Accountability to affected populations
ShelterCluster.Org
Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter

Defining accountability

"The process through which an organisation makes a commitment to respond to and balance the needs of stakeholders in its decision-making processes and activities, and delivers against this commitment."

ECB project

"The responsible use of power"

Humanitarian Accountability
Partnership International (HAP)

This document is aimed at shelter cluster coordination teams and country cluster members to highlight issues in accountability to affected populations.

It is based on the five key elements which were adopted by the IASC in their Operational Framework for Accountability to Affected Populations

This document is based upon: *"Shelter Accountability Resources: A guide to improving accountability to disaster-affected populations during the implementation of humanitarian shelter programmes."*
Further reading on accountability and communications with affected populations can be found on the next page.

Shelter Cluster and accountability to affected populations

Accountability for the implementation of shelter programs lies with cluster members, not the cluster team members themselves. For example, program monitoring and complaint mechanisms should be part of shelter programmes of cluster members. However, the coordination team should be accountable to cluster members, promoting transparency and positive coordination.

Shelter clusters should advocate for:
• Inter-sectoral messaging with affected populations
• Cluster members seeing accountability as being to all affected populations, not just those narrowly defined within specific projects
• Area coverage: ensuring that gaps are not influenced by pressures other than need.

Resources required to ensure accountability

Being accountable within shelter projects does not usually require extensive additional resources. Generally, providing basic training to staff on what accountability is, and how it should be incorporated into the projects should be sufficient. Ensure that staff are allocated time during their field visits to gather opinions from affected populations, and to report back on what they find.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	**Value accountability throughout the shelter cluster** • Integrate accountability into job descriptions and TORs. • Integrate accountability into strategies. • Monitor cluster members using performance indicators that include accountability. • Include accountability in partnership agreements.
TRANSPARENCY	**Share information with all stakeholders** • Make information accessible to cluster members and affected populations (e.g. formats, language). • Establish a transparent process for decisions surrounding cluster funds. • Regularly and systematically update information. • Ensure that the roles of the cluster leads and members are clearly understood. • Ensure that cluster members are able to request and receive further information.
FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS	**A feedback and complaints system is in place** • Allow stakeholders to choose how they provide input on different topics. • Communicate the system to all stakeholders. Ensure that they know how to register complaints . • Ensure that all complaints investigated promptly and that that a response is given. • Ensure that there is a mechanism in place for escalating serious complaints, such as abuse of power or sexual exploitation. • Ensure that projects and organisations learn from complaints and make resulting improvements.
PARTICIPATION	**Affected populations take a lead in making decisions, with support from organisational experts** • Affected population able to lead decision-making. • The work reflects the priorities and needs of the poorest and most marginalised populations. • Conflicts between different interest groups identified and mitigated.
DESIGN, MONITORING AND EVALUATION	**Accountability is integrated throughout the project cycle** • During needs assessment affected populations are consulted about what their priorities are. • Affected populations are given the opportunity to contribute to the design of the intervention. • All stakeholders given the opportunity to participate in the monitoring and evaluation processes. • Information gathered is used to regularly inform and improve the programme. • Evaluate programmes and measure their impact when they are complete.

This page includes resources to help shelter agencies communicate shelter issues more easily to the affected population.

Communication in this context means multi-directional communication; from agencies to affected people and back.

Shelter Specific

Beneficiary Communications Guide for the Shelter Cluster
Introduction into Beneficiary Communication, developed for the Shelter Cluster

Communication in post-disaster reconstruction
This is a chapter from "Safer Homes, Stronger Communities: A Handbook for Reconstructing after Natural Disasters" published by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery. It contains shelter-related case studies on communication.

Shelter Accountability Resources - A guide to improving accountability to disaster-affected populations during the implementation of humanitarian shelter programmes
The tools and examples included in this document can help humanitarians plan, implement and monitor shelter projects and programs in a way that is accountable to disaster-affected populations.

General

CDAC-Network
The CDAC-Network has created an online resource library with reports, case studies, lessons learned and much more related to communication with disaster affected communities (CDAC). It is highly recommended that you take advantage of this resource:
http://www.cdacnetwork.org/resources

Hands-on

CRS - Communication Toolbox
Practical guide for program managers to improve communication with participants and community members.

Complaints Mechanism Handbook
Written by DRC, this handbook explains how to set up and manage a complaints mechanism

Diagnostics tools for communication with affected communities
The "Info as Aid"-Project has created a number of practical tools that can help you assess what kind of information affected people are looking for and what media you should use to reach them-

Best Practice and Lessons Learned in Communication with Disaster Affected Communities: Haiti 2010
Practical recommendations for beneficiary communication based on experiences gained in Haiti by multiple agencies.

Beneficiary Communications Evaluation - Haiti Earthquake Operation 2011
An IFRC evaluation of the organization's beneficiary communications programme.

High-Level

Still left in the dark? How people in emergencies use communication to survive – and how humanitarian agencies can help
Report by BBC Media Action that provides a broad overview of the topic. Potentially useful when lobbying for support within the organization.

Operational Framework for Ensuring Accountability to Affected Populations in Humanitarian Emergencies
The Operational Framework focuses on clarifying roles and responsibilities of individual agencies, clusters, Humanitarian Country Teams and other international actors in their accountability to affected populations.

Beneficiary feedback mechanisms: a literature review
Study of different beneficiary feedback mechanisms based on secondary data.

Communicating with beneficiaries in emergencies: How can international aid organisations improve?
Master thesis written in 2008 that looks at both communication and accountability.