The 'DMT Good Practice Guidelines' provide practical guidance on how to implement, what Tearfund Disaster Management Team consider to be, good practice on a range of cross cutting and sectoral topics. The guidelines are internally designed for Tearfund DMT field staff and will also be a useful reference for Tearfund partners. They do not give in-depth information on the issue, but are intended to be simple and user friendly guides that provide practical information for practitioners in the field. They are freely available for use or adaptation by Tearfund partners and other organisations committed to good practice in disaster management.

For Tearfund staff this document can be found in:
Briefing & Ref Docs/04 Good Practices (GP)/04.3 GP Cross Cutting Issues/04.3.2 Beneficiary Accountability

For external downloads go to:
http://tilz.tearfund.org/Topics/Disaster+Management/Cross+cutting+issues+good+practice.htm
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1

Introduction

- Do you genuinely care about and respect the beneficiaries in your projects in a way that reflects God’s love for you?
- Do you really listen to your beneficiaries?
- Do you share your project plans with beneficiaries so they are fully in the picture?
- Do you allow beneficiaries to raise concerns about how your work affects them?
- Through what channels can beneficiaries share their grievances?
- Do beneficiaries worry that they might be penalised or removed from the project if they complain?

In the humanitarian field, accountability has conventionally referred to the NGO being ‘upwardly accountable’ to their donors on the use of their resources. It was concerned with finances, cost effectiveness and reporting to formal authorities and donors - often for actions already in the past.

A reorientation from ‘Upward Accountability’ to both ‘Upward and Downwards Accountability’

However beneficiary accountability is concerned with ‘the process by which NGOs meaningfully involve intended beneficiaries’. This approach recognises that our intended beneficiaries are the main clients of relief aid and our primary focus should be on them. Whilst beneficiary participation has been a key element of good practice in humanitarian work for years, often only lip service has been paid to the practice of true beneficiary involvement, particularly in sudden onset emergencies. Therefore beneficiaries have too often had little say in the aid they receive.
“The quality of our work is primarily determined by the quality of our relationship between our staff and the project beneficiaries”

A recent consultation¹ revealed:

- NGOs face a political and strategic challenge when striving to deliver quality projects, to have the beneficiary at the heart of NGO quality.

- NGOs feel that the quality of their work is primarily determined by the quality of their relationship with their intended beneficiaries. This quality depends on the relationships with beneficiaries taking priority over the achievement of pre-determined project goals and other ‘professional’ management practices.

The Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) synthesis report called for a “fundamental reorientation from supplying aid to supporting and facilitating communities’ own relief and recovery priorities.” In order for this to be achieved the report suggests that affected populations need to themselves set priorities and draw up plans for recovery programmes and this will only be possible if the affected population ‘owns’ the relief response and aid agencies hold themselves accountable to the affected people. Annex A highlights some of the practical implications of such a ‘fundamental reorientation.’

Ensuring that a programme is accountable to beneficiaries requires an investment of time, effort and funds. The earlier that this investment is made the greater the overall return will be in terms of appropriate and cost-effective projects and positive impact.

In 2007 Tearfund agreed to make beneficiary accountability an organisational priority. This good practice guideline sets out the practical steps required to turn this commitment into reality on our emergency programmes.

As an organisational priority for both the Disaster Management Team and for partners involved in emergency response work these guidelines are specifically aimed at those working in humanitarian and emergency project work but the guiding principles can be applied to wider development contexts. These guidelines will be used for implementation, monitoring and evaluation purposes within all DMT projects working towards established accountability standards. This will also include assessment for certification by the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership in March 2008. Partner organisations using these guidelines are invited to apply the same practical steps that are outlined and to simply insert the partner’s own values statements and other information that should be made publicly available etc within this framework.

This Good Practice Guideline is currently available on Tearnet and TILZ, to which all overseas DMT staff and all UK based staff have access. Hard copies are available in the Teddington office and all field locations will be sent a hardcopy. A full catalogue of Briefing and references documents is also loaded onto all DMT field computers and this includes the electronic version of all Good Practice Guidelines. This Guideline is currently available in English and French and will be reviewed by December 2008 for the third edition.

¹ BOND (British NGOS Overseas for Development) held a consultation through an online survey with 69 Bond members – “A BOND approach to quality in non governmental organisations: putting beneficiaries first”. Aug 2006.
Definitions and context for beneficiary accountability

1.1 Definitions

The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) defines accountability as follows:

Accountability is the means by which power is used responsibly\(^2\).

This definition of accountability goes beyond an exclusive focus on the process of reporting upon - or accounting for - decisions and actions.

Accountability also involves taking account of the needs, concerns, capacities and dispositions of affected parties, and explaining the meaning and implications of, and the reasons for, actions and decisions.

In the humanitarian context accountability is a measure of the quality of the relationship between the NGO and the beneficiary. The more powerful the NGO the greater potential there is for abuse and exploitation of the beneficiaries. Accountability is a force which challenges power and ensures that it is exercised responsibly.

Accountability is about giving POWER back to beneficiaries.

\(^2\) This definition of accountability comes from the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
http://www.hapinternational.org
1.2 Biblical justification

Accountability is reflected in the following Biblical principles:

- **Our Accountability before God**
  We believe that God has created man/womankind with free will to make decisions. He has given us responsibility to be stewards over all the resources he has given us. We believe that we will stand before God and account for the way we have lived. We are accountable to God for our actions.

- **Respect and equality for all people**
  We believe that all members of the human family have been created in the image of God. At the most fundamental level all peoples are equal and should be treated with dignity, sanctity and respect without distinction.

- **Love your neighbour as yourself**
  Caring for others is an essential Christian obligation. “And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother…” (1 John 4:21)
  In the parable of the Good Samaritan we are taught to love our neighbour which means to show compassion for anyone in need, regardless of nationality, race, creed, social status or political affiliation.
  “Love your neighbour” is akin with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which articulates, through international treaties, that all peoples have duties and responsibilities to respect, protect and promote the rights and entitlements of others.

In the context of our emergency projects loving your neighbour as you would love yourself means asking yourself:

**If I was a beneficiary in this project how would I like to be treated?**
“If I was one of these people, how would I like to be treated?”

- Treat those in need with utmost dignity and respect
In the parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus explains that how we treat those in need (hungry, thirsty, sick, cold, in prison, a stranger) is equivalent to how we treat Him:
“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me’”(Matt 25:40)

The practical application of these Christian values requires detailed listening and understanding of our beneficiaries to ensure that the way that care is shown is appropriate both culturally and at the individual level. Accountability ensures that we don’t simply act on how we would like to be treated if we were the beneficiary but to truly understand how the actual beneficiary wants to be treated. Furthermore by empowering beneficiaries we can outwork the principle of equality. Accountability is the mechanism which allows this to happen.
1.3  Professional justification

Participation is a key development principle and is central to the Red Cross Code of Conduct and Sphere. “Disaster Response assistance should never be imposed upon the beneficiaries. Effective relief and lasting rehabilitation can best be achieved where the intended beneficiaries are involved in the design, management and implementation of the assistance programme. We will strive to achieve full community participation in our relief and rehabilitation programmes.” (RCCC No. 7)

True participation goes a long way to achieving the same results as accountability. However, in the humanitarian sector often only lip service has been paid to participation, thus the need to revisit the issue of true participation. In addition, the concept of accountability goes even further, seeking not only to ensure that we as the NGO consult and involve beneficiaries in decision making and implementation, but to acknowledge that we are accountable to them for our actions.

Accountability is core to humanitarian International Codes and Standards as seen in the following quotes:

- “We acknowledge that our fundamental accountability must be to those we seek to assist” - Sphere Humanitarian Charter
- “The disaster-affected population actively participates in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the assistance programme” - Sphere Common Standard 1
- “Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid....” Red Cross Code of Conduct Principle 7
- “We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources” - Red Cross Code of Conduct Principle 9.
-“Request implementing organisations to ensure, to the greatest possible extent, adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring & evaluation of humanitarian response” - Good Humanitarian Donorship Principle 7
- Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International initiative focuses on the issue.

It is often during the first stages of an emergency when staff are subject to the greatest pressures to scale up, deliver aid and “save lives”, and when good practices of accountability seem to be most readily dispensed with. So in a new emergency or a new project our challenge to address this key good practice is all the greater!

In emergency relief operations there is a huge power imbalance between relief workers and beneficiaries. We have power because we control essential services. NGOs can be in danger of behaving as if they are accountable only to their donors, rather than to the people whom they serve - the beneficiaries. In such situations beneficiaries are in danger of being viewed as passive recipients of our assistance, people with no choices, people who ought only to be grateful for the assistance they are receiving. Involving beneficiaries is not a step in attempting to achieve programme outputs, but an overall objective in itself.
Advantages of beneficiary accountability:
- more appropriate and effective service provided
- more equitable and safe relationships with beneficiaries
- increased staff satisfaction and staff retention\(^3\)
- Increased motivation - especially when positive feedback is received
- increased acceptance and therefore security of Tearfund

Disadvantages of not having beneficiary accountability:
- danger of having poorly designed projects
- beneficiaries left with no sense of dignity
- low staff satisfaction
- poorer acceptance by the community towards Tearfund
- possibly a poor security environment.

“The first thing people in crisis need to know about humanitarianism is that we will treat them as human beings, with dignity and respect.” Jan Egeland, Former UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency.

\(^3\) Medair’s case study (in section 4, case study 4) demonstrates that they were able to retain highly skilled staff because of Medair’s commitment to accountability
Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP)

2.1 Who are HAP?

The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership is the humanitarian sector’s first international self-regulatory body. Its work is based on the findings of the Humanitarian Accountability Project, an inter-agency action research initiative that started in 2001. However, the origins of the Partnership go still further back, to the Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the Genocide in Rwanda. The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership formally came into existence in December 2003. The vision of HAP International is of a humanitarian system championing the rights and the dignity of disaster survivors.

2.2. What do HAP do?

The mission of HAP is to make humanitarian action accountable to its intended beneficiaries through self-regulation, compliance verification and quality assurance certification.

The objectives of HAP are:

1. To develop and maintain principles of accountability to beneficiaries through research, consultation, and collaboration;
2. To support members and potential members of HAP International in adhering to the principles of accountability to beneficiaries by providing training and advice;
3. To communicate, advocate, promote, and report on principles of accountability;
4. To monitor and report on implementation of HAP International’s principles of accountability to beneficiaries and to accredit its members accordingly;
5. To assist members in finding solutions where concerns or complaints are raised about them.

2.3 What is the key instrument that HAP uses?

The key instrument that HAP uses is the HAP Standard. The HAP Standard consists of 2 sections - the Humanitarian Accountability Covenant and Benchmarks:

- Humanitarian Accountability Covenant - this is a statement of the basic values against which HAP-certified agencies wish to be held to account. This Covenant draws on the Red Cross Code of Conduct and SPHERE.

The Principles in the Covenant are:

Primary Principles

- Humanity: upholding the right of all persons to receive and give assistance.
- Impartiality: providing humanitarian assistance in proportion to need and with respect to urgency, without discrimination based upon gender, age, race, impairment, ethnicity and nationality or by political, religious, cultural or organisational affiliation.
Secondary Principles

- **Informed Consent**: ensuring that the intended beneficiaries, or their representatives, understand and agree with the proposed humanitarian action and its implications.
- **Duty of Care**: ensuring that humanitarian assistance meets or exceeds recognised minimum standards pertaining to the wellbeing of the intended beneficiaries.
- **Witness**: reporting on policies or practices that affect the wellbeing of disaster survivors.

Tertiary Principles

- **Transparency**: ensuring that all relevant information is communicated to intended beneficiaries or their representatives, and other specified parties.
- **Independence**: acting under the authority of the governing body of the agency and in pursuit of the agency's mandate.
- **Neutrality**: refraining from giving material or political support to parties to an armed conflict.
- **Complementarity**: operating as a responsible member of the humanitarian assistance community.

Each principle is categorized by its relative importance, beginning with the primary principles, followed by the secondary principles and concluding with the tertiary principles. In certain circumstances, an agency may find that the immediate consequence of complying with one principle may render it incapable of fulfilling another. For example, the publication of a relief distribution plan (transparency) may place intended beneficiaries and staff in great danger, justifying in that particular case the application of a non-disclosure policy (putting the principle of humanity first). The agency must be able to explain why it chose to operate in breach of one or more of the principles as an unavoidable condition for being able to comply with a higher-level principle in those particular circumstances.

- **Benchmarks** - these are for assessing compliance with the HAP Covenant and it is against these benchmarks that certification is based. There are 6 benchmarks and each benchmark has more details about requirement and means of verification.

**Benchmark 1** is related to **Humanitarian Quality Management**: The agency shall establish a humanitarian quality management system.

**Benchmark 2** is related to **Transparency**: The agency shall make the following information publicly available to intended beneficiaries, disaster-affected communities, agency staff and other specified groups: (a) organisational background; (b) humanitarian accountability framework; (c) humanitarian plan and financial summary; (d) progress reports; and (e) complaints handling procedures.

**Benchmark 3** is related to **Beneficiary Participation**: The agency shall enable beneficiaries and their representatives to participate in programme decisions and seek their informed consent.

**Benchmark 4** is related to **Staff Competencies**: The agency shall determine the competences, attitudes and development required for staff to implement its humanitarian quality management system.

**Benchmark 5** is related to **Complaints Handling**: The agency shall establish and implement complaints-handling procedures that are effective, accessible and safe for intended beneficiaries, disaster-affected communities, agency staff, humanitarian partners and other specified bodies.

**Benchmark 6** is related to **Continual Improvement**: The agency shall establish a process of continual improvement for its humanitarian.
accountability framework and humanitarian quality management system.

2.4 What is Tearfund’s relationship to HAP?
Tearfund is a founder member of HAP. At the time of writing there are 17 agencies who have signed up to be full members of HAP. To be a full member of HAP requires an organisational commitment to uphold the Principles of Accountability, commit resources to achieve more accountability, be transparent and open to independent monitoring and finally, support a system of voluntary but robust self-regulation.

Unlike other standards that Tearfund signs up to, such as Red Cross Code of Conduct and Sphere which are based on voluntary compliance, HAP will certify agencies who voluntarily asked to be assessed. They will only be certified if they are found to be in compliance to accountability principles.

Since 2005, Tearfund DMT has sought to outwork beneficiary accountability principles in most programmes including recruiting staff dedicated to this activity. Tearfund partner, ZOE, in Zimbabwe is currently piloting beneficiary accountability principles and partners in the Tsunami response are also developing accountability procedures.

In section 3 of these guidelines you will find Tearfund’s 7 steps to accountability - these steps closely follow the Benchmarks in the HAP Standard and are cross referenced to them.
# 3.1 Seven practical steps to beneficiary accountability

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Set aside the resources needed – funds and staff – to support beneficiary accountability</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Understand Tearfund’s values and standards or that of your own organisation (Benchmark 1 – Humanitarian Quality Management System)</td>
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<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Make information on Tearfund and your programme publicly available (Benchmark 2 – Transparency)</td>
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<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Obtain the informed consent of beneficiaries and ensure their ongoing participation from assessment through project implementation (Benchmark 3 – Beneficiary Participation)</td>
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<td>Step 5</td>
<td>Ensure thorough induction, appraisal and development of staff (Benchmark 4 – Staff Competencies)</td>
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<td>Step 6</td>
<td>Establish a system to hear and respond to complaints (Benchmark 5 – Complaints Handling)</td>
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<td>Step 7</td>
<td>Continually reflect on our learning in order to continually improve (Benchmark 6 – Continual Improvement)</td>
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Section 3
Section 3

Seven practical steps to Beneficiary Accountability

Step 1 Set aside the resources needed - funds and staff - to support beneficiary accountability

For any project and programme identify funds in the budget and staff positions dedicated to Accountability:

- All proposals should include an “Accountability and Quality” budget line. (This can cover Accountability Staff and associated costs; target 2-5% of total project budget)
- Ensure the proposal has a clear rationale of how the Accountability system will be carried and the resources required
- Recruit or appoint staff to promote project level accountability. Tearfund’s experience to date has shown that the most effective single action that has made a difference to promoting beneficiary accountability within a project has been to create a dedicated role for this on the project team. Refer to the DMT generic structure chart which now includes the Accountability Officer role within a field team

Step 2 Understand Tearfund’s values and standards or that of your own organisation (Benchmark 1 Humanitarian Quality Management System).

Benchmark 1 is about a Humanitarian Quality Management System. This is a set of processes that enables continual improvement in an agency’s performance in meeting the essential needs and respecting the dignity of disaster survivors. DMT has produced a set of standards and commitments which we have committed to in our emergency programmes and this is updated periodically and distributed to programmes. Partners are similarly encouraged to draw up their own set of standards and commitments.

- Whether you work for Tearfund or for a Tearfund partner, you need to understand the values and standards of your organisation in order to communicate these to staff and beneficiaries and measure your work against them.
- Tearfund places a major emphasis on love, dignity and respect when interacting with beneficiaries. Our attitudes and relationships are at the heart of our commitment to beneficiary accountability. It is not enough to have a ‘head knowledge’ of our standards and commitments - these need to be communicated and conveyed with a right attitude through relationships based on love, dignity and respect.
Step 3 **Make information on Tearfund and your programme publicly available (Benchmark 2 is about Transparency)**

Benchmark 2 is about transparency. To ensure transparency, have the project team agree, in consultation with beneficiary representatives, the amount of information to be given to beneficiaries.

Benchmark 2 explains that the following information should be publicly available to intended beneficiaries, disaster affected communities, agency staff and other specified stakeholders:

- a) Organisational background;
- b) Humanitarian accountability framework;
- c) Humanitarian Plan
- d) Beneficiary Selection Criteria
- e) Progress reports
- f) Complaints handling procedure
Section 3

Tearfund’s head office provides a summary of all the information that Tearfund recommends be included as standard public information in emergency programmes. This will change over time and regular updates will be sent to the field.

The level of detail and the amount of information you share will vary in different situations. Here are some basic principles on making information publicly available:

- The information should be available and accessible.
- The information should be in the language and format most appropriate for the target audience.
- The information should be current and updated regularly
- Means of sharing information may be through meetings, information boards, leaflets, local radio or any other means that are appropriate to the community. Include public sharing on beneficiary selection criteria and deliverables of the project
- Include making agency name and contact details publicly available
- Include guidance on appropriate details to provide on TF structure, including staff roles and responsibilities

You need to think about situations where it may be necessary to withhold information (as per the hierarchy of principles on p10) in order to meet other commitments such as safety and security of beneficiaries.

Security issues may make it inappropriate for you to share certain information - this is okay as long as you can justify why you have not shared the information (see section 2.3 which explains that you can justify not implementing a Tertiary Principle if this is in conflict with a Primary Principle) and have documented the reasons why.

From our experiences to date, one of the most important aspects of transparency is providing information on beneficiary selection criteria. This includes making available to the beneficiary communities the criteria for selection, the names of proposed beneficiaries as appropriate to the community representatives or groups. See the Kenya case study for reference.
Example of an information board:

The information board used above was used in Pakistan and contained information on:
- Details about Tearfund and contact persons
- Names and numbers of community representatives in committees
- Summary of Tearfund project
- Map of where the water points are being fitted.
- Picture of the design of the water point.

You should consider sharing **financial information** with beneficiaries. Empowering beneficiaries to question how funds have been spent may reduce inefficiencies and the chance of fraud. See page 29 for a case study where fraud was uncovered as a result of this initiative. Financial reports must provide information: (a) that is useful for users and (b) in a style that is easy for users to understand.

Financial reports should be provided in local language and currency. They should be short and content should focus on project activities. It is up to each project team to decide the level of budget detail that is appropriate to share. Simple reports which show expenditure compared to the budget often work well. Expenditure can be summarised by activity, or by geographical area, or by budget line - or by some combination of these. As a rule of thumb, each financial report should have no more than 15 lines of information. Reports can be written up on notice boards or paper copies of reports can be made freely available.
Step 4 Obtain the informed consent of beneficiaries and ensure their ongoing participation from assessment through to implementation (Benchmark 3 Beneficiary Participation)

Benchmark 3 explains the importance of beneficiary participation. You should:

- Obtain informed consent from the beneficiaries and community to carry out your project. In the past we have sometimes simply assumed that the community is happy with the proposed project and we don’t intentionally seek out a clear response from the community - a decision point where they agree to participate in the project, fully aware of the detailed plans and the contributions they are expected to make. This is informed consent. This may be verbal or may be documented in a Memorandum of Understanding (See Annex B for an example Standard Operating procedure for a community).
Section 3

• You also need to ensure a high level of participation with beneficiaries during the assessment stage and ensure that it is a two way conversation. Tearfund has a ROOTS guide and other resources explaining tools which help to facilitate meaningful community participation:

  ➢ Agree the level of participation with beneficiary representative
  ➢ Explain Tearfund’s mandate and values
  ➢ Always ask if they have any questions of you - it should always be a two-way conversation
  ➢ Manage expectations carefully. Clarify what type of assessment this is - rapid with no commitment to respond, or in depth with intention to undertake a project. The level of consultation will vary depending on timing and context of the assessment - for example:

    Immediately following a disaster it may not be appropriate to carry out in depth participatory assessments with communities where you have no intention to deploy but are simply gathering assessment data.

    Where you do intend to work the assessments must be fully participatory.

• Identify appropriate representatives of the beneficiary community for ongoing dialogue:

  ➢ Ensure men and women beneficiaries are consulted extensively in monitoring of project progress and measuring of log frame indicators
  ➢ Ensure that the beneficiary representatives are a cross section of individuals trusted by the wider community. Carry out regular public meetings if appropriate
  ➢ Ensure that responsibilities are clearly defined and explained, and ensure that the beneficiary representatives are communicating with the wider beneficiary group.
  ➢ Ensure that they are involved in decisions at all stages of the project cycle - assessment, project design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. We need to take action and adjust project plans in light of the feedback received.
  ➢ Ensure that records of meetings with beneficiary representatives are kept. It is important to record all the discussions and decisions and to be able to show what changes have been made to the project as a result of beneficiary feedback.

For example in Tearfund’s Northern Kenya programme, beneficiary reference groups, comprised of 5 community members, established by the programme, were able to participate on behalf of the community in beneficiary selection criteria for a camel distribution (see Case Study 5: How to distribute a herd of camels)
Step 5 Ensure thorough induction, appraisal and development of staff (Benchmark 4 Staff Competencies)

Benchmark 4 is about having competent staff that understand the organisation’s mandate and values and exhibit the right attitude in relating with beneficiaries. Staff must be provided with a thorough induction and must be developed to ensure that they have the competencies and attitudes required.

- Ensure that induction of local staff is comprehensive and explains Tearfund’s values including our commitment to accountability, and the individual’s role in upholding values and adhering to standards (refer to pages 24 and 25 of the Good Management Guidelines 2nd Edition in folder 4 - and use the Induction Power points in folder 0.1 of Briefing and Ref Docs on your computers)
- Ensure they understand the project so they can explain it to others
- Drivers and guards interact constantly with beneficiaries and communities – are they clear on the project plans and organisational values in the same way that project staff are familiar?
- Review Step 3 and make sure you understand Tearfund’s values and commitments – then explain to other staff
- Carry out regular performance management and appraisals with all staff. When reviewing performance it is important to consider both technical abilities in performing the work and the attitude with which it is carried out. Relationships are very important.
- As part of the appraisal process review staff training and developmental needs. Each staff member should have a personal development plan.
Step 6 Establish a system to hear and respond to complaints (Benchmark 5 Complaints Handling)

Benchmark 5 is about complaints handling.
“Establish a complaints handling procedure that is effective, accessible and safe for intended beneficiaries, disaster affected communities, agency staff, humanitarian partners and other specified bodies”.

The opportunity for beneficiaries to provide feedback and complaints on the assistance provided is an important part of being accountable. While all NGO programmes probably receive complaints and provide feedback informally, a complaints mechanism as a formalised system is a relatively new concept. What we aim to achieve are simple procedures and mechanisms that give beneficiaries access to a safe means of voicing complaints on relevant areas within Tearfund’s or the partner’s control.

The following are the suggested ideal procedures and minimum requirements for a complaints mechanism. The capacity and level of resources of the programme and its local context will determine the type of complaints procedures that a programme can implement. What is critical is that you agree with the community which procedures are most appropriate for each situation. Also find out if the system can be based on a traditional way of complaining or resolving disputes (for example, in some projects complaints boxes have been introduced as it was assumed by the team that these are an important part of a complaints mechanism, although it later came to light that the community didn’t really want them in the first place). There are many ways of welcoming complaints - anonymous drop box, Beneficiary complaints committee, directly to a Beneficiary Accountability officer, by phone or mail. There will be many more as you think of them for your location.
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Ideal Procedures</strong></th>
<th><strong>Minimum procedures</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Information about how to complain</strong></td>
<td><strong>Information about how to complain</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Information about the complaints mechanism must be visible and easily available. Methods to distribute information about the complaints mechanism system could be through information boards, leaflet distribution, posters on the office wall, and these should be backed up though oral systems such as at distributions or community meetings, particularly if literacy levels are limited.</td>
<td>Information about the complaints mechanism is easily available. E.g. Orally at distributions, community meetings or in writing on notice boards, leaflet distribution, posters on the office wall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access and safety</strong></td>
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<td>The procedure should be easy to access and safe to use. Both physical access and safety are crucial, with consideration given to location, distance, travel costs, who is the person to whom the complaint is directed, bearing in mind the fear of retaliation, involvement of public offices and confidentiality. The procedure also should be free to use, sensitive in relation to cultural traditions, gender, age and religious issues.</td>
<td>The procedure should be easy to access and safe to use. Consideration should be given to location, the focal person to receive complaints (bearing in mind the fear of retaliation) and confidentiality. The procedure should be free, sensitive in relation to cultural traditions, gender, age and religious issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Procedure</strong></td>
<td><strong>Procedure</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Submission of complaint should ideally be in writing in order for Tearfund and the complainant to have a clear and mutual understanding of the grievance and so that we have a system for statistics and monitoring. However for those who are illiterate, the complaint can be given orally and the accountability officer can write it down and check the complainant is happy with the statement. The complainant should be given a receipt. This receipt could be a copy of the submitted and signed description of the complaint. The receipt would include an indication on when the complaint will be processed.</td>
<td>There must be a complaints procedure. It can be just verbal or just written but most important is that people know how they can complain and who they can complain to. The project team need to keep a record of the feedback they receive and include this in their internal programme reporting.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Staff training, gender and impartiality</strong></td>
<td><strong>Staff training, gender and impartiality</strong></td>
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<td>Complaints should be processed by someone who has suitable qualities and is trained to deal with them. Staff members processing complaints must understand the sensitive nature of a complaint. Due to the sensitive nature of complaints and gender sensitivities it may be necessary to have both male and female Accountability Officers. Staff designated to process the complaint ideally should be different to the field staff delivering the project.</td>
<td>Complaints should be processed by a focal person who has suitable qualities to deal with them.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Criteria (i.e.” What” to complain about, timeframe and feedback -</strong></td>
<td><strong>Criteria (i.e.” What” to complain about, timeframe and feedback -</strong></td>
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<td>Complaint should be processed against a clear, published definition of a complaint and against clear, published criteria. Include a timeframe for processing the complaint. It is important that the complainant is provided with a description of the complaint.</td>
<td>Staff should have a clear understanding of what type of complaints are valid and they should be able to communicate this to beneficiaries. E.g. limit complaints to things within Tearfund’s responsibility and control.</td>
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complaints mechanism process. This is important as it will avoid beneficiaries wasting their time complaining about issues which are beyond Tearfund’s responsibility and control.

The complainant should be given a clear response that comprises an answer and explanation, as well as an indication that the complaint has gone through an established process. Responses should be sensitive.

The complainant should acknowledge that they have understood the answer.

Complaints are treated confidentially. Files are kept confidential. Publishing / sharing information about the complaint cannot be traced to the individual complainant.

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<td>Once recorded and dealt with the content of the complaint must be incorporated into the internal reporting system for the programme. It is important to demonstrate that changes have been made to the project or programmes that reflect the information received via the complaint. If a complaint cannot be resolved satisfactorily at the local level it can then be referred to the Programme Director level. If the complaint meets certain criteria and is not resolved here then it can be referred to the UK Head Office level and if not resolved there then the complaint can be transferred to HAP in Geneva. Part of HAP’s function is to receive complaints about its members if it cannot be resolved internally. The criteria for such a referral would be for example a complaint about Tearfund’s whole system of beneficiary selection or targeting of communities.</td>
<td>Once recorded the changes should be reflecting in the design of the project or programme. If a complaint cannot be resolved satisfactorily at the local level it can then be referred to the Programme Director level.</td>
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**Example of complaints criteria and time frame:**

**Tearfund can** respond to your complaints about:

- the quality and quantity of the relief items that you have received
- the appropriateness of the relief items
- the targeting of the relief items

**Tearfund cannot** respond to your complaints about:

- other NGOs working in the area
- the local or national Government etc.
Section 3

To complain please use one of the 3 options below:
Write your complaint, including your name and address if you would like feedback, and place it in the suggestion box located at X, Y and Z, or
Come to the office and ask to speak to our Accountability Officer, Mr Joe Bloggs, or
Call Mr Joe Bloggs on 12345678

Tearfund aim to give you feedback on your complaint within 10 days.

These two ‘top tips’ below come from Sarah Dilloway (former Area Co-ordinator in Pakistan):

Top tips on ensuring Confidentiality in Complaints Mechanism
- Accountability staff should register complaints in our file but should not share with the wider team or to the community unless deemed necessary.
- Ensure you have a confidential complaint mechanism such as a suggestion box - people may wish to remain anonymous.
- Give the complainant confidential access to the accountability staff such as through phone calls or visiting the office so they can report something without saying it in front of the community.

Top tips on hiring staff to implement beneficiary accountability
- Hire people who know local culture and languages - but this needs to be held in tension with being cautious in hiring people from the villages you work in as this may raise issue of confidentiality and biased treatment.
- It is important to consider gender when hiring accountability officers. If your team is male will they have access to females and vice versa?
- In Pakistan DMT hired one Accountability Officer and one male and one female Accountability Assistant. This may seem like a high number of staff however this programme was very hardware distribution focused. Each programme context and needs should be considered individually.
Step 7 Continually reflect on our learning in order to continually improve (Benchmark 6 Continual Improvement)

Benchmark 6 is about a commitment to continually improve the quality of our work. Whilst at an organisational level Tearfund will update and improve documents that are used in support of its standards and commitments, these can only be improved and updated based on our actual experiences and learning in the field. This step is therefore principally about 2 issues: capturing the learning and then ensuring that it is disseminated in order that the overall quality of our work and our accountability to beneficiaries continues to improve.

- Learning within programmes: Accountability officers’ job descriptions should incorporate capturing lessons learned as a key part of the role. However as the principles of accountability cut across areas of work, it is important to regularly review learning with a broad section of staff, and to encourage the undertaking of external project evaluations whenever funding permits.
- Dissemination of learning: Programme reports and evaluations should reflect on the project’s experiences in seeking to outwork our standards and commitments, and to provide this feedback to Teddington. Case studies should be written for notable approaches and experiences for the benefit of others. If mistakes are made we need to learn from them and share the experiences with the wider organisation, in order that similar mistakes by others in the future are avoided.
- This good practice guide: Many of the lessons learned to date in outworking Beneficiary Accountability are captured in this guide and future versions will continue to reflect new lessons learned to ensure that new learning on accountability continues to be disseminated widely in the programme.
Check list

Step 1 Funds and staff
- Have you set aside a budget line for Accountability, to cover accountability staff and associated costs?
- Do your proposals have a clear rationale of how the accountability system will work and with what resources?
- Are all staff promoting accountability?

Step 2 Understanding Tearfund values and standards
- Have you communicated Tearfund values and standards to all staff?
- Are your staff working in the spirit of these values and standards?

Step 3 Making information on Tearfund and your programme publicly available
- In your programme have you agreed the level of information regarding organisational background, Quality Standards, project plans, progress reports and complaints procedure to be made known to the public?
- Have you agreed what are the best ways of making this information available (eg. information boards, leaflets, public meetings etc).

Step 4 Obtaining consent of beneficiaries and ensuring ongoing participation
- Have you gained consent of the community to carry out the project?
- Have you drawn up Memorandum’s of Understanding between you and the communities where appropriate? (refer to Annex B for an example)
- Do you have structures to solicit ongoing participation from the communities such as beneficiary committees, public meetings, stakeholder interviews, focus groups etc?

Step 5 Induction, appraisal and development of staff
- Have you inducted all your new staff with Tearfund values including the commitment to accountability?
- Do all staff understand the project in order to represent it to others?
- Are you carrying out regular performance reviews and appraisals with all staff?
- Do all staff members have a Personal Development Plan?

Step 6 Complaints Handling
- Have you established an appropriate complaints mechanism which has been agreed with the beneficiaries?
- Are all beneficiaries aware of it and how to access it?
- Are community reps involved in addressing complaints and resolving disputes?
- Are you keeping a record of the complaints received, the responses given and project decisions made?

Step 7 Continual improvement
- Do you have systems to capture learning from the programme?
- Do you share learning with the rest of the team?
- Are you budgeting and planning for external project evaluations?
- Are you feeding back your learning on the various Quality Standards to Tearfund?
News report and case studies illustrating need for and examples of beneficiary accountability

4.1 Abuse in Liberia

This news report highlights in the extreme why NGOs need to engage in beneficiary accountability.

NEWS REPORT AND EXCERPTS FROM A RECENT SAVE THE CHILDREN STUDY. The issue of abuse is not exclusively a problem in Liberia and the issues the news report raises are relevant for all DMT programmes.

MONROVIA, 9 May 2006 (IRIN) - The government of Liberia and the UN peacekeeping mission on Tuesday promised to conduct investigations into a report by British-based charity Save the Children that government workers, peacekeepers and aid workers are giving Liberian girls money, food and favours in return for sex. In its report released this week, Save the Children said officials at camps for displaced Liberians, peacekeepers, government employees and teachers were among those abusing their positions of authority to have sex with girls as young as eight.

The report, "From Camp to Community: Liberia Study on Exploitation of Children", based its finding of underage sex against gifts or cash on investigations late last year in four highly populated communities and some camps for displaced people. Some 300 people were interviewed.

"All of the communities and camp inhabitants described the widespread nature of the problem and the increasing resignation among adults and children that sex in exchange for goods, services and as a means of survival was becoming a more common option for children to support themselves and their families," Save the Children said.

Extracts from the report:

People mostly said that they would report cases of rape to the police, but did not feel that they would get very far reporting cases of underage sex. In some of the camps, people told us the following reasons for not reporting cases of sexual exploitation of children:
They would not know where to report it as the Camp Management Committee and block leaders were themselves involved in it.
They would not want to report NGO staff, as they were concerned that the assistance provided by the NGO might be withdrawn if they did so.

From the focus groups’ discussions, the factors that contribute to the sexual exploitation of children include the inadequacy of levels and types of humanitarian assistance itself, lack of low risk alternative support to livelihoods, poorly-managed system for the distribution and monitoring of assistance. Without their entitlements people are forced to look for money and food elsewhere, thereby exacerbating the problem of sexual exploitation.

Despite HIV and AIDS awareness-raising workshops having taken place in every camp, particularly among the children, we were told by the men and the women that humanitarian agencies doing the training were also involved in the sex trade.

“As for the NGOs, they are carrying out awareness on sexual exploitation, HIV and AIDS and STIs, but during the night hours they are the same people running after these 12 years girls.”

Although people depend on the assistance that NGOs provide such as skills training, HIV and AIDS awareness-raising, teaching on children’s rights etc., everyone said that the presence of NGO staff in the camps exacerbates the problem of sexual exploitation of young girls.
“Having NGOs around increased [sexual exploitation] because of the high wages NGOs paid their workers who are in this ugly behaviour. Most of the NGO workers do not live in the town; they work here and they are the ones who are doing it.

The case study above raises issues that are both relevant to Tearfund DMT teams in relation to the concept of accountability to beneficiaries and are highlighted in this good practice guide. These issues include:

- power imbalance can lead to abuse
- the importance in having adequate service provision to reduce vulnerability to Abuse
- the importance of beneficiary participation and consideration of the protection environment when planning the provision of services, such as latrine siting
- the importance of induction of Tearfund staff on organisational values and policies
- the importance of beneficiaries receiving an explanation of these values and policies
- the need for clear, impartial and safe complaints mechanism
- the need for confidentiality in a beneficiary complaints mechanism
4.2 Case study 1 ‘Communal latrines in Liberia’

A recent project in Liberia proposed to provide household latrines for communities who were resettling back in the villages after the civil war. The team encountered huge resistance to the proposed design. Villagers told the team that they wanted communal block latrines, as this is what they were used to having lived for years in refugee camps, they looked nicer as they were built with concrete blocks and they kept the village looking tidier. Another NGO had built a block latrine in one village on the main road, highly visible for others to see.

It is generally accepted that household latrines are a much better option over communal latrines in a village setting - communal latrines face problems of clear ownership; they may not be kept clean and become unused if they are dirty and unhygienic, they may not be used if they are a long way from the home, once they are full they won’t be replaced etc.

What should the project team do - agree to communal latrines even though it is less technically advisable or insist on individual latrines?

It is important for the project team to sensitise the community on the public health benefits of individual latrines rather than passively accepting the communities’ wishes for communal latrines. True participation requires all parties to be fully informed and this process may take some time. However at the end of this process if the community does not agree on individual latrines then they should not be built because the project will not be sustainable and the community will not own and may not use the latrines.

Accountability doesn’t mean passive acceptance of everything a community asks for - sensitisation and dialogue are also required as this case study illustrates.

4.3 Case study 2 ‘Sharing financial information in Spin Boldak, Afghanistan’

Spin Boldak is a small town on the southern border of Afghanistan with Pakistan. Tearfund’s Disaster Management Team (DMT) had been working there for the previous two years, with IDPs displaced from within Afghanistan and with refugees on the Pakistan side of the border. As the Afghan government was closing down the IDP camps in Spin Boldak, the project was supporting the integration of IDPs into the host community in Spin Boldak as an alternative to the IDPs moving back towards Kandahar to live, if remaining in Spin Boldak was their preference.

As part of this support the local school was to be extended and renovated, which would provide benefit for both the host community and the IDPs. When it came to project implementation the building and renovation work being carried out was above the specifications planned for and budgeted in the project proposal. This was partly due to raised expectations of the school authorities, who influenced what work was carried out, even if it varied from the original plans. Six classrooms were completed to a standard much higher than Tearfund had funding for.

When it became clear that the project was overspending the project manager halted the project in order that a review be carried out, but this decision was made without reference to the school authorities. The school then became unsure as to what was happening and became suspicious of Tearfund, as other agencies had in the past not fulfilled their commitments for planned work. They feared that funds for the school were going to be used elsewhere.

The school would only allow work to restart if Tearfund agreed to complete the other classrooms to the same higher standard. As part of the discussions the budget for direct project costs was provided to the school authorities, something that had not been done previously. Negotiations with the Ministry of Education concluded with work restarting with a compromise position of remaining classrooms being built to a specification higher than originally planned but lower than the first six classrooms.
As a result of the sharing of budget information, the community who had a distrust of NGOs from negative past experiences, was able to see that Tearfund was being transparent and saw for the first time that only finite sums of money had been given for this project. They more clearly understood that if the specifications for the classrooms increased then there would have to be savings made in other areas.

As well as improving security and acceptance for the project staff working on the ground in what is an insecure environment, Tearfund also discovered that one of its own staff had been involved in fraud through the procurement process. The amounts were small but were probably known by suppliers in the town. Disclosure of budget information meant that the school authorities were able to see costing and to challenge these when they looked inappropriate compared to actual local costs of materials.
4.4 Case study 3. Beneficiary Accountability in Pakistan - Lessons Learned

Introduction
Tearfund’s response to the Kashmir earthquake in 2005 to 2006 was one of Tearfund’s first opportunities to formalise how beneficiary accountability works in practice and to understand how we truly can be accountable to beneficiaries in our emergency operational programmes. Accountability is defined by the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) as “the means by which power is used responsibly.” In emergency relief operations there is a huge power imbalance between relief workers and beneficiaries. NGOs have power because they control essential services and they can be in danger of behaving as if they are accountable only to their donors, rather than to the people whom they serve. It is often in the early stages of an emergency response where basic principles of accountability are dispensed with. Therefore NGOs must seek ways to empower beneficiaries through such mechanisms as information sharing, participation, transparency and inviting feedback from beneficiaries. All of these help to ensure an NGO’s accountability to their beneficiaries. This case study aims to lay out how the response in Kashmir tried to meet various accountability benchmarks, as laid out in the HAP standard 2007\(^4\), what the challenges were of doing this and what worked well.

Goals and Objectives
On the 8\(^{th}\) October 2005 an earthquake struck the Kashmir region of Pakistan, killing approximately 73,000 people and leaving an estimated 3.3 million homeless. The region historically suffers very harsh winters with night-time temperatures regularly reaching sub-zero. The risk of potential human loss due to hypothermia was significant. The main aim of the programme was to reduce suffering and the effects of winter for the earthquake affected communities. At the start of their operation Tearfund set up a programme to supply emergency shelter as well as meet the water and sanitation needs of the communities in Bagh district, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

The emergency phase of the programme comprised shelter and latrine kit distributions. Each shelter kit included plastic and iron sheeting, blankets and tools, and each latrine kit comprised of latrine slabs, plastic sheeting and tools. The building skills of the communities were used in constructing temporary shelters and they were further able to use the distributed materials to reconstruct long-term housing once the winter had passed. The rehabilitation phase of the project, once the initial emergency of winter survival had passed, included rehabilitation of water supply, public health promotion and earthquake risk reduction: e.g. promotion of earthquake proof building designs, community-based earthquake contingency planning, etc.

Tearfund was committed to emphasising its accountability to beneficiaries through both the emergency and reconstruction phases of the programme.

At the time of Tearfund’s response to the Pakistan earthquake, the team were working according to the HAP principles\(^5\). These were only subsequently developed into the HAP benchmarks and this case study retrospectively analyses the lessons learned according to those benchmarks – in particularly benchmarks 2,3,4 and 5 as is detailed below.

\(^{4}\) www.hapinternational.org
\(^{5}\) www.hapinternational.org
Benchmark 2 - Making Information Publicly Available
Information was made publicly available in a number of formats: on notice boards, on posters, through FM radio, through verbal communication from community leaders and through verbal communication by staff at distributions and public health meetings (sometimes using megaphones). Information was given about Tearfund as an organisation, as well as details of the project such as beneficiary selection criteria, beneficiary entitlements (such as the content and usage of the shelter packs, latrine kits, etc), how the project would be implemented, even diagrams of schematics for the water systems that were to be constructed. The communities were given this information from the outset of the programme. The communities were made aware of the intended role that beneficiaries would play in the implementation of activities, as well as how the feedback mechanism for suggestions and complaints would work.

All information was given in the local language when appropriate.

The Accountability Officers, who were employed to specifically outwork beneficiary accountability at the field level, were present at all distributions as well as regularly making visits to different Public Health Education and water committees, engaging with the beneficiaries and encouraging them to make use of the feedback mechanisms. Community members were provided with relevant phone numbers to contact Tearfund staff and they were able to get updates on a daily basis if required. Leaflets containing information about Tearfund’s values, token distribution criteria (tokens were later redeemed for shelter kits) and information on how to use the materials to build a strong shelter were made available in the Urdu language.

Tearfund gave feedback to all interested parties (including beneficiaries) on the compliance with HAP principles, after every shelter kit distribution in a village. The number of shelter kits distributed and the details of the materials were shown in a written report and made available to the community.

Benchmark 3 - Beneficiary Participation in Decision making
The community was encouraged to actively participate throughout the project cycle through involvement in the following areas:

Consultation: Community members were consulted on a variety of details, from the shelter design and tools needed for construction, to the prioritisation of project activities and target areas. For example the beneficiary said that the basic tool kit should include a hammer and thereafter distributions included a hammer. They were involved in decision-making regarding the positioning of distribution points and the method of distributions, as well as identifying community elders, chairman zakat committees, teachers, doctors and religious heads.

Beneficiary committees: The community formed beneficiary committees who were given the responsibility of monitoring the projects and representing Tearfund in the villages. They were selected according to criteria which were publicly posted on the notice board, such as ensuring that there was a fair representation of different tribes within the group. Committee members had to be impartial, so that no political, tribal or other conflicting interests would affect Tearfund helping the most vulnerable. They were asked to monitor and report on how distributions went. Their feedback was used to improve future project activities.

Voluntary involvement & use of resources: Community members were encouraged to participate on a voluntary basis, in arranging for the offloading and distributing of shelter kit materials. They were kept informed of the number of shelter kits available, and were encouraged to use their own resources - where available - to help build temporary shelters.

Benchmark 4 - Appropriately competent Staff
The Accountability staff were recruited according to job descriptions which were drafted specifically for these new positions. They were briefed on Beneficiary Accountability when they started their
roles and received periodic training throughout the life of the project. This training included Tearfund’s’ values regarding beneficiaries, what accountability means, and methods of being accountable. Needs based training was offered to staff as particular needs were identified in the project team.

In addition, all Tearfund project staff were given training on accountability through staff workshops and individual inductions. HAP International staff were available to conduct some of the early workshops and the dedicated Tearfund accountability staff ran further workshops and inductions later in the programme.

**Benchmark 5 - Complaints Handling Procedures**

An important part of accountability to beneficiaries was establishing the complaints handling mechanism. This was a flexible and safe mechanism allowing beneficiaries to complain in ways that were appropriate for them. For some this meant going in person to the Tearfund office, others would write notes and drop them in the suggestion boxes whilst others complained verbally directly to the accountability officers. All verbal comments were recorded so they could be addressed in the same way as written complaints.

Complaints were all recorded in a database and were dealt with as soon as possible. The Accountability Officers reported the response back to the community as appropriate. For some complaints the Accountability Officers followed up the complaint with further research to discover how serious the complaint was. For example after the initial soap distribution, some complaints were received through the suggestion boxes and direct to the Health Facilitators that the soap was making people itch. The Accountability Officers followed up with questions to the community to understand the extent of the problem. The logistics department then liaised with the soap supplier to provide a sensitive variety of soap. The beneficiaries were satisfied with the quality of the second soap provided and were pleased that Tearfund had listened to their complaint.

Examples of complaints and how they were handled

“**We could not get a token from Tearfund**” - (tokens were later redeemed for shelter kits) some beneficiaries didn’t fulfil the criteria, some did not get the information about token distribution or were not present when tokens were distributed. Although the criteria for token distribution had been explained to community members, new ways of informing the community were utilised following the complaints. Village leaders were asked to pass on relevant information, more visits were made to the affected villages to explain the process, and local FM radio was used to deliver Tearfund messages.

“**Influential community groups who are sitting on committees are misleading Tearfund**” - Following this complaint a guideline for establishing committees was drafted which included criteria to ensure impartial representation of communities. New committees were enabled to become more impartial and represented a cross-section of all community groups. Tearfund also ensured that vulnerable groups were able to actively participate in the whole process.

“**As Tearfund is working in our area no other NGO is willing to provide shelter here. Therefore Tearfund should provide shelter material to every household**” - As a result of this complaint, Tearfund shared the list of beneficiaries from the target villages with another humanitarian agency working in the area who was able to provide shelter materials to those who hadn’t received the Tearfund shelter kits.

“**The army compensation lists used by Tearfund for beneficiary lists do not cover all the families**” - The communities were asked to identify those who were not on the list but were in need and extra shelter kits were provided to those families.

“**The Corrugated Galvanised Iron (CGI) sheets provided are difficult to use - we would prefer to have shorter lengths of sheeting**” - The actual area of sheeting being requested was no different, they were simply requesting a higher quantity of smaller area sheets per kit which made it easier for them to construct shelters. Future distributions used the shorter length sheets.
Conclusions

Advantages
The accountability activities gave the community a greater sense of ownership. Because Tearfund listened to their suggestions and complaints, they felt their opinions were valued and respected which in turn gave them a greater sense of dignity. The feedback was consequently used to facilitate and inform necessary changes to the project design to make it more relevant to the needs of the community.

The relationship between the community and Tearfund was closer because of the increased interaction between them. This improved Tearfund staff security in the project area. Furthermore items of value such as pipes could be stored safely by the community.

As there was greater trust between the community and Tearfund, innovative project design was more accepted by the community, even when the impact of the project might not be immediately obvious, such as disaster preparedness plans.

As the communities were better informed about the project design early on, they were able to be instrumental in identifying and involving the most vulnerable: widows, orphans and children. Beneficiary selection is notoriously difficult so the communities’ willingness to engage was essential to the successful identification of the most vulnerable beneficiaries of the project. Being better informed from the outset resulted in a higher level of engagement.

Challenges
A greater level of flexibility is needed as a result of establishing accountability systems, as it is necessary to respond to problems and suggestions identified by changing the design and implementation of the project.

Running a complaints handling procedure means an increased workload for all staff, not only those who are directly responsible for accountability activities. Making changes to the project and responding to the issues brought by the community can take time, energy and requires planning.

There needs to be budget flexibility to be able to respond fully to some of the suggestions raised by beneficiaries. For example where the most vulnerable are not able to fully access the project benefits, there needs to be extra resources available. Female headed houses for example struggled to access and then use the shelter kits effectively, but with flexibility in the budget someone could have been hired to assist them.

It can be difficult to hear the voice of the most marginalised in the community. In this situation, women were not permitted to be part of beneficiary committees and therefore other channels needed to be established such as through the Health Facilitators to enable women to be represented.

At times influential groups in the beneficiary committees tried to negatively influence the programme through the consultation process. This, along with the monitoring and response to complaints, meant more work was created for the team.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations
Despite the challenges of implementing beneficiary accountability, the benefits that resulted from investing in beneficiary accountability systems far outweighed the challenges experienced. The following are the key recommendations drawn from the accountability work in Kashmir:

1. All staff members should be trained on accountability and the implementation of the HAP standard, so they fully understand the context and their responsibilities to the systems. It is particularly important to stress that accountability is part of everybody’s role.
2. Accountability activities should be included in the project proposal to build the trust of donors and reflect the importance of accountability in Tearfund. This would also benefit project staff as they would have a clearer understanding of the requirements of the accountability process and where it is most effective in the project cycle.

3. Having dedicated accountability personnel in both the office and the field proved invaluable and provided the capacity needed to deliver on Tearfund’s accountability commitments. They were able to prioritise listening to beneficiaries and advocate on behalf of the beneficiaries at a very pressured time. The irreplaceable nature of these roles means such positions should always be incorporated into the project budget. Dedicated personnel should be recruited at the start of the project to ensure that accountability are included in planning right from the beginning.

4. Accountability personnel should have excellent facilitation skills and should be able to be neutral in community discussions. It is important therefore that they are not from the specific village or tribe where the project is working. The officers employed in this programme were from Kashmir but not from the specific area where the Tearfund projects were being implemented.
4.5 Case study 4: Medair. Beneficiary Accountability Programme, Indonesia (shared with kind permission from MedAir).

Introduction
During Summer 2006, Medair set up a post-tsunami water & sanitation programme in Aceh province, Indonesia. One of the key early challenges was gaining the trust and confidence of the local community, who reported they had been poorly consulted and had little involvement in NGO project activities.

The Medair Beneficiary Accountability Programme was part of our response to this issue; a feedback mechanism that would enable beneficiaries to participate in the design and implementation of the project, as well as providing a means for people to complain and give constructive criticism to help us improve. To ensure the system was appropriate for the Indonesia setting we designed the system with our National staff and then consulted with beneficiaries before implementing.

We deliberately kept the system simple, inviting beneficiaries and community members to tell us their complaints and feedback in person, in writing or by phone. We committed to respond to all complaints within 7 days.

Staffing
A Project Manager, independent of the project outputs plus a Project Assistant working 3 days a week to proactively encourage and enable people to give Medair feedback. A female project assistant was recruited, in order that local women would be more encouraged to offer their feedback.

Implementation
The initiative was introduced at the first meetings with the community during October 2006, in all the locations where Medair proposed to work. A complaint we heard time and again in the early meetings was that NGO’s were “all talk and no action”. This feedback gave us a springboard to launch the initiative by explaining that the whole point of the process was:

- To listen, as opposed to talking to beneficiaries
- To take action

Early ideas included feedback forms and confidential ‘drop boxes’. In addition, people requested access to the mechanism by phone, we therefore included the Project Assistants phone number on both the complaints form and on a poster on all notice-boards.

Training
In December 2006 all Medair staff received a briefing about the new feedback mechanism, including what to do if they received a complaint either in the field or in the office. From January 2007 this training was incorporated into the monthly staff induction course.

Results to date
The Project Assistant records all complaints received on a database showing date received, response given within 7 days and any further action necessary. As of March 2007, there have been 47 complaints received, with 32 now resolved.

Challenges
- Reluctance of the community to engage with yet another NGO
- Many pre-existing focus groups
- Lack of ownership of beneficiary accountability by our own Medair Managers

Benefits
- Increased participation by the community
• Improved security for the Medair team
• Transparency - the system enabled people to question us about all aspects of the programme.
• Recruitment - highly skilled staff who had worked for other NGO’s were genuinely motivated to work for Medair because of our commitment to beneficiary accountability
• Increased motivation - especially when positive feedback received e.g. when the well rehabilitation project was approaching completion, 18 written compliments were received, which provided great encouragement to the Water Sanitation team.

Future plans
Over the next 6 months we plan to introduce the system to our new project on Nias Island and expand and develop the programme in Aceh in the following ways:
• To formally acknowledge receipt of all claims
• To post complaint and response statistics on our notice-boards
• To produce business cards for the Project Assistant, which will have the project aims on one side and contact details on the other.
• To introduce a form that the beneficiary signs when their complaint has been resolved
• Get feedback from children in local schools where we are implementing Water -Sanitation projects

Conclusion
The beneficiary accountability system works effectively because it was built into Medair’s programme from the very beginning. It has already proved a key tool in maintaining our good relationship with the community and helps us all to keep our focus on those we are here to serve.

Fiona Daborn, Aceh, March 2007 (taken from HAP Newsletter Feb 2007)
4.6 Case study 5: How to distribute a herd of camels - learning from North Kenya (Published on HAP website).

How to distribute a herd of camels – learning from Tearfund, North Kenya

The prolonged drought affecting the Horn of Africa has threatened the lives of 11 million people in the region, 3 million of who live in Kenya. Tearfund has been responding to the drought in Northern Kenya, Marsabit District, since June 2006. The current programme is focusing on the longer-term needs of local communities, and includes a project to restock camels in ten villages.

Like in many other programmes, local reference groups were first set up to identify the criteria for selecting project beneficiaries. Based on this, the community livestock committees, in consultation with community representatives put together a list of who should receive a camel.

However, unlike many programmes, Tearfund North Kenya strived to ensure the process of selection was transparent and gave communities the opportunity to feed back on the beneficiary list. The list was posted on the Tearfund community notice board, for all to see. The community was given seven days to raise any issue related to this list and several routes through which a concern could be raised were provided, including via the community livestock committee, the local leaders or via the Beneficiary Reference Group.

The Beneficiary Reference Groups (BRGs) are comprised of five community members, and were established by Tearfund as an independent group to deal with concerns and complaints raised by the community. For example, in Ngurunit, a dispute erupted between a group of women seeking to include an orphan on the camel beneficiary list and a group of elders who insisted another woman was more deserving. The local BRG were instrumental in mediating between the women and elders, suggesting a solution to Tearfund which was later successfully adopted.

During the final stage of restocking, Tearfund also ensured that individual camels were allocated to beneficiaries through a fair and transparent process (so as, for example, to minimise the risk of discrimination over who received the pregnant or smaller camels). Each camel was numbered and, in a public ceremony, the beneficiaries were asked to pick a piece of paper from a hat – the number on the paper corresponded to the camel that was then given to them.

The feedback from the community on the camel distribution project has been positive so far. There were high levels of satisfaction with the clarity, lack of bias and transparency of the process. The restocking project continues and 14 more camels are on the way for distribution in Namarei.

HAP Field Team visiting Kor, North Kenya
10th August 2007
4.7 Case study 6 - Beneficiary Accountability involving children in Zimbabwe

ZOE is a Tearfund partner in Zimbabwe that was approached to pilot a downwards accountability project with their relief feeding programme. The intention was to work with them to develop a methodology to ensure accountability to their beneficiaries. Zimbabwe has been experiencing increasing economic and political decline over the past seven years. The combination of the breakdown in basic services, food shortages and HIV prevalence mean that in 2007, Zimbabwe has the highest number of orphans per capita in the world and life expectancy is just 34 for women and 37 for men. The result is an increasing numbers of child-headed households who have very limited means of survival.

The food shortages, caused largely by the land redistribution policies of the government, have been exacerbated by erratic weather conditions, shortages of agricultural inputs such as seed and fertiliser, and hyperinflation. Food aid is an increasingly politicised activity.

ZOE work with local churches mobilising care and support for orphans and vulnerable children. Using a network of 600 churches they provide care for approximately 75,000 orphans through local volunteers. Within each area there is a coordinator who is responsible for providing support to the volunteers, reporting to ZOE and acting as the link between ZOE and the volunteers. Over the last 3 years, ZOE has provided food aid to the families who are most vulnerable and provided all the logistics while distributions have been undertaken by the volunteers and coordinators from the different churches. This has been in addition to the core project of providing home-based care and support for the children and their families.

Pilot project
The pilot project was integrated into ZOE’s feeding programme which ran for 6 months from April to September 2007. Three sites were selected: a rural, peri-urban and an urban area. There was considerable variation in each site which is why they were chosen. For example, the urban area had beneficiaries from 15 different churches but the rural area had only one local church. The purpose was to develop mechanisms within the constraints of the Zimbabwean environment that would ensure beneficiary accountability and which could be rolled out to the rest of the project in future.

Approach
Using Tearfund’s guidelines for Beneficiary Accountability the Monitoring & Evaluations (M&E) officer for ZOE followed a series of steps: meeting with church leaders, coordinators and volunteers to introduce the idea and ensure compliance; developing posters containing information about the project in local language (Ndebele); meeting with the beneficiaries to discuss the project and solicit input; encouraging the participation of the beneficiaries including the children; introducing a feedback box for complaints. He also started children’s groups to ensure participation; providing regular feedback to the beneficiaries.

Challenges and lessons learnt

The church leaders were quite opposed to the idea to begin with. Consultations with the beneficiaries resulted in the distribution site for the urban area being moved to a neutral location serving beneficiaries from the whole area. Previously, distribution was from individual churches which meant that those churches lost credit for the programme. In addition, pastors were initially suspicious of ZOE’s motivation and felt like they were being scrutinised. In response the M&E officer invested considerable time answering questions and explaining the purpose of the pilot. He was also greatly assisted by one of the pastors who ‘championed’ the idea. They were further backed up by the beneficiaries themselves.

Implementing the accountability structures meant that ZOE had to take a more active and visible
role.
ZOE’s mission is to empower churches to care for orphans - they do not aim to promote themselves. In most cases, beneficiaries are not even aware of ZOE seeing the church as the provider of the assistance they receive. Implementing the accountability structure required involvement of ZOE officers in order to provide a neutral contact point. A possible solution is to set up accountability committees to oversee distributions and to provide mechanisms of feedback. Ideally they should include beneficiaries, church members and members of the wider community.

Publicising the programme drew suspicion and questions from authorities.
There were attempts at politicising the food distribution in the urban area by authorities. This highlighted the need to choose the audience carefully in a context like Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, it is not possible to be completely transparent with the programme but rather to involve those members of the community who are known and trusted. This has obvious problems and complications.

Involving the children was particularly difficult in the rural area.
In rural areas of Zimbabwe, children are taught that they should not question adults. Therefore even in groups of children only, they were very reluctant to openly engage with the process. This is a cultural constraint that needed specific consideration. The best method to solve this problem was to encourage the children to write out comments for feedback and post them into the box (fortunately, Zimbabwe has quite a high literacy rate). This ensured anonymity and allowed the children to participate.

Ensuring feedback mechanisms that are accessible and anonymous was difficult.
In spite of the high level of literacy, not all children or elderly people are able to write but offering a telephone number is not a viable alternative in Zimbabwe. That leaves reporting complaints to the M&E officer but this removes anonymity.

Successes
Publishing the selection criteria immediately uncovered a number of abuses. The most significant was one of the pastors was taking food for himself even though he didn’t fit the criteria. Beneficiaries pointed this out to the M&E officer who challenged the pastor directly. His name was removed from the list allowing a more needy family to be included. In the words of one of the pastors from that area, ‘It benefits those who are supposed to be benefiting’.

ZOE’s M&E officer started the conversations with pastors by offering an apology from ZOE for not having been more transparent in the past. This humility made it difficult for the church leaders to disagree with the idea.

Volunteers, coordinators, beneficiaries and pastors all admitted that the pilot restored the dignity of the beneficiaries. ‘They were made to feel like beggars before because they collected food from the pastor’s house. Now they own the project.’ One Pastor added and one of the volunteers said ‘We have seen a vast difference. The children are at greater liberty to be involved.’

When questioned, most of the beneficiaries knew the selection criteria, they understood their options to provide feedback or complaints, they knew the time period of the project and what they were entitled to. They also testified to their involvement in making changes to the programme, e.g. they asked for the distribution point to be moved to a more convenient location in a rural area.

Recommendations
1. In politically sensitive areas, only display programme information while distribution is taking place. Consider carefully what information to share based on an assessment of the context.
2. Involve children in the programme - it’s appreciated by them as well as their guardians.
3. Use children’s groups led by teenagers to encourage younger children, who may be afraid to speak to an adult, to contribute. Children are very honest and if approached sensitively will give very clear information.
4. Place an emphasis on the value of beneficiaries with all stakeholders. This not only ensures their dignity but also ensures the correct focus and can help to diffuse difficulties with authorities.

5. Start with a pilot which allows you to iron out the problems before you try to roll it out across the whole project. It also gives time for staff to understand and support the idea.

6. Try to triangulate information received through the feedback mechanisms. This is particularly important in politically sensitive areas and when dealing with children. Incorrect information may be given on purpose so try to corroborate serious allegations.
Table 1: Some possible practical implications of a fundamental reorientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Reoriented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary accountability</td>
<td>Donors and supporters</td>
<td>Affected population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of responsibility for accountability to the affected population</td>
<td>Agency field staff</td>
<td>The board or trustees of an agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the affected population</td>
<td>Aid recipients</td>
<td>Controlling aid policies and priorities within the response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention logic</td>
<td>Agency mission and mandate</td>
<td>Needs of the affected population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustee or Board priority</td>
<td>Strategic direction of agency, funding trends, compliance with legislation, financial honesty and others.</td>
<td>All of this plus accountability to affected population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission and mandate</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Changes to give primacy to supporting the affected population's own priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with the affected population</td>
<td>Consultation (at least the ideal)</td>
<td>Ownership of the aid response by the affected population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority skills for agency staff</td>
<td>Narrow technical skills</td>
<td>Skills in community relations as well as technical skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency team composition</td>
<td>Specialist teams with a single technical focus</td>
<td>Multi-skilled teams with the skills to work with community, local and national structures, as well as to support good quality work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication department priority</td>
<td>Communication with potential donors</td>
<td>Communication with affected population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of affected population in annual reports</td>
<td>Human interest stories</td>
<td>Opinion surveys from the affected population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information flow to affected population</td>
<td>Occasional meetings, Signboards in English for donors</td>
<td>Signboards in local languages giving project, budgets, and details of where to complain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance standards</td>
<td>Based around some objective target agreed by agencies</td>
<td>Reformulated to put beneficiary satisfaction at the core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary quality standard</td>
<td>Sphere or other standards using universal benchmarks or indicators</td>
<td>Affected population satisfaction with an agency's efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of programme determined by</td>
<td>End of funding</td>
<td>Whether the local community still needs the agency's help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priorities</td>
<td>Set by agency management</td>
<td>Set by affected population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance standards</td>
<td>Based around objective measurement</td>
<td>Reformulated to put beneficiary satisfaction at the core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid modality</td>
<td>Mostly in-kind, limited cash</td>
<td>Extensive use of cash if markets are working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational modality</td>
<td>Individual specialist agency</td>
<td>Consortia of agencies to reflect the range of priorities of the affected population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending plans</td>
<td>Agency management</td>
<td>Community committee advised by the agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project funding pattern</td>
<td>Discrete project funding</td>
<td>Funding envelopes for priorities defined by the community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This sample SOP which can be freely adapted to suit the situation in each project area. The aim is to ensure the participation and informed consent of beneficiaries in a formal way.

Standard Operating Procedures for Pakistan
(To be applicable after approval from a specific community)

Composition of the committee
1. The committee would consist of at least 4 members including at least one female representative.
2. The members of the committee should preferably be educated, social, energetic and respectable members of a community keeping in mind their maximum religious, tribal and political acceptability in a community.
3. The members of the committee should be knowledgeable on sources and pipe systems to provide good initial guidance on what exists.
4. Members must include representation from any minority group according to the proportion of that minority in that community.

Responsibilities of Tearfund
1. Tearfund would arrange regular meetings with the Water Committee.
2. Funding the water supply rehabilitation scheme designed in consultation with this community including, sharing of spring-water test results during spring surveys ‘with retrospective effect’.
3. Taking approval of the scheme from the community through the Water Committee.
4. Implementing the construction activities through a contractor and monitoring of these activities.
5. Transporting the construction material to the point; nearest to the said village and accessible through motor vehicle.
6. Providing post completion water supply scheme maintenance training.
7. Providing maintenance material.

Responsibilities of Water Committee
1. The committee members would attend the above mentioned regular meetings and would ensure the voice of females through female representative/s.
2. The committee will provide free-of-cost land for construction of water storage/s.
3. Provision of manpower to transport the construction material from the above mentioned point to the point of use.
4. Providing protection to water storage/s during and after its construction.
5. Providing manpower for unskilled labour of digging, levelling, finishing etc. (need of more specific activities instead of etc)
6. Post completion maintenance of the water supply rehabilitation scheme.

Responsibilities of the Community
1. Cooperation with Tearfund staff in selection of committee members
2. Cooperation with the committee members
Annex C
Useful Publications and resource, people and organisations

The HAP Standard can be read in full in folder 04.3.2.2 of Briefing and Ref Docs.

Tearfund’s draft Accountability Action Plan can be found in folder 04.3.2.3 of Briefing and Ref Docs.

HAP-I Website www.hapinternational.org is regularly updated and has a section on ‘field reports’ which has HAP research examples from the field. It also contains some training materials.

The Humanitarian Accountability Report 2005 (includes good practice case study from DMT Pakistan available for free down load from www.hapinternational.org)

Mango - Financial accountability: www.whocounts.org see paper “Who Counts? Financial Reporting to Beneficiaries: Examples of Good Practice” (can be found in folder 06.1.4 of Briefing and Ref Docs)

The ECB Good Enough Guide - Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies is a useful resource. It is a set of basic guidelines on how to measure impact and how to be accountable in emergencies. It contains some simple tools. It can be found in folder 4.3.2.4 of Briefing and Ref Docs.

The IASG Sexual Exploitation Action Plan is a useful set of principles/code of conduct worth reading in regard to how to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse by our staff in humanitarian emergencies. It can be found in folder folder 4.3.2.4 of Briefing and Ref Docs.

Additional learning on accountability from DMT Pakistan can be found in folder 4.3.2.4 of Briefing and Ref Docs.

One World Trust are carrying out a study into humanitarian accountability and have information on this at http://www.oneworldtrust.org