



WHO'S LISTENING?

Accountability to affected people in the Haiyan response

By Margie Buchanan-Smith, Jonathan Corpus Ong, and Sarah Routley | May 2015



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background to the case study

International humanitarian agencies invested more effort and energy into being “accountable to affected people” (AAP) in the Typhoon Haiyan response than ever before. This case study explores how affected people experienced these accountability efforts, comparing their perspectives with the perspectives of the agencies themselves, and investigates the organisational and systemic factors that enabled some agencies to place AAP centre stage in their programming, and that inhibited others from doing so. The overall aim is to inform current debates and efforts within the sector, to improve and strengthen the ways in which humanitarian agencies engage with affected populations. The research was carried out between November 2014 and February 2015 using a range of predominantly qualitative research methods. It is part of the Pamati Kita project, designed to promote a more collaborative and collective approach to AAP in the Haiyan response.

A brief history of humanitarian agencies’ efforts to be more accountable to affected populations

Since the 1990s, there have been a number of sector-wide initiatives to improve the accountability of humanitarian agencies, particularly to crisis-affected people. These were primarily driven by a desire to improve the quality and performance of humanitarian action, although some agencies have emphasised the rights-based rationale of empowering affected people to have greater influence and voice. But there has been a well-documented gap between rhetoric and reality. Although there have been some modest improvements in agency performance, overall progress has been limited. There has been a tendency to approach accountability to affected people (AAP) in a mechanistic way, focusing on technical tools rather than soft skills such as listening and facilitation, which are key to dialogue and changing the relationship between agencies and affected people. The prevailing power dynamics within the humanitarian sector mean that “upwards accountability,” to donors and organisations, dominates, squeezing out accountability to affected people. The widely-used HAP definition of “accountability” as the “means through which power is used responsibly,” usefully places power centre stage. But the term accountability is not well-understood at field level, and is not easily translated beyond the English language.

Agencies’ AAP approaches in the Haiyan response

As a middle-income country with one of the fastest-growing economies in Asia and a well-defined legal structure, the Philippines is a conducive context for promoting accountability and transparency. One of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, the government of the Philippines has disaster risk reduction and response policies and structures in place, although these were quickly overwhelmed by the scale of the Haiyan crisis. The UN declared it a Level 3 humanitarian response.

Most international agencies used a suite of mechanisms as channels of communication with affected people, including visits by agency staff, community consultations, suggestions and complaints boxes, help desks, and hotlines. Technology played an important role, especially for larger agencies, including the use of smart phones for surveys for assessments, baselines and monitoring; computerised databases to record and analyse feedback; and technological links between hotlines and databases. Most agencies developed their own systems for categorising feedback (although this lack of consistency hampered collective analysis of feedback data), and recorded whether action was taken. For the larger agencies this was a somewhat formalised system of AAP in which they struggled to capture and accommodate less formalised forms of feedback from face-to-face interactions, for example daily contact between staff and affected people, and from community consultations.

National NGOs had a different approach. Those that were local to the area and/or with local staff, with a community-development orientation, felt more naturally in touch with the perspectives of local people and therefore did not see the need to set up dedicated AAP mechanisms, nor did they have the resources.

But not all national NGOs fell into this category, and some spent so much time on project delivery they had less time for community consultation. The more activist national NGOs tended to engage with the concept of “accountability” as holding government to account.

There were substantial efforts to promote collective AAP in the Haiyan response. OCHA deployed AAP and CWC coordinators from the outset, separate AAP and CWC Technical Working Groups were established (eventually merging) in five hubs, and a consortium of agencies—Plan International, IOM, and WVI—came together to establish a common services project, Pamati Kita, from July 2014. Collaborative practices and common services established included community consultations carried out by OCHA in the early response phase, which provided feedback on the overall response, the introduction of Community Feedback Forms to consolidate feedback from individual agencies, and multi-actor community consultations facilitated by the Pamati Kita project during the recovery phase.

AAP in practice in the Haiyan response

Although WVI’s database shows that feedback boxes, SMS hotlines, and help desks were the most widely used channels for affected people to feed back to the agency, consultations with local people show that they overwhelmingly preferred face-to-face communication, because of the human interaction and the opportunity for dialogue. Community consultations could be effective ways to air concerns, but local people reported that they tended to be “one-way” as agencies used them to communicate programme details such as beneficiary selection. Hotlines were treated with skepticism because of the impression that they did not generate meaningful responses, and local people did not know who was at the end of the hotline. Better use was made of SMS if the community already had a relationship with the agency. Agencies had surprisingly little disaggregated data on who was using which AAP mechanisms. According to our research, users of SMS channels were mostly under 40 or 50 years old, and female. Older people preferred direct contact. Despite some AAP initiatives targeted at young people, this group generally participated little. Overall, the perspective of affected people is that agencies were not as accessible as they may have believed themselves to be.

In terms of closing the feedback loop, agencies gave greatest attention to individual redress, particularly through hotlines and SMS. Although this was generally a weak part of the AAP chain, there were some good practice examples of agencies feeding back at community level, for example to validate the findings of community consultations.

The major concern raised by affected people through these feedback mechanisms was beneficiary selection. There was deep-rooted unease with the conventional humanitarian practice of targeting according to need, which cut across Filipino culture where neighbours are regarded as extended family. Selective targeting triggered social divisiveness within communities and a deep sense of shame amongst the excluded. Although agencies discussed these concerns early in the response, they did not change their targeting practices, apart from making minor adjustments to beneficiary lists. As a result, some *barangay* officials chose not to receive aid at all.

There are a number of examples of how feedback triggered minor changes in programming, but very few examples of substantial changes to programming or to strategic decision-making. There are also cases of agencies not responding to issues raised and not communicating with those excluded from relief programming.

Utang na loob, or debt of gratitude, is the key moral principle underpinning social relations in Filipino culture, especially to those who provide help beyond normal expectations. Assistance from international agencies falls into this category, creating an immediate disincentive for local people to express criticism. This is compounded by the patron-client culture in which humanitarian agencies are regarded as the patron in a highly unequal power relationship. There was also an underlying fear that support might decrease if communities complained.

Overall, the relationship between international humanitarian agencies and affected communities was quite distant, characterised by a sense of ambivalence on the part of the latter. While agency branding (especially by international agencies) contributed to high levels of agency recognition by local people, they made a distinction between international agencies, which were seen as service providers and some national agencies, which were seen as accompanying communities on their journey.

How agencies engaged at the *barangay* level was a key determinant of how residents engaged with their AAP efforts. Where agencies had a weak relationship with the community, the influence of the *barangay* captain as “gatekeeper” was strongest; this could hinder feedback where *barangay* officials discouraged residents from raising concerns, partly to “maintain face” to the outsiders. Where agencies had a strong relationship with the community, they were more likely to receive honest feedback. The *barangays* that expressed the most positive experiences of the relief process each had an international NGO embedded in the community, and therefore had the deepest relationship. These relationships were mostly created during the humanitarian response, not before, and positively impacted contentious practices such as beneficiary selection as well as accountability.

The international humanitarian response is believed to have “reactivated” *barangay* assemblies. But the record of how international organisations worked through national NGOs and their channels of communication with affected communities is less impressive. While national NGOs were overwhelmed with the scale of the response, international agencies prioritised delivery over partnership. There was little government participation in agencies’ collective AAP efforts: ongoing agency collaboration was too resource-intensive for limited government capacity, and there is little evidence that agencies tried to build on existing government channels.

Organisational and systemic issues affecting AAP in the Haiyan response

Most agencies had little or no dedicated funding for AAP, which was usually located within their M&E departments. WVI provided a model of excellence in the way it mainstreamed AAP organisationally in its response to Typhoon Haiyan. Five inter-related factors were key. First, through early deployment (in the first week of the response) of an experienced and assertive accountability officer, the mindset of AAP was established in the programme from the outset and did not have to compete for attention later on. Staff had also been trained in advance. Second, senior programme managers were strongly committed to AAP, regarding it as a fundamental part of humanitarian programming. Under their leadership, AAP was built into management systems, and they modelled decision-making based on information and feedback from communities. Third, AAP was passionately championed throughout the response, particularly by a series of dedicated AAP managers. Fourth, organisational structures and processes to support AAP were put in place, including a separate unit and dedicated staff for AAP. Fifth, there were reinforcing factors as WVI was recognised for the work it was doing in being accountable to affected people, and as staff connected with this essence of humanitarian work. But this did not mean that WVI got it right on its own. Periodically checking in with communities was essential to get their perspective, to find out if the agencies’ communication channels were working for them, and to make adjustments accordingly. Other agencies’ experience is a reminder that a rhetorical commitment to AAP, even at the most senior levels, means little if responsibility for AAP is not clearly assigned and located in management structures. Ultimately, mainstreaming AAP requires will, resources, and capacity to succeed.

In the Haiyan response there is evidence that upwards accountability to donors squeezed out downwards accountability to affected people, for example in the allocation of staff and resources to donor reporting as opposed to listening to affected people. Although few interviewees felt that donor requirements prevented them from making programme changes in response to feedback from affected communities, the time it took to secure such donor approval was itself a disincentive.

Overall analysis of AAP in the Haiyan response

While AAP was given much greater attention as an organisational and sector-wide priority in the Haiyan response, there are limitations in the way it was done.

First, feedback tended to focus on existing agency programmes: “are we doing things right?”, rather than on bigger strategic issues: “are we doing the right things?”

Second, local people’s preference for face-to-face communication highlights that dialogue and building relationships are at the heart of AAP. This may require spending substantial time at community level—a challenge for agencies with large programmes early in the response—but actions like setting up help desks in early distributions can be a stepping stone in providing much-valued face-to-face contact. While technology should be used to support interaction between local people and agency staff, it should not become an end in itself.

Third, while humanitarian agencies tend to see the aid transaction as between themselves as service providers and individual vulnerable households, the Haiyan experience demonstrates the relevance of the

wider cultural and societal context. The Taiwanese Tzu Chi Foundation's language of love and care appeared to fit the Filipino culture better than the more consumer-oriented language of accountability and complaints mechanisms of many traditional international humanitarian agencies.

Fourth, this case study highlights the importance of working through local government structures in an informed and nuanced way, alert to power dynamics at local level.

Implications for moving the AAP agenda forward

This case study of the Haiyan experience offers valuable insights for improving agencies' efforts to be accountable to affected people, including:

- using more accessible terminology
- finding ways of better understanding the cultural context and of listening to the experience of affected people
- better incentivising AAP within humanitarian organisations
- expanding the scope of agencies' AAP efforts
- practical action to strengthen how agencies listen and respond to people's priorities and concerns
- strengthening collective action on AAP, and
- learning how to mainstream an AAP mindset and culture, organisationally.

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ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED PEOPLE IN THE HAIYAN RESPONSE

1. INTRODUCTION

For over two decades, international humanitarian agencies have espoused the need to be more accountable to the people they serve, those directly affected by humanitarian crises. During this period, there have been a range of initiatives promoting accountability to affected people, with the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) in the vanguard. But despite the rhetoric and investment in such initiatives, it is widely recognised that the record has been far from impressive (see Box 1 below). Renewed emphasis and interest was generated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) commitment to accountability to affected people, expressed as the acronym, AAP, as part of the Transformative Agenda.¹ Around the same time, there was growing interest in strengthening "communicating with communities" (CwC), with the Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network in the vanguard.

This renewed interest and commitment was put to the test in the international humanitarian response to the devastation caused by super-Typhoon Haiyan in November 2013, in the Visayas region of the Philippines. In a middle-income democratic country, highly prone to natural disasters, yet with reasonable infrastructure, high levels of literacy, and a long history of disaster response, could the international humanitarian agencies put their policy pledges into action and engage differently with affected people and affected communities, to the point of being accountable to those they serve in this well-funded response? The convergence of apparently enabling factors caused some aid officials to comment: "If we can't be more accountable to affected people in this context, then when can we be?"²

Agency efforts to be accountable to affected people in the Haiyan response have attracted much attention within the sector and have been the subject of a number of reviews, for example the CDAC Learning Review (CDAC, 2014a), and IOM's "Starting the Conversation" (Hartmann et al., 2014). The research on which this case study is based builds upon the findings of these earlier reviews and deepens the analysis further. First, it explores how affected people themselves experienced the accountability efforts of humanitarian agencies, and it compares their perspectives with the perspectives of the agencies themselves. Second, it investigates the organisational and systemic factors that facilitated some agencies to "do things differently," placing accountability centre stage in their programming. It also explores the organisational and systemic factors that inhibited AAP, within agencies and within the international humanitarian system as a whole.

This research is part of Pamati Kita, a project designed to promote a more collaborative and collective approach to AAP, implemented jointly by Plan International, World Vision International (WVI), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DfID).³ As well as promoting accountability through the provision of common services, the

¹ See <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-template-default&bd=87>.

² Interviews with aid officials.

³ The first phase of the project was implemented over an eight-month period, from July 2014 to February 2015. See Jacobs (2015a).

project included a learning and research component, carried out by independent researchers. Originally intended to capture the learning from delivering collective services, the scope of the learning and research component was subsequently expanded to capture wider learning from humanitarian agencies' efforts to be accountable to affected communities in the Haiyan response. It has been organised around three parts:

1. Exploring and capturing the affected population's perspectives of humanitarian agencies' efforts to be accountable to them
2. Reviewing agency approaches, mechanisms, and tools to be accountable, and
3. Investigating the organisational or systemic issues encouraging or hindering AAP.

The research was carried out between November 2014 and February 2015, through a combination of qualitative research methods to consult affected communities across the Haiyan-affected area, interviews with agency staff, a review of agencies' AAP approaches supplemented by an online survey, analysis of some of their feedback data, and a review of secondary documentation. In order to put this case study in context, interviews have also been carried out with a number of key resource people who have been at the centre of efforts to promote AAP over the years, as well as with researchers and commentators on these efforts. The research methods for the case study, and constraints, are described in greater detail in Annex 1. This learning and research component of the Pamati Kita project has been guided by an Advisory Group throughout. See Annex 2. The ultimate aim is to feed the findings from this case study into current debates and efforts within the sector to improve and strengthen the ways in which humanitarian agencies engage with affected populations, especially in similar contexts, and to do this in advance of the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. There are limitations of generalising from a context such as the Philippines, where the humanitarian crisis is caused by a natural disaster in a middle-income country, very different from a conflict-related humanitarian crisis in a weak or failed state. Nevertheless, the sense of frustration around the lack of progress so far creates an appetite and opportunity for change.

This report begins with a brief history of AAP, reviewing experience to date and explanations for the lack of progress—Section 2. Section 3 considers the terminology used by international agencies, related to the rationale and values underpinning accountability efforts. Section 4 describes the AAP approaches that agencies have used in the Haiyan response, individually and collectively. Section 5 explores what happened in practice: how did affected people engage with AAP tools and mechanisms, what difference did this make to programming, what was the nature of the relationship between agencies and affected people, and to what extent did agencies build on existing channels or develop their own? This chapter presents much of the data and evidence from our research. Section 6 considers the organisational and systemic issues that fostered or hindered agencies' efforts to be more accountable in the Haiyan response. Some of the obstacles have been well-rehearsed in other reviews and publications, but in the Haiyan response we have an organisational model of good practice in WVI. In the expectation that we can learn more from "what has worked", this section looks at how WVI succeeded in developing a strong culture of AAP in its response. Section 7 summarises our overall analysis of AAP efforts in the Haiyan response, comparing agency perspectives with the perspectives and experience of affected people, and draws out a number of key themes. Section 8 draws out the implications of these case study findings for the international humanitarian sector to engage more effectively with affected communities in future humanitarian crises.

2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES' EFFORTS TO BE MORE ACCOUNTABLE TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS

2.1 The major initiatives

Hertha Kraus's extraordinary record of international relief between 1914 and 1943, much of it in Europe during the two world wars, is a reminder of how long agencies have struggled with the discrepancies between what they are able to provide and how, and the wishes and needs of affected people. She concluded that: "in some programs there has been very little direct contact with the people in trouble, as individuals; in others a great deal of personal service was given them" (Kraus, 1944: 215). The evidence suggests that this pattern may have continued, both in terms of the discrepancy between how agencies operate and the wishes and needs of affected people, and highly variable performance between agencies and contexts in terms of the contact and "personal service" provided.

The issue of accountability of humanitarian agencies to "victims" was raised in the late 1970s by Ressler, describing it as "an operational method and a programme philosophy" in an article in *Disasters* journal (Ressler, 1978: 129). In the mid-1980s, there was a rare example of a "Help Desk" for affected communities being set up by Oxfam as part of its large food distribution programme in the Red Sea Hills in Sudan (Hale, 1986). But it was not until the second half of the 1980s that the concept of accountability really gained prominence as humanitarian aid budgets significantly expanded. It was enshrined in the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief, published in 1994, which stated that: "we hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources," as principle number 9 (IFRC and ICRC, 1994: 3). Accountability in practice was put firmly into the spotlight by the "watershed" experience of the international humanitarian response to the Rwanda crisis in the mid-1990s. The question of "to whom international agencies were accountable" was debated outside the sector, for example by the media asking uncomfortable and probing questions, as well as within the sector. The seminal Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda (JEEAR) took up the issue of accountability on the back of highly variable performance by different agencies, clearly recommending that organisations strengthen their systems to be accountable to recipients of assistance (Borton et al., 1996).

In response, the Humanitarian Ombudsman Project was launched in 1997, hosted by the British Red Cross. Realising this may not work in societies without well-established public services, and functioning and fair judicial systems, this developed into the Humanitarian Accountability Project, to identify, test, and recommend alternative approaches to accountability, with a much broader international membership. Many other sector-wide initiatives sprang up around this time, such as Sphere, People in Aid, and the Urgence Réhabilitation Développement (URD) Quality Compas. All of these initiatives shared a common goal, to improve accountability, primarily in order to improve quality and performance in humanitarian action—described here as the first rationale for being accountable to affected people. However, each took a different route and had a different focus. The HAP initiative has been the one most focused on accountability to affected people, developing the HAP standard in 2007, revised in 2010.

Around the same time, there was parallel but related interest in strengthening the participation of affected people in humanitarian operations. Participation was strongly promoted in the development sector in the 1980s and 1990s, as a way of challenging the prevailing power dynamics and empowering local people, championed by influential thinkers such as Robert Chambers and Paulo Freire (Brown and Donini, 2014). In the humanitarian sector, participation is one of the HAP Benchmarks, and appears in the 1994 Code of Conduct (IFRC and ICRC, 1994). Between 2002 and 2003, ALNAP invested in a Global Study on the

Participation of Affected Populations in Humanitarian Assistance, with six country case studies and production of a comprehensive participation handbook for humanitarian aid workers. The handbook states that:

there is more to participation than a set of tools. It is first and foremost an attitude—a state of mind—that sees people affected by a crisis as social actors with skills, energy, ideas and insight into their own situation. Local people should be agents of the humanitarian response rather than passive recipients. (ALNAP and URD, 2009: 25)

This relates to the second, rights-based rationale for being accountable to affected people, so that they can engage in decision-making processes, have greater voice and influence, and thus fulfil their right to life with dignity (Darcy et al., 2013).

Another strand of work has focused on independent third party agencies surveying and spending time with affected people to capture their experiences and feedback on the effectiveness of humanitarian operations, independently of operational agencies. Indeed, JEEAR proposed that an independent body act on behalf of beneficiaries, for example carrying out regular field-level monitoring and evaluation. The role of third party beneficiary surveys as a means of assessing the effectiveness of humanitarian operations has been developed and tested in several contexts by the Fritz Institute between 2004 and 2006,⁴ although it was not repeated after the tsunami response. Around the same time, in 2005, CDA launched the Listening Program, designed to listen to those on the receiving end of international aid (both development and humanitarian), and thus to gather evidence on how to more meaningfully engage with them.⁵ More recently, since 2012, the Groundtruth program, set up by Keystone Accountability, has attempted to capture beneficiary perspectives and feed them into a performance management tool for agencies, with projects in Haiti, Pakistan, and Sierra Leone.⁶

Many individual organisations have drawn on these sector-wide initiatives in order to improve and develop their own organisational practice, often developing their own guidelines, principles and tools: for example Tearfund, WVI, Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam, Save the Children, Concern, and, more recently, some UN agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).



Encouraging the Communities. Thematic comics with messages about the Common Services Project are distributed to explain the project and encourage feedback.

2.2 The record

Despite the investment in these initiatives for almost two decades, agencies' lack of progress in effectively engaging with, and being accountable to, affected people has been widely lamented, and the gap between the rhetoric and reality frequently commented upon. See Box 1.

⁴ See <http://www.fritzinstitute.org/prgHumanitarianImpact.htm>.

⁵ See <http://www.cdacollaborative.org/programs/listening-program/>.

⁶ See <http://www.groundtruthsolutions.org/home.html>.

Box 1: Accountability to affected people – a poor record

From a report on the future of the humanitarian system in 2009:

- “An unattractive characteristic of the humanitarian system over the last 20 years has been its neglect—arguably willful disregard—of the importance of seeking and responding to the views of its intended beneficiaries (which in many other systems, industries or sectors would be referred to as ‘customers’ or ‘clients’)” (Borton, 2009: 21).

From ALNAP’s “State of the System” report in 2010:

- “Respondents to the survey carried out for this report felt that beneficiaries had less than adequate participation in programming (i.e., planning, design and evaluation of projects)” (Harvey et al., 2010: 40).

From the Humanitarian Emergency Response Review (HERR) in 2011, which concluded that:

- “The paradigm is still viewing the affected population too much as what economist Julian Le Grand has called ‘pawns’ (passive individuals) and the international community as ‘knights’ (extreme altruists). This approach costs. Local capacities are not utilised, the beneficiary is not involved enough and the quality of delivery is lower than it should be” (Ashdown, 2011: 26).

From ALNAP’s “Rhetoric or Reality” report in 2014:

- “crisis-affected people often perceive their engagement in the humanitarian assistance they receive as poor and not meaningful” (Brown and Donini, 2014: 44).

Despite this overall sense of poor performance, modest improvements have been noted, for example according to the annual HAP perception survey in the HAP 2013 Accountability Report (Darcy et al., 2013).⁷ Complaints mechanisms, in particular, are now widely established, although with varying levels of success or impact (Ibid). The “State of the System” report for 2012 highlighted a number of examples of good practice, some of which involved the innovative use of information and communication technology (ICT). But there is also a sense that these pockets of good practice have more to do with the pioneering efforts of a few individuals and teams rather than any system-wide shift in paradigm, approach, or practice.⁸ As the 2012 “State of the System” report concludes:

“To date, there is less evidence to suggest that this new resource of ground-level information is being used strategically to improve humanitarian interventions” (Taylor et al., 2012: 12).

⁷ This is a survey to capture how humanitarian professionals perceive their accountability efforts (although no details are given about how these perceptions are formed). While the majority of humanitarian professionals surveyed have consistently perceived a high level of accountability to official donors between 2005 and 2012, only 8% perceived a high level of accountability to affected people in 2005; by 2012 this had increased to 51% (Darcy et al., 2013).

⁸ This finding, articulated by a number of interviewees, resonates with the findings of the ALNAP study on humanitarian leadership, which highlighted inspiring and effective examples of leadership, many of which “emerged in spite of a deeply constraining context,” including organisational culture (Buchanan-Smith and Scriven, 2011).

2.3 Some explanations

So why does the record not match the rhetoric, despite almost 20 years of efforts to improve agencies' engagement with those affected by humanitarian crises? Understanding this is critical to guide investment, of money and human resources, into new initiatives such as the IASC's Transformative Agenda, and into discussions on accountability and humanitarian effectiveness associated with the World Humanitarian Summit, to ensure much greater progress in the next 20 years, indeed in the next five years.

The evidence suggests two levels of explanation. First, there is a level of explanation that focuses on what has changed and what has not in terms of operational practice. Second, there is the deeper level of explanation, as to why fundamental change has not taken place. The following analysis is based on the substantial literature on these topics, and on interviews with key resource people who have been involved in or who have closely observed the so-called "accountability revolution"⁹ since the mid-1990s.

In terms of the first level and what has changed, a number of interviewees and reviews have commented on the tendency to approach AAP as a menu of activities, in a technical/mechanistic way, focusing on the "tools," for example complaints mechanisms (SCHR, 2010). The mechanisms and tools have tended to become an end in themselves, projectised as an "add-on" to the overall programme. This was described by one interviewee as an attempt to "contain and control" AAP. What has not changed is the mindset, to place dialogue and *relationships* with affected communities centre stage, and to spend time *listening* to affected people (Ibid). Technical skills have been prioritised over "soft skills" such as listening and facilitation. The SCHR peer review of 2010 captured this succinctly:

Accountability cannot be pursued as a project. Accountability to disaster-affected persons requires organisations to work differently rather than do different things. It is about pursuing a process which changes the nature of the relationship with affected groups rather than achieving an end-state of accountability (SCHR, 2010: 3).

At a deeper level, a number of authors and commentators have drawn attention to the systemic obstacles to the fundamental change needed in the relationship between agencies and affected people, if agencies are to be truly accountable to affected people. These relate directly to prevailing power dynamics. The HAP 2013 Accountability Report makes an important distinction between official and legal responsibility (and therefore accountability) and voluntary and moral responsibility and accountability. Accountability of international agencies to affected people falls into the second category, dependent on self-imposed obligations, and is therefore a relatively weak form of accountability (Darcy et al., 2013). In practice, this means that:

voluntary responsibilities tend to be "trumped" by more defined forms of accountability, notably of agency staff to their line managers to deliver on organizational priorities. (Ibid: 10)

And those organisational priorities may look very different from the priorities of affected people. As Ressler pointed out almost 40 years ago, accountability to funders is ultimately where the power lies:

"He who pays the piper calls the tune." It is on this basis that agencies have defined the accountability in the past, viewing themselves as being primarily accountable to their source of funding, rather than to the beneficiaries. (Ressler, 1978: 130)

⁹ See <http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-24/editors-introduction-the-accountability-revolution>.

This has not changed, and it is widely recognised today that accountability to donors, also described as “upwards accountability”, “can easily ‘squeeze out’ accountability to affected populations” (SCHR, 2010: 6), especially when stringent reporting requirements detract from an organisation’s ability to engage with affected people (Ibid). As Jacobs (2015b) has pointed out:

Currently, the dominant funding and operating model for international humanitarian response is that operational agencies win and manage grants from institutional donors...Contracts and project procedures tend to limit the opportunities to engage with communities in various ways...Agencies often have to focus on hastily determined goals about “spend rates” and “output delivery,” rather than listening and responding to people’s changing needs. (Jacobs, 2015b: 5)

These systemic obstacles contribute to a prevailing humanitarian agency-centric approach to AAP, which often means that agencies are insensitive, or at worst blind, to the context in which they are working. In practical terms, this translates into a failure to build on existing community structures and accountability channels. Agencies are more concerned with how communities engage with their AAP mechanisms, rather than how the agencies can engage with the means and mechanisms affected populations use themselves. Indicative of this agency-centric approach, there has been remarkably little research into how affected communities experience and perceive the efforts of humanitarian agencies, with a few notable exceptions such as the surveys carried out by the Fritz Institute (mentioned above), and the occasional piece of commissioned research.¹⁰ Humanitarian agencies’ failure to adequately understand the context in which they are working has been an enduring theme in evaluations and research findings, causing some authors to call for greater involvement of disciplines such as sociology and anthropology, and deeper analysis of the political economy, to help humanitarian agencies better understand the local context and culture,¹¹ and for much greater local consultation.¹²

This Pamati Kita case study explores whether these patterns are repeated in the Haiyan response in terms of how effectively humanitarian agencies have engaged with affected people, and especially whether they have been able to break through some of these systemic barriers.

¹⁰ For example, the insightful research commissioned by Save the Children Fund (SCF) in South Sudan in 1998, which threw light on the redistribution of food aid within communities, despite agencies’ targeting efforts (Harrigan and Chol, 1998).

¹¹ See, for example, Pottier (1996); Torry (1979); and Collinson (2003).

¹² See, for example, ALNAP’s 2012 “State of the Humanitarian System,” which draws a direct link between humanitarian operations being less relevant and a weak understanding of local context (Taylor et al., 2012).

3. TERMINOLOGY, DEFINITIONS, AND CONCEPTS

There has been little consistency in definitions of, or conceptual clarity about, AAP. To some extent, the language, definition, and (often implicit) conceptual framework depends on the rationale, in turn dependent on an organisation's values and approach. Brown and Donini (2014) make some useful distinctions between the Dunantist agencies who are more likely to pursue community engagement for instrumental reasons, to facilitate access and meet humanitarian objectives, to make humanitarian programmes more effective, in contrast with solidarist, rights-based and developmental agencies, that may be seeking to address structural inequalities, to empower affected people, and to facilitate social change.

In practice, HAP's definition of accountability is probably the most widely used: "the means through which power is used responsibly," unpacked as "a process of taking into account the views of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, primarily the people affected by authority or power."¹³ This usefully places power dynamics centre stage, and is usually interpreted by humanitarian agencies as referring to responsible use of *their own* power in relation to affected people who are often disempowered. Participants at the 2014 ALNAP meeting on "Engagement of Crisis-Affected People in Humanitarian Action" drew a distinction between their understanding of accountability to affected people and the more developmental focus on participation and *empowerment* of affected people, suggesting that the latter is about influencing wider power relationships, which detracts from their efforts to be impartial, thus expressing the Dunantist approach.¹⁴ This view helps to explain why AAP is usually treated as an "add-on" by humanitarian agencies, whereas it is more likely to be central to the goals of development agencies, especially NGOs.

The more recent terminology of CwC—communicating with communities—is seen by many to overlap with the accountability agenda, as an "enabler" of accountability, emphasising the "how to." But it is also seen as distinct from accountability because information and communication are themselves considered to be an important form of aid. By effectively receiving and communicating vital information, affected communities can make their own informed decisions. As an approach, it is seen as less formalised than AAP, and less tied to humanitarian programmes and operations (CDAC, 2014b). It has built upon the increasingly creative use of ICT in humanitarian crises, and has promoted new alliances between humanitarian agencies and communications and media organisations.

Much of the debate so far has been driven at the global level, by agency headquarters engaged in sector-wide initiatives. Definitions and concepts have been developed at this level. But how are these definitions and concepts understood at the operational level? This is where the language of accountability quickly runs into difficulties. As the SCHR peer review concludes:

the term "accountability" is not well-understood amongst staff of participating organisations, particularly at the level of country programmes. Moreover, the term itself can frequently block individuals' understanding, so that accountability is kept at a distance, as policy level rhetoric rather than a responsibility that needs to be acted upon. (SCHR, 2010: 18)

¹³ See <http://www.hapinternational.org/what-we-do/hap-standard.aspx>, which unpacks six benchmarks ranging from "establishing and delivering on commitments" to "sharing information," "participation," and "learning and continual improvement."

¹⁴ See Brown and Donini (2014).

There is a fundamental problem that “accountability” is not easily translated beyond the English language, and is consequently not well-understood. This is true in the Philippines where “accountability” cannot be translated into local languages. Some national aid workers interviewed for this case study said they used the language of “responsibility” when explaining their AAP approaches; others talked about participation and communication. Using both CwC and AAP terminology was also confusing in the Haiyan response, especially as it resulted in two different but overlapping Technical Working Groups (see below). Some interviewees commented that CwC was initially more appealing to agencies, offering more “carrot” than the “stick” associated with AAP, and was perhaps also more easily understood. (It should be noted, however, that this case study focuses on AAP rather than CwC.)

A newer and more promising line of thinking looks at accountability as a triangular relationship involving affected people, the state, and international agencies (Brown and Donini, 2014). The HAP 2013 Accountability report talks about this as “re-focusing on official accountability” (Darcy et al., 2013: 12). While this can clearly be problematic in conflict-related crises, where government is a protagonist in the conflict, it is highly relevant to natural disasters where there is a functioning government. This triangular relationship may be challenging to international agencies with a long tradition of “state-avoiding” behaviours in their humanitarian action, but it may also serve to bring the approaches of international and national agencies closer together, where the latter are more likely to be focused on empowering communities to demand accountability from the state (see Box 4 in Brown and Donini, 2014; and also later examples from the Philippines—see Section 4.2). International agencies have, to date, mostly been focused on their bilateral accountability to affected communities.

4. AAP APPROACHES IN THE HAIYAN RESPONSE

4.1 The context of the Haiyan humanitarian response

This section demonstrates the conducive context for promoting accountability, transparency, and CwC in the Philippines during the Haiyan response.

Typhoon Haiyan and the response: an overview

On 8th November 2013, Typhoon Haiyan, locally known as Yolanda, hit the Central Visayas region of the Philippines. A category 5 “super-typhoon,” this was one of the strongest tropical cyclones recorded, with sustained winds of 190 to 195 mph when it made landfall, and a storm surge of 5 to 6 metres in many places. Over 6,000 people were killed and around 4 million were left homeless (Hanley et al., 2014).

The Philippines is a lower middle-income country and one of the fastest-growing economies in Asia. However, Typhoon Haiyan hit some of the poorest provinces in the country, including Tacloban City. President Aquino declared a “State of Calamity” on 11th November 2013, and formally accepted international assistance. The following day the United Nations (UN) Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) declared this a Level 3 humanitarian response.¹⁵

As one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, the government of the Philippines has embedded Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) from national to local level in its policies (Peters and Budimir, 2015) and has dedicated resources for disaster management, overseen by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC). However, Haiyan overwhelmed national DRR and preparedness capacity (Ibid). When the typhoon hit, both government and agencies (international and national) were already responding to the Bohol earthquake in the Central Philippines that had happened less than a month earlier, and to conflict-related displacement.

Government provided substantial resources to the Haiyan response, declaring a budget of \$8.17 billion for “Reconstruction Assistance for Yolanda” (RAY), of which US\$ 2.83 billion was to be spent on immediate needs in the first twelve months; the international response provided a much smaller amount, just over \$500 million (Hanley et al., 2014). The private sector also played a significant role, although remittances may have made the biggest contribution (Ibid). Shelter assistance, cash transfers, and cash-for-work dominated the humanitarian response for the first few months. By the time this research study was carried out, at the end of 2014 and early 2015, the response was mainly focused on livelihood programmes and continued shelter assistance. The government’s RAY had become the Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Recovery Plan.

In early July 2014, government declared that the humanitarian phase was over. Thereafter, coordination of the response shifted from the UN to the Office of the Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Recovery (OPARR).

The legal context for governance, transparency, and accountability in the Philippines

The right to information and the principle of government accountability to the people are enshrined in the 1987 Philippine Constitution. A system for redress is set out in law. See Box 2.

¹⁵ According to the five criteria of scale, urgency, complexity, combined national and international capacity to respond, and reputational risk.

Box 2: Key aspects of the legal structure for transparency and accountability in the Philippines, relevant to the disaster response

- Article III of the Bill of Rights in the Philippine Constitution recognizes the right of the people to information on matters of public concern
- Article II recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation-building
- Article XI states that public office depends upon public trust, and public officers must at all times be accountable to the people
- The Ombudsman Act of 1989 sets out how complaints against government officers or employees will be dealt with
- The Urban Housing Development Act of 1992 clearly states that there will be no resettlement of urban or rural dwellers without adequate consultation

The Philippine Information Agency (PIA), under the Office of the President, is mandated to provide information to the population, to promote meaningful participation in the democratic process, and to provide technical assistance to other government agencies on the communications component of their programmes. Overall, this appears to be an enabling environment for promoting accountability, transparency, and CwC.

4.2 Humanitarian agencies' approaches to AAP in the Haiyan response

In many ways, the Haiyan response represents the zenith of international agency efforts to be accountable to affected people, to date. Most international agencies set up their own systems for AAP: the baseline study for the Pamati Kita project reports that all 11 agencies interviewed—both international and national—had dedicated feedback mechanisms, and documents those mechanisms (Pamati Kita, 2014). OCHA deployed CwC and AAP advisers to the response, and there were various mechanisms and fora for promoting coordination and collaboration of AAP efforts.

AAP mechanisms used by agencies

Individual agencies used a range of mechanisms. According to agencies, reported through our survey results, the most commonly used were the following:

- Regular visits from agency staff
- Suggestions and complaints boxes
- Regular community meetings and community consultations
- Information boards, newsletters, and posters
- Help and information desks
- Dedicated CwC and AAP visits, focus group discussions, and interviews
- SMS/text messages
- Hotlines
- Social media
- Radio shows and drama

How agencies perceived the function of these different mechanisms is presented in Table 1, which shows that one mechanism could fulfil multiple functions.

Table 1: Agencies’ perceptions of the function of different feedback mechanisms

AAP Approach	Provision of Information	Feedback/complaints	Two-way communication	Improving participation	Non-formal communication
Information boards, newsletters, posters	XX	X	X	XX	X
Radio shows, dramas	X	X	X	X	X
Social media—Facebook, twitter	X	X	X	X	X
SMS/text messages hotlines	X	XX	XX	XX	X
Help and Information desks	X	XX	XX	XX	X
Suggestion and complaints boxes	X	XX	X	XX	X
Regular visits from agency staff (MEAL, sector staff for surveys, post-distribution monitoring, after-action reviews)	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
Specific CwC and AAP visits for focus group discussions, community consultations, and interviews	XX	XX	XX	XX	X
Regular meetings and community consultations; with community leaders and key informants	XX	XX	XX	XX	X

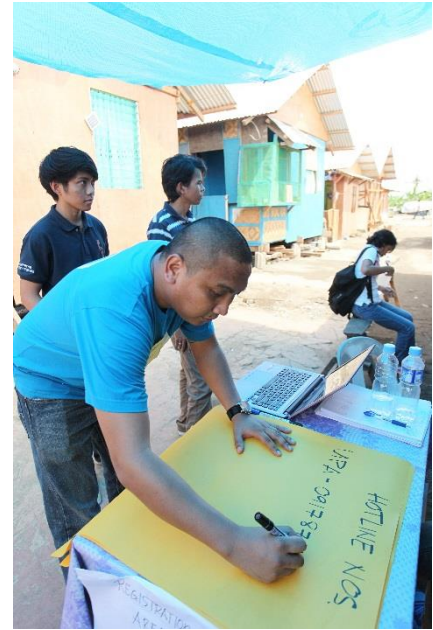
XX denotes a large number of the respondents categorised the feedback channel as performing this function
Source: online survey of agencies, supplemented with face-to-face interviews

Most agencies, especially the larger ones, used a suite of mechanisms in their programme areas, and stressed the importance of treating the mechanisms as a package, partly because they complemented each other, appealing to different members of the community for different issues, and partly because feedback could be triangulated and validated between mechanisms. Agencies interviewed for this study also emphasised the importance of two-way communication between agency staff and members of the affected community.

Technology

Technology played an important role in the AAP efforts of a number of the larger international agencies, especially the use of smart phones in individual and household surveys. For some agencies, this was the first time they had used smart phones for surveying, whereby their staff were issued with smart phones on which a survey was uploaded, the staff member entered the data as they conducted the interviews with local people, and the data were downloaded automatically to a central server, thus facilitating rapid analysis. Additional questions could easily be added to the pre-prepared survey.

WVI used “the Basic Rapid Assessment Tool” (BRAT) on their android smart phones from the beginning of the response for any data collection exercises that involved a quantitative component, for example for baselines, ongoing monitoring, and market surveys. Plan International used Poimapper software on smart phones for assessments, household level monitoring, and post-distribution surveys. Oxfam used a personal digital assistant (PDA) to enable them to increase the amount of qualitative data they could collect and analyse. Smart phones for surveying were strongly supported by management because they made data immediately accessible, and also facilitated donor reporting. In the words of one agency staff member: “this has revolutionized our work, allowing us to provide real-time initial findings to decision-makers.”



Technology was central to the AAP efforts of international agencies

Databases and analysis of feedback

The larger international agencies and some national agencies established computerised databases, usually using spreadsheets, to record and analyse feedback received. This group included Oxfam, Plan International, WVI, IOM, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Coligio dela Purisma Concepcion (CPC), and Filamer Christian University Center for Outreach and Extension (FCU).¹⁶ Some of these agencies invested substantial resources and energy in continuously upgrading and developing their spreadsheets, for example in categorising feedback, triangulating data between sources, and analysing trends. WVI was one of the most rigorous in terms of its range and depth of analysis. See Table 2. A further use of technology was linking hotlines to databases, thus improving the speed and accuracy of data collection and analysis, and the tracking of redress. IOM has developed a Community Response Map (CRM), an online data platform which maps community feedback. So far used mainly by IOM, this is intended to become a collective resource and was part of the Pamati Kita project (see below).

Table 2: WVI’s analysis of feedback data

Type of analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly analysis of feedback from individual mechanisms • Analysis of feedback by municipality • Analysis of feedback per sector (e.g., shelter, livelihoods, WASH, etc.) • Analysis of feedback per theme (e.g., thanks, unmet needs, lack of information, beneficiary selection, etc.) • Analysis of status in terms of resolution (% resolved, unsettled, no action required, referred)

Source: interviews with WVI staff

¹⁶ According to our agency interviews and the Pamati Kita baseline study (Pamati Kita, 2014).

However, agencies using these databases found it particularly challenging to capture less formalised forms of feedback, usually face-to-face feedback, for example from community consultations and especially from day-to-day interactions between community members and agency staff, although, as mentioned below, these were the preferred channels of communication according to local communities.

Most agencies developed their own system for categorising feedback. See Table 3 below, for the different categorisations used by IOM¹⁷ and by WVI. The former subsequently became the system of categorisation for the common database developed by the Pamati Kita project, and was also adopted by Plan International. These inconsistent systems of categorisation hampered collective analysis of feedback data, which had to be re-coded. See Section 4.3 below.

Table 3: IOM and WVI’s respective systems for categorising feedback

IOM’s categorisation, used for the Pamati Kita database	WVI’s categorisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Category 0A and 0B: information requests, responses to communication, gratitude • Category 1: requests for assistance • Category 2: minor dissatisfaction with programme activities • Category 3: major dissatisfaction with programme activities • Category 4a, 4b, 4c: inappropriate behaviour, abuse, or security issues 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Beneficiary Selection Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration (i.e. requests for inclusion) • Criteria (i.e. referring specifically to which category a household belongs, or requests to reconsider criteria for a certain project) • Validation (requests to validate certain profiles) • Political (process is being politically influenced/biased) 2. Distribution Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution site (i.e., issues associated with the location of distribution) • Validation (to determine number of proxies claiming entitlement) • Quality/quantity of item distributed 3. Question/Lack of information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution process • Programme activity (training, orientation, community visits, sector activities) • Land/tenure issues

Source: agency interviews and documentation

The categories used are a strong indication that agencies are seeking feedback on their own programme activities and, in some cases, on the behaviour of their staff, but are not seeking wider feedback, for example on gaps in the response. The implications of this are discussed in section 5.2.3 below.

Response and feedback mechanisms

Agencies’ methods for responding to issues raised by affected people ranged from an immediate and informal response from programme staff on the ground, especially if the issue was raised directly with them and was within their control, to more formalised approaches whereby issues raised through AAP mechanisms were discussed in internal agency meetings between AAP, programme, and sector staff—the approach used by WVI, for example. Some, but not all agencies recorded whether action was taken in

¹⁷ This categorisation was developed by IOM’s Guiuan hub in the early days of the Haiyan response.

response to the feedback. WVI had one of the most comprehensive systems for recording and tracking action in response. See Annex 4.

The final step in the chain should be letting communities know how their feedback has been used and how their concerns are being addressed—“closing the loop.” This is widely acknowledged to be the weakest part in AAP in the Haiyan response,¹⁸ although there are examples of good practice. See section 5.2.4 below.

Formalised approaches to AAP

For many agencies that formalised their AAP approaches in the Haiyan response, as described above, there were four stages: (1) setting up the mechanisms for communicating with, and consulting affected people; (2) carrying out analysis of the feedback received; (3) responding to that feedback; and (4) “closing the loop” by informing communities how their feedback has been acted upon. These four stages are shown in Annex 3. Although there were other, less formal approaches to AAP, for example used by ActionAid with its local partners and used by national NGOs as described below, the “centre of gravity” amongst international agencies in the Haiyan response appears to have been towards a more formalised and systematised approach to AAP.

National NGOs and their approaches

The approaches and mechanisms described so far were mainly those used by international agencies. National NGOs tended to have a different approach and much more limited resources. They were less familiar with the language of AAP and CwC as currently used by international agencies. Some community development NGOs felt that they were naturally more “in touch” with the views and perspectives of local communities as a consequence of living in, and with, those communities. They did not see the need to set up dedicated AAP mechanisms in the way that international agencies had, and a number commented that they simply did not have the resources, either human or financial, to do so. Featherstone (2014) provides a number of examples of how the local knowledge of national NGOs strengthened the relevance of the humanitarian response.¹⁹ But a distinction has to be made between national NGOs local to the area, or at least which employ predominantly local staff, and national NGOs new to the area in the Haiyan response, with limited local knowledge. As some key informants observed, it should not be assumed that all national NGOs had a strong understanding of local issues nor a strong relationship with local communities. Also, small numbers of staff meant that some national NGOs spent much of their time on project delivery and had less time for consultation. As national NGOs mostly relied upon ongoing informal communication and dialogue, a key part of their relationship with local communities, they usually had little or no documentation of feedback or action taken, although this should not imply that they were any less responsive.

Many national NGOs interpret accountability as holding the government to account, especially activist NGOs. And they were usually more involved in advocacy with government than international NGOs were, especially on the issue of the coastal “no build zone.”²⁰

Self-assessed strengths and weaknesses of national NGOs in terms of accountability to affected people, captured in an exercise during an AAP training workshop for national NGOs, held by the Pamati Kita consortium agencies, provides some interesting insights. See Table 4.

¹⁸ Acknowledged in interviews with agency staff and in Hanley et al. (2014).

¹⁹ For example, Green Mindanao, a national NGO, brought locally relevant innovations and sourced locally available materials for shelter programming, implemented in partnership with Oxfam (Featherstone, 2014).

²⁰ “Missed Again” provides an example of advocacy on fisheries reform, pioneered by a coalition of national NGOs in partnership with Oxfam, which held focus group discussions with typhoon-affected fishing communities, feeding into a policy paper (Featherstone, 2014: 8).

Table 4: Self-assessed strengths and weaknesses of national NGOs in AAP

Strengths in being accountable to affected populations	Weaknesses in being accountable to affected populations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consulting with communities and mobilising meetings • Face-to-face, one-on-one approach in communities • High levels of participation • Local knowledge of national issues and structures • Focus on community empowerment • Developmental approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited resources and funding • No dedicated AAP teams or staff • Weak complaints and feedback mechanisms • Need to promote 2-way communication and feedback, with emphasis on “closing the loop” • Access to communities tends to be through the <i>barangay</i>,²¹ and limited at the household level • Limited experience in humanitarian work, and limited knowledge of international humanitarian system, global standards, or the language of AAP

Source: National NGO self-assessment exercise

How some national NGOs are perceived by local communities is touched upon in Section 5.3 below.

4.3 Collective efforts to promote AAP and CwC in the Haiyan response

For the first time ever, OCHA deployed an AAP coordinator to the Haiyan response, 10 days into the crisis, and also a CwC coordinator, tasked with providing technical leadership and support on AAP and CwC to the Humanitarian and Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator, cluster leads, and Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) members. Less than two weeks after Typhoon Haiyan, CwC Technical Working Groups were created in the five operational hubs, building on OCHA’s previous experience in the Philippines in responding to Typhoon Bopha, the Bohol earthquake, and Zamboanga conflict (CDAC, 2014a). In February 2014, an AAP Technical Working Group was established in Tacloban. Recognising the artificial division between the AAP and CwC working groups, unnecessarily creating silos, they were merged in May 2014 to become joint AAP/CwC Technical Working Groups in the five hubs.

Together, these OCHA-supported AAP/CwC resources established a number of collaborative practices and common services, including:

1. Community consultations were held, to provide feedback on the affected population’s experience of the overall response, from the end of November 2013. The first such consultation raised issues about lack of information, unmet needs for specific groups, and concerns about relief distribution.²²
2. From mid-December 2013, AAP and CwC issues papers were produced, based on feedback from communities that were of general relevance to responding agencies, e.g., on the provision of information and perceptions of corruption in December 2013.
3. The AAP coordinator worked in close collaboration with the GBV sub-cluster, to promote awareness amongst agencies of the importance of preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) in the response, e.g., through the provision of briefing packs.
4. Community feedback forms were introduced into the Tacloban AAP Working Group in April 2014, to consolidate feedback from individual agencies and to identify key issues arising.

²¹ The *barangay* (village or neighbourhood) is the smallest government administrative unit in the Philippines, governed by a team of elected *barangay* officials, headed by the *Kapitan*.

²² See OCHA (2013).

Recognising the potential of common services in promoting a coherent and high quality approach to AAP, in early December 2013, less than a month after the typhoon, a concept note was developed by Plan International for a project that would provide enhanced common services and leadership to agencies responding to the Haiyan humanitarian crisis. As Wigley (2015) notes, the novelty of this approach made it harder to secure donor funding, and the project did not get started until seven months later, in July 2014. Called “Pamati Kita”—“Let’s Listen Together”—it was implemented as a consortium of Plan International, WVI and IOM, funded by DfID (Jacobs, 2015a). Although it was originally designed to work closely with OCHA, by July 2014 the context had changed, and OCHA was handing over coordination to OPARR. By this time, the emphasis was on recovery rather than relief.

Fortuitously, the Pamati Kita project was able to take over coordination of the AAP/CwC Working Groups as OCHA withdrew and successfully began to break down some of the barriers that had built up between international and national agencies. Increasing numbers of national NGOs became regular participants of the Working Groups, feeling less intimidated as national staff took over the chairing role and as discussions were more likely to take place in local languages. While the Pamati Kita project struggled or failed to deliver some of the anticipated common services, for example a common hotline to replace the numerous individual agency hotlines and a common basket of tools that would be widely used, it did facilitate improved communications with communities, in particular a wave of multi-actor community consultations, bringing government officials, agency staff, and community members together. Discussions in these fora have usually focused on both government and agency recovery programmes, and have provided an opportunity to share experience across *barangays* (Buchanan-Smith and Routley, 2015). The Pamati Kita project also experimented with comics as a way of encouraging local people to use the agency hotlines and to engage in community consultations. And it continued to promote the community feedback form, although its potential has not been fully realised as few agencies used it, at least in Tacloban, and were therefore not feeding data into the joint database. Inconsistent agency approaches to categorisation of feedback are a constraint, and there appears to be little prioritisation of issues being raised in Working Group meetings, and hence the more substantive and collectively relevant feedback is lost. The early “issues papers” (or summary reports) raised widespread concerns from affected communities, which were of relevance to the wider humanitarian response, but appeared to stop early on.

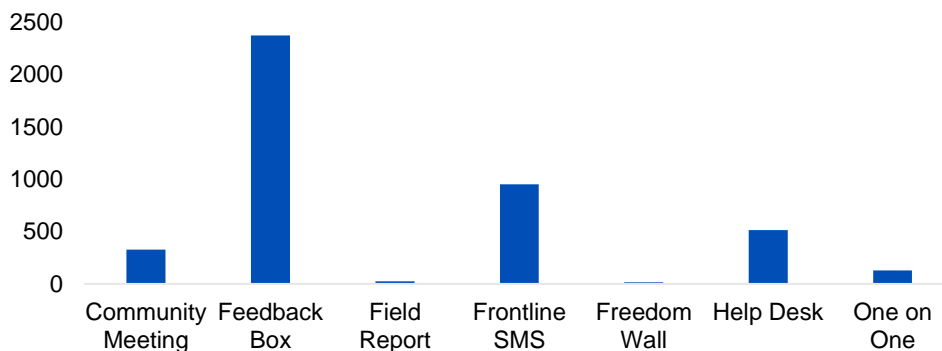
5. AAP IN PRACTICE IN THE HAIYAN RESPONSE: THE EVIDENCE

5.1 How people engaged with agencies' AAP approaches

How people used agencies' AAP mechanisms

The data do not exist to conduct a cross-agency analysis of how communities engaged with the different AAP mechanisms and approaches. But it has been possible to construct a picture of how people used the AAP mechanisms of one agency in particular, WVI, which deployed the widest range of mechanisms and has the only database that collated feedback from all its channels. Analysis of WVI's database reveals that feedback boxes were far more widely used than other channels,²³ followed by SMS hotlines, and then help desks. See Figure 1, which provides analysis of 4,362 items of individual feedback.

Figure 1: Quantity of feedback provided to WVI per month, by mechanism, March 2014 to February 2015



Source: WVI database, Tacloban

The breakdown of different mechanisms used in different months showed that feedback boxes were especially used in the earlier months of the response, and the use of the SMS hotline picked up later. See Table 5, which also shows how the quantity of feedback overall decreased substantially over a twelve-month period, from March 2014.

Table 5: Amount of feedback recorded by WVI per month, through different mechanisms, March 2014 to February 2015

	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Community Meeting	3	2	133	23	114	36	9	0	1	0	4	0
Feedback Box	685	614	238	8	7	163	288	80	124	132	21	13
Field Report										24		

²³ The CDAC Learning Review notes that feedback boxes were liked because of their anonymity (CDAC, 2014a).

	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Frontline SMS	67	127	29	15	27	61	131	65	34	123	104	167
Freedom Wall							15					
Help Desk	9	22	71	97	162	3	72	9	0	0	67	0
One on One	4	0	11	5	4	11	3	17	19	44	10	1
Total monthly	768	765	482	148	314	274	518	171	178	323	206	181

Source: WVI database, Tacloban

However, as mentioned above, the database does not do justice to the role of face-to-face communication, whether from community meetings and consultations, one-on-one discussions with AAP and programme staff, or focus group discussions. These are substantially underrepresented in WVI's database and therefore in Figure 1 and Table 5.

Affected people's preference for face-to-face communication

Research by IOM shows that affected communities overwhelmingly preferred face-to-face communication for providing feedback, with SMS hotlines rated a poor second-best. See Figure 2. This finding was borne out in research with local communities carried out for this case study (Ong et al., 2015). Our research showed that the form of face-to-face communication most valued was interaction during house visits or at help desks—thus conversational and informal one-to-one interaction between an individual and agency staff member—often in the context of discussing beneficiary selection issues. The strength of this



Arriving at a community consultation in Tacloban

communication is both in *seeing*—bearing witness to the state and condition of the person concerned, to their material realities, as well as *listening*. The opportunity this presented for dialogue and influence was valued by local people, who felt they could adapt their communication in response to visual cues and feedback from the agency staff member, so that arguments and claims could be presented in diverse ways, whatever way was judged to be most appropriate. Local people also fed back that face-to-face communication gave them quick resolution and a sense of closure where complaints were addressed on the spot (Ibid).

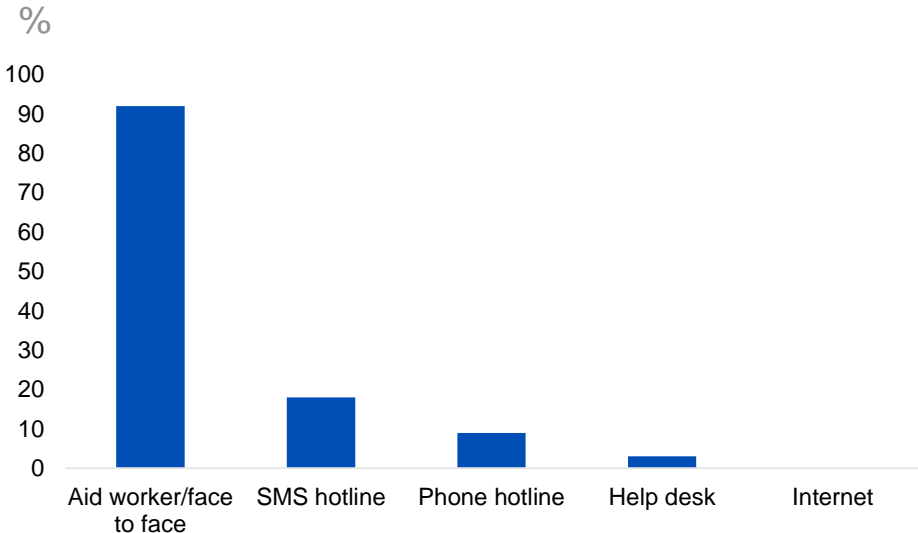
Community consultations were also regarded as an effective way for airing concerns that were important and widespread, and for offering feedback to humanitarian groups. However, a number of local people interviewed in this research study commented on the tendency for consultations to be “one-way,” as agencies used them to communicate beneficiary lists and to explain selection criteria. This suggests the value of dedicated visits by AAP staff, specifically “to consult with and listen to” affected people, separate from the “explaining and communicating about programming” that may be the priority and preoccupation of operational staff. Local people interviewed also pointed out that consultations held during the day excluded those out at work, and would have been better held at a time when most people could attend.

In contrast to these forms of face-to-face interaction, our research at community level revealed a certain skepticism about the use of hotlines as an accountability mechanism because of the impression that they did not generate meaningful responses from the agencies involved. One of the barriers to using SMS hotlines is not knowing who is at the other end and whether the information actually reaches decision-makers and is acted upon.²⁴ It was well-understood by the AAP staff of some agencies that SMS was

²⁴ This finding from the IOM research (Hartmann et al., 2014) was also confirmed in our research with local communities.

more likely to be used if the community already had a relationship and were in communication with agency staff on the ground.

Figure 2: Crisis-affected people’s preferred channels for providing feedback



Source: IOM survey, conducted between May and July 2014 (Hartmann et al., 2014)

The challenge of capturing feedback from face-to-face interactions

This raises a challenge for international agencies. Although the more formal and dedicated feedback mechanisms are the easiest to monitor, they do not fit with community preferences, and may therefore be excluding a substantial amount of potential feedback and dialogue. Some agencies introduced logbooks for operational staff to capture issues raised, and whether/how they were dealt with, but this still did not work well. WVI struggled with this issue, feeling that it was too big a task to train hundreds of staff to systematically document their conversations, and they were concerned that such measures could stifle those informal conversations. At least one agency acknowledged that they were probably missing the richness of feedback provided through this mechanism. There may also be a deeper issue here in how “conversational feedback” is received by agency staff, for example as individual griping rather than raising fundamental and more widespread concerns. This deserves further investigation.

Agencies less accessible to the affected population than they believed

IOM’s research showed that the vast majority of people wanted to reach out to international organisations in terms of raising a question or sharing a concern, but in practice very few did—only one out of 342 respondents participating in their survey—mainly because they did not know how to (Hartmann et al., 2014). This finding is a powerful challenge to the prevailing view amongst international agencies that the Haiyan response was particularly effective in promoting AAP. While there was clearly more attention paid to AAP compared with most humanitarian responses, and inspiring examples of good practice exist, the perspective of the affected people indicates that the agencies were not as accessible as they may have believed themselves to be.

Use of AAP mechanisms by different groups in the population

Surprisingly, agencies had very little disaggregated data that showed who was using which AAP mechanisms by gender, age, or social group. This is a major weakness, which could easily be corrected, especially to disaggregate by sex. Our research showed that different groups preferred and used different mechanisms. Not surprisingly, slightly younger people preferred SMS channels, mostly those under 40 or 50 years old.²⁵ Older people appeared to prefer direct contact with the agency concerned through visiting the agency’s office, although usually as a last resort when other channels had failed, for example use of the suggestion box. Women appear to be greater users of the hotlines over men, causing some agency staff to express concern that men were at risk of being excluded as women had specifically been the

²⁵ This finding is consistent with IOM’s findings (Hartmann et al., 2014).

focus of many programmes. Indeed, our fieldwork for this case study showed that women had much greater familiarity with many aspects of the relief response, and with AAP approaches than men did.

Some child-focused agencies developed specific approaches to improve communication and AAP with young people and children. See Box 3. But despite these initiatives, agency staff felt that the involvement and participation of children had generally been weak throughout the response.

Box 3: AAP approaches developed specifically for young people and children

Plan International trained 280 Youth Reporters who were given cameras to capture the views and voices of others. Video clips were screened in communities and used as an opportunity for children to engage with adults and decision-makers, including barangay officials and NGO staff, around the issues affecting children. They also played a role in disseminating information within communities, amongst friends. A range of media, including social, radio, music, and film were used, which was thought to have helped the understanding of AAP and encouraged children to share their concerns and better articulate their needs.

At the suggestion of school children, WVI set up “freedom walls” in schools where letters and messages could be written and concerns raised. Feedback from the “freedom walls” were incorporated into WVI’s feedback database.

WVI also partnered with Save the Children International (SCI) and IOM to facilitate the participation of children in processes such as the inter-agency humanitarian evaluation (IAHE).

Use of the media, including social media

Although people relied heavily on radio as a source of information, especially in the weeks and months immediately after Typhoon Haiyan (CDAC, 2014a), our research indicates that most community members did not approach local media outlets to raise concerns, although the few that did received high profile, and journalists at both Radio Abante and Radyo Bakdaw, for example, sought out specific agencies to respond, on air, to concerns being raised. Overall, however, local radio appears to have played more of a role in communications than accountability, albeit a very important role in communications.²⁶ There was similarly little use of social media to provide feedback or air grievances to agencies. The lack of anonymity in using social media may have been a disincentive. Where affected people did have Facebook accounts, for example, agencies rarely engaged with them on these platforms. Instead, the agencies’ accounts were usually more donor/funder-oriented than beneficiary-oriented.

A suite of AAP mechanisms

Overall, these findings validate the agencies’ argument for using a suite of AAP mechanisms. Consultations with local communities highlighted their use of a combination of channels. One size does not fit all in terms of feedback users and, as seen below, in terms of what is fed back through different mechanisms. These findings draw attention to the importance of monitoring not only what is fed back—see next section, 5.2—but also how it is being fed back, and by whom, although very few agencies engaged in that level of monitoring.

²⁶ See, for example, CDAC (2014c).

5.2 What feedback was received, and what difference did it make?

5.2.1 Beneficiary selection and targeting: feedback and the response

In terms of the issues that people raised in their feedback, all agencies interviewed confirmed that beneficiary selection was the number one concern. This is clearly demonstrated by analysis of feedback recorded in WVI's database: almost 60% of the individual items of feedback related to beneficiary selection. See Figure 3. Concerns raised included registration (e.g., requests for inclusion), selection criteria (e.g., requests to reconsider criteria for a certain project), validation, and concerns about political bias.

This is consistent with the findings of our fieldwork, which revealed a deep-rooted unease with the conventional humanitarian practice of targeting some households and excluding others (Ong et al., 2015). While varying the amount of assistance a household received according to family size was regarded as fair, as long as most households were assisted, socio-economic targeting between households, targeting by livelihood group, and geographic targeting were regarded as highly unfair, especially if it meant some people got nothing. The former approach—of assisting all households, according to household size—was adopted by the Tzu Chi Foundation, the Taiwanese Buddhist philanthropic organisation, which was by far the most popular organisation with local communities in the Haiyan response in Tacloban.²⁷ The approach of targeting by socio-economic status/vulnerability, geographically, or by livelihood group was practiced by the majority of humanitarian agencies. The inappropriateness of targeting was raised by one focus group after another in our fieldwork, as a major issue striking deep into the heart of Filipino culture where neighbours are regarded as extended family and people's sense of dignity is defined by their status in the community. Targeting and selective relief distributions triggered status anxiety and a deep sense of shame amongst those excluded. Our research uncovered social divisiveness, competitiveness, and conflict arising within close-knit communities as a result of agencies' targeting practices (Ibid). See Box 4. A large proportion of relief assistance was high-value shelter items, which may have exacerbated feelings of envy, resentment, and unfairness amongst those excluded.

Box 4: Views on humanitarian agencies' conventional targeting practices

"It seems that they [agencies] had given me enemies because I received [help] while others did not. Sometimes when my neighbours see me, their hurtful words were targeted towards me. So what really happens is that they caused conflict amongst us." (*Low-income female, early 30s, Estancia*)

"Some people were mad at us. They said, 'I hope that *barangay* health worker would die!' It was said by those who did not receive help". (*Low-income female BHW, early 40s, Bantayan*)

"Especially if the relief that they gave is not enough, that's really when [conflict happened]!" (*Low income focus group discussion, Tacloban*)

"These NGOs have only caused conflict among my neighbours...Whenever I receive help and my neighbour does not, they'll stare me down and look me at me from head to toe like it is all my fault!" (*Low-income female, early 40s, Estancia*)

Source: Focus group discussions and individual interviews. See also Ong et al (2015)

²⁷ The Tzu Chi Foundation has had a growing presence in the Philippines, especially since it responded to Typhoon Ketsana, which badly affected Metro Manila in 2009. Tzu Chi, "projects itself as a welfare foundation in the Philippines involved in the provision of medical, educational, environmental, and other relief operations in times of crisis" (Lau and Cornelio, forthcoming: 7). It is predominantly funded by Taiwanese private sector philanthropists, and is thus independent of "traditional" humanitarian donor governments.

So how did the agencies respond? Early feedback about the discomfort with targeting was discussed within agencies, especially by their national staff and was raised by national NGOs. It was brought to the CwC Technical Working Group and triggered heated debate in the inter-agency cluster meeting. But little changed. According to our interviews with agency staff, there appear to be a number of reasons for this lack of responsiveness, including:

1. agencies being driven by a needs-based approach, and therefore selecting only those who fulfilled pre-determined criteria of need
2. the dilemma of limited resources and not knowing how to spread them more thinly and still make a difference
3. agencies' preoccupation with meeting targets in contracts agreed with donors
4. high turnover of international staff, which meant that the issue was dropped as the first wave of staff left and were replaced
5. the CwC Working Group, where this was mainly discussed, was mostly attended by more junior national staff who did not have the seniority or authority to raise the issue with their, usually international, managers.

There appears to have been a prevailing sense of “that’s just the way we do it” on the part of many international agencies,²⁸ although one NGO explained how they grappled with the dilemma of fulfilling the humanitarian principle of providing aid according to need as set out in the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organisations, yet being sensitive to the cultural impact of needs-based targeting; ultimately they were guided by the principle of being needs-based. Thus, rather than the agencies adapting their targeting practices to the context, communities needed to adapt instead. As an extreme example, in one *barangay* the *barangay* officials chose not to receive any aid because of the limited amount available and the pre-requisite to target, for fear that the aid would “just cause problems” and trigger accusations of favouritism by the *barangay* captain (Ong et al., 2015). Feedback from agency staff indicate that this was not an isolated example. Heated and emotional exchanges during our focus group discussions confirmed that targeting had been socially divisive.

Instead, agencies used the feedback on beneficiary selection and targeting to review eligibility of individual households, and to “tweak”²⁹ who received relief. Indeed, there is some evidence that local people used some of the AAP mechanisms, e.g., the SMS, to “squeal” on their neighbours.³⁰ But there was no attempt to make more fundamental changes to targeting practices, somehow regarded by agencies as “non-negotiable,” as part of the deal of being “needs-based” and having limited resources, despite the fact that selective distribution has been challenged for years, even decades.³¹

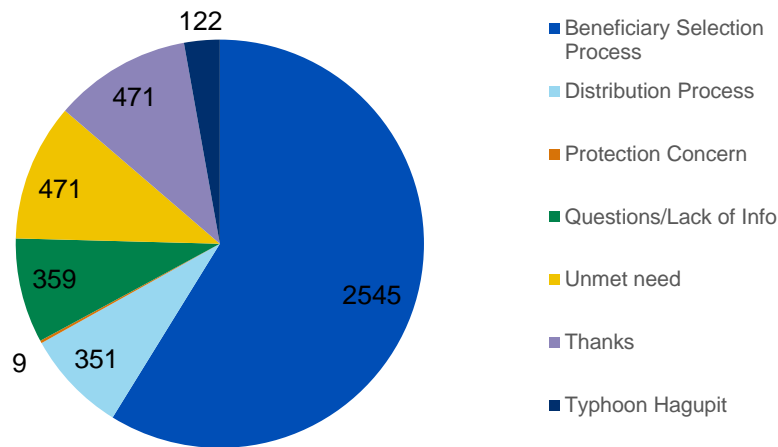
²⁸ The IAHE, for example, recognises communities' unhappiness with targeting, but does not engage with this issue, focusing instead on harmonising approaches to targeting (Hanley et al., 2014).

²⁹ Defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as “make fine adjustments to.”

³⁰ See Madianou et al., 2015; Ong et al., 2015.

³¹ See ALNAP, 2004, Review of Humanitarian Action 2003, London, which draws evidence from 20 evaluations of humanitarian action, showing that targeting food aid at the poor/vulnerable in many countries is largely ineffective because community leaders and members prefer to distribute it according to local cultural and social norms. See also S. Jaspars and J. Shoham, 1999, Targeting the Vulnerable: A Review of the Necessity and Feasibility of Targeting Households, *Disasters* 23 (4): 359–372, which argues that this has been an issue for at least the last 20 years. This paper is the most detailed critique of targeting of food aid to date.

Figure 3: Feedback by category, March 2014–February 2015



Source: WVI database, Tacloban

5.2.2 Other issues raised in feedback

According to WVI's database, expressions of gratitude and concerns about unmet need tied for second place, although a long way behind concerns about beneficiary selection. Interestingly, very few cases of protection were raised; only nine out of 4,328 items of feedback registered by WVI over a twelve-month period. Meanwhile, Plan registered only three cases related to protection issues on its database. Agencies mostly had special protocols for dealing with this category of feedback and for handling confidential data, which were usually referred directly to management. Because of the confidential nature of these issues, we are unable to confirm the nature of this feedback, for example whether they were issues related to the behaviour of agency staff or wider protection issues. The fact that protection issues came up so little is not necessarily because this was rarely a concern, but rather raises a question about how comfortable people feel feeding back on such sensitive issues. However, it is worth noting that in our own interactions with local communities, in focus group discussions and in individual interviews, no one raised protection issues related to agency staff.

5.2.3 What difference did the feedback make to programming?

Early in the response, consultations carried out collectively by AAP and CwC specialists with typhoon survivors, and synthesised for the wider humanitarian community in brief reports and issue papers, appear to have been influential in some early programming decisions. For example, UNFPA added radios to their non-food item (NFI) kits for women in response to feedback that people were cut off from their usual sources of information, and HelpAge International responded to feedback from older people with the provision of underwear (Wigley, 2015).

Later in the response, as the AAP/CwC Working Group strengthened its analysis of consolidated feedback, it presented its top thematic issues to the inter-cluster coordination meeting, and used an Accountability Monitoring Tool (AMT) to capture cluster recommendations and the cluster's response. The AMT provides evidence of action taken. See Figure 4. However, this system only really got going in June 2014, shortly before the cluster system folded when the humanitarian phase of the Haiyan response was officially declared over. Thereafter, there appears to have been less consolidated analysis of feedback or collective action taken.

Figure 4: Extract from AMT, showing how feedback influenced cluster activities

Feedback	Cluster Recommendation	Cluster Response/Activities	Output
<p>Relocation Plans</p> <p>What are the criteria in the prioritization of who will be transferred first: from tents to transitional shelters, and then to permanent shelters?</p>	<p>CCCM: Establish an IDP settlement plan showing who goes where and when, and communicate this information to partners from WASH/shelter/protection for them to also plan out their interventions.</p>	<p>CCCM: Drafted the IDP settlement matrix. Supported DSWD and LGU in the reassessment of families living in tents. Initiated the community forum called "Harambang" in June 2014 where LGU, cluster partners, DSWD, barangay leaders, and IDPs were gathered to an open forum to discuss burning issues especially on relocation, right to tenure, and shelter.</p>	<p>An IDP settlement plan initiated by the CCCM cluster is shared to partners and updated regularly in the relocation working group meetings.</p> <p>Collaboration of CCCM, Protection, and CwC in providing a forum to communicate the plans of the government and humanitarian actors as regards relocation, livelihood, and shelter to affected communities through the "Harambang" and successive community forums.</p>

Source: Bacal (2014)

At the individual agency level, staff of agencies like WVI and Oxfam described how their AAP approaches evolved over time, and how their analysis of feedback also deepened from an initial emphasis on individual feedback to an analysis of trends. This happened as the value of the feedback became apparent to staff and managers. In large agencies that had developed databases of feedback, senior management explained how they liked the accessible "snapshot" of community concerns and programming gaps that their AAP staff were able to prepare. According to senior management at Plan International, it helped to identify key issues arising, programming gaps, and recurrent themes.

Both agencies and communities were able to give examples of how feedback triggered change. Feedback through SMS resulted in changes to beneficiary lists, for example inclusion of some new beneficiaries in response to their messages on selection processes, and the removal of some beneficiaries, for instance if a neighbour revealed their ineligibility according to the selection criteria.³² On Bantayan Island, Oxfam corrected the type of fishing nets it was distributing, based on feedback that the original nets distributed did not comply with acceptable standards. See Box 5. Plan International staff described how analysis of feedback rapidly highlighted a recurring problem of delayed cash for work payments. Management, in collaboration with the finance team, addressed this by opening a local bank account in the project area to speed up payment and to avoid beneficiary documentation having to be sent to Tacloban.

Box 5: Oxfam’s response to feedback on its livelihoods support to fisherfolk, Bantayan Island

Oxfam provided cash grants to fisherfolk on Bantayan Island. During a community consultation, some individuals fed back that recipients of cash grants had been using the money to purchase nets with fine holes, which were illegal as they catch smaller fish and are damaging to the ecosystem in the long term. People also reported that some fishermen purchased cyanide for illegal fishing practices, and air compressors used for "skin dive" fishing—a practice that leads to coral reef damage. Oxfam was quick to act on the complaint and decided to give checks and stubs in exchange for specific and legal fishing gear from a designated supplier.

Source: community consultations, Bantayan Island (Ong et al., 2015)

³² We were alerted to one such case during our fieldwork in Tacloban, where a neighbour revealed by text that a registered beneficiary had an overseas worker relative, resulting in their removal from the beneficiary list (Ong et al., 2015).

There are also examples of agencies *not* responding to issues raised, and again an example from Bantayan Island. People working in the transport sector, for example on *trisikads* (non-motorised tricycles), expressed concern to agencies about their exclusion from livelihood programming while all the attention focused on the fishing community, and also farmers. Rather than triggering a discussion, or indeed a questioning of the agencies' livelihoods programming strategy, the concerns were logged but not acted upon. On further investigation, it appears that the focus of agency accountability initiatives was to seek feedback on existing programmes rather than use feedback for more strategic decision-making, to adapt or develop future programmes. See Box 6.

Box 6: Agencies fail to respond to concerns about exclusion from the transport livelihood sector

People working in the transport sector, for example drivers of *trisikads* who earn around PHP100/day (US\$2.25) and appear to be some of the poorest members of the community, gave feedback to agencies about their exclusion from livelihoods programming while fisherfolk were being prioritised. Some of those giving feedback were acknowledged by the agencies, although at least one feedback user did not receive an explanation. At least one of the agencies concerned logged this feedback into their database, but their accountability officer did not advocate a change in programming, apparently accepting the agency's "sustainability" criterion that ruled out an "alternative" livelihood that is dependent on the tourist season and required other odd jobs to become "sustainable." Another argument for excluding this sector was that fishermen and farmers had organized groups, while transport people had no organized groups, and so the agency found no potential implementing partners. The transport sector feedback users were thus told that there were unfortunately no livelihood programmes dedicated to transport sector workers. During our fieldwork consultations, members of this group expressed resentment, anger, and shame about their exclusion. (Ong et al., 2015)

There are examples of feedback that was considered, but rejected as not feasible. In Plan International's consultation with children about the design and construction of new schools, the children requested toilets to be provided inside the building. However, the Department of Education felt unable to make the change because of the budgetary consequences.

The evidence points to agencies using feedback to tweak or adjust existing programmes, rather than to make substantial changes in programme goals, design, or activities. This is consistent with the way that most AAP mechanisms were set up, as mentioned in Section 4.2 above, focused on existing agency programmes. Thus, feedback mostly came from beneficiaries and would-be beneficiaries rather than other community members. The collation and analysis of feedback data tended to be oriented towards individual redress although, over time, issues raised by individuals were usefully collated and analysed to identify trends. Those not included in programming or from other geographical areas were much less likely to use agency feedback mechanisms. One of the consequences of this can be seen in Box 7 on Roxas City, where those excluded from humanitarian assistance because of geographical targeting had no relationship with agencies stationed in the area, nor were they invited to use agency feedback mechanisms. Thus, their grievances went unheard and, in the absence of reliable information, rumours flourished.

Box 7: Lack of communication with Roxas City

Roxas City was excluded from the relief programming of most agencies because the damage and destruction was significantly lower than elsewhere, although it was used as a hub for relief operations by many humanitarian agencies serving worse-hit rural villages nearby. This caused resentment among urban dwellers watching trucks carrying relief pass them by, who commented that they received no explanation from aid workers about why they had been excluded. As a result, rumours circulated among the affected communities. There was a widely shared belief that a national government secretary's statement to the media that Roxas City had coped better with Haiyan compared to other areas was the reason for their exclusion. Many of those interviewed for this case study in Roxas City were resentful that agency headquarters were stationed in their neighbourhood, yet no aid workers had bothered to visit them, check on their situation, and explain why they were only targeting beneficiaries in rural areas. This strong sense of resentment does not appear to have been fed back to the agencies.

One of the few examples that we came across of consultations impacting on strategic decision-making comes from WVI. They carried out a baseline survey in March 2014, in which households were asked to identify priority issues/problems, and solutions. The findings and analysis were then fed back to the community for verification (see Box 9 below). This consultation revealed that WASH was not considered to be a priority issue by the community. In response, WVI decided not to expand its WASH programme, instead scaling up its livelihood support.

5.2.4 Closing the feedback loop: feeding back to individuals and communities

As Hartmann et al. (2014: 23) note:

Closing the feedback loop is...critical. FGDs suggest that when people do not get a response to their concern, a negative reaction will likely happen. This can lead to distrust and lack of engagement.

The IAHE found this to be a weak part of the chain (Hanley et al., 2014). According to communities consulted for this case study, agency practice has been variable in this respect. Some agencies rigorously monitored feedback *and* tracked resolution, although monitoring was mostly quantitative: in other words, monitoring the number of issues resolved, rather than a more qualitative assessment of how effectively they were resolved. Other agencies that did not track feedback systematically were less able to track resolution. Overall, agencies appear to have given greatest attention to individual redress in response to individual issues raised, particularly through the use of hotlines and SMS. See Box 8 for a description of good practice by WVI in the way that it documented *and* closed the feedback loop using SMS. Interviews with agency staff suggested that the use of SMS was one of the few mechanisms that facilitated individual redress as the automation of the data permitted instant and accurate recording of feedback and hence offered the potential for more timely redress. Agencies were able to quickly identify urgent referrals and feed the analysis into regular reporting and redress processes. Indeed, some agency staff commented that if community members raised feedback and concerns to them directly in the field, they recommended that they use SMS in order to facilitate swifter redress and guarantee inclusion in the database. However, local people interviewed provided a contrasting view: they experienced this practice as dismissive, without any guarantee of resolution, and slow, as their preference was for immediate resolution on the spot (Ong et al., 2015).

Box 8: “Closing the feedback loop”—WVI’s treatment of SMS feedback

Feedback from WVI’s SMS hotline is automatically fed into the agency’s feedback database. The number of the community member is added to a contact list or group, organised by geographic area, Barangay Council or community committee, and feedback type. The database manager is responsible for referring concerns on to the relevant WVI staff member and/or managers. The feedback itself is categorised by sector and feedback type. The sender receives an automatic reply, which says, “Your SMS has been acknowledged and will be forwarded to be dealt with,” intended to provide reassurance and encourage further use of the approach. The sender is subsequently informed of follow-up, redress, and further meetings relating to their feedback or sector. The action taken and redress is then documented.

In terms of feedback at community level, there are a few examples of good practice, of agencies taking the time and trouble to feedback their analysis, action taken, and how they have used information provided by the community, respectively. See Box 9.

Box 9: Examples of good practice in closing the loop at community level

WVI:

- WVI presented consolidated feedback trends and action taken in response to the respective community during regular *barangay* inter-sectoral meetings, held at least once a month.
- WVI fed back the findings of community consultations, sometimes as a validation exercise, informing communities about how these consultations had influenced their decisions. They also did this with the results from their livelihood Post-Distribution Monitoring, indicating how these would be used to inform future plans.

ActionAid:

- ActionAid presented back to communities how they had used information received, for example fundraising material based on assessment information provided by the community.

More challenging was dealing with feedback related to duty bearers other than humanitarian agencies, usually government. Agencies were encouraged to bring these kinds of issues to the AAP Working Group for onwards referral to the appropriate government department. But there were no systems in place for following up, and therefore this particular feedback loop was never closed.

5.3 Nature of the relationship between agencies and affected people: the cultural context³³

Affected communities are quick to express their gratitude and appreciation to international humanitarian agencies, especially those who responded to the immediate aftermath of the typhoon and were involved in the clean-up.³⁴ The speed of their response is often compared favourably with government, which was seen to be neglectful.³⁵ Foreign agencies are singled out for praise as they are perceived as having no direct obligation to help. Gratitude is expressed in many different ways: by SMS, through notes in suggestion boxes, and by specially constructed shrines, to mention a few.

³³ This section is based on Ong et al. (2015).

³⁴ Tzu Chi Foundation’s role in the clean-up of Tacloban and Oxfam’s role in the clean-up of Bantayan were particularly mentioned.

³⁵ This was particularly the case in Tacloban, where long-term political rivalries between local political leaders (the Romualdezes) and the incumbent Philippine President were a major factor in government’s inadequate relief operation in Tacloban. See <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/22/tacloban-mayor-ramualdez-typhoon-haiyan>.

But this sense of gratitude is tempered with criticism, sometimes expressed as resentment and in heated terms. The focus of the criticism often relates to agencies' targeting practices, experience of exclusion from relief assistance, and sometimes the nature of the agency's engagement with the community, where the agency is seen to be ignorant of local cultures, unresponsive, and disengaged.

As Ong et al. (2015) describe, *utang na loob*, or debt of gratitude, is the key moral principle underpinning social relations in Filipino culture, especially to those who have provided help and assistance beyond normal expectations of the relationship (often kin relationships). It is therefore a natural disincentive for many people to express criticism or dissatisfaction to humanitarian agencies, who are seen as having no "natural obligation" to help. This is compounded by the patron-client culture that pervades Filipino politics, especially at the local level. In the humanitarian response, agencies are regarded as the patron in a highly unequal power relationship, further constraining local people in expressing their views (Ibid.). In some cases, raising concerns and complaints was actively discouraged by *barangay* officials (see Section 5.4 below). There was also an underlying fear that humanitarian assistance would stop if local people were critical. This is not unique to AAP in the Philippines. The fear that support might decrease was a factor discouraging feedback after the Pakistan floods in 2012 (Routley, 2013), and in refugee camps in Kenya (SCHR, 2010). But it appears to be particularly strong in the Philippines, combined with *utang na loob* and a strong patron-client culture, all severely restraining people's willingness to be frank with humanitarian agencies. The CDAC Learning Review noted that changing the terminology from "complaints" to "comments" helped to increase the feedback received, and also that communities need to be *invited* to give feedback (CDAC, 2014a). Overall, negative feelings were less likely to be expressed directly to agencies but were the subject of discussion and gossip within communities.

The experience in many humanitarian crises is that local people do not distinguish between agencies.³⁶ But experience in the Haiyan response is very different. Our research with local communities showed high levels of recognition of different agencies, especially international agencies. This has been fostered by intense use of agency branding, with a highly literate population in a middle-income country used to advertising and commercial branding. In contrast, recognition of national NGOs was much lower. They have tended to use minimal branding, and may well be required to use an international agency's brand if they are an implementing partner/have been sub-contracted.

Overall, our research suggests that the relationship between local communities and international humanitarian agencies was mostly quite distant, characterised by a sense of ambivalence on the part of local communities (Ong et al., 2015). International agencies tended to be seen as service providers. The distinction made by a *Barangay* Chairperson in Leyte, quoted by Featherstone (2014) is illustrative: assistance provided by international NGOs was described as "*mitabang*"—"to help"—while assistance provided by national NGOs was described as "*miuban namo*"—"to journey with us."

But there are exceptions to this pattern, where international agencies have really embedded themselves within local communities. In our consultations with affected communities, there were four *barangays* that described their experience of the relief process in more positive terms. In each of these four *barangays*, an NGO was immersed and provided a sustained presence: WVI and Plan International in two *barangays* in Tacloban, Islamic Relief in Bantayan, and WVI in Estancia. This type of presence was described by local communities as "adoption," and they used other positive family idioms to describe their relationship with the respective NGO. Interestingly, in only one case, the WVI "adopted" *barangay*, did the NGO have a relationship with the community that pre-dated the Haiyan humanitarian response. In the other three *barangays*, the respective NGO developed a strong relationship with the community through its humanitarian work.

³⁶ For example, in the response to the Rwanda crisis after the genocide in 1994, affected people were unable to differentiate between agencies, but referred to them all under the term "Croix Rouge" (Borton et al., 1996). An IRIN report on focus group discussions with refugees in the Middle East revealed that people did not distinguish between different aid organisations but saw them all as part of one wider system. See <http://www.irinnews.org/report/101197/what-refugees-really-think-of-aid-agencies>

Box 10 describes how Plan International embedded itself into some communities, thus positively impacting contentious practices such as beneficiary selection, as well as accountability. Featherstone (2014) reports a similar sense of appreciation of Balay Mindanao and ActionAid in Leyte:

The assistance from Balay Mindanao and ActionAid was the most valued by us because it responded to what we needed and [we] were involved in the process...Their volunteers stay at the Barangay Hall, they ate and bathed with the people. (Quote from Featherstone, 2014: 8)

Box 10: Plan International embedded in the community

View of a Community Development Facilitator (CDF), for a Plan International programme covering shelter, WASH, protection, and DRR

The CDF interviewed described how he had moved into the *barangay* he was working in, in order to better understand the issues affecting communities and any problems they might have. He coordinated closely with *barangay* officials and with youth organisations, and set up a “Neighbourhood Improvement Team.” A selection committee was also set up to establish the criteria for assistance and to identify beneficiaries. Each selected beneficiary was subsequently visited by Plan staff, including an engineer. Some issues and concerns raised by local residents were resolved on the spot by field staff, while others were reported back to the agency if they could not be solved at field level or in coordination with local officials. The presence of the CDF was considered key to assist in avoiding disputes, as he was able to facilitate discussions at community level.

View of the community in which a CDF is embedded (from the same project, but not necessarily the same barangay) (Ong et al, 2015)

The *barangay* captain claimed that she never interfered in beneficiary selection. Residents said they were contented with beneficiary selection as they perceived it as organized, fair, and transparent, facilitated by having an “outsider” (the engineer) from the community evaluating the household’s condition. Plan officials communicated with them frequently through community consultations and had a desk in the *barangay* hall. The immersion of Plan in the community also had a positive impact in accountability efforts, helping residents to more quickly resolve complaints. The Neighborhood Improvement Team helped collect feedback and disseminate information to neighbours.

“Why do we need to text them if we could personally tell them our concerns? They are always here in our *barangay*, except during Sundays.”

“Sometimes when they have complaints like, ‘Why did she receive help already while me, I haven’t,’ I will tell my neighbour, ‘Come with me. Let’s go there [in the *barangay*], and tell your problem [to the NGO workers].”

5.4 International agency AAP approaches: working with existing channels?

International agency AAP approaches

International humanitarian agencies, especially NGOs, have a long history of adopting a “state-avoiding posture” (Brown and Donini, 2014: 45), accompanied by a tendency to create parallel structures. The findings of the inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the Typhoon Haiyan response are a reminder that these tendencies have not disappeared:

While there are many examples of excellent cooperation, and government officials at all levels appreciated both the assistance and the extra technical and coordinating capacity provided by the international community, there was also a strong sense that some international surge staff did not understand national systems or capacity and instead bypassed them. (Hartmann et al., 2014: vii)

So how did this impact agencies’ AAP approaches?

The *barangay* was the level at which most operational agencies engaged with affected communities in almost all aspects of relief distribution, from creating beneficiary lists through to the actual process of distribution and seeking feedback. Through our research, we have identified three modes of agency engagement with *barangay* officials: fully dependent, partially dependent, and independent (Ong et al., 2015). Which of these three modes agencies chose was key to the nature of their relationship with the local community. Those fully dependent on *barangay* officials had minimal interaction with members of the community. This practice was widely criticised by local people consulted for this research because it gave too much power to the *barangay* officials who were not always judged to operate fairly and impartially, but rather were said to favour their own kin and loyal constituents. Those agencies operating more independently of *barangay* officials were observed to be the ones most immersed in the community, with a more sustained relationship. But this did not mean they operated without contact with *barangay* officials. Box 10 above describes the good practice example of Plan International, immersed in the community yet establishing a working relationship with *barangay* officials while also setting up independent systems for beneficiary selection.

The mode of engagement that agencies chose at *barangay* level also played a key role in how residents of the *barangay* engaged with agencies’ AAP efforts, both formal and informal. Where agencies had a weak relationship with the community, the influence of the *barangay* captain as “gatekeeper” was strongest, facilitating or hindering feedback from the wider community. Our research shows that the *barangay* captains were more likely to play the latter role, silencing their communities in order to “maintain face” towards outsiders. But where agencies established a stronger direct relationship with the community, residents were less likely to seek permission or approval from local *barangay* officials before raising issues and complaints, and were therefore more likely to provide feedback. This dynamic was well-recognised by the national staff of a number of agencies interviewed.

National aid workers and some local people have commented that the international humanitarian response has actually “reactivated” *barangay* assemblies. Before Typhoon Haiyan many traditional *barangay* assemblies were felt to have been weak, top down and mainly ceremonial. With the support of NGOs and the injection of resources, they were re-energised and considered to have become more relevant and inclusive of community members. NGO engagement with communities has encouraged more regular meetings and was felt to have given the *barangay* officials a greater role and more involvement in current issues. Communities also believe that the sustained and engaged presence of humanitarian workers at *barangay* level has helped to reduce corruption and abuse of power by local authorities. The extent to which these positive influences are sustained beyond the Haiyan response remains to be seen.

In terms of how international organisations worked through national NGOs and their channels of communication with affected communities, the results are disappointing. As Featherstone (2014) and Street (2015) point out, the overall humanitarian response was internationally led and dominated, partly because of the limited capacity of national NGOs, and partly because international agencies prioritised

delivery over partnership.³⁷ This was exacerbated by national NGOs withdrawing from clusters because they felt out of place and at times intimidated. The potential role of national NGOs in strengthening communication with, and accountability to, local communities therefore appears not to have been realised.

Collective AAP approaches

The AAP/CwC Working Groups have provided a new forum for actors to come together: international agencies, national NGOs, government (at different levels), and the church sector. All are invited to participate. But in practice government participation is very limited, and it has not engaged as an equal partner. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the most natural participant, found itself overwhelmed with demands. While the cluster system was active, the DSWD was expected to participate in five clusters as well as the AAP/CwC Working Group *and* maintain its regular programmes. In practice, it has withdrawn from the Working Group forum. Local government officials have similarly expressed that they are too busy to engage with the granular detail of community concerns raised by agencies' AAP mechanisms through the Working Groups (Bacal, 2015), although, as mentioned above, they do engage at *barangay* level.

Against this backdrop of limited partnership between government and international agencies in terms of their collective AAP efforts, two exceptions have emerged in our research, both associated with the Pamati Kita project. First, in the days before Typhoon Hagupit in early December 2014, the AAP/CwC Working Groups played a critical role supporting government's preparedness efforts. Contacted by OPARR, the Working Groups became a conduit for two-way information flow between government and local communities in advance of the typhoon making landfall, for example dispelling rumours that Hagupit was going to be as strong as Haiyan. Community concerns, many expressed through agency SMS hotlines, for example that they did not know the location of the evacuation centres, were subsequently addressed by government and through other means, including radio, SMS, in DSWD and Working Group newsletters, and in person. Agencies worked closely with the PIA. (Buchanan-Smith and Routley, 2015).

The second example is of multi-actor community consultations (of 100 to 200 people) organised by the Pamati Kita project, bringing together international and national agencies that participate in the respective Working Groups, key government officials,³⁸ and community members from a number of different *barangays*. These consultations are intended to encourage transparency in government programming by providing a platform for government officials to provide information about the programmes and assistance they are providing, and by giving communities the opportunity to ask questions of both government and agencies and seek clarification. (Ibid).

It is noteworthy that both of these examples are "one-offs." Ongoing agency collaboration appears to be simply too resource-intensive for government engagement. At provincial level, there is little evidence that agencies have tried to build on existing government channels, nor adapt their own systems to accommodate government engagement.



Looking Out for Teachers. A district supervisor from the Department of Education asks if teachers can still receive calamity assistance

³⁷ Both authors call for much greater investment in the future to support Filipino NGOs to build their capacity and increase preparedness for future emergencies.

³⁸ Including DSWD, OPARR, local government units, the Mayor's office, and the City Housing Department.

6. ORGANISATIONAL AND SYSTEMIC ISSUES AFFECTING AAP IN THE HAIYAN RESPONSE

6.1 Introduction: how agencies managed AAP

This section explores the organisational and systemic issues which fostered, or obstructed, AAP in the Haiyan response. As is clear from the analysis presented above, and from the historical review in Section 2, AAP is not a toolbox that can somehow be projectised as an “add-on.” Rather, effective accountability to affected people is about an organisational culture and mindset, one that places dialogue and *relationships* with affected communities centre stage, and prioritises time spent *listening* to affected people.

Organisationally, agencies responding to Haiyan approached AAP in a range of ways. A number of international NGOs, such as WVI and Oxfam, have a relatively long history of explicit commitment to AAP. Other organisations have more recently made a commitment to AAP, especially UN agencies, encouraged by the IASC Transformative Agenda. Some agencies place more emphasis on the CwC element, for example IOM, while others are more AAP-focused, for example WVI and Plan International.

Table 6 captures five elements that help to describe the different organisational models for managing AAP in the Haiyan response, for six agencies interviewed for this research. These elements are:

- The nature of policy/guidance material, if any
- Organisationally, where responsibility for AAP was located
- How AAP was staffed
- How AAP was built into management systems
- How AAP was funded

The general lack of dedicated funding for AAP is striking. Some agencies have pooled funds from budget lines (often M&E budget lines) across grants to fund their AAP/CwC efforts, but only WVI had substantial dedicated funding for AAP. The Pamati Kita baseline study found that none of the eight national NGOs interviewed had any funding for AAP and feedback mechanisms, similar to Urban Poor Associates (UPA) in the table below (Pamati Kita, 2014). Only WVI had a substantial team of dedicated AAP staff, and a dedicated AAP unit. Most international NGOs located AAP within their Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEAL) departments.

Table 6: Organisational approaches on AAP in the Haiyan response

Agency	Policy or guidance material	Organisational location of AAP	Dedicated staff for AAP	Built into management systems	Funding for AAP
Plan Philippines (directly implementing)	Guidance material developed for Haiyan, but not well-known or used. Globally: accountability included in	Within M&E	No dedicated staff until staff recruited for Pamati Kita. Part of M&E officers' responsibility	Feedback from AAP mechanisms periodically fed into senior management meetings	No dedicated funding for AAP until Pamati Kita project 2015: Plan putting \$200,000 of unrestricted funding

Agency	Policy or guidance material	Organisational location of AAP	Dedicated staff for AAP	Built into management systems	Funding for AAP
	Plan's Child-Centred Community Development Programme standards, but at a high level and with limited guidance				into continuation of Pamati Kita
WVI (directly implementing)	Globally: Integrated Programme Accountability Framework, used for the Haiyan response	Dedicated AAP unit	Senior AAP manager plus other dedicated accountability officers allocated by geographical area, plus staff managing the feedback database (16 staff in total, at the height of the response)	AAP identified as an outcome in the overall programme logframe on accountability Standing agenda item in weekly meetings at field level, and in monthly operations meetings	Unrestricted funding for key (international) AAP staff. Budget lines in grants for AAP mechanisms, e.g., SMS, suggestion boxes, and some staff
IOM (directly implementing)	Globally: Communications with crisis-affected people included in IOM's Migration Crisis Operational Framework, but limited guidance material	Within the Emergency Response and Preparedness Unit	No dedicated AAP staff, but both CwC and PSEA staff addressing AAP issues according to project needs, increased under Pamati Kita (4 field-based staff)	Integrated into specific projects as M&E indicators. PSEA reporting mechanism included in IOM structure	No core funding for AAP. Specific project funds address components of AAP (e.g., CwC projects, PSEA complaints-based mechanisms)
ActionAid (working through local partners)	"Minimum standards" document on AAP developed for Haiyan response, especially for partners Globally: Accountability, Learning and Planning System in place	Part of small 3- to 4-person team	Accountability adviser part of early Emergency Response Team 1 Communications Adviser	Oversight meeting with IHART (International Humanitarian & Response Team) every 2 weeks, in which accountability is a standing agenda item MOUs with implementing partners specify minimum standards on AAP: 5 requirements	Limited dedicated funding. Used DEC funds. ActionAid Ireland provided funds for accountability training

Agency	Policy or guidance material	Organisational location of AAP	Dedicated staff for AAP	Built into management systems	Funding for AAP
FAO (working through government)	Global guidelines on AAP		Programme manager with AAP responsibility		
UPA (national NGO, directly implementing)	None	Central to UPA's work as "community organisation." Not separated out	None, although 10 community organisers play this role		Funding for community organisers from INGO funders/partners

Source: interviews with agency staff and review of agency documents

6.2 WVI: an organisational model of excellence in mainstreaming AAP

WVI is widely regarded as a leader in AAP in the Haiyan response in terms of how it has mainstreamed AAP in its programme, continually adapting and refining its approach. Indeed, within WVI, the Haiyan response operation is seen as its most successful experience of mainstreaming AAP to an extent that had not been achieved before in a response of this scale. So what are the factors that made this happen, and what can be learned from this "model of excellence"?³⁹

Five key factors emerge, also overlapping and reinforcing each other.

1) *Establishing the culture and mindset of AAP from the outset*

Establishing a mindset of AAP in the first few days of the response was regarded as absolutely critical by a number of interviewees within WVI, so it becomes an integral part of the response, is not "added on" later, and is therefore less likely to have to compete for attention later. As one interviewee commented:

what we do at the beginning has a long shelf-life...it is more painful if you don't get it going at the beginning.

There are two main ways in which WVI achieved this:

1. Through the early deployment of an experienced, senior, and assertive international Humanitarian Accountability (HA) officer (from the global accountability and design, monitoring and evaluation [DME] unit) in the first week of the response as part of the early response team⁴⁰
2. Investment in staff capacity (from senior to junior levels) in AAP before Typhoon Haiyan. In June 2013, WVI had conducted a "learning lab" in the Philippines, consisting of eight days of experiential training in humanitarian accountability and DME. In such a disaster-prone country, those same staff found themselves immediately deployed, putting their new skills to use, in three crises before Haiyan hit in November 2013.

³⁹ These findings are based on interviews with a wide range of WVI staff, from global to national level, including both dedicated AAP staff and operational programme staff, and on a review of some of WVI's documentation.

⁴⁰ ActionAid also deployed a senior accountability adviser at the outset, as part of their emergency response team, and similarly felt this to be a critical step in establishing the mindset of AAP from the beginning of their response.

Establishing the culture and mindset of AAP from the outset meant that:

- WVI was one of the first agencies deploying assessment teams to affected areas (and included questions related to CwC/AAP in the needs assessment tool)
- Information sharing and feedback mechanisms (e.g., help desks, staff contact details) were put in place in WVI's first relief distribution
- AAP budget lines were included in the first proposals and AAP commitments were integrated into grants
- "Information provision and feedback was taken as a 'norm' in the response, making it easier to get buy in from sectors as they move into recovery." (WVI, nd: 5)

2) *Strong and supportive leadership at senior level*

1. At the global level, AAP has been an explicit priority for WVI since the 2004 tsunami. A global Accountability and DME team has been in place since 2011, providing the international HA adviser in the first week of the Haiyan response, indeed pushing to ensure that an HA staff member was deployed as a first responder. Thereafter, ongoing support and mentoring on AAP has been provided to the WVI Haiyan team.
2. Within the Philippines, senior managers were supportive of the training of staff in AAP in June 2013. Subsequently, senior managers within the Haiyan emergency programme were strongly committed to AAP, regarding it as not just a cross-cutting issue, but as a fundamental part of humanitarian programming. Practical ways in which this showed up include:
 - a) setting a high priority on feedback and information from communities to inform project design and implementation, for example demanding rapid assessments before making early programming decisions, thus setting an example for programme staff
 - b) building AAP into management systems (see below)
 - c) seeking ways of working closely with communities, for example re-purposing structures within communities as "community recovery committees" to work in partnership with WVI, e.g., on help desks.

In addition, WVI's global "Programme Accountability Framework," which defines minimum accountability standards and guides capacity development, was referred to by staff, as a living, useful, and accessible document (WVI, 2010).

3) *Champions of AAP*

Closely linked with strong and supportive leadership, WVI has had champions of AAP at different levels, most notably in the three consecutive AAP managers who WVI has deployed in the Haiyan response. Words such as "assertive" and "passionate" have been used by other WVI staff to describe their role, for example:

There are quite a few vocal champions and they are very passionate about it.

She feels passionate about it, and always brings things to my (senior manager's) attention.

"Championing" has been important throughout, early on to make the case for dedicated staff and funding separate from monitoring and evaluation (M&E)—see below—but also in terms of sustained advocacy, for example constantly bringing feedback issues and trends to the attention of operational managers. One of the AAP managers reckoned that it took three to four months to really embed the culture and mindset of AAP in WVI's Haiyan response. During this time, the AAP managers and their advisers were holding training and orientation workshops for staff, and continuously reviewing and developing processes, to ensure the right questions were being asked of local people: for example, end of project evaluations included questions about how affected communities had been consulted and the extent to which they had

participated in programme decisions, and the collation and analysis of feedback data was refined and strengthened on an ongoing basis.

4) *Organisational structures and processes to support AAP*

There are a number of organisational structures and procedures that WVI put in place, which staff believe have been key to mainstreaming AAP. See Table 6.

1. The well-funded WVI Haiyan response meant that the organisation could afford to establish a separate unit for AAP. The value is in having dedicated AAP staff, separate from operations, working on consulting with communities, collecting, collating, and analysing feedback full-time. They were assigned geographically rather than to individual projects, thus broadening their scope of work. AAP staff felt it was important to be separate from M&E, which tends to have a more extractive than consultative approach.
2. WVI had one of the largest teams of AAP staff: 16 staff at the height of the response, subsequently reduced to 8, with an AAP Coordinator per zone, under whom there were AAP officers, each covering one or two municipalities, and a community feedback assistant who processed and analysed all the feedback from various channels, all working under an AAP manager.
3. All new programme staff, volunteers, contractors, construction workers (on health centre and school reconstruction projects), and consultants were provided with AAP and PSEA orientation, through short trainings as well as one-to-one sessions with the AAP manager.
4. The agency used its unrestricted funding to cover much of the staff costs, and grant income for many of their technologies and AAP mechanisms.
5. For the first time in a major disaster response programme, AAP was clearly stated as an outcome in WVI's overall programme logframe for the Haiyan response, and systematically monitored. As this then feeds into individual donor and project logframes, it ensures that AAP commitments and outcomes appear in key planning and reporting documents.
6. AAP was a standing agenda item in weekly and monthly meetings in which AAP staff presented the feedback received to operations staff. Importantly, AAP staff were also involved in finding solutions to issues and concerns raised. This helped to ensure they were not just seen as "policing" the operations staff, but also had to grapple with the challenges and trade-offs required to find resolution.

5) *Self-reinforcing factors*

Some WVI staff talked of the importance of factors that reinforced the agency's commitment to AAP once the initial culture was established and practices put in place, including:

1. The more that staff engaged with local communities in an effort to be accountable, the more they got a sense of the importance and value of doing so, and enjoyed it, in a sense reconnecting with the heart of humanitarian work: "this is the work I wanted to do."
2. WVI was also reinforced in its AAP work by the response and recognition from other actors, for example being invited by OCHA to co-chair the AAP Working Group in Tacloban, receiving recognition from donors such as DfID, and being invited to be a consortium member in Pamati Kita.

Although WVI was one of the most effective agencies in mainstreaming AAP in its Haiyan response, this did not mean that they got it all right from the perspective of affected communities. As one of their DME managers admitted: "sometimes, we tend to be confident that we were doing the right thing but when you ask people, they have a different perspective." An internal pilot audit carried out by WVI in November 2014, to test two of the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS)⁴¹ in the Haiyan response, challenged the

⁴¹ The pilot audit was testing Core Humanitarian Standard number 5—"Complaints are welcomed and addressed"—and Standard number 7—"Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve" (URD et al., 2014).

organisation in terms of its channels of communication and whether affected people felt fully informed and consulted. In the words of the DME manager:

In relationship to accountability, one great realization was we just said okay, these are the platforms—SMS, feedback boxes, etc.—but we really didn't consult people in terms of their preference (for sharing information), and we've been deliberate about that now. We asked specific questions in the assessment for Hagupit. Right now, we asked their preferences both to receive and give information, and the vital information they need at the time of assessment.

This highlights an important component of mainstreaming AAP organisationally: periodically checking in with affected communities to find out whether the agency's AAP efforts are working from their perspective, *and* being open to the feedback and prepared to learn and adapt.

Overall, there is a sense that WVI has moved forward significantly in its experience of mainstreaming AAP, and is now able to demonstrate what that looks like, how it works in practice, *and* how to make it happen. However, WVI staff are the first to admit that this positive experience of putting AAP centre stage in the Haiyan response is no guarantee that they could replicate it in future humanitarian crises. In the words of an experienced WVI staff member, mainstreaming AAP requires will, resources, and capacity. The will is a pre-requisite for mobilising dedicated resources for AAP, and putting the necessary capacity in place.

6.3 Other agencies' experiences of mainstreaming AAP

While most international agencies in the Haiyan response were committed to being accountable to affected people, some of them struggled to place this at the heart of their response. Their experiences and reflections, both of what worked, and of the organisational and systemic factors that inhibited the effectiveness of their AAP efforts, provide valuable insights, organised around three broad themes.

Leadership:

Barb Wigley, OCHA's AAP adviser in the early phase of the Haiyan response, is unequivocal about the role of leadership:

(Leadership) is the only thing that keeps AAP, PSEA and CwC on the agenda...It was senior leaders in the sector that put AAP on the map in the Philippines, and it was faltering leadership commitment and a lack of understanding of the core mission that caused it to struggle from time to time. (Wigley, 2015: 14–15)

In terms of OCHA's experience, an AAP adviser some months later confirmed the critical role of OCHA's senior management in Manila and in Tacloban and Roxas in supporting AAP and ensuring it was a standing agenda item in inter-cluster meetings (Howlader, 2014). Other ways in which senior managers played a leadership role in AAP, especially within international NGOs, was through spending time in local communities listening to people's feedback and concerns, thus modeling a way of engaging with affected communities for their staff.

However, there was also evidence of senior managers paying lip service to AAP and how much they valued it, while in practice constantly de-prioritising it in favour of other demands on their time that seemed more pressing. This also showed up as lack of reflective space to really consider the implications of feedback and information they were receiving from community level. The overall result was AAP never really becoming mainstreamed within their organisation.

Organisational culture, practices, and staffing

A number of staff commented on their organisation's rhetorical commitment to AAP, yet the failure to establish an AAP mindset in programming, or to put systems in place that made sure affected people's concerns influenced programming. While senior managers might express interest in knowing what affected people had to say, unless this information was channeled systematically to programme staff who

should act upon it, it could have little influence. This was an issue for Plan International. In contrast to WVI's experience, if the culture, and subsequently the systems, were not in place from the start, it was hard to "add them" successfully later. And without dedicated funding and therefore dedicated staff, AAP became "everyone but no-one's responsibility." A number of Plan International staff commented that they would benefit from having an organisation-wide policy and/or guidance material that would help them with the "how to" of mainstreaming AAP. Otherwise, it was driven by committed individuals with different interpretations of how to be more accountable to affected people, and the commitment subsided when the "champions" left. Responsibility for AAP needs to be located clearly in management structures and job descriptions, which is not currently the case for Plan International staff.

The tendency for programme staff to think of "accountability" as compliance and "being policed" was mentioned by some senior managers. This was attributed to the unhelpful associations of the term "accountability," and lack of familiarity with what it means and looks like in practice. A shift in culture requires a strong message to field staff to be flexible in their programming decisions, and that proposals are not "set in stone" and can be changed. (See "incentives" below.)

National staff have an essential role to play in agency efforts to be more accountable to affected people, and their contribution in the Haiyan response has been acknowledged.⁴² However, as pointed out in Section 5.2.1, unless they are employed at a sufficiently senior level, they may not have the necessary authority to raise issues with senior management, nor to challenge programme staff and managers, especially if those issues are "inconvenient truths" for the agency concerned. A serious commitment to AAP means deploying senior staff to manage it.

Balancing upwards and downwards accountability

As mentioned in Section 2.3 above, "upwards accountability" to donors, where the power lies, can squeeze out downwards accountability to affected people. There is evidence of this in the Haiyan response, for example in the way that agencies allocated staff: one international NGO had 15 M&E staff, mostly oriented to agency and donor reporting, spending a fraction of their time on AAP. Senior management time was similarly oriented towards donor and agency reporting and visits. Using Darcy et al.'s 2013 analysis, this illustrates voluntary and moral responsibility being trumped by more defined and official forms of accountability. And those more powerful lines of accountability set the incentive system to which senior managers respond. As Alex Jacobs comments:

There is a general sense that, in many agencies across the response, staff have struggled to secure the time and management attention needed to achieve a high level of accountability. They still seem to be swimming against the tide of pressure to spend large budgets in short timeframes by implementing pre-determined activities in a relatively inflexible manner. (Jacobs, 2014: 4)

Surprisingly few interviewees felt that donor procedures and contracts prevented them from making changes to their programmes in response to feedback from affected communities. However, the examples cited, of donors giving approval for changes, mostly related to minor adjustments to programmes, for example replacing tarpaulins with corrugated galvanised iron (CGI) sheets. Donor flexibility in allowing more substantial changes to programmes was less assured, with some positive experiences, for example of a switch from relief distribution to livelihoods programming, and some examples of donors refusing to allow any substantial change despite evidence that the original project design was no longer in line with local people's needs and priorities. When donors were prepared to allow changes to programming, interviewees reported that it usually took a long time to secure approval, and this was a more significant stumbling block, which may discourage implementing agencies from requesting programme changes.

On a more positive note, some interviewees commented on how donors used their influence in the Haiyan response to encourage implementing partners to be more accountable to affected communities, indicating that it should be part of their proposals and reporting. They felt that donors could take an additional step, to encourage greater collaboration between agencies in their AAP approaches.

⁴² See, for example, Howlader (2014).

7. OVERALL ANALYSIS OF AAP IN THE HAIYAN RESPONSE: WHOSE EXPERIENCE COUNTS?

The fact that so many agencies made efforts to be accountable to affected people and set up mechanisms to do so in the Haiyan response is to be commended. AAP as an organisational and sector-wide priority was given much higher profile in the Haiyan response than in almost any other major humanitarian crisis. It is well and truly “on the agenda,” and the IASC Transformative Agenda has made an important contribution in achieving that. There are positive examples of how this triggered changes in programming, to become more relevant and/or more effective and efficient in delivery.

But our research has also thrown light on some important differences in the perceptions of humanitarian agencies and the perceptions of local people about the effectiveness of AAP approaches, and also about what approaches work best. Table 7 captures some of these differences. For example, humanitarian agencies felt they were more accessible for feedback than local people experienced, and were not always sufficiently alert to the social and cultural factors that inhibited communication. Agencies tended to favour more formal and technological approaches to AAP, focusing particularly on feedback mechanisms, while affected people strongly favoured face-to-face and more human forms of interaction.

Table 7: Differences in perspectives on AAP: humanitarian agencies and local communities

Issue	Agency perspectives	Local community perspectives
Opportunity to feedback to agencies	Many opportunities and channels made available	Not knowing how to feedback. Many social and cultural factors that constrain feedback
Preferred channels for feedback	Focus and investment in more “formal” and technological mechanisms, e.g., SMS hotlines. Easier to monitor	Strong preference for face-to-face communication: house visits, help desks, and community consultations
<i>Range of mechanisms for feedback</i>	<i>AAP mechanisms should be seen as a package, complementing each other</i>	<i>Feedback mechanisms used in combination, and used most actively when communities have personal relationships with aid workers, cultivated by face-to-face interaction</i>
Major concern raised	Beneficiary selection (NB. Quickly interpreted as concerns around beneficiary selection criteria and inclusion)	Deep unease and discomfort with agency practice of selective targeting, especially within communities

NB. Italicised are the issues where agency and local community perspectives coincide.

While AAP practices in the Haiyan response are a step forward, our research reveals some of the limitations in the way that AAP is currently being applied, which is also a valuable opportunity for learning for future responses.

First, the scope of agency AAP practices during the response has mostly been limited to soliciting feedback on existing agency programmes, to address the question: “are we doing things right?” But the bigger question: “are we doing the right things?” has tended to be overlooked. Table 8 presents a typology of AAP feedback and how it is used. In the Haiyan response, AAP practices have tended to focus on the first two columns, and have been much less likely to trigger substantial change. This places pressure on early assessments, to get the overall design of the response right. Of course, good consultation with affected people in that early stage helps to achieve this, and there are examples of this in the Haiyan response. But thereafter, feedback has mostly been used to tweak those early decisions rather than to question or change them, or to correct underlying design faults. In other words, with few exceptions, AAP feedback has not been used for strategic decision-making. The collective failure of agencies to engage with the challenge to household targeting, a profound issue for local communities, is, perhaps, the most powerful example of this. This finding echoes the findings of previous research.⁴³

Table 8: Typology of AAP feedback and how it is used

Breadth of concern	Implications for response		
	Individual redress	Tweaking of existing programmes	Requires fundamental redesign/rethinking of approach
Individual	X	X	
Community-wide	X	X	
Response-wide		X	

Second, the perspectives of affected people in the Haiyan response provide a reminder of the essence of AAP. At a minimum, it is about two-way communication, about a conversation. For affected people, it is about being seen and heard by humanitarian responders, and it is about engaging in dialogue: face-to-face communication is what really counts to affected people. At its more expansive, AAP is about building relationships with affected communities by spending substantial time in those communities to understand them and to find out their needs and priorities. This is a reminder and a challenge to agencies that have adopted a somewhat mechanistic or technology-driven approach to AAP. Agency enthusiasm for some of those mechanisms, for example the use of SMS, which can be automatically logged into databases, does not match local people’s preference for human interaction. This does not mean there is no place for technology, but rather that it must be used to support genuine interaction in AAP, rather than becoming an end in itself in ways that may actually create a barrier between affected people and agency staff, especially if the latter spend much of their time behind computer screens in agency offices. Indeed, the findings of this research indicate that the stronger the personal relationships between affected people and agency staff, the more affected people are likely to use technological channels for feedback. And the more that agency staff spend time listening to affected people, the more they hear the sentiments and emotion behind issues and concerns, so that feedback is not “dehumanized” or “lost in translation” when mediated through technological channels. While more formalised approaches tended to dominate agencies’ AAP efforts, in reality it is often an informal and messy process. Our research highlights the importance of capturing feedback and issues raised in face-to-face interactions, which a number of agencies have struggled with. At least capturing more substantive challenges and concerns should be a priority.

⁴³ See Bonino et al. (2014) for the findings of research by CDA and ALNAP that show that most feedback is on project-level details rather than broader programme or agency strategies. Darcy et al (2013) call this a shift from macro to micro accountability.

The desire for personal contact poses a dilemma in a widespread crisis for agencies with large programmes, especially early in the response when extensive face-to-face contact may not be feasible, although help desks in early distributions provide an immediate and relatively easy way of doing so and are valued by local people. But this does not clarify the longer-term priorities, to give precedence to face-to-face communication, to build relationships with communities, and to empower staff on the ground to resolve issues. There are positive examples from the Haiyan response to build upon, in terms of how to build relationships with affected people by embedding staff in local communities.

Third, there is a tendency for humanitarian agencies to perceive the aid transaction as between themselves, the providers of services, and the most vulnerable, those most in need of those services. The focus is the individual household, and many ongoing AAP mechanisms are set up for individuals to channel their questions and concerns, much as the private sector might seek feedback on its services and products from individual customers. However, as our research demonstrates, this sits uncomfortably with the cultural context in the Philippines in which selfhood is intensely “relational,” and therefore the experience of being selected or de-selected for assistance is also relational. While agencies tend to approach humanitarian assistance and AAP in a somewhat technical and procedural fashion, for local people the experience is both personal and relational. This is powerfully illustrated in the difference between the Taiwanese Tzu Chi Foundation and its language of love, compassion, and care,⁴⁴ which appeared to fit well with the Filipino culture, and the more bureaucratic and consumer-oriented language of accountability and complaints mechanisms of many traditional international humanitarian agencies, which did not sit so comfortably and was less well understood. This is a powerful reminder of the importance of understanding the local context, beyond a superficial analysis, and adapting AAP approaches to that context, rather than expecting local people to adapt to the westernised and technocratic culture that tends to dominate the international humanitarian system.

Fourth, our findings demonstrate the range of ways that agencies have engaged with local government structures in the Haiyan response. They warn against working unquestioningly through existing channels and with local officials who can easily become gatekeepers, filtering or blocking what community members really think and experience. But this is not an excuse to bypass local structures. Indeed, as the Haiyan response shows, agencies’ AAP efforts may play a role in strengthening the functioning and accountability of local structures, at least temporarily. Our good practice examples show that an informed and nuanced approach is needed, where an agency is alert to the power dynamics at local level and works with local government officials, but also develops a relationship directly with the local community. The role of national staff is critical, both to help their agency understand the local political and power dynamics and also to build relationships with the wider community.

Collective efforts

Although there has been a mixed record in promoting a collective approach to AAP in the Haiyan response, it has moved the sector’s experience of collective efforts forward,⁴⁵ for example through the generally positive experience of the AAP/CwC Working Groups, and through learning how to make best use of collective collation and analysis of feedback data, for example through the Common Feedback Form.

There is an opportunity to learn from some of the challenges and failings, for example developing a stand-by consortium for the provision of common services in advance, setting up a common hotline (currently being taken forward and developed in Iraq) early in the response, and having a library of materials (for example guidance material on methods and mechanisms for AAP, the Community Response Map [CRM], and an improved version of the Community Feedback Form) that can be drawn upon in future humanitarian crises. Some of these can be developed specifically for the Philippines, based on the rich experience of the Haiyan response.



The Typhoon Haiyan Response Stakeholders’ Dialogue

⁴⁴ A faith-based organisation, Tzu Chi encourages self-discipline and certain behaviours, for example refraining from gambling, but does not appear to proselytise (Lau and Cornelio, forthcoming; Ong et al., 2015).

⁴⁵ As Wigley (2015: 15) notes, even in Pakistan in 2012 where individual agencies “were openly implementing commitments on accountability, very little was happening collectively aside from peer support and a few joint mechanisms.”

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR MOVING THE AAP AGENDA FORWARD

While the Haiyan response may be seen as the most “AAP-intensive” humanitarian response to date, the experiences recounted by affected people are not quite as rosy as the picture painted by the agencies. Comparing both perspectives, as we have done in this case study, also demonstrates how challenging it is for humanitarian agencies, responding to a massive humanitarian crisis and need, to “get it right” in terms of delivering assistance on a large scale *and* effectively engaging with affected communities, even in a middle-income country with a reasonable level of infrastructure. The Haiyan experience is a rich source of learning. This section draws out the implications from this experience for the sector’s efforts in future to be more responsive and accountable to affected people, especially for similar contexts of natural disaster. While some of these implications may be widely applicable—implications 1, 2, and 3 below—others may not be generalisable to other contexts, for example to highly politicised conflict-related humanitarian crises.

1. More accessible terminology

The **terminology** of “accountability” is not easily translated and therefore understood at local level. It is more associated with compliance and setting up feedback channels than with listening, dialogue, and relationship-building between humanitarian agencies and affected communities. The more neutral and broader term of “community engagement” (helpfully, not easily reduced to an acronym) may be more appropriate. Informally, OCHA staff have started to use this term instead of AAP, Brown and Donini (2014) use the term, and it has been proposed instead of AAP to the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) (Jacobs, 2015b).

2. Understanding the cultural context, and the experience of affected people, across the response

- a) Our research clearly demonstrates the importance of **understanding the cultural context**, and taking that into account in how AAP is approached. This requires international agencies to pay attention to the views and experience of their national staff, to listen to national NGOs, and to seek out sociologists and anthropologists to help them understand the local culture. This is a reminder that AAP approaches cannot be “blue-printed,” and must be adapted to each context.
- b) To serve the sector as a whole, **independent third party bodies could play a very valuable role in listening to affected people** and their experience of the humanitarian response, to be fed back into the humanitarian response. The work done by Ong et al. (2015) demonstrates the valuable role that sociologists and anthropologists can play in this respect, independently of humanitarian agencies.

3. Incentivising AAP

There needs to be a **re-orientation of the incentive systems** driving humanitarian programming and especially programme managers. Working with the prevailing power dynamics, donor organisations have a key role to play here, as do organisations themselves, to incentivise agencies to spend time with, listen to, and respond to affected people. The implications for **donors** are: a) indicating to their implementing partners that they expect them to be spending time listening to affected communities, and designing and adjusting their programming according to what they hear; b) requiring agencies to feedback on the views

of affected people; c) requesting budget lines for dedicated staff positions focused on AAP and community engagement, and funding AAP activities; d) exploring how they can build greater flexibility into contracts, for example allowing programmes to be re-planned and logframes finalised after a period of time (one to three months), based on feedback from affected people that changes are needed; and e) considering how donors can lighten the burden of agency reporting, to meet the donor's needs, yet not to detract staff resources and attention away from time spent with affected communities.

4. Expanding the scope of agencies' AAP efforts

The **scope of current AAP practices** appears too restricted, focused on existing programmes and beneficiaries. While there will probably always be an element of AAP that is project- or programme-based, focused on communities with which the agency is already engaged (and this level of AAP is probably easiest to fund), it needs to be supplemented by wider consultation and listening exercises extended to groups that may not have been targeted by the response. This may best be done as a collective (rather than individual agency) exercise, for example through a third party organisation, as described above.

If the scope of AAP practices is expanded, agencies are likely to be more challenged to make **substantial rather than minor changes to programming** in response to what they hear from affected communities. This has implications for many aspects of how humanitarian programming is currently organised, and above all implies much greater flexibility in design and implementation (see above for the implications for donors). But only when information from affected populations is really influencing strategic decisions can agencies claim to be truly more accountable to affected people.

5. Strengthening agencies' AAP approaches

- a) Agencies' AAP efforts cannot be approached in isolation from **existing channels and governance structures**, yet this case study shows the dangers of unquestioningly working through local government units, which may silence community members. Agencies must understand the local system of government, in terms of power dynamics and how well it represents the interests of local communities, and must be particularly aware of "gatekeepers" in the community. Where possible, agencies should build their own relationships with communities as well as working through official channels.
- b) The evidence demonstrates the value in agencies using **a suite of AAP mechanisms** and channels, to reach different groups and to triangulate information received through different channels.
- c) **Face-to-face informal and conversational interaction** between agency staff and affected people, not mediated through technological channels, is clearly valued most by the affected population as a way of providing feedback and getting information and clarification about the response. The human connection is fundamental. Initially, this can be done through help desks at early relief distributions, and gradually expanded as staff can spend more time at community level. There is a strong case for **dedicated AAP staff to engage in periodic community consultation and listening exercises**, in as neutral a way as possible, separate from programming and operational staff, to ensure it is a genuine listening exercise.

There is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that issues raised in this way are not downplayed, especially in comparison with information received through more formal AAP channels that is easily documented and analysed. Ways of capturing these face-to-face interactions more qualitatively, for example through regular meetings or even focus group discussions with agency frontline staff, should be explored, especially to help distinguish between individual concerns and deeper community-wide concerns.

- d) Agencies must give much greater attention to **disaggregating feedback** received, by sex, age, and socio-economic status, to better understand the concerns of different groups, and therefore to better direct responses. There is also scope for further analysis of which groups are using different channels for feedback, to inform the overall AAP approach.

- e) “**Closing the feedback loop**” continues to be a weak point in agencies’ AAP approaches. However, there are good practice examples from the Haiyan response to be drawn upon, especially through face-to-face feeding back by agencies at community level.

6. Collective action on AAP

- a) In terms of **collectively promoting AAP**, the Haiyan experience demonstrates the value of a collective forum, such as the Working Group, to identify common issues arising across the response and across agencies with implications for the overall humanitarian response. Such a forum requires strong strategic leadership and resources, for example to carry out response-wide consultations. There is also value in providing common services, for example a common hotline and a common feedback form, but these need to be established early in the response, implying the planning and preparatory work needs to be done in advance. And collective services must be properly funded by donors.
- b) Agencies must be realistic about government’s capacity to engage in “meeting-intensive” collective efforts, and be prepared to find other workable ways of engaging with key government departments, especially where issues are being raised by affected people that require government attention.
- c) Ways of **collating and categorising feedback** should be standardised across agencies through continued use of an improved community feedback form (for example that includes gender disaggregation). This could be prepared in advance, learning from the Haiyan experience, and then adjusted for the specific context of each individual humanitarian response.

7. Organisational approaches to mainstreaming AAP

- a) For agencies to **mainstream AAP effectively** requires will, resources, and capacity. “Will” means leadership that prioritises AAP, both at the global level and in-country for international agencies, and is prepared to push back on other immediate demands. There must be a number of champions of AAP throughout the organisation, especially at the senior level. There is a very short period of time to set an AAP culture: it should be done in the first couple of weeks of the humanitarian response, when senior staff with responsibility for establishing the agency’s approach to AAP, including systems and processes, are deployed. However, continued advocacy and promotion of AAP is needed for that culture to be sustained and in order to shift mindsets.
- b) Agency staff **embedding themselves in local communities**, to understand them better, to engage with local people directly while still developing a working relationship with local government officials, is perhaps the most effective way of engaging with affected communities in a humanitarian response. In a large-scale response, this is clearly not feasible for all communities, nor for all agencies, but it does demonstrate the comparative advantage of NGOs (both national and international) with a strong community development orientation, and their potential contribution to collective efforts to be more accountable, if they share their understanding and grassroots knowledge.

Targeting

The deep unease that affected communities experienced with **conventional humanitarian targeting practices**, and the evidence of divisiveness that this may have caused, is a serious challenge to the international humanitarian community. This is not a new issue, but has never really been addressed. Experience across humanitarian crises could usefully be collated, to inform a policy-level discussion on this issue.

ACRONYMS

AAP	Accountability to Affected People
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
AMT	Accountability Monitoring Tool
BRAT	Basic Rapid Assessment Tool
CDAC	Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities
CDF	Community Development Facilitator
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards
CPC	Colegio de la Purismo Concepción
CRM	Community Response Map (IOM)
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CwC	Communicating with Communities
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee (UK)
DfID	Department for International Development (UK government)
DME	Design, Monitoring and Evaluation
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator (UN)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
FCU	Filamer Christian University Center for Outreach and Education
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HA	Humanitarian Accountability
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HERR	Humanitarian Emergency Response Review
HPG	Humanitarian Policy Group (ODI)

HPN	Humanitarian Practice Network (HPG, ODI)
IAHE	Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
IHART	International Humanitarian & Response Team
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JEEAR	Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDRRMC	National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council
NFI	Non-food item
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OPARR	Office of the Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Recovery
PDA	Personal Digital Assistant
PIA	Philippine Information Agency
PSEA	Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RAY	Reconstruction Assistance for Yolanda (Philippines Government)
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
SCI	Save the Children International
SMS	Short Message Service (text messaging)
UN	United Nations

UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UPA	Urban Poor Associates
URD	Urgence Réhabilitation Développement
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit
WVI	World Vision International

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ANNEX 1

RESEARCH METHODS USED IN THIS CASE STUDY

1) Exploring and capturing the affected population's perspectives of humanitarian agencies' efforts to be accountable to them.

The methodology for this part of the fieldwork was informed by an ethnographic approach designed to capture a wide range of local people's experience of the humanitarian response and of agencies' AAP efforts.

Three areas were selected: Tacloban City, Bantayan Island, and Roxas City/Estancia, Iloilo, according to the following criteria: varied levels of devastation, geographical diversity (covering both urban and rural), varied experience in receiving humanitarian assistance, and varied availability of feedback platforms.

Focus group interviews were conducted in each site, purposively selected by socio-economic category, age, class, gender, and sexuality. Ten to twelve focus group interviews were carried out in each site, in 22 villages in total, using a semi-structured interview approach. These were supplemented with individual in-depth interviews with feedback platform users.

The research team comprised three experienced Filipino researchers familiar with the local language and customs, and with prior research experience of ethnographic fieldwork with Haiyan-affected communities. The team introduced themselves as independent academics rather than as individuals affiliated with humanitarian agencies, to encourage as unbiased a response as possible. While this separation from humanitarian agencies was deliberate, it meant that the team had limited access to agency feedback databases. This made it more difficult to identify feedback users, especially as very few people have tended to use the feedback mechanisms, and some individuals may keep their use of feedback mechanisms to themselves.

2) Reviewing agency approaches, mechanisms, and tools

This component of the research commenced with a review of relevant documentation.

Interviews were carried out in Tacloban with four national and six international NGOs actively engaged in AAP activities and in the Pamati Kita project, with their field staff, sector specialists, AAP staff, and their senior managers. More detailed case studies were undertaken with WVI, Plan International, and ActionAid.

An online survey of how agencies had approached AAP was widely disseminated and yielded 36 responses from 16 different organisations plus a further 12 anonymous responses. This information was used to inform and support the information gathered from interviews. A focus group discussion was held with members of the Tacloban AAP/CWC Working Group during a scheduled Working Group meeting. This was an opportunity to discuss and triangulate the survey findings.

WVI provided access to their computerised database of feedback received. Some further analysis of this feedback data was carried out.

3) Investigating the organisational and systemic issues encouraging or hindering AAP

This component of the research commenced with a literature review, particularly focusing on the wider literature on AAP, on progress made by humanitarian agencies to be accountable to affected people, and on enabling and constraining factors. Thirteen key informants were interviewed, many of whom have been part of, or who have observed, agencies' AAP efforts over the last couple of decades, to capture their perspectives on what has worked and what has not.

Interviews were carried out in Tacloban with the staff of two national and five international NGOs, with senior managers, operational staff, AAP staff, and their frontline staff. Headquarters staff of WVI, Plan International, and IOM were also interviewed. A more detailed case study of WVI's organisational model for AAP in the Haiyan response was carried out. These interviews were supplemented with a review of agency documentation and a review of relevant evaluations and research reports that have touched upon AAP in the Haiyan response.

4) Learning from Pamati Kita project as a collaborative initiative

As well as a review of relevant documentation, a facilitated workshop was held with Pamati Kita-designated staff in Plan, IOM, and WVI in November 2014 to capture their learning and perspectives. This was followed up with another workshop exercise with the Pamati Kita-designated staff in January 2015 to capture their experiences of implementing the project.

Interviews were also carried out with the staff of international and national agencies participating in the AAP/CWC Technical Working Group in Tacloban.

In addition, a paper was commissioned exploring the relationship between agency efforts to be accountable to affected populations, and the role of the state after Typhoon Haiyan.

Constraints

While the consultation with affected communities was deliberately distanced from consultation with agencies, so that it would be as independent as possible, this has resulted in some disconnects in our analysis. For example, specific issues arising from community consultations could not always be followed through with agencies to gain their perspective, although general issues could usually be followed up with agencies.

As this research started 12 months after Typhoon Haiyan, it was harder to capture what had happened in the earlier period of the relief response.

ANNEX 2

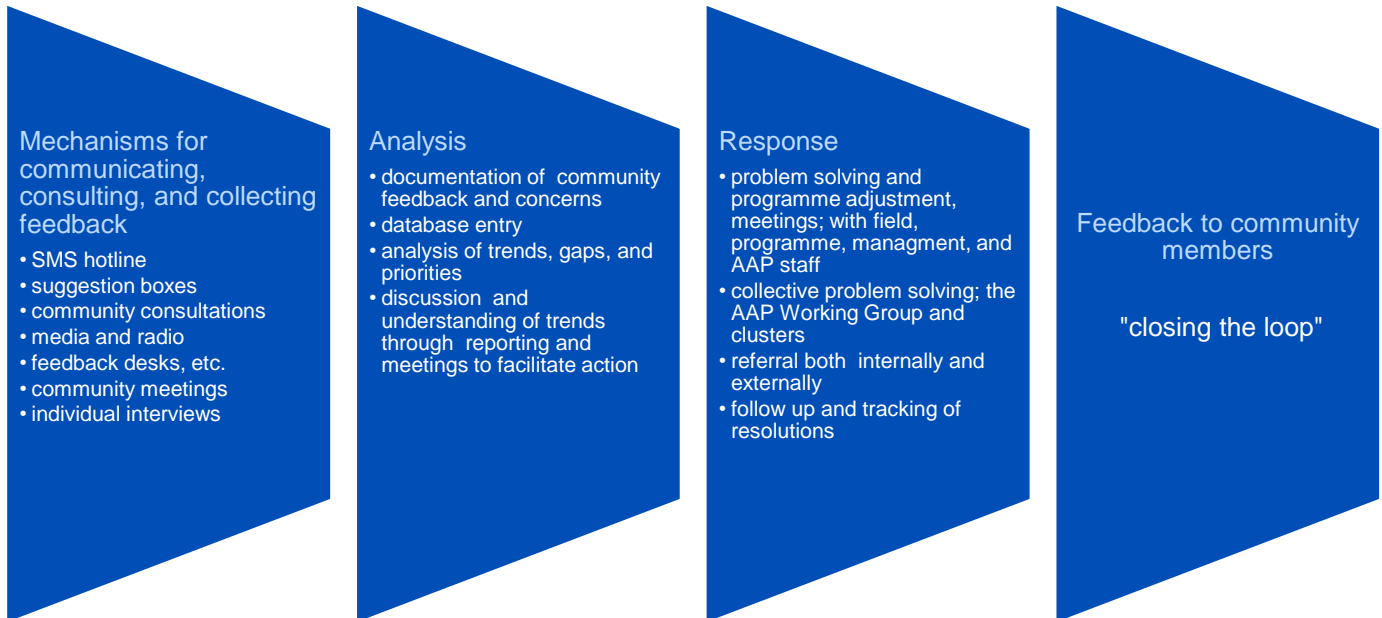
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ANNEX 3

FOUR STAGES IN THE FORMALISED AAP APPROACH IN THE HAIYAN RESPONSE



ANNEX 4

EXCERPT FROM WVI'S DATABASE TO TRACK ACTION TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK THROUGH AAP MECHANISMS

Source	Sector	Theme	Concern	Priority	FEED-BACK DETAILS	RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION TAKEN	Date of action	Status	Level of resolution	Turn Around Time (days)
Feed-back box	Shelter	Beneficiary selection	Criteria	Medium	..... ..... ..... .....	Communicate this message to the programme team and operational team and the upward management for decision-making	Message acknowledged and responded to via SMS. Explained to beneficiary that the selection process had already taken place		Unsettled		2
Feed-back Box	Shelter	Unmet need		Medium	..... ..... ..... .....	Communicate this message to the programme team and operational team and the upward management for decision-making			Unsettled		
Frontline SMS	World Vision	Question/ Lack of Information		High	..... ..... ..... .....	Clarify or validate message and shared with the Municipal team for action. Encourage team to include in key messaging to the community that the organisation is not or never ask for anything or any favours from the community in exchange for the materials distributed	Message acknowledged and responded via SMS. Explained via SMS that World Vision is not asking for anything or any favour from the community in exchange for the materials being distributed	10 th July	Unsettled	SMT Level	
Frontline SMS	World Vision	Thanks		Low	..... ..... ..... .....		Message acknowledged	3 rd July	No actions needed		

ABOUT PLAN INTERNATIONAL

Plan International is an independent global child rights organisation committed to supporting vulnerable and marginalised children and their communities to be free from poverty. By actively connecting committed people with powerful ideas, we work together to make positive, deep-rooted and lasting changes in children and young people's lives. For over 75 years, we have supported girls and boys and their communities around the world to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to claim their rights, free themselves from poverty and live positive fulfilling lives.

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