

Enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of Food Security Cluster Coordination

**Lesson: Accountability to affected
populations, centrality of protection,
gender and age, and PSEA**

Text-only version

In partnership with:



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Learning objectives

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- define what "accountability to affected populations" means in a humanitarian context;
- explain the links between mainstreaming gender, age, centrality of protection, gender-based violence (GBV), protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), and accountability to affected populations (AAP); and
- describe some of the tools produced by different initiatives in order to enhance accountability of their work.

Introduction

This lesson will highlight the importance of accountability for populations affected by humanitarian crises – women, men, girls and boys of all ages and backgrounds – as well as for other stakeholders. It will also show the linkages between accountability to affected populations (AAP) and the mainstreaming of gender, age and the centrality of protection, including GBV, disability and PSEA

Accountability to affected populations

Why is accountability important to people – women, men, girls and boys of all ages and backgrounds – affected by humanitarian crises?

Accountability to affected populations is important because **it forms the heart and the very basis of the way in which all actors should be working as humanitarians**. In the chaos and extreme pressure of a humanitarian response, the differentiated needs of affected people can sometimes slip from the top of the agenda.

It is important to remember at all times that conflicts and natural disasters affect women, girls, boys and men of all ages differently.



AAP focuses on the rights, dignity and safety of all segments of an affected community, identifying the capacities, aspirations, vulnerabilities and unique needs by gender, age, and diversity groups, as they evolve over time.

What is accountability to affected populations?

Accountability to affected populations is an active commitment to use power responsibly by **taking account** of, **giving account** to, and **being held to account** by the people who humanitarian organizations seek to assist.

It's an active commitment to take account of, giving account to, being held to account the humanitarian organizations seek to assist.

Taking account, giving account and being held to account is critical at the **level of individual agencies**, but is also crucial at the **collective level**, and for the Humanitarian Country Team and Clusters, including the Food Security Cluster. While many organizations are now putting in place individual feedback systems, innovative approaches to joint feedback mechanisms can reinforce transparency and mutual accountability, and have a positive impact.

Giving account is about the sharing of information in an effective and transparent way across communities. This can include, for instance, information about agencies and their roles and responsibilities, about entitlements and targeting criteria, as well as the reasons why these might change. It may also include information about how to provide feedback, or how to make complaints. Information needs to be shared in such a way that communities can actually understand it, be empowered by it and become active participants in the response. The Humanitarian Country Team should agree on a strategy to share information, so as to streamline communication and ensure coherence of messaging.

Being held to account means ensuring that communities have the opportunity to assess and, where feasible, alter or sanction humanitarian actors' actions. Communities are rarely in a position to have the agency or power to select the organizations that will support them, or choose the type of support they will receive, at least initially. Their view on the appropriateness and quality of the service or response should be sought consistently. Being accountable involves consulting communities on what they think about the quality of the response by humanitarian actors - at the individual agency and collective level. Communities being assisted should be involved in the monitoring of programmes, and their opinions on the success and impact of a humanitarian intervention should be central to any evaluation.

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The **IASC AAP Operational Framework (2013)** was designed to assist agencies, both individually and in groups, to find practical entry points for improving accountability to affected populations. For each objective, it highlights the relevant phase of the humanitarian programme cycle (HPC) responsibilities, and suggested indicators, means of verification, risks and additional tools.

Humanitarian organizations engaged in a response are expected to listen to, engage with and communicate transparently with affected populations, throughout all phases of the humanitarian programme cycle (HPC).

The cluster system acknowledges that affected people must always be at the centre throughout the humanitarian programme cycle. It is committed to upholding this principle, despite the high stress and pressured environment of a humanitarian response. To help ensure that the cluster system actively supports a **people centred approach**, a series of commitments has been drawn up.

Accountability is one of the three pillars of the Transformative Agenda, and the IASC Principals committed to creating a system-wide "culture of accountability" by endorsing these 5 commitments:

1. **Leadership/governance**

Demonstrate commitment to providing accountability to affected populations, by ensuring that feedback and accountability mechanisms are integrated into country strategies, programme proposals, monitoring and evaluation, recruitment, staff inductions, training, performance management and partnership agreements, and are highlighted in reporting.

2. **Transparency**

Provide accessible and timely information to affected populations on organizational procedures, structures and processes that affect them, so as to ensure that they can make informed decisions and choices.

3. **Feedback and complaints**

Actively seek the views of affected populations to improve policy and practice in programming, ensuring that feedback and complaints mechanisms are streamlined, appropriate and robust enough to handle

(communicate, receive, process, respond to and learn from) complaints about breaches in policy and stakeholder dissatisfaction.

4. Participation

Enable affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them through the establishment of clear guidelines and practices to engage them appropriately. Ensure that the most marginalized and affected are represented and have influence.

5. Design, monitoring and evaluation

Design, monitor and evaluate the goals and objectives of programmes, taking care to involve affected populations. Feed learning back into the organization on an ongoing basis and report on results of the process. All humanitarian actors involved in a response should constantly monitor its quality, and report failures or problems of delivery.

Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)

Sexual exploitation and abuse by anyone associated with the provision of aid constitutes the **most serious breach of accountability**. Populations should be able to make complaints and call for appropriate protection measures against such abuse, as well as be informed of the results of investigations into their complaints.

What is the link between accountability and PSEA?

Sexual exploitation and abuse of affected community members frequently occur when the essential needs of those most at risk in communities are not adequately met. **Issues of impunity and lack of accountability** in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse are the result of existing **asymmetries in the balance of power**.

This is a serious protection concern, which erodes the confidence and trust of affected communities, local actors and the host state in all those providing assistance.

Accountability and protection mainstreaming

What is the link between accountability and protection mainstreaming?

Accountability is not only about improving humanitarian programme effectiveness. It is also about **rights**. Accountability and protection complement each other, and both are rooted in a rights-based approach.

Protection mainstreaming means ensuring that humanitarian programmes are protection sensitive, and therefore constitutes a crucial pillar of programme quality. It is based on fulfilling

4 key principles:

1. prioritizing safety and dignity;
2. ensuring meaningful access of affected populations to needs-based (impartial) humanitarian assistance and services without discrimination or barriers;
3. promoting the participation of affected populations in the humanitarian response; and,
4. ensuring humanitarian accountability to affected populations.

Under this framework, in many ways safety, dignity and meaningful access constitute the **end** goal of protection mainstreaming, while participation and accountability are essential **means** to that end.

UNHCR guidance note on Protection, Accountability to Affected Populations and the Humanitarian Programme Cycle

http://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/unhcr-aap_guidance_note-draft4.pdf

Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, Global Protection Cluster / IASC, 2015

https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2015-iasc-gender-based-violence-guidelines_full-res.pdf

Accountability and communications with communities (CwC)/ community engagement

What is the link between accountability and communications with communities (CwC)/ community engagement?

Communication with communities is defined as a programmatic field of work through which humanitarian organizations can be accountable. It includes three operational components: feedback/complaints, participation and information provision. Community engagement is now a preferred term for many organizations, as it implies a more active process, which should involve programming teams, and not just those for "communications" or "public information".

Accountability, gender and age

What is the link between accountability, gender and age?

Being a young boy, an adolescent girl, an adult man or an older woman largely determines:

- the role and position of individuals in society;
- the risks they face;
- the way they are going to be affected by emergencies; and
- their ability to cope with these.

Humanitarian responses that are inclusive and accountable to affected populations acknowledge the differences linked to gender, age and diversity, including disability and other vulnerabilities. They are also informed by an analysis of **sex and age disaggregated data (SADD)**, at the very least.

Delivering humanitarian response that meets the needs of women, girls, boys and men is therefore **integral to accountability** to affected populations, and remains a **priority** for all UN agencies and their partners.

IASC Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action.

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/Gender%20Handbook.pdf>

Paying attention to gender in humanitarian action is vital because:

Crises have different impact on different groups

- Indonesian tsunami mortality (2004): for every man who died, four women were killed. ♀♀♀♀:♂
- Tsunami mortality by age (2004): more than 50% of deaths were among people over 70 or under 9 years-old.

Women, girls, boys and men all have different experiences, needs, abilities and priorities in a crisis

Good programming will identify and respond to these differences.

- Attending school (Somalia, 2011): three boys were in school for every girl. ♂♂♂:♀
- Receiving enough food (Pakistan, 2009): twice as many men as women surveyed reported that they were receiving enough food. ♂♂:♀
- Possessing house-building skills (Uganda IDP camps, 2004): nine men were able to construct their own shelter, for every one woman. ♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂:♀

There are direct correlation between inequality and vulnerability

Enabling the equal enjoyment of human rights by women, girls, boys and men requires a more level playing field. Projects that analyse and take into consideration the needs, priorities, capacities and

vulnerabilities of both the female and male population of all ages and backgrounds, and the risks they face, are far more likely to improve the lives of affected communities.

Doing so increases resilience, reduces poverty and disparities, and contributes to national development

Failure to analyse and address gender and age needs and capacities compromises the efficiency and effectiveness of the response. That's because it will not adequately address the needs of a large part of the affected population, and tends to ignore important power dynamics. It could also unwittingly cause harm to those we aim to assist. Humanitarian action that improves the social and economic situation of women – who make up the vast majority of the poor worldwide – increases resilience, reduces poverty and disparities, and contributes to national development.

Why do gender and age matter in agriculture/livelihood interventions?

In an emergency, the initial focus is on primary needs and on meeting these through the delivery of aid, such as emergency food security assistance, as quickly as possible. In the aftermath of an emergency, affected communities will need to restart agricultural and other livelihood activities as soon as possible.

For a good assistance project to have a positive impact, women, girls, boys and men must be equally and meaningfully involved in the process.

Distributing food assistance (i.e. either food rations or cash/vouchers) – directly or through food/cash-for-work or food/cash-for-training projects – **will not automatically guarantee their optimal use, or a positive impact** on individuals or the affected population.

Only a gender and age sensitive, participatory approach at all stages of the humanitarian programme cycle can help to ensure that an adequate and efficient response is provided.

A needs assessment (e.g. **MIRA**¹, **EFSA**², **CFSAM**³) is the essential first step in providing emergency food assistance and in planning agriculture/livelihood programming that is effective, safe and restores

¹ **MIRA**: The Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) is a joint needs assessment tool that can be used in sudden onset emergencies, including IASC System-Wide level 3 Emergency Responses (L3 Responses). It is a precursor to cluster/sectoral needs assessments and provides a process for collecting and analyzing information on affected people and their needs to inform strategic response planning.

² **EFSA**: An Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) analyses the impact of a crisis on the food security of households and communities. An EFSA is conducted when a natural disaster, a conflict or an economic shock causes food insecurity due, for instance, to population displacements.

³ **CFSAM**: A Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) is undertaken jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and WFP, usually for emergencies related to agricultural production or overall food availability

dignity. A **gender and age sensitive analysis** (based on primary and secondary sex and age disaggregated data), which also takes into account the sociocultural context of the emergency, is critical to understanding the social and gender dynamics that could help or hinder the effectiveness of the response.

A **gender and age analysis** during the needs assessment will identify **gender gaps**, such as unequal access to food assistance or agriculture/ livelihood services for women/girls and men/boys, which need to be addressed. The analysis should then inform the relevant sections of the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), as well as the activities of selected projects.

The project's outcomes should capture the change that is expected for different female and male beneficiary groups (e.g. young boys, adolescent girls, adult men, older women, etc.) and be reflected in the monitoring framework.

Gender-based violence



Gender-based violence is among the greatest protection challenges that individuals, families and communities face during humanitarian emergencies.

Accounts of horrific sexual violence in conflict situations – especially against women and girls – have been documented in several emergencies. Natural disasters and other emergencies exacerbate the violence and diminish means of protection. Gender-based violence (GBV) not only violates and traumatizes its survivors. It also undermines the resilience of their societies, making it harder to recover and rebuild.

IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action – Food Security and Agriculture section

http://gbvguidelines.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/TAG-FSA-08_26_2015.pdf

problems. It assesses the seriousness of a crisis situation, by looking at the food produced nationally and the extent to which poor people can meet their basic food needs.

Tools and initiatives created to enhance accountability

In the humanitarian sector, various tools and initiatives have been created to enhance accountability. Let's present some of them:

🔗 Minimum Operating Standard on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (MOS-PSEA)

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The Minimum Operating Standard on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by own Personnel (MOS-PSEA) highlights **eight objectives** and related indicators for monitoring. It is complemented by the **Guidelines to Implement the MOS-PSEA**, with links to additional resources for each area of work.

<https://www.interaction.org/document/guidelines-implement-minimum-operating-standards-psea-iasc-mos>

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) by our own staff: www.pseataaskforce.org/

🔗 The Core Humanitarian Standards on Quality and Accountability

The Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) are the result of wide consultation with NGOs, the UN and Global Clusters. They offer practical steps on how to achieve accountability and quality programming. The CHS set out **nine commitments** that organizations and individuals involved in humanitarian response should respect, so as to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. The CHS place communities and people affected by crisis at the centre of humanitarian action and promote respect for their fundamental human rights. They are underpinned by the **right to life with dignity**, and the **right to protection and security**, as set forth in international law, including within the International Bill of Human Rights.

The Core Humanitarian Standards replace various standards, including the Core Standards section of the Sphere Handbook.

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability

<https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard>

🔗 The Sphere Project Sector Specific Minimum Standards

Sphere was started by a group of humanitarian NGOs and the Red Cross/Red Crescent. Its best known quality and accountability resource is the **Sphere Handbook**. This includes a Humanitarian Charter on

the rights of people affected by emergencies, as well as minimum standards for use in four sectors of humanitarian assistance:

- Water/sanitation and hygiene promotion;
- Food security, nutrition and food aid;
- Shelter, settlement and non-food items;
- Health services.

The Sphere Project: www.spherehandbook.org/

The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP)

ALNAP was established in 1997 following the multi-agency evaluation of the Rwanda genocide. It is a collective response by the humanitarian sector, dedicated to improving humanitarian performance through a shared process of learning and collaborative research. The ALNAP network comprises 61 Full Members, who collectively make up the key actors involved in humanitarian funding, research, planning, operations and evaluations. This unique system-wide composition provides an inclusive platform for collective learning, innovation and positive change.

ALNAP focuses on three key areas of work: research and development; providing fora for shared learning and improvement; and providing a knowledge library based on evaluative reports.

ALNAP's longer-term research includes the Review of Humanitarian Action (RHA), which has provided chapters on knowledge management, capacity-building, evaluation utilization, field level learning, organizational change, innovations and performance measurement. Evaluation reports provide much of the source material for these studies and ALNAP is committed to improving the quality and utilization of evaluations. Shorter-term research studies aim to promote real-time learning, including lessons learned in emergency response as well as quality real-time evaluations and after action reviews. Lessons papers are available on different kinds of emergencies, including earthquakes, floods, food insecurity and urban crises.

The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP)

As a system-wide network, ALNAP has a unique convening power and brings together representatives from across the humanitarian system, as well as from other sectors. ALNAP biannual meetings are now an established and important fixture on the humanitarian calendar. ALNAP offers a database containing

more than 1 000 evaluative reports. Most of these are fully searchable online. Several guidebooks are also available, including publications on protection, participation and evaluation.

ALNAP www.alnap.org/

Best practices for mainstreaming cross-cutting dimensions in FSCs

Some Food Security Clusters (FSC) have developed their own checklists and guidelines, so as to mainstream cross-cutting dimensions in their activities and provide a common framework for the sector as a whole. Examples include:

Syria

Whole of Syria "Protection Mainstreaming Checklist"

<http://fscluster.org/syria/document/protection-mainstreaming-checklist>

Food Security and Agriculture Sector in Syria, Gender & AAP Report

<http://fscluster.org/syria/document/food-security-and-agriculture-sector>

Jordan

Jordan Hub Protection Mainstreaming Checklist

<http://fscluster.org/syria/document/jordan-hub-assessment-protection>

Iraq

Iraq Safe Distribution and Food Assistance

<http://fscluster.org/iraq/document/fsc-iraq-safe-distribution-food>

Pakistan

Mainstreaming of Gender, Protection, GBV and AAP in Humanitarian Proposal Writing

<http://fscluster.org/pakistan/document/training-report-mainstreaming-gender>

Somalia Protection Mainstreaming Checklist

<http://fscluster.org/yemen/document/protection-mainstreaming-checklist-0>

For more information on documents related to Food Security Clusters and Cluster Lead Agencies, please check the **Programme Quality and Cross-Cutting Issue** section of the gFSC website.

<http://fscluster.org/programme-quality-and-cross-cutting>

Mainstreaming Accountability to Affected Population and Core People-Related Issues in the HPC through the Cluster System

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GNC_gFSC-Joint-AAP-Guidance_WEB.pdf

Summary

Accountability to affected populations (AAP) is important because **it forms the basis of the way in which all actors should be working as humanitarians.**

AAP is an active commitment to using power responsibly, by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people who humanitarian organizations seek to assist.

Sexual exploitation and abuse by anyone associated with the provision of aid constitutes the **most serious breach of accountability**. Populations should be able to make complaints and call for appropriate protection measures against such abuse, as well as be informed of the results of investigations into their complaints.

Protection mainstreaming is about ensuring that humanitarian programmes are protection sensitive, and therefore constitutes a crucial pillar of programme quality. It is based on fulfilling **4 key principles**.

Humanitarian responses that are inclusive and accountable to affected populations acknowledge the differences linked to gender, age and diversity, including disability and other vulnerabilities, and are informed by an analysis of **sex and age disaggregated data (SADD)**, at the very least.