

# Accountability to Disaster-Affected Populations

## A Peer Review by the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response

The Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) is an alliance of eight major international humanitarian organisations and networks.<sup>1</sup> Together with UNHCR, these agencies are conducting a collaborative peer review of their accountability to disaster-affected populations.

### What is it?

The SCHR agencies are using this peer review to facilitate learning. Learning will be derived from the reflection, self-examination, sharing and questioning that will go on at various levels of each of the 9 organisations. The peer review will be carried out in a spirit of openness and constructive critical analysis, a safe space where the sometimes difficult questions around accountability can be confronted openly within and between organisations.

### Why are we doing it?

The purpose of the peer review is to strengthen and deepen efforts that demonstrate accountability to disaster-affected populations. This has two dimensions: firstly, organisational policies and processes; and secondly, staff thinking, conduct and practice. Ultimately, it is hoped that the peer review will help bring about important and lasting changes – within organisations (in terms of ‘culture’ and capacities) and within individuals (in terms of their attitudes and capabilities).

### How will it help the work of our agencies?

- By helping us understand the range of approaches to accountability to disaster-affected persons;
- By identifying best practices, challenges and learning around different approaches to accountability, and their relative effectiveness and practicality; and
- By informing decisions about whether and how best to prioritise and integrate the diversity of accountability approaches in our agencies.

### Aren't there other quality and accountability initiatives already doing this?

Although there are several other initiatives that are addressing various aspects of agency accountability to disaster-affected populations, this peer review is not duplicating their work. Rather, the peer review provides an opportunity to take stock of how the various tools and resources currently available are being used by the different agencies at headquarters and field levels.

### How is the review being conducted?

The 9 agencies are grouped in three groups of three:

Group 1: March 08 – June 08	Group 2: Sept 08 – Jan 09	Group 3: Feb 09 – Jun 09
CARE	LWF	Caritas
Save the Children	Oxfam	ACT
ICRC	UNHCR	IFRC

### Self-Assessments

Each group begins with self-assessments at the headquarters level and in two selected countries. A common questionnaire guides this process of self-analysis. Where feasible, the country-level self-assessments should involve consultations with beneficiaries and field staff.

<sup>1</sup> Action by Churches Together (ACT), Care International, Caritas Internationalis, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Oxfam and the International Save the Children Alliance.



### **Field Visits**

There then follow two country visits by a review team where the self-assessments are probed and explored more fully. The review team consists of staff from the agencies (from outside the countries concerned) plus an independent facilitator. Each visit lasts about 12 days, with most of that time spent at project level. Agency staff, partners and persons affected by disaster are interviewed using different methods. Prior to departing the country, the review team presents their key findings and preliminary recommendations to the country teams.

### **Headquarters Visits**

The HQ visits are then carried out, with 3 days per agency. These provide an opportunity to put the country-level learning within a wider organisational context. Again, the review team presents their preliminary findings and recommendations before departure.

### **Peer review amongst the CEOs**

Based on the agency reports produced by the review teams, the 9 CEOs will then meet to discuss the findings, learning and recommendations. This is where the actual 'peer review' takes place. Each agency responds to its report and a discussion amongst the peers concludes with a set of priorities for each agency to follow up.

### **What reports will be produced?**

- **Country-level Reports.** Summary findings will be documented in a country report for each agency reviewed. It is expected that each agency will use this report as the basis for providing feedback to key stakeholders, including disaster-affected populations.
- **Individual Agency Reports.** These will be the documents used by the CEOs for the peer review. They will be structured around the following headings:- Organisational Policies and Strategies; Organisational Commitment and Staff Capacity; Programming; Communication and Advocacy; and Organisational Learning
- **Synthesis Report.** Following the completion of the third review group, all those who participated in the review teams and in the planning of the work will discuss the key findings and guidance emerging from the entire Peer Review process. This will not be a summary of the agency reports, but rather will seek to advance learning throughout the humanitarian community as a whole, by capturing generic lessons about accountability to disaster-affected populations as well as the peer review process itself.

### **Who will coordinate the review?**

- The review is ultimately being overseen by the SCHR/UNHCR Principals (i.e. the CEOs of the 9 participating agencies).
- The SCHR secretariat is responsible for facilitation, technical support and communications. Two consultants are supporting the work: A Peer Review Facilitator and a Country-level Reviewer.
- Within each agency, the processes of self-assessments, visit planning and follow-up are being coordinated by one or two focal points. At field level, agency Point Persons are responsible for coordinating self-assessments and the logistics of field visits.

### **Who can answer any other questions?**

Lola Gostelow, the Facilitator ([lola@gostelow.co.uk](mailto:lola@gostelow.co.uk)), and Eva von Oelreich, the SCHR Executive Secretary ([schr@ifrc.org](mailto:schr@ifrc.org)), are also both available to answer any further questions you may have.

