

# Improving Impact: Do Accountability Mechanisms Deliver Results?

A joint research project by Christian Aid, Save the Children, Humanitarian Accountability Partnership.

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# Outline

- What motivated the research
- Agencies came together
- Research methodology
  - 2 stage research process
  - Research methods
- Key Findings
- What this has meant for CA

# What motivated the research?

- ▶ Whilst commitment to accountability in Humanitarian Aid recognises moral and practical rationale – there is little evidence
- ▶ Aimed to document whether accountability practices improve the quality of programmes
- ▶ The key question was: *What does accountability contribute to quality and impact?*

# Agencies came together

- Initiative of HAP peer-learning group
  - *15 agencies*
- Literature review of existing case studies and research from 15 agencies
- 2 case studies piloting the new research methodology in Kenya and Myanmar.

# Case studies

- Kenya – Ukamba Christian Community Services (UCCS) & CA, DFID-funded.
  - Makueni County in lower Eastern Kenya.
  - Using PVCA to identify and respond to risks & impediments to resilient sustainable livelihoods.
- Myanmar – SCF, USAID-funded.
  - Meiktila and Kyaukpadaung townships.
  - Child protection and non-formal education, and building good governance by supporting CBOs to monitor, respond to and prevent child rights violations.

# Research methodology - cases

Research team: International consultant (AF), local consultants (Myanmar, Kenya), CA/ SCF staff

➤ Focused on 3 benchmarks from HAP standard:

- Information Sharing
- Participation
- Complaints mechanisms

Together they were considered to form an 'accountability mechanism'.

## 2 stage research process

**Stage 1:** Needed to assess how well the accountability mechanism works in a given target community, against the HAP standard.

Used the *Listen First methodology* to grade mechanisms as basic, intermediate or mature. The assumption was that intermediate or mature mechanisms would contribute more to programme quality.

## 2 Stage research process

**Stage 2:** Employed participatory research methods to measure how well the accountability mechanisms delivered against the DAC criteria:

*Relevance; effectiveness; efficiency; sustainability .*

Based on these we then looked at the overall *impact*



# Research methods:

- Score cards/ ranking exercises
- Focus group discussions (independent researcher, local facilitator)
- Separate male and female groups
- Separate groups for children

# Findings - Relevance

- Case studies emphasized that participation strengthened targeting - *Quality discussions with communities helped identify and target the most vulnerable*
- Documents submitted by HAP peer-learning group for the literature review – *identified several instances where complaints mechanisms highlighted errors of inclusion or exclusion and thereby improved targeting.*

# Findings - Effectiveness

Information sharing and participation meant that communities designed and implemented projects. Complaints mechanisms meant that communities were able to redress problems.

- This meant that there was more trust and ownership of projects and communities felt more involved.
- Communities perceptions were that projects were more effective.

# Findings - Efficiency

Some evidence in literature review of how accountability improved cost effectiveness. Limited evidence from field.

- Myanmar: Examples of procurement of timber through local sources
- Kenya: Communities oversaw the monitoring of activities – contractors being more closely managed – better efficiency

# Findings - Sustainability

- All 3 areas/benchmarks meant the projects were more relevant and communities had greater ownership
- Greater ownership meant they were more passionate about working with the agencies to sustain the projects

# Findings – Overall impact

Several examples where accountability mechanisms have influenced communities in ways that went beyond the expected outcomes of the project.

- Provision of info, participation, complaints mechanisms – influenced community decision-making more broadly.
- Examples of how communities had asserted their rights elsewhere from other duty bearers – local bank.

# What has this meant for Christian Aid?

We knew that accountability was the right thing to do. And we believed it improved programmes.

Now:

- We have a stronger evidence base to show that accountability improves quality.
- We are using this to gain a renewed commitment from our managers, staff and partners to implementing accountability.