Putting beneficiaries in the driver’s seat of humanitarian action

What is AAP?

Accountability to affected populations (AAP) is about humanitarian agencies enhancing the effectiveness of their work by systematically engaging aid recipients in the decisions that affect their lives. It means giving people affected by humanitarian crises a ‘voice’ in the design and implementation of programmes intended to benefit them.

This theme is an integral part of the UN’s Transformative Agenda and talk of making accountability to affected populations is now ubiquitous in the humanitarian space. However, practical, systematic methods to capture the beneficiary perspective and manage to it have been slow to emerge.

The main focus has been on standards, codes of conduct, and commitments like those from the IASC. These initiatives are important in setting targets and underlining the salience of accountability. So far, however, too little attention has been paid to ensuring that the precepts of accountability are respected on the ground and tools to surface the perspective of the affected people are used to give them a bigger say.

Does AAP make a difference?

One reason for the slow pick up is a lack of concrete evidence demonstrating what many people believe is the case: that AAP makes a difference in terms of impact and outcomes. The ECOSOC session will examine recent efforts to demonstrate the utility of incorporating beneficiary feedback in humanitarian programmes. These include an important study by CDA/ALNAP on the impact of a range of accountability tools and findings from the Ground Truth pilots now underway in Haiti and Pakistan.

Objectives of the session:

- Moving from the “what” of AAP to the “how” -- Does the evidence suggest that humanitarian programs informed by affected populations are more likely to yield durable results?
- Presenting case studies on the usefulness of practical feedback tools now being tested and case studies of a range of approaches to AAP -- What tools are available and how successful are they?
- Scaling-up AAP – What are the bottlenecks and opportunities to AAP?

Participants

- Dr. Jemila Mahmood, Chief of the WHS Secretariat, OCHA
- Florika Fink-Hooijer, Director Strategy, Coordination and Inter- institutional Relations, DG ECHO
- Miriam Warui, project Officer, Quality and Accountability, CARE International
- John Mitchell, Director, ALNAP
- Nick Van Praag, Director of Ground Truth
Format of the Side Event

The side event format will be a traditional panel-type with humanitarian experts, practitioners and donors pulling together the pieces of what for too long has been a not very coherent puzzle.

Scaling cooperation among existing AAP initiatives.

The range of accountability initiatives obscures the fact that most of the pieces of the accountability puzzle now exist. The challenge is to demonstrate how the different elements complement one another and improve humanitarian outcomes. A sub-set of the quality and accountability community (HAP, CDAC Network, CDA and Ground Truth) are now actively talking about how, by combining their skills and methodologies, they can speed up the slowly evolving humanitarian architecture.

The goal of this still tentative collaboration is to show how the pieces of the puzzle fit together and clarify the logic of the evolving AAP system, which has grown up piecemeal over the past two decades, so as to demonstrate how the system can deliver on its promise. It is a shift from 'pointillism' to the big picture.

Incentives and the role of donors

Even if we have a serviceable set of tools, we still lack the kind of incentives necessary to drive continuous improvement in response to beneficiary inputs. Most of the supply side initiatives are voluntary and many agencies in the humanitarian system, notably the UN, insist that their ‘mandates’ trump non-binding regulatory frameworks.

Of particular note is the shift on the part of some donors towards stipulations that collecting data from and responding to the beneficiary perspective is no longer optional.

Key Messages:
- Increasing evidence that incorporating beneficiary feedback improves humanitarian effectiveness
- It is time to move from voicing good intentions to consistently practicing AAP in all humanitarian agencies
- Practical tools are essential for aid agencies to understand the beneficiary perspective and integrate it into the implementation of their programs.
- Incentives are key if aid organizations are to use the tools in a systematic and rigorous way.

Information

http://www.groundtruthsolutions.org

Event organisers

The German Federal Foreign Assistance Office for Humanitarian aid http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Aussenpolitik/HumanitaereHilfe/Uebersicht_node.html

The Humanitarian Aid of the Swiss Confederation is a Division of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) within the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA).
http://www.sdc.admin.ch/en/Home/Activities/Humanitarian_Aid