



**Afghanistan Educational & Health Development Aid (AEHDA)
Organization**

Accountability to Affected Populations Policy AAP

Approved by: Chair of BoD Dec 02, 2023

Reviewed By TPP 2024

Forward Note

Subject: Forward Note for Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Policy

Dear Esteemed Team Members,

I am pleased to present the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Policy for AEHDA. This document signifies our commitment to ensuring that the voices and needs of those we aim to assist are not only heard but also actively incorporated into our decision-making processes and programmatic interventions.

In an era where humanitarian and development work is evolving rapidly, it is imperative that we prioritize the perspectives and aspirations of the communities we serve. The AAP Policy outlined herein reflects AEHDA's dedication to promoting transparency, inclusivity, and responsiveness throughout all stages of our projects.

As we embark on this journey of enhanced accountability to affected populations, I encourage each team member to embrace the principles outlined in this AAP Policy. By doing so, we not only uphold the values of AEHDA but also contribute to the broader goal of creating positive and lasting change in the lives of those we serve.

Thank you for your dedication to our mission, and I look forward to witnessing the positive impact of our collective efforts.

Sincerely

Chairman of the Board of Directors

Update History

No	History	Date	Major Changes	Remarks
1	Policy Initiated	Feb. 2022		
2	First update /Review	July. 2024	Added Awaz-e-Afghanistn	Reviewed by ACBAR SHAPE TPP
3	Next update /Review	Feb.2025		

Note:

The first review resulted in adding Awaz-e-Afghanistan element in the policy as one of the means for sharing concerns about response with the sector, the revised policy was approved by two member of the board of directors of AEHDA prior to adaptation and implementation.

Acknowledgement:

In the development of this policy the publication from OCHA and IASC and other resource available in the internet were used, what was abstracted from these sources are integrated with AEHDA-self developed policies.

Implementation:

The policy is part of all project implementation plan, AEHDA appoints an AAP focal point for each project specially for humanitarian emergency responses, the job of focal point is to make sure all staff and partners are knowledgeable about the AAP policy, and will let beneficiaries and other relevant stakeholders know about the accountabilities of AEHDA and he will receive all complaints in relation to AAP for follow-up process.

Introduction

Accountability to affected population while providing emergency or relief assistance is of most importance of the AEHDA. This introduction sets the stage for our AAP Policy, emphasizing transparency, inclusivity, and responsiveness in our engagement with communities. By placing the voices and needs of affected populations at the forefront, AEHDA is committed to ensuring that our interventions are not only effective but also respectful of the unique perspectives and aspirations of those we serve.

Guiding Principles

Community Engagement: We recognize the importance of engaging communities as partners in our initiatives. This policy emphasizes the establishment of meaningful and ongoing dialogues

with affected populations to understand their needs, priorities, and capacities. By actively involving communities in the decision-making process, we aim to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of our interventions.

Information Sharing: Transparency is at the core of our commitment. Our AAP Policy ensures that timely and accurate information about our projects, objectives, and methodologies is accessible to affected populations.

Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms: AEHDA is dedicated to creating a safe space for individuals to voice concerns, provide feedback, and express grievances. We have established clear and accessible mechanisms for receiving and addressing complaints. This ensures that the feedback loop is closed, lessons are learned, and our interventions are continuously improved.

Capacity Building: Recognizing the unique strengths and capacities within communities, our AAP Policy underscores our commitment to building local skills and leadership. Through targeted capacity-building initiatives, we aim to empower community members to actively participate in decision-making processes and take ownership of their development.

Adaptability and Learning: In a dynamic and ever-changing environment, flexibility and continuous learning are crucial. Our AAP Policy encourages a culture of adaptability, where lessons learned from community engagement and feedback mechanisms are integrated into our programming, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes.

Cultural sensitivity is integral to our AAP approach: We respect and appreciate the cultural diversity of the communities we serve, adapting our interventions to align with local customs and traditions. This principle ensures that our work is culturally relevant and respectful.

AEHDA is committed to non-discrimination in all aspects of our work. Our AAP principles demand that interventions are designed and implemented without discrimination based on race, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or any other characteristic. All individuals have the right to equitable access to assistance and opportunities.

Transparency is a cornerstone of our AAP principles: We strive to provide clear and accessible information about our projects, objectives, and methodologies to the communities we serve. Open communication builds trust and allows for informed decision-making among affected populations.

What is Accountability?

As we have seen, accountability is a word with two meanings:

1. **Accountability:** despite appearance, not all related to accounting
2. **Responsible:** the second definition doesn't fully cover the same idea and can be misleading

Accountability means bearing responsibility and being accountable to other people, mainly beneficiaries, partners and donors, explaining what it is we do and reporting back.

What is Humanitarian Accountability?

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) is about using power and resources ethically and responsibly. It's about putting the needs and interests of the people and community's organizations serve at the center of decision-making, and ensuring the most appropriate and relevant outcomes for them, while preserving their rights and dignity and increasing their

resilience to face situations of vulnerability and crisis. In practice, this means that people - including children and adolescents have a say in decisions that affect their lives, receive the information they need to make informed decisions, have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to provide feedback or to complain, and have equitable access to assistance in proportion to their needs, priorities and preferences.

Terminologies

A. Affected Populations

Affected populations are the girls, boys, women and men with different needs, vulnerabilities and capacities who are in situations of vulnerability and/or are adversely affected by poverty, conflict, disasters or other crises.

B. Collective Accountability

In Collective Accountability, humanitarian and development agencies are equally committed to accountability, and they coordinate and harmonize their policies, practices and activities across the board. Collective Accountability increases awareness of the work of different agencies among Affected Populations, reduces duplication and mitigates the burden on Affected Populations by coordinating information streams from different agencies. Collective Accountability does not replace agencies' individual accountability - it sits beside it in order to support their work and to ensure a comprehensive, predictable and coherent approach.

C. Common Service

A Common Service is a support function that is provided on behalf of all organizations working on a humanitarian response. For example, a Common Service on Community Engagement collectively provides information to Affected Populations and collects and analyses their feedback in order to influence strategic and operational decision-making..

D. Community Engagement

Community Engagement (CE) refers to the active participation of people and communities in ways that mean their voices are heard and their active contribution to decision-making is safe, equitable and effective-doing with, not doing to. In order to achieve this, CE includes processes for listening to, and communicating with people in order to better understand their needs, vulnerabilities and capacities, and gathering, responding to and acting on their feedback.

E. Rumors

A rumor contains information of uncertain or doubtful truth that spreads quickly among people and needs to be countered by accurate information. A rumor could be about risks or diseases, or about other people or organizations. Rumors have serious negative consequences for programmed delivery and people's behavior.

F. Social Accountability

Social accountability is a bottom-up, people-led process through which public institutions (including non- state providers delivering services on behalf of government agencies) are held to account. It includes meaningful participation in decision-making to shape policy, plans and budgets, as well as initiatives that empower communities to hold duty-bearers to account.

I. AEHDA's Commitment Statement to Accountability to Affected Population

Accountability to affected populations is an active commitment to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people AEHDA as a humanitarian organizations seek to assist.

Taking Account:

Giving affected people influence over decision making in a way that accounts for the diversity of communities, and allows the views of the most vulnerable/at-risk to be equally considered

Giving Account:

Transparency and effectively sharing information with communities

Being Held to Account:

Giving others the opportunity to assess and if appropriate sanction your actions. More specifically, according to the IASC, it can be broken down into three types of accountabilities to affected people — taking account, giving account and being held to account.

The category of "being held to account" is worth emphasizing as it includes Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). "Sexual exploitation and abuse by anyone associated with the provision of aid constitutes the most serious breach of accountability, and populations should be able to raise complaints and call for appropriate protection measures against such abuse, as well as be informed of the results of investigations on these complaints."

II. Why AEHDA is Accountable to Affected Population while delivering aid services?

AEHDA as a humanitarian actors exercise power over others and that they are responsible for managing resources entrusted to them.

Experience shows that there is a severe imbalance of power during a crisis. Through the provision of essential services, humanitarian actors find themselves in a position of control and power over the vulnerable population. In addition, humanitarian actors are made responsible for considerable public and private resources to manage the crisis. These imbalances in power can be countered by involving the affected people in decision-making processes. And from a practical viewpoint, people affected by the crisis have skills, knowledge and understanding of the crisis and know how to resolve it if required resources and assistance will be provided.

III. How AEHDA is Accountable to Affected Population

1. In order to overcome the imbalance of power between affected population and aid workers AEHDA is committed to be accountable to affected population one of the measure is the development of AAP policy. AEHDA as humanitarian actor is committed to ensuring the "right to speak" and meet the "obligation to respond" to any question about its humanitarian operations and decision-making which is part of our accountability to affected population, moreover our humanitarian accountability includes the duty to involve and consult, the duty to provide information, the duty to listen, and the duty to respond and followup.

Consequently being accountable means, among other things, taking the community into account:

- We must ask the community
- Listen to it
- Interchange ideas
- Agree upon the appropriate response
- Do things with help from the community.
- Review them together,
- if necessary Show them what has been don
- Planning and implementing actions in a responsible manner, in accordance with the needs and desires of the beneficiaries.

- The right information to communities, engaging them in decision-making, and ensuring their safe access to responsive complaint mechanisms.

While the importance of listening to people affected by crises may seem obvious, it is in fact one of the weakest areas of progress and performance in humanitarian action across the system as a whole.

1.a. A rights-based Approach

One way to approach AAP is to recognize that the people we serve are rights-holders rather than passive 'aid recipients'. That is why we are renewing and reinforcing our commitment to promoting and respecting their rights, dignity and safety, ensuring that all our aid programs and activities are created in their best interests and meet high standards.

The girls, boys, women and men receiving assistance are our primary stakeholders. They have fundamental rights to:

- Participate in decisions that affect their lives
- Receive the information they need to make informed decisions
- Be heard if they feel the help, they receive is not adequate or has unwelcomed consequences
- Know what agencies are doing in their communities and how money is being spent.

1.b. An Active Approach

AAP demands real, practical commitment in leadership, organizational transparency and program management. It demands that we recognize and encourage the input, participation and indeed leadership of communities in all our work.

AAP is not just 'the right thing to do': over time, systemic engagement of the people we serve contributes to reducing vulnerability, increasing resilience and strengthening social cohesion. That in turn will improve the quality and effectiveness of our humanitarian and development programs. It's a truly virtuous circle.

2. Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

AEHDA is accountable for a performance free from SEA and the affected population will be safe from exploitation of all kind including sexual.

Sexual Exploitation refers to actual or attempted manipulation, for sexual purposes, of someone who is in a position of vulnerability, including where there are differential power relations. This includes (but is not limited to) profiting financially, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another person. Sexual Abuse refers to the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) by UN personnel, their partners or other aid workers against the people they serve constitute one of the most serious breaches of accountability.

3. Leadership/Governance:

Demonstrate commitment by ensuring AAP is integrated into strategies, program proposals, monitoring and evaluations, recruitment, staff inductions, trainings and performance management, partnership agreements, and highlighted in reporting.

4. Transparency:

Provide accessible and timely information on organizational procedures, structures and processes that affect them to ensure that they can make informed decisions and choices, and facilitate a dialogue between an organization and its affected populations over information provision.

5. Complaint Feedback Response Mechanism

Actively seek the views of affected populations to improve policy and practice in programming, ensuring that feedback and complaints mechanisms are streamlined, appropriate and robust enough to deal with (communicate, receive, process, respond to and learn from) complaints about breaches in policy and stakeholder dissatisfaction.

Asking community members what people and communication channels they trust for giving feedback on assistance and for receiving information about humanitarian assistance.

Creating feedback-and-response channels based on what people say. Also, AEHDA will establish a process for safely record of feedback, referring it to Awaaz-e-Afghanistan or other humanitarian agency as needed, and “closing the feedback loop” by going back to people who submitted feedback and updating them on the issue they raised or the complaint they made, or by giving them answers to their questions.

Raising awareness of affected communities:

- On organization’s feedback/complaint-and-response mechanisms and on Awaaz-e-Afghanistan
- People’s right to make complaints and give other feedback about humanitarian assistance, organizations through!
 - Holding routine community consultations/Focus Group Discussions, community meetings
 - Conducting regular “customer satisfaction” surveys about each AAP project

Complain and/or Feedback Entry

- Appointing “Participant Representatives” or “Question-and-Answer Officers” (one woman and one man) for the projects if necessary. These people should be publicized and made available to project participants in a way that encourages trust and confidentiality.
- Remembering to protect the privacy and personal information of those who make complaints and give feedback. AEHDA will securely document people’s concerns and comments.

6. Participation:

Participation is people's voluntary involvement in the processes and activities led by humanitarian agencies. Fundamental to participation is that everyone, including the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, has the right to express their views and have them heard, and to be involved in decisions affecting them or their communities.

Affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them through the establishment of clear guidelines and practices to engage them appropriately and ensure that the most marginalized and affected are represented and have influence.

Making sure to reach out to Participants from marginalized groups, including women and girls, people with disabilities, displaced communities, elderly people and people who are

Illiterate to get their suggestions on the best ways for them to give us information and to get information from us

7. Design, monitoring and evaluation:

Design, monitor and evaluate the goals and objectives of programs with the involvement of affected populations, feeding learning back into the organization on an on-going basis and reporting on the results of the process.

- Holding two-way consultations with target communities throughout project, as part of its design
- Counselling with communities through Focus Group Discussions, community meetings, household conversations.
- Embedding the Awaaz Afghanistan telephone hotline (410) into AEHDA design as one way for participants to give feedback confidently (and anonymously, if preferred).

8. Do not Harm

Following the principle that humanitarian programs should never put participants at risk of harm. The provision of humanitarian emergency assistance normally results in power dynamic that can enable abuse, competition, conflict, misuse or misappropriation; they may lead to negative economic, social or environmental consequences. In order to prevent negative impact of the intervention AEHDA acknowledge its responsibility by carefully considering how programs may affect not just the people directly affected but also the broader community, the environment or the local economy and takes appropriate preventative measures accordingly.

9. Delivering aids with Dignity

AEHDA is accountable for keeping the dignity of affected population during delivery of survival services based on the context, elderly; women and children will receive extra efforts. AEHDA is committed to ensuring that people are not abused in the whole process and that professional and respectful treatment of people and victims is provided during the relief program so that peoples respect and humanity are not violated. To control this process, our monitoring teams monitor the process from time to time and provide specific and relevant feedback to employees and project managers.

10. Coordination

Sharing AEHDA's AAP lessons with the AAP Working Group so members can benefit from what the organization learned about, what did and did not work.

11. AAP Focal Point

AEHDA will appoint an AAP focal point for every project especially for humanitarian response project. The tasks of the focal point are to provide information about the existence of such a process to affected population also will be responsible for integration of the APP to the project; in addition the focal point will deal with all concerns and complaints in relation to AAP.

12. Inclusivity:

AEHDA is committed to ensuring that the voices and perspectives of all affected populations are considered and valued. We actively seek to include diverse community members, including vulnerable and marginalized groups, in decision-making processes, recognizing the importance of equal representation.

Making sure each project of community engagement activities is inclusive enough so that people from marginalized groups (or even the more marginalized people within marginalized groups)

are involved in project decision making. Asking target communities which marginalized groups are unseen by the response and will seek their participation.

IV: Using standards to regulate accountability to affected population within AEHDA projects

Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS)

During the world humanitarian summit many organizations, including governments, donors and NGOs committed to the nine Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS). The CHS set out guidelines on how organizations and individual humanitarian aid workers can improve humanitarian aid and make it more effective and efficient. The Standards further facilitate accountability to affected populations and provide mechanisms to implement prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA).

When affected populations participate, influence and actively engage in the emergency response, activities and services will be better tailored to the needs of the population and are likely to be better accessed and better support sustainability in the long term. When committing to AAP, organizations commit to use and manage the power and resources they have in a responsible and ethical way (CHS Alliance 2023)

HAP-2010 standard

1. **Establishing and delivering on commitments:** The organisation sets out the commitments that it will be held accountable for, and how they will be delivered.
2. **Staff competency:** The organisation ensures that staff have competencies that enable them to meet the organisation's commitments.
3. **Sharing information:** The organisation ensures that the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders have access to timely, relevant and clear information about the organisation and its activities.
4. **Participation:** The organisation listens to the people it aims to assist, incorporating their views and analysis in programme decisions.
5. **Handling complaints:** The organisation enables the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders to raise complaints and receive a response through an effective, accessible and safe process.
6. **Learning and continual improvement:** The organisation learns from experience to continually improve its performance.



IV. Policy Review and Amendments

The Policy Review and Amendments process at AEHDA is a structured approach to ensuring that AEHDA policies remain current, relevant, and aligned with evolving needs and regulations. This involves conducting regular scheduled reviews by the policy review committee, triggered by significant events, and annual comprehensive assessments.

Proposed amendments undergo thorough impact assessments and are subject to an approval process before being communicated to relevant stakeholders. Proper training and implementation strategies are in place to ensure seamless adoption of policy changes.

Additionally, version control mechanisms are employed to guarantee that staff have access to the most current and approved policy documents. This robust process is instrumental in maintaining a dynamic and effective policy framework within AEHDA.