Real-life story

• An organization working in the health sector in Bangladesh after Sidr hit in 2007 was committed to be accountable to the people affected by the cyclone. It has not however described what this means, to what standards the organization has committed and how these will be put in practice. As a result, staff were a bit confused: they have heard about certain standards such as Sphere or HAP but are not clear about what they are. Most staff also thought that accountability, but also equity and inclusion, are the responsibility of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer and don’t focus on these aspects in their day-to-day activities as they were extremely busy with their work already. After all, more than 15 provinces were affected, the estimated death tolls was put close to 5,000 people and the total damages were nearing $450mil.

Question

• What is missing here? What could the organization do to make things more clear for staff?
“The organisation sets out the commitments that it will be held accountable for, and how they will be delivered.”

• Establish an accountability framework that:
  – Identifies stakeholders and commitments
  – Is approved by leadership, with milestones for each commitment

• Set up a management system that:
  – Clarifies management roles & responsibilities,
  – Ensures good use of resources
  – Involves staff in decision-making
  – Enables continuous improvement.
Real-life story

• In Haiti, after the earthquake in 2010, a lot of staff were hired very promptly after the earthquake in order to respond as quickly as possible to the needs of the affected populations. Some staff just signed their contracts and were sent immediately to the field.

• Nine months after the earthquake, the following situation happened:
Nine months after the earthquake. Garline is sitting by her small tent, drying her essential papers and photos. Yesterday someone stole all her money from her tent.

I can’t go on anymore. Please come and help me, God!

A man approaches.....

I am a staff member of an NGO and I come to give you a big favour. I have a house for you. I only need your Birth Certificate and you only have to pay 2500 Gourd. It is almost for free. Imagine, your own house.

Is it true? Do you have a house for me? But I don’t have 2500 Gourd. Yesterday someone robbed me. In these rotten tents I can’t lock anything away.

Oo, Rotten tents! Never look a gift horse in the mouth! It’s my organization who gave you this tent. How dare you to complain about it. If you didn’t have this tent you would be in an even worse situation. Aren’t you ashamed?

Humm, a beautiful girl, with no money to pay for her house... that is a big problem... but maybe we can “arrange” something. You are beautiful girl and I’m a good man.

No! Stop! Please don’t touch me!
Question

• What could have prevented this situation?
“The organisation ensures that staff have competencies that enable them to meet the organisation’s commitments.”

- Define, document and support:
  - The knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes that staff need to meet the commitments, including responsibilities of staff by linking to job description and performance evaluations

- Have a staff code of conduct that:
  - Defines exploitation and abuse (including SEA), cultural sensitivity, and responsibility to report abuse.
  - Is understood by staff

- Continually develop staff
  - So that commitments are met more effectively.
Real-life story

- Zwet Htet Mhn was four months when he became ill with a fever. His mother, Thant Thant Myint, was worried and approached the midwife at the Set San Rural Health Centre. Concerned about Zwet Htet Mhn’s respiratory condition, she referred him to the hospital where he received care and was discharged after five days. Thant Thant Myint didn’t know the treatment would be free of charge until the midwife informed her, after Zwet Htet Mhn’s hospital admittance. To cover the costs, she had borrowed K20,000 from neighbours at an interest rate of K600 per day. In total, the drug and meal costs, plus a small donation to the hospital cost K30,000, which was refunded on the day of discharge. The only cost born by Thant Thant Myint was K2,000 in interest payments on the initial sum borrowed.

Question

- This true story is ending well but could have ended very differently. What could have been done differently in this particular situation?
“The organisation ensures that the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders have access to timely, relevant and clear information about the organisation and its activities.”

- Define and document:
  - What information shall be shared and how
  - What information shall not be shared and why

- Share information appropriate to needs, such as:
  - Background and contact details, accountability framework, code of conduct, complaints procedure, objectives & expected results, financial summary, summaries of evaluations and progress reports, criteria for selecting target groups, and results from participatory processes.

- Adapt the way information is shared to the local context:
  - So that language, format and media are appropriate for, accessible to and easily understood by people it aims to assist
Real-life story

In support of the distribution of long-lasting insecticide treated bed nets (LLIN) under the National Malaria Control Program (NMCP) to the vulnerable villages in the Bago Region Regional Officers (malaria) and Township Medical Officers (TMO) invited village leaders, community volunteers and basic health staff to planning meetings on how the LLIN could be distributed to vulnerable communities, and how particularly remote communities could be reached. Based on suggestions from the community, the NMCP successfully distributed over 200,000 LLIN within the limited budget that they had available.

Questions

• What do you think was the main reason why the NMCP was successful in distributing LLIN?
IN FOCUS: AEI

BENCHMARK 4: PARTICIPATION

“The organisation listens to the people it aims to assist, incorporating their views and analysis in programme decisions.”

• Define and document processes that allow you to:
  – Identify target groups & representatives, and how to enable women, men, boys, and girls to participate.

• Adapt these processes to local context so that:
  – Appropriate stakeholders can provide feedback and influence the initial assessment, program design, implementation, and monitoring & evaluation.

• Ensure that dialogue takes place and is adapted to the changing environment
  – At the very minimum, informed consent shall be obtained for the action.
Real-life story

- As part of its food distribution activities to people affected by Cyclone Nargis, an INGO parked a vehicle to serve as a mobile information center near the distribution point in each village. Through this information center, affected community members were invited to provide feedback and concerns related to the food distribution project. Staff were on hand to provide immediate response to issues or grievances when relevant, and processes were established to forward concerns to appropriate persons in situations when immediate response was not possible. This system helped to save time for staff in the field and in the area office, by identifying gaps in coverage, and sharing suggestions on how to improve food distribution, and helped the service provider to reach more than 100 families whose needs would otherwise have been overlooked.

Questions

- How useful was this feedback system? Does your organization have a similar system in place? What are the benefits? What are the challenges?
“The organisation enables the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders to raise complaints and receive a response through an effective, accessible and safe process.”

- Establish a procedure that:
  - Defines who it is for, its purpose & limitations,
  - Explains how to raise a complaint and how it should be responded to
  - Guarantees confidentiality, non-retaliation, and a safe referral process.

- Take into account local preferences when adapting the procedure to a local context

- Ensure the procedure is understood and supported by staff
Real-life story

• In order to prevent mosquito-borne infections such as malaria and dengue an organization distributed long-lasting insecticide treated mosquito nets (LLINs) to communities in a mountainous region of Kayin State in 2009. During a post-distribution field visit, the organization was surprised to learn that communities were using the nets… as fishing nets! Community members didn’t see the need to sleep under the nets as they thought that there were no mosquitos – and therefore no mosquito-borne diseases – in their area due to the cold weather. After receiving this honest and useful feedback, the organization reviewed and intensified its health education awareness activities regarding the prevalence of malaria in the Kayin State and the usefulness of LLINs in malaria prevention. Over time, communities gradually started to sleep under the nets, understanding how important this simple practice was in preventing malaria.

Questions

• Good accountability practices have been observed here. Which ones are they? Some also need to be strengthened; which ones are they?
“The organisation learns from experience to continually improve its performance.”

- Define and document processes to learn effectively:
  - Including monitoring, evaluations, and complaints
- Regularly monitor performance:
  - In relation to the accountability framework, staff competencies, sharing information, enabling participation, handling complaints, and learning
- In the scope of evaluations:
  - Include an objective to assess progress in delivering the accountability framework
  - Include the people you aim to assist in evaluations!
### Benchmark 1: Establishing and Delivering on Commitments
- The organization sets out the commitments that it will be held accountable for, and how they will be delivered.

### Benchmark 2: Staff Competency
- The organization ensures that staff have competencies that enable them to meet the organization’s commitments.

### Benchmark 3: Sharing Information
- The organization ensures that the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders have access to timely, relevant and clear information about the organization and its activities.

### Benchmark 4: Participation
- The organization listens to the people it aims to assist, incorporating their views and analysis in programme decisions.

### Benchmark 5: Handling Complaints
- The organization enables the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders to raise complaints and receive a response through an effective, accessible and safe process.

### Benchmark 6: Learning and Continual Improvement
- The organization learns from experience to continually improve its performance.