

ISTANBUL PRINCIPLES FOR CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

5 PRACTICE
TRANSPARENCY AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

Civil Society Organizations are effective as development actors when they demonstrate a sustained organizational commitment to transparency, multiple accountability, and integrity in their internal operations.



**CANADIAN
RED CROSS**



Photo: Louise Taylor/Canadian Red Cross

Accountability to beneficiaries:

Canadian Red Cross

The Canadian Red Cross works to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity in Canada and around the world.

CHALLENGE

When disasters strike, the damage can extend far beyond loss of lives, homes, and infrastructure. For survivors, it can mean losing national and local government and community services and support, and the societal mechanisms integral to their security and well-being. The resulting lack of power and access to local institutions and norms can be as devastating as their physical loss. Humanitarian organizations often supplement affected services in a disaster's aftermath and deliver life-saving support. However, sometimes, despite the best of intentions, the focus on addressing basic needs can leave affected people with little influence over their own relief and recovery and without the most appropriate or beneficial support.



RESPONSE



The Canadian Red Cross is committed to engaging beneficiaries in their own relief and recovery, and has recently adopted a beneficiary accountability framework to further guide its staff and partner Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies. The new beneficiary accountability framework is being fully integrated within our programs, which are guided by the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement's seven fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and universality.

The framework and implementation tools were developed through first researching various humanitarian accountability and quality initiatives, resulting in the selection of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) 2010 standard, an internationally developed and tested accountability standard. The beneficiary accountability framework covers six benchmarks as set out in the HAP 2010 standard:

1. Establishing and delivering on commitments - The Canadian Red Cross will set out the commitments it is making and be held accountable for them and how it delivers on these commitments.

¹ <http://hapinternational.org/projects/standard/hap-2010-standard.aspx>

2. Ensuring personnel competencies - The Canadian Red Cross ensures that personnel have the competencies that enable them to meet the commitments made to various stakeholder audiences.
3. Sharing information - The Canadian Red Cross ensures that the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders have access to timely, relevant, and clear information about its activities.
4. Participation - The Canadian Red Cross listens to the people it aims to assist, incorporating their views and analysis in programming decisions.
5. Handling complaints - The Canadian Red Cross 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 Canadian Red Cross learns from experience to continually improve its performance.

These six key benchmarks represent best practices and should be monitored and evaluated for all emergency and recovery response operations through the application of a results-based management approach to service delivery planning.

LESSONS LEARNED & BEST PRACTICES

The beneficiary accountability framework is being piloted in our recovery operations for the Haiti earthquake, and the lessons learned will be integrated back into the framework and tools.



Examples of best practices identified in Haiti have been strong information-sharing with beneficiaries in our programs, including using information boards, SMS text messages to disseminate information, and interactive radio programs to discuss our recovery operations. Another area has been in establishing community-based committees to assist in the selection of beneficiaries for our shelter program.

NEXT STEPS



The Canadian Red Cross International Operations team is developing an implementation plan for our beneficiary accountability framework, identifying the steps we need for full integration into our operations. One of the first steps we have taken was to host the first-ever HAP Training of Trainers accountability training in Canada in mid-October 2012, where we had a number of staff from our international operational and national disaster management departments trained to build capacity of other staff and volunteers on implementing beneficiary accountability. Other agencies were also invited to take part. As a result, beneficiary accountability will be mainstreamed into the training of incoming international delegates, as well as in the training of the personnel for our 70-bed emergency hospital unit, deployed in disasters.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Canadian Red Cross web-site
<http://www.redcross.ca/>

Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
<http://hapinternational.org/>

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (beneficiary communications page)
<http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/beneficiary-communications/>

Go here for more examples of how Canadian civil society is improving its development practice: <http://www.ccic.ca/IP-case-studies.php>