Responsible Humanitarianism: Assessing the Impact of Accountability to Affected Persons Efforts on Humanitarian Program Effectiveness and Efficiency

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ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

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AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
CAID-UK	Christian Aid United Kingdom
CBCM	Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms
CCE(A)	Communication, Community Engagement (and Accountability)
CDAC (Network)	Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard
CWC	Communication with Communities
GTS	Ground Truth Solutions
HCT	Humanitarian Country Teams
HDI	Human Development Index
HSP	Humanitarian Partner Standards
IAAWG	The Inter-Agency Accountability Working Group - "Country Name"
IASC	United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organizations
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KAP	Survey Model: Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NORC	National Opinion Research Center
OCHA	The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODI	The Overseas Development Institute

OPAG	Operational Policy and Advocacy Group at IASC
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
PSNP	Ethiopian Productive Safety Net Programme
RGA	The Rapid Gender Analysis
SOP	Inter-Agency Standard Operating Procedures
STAIT	Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team
UNCT	United Nations Country Teams
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Human Rights
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

SECTION I: BACKGROUND ON AAP

INTRODUCTION

In this section, we establish the foundations for analyzing and measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of AAP programming. We begin by describing the core concepts and goals of AAP as founded by the Grand Bargain and **United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee** (IASC). This is continued by a discussion of existing standards and the evolving work by organizations like the CDAC (**Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities**) Network and **Ground Truth Solutions** (GTS). Finally, we explain the existing standards for measurements and considerations for diversity and inclusion.

CORE CONCEPTS

GOALS

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) is a commitment by international aid organizations and humanitarian actors to be accountable for their assistance programming in the protection of, advocacy for, and collaboration with those affected by humanitarian crises. AAP is bolstered by a set of internationally recognized parameters. These parameters are known as the **Core Humanitarian Standard** (CHS). CHS is a universally recognized set of nine commitments to improving the quality and scope of humanitarian response and assistance.

Humanitarian aid organizations providing support to affected communities will:

I. Work to meet understand, meet, and address the needs of an affected community;
II. Provide support, in various capacities, when needed;
III. Provide support that is long-term and preemptive, equipping populations with the means to respond to themselves in the future;
IV. Be transparent in decision-making processes and work to ensure all voices are taken into consideration;
V. Make a safe space for feedback and reporting by protecting the reporter from harm and then act upon the feedback;
VI. Collaborate with regional organizations;
VII. Adapt to situations and learn from past experiences to continue to bolster commitments and broaden the scope of outreach;
VIII. Train aid professionals to best equip them with the knowledge and skills to best support those affected; and
IX. Effectively and efficiently balance, monitor, and distribute resources to maximize positive impact.[1]

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[1] CHS Alliance, *CHS in Plain English*

FOUNDING DOCUMENTS

There are two primary founding documents for AAP that our report references.

    I.   *The Grand Bargain*

The Grand Bargain is a significant, all-encompassing agreement between the world's largest aid donors and humanitarian organizations to bolster the capacity of effective populations to respond to and bounce back from crises. Its signatories include 25 Member States, 24 NGOs, 12 UN agencies, The Red Cross, and two **Intergovernmental Organizations** (IGOs). The Grand Bargain maintains 10 work streams and 51 commitments to enhance preparedness, risk-reduction, and mitigation measures.[2] Its international recognition further marked a shift from a *supply-driven* to a *demand-driven* international humanitarian aid model.[3]

The 10 work streams are as follows:

1. "Greater transparency,
2. "More support and funding tools to local and national responders as directly as possible,
3. "Increase the use and coordination of cash-based programming,
4. "Reduce duplication and management costs with periodic functional reviews,
5. "Improve joint and impartial needs assessments,
6. "A participation revolution: include people receiving aid in making the decisions which affect their lives,
7. "Increase collaborative humanitarian multi-year planning and funding…,
8. "Reduce the earmarking of donor contributions…,
9. "Harmonize and simplify donor requirements, [and]
10. "Enhance engagement between humanitarian and development actors."[4]

The Grand Bargain was proposed in 2016 by the then United Nations Secretary General's report "*Too Important to Fail: addressing the humanitarian financing gap*" - a report in recognition of the alarming gap between the needs of affected populations and the severely limited scope of resources to assist those in need. In 2021, its signatories worked to create *The Grand Bargain 2.0* to better equip its framework with the evolving demands of international crises and to be more responsive to the needs of affected populations based on feedback, reflection upon prior measures, and the change in international readiness in various responses.

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[2] The Grand Bargain (Official Website)
[3] The Grand Bargain (Official Website)
[4] The Grand Bargain (Official Website)

In addition to The Grand Bargain, **The Overseas Development Institute** (ODI) influences policy creation to address faults in AAP.

ODI's Humanitarian Policy Group has produced the Grand Bargain's annual independent report and an annual report on humanitarian financing. The report critically analyzes progress in the implementation of Grand Bargain commitments and related humanitarian reform efforts and provides recommendations on cooperation, continued investment, and addressing barriers to change (economic, socio-cultural, and political).

In an evolving and increasingly globalized world, AAP programming must be dynamic and adaptable. Such recommendations from the most recent report include
   A. Increase provisions to support local leaders and bolster local leadership capacity (*Participation Revolution*),
   B. Enhance coordination efforts for a *multiplier effect*, and
   C. Simplify monitoring and reporting to better track progress and improve transparency.

II. *United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)*
   IASC is the formal interagency mechanism for the United Nations humanitarian response agencies, and affiliates, headed by the Undersecretary General and Emergency Relief Coordinator. IASC and its **Operational Policy and Advocacy Group** (OPAG) have done significant work to produce guidance and other resources on accountability and **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse** (PSEA). The website contains a list of the four Core Principles of AAP adopted by IASC and five formal commitments to, "committed to protecting affected populations from sexual exploitation and abuse within all the humanitarian response operations."

   IASC's four core principles as revised in 2017 written to reflect transformative developments such as CHS, PSEA, and The Grand Bargain are…
   A. **Leadership:** Demonstrate an unwavering commitment to affected populations by "enforcing, institutionalizing, and integrating AAP approaches in the Humanitarian Program Cycle and strategic planning process."[5] This is done through the advancement of systems and bolstering of existing aid frameworks.[6]
   B. **Participation and partnership:** Enable marginalized and at risk-community members to participate in AAP efforts, and assist in creating partnerships with active community organizations aimed at regional AAP efforts.

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[5] IASC, *POLICY: Commitments On Accountability to Affected People and Protection from Sexual Exploitation*
[6] IASC, *POLICY: Commitments On Accountability to Affected People and Protection from Sexual Exploitation*

C. **Information, Feedback, and Action:** Ensure progressive feedback mechanisms to inform and improve AAP approaches that are "responsive to the diversity and expressed views of affected communities."[7]

D. **Results:** Ensure results at the agency and collective level through international standards previously abided by.[8]

The former IASC Results Group Two also created a comprehensive portal of resources for field staff and agency managers on strengthening AAP in the field. The Results Group has now transitioned into a two-year Task Force on Accountability to Affected People which is undertaking a series of pilot programs.

EXISTING STANDARDS

In addition to the Grand Bargain and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines on AAP, the research and advocacy of other organizations, like CDAC Network and GTS), are also relevant in understanding today's best practices for AAP. The CDAC Network is a worldwide alliance of international humanitarian and communications organizations. They specialize in facilitating and monitoring effective **communication, community engagement, and accountability** (CCEA) during crises, all of which are important aspects of AAP. They work to equip communities with the skills and tools necessary to lead communication with humanitarian organizations and localize the decision-making involved in crisis response processes. Similarly, as an international **nongovernmental organization** (NGO), GTS works to help affected populations influence humanitarian responses by surveying their perceptions and perspectives on the aid they receive.

CDAC Network

CDAC Network's Rosie Jackson, Director of Policy and Innovation, and Alyssa Thurston, Policy & Advocacy Manager, stressed the importance of CCEA in interviews with our research team. CDAC Network takes the approach that "communication is aid [and it is] as crucial as food, water, shelter, and medicine." The network has explained the "minimum actions and services for communication and community engagement"[9] in order to bridge the gap between communities and humanitarian organizations through feedback mechanisms and information accessibility. These minimum actions include the establishment of national platforms for CCE, attention to community culture and preferences, strong feedback and complaint mechanisms for humanitarian organizations, increased local decision-making opportunities, and capacity

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[7] IASC, *POLICY: Commitments On Accountability to Affected People and Protection from Sexual Exploitation*.
[8] IASC, *POLICY: Commitments On Accountability to Affected People and Protection from Sexual Exploitation.*
[9] CDAC Network, *How to Guide.*

building.[10] As a core tenet of their work, the organization recognizes that accountability goes beyond the need to solicit feedback– affected populations require this feedback to carry weight and ensure their choices are heard in times of conflict.

Ground Truth Solutions

GTS works with all actors involved in decision-making from local communities to humanitarian aid organizations by facilitating inter-level communication through "an evolving methodology that draws from customer satisfaction research and polling."[11] GTS communicates with local communities and analyzes community perception data to measure progress and identify gaps in humanitarian programming. They conduct research and undertake these surveys to test the results and analyze the effectiveness of AAP programming against the pre-existing and founding standards. Their work is based on "quality metrics taken from agreed global standards like the Core Humanitarian Standard– participation, effectiveness, agency, trust, respect, and information– and the stated goals of a response."[12]

MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS & EFFICIENCY

CDAC & GTS Framework

For the purpose of this report, we will use the CDAC Network and GTS's *Framework for Assessing the Success of National CCE Platforms* to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of AAP. This framework connects desired outcomes with ways in which to measure whether results are "effective" and "efficient." These include guidelines for the outcomes and measuring of the establishment of collaborative structures between the humanitarian organization(s), the local community, and the national government, consistent communication through trusted and reliable channels, and respect for the varied preferences and needs of all members of a community. The definition of effective and efficient differ according to each desired outcome.[13]

For example, to achieve the desired outcome of "Map Potential Organizations" in an effective and efficient way, one must consider the corresponding questions under "Measure Of Results." See CDAC and GTS for the full framework.[14]

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[10] CDAC Network, *How to Guide.*
[11] GTS, *How We Work*.
[12] GTS, *How We Work.*
[13] CDAC Network and GTS, *Framework for Assessing Success of National CCE Platform.*
[14] CDAC Network and GTS, *Framework for Assessing Success of National CCE Platform.*

	Outcomes to Achieve		Measures of Results
1.1	Map Potential Organizations – Develop an understanding of existing communications and engagement capabilities and practices within the country, *so that* proposed CCE development can collaborate with existing crisis response organizations and leaders.	1.1.1	Government Organizations: Has the structure of the country's national disaster response system been identified? Are there visual diagrams to describe the structure? Are key individuals within key organizations defined?
		1.1.2	Non-Governmental Organizations: Have key international aid organizations, NGOs and civil society organizations that participate in communications and engagement activities with communities been identified? Are there visual diagrams to describe the structure? Are key individuals within key organizations defined?
		1.1.3	Validated View: Have the organizational maps been validated with key members of organizations that will be strategic collaborators in CCE platform building?

*Please note: for the purposes of this report, CCE will be considered the same as AAP.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

In recent years, diversity and inclusion have become much more significant in the works of humanitarian organizations. Today, humanitarian organizations are making personal commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion, moving it from mere tick boxes to "part of our DNA."[15]

Different organizations have used a variety of methods to define diversity. Thus, it makes the work of comparison relatively difficult.[16] In this report, we will focus specifically on racial diversity, gender parity, and participants' capabilities.

Racial Diversity
In terms of racial diversity, organizations are leveraging this aspect by ensuring a diverse staffing process as well as an increase in racial/ethnic awareness elements in their programs. These organizations place an emphasis on a diverse workplace as well as improving the percentage of women and people of color representation in leadership positions.[17]

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[15] ALNAP, *The State of the Humanitarian System*
[16] ALNAP, *The State of the Humanitarian System*
[17] ALNAP, *The State of the Humanitarian System*

Gender Parity

In terms of gender parity, many organizations are now recognizing the significantly higher dangers of sexual harassment and abuse for women and girl participants. For instance, the UNHCR has made the prevention of sexual abuse for women and girls the fourth goal among four main pillars in terms of accountability to affected persons.[18]

Disabilities

Under this caveat, many organizations such as the **International Rescue Committee** (IRC) and UNHCR are and will continue to develop protocols to enhance people with disabilities' experiences within aid programs. These organizations work to ensure the dignity of all, regardless of physical or mental disabilities.

CONCLUSION

AAP encompasses the goals laid out by these founding documents, including the Grand Bargain and IASC Core Principles, but is also evolving based on continued work by organizations like the CDAC Network and GTS. After identifying these standards of AAP and existing measurement frameworks, we must analyze the extent to which they were realized in response to crisis cases. In the next section, we describe key crisis-country case studies, what aid and AAP programming were implemented, and the resulting successes and shortcomings. In doing so, we can analyze how effective AAP programming has been so far, with respect to these goals and concepts, allowing for the development of recommendations for the humanitarian community and proposals for how to best measure the efficiency and effectiveness of AAP programming.

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[18] UNHCR. *Working in Partnership with Communities: A Future of Accountability to Affected People in UNHCR.*

SECTION II: CRISIS CASES AND EVALUATION OF AAP

INTRODUCTION

In this section, we examine the impacts of humanitarian aid on affected populations and AAP programming effectiveness and efficiency in five humanitarian crisis case studies. These cases provide valuable insights into best practices for the implementation of AAP across diverse contexts. The insights gained from these case studies highlight the imperative nature of including AAP programming in humanitarian initiatives and underscores the tangible impact that tailored AAP can have on communities. They also reveal the gaps in existing efforts among the international community that must be addressed.

Figure 1 presents the factors that are present among 10 different country-crisis case studies. These factors are climate change, conflict, disease, food insecurity, displacement, and whether the crisis is/was protracted and/or rapid onset in nature. From this table, five countries were intentionally selected– Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Haiti, Myanmar, and Ukraine. These selected cases are the most diverse in terms of variation on the context variables represented in the columns.[19] This case selection strategy allows for a complete review of the different crisis contexts in which **Accountability to Affected Populations** (AAP) is implemented. Insights gained from the five selected cases can be applied to the other current cases not reviewed and cases that might occur in the future. This cross-comparison will also allow for a broad recognition of successes, or specific recommendations to be made in order to address common gaps, in current AAP efforts.

Figure 1: Country Cases and Respective Crisis Factors

	Climate Change	Conflict	Public Health: Disease	Public Health: Food Insecurity	Displacement	Protracted Crises	Rapid Onset Crises
Afghanistan	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Chad	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Ethiopia	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Haiti	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Myanmar	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
Somalia	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Venezuela	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Yemen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Syria	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ukraine	0	1	0	1	1	1	1

Figure 1: A table that displays each present crisis factor among 10 different country case studies. Using a binary measurement, each cell is assigned "1" if that certain aspect is present in the

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[19] See Seawright (2006) for guidance on case selection strategies. Seawright, Jason. 2016. "The Case for Selecting Cases That Are Deviant or Extreme on the Independent Variable." Sociological Methods & Research 45(3):493–525.

country's crisis, or a "0" if not. This table and categorization system was used to select the most diverse set of country cases for comparison throughout Section II. For example, Ukraine, Ethiopia, and Myanmar are all unique in their combination of crisis factors. Additionally, while Afghanistan and Haiti both contain all "1's", these crises were very different in nature.

CASE STUDIES

CASE 1: AFGHANISTAN

BACKGROUND ON CRISES IN AFGHANISTAN

Over the past four decades, Afghanistan has faced an onslaught of humanitarian crises and has been in a state of needing emergency aid. According to the International Rescue Committee[20], Afghanistan currently ranks #169 out of 189 countries on the **Human Development Index** (HDI). For years, the country has struggled with severe economic decline which was further exacerbated by the government takeover of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (more commonly known as the Taliban). With this takeover, Afghanistan saw an immediate halt in almost all non-humanitarian funding via international donors. Without the support of these donors, the economy spiraled and the price of medicine and food drastically skyrocketed. In 2021, 97% of Afghans were at risk for poverty thus ushering in a new condition of near-universal poverty in the country.[21] The United Nations estimates that in 2023, 28.3 million Afghans will need protection and humanitarian assistance, which is an increase of nearly four million from the previous year, and that at least 17 million will also experience acute hunger.[22]

Other humanitarian issues facing Afghanistan include a fourth wave of COVID-19 and several climate crises such as severe droughts, floods, and the 6.2 magnitude earthquake occurring in June of 2022 which mostly impacted the provinces of Paktika and Khost. While aid has been delivered to Afghanistan throughout the 2000s and 2010s, there is a severe decline and even halt in AAP efforts to Afghanistan for the time being due to the Taliban's current control.

AID DELIVERED AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AAP

The economic shock that was observed in August 2021 after the Taliban's takeover can be traced back to the country has been heavily reliant on large donations since 2001, shortly after the onset of the war in Afghanistan. Consistent donors created an incredibly aid-dependent country in 2001, which today is in economic and social turmoil as a result of the swift withdrawal of donations after said takeover. Before the physical withdrawal of American and international troops, nearly every region in Afghanistan depended largely on funds from donors. After this withdrawal, the political order of Afghanistan collapsed and the Taliban exerted their

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[20] International Rescue Committee, *Afghanistan.*
[21] International Rescue Committee, *Afghanistan.*
[22] United Nations, *Afghanistan Humanitarian Crisis.*

force over Kabul, Afghanistan's capital. According to the International Crisis Group, this prompted donors to refuse cooperation with the new Taliban regime and stop allocating funds that accounted for the salaries of civil servants and other government institution costs.[23] They also "allowed pre-existing sanctions on the Taliban to become de facto sanctions on the Afghan government" and froze state assets, which contributed deeply to the vast humanitarian crises that Afghan civilians endured specifically since 2021.[24]

Shortly after the Taliban takeover, the **International Rescue Committee** (IRC), Save the Children, the Norwegian Refugee Council, CARE International, and Islamic Relief announced that they would "halt their activities in Afghanistan until female staffers were permitted to return to work."[25] The United Nations did not suspend operations but is reportedly using only men for a number of food aid delivery initiatives. This halt of AAP efforts has especially exacerbated the gender equality gap within Afghanistan. According to Ground Truth Solutions, this is specifically observed in the results of **The Rapid Gender Analysis** (RGA) that was conducted by CARE Afghanistan from June through July of 2021. This analysis highlights that "women's exclusion from decision-making spaces extends to humanitarian assistance, especially since the ban on women working for national and international NGOs, which has left little opportunities to engage with women." With this lack of AAP, there is a heightened human rights crisis pertaining to gender equality. Women specifically are not receiving the resources that they need and they oftentimes do not know about or have access to resources that do exist. A 2023 assessment by Ground Truth Solutions reports:

Women struggle to access aid. They feel less informed about what is available, and they don't trust targeting processes. Women living without a male household member face particular difficulties, because of movement restrictions and the lack of female aid workers. Eighty-three percent of women and 86% of men say that both men and women should have equal access to aid, but only 45% of men and 47% of women say this is the case.[26]

According to the Department of State, nearly $327 million in additional humanitarian assistance is being provided to benefit the vulnerable communities within Afghanistan as of now.[27] This funding includes nearly $208 million through the U.S. Agency for International Development's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and nearly $119 million through the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, which brings the combined U.S. humanitarian

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[23] International Crisis Group, *Beyond Emergency Relief: Averting Afghanistan's Humanitarian Catastrophe.*
[24] International Crisis Group, *Beyond Emergency Relief: Averting Afghanistan's Humanitarian Catastrophe.*
[25] The New Humanitarian, *After the Taliban ban on women NGO work, local and foreign aid groups take different approaches.*
[26] GTS and Salma Consulting, *Against the odds: Strengthening accountability to women and girls in Afghanistan.*
[27] Department of State, *United States Announces Humanitarian Assistance for Afghanistan.*

assistance total for Afghanistan and bordering countries to over $1.1 billion since August 2021.[28] This sum will continue to support humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan and neighboring countries through international humanitarian organizations, including the United Nations Population Fund, International Organization for Migration, and other partners in the region.[29] This funding will reportedly provide "emergency cash, shelter, healthcare, and reintegration assistance to internally displaced persons and returnees; as well as protection, life-saving reproductive and maternal health, and gender-based violence prevention and response services."[30] Additionally, funding will support multisectoral humanitarian aid for Afghans currently residing in surrounding countries, such as COVID-19 screening and vaccination services and nutrition and health services for Pakistani refugee host communities and Afghan refugees residing in said communities.[31]

EVALUATION OF AAP EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

While it was found prior to 2021 that AAP was mostly effective, it was not nearly as effective after the Taliban takeover. It was difficult to ensure long-term and consistent solutions and preparedness in the face of different humanitarian crisis situations. In a report published by Ground Truth Solutions, AAP in Afghanistan was found to be ineffective because while donors are currently providing humanitarian aid, this limited type of emergency assistance is insufficient to arrest the worsening humanitarian and economic crises. Donors agree on sending humanitarian aid, but emergency relief is not enough. The suspensions of international donors have drawn criticism from a range of actors, most recently from the International Crisis Group, which claimed in a report that donors and **international non-governmental organizations** (INGOs) were worsening the humanitarian crisis by pausing operations or cutting assistance. In January 2022, a group of over 100 civil society groups and NGOs in Afghanistan issued a statement where they criticized INGOs for their work suspension.[32] This backlash continues even among attempts from the U.S. Department of State to provide aid that is otherwise not seen from INGOs.

Ground Truth Solutions also reported the following feedback from Afghan civilians on AAP effectiveness findings in their February 2023 report.[33] Overall, the results reflect Afghans' desire for higher involvement and more consistent and thorough updates pertaining to AAP efforts in their country:

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[28] Department of State, *United States Announces Humanitarian Assistance for Afghanistan.*
[29] Department of State, *United States Announces Humanitarian Assistance for Afghanistan.*
[30] Department of State, *United States Announces Humanitarian Assistance for Afghanistan.*
[31] Department of State, *United States Announces Humanitarian Assistance for Afghanistan.*
[32] The New Humanitarian, *After the Taliban ban on women NGO work, local and foreign aid groups take different approaches.*
[33] GTS and Salma Consulting, *Against the odds: Strengthening accountability to women and girls in Afghanistan.*

- Over half of the people noted that a) accessing aid was difficult due to their distance away from distribution sites and b) they do not receive clear and suitable communication about information pertaining to aid access.
- Women struggle to access aid at much higher rates and feel both distrustful towards and uninformed about aid access services.
- Humanitarian organizations are expected to be cognizant of and sensitive to traditional gender norms. This includes an understanding of the risks and difficulties faced by women in aid contexts, as well as how agencies can adjust to protect women and girls.
- Many expect that the most vulnerable members of a community will receive assistance. However, this is not generally the case. Male community leaders, including elders, Maliks, Shura members, and religious leaders, are frequently implicated in targeting aid recipients. However, they typically recommend that relatives and friends of those in need be aid recipients, thus excluding those who are most in need.
- Community members desire to be informed about the manner in which humanitarian aid is provided however this is often not the case. Women report feeling much less consulted than men about aid. They seek financial transparency and that aid is tailored to their longer-term requirements. They also seek training, work opportunities, and infrastructure while acknowledging that any form of aid, including temporary relief, is beneficial.
- Afghani citizens expect to influence the process of aid providing and to share their priorities with humanitarian actors. They request needs assessments and door-to-door visits to provide input.

CASE 2: ETHIOPIA
BACKGROUND ON CRISIS AND AID DELIVERED
Ethiopia is currently experiencing a protracted crisis including ongoing conflict, forced internal displacement, recurrent extreme weather events (eg.: droughts, flooding, temperature fluctuations), and stark food insecurity.

In November 2020, tensions reignited between the central and regional governments which destroyed civilian infrastructure (hospitals, schools, factories, businesses, and homes). The subsequent humanitarian crisis forced over two million people to flee and an additional two million to be internally displaced and in need of humanitarian aid. In addition to the Tigrayan conflict in the north, southern regions of the country have been experiencing prolonged La Niña-induced droughts after a fifth consecutive failed rainy season.[34] The droughts threaten the livelihoods of livestock, increase internal displacement statistics, and contribute to acute food

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[34] ReliefWeb, *Ethiopia: Drought Update No. 4*.

insecurity.[35] Millions of regional pastoralists are in search of water, pasture, and assistance.[36] The protracted crisis was further exacerbated by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and the fragility of the country's public health system, and the current Russia-Ukraine War. It is important to note that Russia and Ukraine are leading exporters of wheat, barley, sunflower oil, and other affordable food products that developing nations like Ethiopia rely on.[37] Should other regional and political conflicts persist, Ethiopia will struggle to receive key imports.

More than ¾ of the 20 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022 were women and children. These statistics are a significant cause for concern over the future of the country and the ability of the next generations to prosper. As of February 2, 2023, ACAPS reported that Ethiopia's "risk of humanitarian crisis and disaster" was incredibly high with a score of 7.3/10 and the country's lack of "coping capacity stands at 6.7/10 and vulnerability at 7.1/10."[38]

The Financial Tracking Service reports US$725.9m total funding to Ethiopia, with the top five donor countries being the United States (84.7%), Germany (4.6%), the European Commission (2.6%), Japan (2.3%), and the Central Emergency Response Fund (1.7%).[39] The U.S. Department of State reports that it is the largest bilateral donor of financial assistance to Ethiopia. The database also reports that the majority of humanitarian aid is distributed for food security (45.7%), health (7.5%), and nutrition (6.7%). The World Food Program is the largest recipient of aid and is a key stakeholder in Ethiopia's rapid-onset crisis response and protracted crisis response teams.[40] It successfully provides food and cash transfers and ensures appropriate stocks of resources are maintained.[41] The leading humanitarian aid organizations work with those like the Catholic Relief Fund, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the International Rescue Committee.[42]

IMPLEMENTATION OF AAP
The Inter-Agency Accountability Working Group in Ethiopia (IAAWG-E) was established in 2009 by multi-sectoral stakeholders within a transnational advocacy network that abides by the IASC Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), Sphere and the **Humanitarian Partnership Standards** (HSP) for AAP.[43] Its collaborative network reflects a sincere commitment to contemporary humanitarian principles. The network

[35] Department of State, *Ukraine and Russia - United States Department of State*.
[36] ReliefWeb, *Ethiopia: Drought Update No. 4*.
[37] Ritter, *Russia, Ukraine extend grain deal to aid world's poor.*
[38] ACAPS, *Ethiopia: Complex Crisis.*
[39] OCHA, *Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Plan 2023.*
[40] OCHA, *Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Plan 2023.*
[41] World Food Program USA, *Ethiopia - Violence in Tigray Is Causing Starvation for Millions.*
[42] OCHA, *Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Plan 2023.*
[43] OCHA, *OCHA Accountability to Affected People (AAP).*

is composed of 51 stakeholders including Non-Governmental Organizations, United Nations Programs, Cluster Lead Agencies, International Rights Groups, etc. with The **International Organization for Migration** (IOM) Ethiopia as head Co-Chair and Plan International Ethiopia as supporting Co-Chair.[44]

The 2023 Ethiopian Humanitarian Response Plan outlined three pillars of assistance
1) *Reduce morbidity, mortality, and suffering;*
2) *Provide protection and safe access to critical, integrated, and inclusive basic services; and*
3) *Support vulnerable people in crisis recovery with targeted programming to bolster coping capacities.*

Pillars one through three will follow contemporary accountability to affected populations (AAP) parameters as outlined by the CDAC network including following PSEA guidelines and working to build the capacity of network stakeholders. The response plan places a renewed emphasis on supporting those 'highly affected' (IDPs, returning IDPs, affected non-displaced) with undue consideration to gender and age– The 2023 plan specifically notes gender and age[45] as imperative to increasing the visibility of community voices in municipal decision-making.[46] Adopting the title of *Resilience Programming*, the current AAP in Ethiopia mandates the 'consultation and collaboration' of network actors and national authorities. An example of said collaboration includes the country-specific Protection Cluster which seeks to *mitigate and alleviate the protection consequence* to affected populations.

EVALUATION OF AAP EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

AAP in Ethiopia is an evolving space. The country's two parallel crises make points of access circumstantial and they implicate the ability of stakeholders to continually engage with affected populations through efficient and effective mediums. In-network stakeholders have found the most success with early action relief and social safety net programming like Emergency Cash Transfers to bolster community economic capacity and renew degrees of agency to those of affected populations. After the failed response to the 2011-2012 famine, agencies adopted a "No Regret" funding posture (2017-2018) for initiatives such as the Ethiopian **Productive Safety Net Programme** (PSNP).[47] Significant progress has since been made in tackling sexual exploitation and abuse within the humanitarian aid efforts.[48] Inter-Agency **Standard Operating Procedures** (SOPs) for **Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms** (CBCMs) have successfully developed information campaigns and training sessions for the United Nations Country Team

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[44] OCHA, *The Inter-Agency Accountability Working Group in Ethiopia.*
[45] OCHA, *Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Plan 2023.*
[46] OCHA, *Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Plan 2023.*
[47] Halakhe, *We Were Warned: Unlearned Lessons of Famine in the Horn of Africa.*
[48] OCHA, *Inter-Agency Ethiopia PSEA Network.*

and the Humanitarian Country Teams, and support an evolving dashboard of 3W Visualisation of operating agencies and stakeholder involvement in targeted humanitarian programming. The core challenges detailed by network stakeholders, most recently published in response to extensive Cholera outbreaks, include insufficient directed funding, limited partner presence, and maintaining a balance between crisis response mandates.[49]

CASE 3: HAITI

BACKGROUND ON CRISES IN HAITI

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, has warned that Haiti has descended into the "worst human rights and humanitarian situation in decades."[50] Haiti came to international attention beginning with the earthquake in 2010, followed by Hurricane Matthew in 2016. In the past year, this protracted crisis has included political unrest and assassinations, a migration crisis, gang violence, another earthquake, and economic instability.[51] In the Fall of 2022, the United Nations discussed three converging crises in Haiti and the Haitian government's decision to remove fuel subsidies, leading to the precipice of destruction Haiti leans against.[52] Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti and Head of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti, Helen La Lime, divulged that the gang crisis has caused 20,000 people to be displaced from their homes, elevated food prices, and increased black markets for fuel, all whilst the government of Haiti attempts to move towards elections.[53] A further implication of these issues is the 4.7 million Haitians facing acute hunger, along with poor water supply and sanitation that caused 2,600 suspected cases of Cholera.[54] AAP has endeavored to be implemented, however, the protracted crisis in Haiti seems to be growing worse.

AID DELIVERED AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AAP

Following the 2010 earthquake, CDAC instigated its first-ever ground initiative called CDAC Haiti.[55] This project created a strong foundation that could train the secretariat staff to continue CDAC Haiti forward.[56] CDAC Haiti became the communicator in regard to the 2010 Cholera outbreak by The **United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs** (OCHA). However, they lost funding in January of the next year and did not receive further funding till April 2011.[57] CDAC Haiti made significant strides in implementing AAP in Haiti by facilitating coordination efforts among stakeholders, including affected persons. To ensure their focused

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[49] OCHA Ethiopia, *Cholera Outbreak - Flash Update #5*.

[50] Türk, *Haiti: International community must act now to avert tragedy.*

[51] Fauriol, *Avoiding Disaster—A Narrowing Path Forward in Haiti.*

[52] United Nations Security Council, *Haiti's Crises at New Levels of Desperation.*

[53] United Nations Security Council, *Haiti's Crises at New Levels of Desperation.*

[54] Türk, *Haiti: International community must act now to avert tragedy.*

[55] Ljungman, *CDAC Haiti Learning Review Final Report.*

[56] Ljungman, *CDAC Haiti Learning Review Final Report.*

[57] Ljungman, *CDAC Haiti Learning Review Final Report*.

communication and coordination actions remained, CDAC Haiti was devoted to working with the government of Haiti to establish this solid foundation.[58]

In 2021, following the second earthquake, CDAC quickly responded to this crisis and immediately began implementing AAP. This was done by reactivating a previous AAP-endeavor, **Communication with Communities** (CWC), which is an important element of humanitarian response that ensures that local views and knowledge are at the center of all actions taken.[59] This working group seemed to be the main avenue for providing AAP-related aid. One month after the earthquake, UNICEF and OCHA listed AAP that had been established and implemented. This included an interagency hotline for community members to provide feedback, hiring local experts to support local networks and incorporate them with the working group, and training 150 U-reporters, etc.[60] To help food insecurity issues, the World Food Program set up community feed.[61] While this was just some of the localized aid that was contributed to in the Haitian protracted crisis, communication was a critical component especially as the goal was to involve community members in decision-making.

EVALUATION OF AAP EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY
While it was found in 2012 that AAP was effective, it was not as effective in 2021. CDAC Network attempted to implement long-term communication and leadership efforts, but it was proven difficult to maintain these humanitarian relationships and training to ensure long-term preparedness and action in protracted crisis situations. In a report published by Ground Truth Solutions, AAP in Haiti was found to be ineffective because of the lack of institution capitalization or memory.[62] This was reiterated in the six-month report written by CDAC. Another complicated factor of AAP effectiveness was in relation to humanitarian agencies ignoring local leadership, along with taking accountability but lacking transparency with the communities they were working with.[63] There was still progress through AAP, but community members felt like later leaders did not remember anything that was initially placed by humanitarian organizations.[64] In GTS's phone survey following the 2020 earthquake, 67% of respondents were dissatisfied with available humanitarian aid and it is linked to the aid not

[58] Ljungman, *CDAC Haiti Learning Review Final Report.*
[59] Betz, *Was communication, community engagement and accountability considered in the 2021 Haiti Earthquake response?*
[60] Betz, *Haiti Six Months On: Good Intentions, Bad Memories and Local Frustrations Was Communication, Community-Engagement and Accountability considered in the 2021 Haiti Earthquake Response?*
[61] Betz, *Haiti Six Months On: Good Intentions, Bad Memories and Local Frustrations Was Communication, Community-Engagement and Accountability considered in the 2021 Haiti Earthquake Response?*
[62] Ground Truth Solutions, *H2H Network: Humanitarian Action Network, and The New Humanitarian .*
[63] Betz, *Haiti Six Months On: Good Intentions, Bad Memories and Local Frustrations Was Communication, Community-Engagement and Accountability considered in the 2021 Haiti Earthquake Response?*
[64] Ground Truth Solutions, *H2H Network: Humanitarian Action Network, and The New Humanitarian.*

being in relation to their priorities.[65] Further, more than half of the respondents stated that their community was not consulted on the aid provided to them.[66] AAP can be a fantastic avenue to ensure that communities are receiving the aid they need, but members of the community must be informed and not just asked for feedback after the fact.

CASE 4: MYANMAR

BACKGROUND ON CRISIS

Since August 25th, 2017, there has been a violent expulsion of 650,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar's Rakhine State due to political instability by the military juntas. In the Rakhine state of Myanmar, the Rohingya are a Muslim minority with a population of 1.3 million. Within the country, the Rohingya people are stateless, cannot take part in census polls, and are not included in the 135 official ethnic groups that are recognized in Myanmar.[67] Previous to the expulsion itself, in addition to suppressing free elections, the military juntas have also failed to recognize the Rohingya minority as one of the nation's ethnic groups and have employed raids and violence on them for decades.

AID DELIVERED AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AAP

It was the world's fastest-growing displacement crisis, and rapidly escalated to a major humanitarian crisis in just one year alone.[68] The number of Rohingya refugees has grown rapidly in numbers, yet access and resources continue to decline. Most of the Rohingya refugees fled to Bangladesh and settled in the city of Cox's Bazar and nearby towns.[69] Unfortunately, the largest camp settlements have quickly reached capacity, and other refugees are currently residing in the 30 unregistered settlements. According to sources and reports from organizations such as the Ground Truth Solutions (GTS) and **Christian Aid U.K** (CAID-UK), humanitarian aid that was delivered to the Rohingya people comes in the form of cash, food assistance, and services.

EVALUATION OF AAP EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

According to CAID-UK, as of the 2019 report, the major mode of communications or AAP practices between humanitarian organizations and the Rohingya refugees are (1) complaint/feedback boxes and (2) phone lines. In the short amount of time that the Rohingya crisis escalated, these efforts to enforce Accountability to Affected Persons are relevant, but in the long-term view, they need to adapt to better address the needs of refugees. Overall, the CAID-UK report of 2019 found these two mechanisms largely ineffective due to reasons such as

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[65] Ground Truth Solutions, *H2H Network: Humanitarian Action Network, and The New Humanitarian.*
[66] Ground Truth Solutions, *H2H Network: Humanitarian Action Network, and The New Humanitarian.*
[67] MercyCorps, *The facts: Rohingya refugee crisis.*
[68] MercyCorps, *The facts: Rohingya refugee crisis.*
[69] CAID-UK, *Accountability Assessment Rohingya Response Bangladesh.*

language barriers, lack of knowledge of rights, and lack of confidentiality. The report also demanded that humanitarian organizations adapt these accountability mechanisms to deliver aid more effectively.

In the CAID-UK report of 2019, the KAP (**Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices**) surveys revealed that only 27% of Rohingya are literate, and only 85% have Rohingya as their first language. However, humanitarian actors are continuing to implement more complaint boxes and phone lines, with information in either Rohingya or English.[70] This major language barrier poses difficulty for refugees to communicate their needs or to report abuses to the humanitarian organizations at the other end. In addition, the same report showed that only 16% of women and 25% of men are aware of any feedback or complaint mechanisms. This lack of knowledge of rights and AAP orientations also poses many missed opportunities for the affected persons to have submitted their complaints or recommendations.

Another reason cited for the ineffectiveness of complaint boxes and phone lines is their lack of confidentiality. According to the survey, over 95% of women and 80% of men reported confidentiality as important for accountability.[71] Considering the Rohingya minority's history of violence with the state, it is reasonable that confidentiality ranks as one of the most important factors for effective communication. Previous to their mass expulsion from Myanmar in 2019, the Rohingyas have faced prolonged abuses and discrimination from the military juntas that are in control of the country.

In addition, a 2018 report from Ground Truth Solutions also analyzed other dimensions of the effectiveness of accountability to affected person measures.[72] In a recent survey conducted with 1034 participants of the Rohingya refugees, GTS recommended that there need to be more efficient communications between humanitarian organizations and the elderly and/or persons with disabilities. As of now, the physical terrains of the camps (in Cox's Bazar) and the current APP can make communications and inclusion efforts much less accessible and effective.

CASE 5: UKRAINE
BACKGROUND ON CRISIS AND AID DELIVERED
Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was an escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War and marked an incredible increase in humanitarian need. According to the U.S. Department of State, the war has produced 8 million refugees, 5.9 million internally displaced persons, and

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[70] CAID-UK, *Accountability Assessment Rohingya Response Bangladesh.*
[71] CAID-UK, *Accountability Assessment Rohingya Response Bangladesh.*
[72] GTS, *Rohingya - Needs and services, June 2019.*

17.6 million more in need of humanitarian assistance in general.[73] The humanitarian response has largely prioritized displaced persons, seeing two parallel crises: one affecting those who left Ukraine, and one affecting persons within the country and IDPs. Finally, the displacement of Ukrainian children has been of particular concern. Critical social infrastructure that children and families depend on is being ruined, and Russia is deporting Ukrainian children and placing them into Russian families.[74]

GTS has reported that as of December 2022, 14 million people have been reached with some form of aid or government assistance and that the crisis response was generally well-funded.[75] The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Financial Tracking Service reports a total of approximately $4.2 billion in foreign aid sent to Ukraine in 2022, with the largest donors being the United States, the European Commission, Germany, France, Canada, and Private Donors, respectively. Almost half of all funding was considered multi-sector or unspecified in scope.[76] Finally, Ukraine is a "highly [digitized] lower middle-income country," and donors/deliverers have largely aimed to reflect this in their aid implementation.[77]

IMPLEMENTATION OF AAP

The crisis in Ukraine is the first major one to have erupted after the international system broadly put AAP frameworks in place. Guidelines on AAP have existed in Ukraine prior to Russia's 2022 escalation of the war; in 2017, the OCHA framework highlighted the **Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team**'s (STAIT) 2017 mission that focuses on AAP efforts through the IASC Cluster Coordination Mechanism and cluster/sector member organizations. The Framework includes many checklists for different aid initiatives and AAP processes developed by Ukrainian bodies. This is in addition to the guiding frameworks and existing standards laid out in Section I, along with mandates by many involved international organizations including the **United Nations High Commission for Human Rights** (UNHCR), **United Nations Children's Fund** (UNICEF), IRC, **World Health Organization** (WHO), and more.

Since the crisis began, the CDAC Network has consistently reviewed AAP-related activity in Ukraine and the refugee populations of neighboring countries. As international humanitarian networks prioritized AAP in Ukraine since the invasion began, first, there were a number of needs assessments for Communication, Community Engagement, and Accountability (CCEA, a focused version of AAP) in the country *and* cross-border refugee communities. Assessments have been run by many UN agencies, the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster and other

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[73] Department of State, *Ukraine and Russia.*
[74] Gozzi, *Deportation of Ukrainian Children.*
[75] GTS, *Perceptions of aid in Ukraine.*
[76] UNOCHA, *Ukraine 2022 FTS.*
[77] GTS, *Perceptions of aid in Ukraine.*

communication-focused organizations, and IGOs like the IFRC and IOM. These needs assessments were conducted with the goal of informing aid providers on best practices for information and messaging provision in order to reach all affected persons. It also found various instances of feedback, complaint, and safeguarding report systems in place by UN agencies and international NGOs that span across Eastern Europe. Other areas of existing AAP programming include language and translation services for Russian and/or Ukrainian-speaking refugees, capacity-building workshops and resources for humanitarian workers, community perception surveys, and direct cash/voucher assistance to affected persons.[78]

As previously mentioned, since Ukraine is a middle-income and increasingly digital country, deliverers of humanitarian aid believed that the digitization of their processes would be best practice and allow for maximum reach and accessibility of their services/aid. Most applications for aid were in the form of a digital tool, like a website or app. Information campaigns were abundant on social media and online sources. Surveys and feedback mechanisms took place virtually or over the phone.[79] In theory, the digitization of these aid types would increase accountability and reach, and streamline communication channels.

EVALUATION OF AAP EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

Drawing primarily from the GTS 2023 *Report on Perceptions of Aid in Ukraine*[80] and the CDAC Network's most recent *Snapshot Report*[81] on progress and gaps in Ukraine, it is clear that although significant progress has been made in the intentionality and proactivity of humanitarian aid, there are still barriers to full AAP. These gaps include:

- **Limited coverage in older populations.** Older affected populations, especially rural ones, indicated that the assistance they received was inadequate or nonexistent. This is largely due to the digital nature of aid implementation and information campaigns.
- **Not enough direct cash/voucher assistance.** The main concern of GTS' correspondents was that most people wanted more cash assistance because they found it most useful for their evolving needs. Direct cash transfers or vouchers offer affected populations more flexibility with how to use the aid allocated to them.
- **Lack of transparency and ownership of feedback mechanisms.** Many respondents complained about low transparency levels in existing aid efforts and a lack of coordination between them and local communities. Ukrainians have expected more collaboration than they have seen, and feel that they aren't being asked what their

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[78] CDAC Network, *CCEA across the Ukraine response.*
[79] GTS, *Perceptions of aid in Ukraine.*
[80] GTS, *Perceptions of aid in Ukraine.*
[81] CDAC Network, *Snapshot Report.*

needs are in advance. Additionally, many with these (or other) concerns don't know about feedback mechanisms or aid applications in place. Of those who do, few use them.

- **Information overload and confusion.** The push for accessible information has caused the unforeseen problem of information overload, where affected populations are confused about what information is actually correct and which sources are reliable. Rather than being a clear source of information, social media and news sources become less trusted or points of confusion for affected communities. This must be tailored and intentional.

- **Potential underreporting.** The war in Ukraine has caused disruption of communication and digital networks, so not all regions/individuals/social groups are equally represented in the surveys and reviews conducted by GTS, the CDAC Network, and the OCHR. Our analysis indicates that these reports have yet to reach affected children and especially those deported and/or separated from their families.

- **Lack of attention paid to affected children.** Given that children are of particular concern in this case due to deaths, deportations, disruptions to schools, and cancellations of family services, the international community has lacked in their accountability to this especially vulnerable population.

SECTION III: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Our selected case studies demonstrate the challenges and successes of AAP implementation in situations of varying crisis types and environments. The nature of the crises, the political and cultural environment, and the accessibility of affected populations all play a significant role in shaping AAP implementation. It is clear from our case studies that gaps in AAP implementation and effectiveness persist and action must be taken to ensure accountability to affected communities.

Section III synthesizes the report and provides recommendations to the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, as well as other stakeholders involved in the implementation of humanitarian aid and AAP programming. Building off of the **Section II** case studies, **Section III** proposes eight detailed takeaways, how to best measure the effects of AAP programming across sectors, subpopulations, regions, and crisis types, and six detailed recommendations for further courses of action. Additionally, this section takes into account the nuanced dynamics and complexities of international aid frameworks. Given evolving trends, varied needs, and diverse already-implemented crisis response frameworks, recommendations for AAP drastically differ across subpopulations.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **AAP is Most Effective When Consistently Sustained Throughout a Crisis.**
   The case studies of Ethiopia and Afghanistan aptly elucidate the importance of sustaining humanitarian aid and conflict management initiatives throughout a crisis's full duration. To be fully accountable to affected populations, aid must not be abruptly halted or obstructed. Onerous restrictions, fear of political risk (e.g.: the possibility of legitimizing *de facto* governments), donor fatigue, and suspension of resources for political bargaining decrease the validity of humanitarian aid and prevent the effectiveness of AAP in crisis zones. Sustained AAP supports stabilization efforts and allows in-network stakeholders to communicate and incorporate tested best practice mechanisms with the communities affected leading the conversations. It allows aid networks to immediately reach those affected by any degree of crisis, and aid workers would have the capacity to minimize the long-term psychological, economic, and structural consequences of trauma. For example, in 2021 the obstruction of humanitarian aid to Ethiopia contributed to acute malnutrition rates comparable to the 2011 famine and an alarming spike in gender-based violence. Upon a U.N. declaration and the reinstatement of programming, officials saw a shift in accountability and relief to affected persons, though the consequences of obstructed aid exacerbated regional crises in Ethiopia. This sentiment also applies to other protracted and polycrisis studies

such as Afghanistan and Haiti. Coordinated, dynamic, and inclusive AAP frameworks and paralleled aid efforts are most effective when continued throughout a crisis.

a. **Quality AAP Before, During, and After Aid Delivery is Necessary to Align Humanitarian Aid with Communities' Needs.**

The case studies of Haiti and Ukraine emphasize the importance of implementing quality Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) measures throughout the entire aid delivery process. The CDAC & GTS Framework highlights the need for community and individual engagement before, during, and after a crisis to effectively and efficiently deliver aid. In Haiti, GTS's phone survey found that over half of the respondents were dissatisfied because they felt their community was not consulted about the aid they received before its delivery. Similarly, in Ukraine, locals expected more collaboration with aid agencies and expressed concerns about not being consulted on their needs in advance. Humanitarian agencies must prioritize quality AAP measures throughout the entire aid delivery process to align interventions with the needs of the affected communities.

2. **Accountability Mechanisms Must Be Adapted to Address the Needs of Different Social Groups.**

The case studies of Afghanistan and Myanmar exemplify the importance of championing and upholding equality throughout all Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) measures. As with all societies, certain identity groups are generally considered to be more vulnerable and marginalized than others. The United Nations emphasizes in their 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan that to apply effective AAP measures, one must understand the caveats and social dynamics of the communities that they are working within whether this be focused on gender, disability inclusion, gender-based violence (GBV), child protection, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), etc. In Afghanistan, Ground Truth Solutions (GTS) noted that "women struggle to access aid. They feel less informed about what is available, and they don't trust targeting processes…83% of women and 86% of men say that both men and women should have equal access to aid, but only 45% of men and 47% of women say this is the case."[82] Similarly, in Myanmar, the Muslim minority group of Rohingya people is excluded from equal access to aid as well. According to Mercy Corps, the number of Rohingya refugees has grown rapidly in numbers, yet access and resources continue to decline.[83] Humanitarian agencies must prioritize the most vulnerable groups when considering

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[82] GTS and Salma Consulting, *Against the odds: Strengthening accountability to women and girls in Afghanistan.*
[83] MercyCorps, *The facts: Rohingya refugee crisis.*

which AAP measures to enact so that their end goals align with the needs of the affected communities.

3. **Empowering Local Communities Makes Humanitarian Response Stronger**.
The case studies of Haiti and Ukraine illustrate the crucial role local ownership holds in reinforcing humanitarian responses. In Haiti, the Communication with Communities (CWC) initiative focused on placing local views and knowledge at the forefront of humanitarian efforts. Additional AAP initiatives fostered community ownership by employing local experts. However, the GTS phone survey disclosed that dissatisfaction with aid provision persisted, primarily due to insufficient transparency and inadequate consultation with communities. In instances where local leadership was ignored, communities were less satisfied with the aid delivery. Similarly, in Ukraine, GTS surveys underscored the necessity for enhanced transparency and ownership of feedback mechanisms. By involving local communities and empowering them to actively shape the assistance they receive, humanitarian agencies can attain a more precise comprehension of community needs and priorities, resulting in more efficient and effective interventions.

4. **Different Types of Crises Have Different Needs.**
It is evident in all case studies that one single type of AAP will not be effective in all crises, and customized approaches for each provide the best results. As seen in the case study regarding Haiti, humanitarian efforts and training that were implemented during the 2010 earthquake and following cholera are not guaranteed to continue in the crises that followed. As Haiti continues to face extreme violence, political unrest, displacement, public health emergencies, and continuing natural disasters, the humanitarian efforts implemented by CDAC Network and other humanitarian efforts unraveled because of the high turnover rate of trained implementers. Haiti and states with similar protracted crises need AAP efforts that focus on providing aid while trying to establish consistency of leaders and those who are trained by the network. With high turnover, the aid and information that was originally coordinated and provided get lost. AAP cannot be a one-size fits all approach and needs to be hyper-specific to each situation, to ensure that the affected populations receive the care and aid they need. In Ukraine and Afghanistan, the AAP required is severely different from the AAP required by Haiti, and should be treated as such. Agencies and organizations looking to provide AAP and aid need to be thoroughly communicated with the affected communities, as this can help provide long-lasting changes that are supported by the other types of aid provided. One thing that all AAP should have in common is that they originated through

the needs of affected community members and is determined through feedback from those facing the crisis.

5. **Accountability is Not Possible Without Confidentiality.**
   As the Myanmar case study shows, confidentiality proves to be an important factor regarding AAP practices' effectiveness. According to the CAID-UK report, up to 95% of women and up to 80% of men claimed that confidentiality is important for accountability[84]. These statistics are reflective of the Rohingya refugees' beliefs and trust in authoritative figures. Previous to their mass expulsion from Myanmar in 2019, the Rohingyas have faced prolonged abuses and discrimination from the military juntas that are in control of the country. The military government, in addition to suppressing free elections, has also failed to recognize the Rohingya minority as one of the nation's ethnic groups and has employed raids and violence on them for decades. In addition, the military juntas also fuel tensions between Rohingyas and other ethnic groups within Myanmar, often using them as a scapegoat for the state of the economy. This history of abuses from authority explained their mistrust towards the government and the figures in power. In this sense, confidentiality proved to be of utmost importance to the Rohingyas to fully report misconduct or abuse from the humanitarian worker's organizations. In the same CAID-UK report, the team of researchers also conducted other pilot projects that aimed to improve the confidentiality factor for refugees. Through testing different potential AAP communication programs, the results showed that employing other AAP practices in communications such as Voice Recorders and Help Desks can effectively increase aid receivers' trust in humanitarian organizations.[85]

6. **In Crises that Spur Displacement, There Must Be Two Parallel Responses.**
   The crises in Afghanistan, Haiti, Myanmar, Ethiopia, and Ukraine have all led to forced displacement. This is most often caused by civil conflict/war, food insecurity, and natural disasters, among other factors. Due to the complex and interrelated nature of displacement crises, to ensure accountability to all affected people, humanitarian responses must have two parallel mandates. One is directed toward refugees who have crossed international borders, and another for internally displaced peoples (IDPs), because these two categories of persons of concern experience crises differently. Additionally, different types of crises impact peoples' levels of mobility. The UNHCR, for example, recognizes the necessity for these tailored responses as integral to inclusivity and non-discrimination.

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[84] CAID-UK, *Accountability Assessment Rohingya Response Bangladesh.*
[85] CAID-UK, *Accountability Assessment Rohingya Response Bangladesh.*

7. **Digitization Can Be Both Inclusive and Exclusive.**
   The increasingly digital nature of humanitarian aid delivery and transparency mechanisms responds to some challenges but creates others. The International Rescue Committee has highlighted the potential for **information communication technology** (ICT) programs specifically in urban areas, as crises are becoming increasingly common in urban areas.[86] This is considered a new best practice because it is sensitive to the diverse needs of urban populations, the dynamic and "on-the-go" nature of these populations, and a higher likelihood of people of concern's access to internet and digital network coverage. However, as seen in the case of Ukraine, this is not a full solution. The digital applications for aid and cash assistance were significantly less accessible to older and rural populations than to younger or urban populations. Feedback/complaint mechanisms and needs/impact assessments often took place over the phone, posing the same challenges. Additionally, it is important to consider who has access to which types of digital devices around the world, and how these are used. There is existing data that shows standard access and use types across countries that can be quickly evaluated, especially in the case of rapid-onset crises, from public sources including the Latin American Public Opinion Project,[87] World Values Survey,[88] and Afrobarometer.[89] They might reveal important realities, for example, families sharing one device, or access to mobile phones that don't support all applications. In current and future crises, humanitarian organizations and aid deliverers must employ a combination of approaches, including digital tools, tailored information campaigns on and off-line, and traditional outreach methods on the ground, to ensure full AAP. This will continue to be a challenge in any crisis.

TO BEST MEASURE THE EFFECTS OF AAP PROGRAMMING

When measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of AAP programming, it is important to recognize that there is often statistical bias due to "contact insecurity".[90] Contact insecurity is associated with social insecurity, meaning that the most disadvantaged populations are hardest to reach and most excluded from current efforts. However, there are well-developed methods, along with our suggestions, that are designed in order to eliminate this bias and maximize survey/feedback participation.

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[86] International Rescue Committee, *Using ICT in Urban Areas.*
[87] Vanderbilt University, *LAPOP.*
[88] World Values Survey Association, *World Values Survey Database.*
[89] Afrobarometer, *The Pan-African Research Network.*
[90] Western, et al, *Study retention as bias reduction.*

In addition to the earlier measurements laid out by the CDAC Network and GTS' Framework for Assessing the Success of National CCE Platforms, our research has led to one main method of measurement. In line with our key takeaways 1, 1a, 2, and 8, we can use sustained qualitative assessments as a tool for comparison of accountability over time in terms of reach. Needs assessments prior to the implementation of humanitarian aid can identify communities that are not being reached using current methods. For example, if responses are disproportionately from urban or younger populations, as in Ukraine, organizations will realize that they must change their methods to reach others. If assessments and feedback mechanisms are sustained throughout the length of a crisis, the demographics of responses can be compared over time. Organizations can continually use this information to monitor whether their reach is improving, therefore improving accountability. However, this is made all the more challenging in country contexts in which little to no census or other demographic data exists.[91]

Still, collecting data, accurately surveying populations affected by crises across the globe, and measuring the impacts of aid and AAP programming *has* been and *will continue* to be a great challenge. There is not a singular method of measurement that will work in all cases– the **National Opinion Research Center** (NORC) at the University of Chicago reports that surveying some populations and subgroups will remain challenging. This is because the characteristics of populations and their particular difficulties vary across the globe. Errors range from non/under-coverage, to nonresponse, to misreporting. Unique national factors and social/individual-level attributes mean that responses and AAP programming measurements must be practically and viably designed for specific populations.[92]

In line with our suggestion to implement sustained assessments throughout crises (in order to compare response demographics over time), to adequately meet these sampling challenges, there are promising methods for effective and efficient surveys to measure AAP using local perceptions. These include using personal interviews, working through local organizations, asking locals for referrals within the affected population to gather more perceptions, and hiring and taking care of enumerators/local touchpoints.[93]

The international community understands the importance of AAP in crisis response, yet gaps in efficacy remain. The following recommendations will serve to augment existing successes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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[91] Denny & Driscoll, *Calling Mogadishu*.
[92] Smith, *Surveying Hard to Reach Populations.*
[93] Rozo, *Tips for Collecting Surveys.*

1. **Combining Digital and Traditional Tools.** In an increasingly digital world, recognize that both digital and traditional tools and accountability mechanisms are valuable in their own right. Rather than prioritizing one over the other, think about how each can be best used to reach different areas of a population.

2. **Gather Perceptions of Affected People.** Actively solicit information from and listen to affected people and what they say is most valuable. For example, many populations have responded that direct cash assistance or vouchers are most effective because they allow for maximum flexibility.

3. **Implement More Expansive Pre-Assessments.** By seeing who responds initially, an organization can better tailor their response to be most inclusive and mitigate gaps later.

4. **Actively Employ and Trust Locals.** Community organizations have pre-existing networks within their communities to know where the need is greatest and to best reach others. Listening or delegating will raise local voices through the crisis and recovery. This means that instead of a singular, centralized "hub," aid efforts are made unique to each individual affected population.

5. **Increasing Collaboration Among Organizations.** PRM, and other key organizations, should increase collaboration among each other to implement the most tailored and informed response. Additionally, knowledge-sharing between organizations can increase the effectiveness and efficiency of AAP.

6. **Implement Targeted Feedback Mechanisms.** Targeting especially vulnerable groups through public opinion analysis, such as telephone surveys, focus groups, and content analysis. It would be imperative to execute this before applying to AAP, however, some crises are imperative where this should occur during or following the application to learn in future scenarios.

CONCLUSION

While the international system recognizes the importance of AAP and accurately measures the effectiveness and efficiency of this programming, there are still areas with significant room for improvement. Our key takeaways emphasize that full accountability can only be taken by having sustained programming throughout a crisis, recognizing variable needs (based on social groups, crisis type, or movement), empowering locals, ensuring confidentiality, and combining

traditional and digital tools. In order to best measure the effectiveness and efficiency of AAP programming on humanitarian responses, we must recognize the existence of contact insecurity, unique national factors, and social/individual level attributes that require tailored responses for each crisis and change the difficulties of measurement. We propose that PRM and monitoring organizations conduct frequent surveys and needs assessments, analyzing the difference in response demographics over time, along with other promising methods for increasing survey participation and engaging local communities from day one. In addition to our recommendations, further research into innovative approaches to AAP, including those surrounding the improvement of digital reach or solutions to contact insecurity, can lead to more effective and efficient strategies for measurement.

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