attitudes
Section 6

Terminology

Accountability Involves taking account of and giving account to disaster survivors (See page 4 and 5 for more detailed definitions)

Complaint and Response Mechanism (CRM) A formalized mechanism that provides a safe, accessible and effective channel for individuals to raise complaints and for a response or redress to be given.

Duty of care 'Ensuring that humanitarian assistance meets or exceeds recognized minimum standards pertaining to the well being of the intended beneficiaries' (HAP 2008)

Evaluation A one off assessment of how project or programme processes and outputs have achieved or are contributing to outcomes and goals.

Feedback The information provided to an agency or organization by WASH stakeholders (particularly users) that allows progress to be assessed and timely corrections to be made.

Informed consent 'Ensuring that the intended beneficiaries understand and agree with the proposed humanitarian action and its implications' (HAP 2008) This necessitates the provision of clear and accessible information.

Integrity The quality of being honest or morally upright

Monitoring An ongoing process of cross checking the progress of project activities, outputs and goals.

Participation Effective participation means individuals have an adequate and equal opportunity to voice their concerns and to express their preferences. Participation can occur directly or through legitimate representatives.

Staff competencies Competencies are the application of knowledge, skills and behaviours in performance. Accountability competencies should strengthen communication and include interpersonal skills, willingness to reflect on and learn from experience, awareness of gender issues etc.

Transparency Refers to openness and communication. An activity or organization is transparent if information about it is open and freely available to the public. This is the basis for improved participation and accountability.

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Participation

Effective participation means individuals have an adequate and equal opportunity to voice their concerns and to express their preferences. Participation can occur directly or through legitimate representatives.

Case Study: Sphere and participation

IRC Pakistan decided to pay particular attention to the SPHERE indicator on participation when planning their response to the Pakistan earthquake in 2004. In order to fully understand the cultural requirements of IDPs (in particular women) in Jalozi Camp, IRC hygiene promoters conducted focus group discussions with groups of women in four different locations. During the focus groups, women were invited to share their needs in relation to the type, location and layout of bathing, laundering, and defecation infrastructure. The original sanitation plan put together by the site planners, situating sanitation blocks in the middle of public areas, completely overlooked the privacy needs of women in the camp and resulted in women being limited to defecation in and around the privacy of their tents.

During the discussions, the women clearly expressed that they wanted the public sanitation blocks in the middle of the camp split up and installed within the Purdah wall surrounding a group of 10 families. Ideally, women would have a separate laundering, bathing and excreta disposal area around a common courtyard. In addition, the women reported that the plastic sheeting wall around the sanitation block should be at least 8 feet high and preferably covered at the top in part to provide added privacy when the water tanker visited in addition to shading. Women explained that the latrine blocks and the bathing blocks should not be against the outer Purdah walls because of the risk of men creating 'peep holes'.

When IRC hygiene promoters talked about the needs for laundering, the women explained that they prefer to wash their clothes in a squatting position and what they really needed was a good floor level concrete slab and lot of running water. Finally, the IRC Hygiene Promoters discussed the possibility of IRC's support to use waste water from the tap-stands and grey water from laundering and bathing to water a series of kitchen gardens and whether this was culturally acceptable and feasible. Following the focus group discussions, IRC revised their plans for the sanitary block designs in Jalozi Camp and has just started to construct infrastructure based on the new designs. (*IRC Environmental Health Newsletter Winter 2009*).

GOOD PRACTICE Participation of older people

A lack of mobility, joint pain and arthritis affect not just quality of life but also the ability of older people to engage as active members of the community, or to access health, food and water. Physical infrastructure, such as latrines, can be made more accessible for older users (and for other vulnerable groups) with relatively little effort. Experience in Sindh in Pakistan during the recent floods highlighted the beneficial impact of such relatively modest changes on access for old people. *(Taken from: Report of an Inter-agency review conducted by HelpAge International November 2007).*

The 2008 IASC report suggests the following key actions for older people in the WASH response:

- Appropriate water carrying containers are provided to older persons
- Latrines are designed in such a way that older persons can use them e.g. handrails
- Older women's role in hygiene promotion is emphasized

It should also be remembered that older people have a wealth of experience and knowledge about their communities and can make a significant contribution in both preparing and responding to emergencies: so consideration and thought needs to be given in how to responsibly contact and interact with older people.



*Well opening Sierra Leone.
Photo: WASH visual aids library*



*Home visiting
Photo: WASH visual aids library*

Case Study: Participating and the safety of civilians

More than 40,000 IDPs fled to Kebkabiya town to seek safety from the violence engulfing the Darfur region of Sudan. There were some water points throughout the town but an Oxfam assessment found that the quantity and quality of water was insufficient. In addition, at most water points women and girls reported violence and harassment from the militia. The abuse included beating and whipping, water containers being confiscated, and shooting into the air to scare and intimidate. Women and young girls in and around the town were regularly abducted and gang raped for days at a time. Levels of violence were highest in isolated locations on the town periphery, where the nearest house is over 500m away, and near areas of high militia presence. Men would not leave the town boundary because of a very real threat of being shot.

As a result of this assessment, it was decided that Oxfam would not refurbish any water source that IDPs considered insecure. During the assessment of water points, many potential sources were eliminated from consideration due to their isolation and/or proximity to areas of high militia presence. Four viable water sources were ultimately identified which explicitly met the criteria of enabling safe access to water. In one case, Oxfam ran a pipeline from the town's outlying well into a residential area, in order to ensure safe access to water by IDPs.

Apart from standard water point monitoring, the project planned to monitor the extent to which women felt safer and less subject to harassment and violence at the new water points. This project aimed to benefit more than 4,000 households (24,500 people) and significantly reduce exposure to violence for women and young girls. (Swithern, S. & Hastie, R. (2008) *Improving the Safety of Civilians: A Protection Training Pack*. Oxfam Publishing).

GOOD PRACTICE The talking stick

The use of a talking stick can ensure that people take turns in contributing their point of view in meetings or debates and that other people listen to them. The person who is talking must be holding the stick and once they have finished they must then hand the stick to another person. Anyone not holding the stick is obliged to listen until it is their turn to talk. This can be an effective way of preventing a heated debate from degenerating into a shouting match. (Adapted from CCCM handbook 2008)

GOOD PRACTICE Social mapping in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. (HelpAge 2009).

As part of its Tsunami response programme, HelpAge has produced a detailed social map of all the villages in which it works. Data, collected through village surveys and individual interviews, is represented visually in a series of maps available on CD-Rom. The maps show each house, the type of house (brick, thatch), houses with older people, houses in receipt of programme support and type of activity (e.g. livestock, artisan). Clicking on individual houses gives details of the older person living in that house, including information on health issues. Each social map is available at village level on a 12 x 8 foot canvas. (This idea could be adapted for the WASH sector.)



Digging drainage channels. Photo: WASH visual aids library

GOOD PRACTICE The participation of children

Children are frequently invisible within the community structures set up to monitor the performance of aid programmes, and are unable to raise their individual and collective concerns. Despite the fact that many children live in households where parents have either died or are absent, they claimed that they were never included in the registration process. Community gatherings did not seek their participation, nor did subsequent household verifications particularly focus on them as a group that needed to be consulted. When child-headed households were included in beneficiary lists, on many occasions no information was given to them about their entitlements, roles and responsibilities. Finally, children indicated that they were unwilling to make complaints, either within the community or to agency staff - for fear that food aid might be terminated. (*Children's feedback committees in Zimbabwe: an experiment in accountability* by Chris Mclvor, *Save the Children (UK) Issue 27 July 2004*)

WASH programmes can be more accountable to children by ensuring their input into the design of facilities: can children reach the tap stands? Are the latrine squat holes too large? Are children targeted in the hygiene promotion strategy? The following WASH design considerations for children should be borne in mind (Taken from: Oxfam Technical Brief: Vulnerability and Socio Cultural Considerations for Public Health Engineering in Emergencies)

- Potties can be provided for parents of small children and / or scoops for picking up children's faeces. For both of these items the users will need adequate facilities to be able to wash the items after use.
- If slabs are not pre-formed and are being constructed on site, then smaller holes for children can be designed into a proportion of slabs.
- Child friendly designs for latrines can also include latrines without a superstructure, where the child can defecate as though they were in the open, such as were used in Rwanda, but where they are actually defecating into a latrine pit.
- Provision of cloth nappies. Care is also needed to ensure effective disposal if disposable nappies are provided. Disposable nappies can block pour flush latrines if the users do not understand their correct disposal.



Children collecting water. Photo: WASH visual aids library



Sierra Leone, IDP camps. Photo: WASH visual aids library

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Transparency

Transparency refers to openness and communication. An activity or organization is transparent if information about it is open and freely available to the public. This is the basis for improved participation and accountability.

GOOD PRACTICE How to provide information

Muslim Aid Bangladesh produced a one-page leaflet in Bengali and English during its response to Cyclone Sidr in order to provide information to its main stakeholders. The leaflet was also distributed to beneficiaries and contained information on the Muslim Aid's response including the names of donors and the quantity of food and non-food items provided and details on the planned sanitation project including the latrine design, government partners, and the process that would be used to distribute latrine construction material to the beneficiaries. The Danish Refugee Committee designed a simple leaflet with pictures to explain how their complaints mechanism would work.

Other programmes have used notice boards (which must be regularly updated), community meetings or outreach workers such as community mobilisers to provide ongoing information.

GOOD PRACTICE Community accountability booklet

Concern in Ethiopia has produced a pictorial booklet that provides communities with information on what they can expect from Concern staff. This includes pictures related to bribery and corruption and staff attitudes as well as sexual harassment and bullying. Each page of the booklet portrays the unacceptable behaviours in 'greyscale' and marked with a cross and the acceptable behaviours in colour and marked with a tick as shown below. (*Concern Ethiopia 2009*)



Case Study: Working with the media to provide information and promote accountability

Starting in 2005, Internews has built three community radio stations along the Chad-Sudan border and trained local journalists to run them. The stations allow Darfur refugees and displaced Chadians to hear and produce news that directly affects their survival, including information on security, food rations, and water distribution; news on their home areas; and special programming on women's issues. The stations also serve as a communication channel between relief agencies and camp dwellers.

Some humanitarian organizations and funders are beginning to understand the role of local media in humanitarian response. The *2005 World Disasters Report* by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies focuses on the vital role of information in disaster response. A 2008 report by the BBC World Service Trust also addresses this issue.

Yet much more remains to be done. Humanitarians and the media development community must raise awareness among stakeholders, conduct solid research that provides the data necessary to make the case, and foster an ongoing dialogue that will continually examine and improve the way people work in the field. This process will result in a community that includes funders, implementers, and government officials who are willing to ensure that this issue is nurtured and developed. (www.Internews.org).

Case Study: Failures in communication

Following the Tsunami in December 2004, WASH staff in Tamil Nadu did not think it was necessary to employ interpreters as they were working in their own country. However, many people in the state were not happy to speak Hindi and this inability to communicate meant that latrines and shower and laundry facilities were not designed with input from the affected community. A focus group discussion later revealed that women did not like the toilets next door to the shower rooms and said that when they washed their clothes the dirty water from the showers often flowed onto the laundry slab. (*Oxfam internal report 2005*).

Case Study: Curbing corruption through the provision of information

A WASH programme run by Tearfund in Liberia decided that they would provide as much information as possible to the communities with whom they were working. They sought innovative methods to ensure that communities were aware of not only what was being planned but also how much money was available. They provided this information in a variety of ways and used community notice boards with pictures to indicate how much money was available for the different components of the project.

Ensuring that communities have adequate information in this way can help to curb fraud either by staff or community members themselves. Whether it's a community receiving snacks instead of meals during workshops or materials going missing from deliveries, detailed MOUs and stock ledger books have also been helping Tear Fund to ensure that personnel are better stewards of the resources entrusted to them.

Communities initially used the ledgers as guest books to record visitors to the community. This made sure that other NGOs were not duplicating efforts but later the communities were trained to use the ledgers to record the movements of project materials. The Committee made sure that any request for materials from project staff details the quantities, output and staff names. This helps to ensure that materials are used for their intended purpose. *(Tearfund 2009 personal communication)*



Information board in Liberia.
Photo: Chantal Richey/Tearfund

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Feedback & Complaints

Feedback: The information provided to an agency or organization by WASH stakeholders (particularly users) that allows progress to be assessed and timely corrections to be made. This can be positive or negative.

Complaints Mechanism: A formalized mechanism that provides a safe, accessible and effective channel for individuals to raise complaints and for a response or redress to be given.

Setting up feedback mechanisms

Feedback Mechanisms should be introduced within the context of open, transparent and participatory approaches to water, sanitation and hygiene. If done well it can facilitate immediate learning, accountability and good practice and help protect staff and boost their morale. If done badly it can lead to a breakdown of trust with affected populations, make staff feel devalued and put people at risk of reprisals.

Agencies may fear that they will be overwhelmed with complaints but this is often unfounded. Many complaints can be dealt with easily at field level. The main problem can often be the opposite - that people are reluctant to use the system. This can be because: it has not been well advertised, they do not trust the system or feel that there will be negative repercussions if they complain.

What is a complaints mechanism?

The Danish Refugee Council defines a complaints mechanism (CM) as:

Simple procedures and mechanisms that give users access to safe means of voicing complaints on areas relevant and within the control of the agency.....A CM seeks to provide a safe opportunity to raise a valid concern and to have this concern addressed objectively against a standard set of rules resting in the values and commitments of the agency. (The Danish Refugee Council Complaints Mechanism Handbook 2008).

There is no blueprint for setting up a complaints mechanism and it needs to be developed with reference to local structures and systems for dealing with complaints and according to literacy levels, the type of assistance provided, the available resources, the size of intervention and security levels. An informal mechanism might comprise community members having access to the programme manager's contact number. A more formal mechanism might involve specific staff assigned to handle complaints, the setting up of a system where different levels of complaints and appeals can be dealt with as well as information centres and mobile teams seeking ongoing feedback. Where acceptable, complaints should be addressed with the full involvement of the community and the resolution of complaints should seek their input.

A complaints mechanism should be:



The Danish Refugee Council suggests the following steps in setting up a complaints mechanism:

- Define purpose of complaints mechanism and ensure commitment and support from staff and users.
- Define what constitutes a valid complaint
- List of stakeholders who will have access to complain
- Define how complaints will be made (which entry points they will be submitted etc.)
- Decide in which form complaints can be submitted e.g. written and/or verbal and the information required
- Define system of processing complaints with time limits
- Define procedure and persons involved in processing of complaint
- Decide how to communicate when responding to a complaint – who to communicate resolution of complaint to
- Decide on how to communicate the existence of CM to users and invite feedback (explain and make both staff and beneficiaries aware also of limitations – things that are not within your power to change, complaints about other areas of humanitarian response etc.)

GOOD PRACTICE Actively requesting feedback

Medair's work following the devastation of Cyclone Ivan in Madagascar also illustrates accountable WASH programming. From the beginning, beneficiaries were encouraged to provide feedback to Medair's village representatives. Comments were obtained on three aspects of the SanPlat. Community members provided feedback on the ease of cleaning, the method of urine separation, and the ease of use for women, and as a result WASH teams made significant improvements to the design of the latrines.

Input from beneficiaries did not stop there. When a household bought one of these subsidised latrines, they signed a certificate of installation where they could provide feedback about it. "Good quality of construction and satisfactory," said one villager. "I'm very happy since Medair is here," said Mme Marie Eveline, president of a women's association in Maroantsetra. "I have been able to purchase a double-vault compost latrine, which is much cleaner than what we had before. There are no more odours and we all have fewer stomach aches and diarrhoea. Nine adults and children are using this latrine here, and this is a great improvement for daily hygiene."

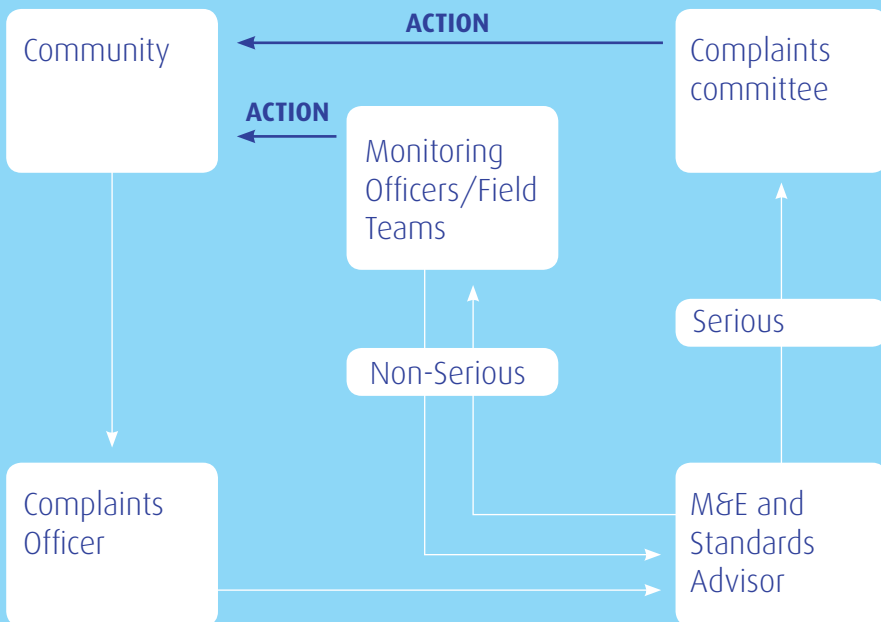
"Medair distributed ceramic water filters to 170 families in Varingohitra and other quarters of Maroantsetra. We also made at least three follow-up visits to each home, asking for comments and feedback. Our team specifically requested people to make 'suggestions to improve our project,' in order to dissuade people from saying only positive things. Medair is in the process of implementing a new system to make it easier for beneficiaries to provide feedback about all their programmes on a regular basis. The people of Madagascar deserve access to clean water and sanitation. Furthermore, they need to be a part of the process that gets them these essential services. By working alongside them, and by seeking their feedback or complaints, we make ourselves accountable to them. We provide them with the assistance they need while acknowledging their innate dignity throughout the process."

www.medair.org/en/infochanel/news/detail/article/being_accountable_to_the_people_of_madagascar/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=0&cHash=765cf71895



Case Study: Staff anxiety about feedback and complaints mechanism

“CARE investigated a complaint from a community that complained that CARE staff had not turned up to a meeting that they had asked for, and had wasted the time of many people. Although the staff involved were initially upset by this, as there had been several logistical reasons for why they could not attend, they were encouraged by the M&E and standards officer to respond and to see the incident as an opportunity for learning. They visited the community with a written apology, and were surprised to find the community extremely pleased with this turn of events. The staff concerned, now say that they have a very strong working relationship with this village, and whilst they did not understand and were fearful of the complaints system before hand, they can now understand the mutual benefits that it can bring.” (CARE Peru Earthquake Response, 2007).



Making a complaint's system work

One crucial element in setting up the complaints system is communicating to people how it works (its limitations and how complaints are followed up). CARE felt that it was essential to follow up on all complaints, and within agreed timeframes, because it is only if people trust the system that it can be effective. Despite the information campaign on the complaints mechanism, many people who used the system only really learnt about it through their neighbours, and through testing it out.

Of fundamental importance is how people making complaints are treated; showing real levels of respect, calm (in the face of often initially very strong feelings of anger and frustration) and kindness. Getting that wrong would have made things worse, not better, and undermined the whole system, and relationships with CARE. (CARE 2008).

Case Study: Using photographs to resolve complaints

During the response to Cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh, an inventive engineer came up with a useful way to help to manage and resolve complaints. The selection criteria for the provision of shelter was determined in partnership with community groups in order to determine where the priorities were. Photographs were taken of the shelters to be repaired. Several families subsequently complained that they should also have had shelters provided for them. A picture was then taken of their shelter and compared to the shelters of the families that had been selected and this helped to provide both community members and the construction team with a useful way to resolve any differences. (OXFAM personal Communication)



Three pile sorting. Photo: WASH visual aids library

GOOD PRACTICE

Involving the community in the regulation of water services in South Africa

The “Raising Citizens’ Voice in the Regulation of Water Services” is a public education initiative driven by the National Regulator (currently within the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry [DWAF]). It supports a bottom-up approach to water services regulation by actively involving citizens in the local monitoring of water and sanitation services. An initial pilot project in four townships of Cape Town since 2006 was so successful that the City up scaled “Citizens’ Voice” to a fully-fledged municipal programme. It helps empower citizens to hold local government accountable through:

- Training citizens about their rights and responsibilities, and then
- Setting up “User Platforms” which serve as monthly meetings between the municipality and the community for ongoing civil society water services monitoring and problem solving.

The initiative aims to build partnerships between the three spheres of government (national, provincial and municipal levels) and civil society. Important lessons learned so far are:

- The need to secure political support, through getting endorsement and providing training to local government officials;
- After citizens are trained, User Platforms should be established as soon as possible to keep them engaged;
- Ensure citizen ownership of User Platforms and not let them become a public relations vehicle for local government.

Taken from: WIN-SA lesson series no. 20 “Public accountability through “Citizen’s Voice”: City of Cape Town shares good practice (March 2009).

Community complaints fact sheet: adapted from World Vision Sri Lanka

Progressive humanitarian agencies are aware of the benefits to be derived from effectively managing the complaints that will inevitably be made by communities no matter how well those organizations may be run.

Properly handled, complaints can improve the quality of our programs, restore trust and confidence and identify and rectifying problems quickly and efficiently. Badly handled, complaints can be an expensive exercise that reflects poorly on World Vision and generally decrease the effectiveness of our programs.

Why manage complaints?

They are inevitable. Every agency that works with people will receive complaints and feedback. That fact cannot be avoided. It has to be managed and seen as a positive way to improve.

To improve accountability. People we work with have a right to complain about, and receive a response for decisions or actions that affect them. In doing so, the community holds World Vision accountable for actions and decisions. This is an important principal of what we do. Handling community feedback is an opportunity to show communities that our program is accountable to them. Complaints are an essential part of an accountable program. Any agency that claims to be accountable for its actions must take complaints seriously.

There are benefits to be gained. Good complaints management is an integral part of quality programming and provides tangible benefits for World Vision, staff and in particular the communities we work with.

What is a complaint? A complaint is a grievance made when a beneficiary believes World Vision has failed to meet a commitment. That commitment can be related to a program plan, beneficiary criteria, an activity schedule, a standard technical performance, an organizational value, a legal requirement or staff misconduct.

So what are the benefits of a complaints system?

Effective community complaints management systems:

- Improve the quality of our programs, by providing information about the experiences of communities and beneficiaries
- Restore trust and confidence
- Identify areas that need improvement
- Enable poor decisions to be rectified quickly and efficiently
- Promote a culture of transparency and accountability
- Prevent complaints from escalating a situation that can be resource intensive and lead to adverse outcomes
- Reduce stress of staff by providing training and support to help deal with community problems and a structured approach to resolving problems

What not to do when receiving a complaint

- Become defensive
- Argue with the person
- Be dismissive
- Blame others
- Make assumptions without knowing the facts
- Make promises you can't keep
- Ignore the problem

What to do when receiving a complaint

- Listen
- Empathize with the person
- Repeat your understanding of the situation

The five elements

In 2007 World Vision Sri Lanka Tsunami Response Team developed and implemented a community complaints system for certification of its program by the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP-I): It is based on 5 elements. These elements are:

1. Visibility and access Mechanisms and strategies are put in place to provide beneficiary communities with readily available information on where and how to complain, and how the complaint will be managed.

2. Responsiveness Mechanisms and strategies are in place to: ensure staff know the complaints system and how it works, complaints were responded to in a 'timely manner', time frames were used and complaints monitored and participants advised of progress.

3. Assessment and action Complaints are assessed and action taken based on fairness and objectively.

4. Feedback is provided to complainants in a timely manner regarding outcomes as well as appeal mechanisms, and internally within World Vision potential system improvements are identified and acted upon.

5. Monitoring effectiveness of the community complaints and feedback system is done regularly and a community complaints officer tracks complaint statistics and identifies trends.

The original World Vision Sri Lanka Community Complaints

Fact Sheet can be downloaded at the following address:

www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/wv-sri-lanka-community-complaints-fact-sheet.pdf



5

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

The process through which an organization reviews its progress against goals and objectives; feeds learning from this back into the organization, and reports on the progress.

WASH performance review framework

The WASH cluster performance review framework provides a rigorous and systematic framework to **assess, learn about and manage the performance of the WASH Cluster**. As such the whole tool is aimed at improving accountability. It is recommended that a review will be conducted within 2-6 months of a rapid onset emergency

Performance sub areas (most relevant to forward or downstream accountability):
Accountability, Participatory Approaches, Information Management

Example measures

1 The following information relating to the WASH Cluster is made publicly available (using appropriate means) to intended beneficiaries, disaster-affected communities, staff and other specified stakeholders:

- Terms of Reference
- WASH strategy
- Progress reports
- Complaints-handling

2 The WASH Cluster enables women and men of all ages from the disaster-affected and wider local populations, including vulnerable groups, to participate in programme decisions and seeks their informed consent with regard to issues such as:

- Targeting criteria and mechanisms
- The design, siting and construction of facilities
- Monitoring and evaluation

WASH performance review framework (continued)

Example questions

- 1** Are you satisfied that you have been sufficiently informed about the WASH Cluster and its purpose, plans and progress?
- 2** How would you rate the appropriateness of communications e.g. are communications culturally appropriate and key documents translated for local NGOs, government representatives, community leader and beneficiaries?
- 3** Do you feel that there are adequate mechanisms in place for you to make complaints or suggestions for improvement?
- 4** To what extent have you been encouraged to take part in consultations and contribute to decisions regarding needs assessment and prioritisation, planning and decision-making, programme implementation and monitoring?

See the website www.humanitarianreform.org for further information.

GOOD PRACTICE **Model households**

Households that meet certain 'hygiene' criteria such as having a latrine, handwashing facilities and a refuse pit are awarded 'model household' status and allowed to display a green flag in the compound.

The community elects volunteers who visit the houses to verify if the house still deserves the award and/or if there are new houses that can fly the green flag. It is hoped that in the future, the community will determine the criteria for a model household. Mapping those households with green flags can be a useful community exercise and can trigger a lot of debate and discussion. (*Oxfam Accountability Case study: 2008 Southern Sudan; Community Participation in Monitoring*).



Sudan, Darfur Camp
Photo: WASH visual aids library

The Ten Seed technique

The Ten Seed technique is a simple but useful way to help generate discussion and probe more deeply into a variety of issues including those related to WASH. It can be effective with both literate and non-literate groups and can help to ensure that a focus group discussion does not just turn into a question and answer session. The group is given ten seeds (whatever is available but coloured ones ensure better visibility) that represent the entire population under study. They are then asked to group the seeds according to the question for discussion e.g. how many of your children wash their hands after using the latrine? Or how many people use the latrine at night? Or how easy is it for you to contact the agencies working in your area? They can then be asked why they have grouped them in this way and if everyone agrees and/or to describe the characteristics of each group. Further exploration can be conducted by subsequently asking the participants another question using the seeds e.g. what other type of latrines do people use and how many use each type. Even more information can be sought on what the different groups do using the seeds as a way to visualize the issue.

Jayakaran, R. (2002) The Ten Seed technique:

www.rcpla.org/pdf%20download/Ten%20seed.pdf

Learning to coordinate

An ad hoc or un-coordinated approach to working with committees can lead to damaging inconsistencies between different project sites, or across programme sectors e.g. if some activities are carried out by paid (casual) labourers and others are undertaken by volunteers. Levels and types of “incentives” (cash, food, clothes or other goods sometimes given to committee members to encourage participation) can also vary considerably between projects. The impact of these inconsistencies is magnified when varying community engagement policies between different NGOs and UN agencies are considered. Inter-agency discrepancies seriously damage the relationship between communities, local authorities and NGOs, and can potentially create security risks for field staff. (*Oxfam Public Health Briefing Paper: Working with Committees Jan 2009*).

GOOD PRACTICE Community book

IRC have been employing the idea of a Community Book as a way of keeping a record of the project that belongs to the community. This contains written records but also pictures, drawings, songs or whatever community members feel is appropriate. Where communities have low literacy rates, a memory team is identified whose responsibility it is to relate the written record to the rest of the community in keeping with the oral traditions of that community. (*IRC 2008*).

GOOD PRACTICE Learning about community management

In order to understand the dynamics of good governance at the village level, the Water and Sanitation Programme – South Asia (WSP-SA) commissioned a study of village water and sanitation committees in two World Bank assisted rural water supply and sanitation projects in the states of Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, India. The study concludes that transparency, participation, inclusion and ownership are important committee features. When committees have higher scores for these features, the projects are more effective in terms of both financial performance and consumer satisfaction.

Taken From Water and Sanitation Program (2001). Why some village water and sanitation committees are better than others: A study of Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh (India).

www.wsp.org/UserFiles/file/327200744509_saybetter.pdf



Spring Protection.
Photo: WASH visual aids library



East Timor. Illegal Connections.
Photo: WASH visual aids library

GOOD PRACTICE

Evaluating the cholera response in Zimbabwe: owning up to our mistakes

From August 2008 to May 2009 Zimbabwe experienced its worst ever Cholera epidemic resulting in 4,228 deaths. In various evaluations, the following issues were observed:

- NFIs were distributed relatively late after the epidemic had reached its peak.
- In some cases, the distribution of NFIs was carried out in rural areas prior to urban areas even though urban areas had higher concentrations of cases,
- Distribution in urban areas was done via landlords and many tenants (often amongst the poorest and the most vulnerable) did not obtain the items they were entitled to.
- One agency in particular, failed to provide information about the distribution of NFIs and this was simply added onto an existing food distribution. In many cases buckets, intended for the chlorination of water were used to store the maize that had been distributed.
- Several apostolic church groups were also reluctant to use the water treatment tablets and ORS that had been distributed and a lack of dialogue with these groups had failed to identify this issue early enough to take remedial action.
- Care of the sick fell to women and it was reported that in affected families, women and girls were required to fetch water three times more than usual.
- In some areas, the authorities stopped income-generating activities in order to reduce transmission risks but this made women, who were the main participants in these activities, even more vulnerable.

A greater emphasis on discussion and dialogue with affected men and women would have helped to address some of these issues earlier and improved the effectiveness of the response. Dialogue is at the heart of accountable working.

Sources: IWSD Zimbabwe (2009) Evaluation of the WASH Response to the 2008-2009 Zimbabwe Cholera Epidemic and Preparedness Planning for Future Outbreaks, UNICEF Zimbabwe (2009) Evaluation of the blanket distribution of Non Food Items as part of the cholera response in Zimbabwe.

6

Staff Competencies and Attitudes

Staff Competencies: Competencies are the application of knowledge, skills and behaviours in performance. Accountability competencies should strengthen communication and include interpersonal skills, etc.

Staff Attitudes: In order to be accountable, staff members need to demonstrate an attitude of respect towards the people they are working with.

Communication, empathy and perspective

Working in an enabling way with individuals and communities has a lot to do with empathy and putting yourself in their shoes. Ask yourself 'What if that was me – how would I want to be treated, what would I want to know?' Of course people's ideas will be different but your job will be made easier if you try and see the issue of water, sanitation and hygiene through their eyes.

Put yourself in other people's shoes...



Different perspectives

We all have a particular way of looking at the world and will come at the world with a slightly different perspective. A simple exercise for getting people to understand this is shown in the picture (below). Ask each participant in turn to describe what they see. The four people will each see something different and yet the shape is the same.



(One person sees an 'm', another sees a '3' etc)

The Global Diversity Board Game

This game is an interactive training tool developed by the Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB) to explore issues of diversity. It was developed as part of a broader project on developing trust in diverse teams. The question cards cover 4 areas: demographics, jobs, policies and society and help to challenge preconceptions and can be downloaded at: www.ecbproject.org/resources/staff They can also be found on the minidisc.



Welcome to my culture: Awareness-Raising Training Exercise

This is a training exercise that has been used by OXFAM to raise awareness about different cultural issues: 'Explain to the participants that this is a respectful, non-judgemental exercise to explore each other's cultures. Four speakers are pre-selected by the facilitator – two national staff and two international. Each speaker takes it in turns to give an informal five minutes 'presentation' (story, role play, discussion etc.) on: 'What the culture is like where I come from'. National staff members could also be asked to develop a 'beginner's guide to local customs & manners'. (This can include greetings, appropriate dress etc).'

Source: Lucy Heaven, Oxfam GB

Examples of cultural, traditional or religious beliefs and needs that affect WASH programmes

- People may believe that particular water source types (springs which never dry up, high yielding wells etc) have supernatural powers. This may affect whether the existing users of the source will allow them to be further developed.
- In the Islamic faith, good hygiene is very important before prayer. Therefore wherever there is a Mosque, the provision of an adequate water source or supply will help the people who utilize the Mosque to be able to fulfill their religious needs effectively.
- For Muslim communities, latrines should be placed so that the user is not facing Mecca when he or she uses the latrine. An acceptable direction for the latrine should be confirmed through discussion with the users.
- There may be particular traditions that it is appropriate to follow when utilizing a new water source, such as the slaughtering of a goat before its use.
- Many people may not be used to the taste of chlorine and may reject its taste. Particular efforts to promote its use will be needed if this is the case, to ensure that they do not revert back to using unsafe sources.
- In Indonesia in response to the Tsunami in 2004, people who were used to pour-flush latrines rejected the use of direct drop latrines.
- Some cultures may find the handling of excreta offensive. In such cultures the use of ecological sanitation may not be appropriate as people will not want to handle the waste after it has decomposed and would not want it used on their fields as a fertilizer. It may also cause problems with finding people who are prepared to repair damaged latrines, or emptying the latrines.
- The caste system operates a strong hierarchy within some Asian societies. People from the lower castes are sometimes excluded from using the same water sources as people from the higher castes. Unless those from the lower castes are specifically targeted it is unlikely that they will be involved in discussions as lower caste people are usually not able to sit together with, or speak in the presence of higher caste people.

Adapted from: Oxfam Technical Brief: Vulnerability and Socio Cultural Considerations for Public Health Engineering in Emergencies

Active listening techniques

Types of Listening	Purpose	Possible Responses
Clarifying	1.To get at additional facts	'Can you clarify this?'
	2.To help the person explore all sides of a problem	'Do you mean this?' 'Is this the problem as you see it now?'
Restatement	1.To check out meaning and interpretation with the other	'As I understand it your plan is...'
	2.To show you are listening and have understood what the other has said	'Is this what you have decided to do....and the reasons are...'
Neutral	1.To convey that you are listening and interested	' I see' 'Mmm', 'Yes – go on' 'I understand'
	2.To encourage the person to continue talking	'That is a good point' 'You feel that....'
Reflective	1.To show that you understand how the other feels about what s(h)e is saying	'It was shocking as you saw it'
	2.To help the other person to evaluate and temper his or her own feelings as expressed by someone else	'You felt that you didn't get a fair hearing'
Summarising	1.To bring all the discussion into focus in terms of a summary	'These are the key ideas you have expressed...'
	2.To serve as a springboard to discussion of new aspects of the problem	'If I understand how you feel about the situation.....'

Adapted from Training for Transformation Book 2 Hope, A. and Timmel, S. ITDG Publishing reprinted 2007

Do's and Don'ts of listening

Do	Don't
Cultivate the ability to be silent where necessary	Feel you always have to say something
Show interest	Argue
Be understanding	Interrupt
Express empathy	Pass judgement too quickly or in advance
Listen for causes of the problem	Give advice unless it is requested
Help the speaker associate the problem with the cause	Jump to conclusions
Encourage the speaker to develop competence and motivation to solve the problem	Let the speaker's emotions react too directly on your own

Adapted from Training for Transformation Book 2 Hope, A. and Timmel, S. ITDG Publishing reprinted 2007



Employment of competent staff: HAP Benchmark 4

Benchmark Four The agency shall determine the competencies, attitudes and development needs of staff required to implement its humanitarian quality management system.

Taken from: HAP (2008) The Guide to the HAP Standard, Oxford: Oxfam Publishing

No	Requirement	No	Means of verification
4.1	The agency shall maintain a statement of the competencies (knowledge, skills and behaviours) required from its staff	1	Review Job Descriptions, recruitment files and vacancy notices
		2	Interview agency staff responsible for recruitment, assignment and training
4.2	The agency shall ensure that staff are aware of the humanitarian accountability framework and humanitarian quality management system, its relevance and importance and understand their responsibilities in its implementation.	1	Review induction and briefing procedures
		2	Interview staff to check awareness
4.3	The agency shall implement a system to review staff performance and competencies, including their knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes	1	Review the performance management system
		2	Review performance appraisal documents and other formal approaches
		3	Review follow up activities
		4	Interview staff to check the impact of appraisal and performance management
4.4	The agency shall enable continual staff development for more effective implementation of the humanitarian quality management system	1	Review staff training records
		2	Review other staff development approaches
		3	Review agency support for the continual improvement of its humanitarian partners

7

More Accountability Tools

This section contains some more tools that could help you to promote accountability within WASH programmes.

Holding focus group discussions

Often Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) concentrate solely on the technical aspects of a WASH response. You might want to consider adding some (probably not all) of these questions into your discussions with communities so that you learn more about how accountable your response is/was.

A really good way to start discussions (and orient them during the process) is the following statement:

“**YOU** are the experts on your own situation and **WE** have some expertise on WASH. Therefore we **ALL** need to work together to make a successful project.”

General

- What do YOU consider to be the good things about this WASH response?
- What do YOU consider to be the bad things about this WASH response?
- What do YOU consider to be the good or bad about the way that staff on this project have worked with you?
- What would YOU like to improve? Do you think that money for this WASH project has been spent wisely?
- Do people ever ask you for favours or for something in return for the aid or support they provide?

Feedback & complaints

- If one of the WASH project staff was rude to you what would you do?
- If you have/had a complaint to make about something/someone do you know what you can do?
- If you have/had a complaint to make about something/someone do you know who you should talk to?
- If you have made a complaint about this WASH project was this dealt with quickly and did anything change as a result?

Transparency

- Did the WASH project staff in this area introduce themselves to you? Do you know their names?
- What do you know about the WASH agency/ies working in this area?
- Do you know what you can expect from these WASH agencies and their staff? What? How should they behave in your community? Do they behave like this?
- Do you feel that you have been kept informed about this WASH project? Do you know what will be happening during this project? Do you know what you/your community involvement/contribution will be/has been?
- Do you have contact details for this/these WASH agency/ies? (Names, telephone numbers, office address/location, etc.)

Participation

- Do you feel that people have asked you what you think about how this WASH project should be carried out?
- Do you feel that you have influenced any of the decisions about the project e.g.
 - Do you feel that people have asked you what you think about how this WASH project should be carried out?
 - Do you feel that you have influenced any of the decisions about the project e.g.
 - The design of the facilities
 - Where water facilities are sited
 - Where latrines are sited
 - The contents of the hygiene kits
 - The identification and selection of committees or outreach workers etc?
- Have you also discussed and agreed your responsibilities in this project e.g.
 - Safeguarding WASH resources and materials
 - Taking responsibility for care and maintenance
 - Making by-laws etc?

Monitoring & evaluation

- How would you describe the outcome(s) of this WASH project? What difference will it make to you and your family?
- Have you been involved in the monitoring of this project?
- Have there been any outcomes of this project that were unexpected?
- Have there been outcomes of this project that are negative? Could these have been avoided?
- If we were to do a project like this again what would you recommend we did differently?

Example of a Memorandum of Understanding/Community agreement

AGREEMENT between (insert name of NGO/agency) and (insert name of Town/District/Village/Community/etc.) in regard to the provision of (insert what is being provide/done/etc.).

(NGO/Agency) ... intends to work in partnership with the above community in order to facilitate the provision of (a well/a handpump/hygiene promotion materials etc.). However (NGO/Agency etc.) can only facilitate the provision of services as described and will not/may not be responsible for providing (insert or delete as appropriate manual labour/locally available materials/payment for community members/long term maintenance/etc.). (NGO's/Agency's) involvement in the project will depend on the commitment of the community and both parties will be bound by the terms of the agreement

Before (NGO/Agency/etc.) can commence any work all ownership and rights of way issues must have been discussed and settled.

Under The Terms Of The Agreement (Name of Agency) Will Have The Following Responsibilities:

Information

(Agency name..) will provide the community with ongoing information about the project and any delays and will seek to involve the community as far as possible in making decisions about the project.

Labour

(Agency...) will be responsible for the execution of construction works and supervision of this work.

(Agency...) will provide training in basic maintenance of the hand pump for two caretakers chosen by the community. In addition (Agency...) will work with members of the community to ensure that people are aware of how they can best prevent contamination of water supplies.

Materials

(Agency...) will be responsible for providing all materials that are not available locally as specified in the community obligations above.

(Agency...) will notify the community that they are ready to start construction work at least two days in advance.

Example of a Memorandum of Understanding (Continued)

Training

(Agency...) will provide training in operation and maintenance of the facilities, managing water supplies and hygiene promotion.

Feedback and Suggestions

(Agency..) welcomes feedback and suggestions about the project and about how the work is carried out. All staff members and agency representatives are keen to answer any questions you may have about the work being undertaken.

Complaints

All project related complaints will be investigated by (Agency...) in a confidential, fair, impartial and timely manner, involving local people where appropriate. The person making the complaint will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of the complaint. The constructive support of all involved is requested in seeking solutions to any identified problems.

Under The Terms Of The Agreement The Community Will Have The Following Responsibilities:

Labour

The community will provide the necessary labour for the digging of the wells including the extraction and removal of soil and any other assistance that may be required. Seven labourers per day will be required.

Accommodation and Food

The community will provide the necessary locally available materials i.e. sand, gravel, sticks and clean water for the construction work.

The community will be responsible for project materials and will secure them as necessary. The materials must only be used for the purpose intended.

Safety

The community will provide accommodation and at least one meal per day for the technicians working on the well and will also provide food for community labourers. The community must make every effort to observe the safety regulations laid down by (Agency...) with regard to the digging of the well. First aid kits will be provided at every well site for minor injuries but if other medicines and medicaments are required, these must be provided by the community.

Example of a Memorandum of Understanding (Continued)

Maintenance

On completion of the work the community will immediately become responsible for the long-term maintenance of the wells and pumps. In order to minimise damage to the facilities and to minimise the risk of disease all community members will be responsible for day-to-day care and maintenance. The community will be required to finance the payment of spare parts where these become necessary.

The community is advised to set up a WASH or community development committee where one does not exist by electing representatives - 50% women and 50% men - which will include a chair person, secretary and treasurer and to develop a constitution relating to the management of the water system/sanitation facilities.

The community will identify two suitable people (one man and one woman) to be trained in basic maintenance of the hand pumps and the well.

Resolution of Conflict

Community leaders and community representatives are expected to take a lead in the constructive resolution of complaints and/or conflict related to the provision of WASH facilities and services.

Change of Circumstances

In case of the deterioration in the security situation or during the period of heaviest rains, (Agency...) reserves the right to cease all work. This work will be resumed as soon as conditions allow.

Both Parties reserve the right to sever relations if either side does not comply with the terms of the agreement or if materials supplied by either party are misappropriated.

Signed (Community Representative)

Signed: (Agency Representative)

Working with the community to formulate a community agreement/MoU

The suggestions below are only an example of how you might work with the community to formulate an agreement:

- Ensure you carry out an initial assessment to understand the situation as much as possible.
- Ensure that you discuss all of your agency's possible areas of responsibility and the possible areas of community responsibility with key stakeholders and community representatives individually or in small groups first (see example MoU for ideas of what might be included)
- Organise a community meeting or small group meetings with a variety of stakeholders (see working with groups) to discuss the details of an MoU and to agree on what should be included. In a well-organised community with strong leadership, community leaders can lead the process, with your input.
- Once agreement has been reached on the mutual responsibilities for the project finalise the community agreement and organise a 2nd community meeting where the community will be informed of the agreed responsibilities (provide a recap on the consultation process prior to this agreement) and where the agreement will be signed by both agency and community representatives.
- Ensure that both the community and your agency have an original signed copy of the agreement. Depending on the wishes of the community other photocopies can be made and posted at key venues.
- Make reference to the MoU and use the document as a discussion tool during the project to cross check and ensure that both parties are upholding the terms of the agreement.
- Discuss with male and female community leaders/representatives or key informants and gauge the reaction of the community in ongoing assessment/monitoring using focus group discussions.



Community Meeting. Photo: WASH aids visual library



Tsunami Response. Photo: WASH aids visual library

Template community leaflets

These leaflets provide examples of one way to inform communities about your agency, how you intend to work and what they can expect from you. In many communities there will be people who have limited literacy and leaflets may not be the ideal form of communication but the content of the leaflets could still be presented in community meetings.

There are two versions of the leaflet. The first leaflet has less information about how to make a complaint as it may take time to instigate a formal complaints mechanism and this could be distributed in the early stages of an emergency. Ideally, discussions would be held with those affected by the emergency to identify the preferred way for handling complaints and the leaflet would be pre-tested once the wording has been translated. Both Word and PDF versions of the leaflet are available on the website: www.humanitarianreform.org, at the back of this booklet and on the minidisc.

It may also be useful to provide more detailed information sheets about the actual work being undertaken for other stakeholders including local authorities and community leaders.

We strongly encourage you to use and adapt these leaflets for your agency, for your project and/or for the circumstances in which you are working.



Some ideas for training/familiarisation sessions you could run

Below are some examples of how you could raise awareness about forward accountability with WASH team members. Additional training session plans can also be found in the WASH Cluster Hygiene Promotion Training Package/CD and on the Humanitarian Reform website; www.humanitarianreform.org/Default.aspx?tabid=343

The ideas below cover some of the different accountability dimensions but should be made as context specific as possible.

1. Familiarisation with the WASH accountability checklist (all dimensions). You can find this checklist on the WASH Accountability minidisc and at the back of this booklet.

On 5 pieces of flipchart paper write 5 different questions that relate to forward accountability in the team's current programme. (You can use the WASH Accountability Checklist to do this if it helps.) Put these pieces of flipchart paper around the room. Ask participants to walk around the room and answer 'yes' or 'no' to each question about accountability in 'their' programme. Discuss the results in plenary. Ask participants to sit in pairs, give each pair a copy of the WASH Accountability Checklist and ask each pair to rank themselves and/or their programme. Invite the group to discuss the results in plenary, identifying any changes that can be made and how these will be achieved.

2. Increasing information provision/exchange (Transparency)

Ask the group to brainstorm questions that people in the communities they work with have wanted answers to. Then ask them to list the answers that they gave. Ask the group to consider the answers given – Are they good enough? How could they be improved? (Alternatively you could use the questions and answers cards to be found on the WASH Accountability minidisc called "Training Ideas; Questions and Answers".)

Provide your group with the "Need to Know" handout from the ECB Good Enough Guide (on the minidisc). Divide participants into pairs and ask them to role play the questions and answers. Invite one or two pairs to demonstrate an example of good and bad information provision. Remember that the answers need to be understood by community members so jargon and acronyms must be avoided! Ask the pairs to estimate how many of the questions on the "Need to Know" list they are confident they could answer correctly. Ask them what they will do about the questions they don't know the answers to?

3. Using the case Studies (all dimensions)

Divide participants into four groups and give each group one of the 'accountability dimensions' described in this booklet. Ask the groups to read through the case studies/best practice for 'their' dimension and consider how they might apply or adapt the lessons learnt to their current context. Ask each group to compile a presentation on their dimension in whatever format they want – role-play, colourful poster, video, radio spot, song, dance, etc.

4. Assessing accountability in your project (all dimensions)

Ask the participants to think about how they might carry out an 'accountability audit' to assess the levels of forward accountability in their programme. Divide the participants into four groups and ask them to list 3 questions they would want to ask. Also ask them who they would want to ask these questions to in order to get a balanced and representative view of how accountable their programme is to those it is seeking to help. Ask each group to record their questions on small cards (one question per card) and then ask each group in turn to put their questions up on the wall/piece of flipchart paper. As the questions are being put up get the participants to try to group similar questions together.

Give the participants a copy of the guidance on holding Focus Group Discussions (on page 35 in this booklet) to see if their questions are similar. Discuss the similarities and differences and decide on a final set of questions that the group would like to ask and who they will ask.

Arrange a field trip so that the groups can assess their programmes and ensure that time is made to discuss the results and make suggestions/plans for improvement where necessary.

5. Making a complaint (feedback and complaints)

Ask the participants to think about an example of when they have made, or wanted to make, a complaint e.g. the state of public toilets, bad service or food in a restaurant or unhelpful/rude staff in a bank or shop. What happened and how was the complaint dealt with – or how would they have liked the complaint dealt with?

Ask them to list good practice and poor practice in dealing with a complaint. How can participants ensure that affected members of the community can give feedback or make a complaint? Is there a formal or informal feedback and complaints mechanism in place? How could one be initiated? (See information on Feedback and Complaints on page 15 in this booklet and/or the Good Enough Guide on the minidisc.)

Ask the group to brainstorm what the barriers affected communities might face when making complaints in their programmes? Then draw up a list of actions/changes that would mean these barriers could be overcome. How many of these actions could be incorporated into the current programme?

Working with groups

- Try to ensure that focus group discussions are arranged into peer groups e.g. women in a certain age range or primary school girls etc. Many people may be reluctant to speak out in large meetings or in meetings with elders or the opposite sex.
- In large meetings, break out groups with one spokesperson reporting back are also a way to ensure that people who are reluctant to talk have a chance to air their views.
- Try not to let one person dominate – if they do, say something like ‘you have so much to contribute that I would like to meet with you afterwards’ and stress that you want to hear from other people also but let them know that any decisions cannot be made unilaterally and that the purpose of the large meetings is to get people to discuss different points of view.
- Participation is not about giving people everything they ask for but about entering into dialogue and giving people increasing opportunity to make decisions for themselves.
- Do not simply expect people to come up with suggestions about the design of toilets or the shape of the project as they may need to be provided with options and the pros and cons of these options first. If people only eat rice and beans, they may not know about pineapples and mangos so give people some alternatives and use pictures or models to ensure that people understand.
- Everyone may want piped water to their homes but often this is not feasible. The reasons why may need to be discussed with people if this is what they request. For example such systems may not be sustainable or there may not be enough funding available etc.
- Where communities insist on certain facilities then pilot projects may be a way around this – making it clear that further work would depend on the success of the pilot. Visits to areas where such projects have not worked may help community leaders and representatives to identify the reasons for failure and address these in their pilot.



How to hold a public meeting

- Prior to the meeting, discuss and agree the best time and place to hold this with a variety of key informants so that the meeting is accessible to men and women at a time that is convenient to all, e.g. during the day people may be working or certain times may not be convenient for women etc.
- Advertise the meeting, time and place and the reason for the meeting. Use a variety of means e.g. radio, leaflets, posters etc.
- Prepare yourself in advance. Put yourself in the shoes of the people attending and ask yourself what will they want to know. Think about the type of questions people might ask you and think of how you might answer these questions.
- If interpretation is needed be sure to brief your interpreter beforehand so they are familiar with the vocabulary that you might use.
- Arrive on time (even if others don't).
- Take some support with you! It is good to have at least 2 people to help field questions.
- Ensure you have an agenda and that people are aware of this. Designate someone as the chair and ensure that they keep people on track.



Example of WASH accountability action plan (Oxfam Zimbabwe 2009)

Indicators	Expected Result	Activities	Resources Required	Responsibility
<p>% of beneficiaries demonstrating knowledge on essential programming information</p>	<p>1. Beneficiaries demonstrate knowledge on programming information.</p>	<p>During volunteer training sessions and beneficiary distributions, incorporate sessions to raise awareness on humanitarian standards that OGB subscribe to, project operations, OGB values and beliefs and OGB contact details Distribution of leaflets and other IEC materials for communication. e.g. volunteers should have these during HH visits - Establish various communication channels during PHP and PHE activities such as verbal during meetings, suggestion boxes, reports, or through beneficiary focal persons/team leaders. Display organisational logos on vehicles, T-shirts or hats. Inform beneficiaries about their entitlements</p>	<p>IEC material for communication Help desks during distributions</p>	<p>PHP officer Gender officer M&E officer</p>
<p>=# of men, women and representation of vulnerable people, participating in decision making throughout the project cycle</p>	<p>2. Beneficiaries participate in decision making throughout the project cycle.</p>	<p>Community based targeting and monitoring Establishing beneficiary committees with a clear role in decision making Conducting household and community consultations during assessments, surveys or process monitoring.</p>	<p>Vehicle Note books and pens. Documents such as checklists to guide consultations.</p>	<p>M&E officer Gender officer PHP officers</p>
<p># of complaints/ feedback and response mechanisms functional for beneficiaries in all operational areas</p>	<p>3. Complaints/ feedback and response mechanisms functional for beneficiaries in all operational areas.</p>	<p>Liaise with communities to identify complaints and response mechanisms. Inform beneficiaries of complaints mechanisms established. Systematically record complaints and responses given. Conduct feedback sessions with beneficiaries and community representatives</p>	<p>Suggestion boxes where applicable Note books and pens Com+ter</p>	<p>M&E officer PHP officers</p>
<p># of OGB staff and volunteers demonstrating knowledge of code of conduct. # of beneficiaries reporting good conduct of OGB staff</p>	<p>4. OGB, partner staff and volunteers interact with beneficiaries in a respectful way.</p>	<p>All OGB staff sign the Code of conduct during the induction period. Staff training on sexual exploitation and abuse issue and other humanitarian standards Partner staff and temporary workers are acquainted with the OGB's Code of Conduct and humanitarian standards to observe</p>	<p>Training venue Flip charts LCD & laptop Com+ter</p>	<p>HR manager M&E officer PHP officers</p>

8

Other Points to Consider

This section contains additional information on vulnerability and promoting participation as a means to combat corruption – these are important issues for the WASH sector.

Vulnerability

Accountable working requires an understanding of the group or community that you are working with and especially an understanding of who might be vulnerable. For example, not all women and not all single headed households will be vulnerable as many may have supportive networks of friends and family or financial resources they can draw on in times of need. Vulnerability is context and person specific and can take many forms. Often the factors that underpin vulnerability are interlinked:

*“It is the overlapping and compound factors that make individuals from within the categories vulnerable. For example, many people with disabilities are old; many of the most vulnerable or marginalized women are older women and in particular widows. Grandparents play a pivotal and increasing role caring for their grandchildren – in particular those orphaned as a result of HIV and skipped generation households comprising children and older people face particular challenges”
(Jo Wells: HelpAge International: Personal Communication).*

Vulnerability can depend on medical, social or environmental factors and therefore different clusters might target different groups as vulnerable at a given time. For example pregnant women and children under five are usually more vulnerable to malaria and other diseases than others in the community and health programmes will often target these groups. However, the women and children in these groups will not necessarily always be poor or socially vulnerable and may not automatically fall into the target group for other assistance.

In some disasters certain livelihood groups may be more vulnerable than others such as sedentary farmers during a drought or groups who have only one main form of income such as fishing may no longer be able to cope if their boats or nets are destroyed following a tsunami or cyclone. There is often an inter relationship between the different types of vulnerability but this can only be understood by assessing each situation.

The key objective in most WASH programmes is to protect or prevent further deterioration in public health by ensuring people's capacity to maintain or improve their hygiene. Following a disaster or conflict everyone may become more vulnerable to disease if normal systems have become disrupted and in the interests of public health, interventions that target all will be required.

“Generally older people are likely to be disproportionately vulnerable during disasters because they are more likely to have chronic illnesses, functional limitations and sensory, physical and cognitive disabilities than are those of younger age. In particular disasters such as floods or earthquakes, where the ability to move quickly can affect survival, the numbers of older people affected are disproportionately high. There is a growing volume of data on older people's health issues and experiences in emergencies that point to a range of problems around excess mortality and morbidity, access to and appropriateness of relief and rehabilitation services, qualifications and experience of staff” (Jo Wells: HelpAge International: Personal Communication).

However, some people will be more vulnerable than others and limited resources might mean that aid will sometimes need to be targeted at particular groups and decisions will have to be made by weighing up the pros and cons of each. For example in the case of NFIs, some people may be able to afford to purchase hygiene items but a blanket distribution of soap may be easier to manage and may stimulate increased use which will help to protect the health of the public as a whole.



Older people are likely to be disproportionately vulnerable during disasters.

WASH sector corruption risks *(Adapted from Corruption Risk Map TI and ODI 2006)*

Activity	Risk	Mitigation Measures involving affected community
Procurement of materials	Prices artificially raised Sub standard materials purchased Forged tenders or quotes Quotes leaked to competing suppliers	Community members involved in decision making Decision on supplier made by more than one member of staff and based on community input
Transportation of water/goods	Water tanker drivers do not deliver agreed amount of water. Materials misappropriated en route	Use token/signed delivery system that community committee controls Logistics systems involve communities.
Asset Control	Materials misappropriated by staff and/or community members	Involve rotating community committee in overseeing materials Include this in Community agreement
Siting of facilities	Facilities sited according to wishes of most powerful and most vulnerable denied access or have limited access	Involve community members including the most vulnerable
Construction of WASH facilities	Materials misappropriated by staff and/or community members Cement diluted	Community members involved in taking responsibility for materials
Contracting work to commercial company	Ambiguities in the contract may be exploited by the contractor Specifications and/or standards are not adhered to and are not noticed prior to payment being made Sub-standard materials are used	Closer monitoring of work by experienced engineers and overseen by community committees Carry out work in house Ongoing feedback and complaints mechanism in place
Distribution of hygiene kits	Favours demanded in return for registration or provision Selection of beneficiaries not transparent	Ensure people know of entitlements Use committees to help identify beneficiaries Post list of beneficiaries in a public place Ensure system for complaints accessible to all
Maintenance of facilities	Fuel required to run pumps is misappropriated	Involve rotating community committee in overseeing fuel supply and maintenance
Recruitment of staff	Nepotism – clear and transparent procedures are not used in the interest of rapid scaling up Expatriate workers may not be familiar with local context and corruption risks	Transparent job descriptions and advertising & recruitment procedures open to affected and host community

The power of participation

Taken from: Water Integrity Network (WIN): (2008) Advocating for Integrity in the Water Sector

Participation is a powerful mechanism for reducing undue influence and capture of a sector by one or more particular actor(s). Informed and knowledgeable participation in decision-making processes is one of the most powerful anti-corruption tools there is. Citizen engagement forces public and private sector counterparts to behave with integrity, and be more transparent and accountable in their actions. Taking various forms, participation seems to be the one tool that is common to anti-corruption work in all the subsectors. Some examples are:

In hydropower

- Participation in project selection stage ensures that assessment of available options can counter the corruption-driven bias towards larger projects.
- Revenue sharing: a system where local communities receive a monetary share of project revenues when they have to give up their land or natural resources can correct feelings of inequity.
- Civil society organisations and community participation can provide important additional checks and balances through independent monitoring and mobilising in hydropower decision-making.

In water and sanitation

- Participation in auditing, environmental pollution mapping and performance monitoring of water utilities creates checks and balances to see whether contracts have been fulfilled and violators punished.
- Service providers can promote codes of conduct and citizen charters as a means of improving the professionalism and integrity of their operations.
- Citizens can provide essential input to water policies and check the performance of both private and public water utilities. These can range from social contracts between providers and citizens, to social scorecards, citizen surveys and social audits.
- Greater public participation and transparency in budget-setting activities can contribute to a more equitable distribution of resources for the poor.



*Water treatment and distribution.
Photo: WASH visual aids library*

In water resources management

- Participation in infrastructure planning or environmental impact assessments gives civil society stakeholders a platform for holding decision-makers accountable for extending the benefits of new water abstraction sources or dams to everyone.
- Water development and management should be based on a participatory, public approach, involving users, planners and policy-makers.
- Self-help groups made up of local groups and villagers result in equitable and sustainable water sharing.
- The public is needed to vote corrupt politicians out of office, to demand greater accountability and becoming involved in environmental monitoring and protection.
- Donors and international financial institutions can do their share by adhering to participative consultation for WRM projects they finance and commission.

In irrigation

- Community involvement in selecting the sites of rural wells and managing irrigation systems helps to make certain that small landholders and poor villagers are not left out in accessing water services.
- Drafting mandatory rules for user associations, including provisions for gender-sensitive participation and auditing procedures, can ensure that farmers have some form of redress and control over association executives to stop corrupt practices.
- Rotating tasks ensures that, over time, everyone becomes familiar with all tasks in an irrigation system and prevents one person from gaining specialised knowledge, thus reducing corruption risks.
- Social audits can expose and correct corrupt practices in irrigation systems through collective, community-based oversight.



Well construction. Photo: WASH visual aids library

9

The WASH Accountability Quiz

How much have you learned? This useful quiz will help you consolidate everything you've read. Grab a pen and put yourself to the test!

1. What is a Code of Conduct and have you signed one?
2. List 6 ways to promote the participation of the affected community in a WASH project.
3. What kinds of corruption risks might there be when distributing hygiene kits?
4. What are your obligations to the community when working on a WASH project?
5. List the dimensions of accountability
6. For each accountability dimension provide an example of specific actions you can take to ensure your WASH project meets accountable standards.
7. What can the community expect from YOU in terms of accountable behaviour?
8. What is the WASH Performance Review Tool?
9. Describe a training activity you could do to promote understanding of the term Transparency.
10. What is a Community Agreement?
11. In a small community meeting, how could you make sure that everyone had a chance to talk?
12. Describe the 'ten seed technique'. How and when might you use it?
13. Agency Branding should be used:
 - a. Always and without reservation
 - b. With care
 - c. On all WASH materials
 - d. Only at the beginning of an emergency
14. What is a complaints mechanism?
15. Accountability is:
 - a. An obstacle to be overcome
 - b. An approach to budgeting
 - c. A new approach to working with communities
 - d. A way to improve the quality of a WASH programme or project

All of the answers can be found in this booklet. Multiple choice answers: 13; b and d, 15; d

References and resources

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WASH Cluster (2009) Final Draft Report, Accountability in the WASH Cluster, WASH Accountability Project. www.humanitarianreform.org/Default.aspx?tabid=740

Community Management

McSorley, B (2009) Toolkit for Training Water Management Committees in Kenya (available on CD/website)

Example Leaflets (provided to communities)

www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/drc-uganda-complaints-leaflet.pdf

www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/muslim-aid-bangladesh-information-leaflet-jan-2008.pdf

Film/Videos

Conversation (A video about accountability during the response to Hurricane Stan in South America in 2005)

www.sphereproject.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=220&Itemid=233

Focus Group Discussion Guides

www.listenfirst.org

www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/guidance-notes-for-focus-group-discussions-on-accountability,-developed-by-hap-in-zimbabwe.pdf

Training Materials

[www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/accountability-learning-materials-\(updated-07-2006\).pdf](http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/accountability-learning-materials-(updated-07-2006).pdf)

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Websites

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Humanitarian Accountability Partnership: www.hapinternational.org

Emergency Capacity Building Project: www.ecbproject.org

ALNAP: www.alnap.org

Acknowledgements

The Global WASH Cluster, led by UNICEF was established as part of the international humanitarian reform programme, and provides an open, formal platform for all emergency WASH actors to work together.

This collection of resources has been compiled by the WASH Cluster Accountability Project

Produced by Oxfam GB on behalf of the Global WASH Cluster, with support from members of the WASH Cluster Accountability Project Steering group: Oxfam, CARE, World Vision, IRC and Tearfund.

Compiled by Suzanne Ferron

Cover illustration and community leaflets by Bob Linney, Healthimages

Layout and Design: Oxfam GB

November 2009

Published by the Global WASH Cluster.

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