Evaluation Report:

The Humanitarian Accountability Project
Field Trial in Afghanistan

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Ian Christoplos
Realtime Evaluator/Methodological Resource Person

A HAP REPORT

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The Humanitarian Accountability Project (HAP) is an inter-agency initiative, set up in February 2001, to strengthen accountability towards those affected by crisis situations and to facilitate improved performance within the humanitarian sector.

HAP’s vision is for all humanitarian operations to mobilize mechanisms at field, organizational and sector-wide levels that ensure accountability to communities and individuals affected by wars and disasters. At the core of these mechanisms will be the participation of affected populations and an ethical commitment to listen, monitor and respond to their concerns.

HAP’s activities are taking place at field, organizational and sector-wide levels where accountability mechanisms need to be established.

At field-level, we are:
- Conducting action-research in crisis situations, testing practical mechanisms to enhance accountability towards people affected by natural disaster or armed conflicts.
- Learning from, and supporting, local initiatives that aim to increase accountability.

At organizational level, we are:
- Researching mechanisms and approaches adopted by humanitarian organizations that foster greater accountability to people affected by disaster and conflict.
- Engaging humanitarian organizations to review, strengthen and test these mechanisms.

At sector-wide level, we are:
- Engaging a range of humanitarian actors on the issue of accountability, in order to generate wider commitment to the principle and values of accountability.
- Working in partnership with organizations developing projects and initiatives with an accountability dimension.
- Contributing to the development of sector-wide accountability mechanisms, such as accreditation, professional associations and humanitarian ombudspersons.

HAP’s structure consists of an office based in Geneva and of Governing and Advisory Boards representing a range of international and national humanitarian organizations and individuals with humanitarian experience. Participating agencies include: British red Cross, CARE International, CARITAS International, DANIDA, DFID, DRC, FUNDEMOS, IFRC, OFADEC, OXFAM International, SLANGO, SSRC, UNHCR, and World Vision International. The project is currently funded by AusAid, DFID, Ford Foundation, CARE International, Oxfam and World Vision. It is supported at field level by DACAAR, DRC the IFRC, and Oxfam.

To find out more about the HAP, or to share information and experience on accountability, please contact us at:

Humanitarian Accountability Project
27 chemin des Crets-de-Pregny, CH-1218 Grand Saconnex, Geneva. Switzerland.
Tel: +41-22-747-0088. Fax: +41-22-747-0099
Email: secretariat@hapgeneva.org.

Website: www.hapgeneva.org
Executive Summary

The main purposes of the HAP Afghanistan field trial were:

1. To test, through various methods, how a mechanism for enhanced accountability to beneficiaries or claimants of humanitarian assistance can function, and add value to humanitarian programmes in Herat, Afghanistan;
2. To contribute to enhanced accountability to Afghan communities within the context of Afghanistan reconstruction and good governance.

This report assesses how the trial pursued these purposes, and draws conclusions regarding potential future frameworks for promoting accountability from a rights-based perspective focused on beneficiary voice. The focus of the Afghanistan trial was primarily on learning about what HAP could do in practical terms. This evaluation pays significant attention to also extrapolating what HAP should strive to do in the future based on the Afghanistan experience, even if this would require different structures and resources.

The HAP trial began after the period when there was an acute service provision crisis in the Herat IDP camps (approximately December – April) during which time a number of cases of poor accountability had been noted by other actors. By the time the trial began, these were largely in the process of being resolved. Whilst HAP monitored this process, there was little need for a major level of involvement. The HAP trial was conducted before what many observers expect may be the next humanitarian crisis, that being the dearth of livelihood possibilities for returning IDPs and refugees in rural areas during the coming winter. The flow of returning refugees from Iran into the Western Region of Afghanistan has been much slower than expected. At the close of the trial Iran appeared to be greatly increasing pressure on refugees to return, which could aggravate the situation. Between these two ‘crises’, HAP’s focus reflected an effort to avert or mitigate the possible reintegration crisis through an analysis of the voluntary nature of return and the information that returnees have regarding their entitlements and the conditions in their home areas. The chosen focus was generally perceived as appropriate, in light of HAP’s constraints in working in rural areas. It should be noted, however, that with the increasing shift of most agencies’ operational foci to the rural areas in recent months, and the relatively small population remaining in the IDP camps, HAP’s focus would almost certainly not be seen as valid if the trial had begun a few months later.

The trial also coincided with a growing effort by the government to assume a leadership role in humanitarian and development programming. The civil administration is increasingly exerting leadership in coordinating aid flows. During the trial the government was engaged in discussions of the rights of people affected by drought and conflict, even though their perspective was at times at odds with that of the NGO community, particularly the decision to rapidly close the IDP camps. The government’s perception of HAP’s ‘position’ in this debate was mixed. The government was openly critical of HAP’s perceived alliance with those agencies that questioned the pressures for rapid return of the IDPs, while at the same time being highly supportive of HAP’s role as an organisation that could join with them in questioning and criticising poor quality humanitarian programming.

The trial certainly achieved the objective of identifying and testing methods in the IDP camps, but was not able to surmount logistical and human resource constraints to pursue these approaches among drought-affected populations and those who were being ‘reintegrated’. The focus on IDPs who were being rapidly resettled meant that there was little opportunity to provide feedback and inform beneficiaries of the findings of the research. This was further hampered when the team was expelled from working in the camps during a period that they had planned to provide this information.

The methods of the trial can be described as being partially one of directly giving ‘voice’ to the IDPs themselves, and partly one of documenting the amount of information that IDPs had regarding their entitlements and whether the principle of voluntary return was being upheld. Methods included:
• Direct research about the return and reintegration of IDPs to identify accountability concerns
• Monitoring the implementation of accountability mechanisms of other agencies
• Engagement with a spectrum of agencies to identify and raise accountability concerns
• Provision of technical support to enhance agencies’ own accountability to project participants

The quality of the team’s survey methodology for direct research and monitoring was recognised as very good. One of the greatest challenges that the team faced was in retaining educated female staff. The team was, however, able to keep a core of relatively high calibre and motivated staff for the duration of the trial. One of the main factors regarding the choice of methods used in the trial was the focus on modest and achievable areas of research to ensure that high standards of quality and rigour could be maintained. There were found to be two levels to be considered when determining the amount of rigour required to retain credibility. Where specific agencies were held responsible for failed accountability, high levels of rigour were generally deemed as being absolutely essential. Another more modest level of rigour was required when revealing the gaps in service provision where no specific agency could be held responsible. HAP even brought up some accountability issues where it lacked its own empirical research in order to highlight systemic accountability concerns.

Through these approaches HAP positioned itself well within the Herat humanitarian community in a short period of time. The team’s approach was appreciated and many agencies felt that HAP provided added value in both the specific findings it introduced into agency discussions and decision-making regarding accountability, and also by helping to highlight the topic of accountability more generally. The team held an accountability workshop that was seen as a valuable introduction, especially for staff who were unaware of current approaches to enhancing humanitarian accountability.

An important question regarding engagement is, ‘which humanitarian community’ HAP developed relations with. HAP naturally gravitates toward (a) agencies with large resource flows, (b) agencies that define their work as ‘humanitarian’ (rather than ‘development’), and/or (c) agencies that are already engaged in the international discourse on humanitarian accountability. HAP had little engagement with Afghan NGOs and with agencies that tended to work on more development related issues. These factors suggest the need to adopt special strategies if HAP is to effectively engage with local and national NGOs since they will undoubtedly follow a different (but important) path to improved accountability than the international agencies.

HAP’s focus on engaging with humanitarian (as opposed to development) agencies is necessary. It is nonetheless important to consider the consequences of this focus, particularly since the trial is conducted “within the context of Afghanistan reconstruction and good governance”. In such a context it is the more developmental actors who are at the forefront of recreating accountability within new governance structures and in choice of reconstruction and reintegration priorities. It is here where an increasing proportion of the decisions will be made regarding what services a returning IDP or refugee might hope to access when arriving back in his or her village. As mentioned above, it is back in these villages where many observers expect that the next major humanitarian crisis will occur.

The question of whether HAP was able to generate responses to issues raised is difficult to confirm, given uncertainties regarding attribution. Accountability reforms were already being implemented when the team arrived. The trial revealed a few instances where reforms were clearly implemented, no instances where HAP advice was entirely rejected, and several instances where HAP advice entered into a broader process of making commitments to reform, but where the level of implementation can be questioned.

The team had difficulty in enhancing the level of public discussion on accountability issues. Agencies in Herat did not feel comfortable discussing such issues in public forums, preferring a one-to-one basis. The team noted that their recommendations were seen to be more realistic and implementable if they were modest and less contentious. In determining what is realistic, implementable and cost-effective for a given duty bearer, much depends on the capacities, norms and longer-term objectives of
a given organisation. Where HAP had a tacit understanding of how its advice might be effective, it had more impact. HAP had weaker relationships with agencies that would not have been interested in implementing HAP's recommendations anyway. This is not meant to suggest that HAP adopt a relativistic stance regarding what is realistic, implementable and cost-effective, but rather that this determination must be made in dialogue with the agency concerned. There is no template.

The team maintained a complete reporting system, including monthly reports, research reports and notes from field work and meetings attended. The interview notes from the field teams were translated and well organised, further enhancing transparency. After initial discussion with the relevant duty bearers, reports and information were freely shared with agencies, which generally helped to support the team's credibility, while creating some tensions when individual agencies were criticised.

The methods and structure of the trial were effectively used in the sense of testing what can function and provide added value to the ongoing discourse on humanitarian accountability in Herat. The priorities selected for the trial represented a modest but appropriate set of approaches. These were tested in a highly professional and rigorous manner. The methods used should provide a useful basis for the design of future accountability mechanisms, for charting priorities for increased accountability in Afghanistan, and for generally bringing the international discourse on humanitarian accountability closer to field level realities.

HAP has, however, not been able to test methods and support learning in isolated areas. This is due to the fact that HAP has not found an appropriate model for enhancing accountability through rigorous field research where the logistical, cultural and practical challenges are as great as they are in rural Afghanistan. The most obvious lesson is that HAP must establish realistic levels of ambition. HAP field teams may be most effective in acute camp contexts in limited geographical areas.

Some agencies are changing their approaches to IDP resettlement under pressure from, not only HAP, but also in reaction to concerns raised by other agencies and emerging reports of ethnic reprisals in the North. HAP has been part of this process, but it is impossible to verify the level of direct HAP impact on humanitarian intervention. In general the impact on the beneficiaries that the trial interacted with can be assumed to have been limited. In reviewing the costs of the trial with respect to its outputs, the trial can be said to be cost efficient in the sense of having produced a high quality set of studies and a significant level of agency engagement in a very difficult context at a modest cost. That said, given its probable limited impact the evaluator doubts whether the trial represents a cost effective model.

The trial did not directly strive to increase the longer-term capacity of disaster and conflict affected people with respect to voice. This would have involved a political engagement for which HAP lacked the time and institutional framework to pursue. It is generally recognised that a sustainable rights-based agenda must eventually be anchored in local civil society. The Herat trial was not designed to provide a basis for this longer-term objective.

HAP found very good coherence and complementarity vis-à-vis ongoing accountability initiatives related to the IDP camps. Through exchange of information and encouragement HAP helped to provide deeper and more rigorous analysis of issues that had already been identified by agencies on the ground, and also provided an extra 'push' for ongoing internal reform efforts. The team built much of its efforts and chose initial priorities by building upon issues that agencies themselves had already identified. HAP's efforts became part of the ongoing work of agencies in the field. Respondents were sceptical, however, about whether HAP could establish a credible role for itself if it did not have its own assessments and if the independently verifiable nature of the information it presented could therefore be questioned.

Improvements in HAP's efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability could in the future be best achieved by tailoring approaches to the context before sending a team out. The Afghanistan trial has
not revealed any standard, self-evident niche for a field level accountability mechanism. Considerable effort is needed in country to:

- choose an appropriate topical niche
- recruit staff appropriate to the expected focus of the trial, e.g., service provision or protection, key sectors, etc.
- choose an appropriate host agency with an interest in carrying on the work after the trial
- ensure that the ownership is anchored at all levels of the host organisation
- select methods appropriate for the objectives and purpose of the trial
- ensure that adequate administrative, logistical and security structures are either in place or can be set-up rapidly

HAP operates within an uneasy relationship between rights-based approaches and the day-to-day efforts of humanitarian agencies to ensure that target groups obtain what they need to survive. Operational agencies (and indeed HAP itself) must prioritise among an overwhelming array of pressing failures to live up to the rights of disaster and conflict affected people. What happens when HAP, in monitoring this process, criticises the chosen priorities, and when other agencies criticise HAP’s choice of priorities? What happens when, as is the case in much of rural Afghanistan, there is no agency prepared to declare itself responsible for more than a narrow set of beneficiaries and a narrow set of rights? What is HAP’s mandate where the division between humanitarian entitlements and the challenges of dealing with high chronic vulnerability begins to blur? Can HAP be part of the solution for this or does it merely create frustration by drawing attention to an unprioritisable collection of rights?

In a short period of time, the HAP team performed admirably in dealing with these difficult questions by promoting and providing practical advice and data collection related to accountability issues in the IDP camps in the Herat vicinity. This was done in an effective and highly professional manner, and the value of this work was generally recognised and appreciated. The team, and other stakeholders, were acutely aware, however, that the IDP camps were not the most strategic focus within the broader spectrum of accountability issues facing the Western Region. HAP chose its camp focus due to the fact that it was even more constrained than those agencies it is mandated to follow in working with the ‘main issues’ since it was even more constrained in reaching and soliciting the perspectives of war and drought affected people once they have left the camps.
Acronyms

ALNAP  Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
ACBAR  Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
AREA   Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation in Afghanistan
AREU   Afghanistan Research & Evaluation Unit
CHA    Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs
DAC    Development Assistance Committee
DACAAR The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DRC    Danish Refugee Committee
HAP    Humanitarian Accountability Project
HRW    Human Rights Watch
ICRC   International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA   International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDP    Internally Displaced Person
IFRC   International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO   International Non-Governmental Organisation
IRC    International Rescue Committee
IOM    International Organisation for Migration
MDM    Medecins du Monde
MoP    Ministry of Planning
MoR    Ministry of Repatriation
MSF    Medecins Sans Frontiers
NGO    Non-Governmental Organisation
PHR    Physicians for Human Rights
ToR    Terms of Reference
UNAMA  United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNHCR  United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCHA United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs
Table of Contents

1. Background
   1.1. Introduction
   1.2. Evaluation methodology
   1.3. Methodological guidance and support
   1.4. Governance context and major potential fields of enquiry in the Western Region

2. Methods and strategies
   2.1. Methodological choice: quality, appropriateness and rigour
   2.2. Engagement with humanitarian actors and response
   2.3. HAP’s impact on debates and discussions on humanitarian accountability
   2.4. HAP’s recommendations: realistic, implementable, cost-effective?
   2.5. Reporting
   2.6. Learning points

3. Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability
   3.1. Testing and learning: achievements and constraints
   3.2. Impact on people affected by disaster and conflict
   3.3. Cost efficiency and cost effectiveness
   3.4. Sustainability: what is possible?
   3.5. Capacity-building
   3.6. Coherence and complementarity with other actors
   3.7. Alternative methods and strategies
   3.8. Learning points

4. Conclusions

References
Persons met
Annex 1: Terms of reference
Annex 2: Inception report
1. Background

1.1. Introduction

As stated in the terms of reference, the main purposes of the Humanitarian Accountability Project (HAP) Afghanistan field trial were:

3. To test, through various methods, how a mechanism for enhanced accountability to beneficiaries or claimants of humanitarian assistance can function, and add value to humanitarian programmes in Herat, Afghanistan;
4. To contribute to enhanced accountability to Afghan communities within the context of Afghanistan reconstruction and good governance.

This report is intended to assess and provide perspective on how the trial pursued these purposes, and to highlight what conclusions may be drawn from HAP's experience in Afghanistan regarding potential future frameworks for promoting accountability.

Evaluating a small trial of less than three months in a complex and rapidly changing environment presents obvious limitations regarding attribution of causality between outputs and outcomes and in drawing conclusions about 'what works' to promote humanitarian accountability. That said, the trial did provide a significant empirical input toward HAP's efforts to consider 'what might work' in the future. It is hoped that this report can provide a basis for stimulating dialogue within HAP and among other stakeholders with whom this report is shared about various ways to enhance field-level accountability.

One of the roles of the trials within HAP's work is that of contributing to learning. The evaluator interprets learning as the process of gaining a greater understanding of what HAP should do and what it could do.\(^1\) The focus of the Afghanistan trial, as emphasised by HAP Geneva, and as interpreted by the team in Herat, was primarily on learning about what HAP could do in practical terms. This evaluation does not question this pragmatic focus, but nonetheless pays significant attention to extrapolating learning points related to what HAP should strive to do in the future based on the Afghanistan experience, even if this would require different structures and resources.

Given that the HAP trials are intended, among other things, to support learning, this evaluation also leans toward the learning end of the learning-accountability continuum that any evaluation must straddle. Accountability is nonetheless also an objective, since HAP's credibility as a pilot is inevitably grounded in its own transparency. Evaluation is part of this.

Since its inception, HAP has been subject to contested interpretations by different stakeholders of its mandate, ultimate goals and conceptual underpinnings. In order to use the HAP experience to promote sector-wide learning, it is important that these different assumptions are made transparent and acknowledged as the point of departure for each observer in analysing the findings of the project. Of course the evaluator has his own assumptions as well, the most important of which is the assumption that: HAP as a whole, and the individual trials and activities within HAP, take a rights-based perspective, focused on downward accountability.

HAP's 'slogan' (which the evaluator has seen as its de facto mission statement) is to be "a voice for people affected by disaster and conflict", which implies a clear focus on downward accountability and normative commitment to the rights of beneficiaries or claimants to influence the programmes and entitlements that they receive. HAP has described this voice as constituting a right in stating that

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\(^1\) See Inception Report, Annex 2
"people have a right to a say in actions that affects (sic) them." HAP’s vision states that "at the core of these mechanisms will be the participation of affected populations and an ethical commitment to listen, monitor and respond to their concerns.” HAP’s principles are described as emphasising "ethics, rights and responsibilities." Furthermore, HAP has stated that:

"In practice it [accountability] means that disaster-affected people have

- A right to information about agency mandates or missions; agency values and principles; agency policies, programmes and budgets; who will get how much of what and why; why things are not happening as planned or announced; who decides on programme changes and on what basis; what the outcomes of evaluations are etc. etc.
- A right to a say in what is being done on their behalf; what are their priorities, how do they see effectiveness of programmes, how do they see the relationship between aid provider(s) and themselves, how do they see they (sic) impacts of programmes, etc. etc.
- A right to have their concerns heard and taken into account;
- A right to bring complaints and get an appropriate response to it if the complaint turns (sic) out valid;
- A right to a form of redress where an organisation or institution through its actions or inaction has caused avoidable harm to disaster-affected people."

HAP’s rights-based approach was considered self evident in Herat, by the team and by other stakeholders. The team understood their terms of reference (ToR) to imply that they were expected to adopt a rights-based approach in their work and that the mechanisms they were testing were grounded in a rights-based perspective. They trained their field teams specifically to look at the rights of people in camps and those returning home. The HAP Briefing Notes, cited above, were distributed to agencies at the start of the trial and were understood to describe the outcomes that HAP was pursuing.

Defining responsibilities is, in the view of the evaluator, only possible with reference to explicit or implied rights and the social, political and economic relationships that underpin shifting responsibilities. The Herat trial provided a useful vantage point to consider who might be responsible for the rights listed above in a complex context. The trial approached this question from a pragmatic and direct engagement with emerging (and in some instances hesitant) duty bearers. The point of departure of the team’s efforts was in downward accountability. The HAP team informed agencies in their introductory letter that the “first entry point will be the experience and perception of affected people.”

All of this, in the view of the evaluator, amount to a clear normative commitment to a rights-based approach focused on downward accountability. It is therefore assumed to be valid to assess the Herat trial with a view to ascertaining to what extent HAP can achieve its normative rights-based aims with a field mechanism.

In addition to the evaluator’s main assumption, it is important to furthermore mention a point that is key to understanding other stakeholders’ various assumptions regarding HAP, which is: In order to achieve stakeholder confidence and support, HAP must make the extent of its mandate clear and adapted to (a) the concerns of war and disaster affected people, (b) the ability of duty bearers to address these concerns, and (c) its own practical, logistical and financial limitations.

From interviews with stakeholders, the evaluator has understood that in their eyes, HAP’s credibility also relies on an ability to plan its actions in congruence with its capacities and a readiness to rapidly adapt its priorities and modus operandi to the context of the disasters in which it works. Furthermore,

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2 HAP Geneva, 2001, HAP Briefings 3
3 HAP Geneva, 2001, HAP Briefings 1
5 See Accountability Training Notes
different actors have different assumptions and expectations regarding where HAP should delineate its own mandate vis-à-vis various grey areas, such as between relief and development. This delineation is inevitably an iterative process that will take place throughout the period of any field trial. The evaluator has tried to make this process transparent, and has avoided taking stands regarding which assumptions are right or wrong.

Related to this need for clarity is the evaluator’s commitment to seeing evaluation as a tool, not just for management, but also for policy analysis. Based on numerous reviews of humanitarian evaluation and recommended priorities, this evaluation has been structured to help readers to consider what HAP has accomplished in relation to its broader stated goals and policies, even if the interpretation of these statements is contested. The evaluator acknowledges his own normative commitment to overcome the tendency, extensively documented in various Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) publications, for evaluation to disregard the connection between field level priorities and practice and the broader policies and goals of the organisation being evaluated.

1.2. Evaluation methodology

This evaluation is based on two missions to Herat Afghanistan, June 11-16 and July 11-24. During these missions the evaluator had extensive discussions with the HAP team, interviewed key stakeholders, participated in various interagency meetings and visited two camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) near Herat. In the first of these camp visits, he observed the work of the HAP field research teams. The evaluator has also reviewed HAP documentation, some agency reports and relevant studies and literature relating to the situation in Afghanistan.

The evaluator’s overall method for performing real time evaluation draws on several guides to humanitarian evaluation in general and real time evaluation in particular. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) expects real time evaluations to provide “...a wide angle snapshot of a situation... [in order to] reinforce the link between operations, evaluation and policy formation” (Jamal and Crisp 2002:1). This need for strengthening such policy-practice linkage is further stressed in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) guidelines, that state: “Humanitarian assistance evaluation requires a greater emphasis upon policy evaluation techniques than is often the case for ‘conventional’ aid evaluation” (1999:12).

This evaluation is situated so as to combine the levels of a “single agency, single project evaluation” and a “partial system evaluation”, since the outcomes of HAP’s work can only be understood within an analysis of the systems that it seeks to influence.

In applying this to HAP’s objectives of testing and learning, HAP’s work (i.e., desired outcomes) have been assessed in terms of obtaining a better understanding of what a field mechanism should do (with respect to policy objectives) and what it could do (in operational terms).

The evaluator has developed his approach based on the two purposes of the Afghanistan field trial. The first purpose is;

>To test, through various methods, how a mechanism for enhanced accountability to beneficiaries or claimants of humanitarian assistance can function, and add value to humanitarian programmes in Herat, Afghanistan;"
With regards to testing, beyond the obvious yes or no question of whether or not the methods were applied, the evaluation has primarily focused on assessing the quality of the methods used. Quality, in this evaluation, is assumed to best be judged based on whether the methods functioned and added value with respect to the second objective of the trial, which was:

*To contribute to enhanced accountability to Afghan communities within the context of Afghanistan reconstruction and good governance.*

As such, the relevance of methods used is put in focus, even though the word ‘relevance’ is not specifically mentioned. These assumptions are further grounded in analysis of the expected relevance of the trial within HAP’s overall policy objectives. The term ‘methodology’ in the ToR of the trial is defined as “the philosophy or general principles behind research”, which is interpreted as the use of techniques in pursuit of a greater understanding of how to achieve the purpose of the project. Thus the term ‘methods’ (as opposed to techniques) implies a framework of analysis of a causal relationship between research techniques and the purposes and principles of the study. The evaluator has taken this relationship as the primary basis for determining quality.

The evaluator has chosen to apply this approach as it seems the most appropriate way to constructively situate analysis of the trial within HAP’s policy research and formation process. These issues need to be better clarified in the project. It is therefore recommended that, to enhance both learning and transparency, HAP should apply a logical framework approach (or similar planning mechanism) to the next trial, with specific reference to the trial’s role within HAP’s concluding phase during the latter part of the year.10

Already during the initial mission that the evaluator made to Herat in June it was clear that the HAP team in Herat was performing in a highly professional manner. Evaluation of the rigour and professionalism of their work was therefore not seen to be the primary focus. Major emphasis was instead given to analysing the practical and conceptual efforts of the team to define an appropriate, valuable and feasible niche for a field accountability mechanism. The evaluator has reviewed the opportunities and choices that the team has faced, as interpreted by the team and by other stakeholders in Herat, with the objectives of determining:

- what has been effective and efficient
- what has contributed to learning
- what has encouraged agencies to take their commitment to accountability more seriously
- what would have been required to pursue alternative courses of action.

The team’s excellent reporting has provided an important basis for this analysis. This has been complemented by collecting the views of different stakeholders in Herat through interviews with agency and government representatives. Interviews focused on four themes:

- The overall context of humanitarian needs, together with emerging governance and development trajectories
- The prevailing emphasis in humanitarian and rehabilitation programming
- The current discourse on accountability among agencies in Herat
- Interactions with HAP, including impressions, reactions, perceptions of relevance/usefulness and suggestions for future priorities

The evaluator is not an expert on the political economy of relief and rehabilitation in Afghanistan, but he has reviewed some key reports that shed light on livelihoods and the identification of duty bearers

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10 It may be appropriate to adapt the logical framework to focus more clearly on HAP’s central assumptions. This would be in line with recommendations put forward for a modified structure for humanitarian emergencies, see Broughton 2001.
in the locations where refugees and IDPs are returning and relocating. This has been used to chart where the standard narratives that guide humanitarian and rehabilitation programming appear to be out of sync with emerging livelihoods and vulnerabilities, and the structures of accountability that these survival strategies imply. The evaluator has, in so doing, also attempted to provide an admittedly simplified overview of “the context of Afghanistan reconstruction and good governance”, including the many current uncertainties regarding the roles of national, regional and provincial government, and the role of Afghan civil society. The importance and implications of these factors for situating a rights-based approach to humanitarian accountability in the context prevailing in Afghanistan’s Western Region is analysed in the conclusion.

Within the terms of reference for the evaluation, key cross cutting questions investigated in this evaluation include:

- How has (could/should) HAP maintained a focus on humanitarian accountability, in a context where many key actors are increasingly focused on developmental norms of accountability? What is the impact of raising attention to rights within such a context?
- How has (could/should) HAP differentiated between methods leading to a focus on specific cases of poor accountability by an individual agency versus pursuance of broader issues of more systemic concern? What are the different demands and expectations regarding rigour as perceived by various stakeholders? Is there a continuum of methods that should be applied depending on whether HAP is pursuing ‘cases’ versus pursuance of ‘issues’?
- What role has (could/should) HAP played in highlighting a humanitarian crisis among people who are pursuing livelihood strategies that are at odds with government policy (e.g., remaining in IDP camps)? What dynamics emerge when HAP raises examples of poor humanitarian accountability that are related to agency efforts to maintain humanitarian space while supporting government ownership and policy formation?

A major constraint on the evaluation (and indeed on the trial itself) was the rapid turnover of agency personnel in Herat. The team began their work by engaging with the ‘first wave’ of agency staff, most of whom had arrived at the end of 2001 and were completing their short-term contracts. When evaluation itself was conducted there were several relatively new programme managers who had not followed HAP’s work from the start.

A related constraint was that, with the limited length of the trial, most of those interviewed had not had time to become familiar enough with HAP to have established opinions about the trial. Several respondents acknowledged that they really had not thought much about the issues raised or had little contact with the team, and therefore did not have well considered views about what HAP accomplished and what it should or could have done.

The team’s excellent documentation and reporting provided a solid basis for assessing much of the work of the trial. This evaluation does not include a detailed chronology of events and activities, since the trial reports provide a fully sufficient record in this respect. Even though reporting was of high quality, a degree of information is inevitably lost from the discussions between the international and national staff. Some discrepancies between interview transcripts and the issues that HAP eventually raised were due to information that arose in debriefings and informal discussions. The evaluator was naturally not able to fully follow this process. It should also be mentioned that the evaluator had limited opportunity to directly observe the work of the field teams, since they had been disbanded by the time of the main evaluation visit. The observations regarding their work are based on the first visit, documentation review and secondary reports from interviews with different stakeholders.

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12 The Interim Government of Afghanistan has formally discontinued the use of Regions as an administrative unit. Herat City nonetheless remains in many respects the de facto administrative base for the provinces under the control of Ismael Khan, and the former Western Region was also the area that HAP had the potential to reach or influence in its work. This report therefore still makes reference to the Western Region.
One of the greatest constraints in evaluating the trial was the challenge of assessing the perceived value of the trial for both learning about and enhancing accountability in Herat within the transitional phase that prevailed during the course of the trial. As will be described below, the trial was conducted after the main phase of acute problems in the IDP camps, and before what many stakeholders believe will be a new acute reintegration crisis in the rural areas with the onset of winter. Among many of those interviewed, these were more important reference points for addressing accountability than the issues that were dealt with in the course of the trial itself. This was both a constraint, with respect to focusing on what HAP actually accomplished, and also an opportunity, by providing a window to looking at HAP’s range of methodological options in the context of ongoing efforts to address accountability in the past and the future.

1.3. Methodological guidance and support

The role of real time evaluator was combined with that of methodological resource person. This combination proved unproblematic, with the needs of the team for methodological guidance and support essentially consisting of having an external sounding board and dialogue partner. This involved joint critical reflection on how best to situate the Herat level learning process within the learning processes under way at other levels in the humanitarian system.

The team needed little guidance regarding the choice and application of listening mechanisms themselves, having excellent skills in this regard. Advice focused on the question of how to relate this listening process to the process of interacting with agencies and promoting learning. This involved differentiating and finding an appropriate balance between (a) those issues that could be directly investigated with an ‘acceptable’ amount of rigour, (b) those that had the potential of being effectively raised with the agencies present in Herat, and (c) those that were of apparent strategic importance in the Western Region from a rights-based perspective. The team expressed concerns (shared by the evaluator) regarding how to show HAP’s “added value” in the Herat context. One example of a topic that was discussed was the possibility of combining rigorous analysis within the IDP camps (particularly on issues of information related to resettlement) together with collecting limited impressionistic data on the reintegration issue in the field. This option was later rejected for practical reasons, but the discussion helped focus consideration of the choices based on the criteria which emerged regarding strategic importance, potential rigour, relevance to potential stakeholders and HAP’s own capacity.

The team was well aware of the issues surrounding assessing the validity of information collected. The evaluator provided a discussion partner regarding if and how they might use weakly validated information in order to stimulate a more focused dialogue on the dilemmas of reintegration. A major question discussed with the team was whether or not to use information for dialogue purposes, even if it was too weakly validated to draw conclusions regarding the accountability of specific duty holders. The Sierra Leone team encountered similar difficulties, which also encouraged a focus on ‘issues’ rather than ‘cases’.

From the outset of the trial, the team was highly conscious of the need to anchor their work in the Herat context, both with respect to broader humanitarian issues and the opportunities and constraints faced by the agencies themselves. The team was advised regarding how similar transitional issues are being addressed internationally, including the impact of changing aid architectures and assumptions regarding the relationship between rights and livelihoods based approaches.

1.4. Governance context and major potential fields of enquiry in the Western Region

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14 HAP Afghanistan, 2002, Strategy Rationale
In the trial, HAP was faced with a choice of how to prioritise the use of its resources among different types of ongoing humanitarian operations in the Western Region. These can be summarised as follows:

**Drought relief**
The drought, which has affected most of western and southern Afghanistan over the past three years has eased in much of Western Region, and crops were being harvested during the trial. Insufficient/late seed deliveries and other factors have resulted in continued rural food insecurity. Otherwise relief efforts are continuing, though threatened by a highly uncertain food aid pipeline. The logistical difficulties of assessing these efforts made HAP input largely infeasible.

**IDP Camps**
During the trial the IDP camps in the Herat vicinity were officially in the process of being closed, with IDPs being assisted (and in some respects strongly encouraged by the government) to return to their homes. Camp level service provision/entitlements, the voluntary nature of return and information about impending resettlement were the primary foci of HAP efforts.

**Transit/assisted return**
Both returning refugees and IDPs were being assisted to return to their homes or the areas that they choose. HAP used the vantage point of the IDP camps to look at the transit process and in particular the information that IDPs received regarding their entitlements with respect to resettlement packages and other assistance.

**Stranded populations**
Returning IDPs and refugees generally have not received sufficient support to reach their final destinations (either home villages or in the case of many refugees, Kabul). As a result some are stranded in provincial capitals or elsewhere. There are indications that some of these people wish to stay in a visible location (rather than an isolated village) in hopes of accessing aid and basic services. The humanitarian needs of these stranded populations are acknowledged, though poorly assessed. Early in the trial there were fears that this could be a widespread problem, but later there were few reports received indicating that such stranded populations were commonplace. HAP engaged somewhat in raising attention to this issue, even though it lacked capacity to fill the gap in field level assessment.  

**Reintegration**
Probably the greatest emerging humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is in the reintegration of returning refugee and IDP populations, either in rural or urban areas. A number of agencies in Herat (primarily national and local) are engaged in projects that could assist rural reintegration. Operations are being rapidly built up in the provinces of the Western Region and in the rural areas, but these are far too few to address the massive needs. Some of this programming is being managed in a development mode, and agencies have in several cases expressed explicit rejection of the application of humanitarian norms in assessing accountability within these projects. These same agencies relatively well developed methods of interacting with communities to ensure developmental accountability. They are accountable to project participants, but not necessarily to those who lack the assets and access necessary to become genuine participants in these projects.  

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16 In communities where the social fabric has undergone such tremendous strains as in Afghanistan, it can be assumed that in many cases those people who are deemed to be part of the ‘community’ that most community development initiatives target may exclude marginal groups, such as outside ethnic groups (in the case of the Western Region, the Koochi in particular), landless and destitute. Many development interventions have only been viable in relatively stable villages. Virtually all agencies recognise that women are largely excluded from many forums, and most admit that their efforts to address this problem at village level have had limited impact. A degree of triage is therefore virtually inevitable in community development efforts in such contexts. This
gaps in service provision and protection in the rural areas that will certainly grow in the coming months, but lacked the capacity to perform its own assessments in the main areas of return.

Chronology of crises
The HAP trial began after the period when there was an acute service provision crisis in the IDP camps (approximately December – April). During HAP’s initial assessment, in January, there were a number of cases of poor accountability in the camps. By the time the trial began, these were largely in the process of being resolved.\(^\text{17}\) One agency representative stated that “HAP arrived too late.” Whilst HAP made a modest contribution to this process, and provided useful documentation of the processes by which agencies were addressing these problems, there was little need for a major level of involvement.

The HAP trial was conducted before what many observers expect may be the next humanitarian crisis, that being the dearth of livelihood possibilities for returning IDPs and refugees who may have depleted their assets (primarily return packages) by the beginning of the winter.\(^\text{18}\) The team noted that “There were no initiatives targeted specifically at listening and responding to the needs of those IDPs and refugees who had returned to their home areas.” This suggests recognition of a potentially huge gap in accountability structures in the reintegration process. During the trial the flow of returning refugees from Iran was much slower than expected. At the close of the trial Iran appeared to be greatly increasing pressure on refugees to return.\(^\text{19}\) If this strategy proves effective, it could greatly aggravate the situation. This may become particularly acute since the refugees have become significantly urbanised and are therefore ill equipped for a return to agricultural production.\(^\text{20}\)

Between these two ‘crises’, HAP’s focus reflected an effort to avert or mitigate the possibly impending reintegration crisis through an analysis of the voluntary nature of return and the information that returnees have regarding their entitlements and the conditions in their home areas. The team made effective efforts to bring to light the need to begin applying ideas of humanitarian accountability to reintegration in the interagency discourse in Herat. The chosen focus was generally perceived as appropriate, in light of HAP’s constraints in working in rural areas. It should be noted, however, that with the increasing shift of most agencies’ operational foci to the rural areas in recent months and the relatively small population remaining in the IDP camps, HAP’s earlier decision to work in the environs of Herat City would almost certainly not be seen as valid if the trial had begun a few months later.

The IDP return debate\(^\text{21}\)
The focus of the trial, and most of the concerns of agencies in Herat, related to the pros and cons of relatively rapid return of refugees and IDPs. This debate was fuelled by two sets of issues.

First, there were concerns about the right to voluntary return. Several NGOs expressed the view that the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR had conceded to pressures from the Ministry of Repatriation (MoR) to hasten the return process and may have thereby compromised the principle of voluntary return. All agencies working in the camps were strongly urged by the MoR to provide guarantees of aid in areas of return and thereby expedite the closing of the camps. In one protection meeting the MoR presented allegations that the HAP team was spreading false information.

suggests the need to pay special attention to the gaps in service provision that may emerge, and to design humanitarian programmes accordingly.

\(^\text{17}\) HAP Afghanistan, 2002, Accountability Initiatives and Mechanisms in Western Region
\(^\text{18}\) Shelter for Life 2002
\(^\text{19}\) PHR 2002b
\(^\text{20}\) Jamal and Stigter 2002
\(^\text{21}\) In addition to the debate on IDP return, some agencies in Herat were also monitoring refugee repatriation. Since Herat based actors had virtually no influence on the pace of this process and there was little information regarding the factors affecting the pace of return, this was primarily an issue for concern rather than debate.
discouraging IDPs from returning and the HAP research teams were barred from the camps at one point. This is indicative of the sensitivity of the voluntary return issue. The course of the trial coincided with a period where UNHCR and IOM were generally perceived to have increased their efforts to defend the principle of voluntary return, but some agencies felt that this was still insufficient.

Second, there were great concerns about whether it was advisably for people to return given the lack of livelihood options and services in their home areas. This was generally acknowledged to ultimately be a choice for the IDPs and refugees themselves, but some agencies actively urged the programme of assisted return to be delayed so as not to provide added incentives (in the form of subsidised transport and resettlement packages) to encourage people to make what these agencies felt to be a “wrong” decision. These agencies also raised concerns about the information provided by MoR staff to IDPs, which suggested a very positive view of conditions in home areas.

A difficult question related to these concerns is that of judging of when and how livelihood options and services can be deemed sufficient for return. Even the most optimistic observers acknowledge that rights to basic health and educational services will not be met for at least several years. Services can be expected to be highly scattered and patchy for many years. The assumption that livelihoods will return to ‘normal’ with the next harvest may also be disputable since very many of the returnees have sold or rented out their land, are deeply in debt, or are primarily pastoralists who have lost their animals and do not derive a large proportion of their livelihoods from crops. This final point is interwoven with the question of protection, since the Pashtu speaking Koochi are the main “pastoralist” group and are also the ethnic group that is generally perceived to be the greatest object of reprisals since they had been favoured by the Taliban regime. A significant number of new, conflict related IDPs arrived in Herat during the course of the trial. Contested rights to productive assets combined with conflict between the forces of Ismael Khan and other powerful figures in neighbouring provinces are resulting in human rights abuses and insecurity.

During the course of the trial a compromise approach to IDP return was under discussion whereby a contingency structure would be established with pre-positioned food in the areas at risk before the winter. These stocks would be used for direct village distributions or in small centres where people would be able to pick up rations or even stay during the harshest period of the winter. The objective would be to address a certain degree of displacement while ensuring that people could easily return to their homes in time for the spring planting season. These proposals were controversial, with some agencies enthusiastically supporting these proposals and others pointing out the difficulties in finding female staff willing to work in these centres and the danger that they may create pull factors. A major challenge to general contingency planning was the rapidly diminishing resources for humanitarian action. Contrary to early assumptions that aid flows would be overly focused on humanitarian needs, at the expense of development opportunities, the food aid pipeline was rapidly drying up at the end of the trial. WFP reported being more concerned about “whether we have food to preposition” than in more elaborate planning for the use of resources that are unlikely to be mobilised before the winter.

22 Lautze, et al 2002
23 The Koochi have, for a long period, shifted among different livelihoods, including pastoralism, trading and sedentary farming (Lautze et al 2002; Pain and Goodhand 2002). It is therefore difficult to make clear predictions regarding the mix of livelihood strategies that they will assume in the coming year.
25 Shelter for Life 2002
Migration and displacement

HAP's engagement in enhancing accountability to IDPs and refugees builds on an implicit assumption that they are "people affected by disaster and conflict" and have rights as such. In western Afghanistan the movement of IDPs and refugees parallels long established migration patterns of seasonal and more long-term nature. During the harsh winters and in minor droughts, many people have traditionally come to Herat in search of work. Labour migration to Iran is also a long-standing phenomenon. Afghans have for several decades been diversifying their livelihoods, with migration being an important component of these strategies. As Afghanistan presumably follows international trends in shifting from subsistence to larger-scale commercial agriculture and urbanisation, this process can be expected to expand. Iranian development cooperation has been focused on major transport infrastructure, which may accelerate this process in the Western Region in the near future. Within international conceptions of sustainable livelihoods, migration in search of employment, even to seemingly overcrowded urban areas, is increasingly being perceived of as a 'solution' for the poor, rather than as a 'problem', per se.

The drought and conflict have massively increased population movements, and the vast majority of those who have moved can undoubtedly be considered to be refugees and IDPs, but as the situation normalises it will become increasingly difficult to make this distinction. There are indications that some migrants may be registering as refugees and IDPs in order to obtain resettlement packages and transport home. There are even some reports (unsubstantiated) that rural landlords have moved to the IDP camps in order to develop their trading urban networks while receiving assistance, leaving their tenants to cope with the drought in their home villages.

This is of direct importance to HAP as it must filter IDP concerns and expectations. The government has a well justified fear that peri-urban IDP camps may provide a subsidised livelihood for urban migrants. There is no clear line that can be drawn between a drought-related IDP and any other individual who has become destitute in a village and chooses to come to the city. There is no template that can be used for effectively making such determinations, but awareness of the dynamics of migration patterns is essential for HAP, together with the agencies with which it interacts, to make sense of the interweaved nature of migration and displacement.

Governance

The trial also coincided with the run-up and follow-up to the Loya Jirga, and with that a growing effort by the government to assume a leadership role in humanitarian and development programming. The central government and regional and provincial structures are gaining increasing recognition in the form of donor mission and plans to enhance their roles in coordinating aid flows. In addition, the trial was a period when the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) structure was being put into place, the major objective of which was to support this process. As such the Afghan state was becoming more clearly a duty holder (rather than a bystander) vis-à-vis these crises by the end of the trial. The government was engaged in discussions of the rights of people affected by drought and conflict, even though their perspective was at times at odds with that of the NGO community. The government's perception of HAP's 'position' in this debate was mixed. The government was openly critical of HAP's perceived alliance with those agencies that questioned the pressures for rapid return of the IDPs, while at the same time being highly supportive of HAP's role as an organisation that could join with them in questioning and criticising poor quality humanitarian programming. Government representatives were particularly hopeful that HAP could play a role in revealing the level of presumed wastage in NGO programmes.

The government, with the support of the World Bank and most key donors, is putting into place a system by which NGOs will eventually tender for projects chosen by government ministries and vetted
by donors. This system was not yet operational during the trial and most NGOs had only heard vague rumours about it. It is unclear whether this system will be applied to humanitarian programming, but if it is, it may eventually impinge on the space that NGOs have to design and focus their programming. This runs counter to some recommendations that in Afghanistan "humanitarian assistance requires its own 'space'". In other post-conflict contexts (e.g., Sierra Leone), similar systems have been put into place that have overstretched the capacity of government bodies responsible for monitoring and regulatory public service contractors. This is an aspect of the changing architecture of post-conflict governance that deserves closer analysis from a rights and accountability perspective.

27 Ridde 2002
28 DAC 2001
2. Methods and strategies

2.1. Methodological choice: quality, appropriateness and rigour

The trial certainly achieved the objective of identifying and testing methods in the IDP camps, but was not able to surmount logistical and human resource constraints to pursue these approaches among drought-affected populations and those who were being 'reintegrated' or who had been stranded. The focus on IDPs who were being rapidly resettled meant that there was little opportunity to provide feedback and inform beneficiaries of the findings of the research. This was further hampered when the team was expelled from working in the camps during a period that they had planned to provide this information.

The methods of the trial can be described as being partially one of directly giving 'voice' to the IDPs themselves, and partly one of documenting the amount of information that IDPs had regarding their entitlements and whether they had a right to choose if they wished to return to their home areas.

As such, the trial focused to a considerable extent on an interpretation of the 'appropriate' concerns of the IDPs. The team 'filtered out' many issues that were raised regarding requests for increased entitlements (e.g., more bread) and 'better' entitlements (e.g., more injections from the health services). It also chose not to give major priority to taking up some service provision issues that were raised by IDPs but which were judged to be in the process of being addressed by the relevant agencies. The most notable issues in this regard were corruption and extortion, which were major problems in the months before the team arrived, but which were controlled far better after April, when a system was introduced of providing bread rather than wheat to the IDPs, a 'good practice' that greatly reduced opportunities for theft. The filtering process furthermore consisted of determining:

- Whether the issues lay within the scope of the work of the trial
- Whether there was sufficient evidence - if beneficiary concerns could be judged to be an allegation, a rumour or a fact
- Whether more research was necessary, and whether HAP had the capacity to carry out additional research
- The relevance of the issue and impact of redress (i.e. was there still interest in the issue and potential for redress)
- The relative severity of the issue for the beneficiaries concerned
- HAP's ability to make an impact
- Whether the duty bearer could be identified by HAP or through discussions with others. 29

As can be observed from this list, the team played a central role in determining priorities based on a number of factors that were exogenous to the priorities of the disaster and conflict affected people themselves. 'Voice' as such, did not in the end feature as highly as might be expected. This was largely related to:

- The methodological difficulties of developing voice with field teams consisting of relatively inexperienced national staff
- Time pressures that did not permit the use of more genuinely participatory methods, which could have allowed the IDPs themselves to prioritise their concerns
- Prevailing power relations that HAP could do little to influence

The HAP team conducted an agency survey that revealed a very low level of knowledge regarding Sphere, codes of conduct and even internal agency benchmarks. In the course of the evaluation missions, only two interviewees spontaneously brought up benchmarking, one of whom was the

29 Featherstone and Routley; 2002
director of the Ministry of Planning. He was an enthusiastic adherent of Sphere and hoped that HAP would encourage its use. Due to the lack of awareness among agencies, benchmarking was not used within the team’s methodology. HAP did not have the capacity to fill the gap in agency knowledge, and therefore judged the use of benchmarks not to be an effective way to engage. It is interesting to note the MSF was one of the few agencies with an awareness of the Sphere standards, presumably motivated by its critical stance on their use. The issue of benchmarking is an example of how a field level mechanism must inevitably adjust its level of ambition to the capacities and knowledge of the agency staff with whom it interacts.

The trial tested four basic methods:

- Direct research about the return and reintegration of IDPs to identify accountability concerns, from a camp perspective (two field survey reports produced)
- Monitoring the implementation of accountability mechanisms of other agencies (one field survey report produced)
- Engagement with a spectrum of agencies to identify and raise accountability concerns
- Provision of technical support to enhance agencies’ own accountability to project participants

The first two methods used direct research. There was one monitoring initiative (UNHCR Mass Information and Monitoring Campaign, see below). These initiatives provided an empirical platform for much of the team’s more general engagement with agencies in Herat.

Technical support was primarily provided through informal discussions with agencies, often emanating from a workshop that the team organised on accountability. Technical support was a relatively low-keyed activity, but many agencies interviewed commented on this support as one of the aspects of HAP’s work that they appreciated most. In addition to practical advice, the model that HAP used for its field research effectively provided a form of technical support through a demonstration of how accountability can be monitored for agencies considering similar initiatives.

The ultimate objective of all of these methods was agency engagement, which is analysed in the following section. The team’s final report provides excellent documentation of the steps taken in the research, and should provide a useful basis for future learning. In addition, the detailed descriptions of the research methods, accompanying all three field survey reports, contributed greatly to their credibility and to raising attention to the need for such transparency, especially regarding ‘missing voices’ when raising accountability issues.

The quality of the team’s survey methodology for direct research and monitoring was generally recognised as very good. The field teams were given four days of training based on a rights-based approach to assessing IDP concerns and protection issues. This was extensive compared to that which other agencies provided when training teams to perform interviews. One of the greatest challenges that the team faced was in retaining educated female staff in the face of competition with other organisations that could offer better job security, less arduous working conditions and in some cases higher pay. Despite some resignations, the team was able to keep a core of relatively high calibre staff for the duration of the trial. The staff were clearly motivated in raising issues of the rights of the beneficiaries that they interviewed, with one of the major supervisory challenges being to ensure that they kept an objective distance and did not take too much initiative by directly approaching duty bearers with the concerns they were hearing in their interviews.

One of the main issues regarding the choice of methods used in the trial was the desire to ensure efficiency by focusing on modest and achievable areas of research, where high standards of quality and rigour could be maintained. This was at some cost to effectiveness, in terms of the overall purposes of the trial, as broader strategic issues could not be directly addressed.

In discussing the amount of rigour required to retain credibility and thereby ensure impact regarding the issues raised, there were two levels to be considered. Where specific agencies were held
responsible for failed accountability, high levels of rigour were deemed by most of those interviewed by the evaluator as being absolutely essential. This need is exemplified by a defensive and detailed critique that UNHCR presented in response to HAP's report on their Mass Information and Monitoring Campaign - a report that other agencies considered exceptionally rigorous. Even when other agencies had earlier raised accountability concerns, the 'accused' parties were also generally defensive and questioned the rigour and methodologies that had been applied.

The team was also cautious in addressing topics that were highly subject to heated polemics, and where it was difficult to verify the true extent of the problems (e.g., corruption in food aid). Nonetheless, some respondents stated that they thought that HAP could not avoid being implicitly associated with other (less rigorous) accountability critics.

A conclusion that can be drawn from the trial is that, if HAP intends to in any way take up specific cases with specific duty bearers, a very high level of rigour is absolutely essential. Even then it should have a conscious strategy to address the risk of guilt by association with those who are perceived of as 'protection cowboys', or 'professional complainers'.

Another level of rigour was deemed necessary when revealing the gaps in service provision where no specific agency can be held responsible. HAP did, to some extent, bring up accountability issues where it lacked its own empirical research. This was done in a modest way, and was primarily directed at summarising information that was broadly known in Herat in such a way as to highlight the implications of this information for accountability concerns. The team was cautious, even in such general discussions, about raising issues based on information emanating from windshield surveys, even though such reports on the conditions in rural areas by other agencies were usually (but not universally) accepted as sufficient by most humanitarian agencies.

An outstanding question is whether HAP itself should, in the future, engage in producing windshield surveys. If HAP was to operate in such a manner, it would then be important to consider whether HAP can provide any significant added value by conducting its own quick and dirty rural assessments, particularly if it lacks sectoral expertise in water, agriculture, nutrition and health.

2.2. Engagement with humanitarian actors and response

The trial used eight methods to engage with humanitarian actors:

- Information Dissemination: Information about HAP was widely distributed in Herat and key documents were translated into Dari.
- Agency Introductions: HAP visited a large number of agencies at the start of the trial to create awareness and to identify those agencies that were interested in broader engagement with HAP.
- Workshop on Accountability: This workshop, held 4 weeks into the trial, was the HAP event that informants were most aware of. Though the workshop was intended as a two-way information exchange, it was primarily valued as a basic training exercise, suggesting that many actors needed to first get a better grasp of the concepts of accountability before engaging in critical reflection on their own work.
- Participation in Interagency Meetings: HAP attended a number of interagency meetings where the team was able to monitor the issues currently being raised, present and receive research findings, and develop a presence in the Herat humanitarian community.

31 An additional factor in determining the “bottom line” on rigour is the tremendous difficulty in finding and retaining female researchers willing to work in the rural areas. The team write in their final report that “As the female team were unwilling to travel outside of Herat, and the team felt access to women should be a prerequisite of its direct research, it was not possible to conduct research outside of Herat.”
• Agency Survey: Building on the information collected in the agency introductions, the Agency Survey was finalised towards the end of the trial.

• HAP Action Reports: HAP presented its research findings to agencies both individually (first, where specific cases were being raised) and in broader forums.

• Bilateral Meetings: HAP had frequent bilateral meetings with agencies involved with emerging issues that HAP was addressing, was considering addressing, or which had potential bearing on the overall humanitarian focus in Herat.

• Informal Networking: The team developed an informal network through which it was able to both monitor the views of key stakeholders and was able provide ongoing technical advice on accountability to interested agencies.

Through these approaches HAP positioned itself well within the Herat humanitarian community in a short period of time. The team’s approach was appreciated and many agencies felt that HAP provided added value in both the specific findings it introduced into agency discussions and decision-making regarding accountability, and also by helping to highlight the topic of accountability more generally. Some respondents referred to accountability as a set of issues that was easily ignored in the face of normal tendencies to focus on day-to-day project implementation. The team held an accountability workshop that was seen as a valuable introduction, especially for staff who were largely unaware of current approaches to enhancing humanitarian accountability. Some respondents stated that they would have liked more practical support for their own learning.

An important question regarding engagement is, ‘which humanitarian community’ HAP developed relations with. HAP naturally gravitates toward (a) agencies with large resource flows (that may be abused), (b) agencies that define their work as ‘humanitarian’ (rather than ‘development’), and/or (c) agencies that are already engaged in the international discourse on humanitarian accountability. Methods may effectively determine to scope of the ‘humanitarian community’ with which HAP engages.

HAP had little engagement with Afghan NGOs and with agencies that tended to work on more development related issues. None of the Afghan NGOs invited to the accountability workshop attended. HAP did not have a high level of engagement with international NGOs (INGOs) that gave priority to capacity building among Afghan NGOs, such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). HAP had greater engagement with agencies that had more of a contracting relationship with local partners, such as IRC and Christian Aid. This gap has also been affected by the decision to restrict areas of focus to protection, where national and local NGOs have little involvement. There are nine reasons that HAP did not engage extensively with local and national NGOs, all of which may be encountered in other contexts where HAP works. Generalisations cannot be made, but common characteristics of Afghan NGOs include:

• engaging in humanitarian activities only as a small, temporary supplement to a primary focus on development
• coming into conflict with humanitarian programming when handouts and free distributions disrupt community participation mechanisms
• involved in protection only as an ‘implementing partner’
• not actively taking part in the meetings where accountability issues are discussed
• not part of (and facing legal restriction that prevent joining) the same social sphere as INGOs
• not familiar/comfortable with the terminology of the humanitarian accountability discourse
• encountering far graver threats to their personal security than INGOs if they question or confront power structures
• lacking resources with which to address accountability concerns that emerge
• due to several of the above factors, having difficulty in establishing a consistent ‘bottom line’ on accountability issues and principles
This does not mean that local and national NGOs are marginal to efforts to enhance accountability. On the contrary, these agencies are very much engaged through community development activities and due to the fact that they are an integral part of any effort to strengthen accountability through governance. Several respondents remarked that Afghan civil society was surprisingly strong given the circumstances, and was playing a vital (though cautious) role in influencing the new governmental power structures. These factors suggest the need to adopt special strategies if HAP is to effectively engage with local and national NGOs since they will undoubtedly follow a different (but important) path to improved accountability than the international agencies.

HAP’s focus on engaging with humanitarian (as opposed to development) agencies is necessary and not questioned in this evaluation. It is nonetheless important to consider the consequences of this focus, particularly since the trial is conducted “within the context of Afghanistan reconstruction and good governance”. In such a context it is the more developmental actors who are (presumably) at the forefront of recreating accountability within new governance structures and in choice of reconstruction and reintegration priorities. It is here where an increasing proportion of the decisions will be made regarding what services a returning IDP or refugee might hope to access when arriving back in his or her village. As mentioned above, it is back in these villages where many observers expect that the next major humanitarian crisis will occur. This factor is even more acute given the financial crisis facing many humanitarian agencies in Afghanistan. Their capacities to address basic humanitarian needs are dwindling, and levels of service provision for resettlement areas are likely to be very low given resource constraints. Donor funding structures and priorities are prodding NGOs toward development norms, even where they may perceive humanitarian issues to be of greater concern. This should in no way be interpreted as a criticism of the choices made in the trial, as the team made (in the opinion of the evaluator) a valid decision not to engage in the reintegration issue, and with that development. This is mentioned here in order to highlight the importance of considering where to situate HAP’s work in other rehabilitation contexts.

The question of whether HAP was able to generate responses to issues raised is difficult to confirm, given uncertainties regarding attribution. Accountability reforms were already being implemented when the team arrived. Perceptions of the level of genuine response to HAP’s work varied, with some respondents cautiously optimistic and others stating the agencies are so hostile to perceived criticism that, in the words of one agency representative, there has been “no effect of working with local channels”. One can discern three types of response from humanitarian agencies:

- An agency implements reforms to their procedures
- An agency rejects outside criticism entirely
- An agency reacts by promising reforms, which are then (a) delayed, (b) forgotten, (c) not actively pursued, or (d) weakly implemented

The trial revealed a few instances where reforms were clearly implemented, no instances where HAP advice was entirely rejected, and several instances where HAP advice entered into a broader process of making commitments to reform, but where the level of implementation can be questioned. It must be stated that this last set of responses should not automatically be assumed to be a conscious tactic. The high level of turnover of personnel and the weak capacity of some personnel to grasp and implement the necessary procedures are also factors. Where reform is in apparent conflict with government

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32 OFDA has, for example, already withdrawn from Afghanistan, signalling the intended rapid phasing out of humanitarian assistance.
33 This may become a major issue for the HAP trial in Cambodia, as almost all NGOs in those countries are overwhelmingly development oriented.
34 HAP Strategy – the Dilemma of Accountability in Herat; Accountability Initiatives and Mechanisms in Western Region
35 The same observer was equally pessimistic about the level of response when agencies have raised accountability concerns at Kabul level.
policy, delays and problematic implementation are virtually inevitable. Greater impact in this regard would require closer and more long-term engagement with the agencies in question than is possible in the current structure.

As mentioned above, HAP arrived as agencies were already in the process of addressing what had earlier been a problematic camp situation. During the period of the HAP trial there was an apparent improvement in the information that IDPs received of their entitlements and reinforced efforts to combat what most actors referred to as endemic extortion in the IDP camps. IOM was the main agency responsible for these tasks. HAP could be given at least partial credit for this change.

UNHCR was the effective object of the one major 'case' that was taken up in the trial when HAP monitored the implementation of their IDP Mass Information and Monitoring Campaign. This monitoring effort grew out of earlier, more general assessments. UNHCR reactions included elements of both of constructive interaction and defensiveness. Despite some qualms, UNHCR generally acknowledged that the HAP study was rigorous in its methodology, but questioned the extent to which HAP had presented the full context of the Campaign, e.g., the extent to which the IDPs actually relied on information from UNHCR, the constraints under which UNHCR operated, etc. In effect, UNHCR suggested an internal support role for HAP in looking at UNHCR's challenges, rather than external monitoring. One comment was that "it would be better to have an agreement on what would have provided value."

It should perhaps be mentioned that internationally, UNHCR has itself shown a certain ambivalence to shouldering the burden of ensuring protection for the IDPs. Their real-time evaluation states that "it is not responsible for UNHCR to assert an additional protection role in respect of internally displaced persons without first securing adequate, long-term resource with which to effect this role [protection of refugees in Iran] properly." UNHCR's engagement with IDPs internationally has focused overwhelmingly on conflict induced displacement. Whilst there are some conflict related IDPs in the Western Region, the large majority have fled their homes due to drought.

The issue of HAP's responsibility for highlighting the constraints of a given duty bearer is central to the further development of HAP's methods for engaging with agencies. The final report of the trial acknowledges that field level actors are severely constrained (primarily by resources, but also by the political and institutional context) in their efforts to improve accountability. This finding implicitly questions assumptions that by drawing attention to a given problem that it can usually be subsequently solved. If HAP was to make greater efforts to unpack and analyse the difficulties that agencies experience in acting on commitments to improved accountability, this could constitute a first step toward a support function whereby HAP works with individual agencies to analyse the internal factors (constraints, incentives, organisational culture, etc.) that determine whether an agency acts in an accountable manner. The resulting HAP reports would not be as powerful as a more independent mechanism working to 'hold agencies to account', but could be more effective.

The HAP report on the Mass Information and Monitoring Campaign was presented at the end of the trial, and it was thus too early to accurately judge UNHCR's operational response. They did, despite their criticisms of the study, clearly take the points raised by HAP seriously. The prospects for impact can therefore be judged as good.

36 The "right to information" has been a key feature in HAP's stated strategy, see HAP, 2001, Being accountable to local populations: what can we do?.
37 HAP Afghanistan, 2002, HAP Research on IDP Return (Phase III), Mazlakh Camp, 23rd-27th June
39 Jamal and Stigter 2002:2
The UNHCR Mass Information and Monitoring Campaign was designed based on a comprehensive and ambitious list of the types of information that should be provided to IDPs. Their response to HAP's report, however, suggests that UNHCR actually had far more modest objectives, since the IDPs were already receiving information from relatives, friends, traders and others. UNHCR effectively acknowledged that their own information about conditions in areas of return was scanty, and that these other informal sources were essential in helping IDPs make informed decisions. The admission that UNHCR's information was only one component of how IDPs gather information and make decisions on whether or not to return parallels the realisation in other fields that an external intervention, be it information, training, awareness raising, etc., is but one component of the "knowledge spheres" in which people scan their choices and choose their course of action.

This is a clear example of an issue where effective accountability demands an analysis of the scale of the 'duty' that is being assumed of the aid agency in relation to the solutions that the disaster affected people themselves are finding. It is easy (particularly in a camp situation) to assume that people 'have nothing'. This is rarely true. In assessing responsibilities it is important for both HAP, and the agencies with which it interacts, to determine where a given intervention complements ongoing strategies to obtain entitlements, be these for information or for food. Use of such analytical frameworks are increasingly common practice in development programming but this still relatively rare in humanitarian action where unconscious assumptions about the destitution of disaster affected people steers thinking away from analysis of how they use the assets that they do possess.

2.3. HAP's impact on debates and discussions on humanitarian accountability

Before HAP arrived, the level of public discussion of accountability issues in the Herat humanitarian community was reported by several informants to have been very low. One respondent pointed out that "99% of the time in meetings was spent talking about implementation and trouble-shooting".

The team had difficulty in enhancing the level of public discussion on accountability issues. They made various attempts (in presentations at meetings, in the accountability workshop and in presenting their reports), but the agencies in Herat clearly did not feel comfortable discussing such issues in public forums. When HAP (or other agencies) presented findings regarding accountability issues in such meetings they elicited little immediate response. It appeared that agencies preferred to discuss these issues on a one-to-one basis afterwards.

An important issue to consider in judging HAP's effectiveness in raising accountability issues is the capacity of agencies to engage in a policy dialogue. Failures in acknowledging and addressing the rights of drought and conflict affected people are not just related to a failure to implement procedures or 'good practice'. Accountability relates to a disjuncture between field level praxis and the broader policy commitments that agencies have made. Many agencies lack the human resource capacity, particularly at provincial level, to reflect on the relevance of their day-to-day procedures for their policy commitments in the context that they are confronted with at field level. Another related issue is whether their headquarters encourages (or trusts) them to engage in such critical reflection. The evaluator does not have the data to speculate on the answer to this question, but it is nonetheless central to the prospect for HAP in promoting field-level reforms.

At the close of the trial HAP did not engage with actors outside of Herat and was therefore unable to contribute to policy discussion in Kabul or other regions. At the time that this report is being prepared,
HAP is considering a further initiative in Kabul. There appears to be a divide between the Kabul based discussions, which in some instances bring in fundamental policy issues, and the practical questions that dominate discussions in Herat. This is related to human resources (staff with policy related skills are primarily based in Kabul, while Herat staff are primarily more technically oriented) and to a decentralised structure where decisions are made in Herat without clear links to the Kabul policy discourse.\textsuperscript{40} This has significance for HAP’s eventual strategy after the end of the trial itself.

Despite the lack of public debate in Herat, the team contributed very constructively to galvanising commitment to addressing practical accountability issues in the IDP camps. HAP made some efforts to stimulate a debate on policy level accountability issues beyond those related to camp-related protection and the voluntary nature of return and information, but given the team’s lack of direct involvement in these broader issues, its impact can be assumed to be modest. The relatively narrow focus of the trial was accepted by most agencies as being valid, though some stakeholders felt an expanded focus was feasible and important for moving toward a stronger focus on strategic issues in the Herat humanitarian community. One agency representative stated that “sometimes I have the impression that HAP is a theoretical tool” due to the caution of the team in engaging in broader issues.

\textbf{2.4. HAP’s recommendations: realistic, implementable, cost-effective?}

The recommendations that the team made regarding the IDP camps appear to have been realistic, implementable and cost-effective -if the IDP camps remain open and if agencies are permitted by the government to act on those recommendations. Given the strong desire by the MoR to “close the chapter on IDPs by the end of the year”, the efforts to address camp issues of voluntary return and information may soon become moot points.

Judgement of the realism and implementability of HAP’s recommendations must be related to the amount of humanitarian space that agencies (in this case particularly UNHCR and IOM) have to forcefully pursue their protection mandate. A number of interviewees acknowledged the very difficult situation that UNHCR and IOM faced given the desire of the government for a very expeditious resettlement programme. Many felt that HAP’s pressure could provide a modest input for broadening this space by highlighting the dilemmas of the protection mandate.

The team noted that their recommendations were seen to be more realistic and implementable if they were modest and less contentious. The trouble-shooting or constable approach, as observed in the Sierra Leone trial, appears to again have been seen as useful, even though it may not be cost-effective in a broader perspective. As mentioned above, the team chose not to focus on the larger issues of reintegration. This was partly because of an awareness of the constraints that agencies face in addressing their own shortcomings in highly remote areas, even if problems were better documented. In the most isolated areas there is a trade-off between doing a ‘good job’ with easily accessible populations versus doing a ‘mediocre job’ in areas of greater need.

There are limitations regarding how far HAP can go in determining what is realistic, implementable and cost-effective for a given duty bearer. Much depends on the capacities, norms and longer-term objectives of a given organisation. The trial was most effective in stimulating change among those agencies with which it had close contact. Where HAP had a tacit understanding of how its advice might be effective, it had more impact. HAP Herat was, to some extent, the node in a self-selecting network of agencies already concerned with humanitarian accountability -a coalition of the willing.

Similarly, HAP had weaker relationships with agencies that would not have been interested in implementing HAP’s recommendations anyway. Some more development oriented agencies felt that

\textsuperscript{40} Schenkenberg (2002:7) writes that even in Kabul “there appears little capacity (sic), certainly among the smaller NGOs, to be involved in policy analysis and advocacy... For example, there is no debate at this moment in time among NGOs in Kabul on issues relating to the quality of and accountability of humanitarian action.” This is a view confirmed by other observers based in Kabul.
they should give higher priority to developing a long-term relationship with the communities that they serve, rather than investing resources in raising the level of accountability in humanitarian programmes that they intend to phase out as soon as possible. Other agencies have a very modest ‘bottom line’ on accountability due to their vulnerable positions within local power structures and/or their limited ability to monitor field activities. The scale of institutional infrastructure behind a field office (e.g., presence of a Kabul office, strength of its northern headquarters, access to communication and information technology) may have major impact on what is cost effective since they can make more efficient and cost effective investments in learning and human resource development than small organisations. This is not meant to suggest that HAP adopt a relativistic stance regarding what is realistic, implementable and cost-effective, but rather that this determination must be made in dialogue with the agency concerned. There is no template.

2.5. Reporting

The team produced excellent reporting and analysis. A complete system of documentation was maintained, including monthly reports, research reports and notes from field work, meetings attended, etc. The interview notes from the field teams were translated and well organised, further enhancing transparency. After initial discussion with the relevant duty bearers, reports and information were freely shared with agencies, which generally helped to support the team’s credibility, while creating some inevitable tensions when individual agencies were criticised. The circulation of reports also may have stimulated a process of internal follow-up and monitoring of the issues raised, as the findings of the research and the questions raised by HAP remained in the public domain after the departure of the team.

Abbreviated versions of the reports were translated into Dari and provided to relevant government bodies. It would, given the purpose of the trial, have been appropriate to provide full translations of all public documents. This was not done due to time pressures and concerns regarding the controversial nature of the reports. A pragmatic approach was taken so as not to risk having the trial be forced to close early. This is an area where further guidance is needed.

HAP was not able to report back to beneficiaries, and in so doing solicit their views regarding the impact of the trial. This was due to the fact that most of those interviewed had already been resettled by the time that HAP’s reports had been presented to the relevant agencies. This lack of two-way feedback was unavoidable in the context. Given the level of openness and interest from the IDPs who were interviewed, and the quality of the relationship between HAP staff and the camp dwellers, one could speculate that the prospects for a more iterative engagement would have been good if the camp populations had been more static and the trial had been longer.

The experience of the Herat trial illustrates the importance of skilled and experienced staff to design and maintain appropriate reporting systems. This had a significant cost with respect to time spent on these tasks, but in the view of the evaluator, such an investment is essential for credibility, impact and learning.

2.6. Learning points

- Objectives related to beneficiary voice must inevitably be weighed against the need to filter and prioritise among issues raised, the methodological challenges of using genuine participatory processes, and the realities of existing power relations.

- Where agency awareness of existing benchmarks is very low, HAP has little capacity to fill the gap in staff knowledge, which is an effective prerequisite for extensive use of benchmarks as a basis for promoting accountability.
• Ambition levels regarding rigour must be chosen based on how the information will eventually be used, and also how HAP expects to provide added value in relation to the survey work that agencies are already engaged in.

• In considering priorities, it is important to take into account the fact that HAP itself is subject to many (or more) of the same constraints that prevent the NGOs themselves from doing quality field surveys in isolated locations.

• If HAP intends to take up specific cases with specific duty bearers, a very high level of rigour is absolutely essential.

• Where knowledge regarding accountability is low, an agency workshop may be more important from a training perspective rather than as part of a process of raising public debate on accountability.

• HAP’s current methods and structure tend to channel efforts toward larger INGOs. Greater engagement with local and national NGOs will require a different approach. If HAP wishes to anchor its work in emerging governance structures and reconstruction contexts this issue will need to be more explicitly addressed.

• In order to be perceived as providing constructive support, HAP may need to pay more attention to analysing the constraints that agencies experience in implementing reforms. This would involve more of an action research methodology than that currently applied. This is a methodological decision requiring greater analysis in the future.

• Depending on the pre-existing level of public discussion and debate on accountability, HAP may need to adopt a modest focus on one-to-one interactions in a short trial. This may be especially true if agencies perceive that public debate is better addressed at headquarters or capital city levels.

• Judgement of the realism and implementability of HAP’s recommendations must be related to the capacities and amount of humanitarian space that agencies have to pursue their mandates. HAP’s efforts are inevitably built around a coalition of the willing, which will in turn to a large extent be circumscribed by those agencies which view the scope of HAP’s recommendations as realistic and implementable.

• Quality reporting is reliant on a considerable investment in staff time and effort, and requires appropriate skills, but it essential for underpinning the credibility of the trial and to ensure that maximum learning is possible.

• Sharing of reports with government authorities is important with regard to transparency, but may carry with it significant risks to the HAP team and even the host agency. Guidance on this topic is important.
3. Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability

3.1. Testing and learning: achievements and constraints

The methods and structure of the trial were effectively used in the sense of testing what can function and provide added value to the ongoing discourse on humanitarian accountability in Herat. The priorities selected for the trial represented a modest but appropriate set of approaches. These were tested in a highly professional and rigorous manner. The methods used should provide a useful basis for assessing what worked, what did not work and for drawing some further preliminary conclusions regarding what could work. The trial has yielded a significant body of information that can be used for design of future accountability mechanisms, for charting priorities for increased accountability in Afghanistan, and for generally bringing the international discourse on humanitarian accountability closer to field level realities.

It is difficult, however, to assess how well that information has contributed to learning and knowledge. Learning is a cognitive process that can be best assessed by monitoring changes in the understanding, perceptions and awareness of the topic on the part of the target group. The evaluator has had discussions with intended ‘learners’ in Herat, but at the time of this writing it is too early to assess how much the trial will eventually result in learning among other stakeholders. There has been a degree of learning among agencies in Herat regarding what they could themselves do to enhance and monitor their own accountability, although the rapid turnover of personnel make the prospects poor for that learning to become anchored in Herat itself. It must also be noted that it is beyond the capacity of the evaluator to evaluate how well the ‘primary target group’ (i.e., the HAP Steering Committee, board and HAP Geneva) have learned from the trial, although it appears that the reporting produced in the trial should provide a solid basis for drawing conclusions at central levels.

Whilst these two objectives have been achieved with regard to those actors working with easily accessible populations, for those with operations in more isolated areas, HAP has not been able to test methods and support learning. This is due to the fact that HAP has not found an appropriate model for enhancing accountability through rigorous field research where the logistical, cultural and practical challenges are as great as they are in rural Afghanistan. The most obvious lesson is that HAP must establish realistic expectations and perhaps begin by reassessing where different approaches are feasible. An initial conclusion from Sierra Leone, that HAP field teams may be most effective in acute camp contexts in limited geographical areas, has been reinforced by the Herat experience.

3.2. Impact on people affected by disaster and conflict

It has been observed that in Afghanistan “There is an inescapable reality that there is a gross imbalance of power between relief workers and the impoverished communities they seek to assist.” Impact must inevitably be judged in terms of whether HAP has, in even a modest respect, served to tilt this balance toward these communities by putting their rights and perspectives on the humanitarian agenda. As mentioned above, attribution problems naturally plague any analysis of the impact of a small, very short-term intervention on a dynamic context such as this. Some agencies are changing their approaches to IDP resettlement under pressure from, not only HAP, but also in reaction to concerns raised by other agencies and emerging reports of ethnic reprisals in the North. HAP has been part of this process, but it is impossible to verify the level of direct HAP impact on humanitarian intervention. HAP has, for example, presumably contributed to beneficiaries receiving better information regarding their entitlements due to its efforts to highlight this issue, and some agencies may have increased their vigilance regarding the voluntary nature of return, but HAP has not been alone in driving these processes. In the view of the evaluator, in general the impact on the beneficiaries that the trial interacted with can be assumed to have been limited.

41 Lautze, et al 2002:44
3.3. Cost efficiency and cost effectiveness

In reviewing the costs of the trial with respect to its outputs, the trial can be said to be cost efficient in the sense of having produced a high quality set of studies and a significant level of agency engagement in a very difficult context at a modest cost. Efficiency levels would have been even higher had the trial been longer since the proportion of costs effectively being applied to set up and capital equipment would have been smaller. It should be stressed that the first five weeks of the trial were effectively spent establishing an office, explaining HAP to agencies in Herat, and establishing trust. This left a very short period for HAP’s actual field investigations.

That said, given its probable limited impact the evaluator doubts whether the trial represents a cost effective model. The time and expense will probable yield modest outputs in the sense of impact on increased voice and other rights among people affected by disaster and conflict, and with regard to sustainable change within the humanitarian system in Afghanistan. A longer-term initiative, better anchored in in-country structures, and with a commitment to creating sustainable impact could result in greater cost-effectiveness.

3.4. Sustainability: what is possible?

A recent major review of “Aid, Incentives, and Sustainability” points out that more sustainable impact of aid interventions (both on the beneficiaries and on the bureaucracies that administer the aid) is reliant on three factors:

- More explicit understanding of incentives in field settings and how they are “shaped by the very system of aid”
- Creating incentives for individual and organisational learning regarding sustainability
- Devolution of ownership to the target population

HAP did not have the objective or capacity to engage to a significant degree in the third factor, but made some efforts to gain a better understanding of incentives in field settings, and had some direct engagement with individual agencies to jointly consider how they might create incentives for their organisations to act in a more accountable manner in the longer term. This evaluation is, in itself, a part of HAP’s process of learning about how the trial activities may have impacted on the incentives that guide field personnel in their perceptions and actions with regard to accountability. In the view of the evaluator, it is above all the first two factors that are the central link between the current pilot phase of HAP and the intention of creating a permanent structure for the future. Short-term field interventions will only yield cost effective and sustainable impacts if they are directly related to the incentives that steer both day-to-day and strategic decision-making at operational levels of humanitarian service provision and protection. It is at the frontline that accountability happens, and HAP’s outputs must therefore be synchronised with the pre-existing array of incentives that guide the choices of field level personnel.

Sustainability is ultimately contingent on ownership by local and national actors. As mentioned above, HAP made little headway in engaging with Afghan NGOs, and took a cautious approach to interaction with government. The trial coincided with the start of a shift from rhetorical statements to action in UNAMA and other actors’ commitments to, as one UN consultant on a capacity building mission put it, “put the government in the driving seat.” Although UNHCR’s mandate provides a basis for somewhat greater independence from government than other UN agencies, it too was placing strong emphasis on ownership from its partners in the MoR, despite their commitment to “removing the IDP problem”.

42 Ostrom, et al 2002
3.5. Capacity-building

The trial did not directly strive to increase the longer-term capacity of disaster and conflict affected people with respect to voice. This would have involved a political engagement for which HAP lacked the time and institutional framework to pursue. It is generally recognised that a sustainable rights-based agenda must eventually be anchored in local civil society. The Herat trial was not designed to provide a basis for this longer-term objective. HAP may, however, have indirectly enhanced this capacity by highlighting the importance of quality information regarding entitlements and conditions in home areas. Information is power, and if beneficiaries have the information that they have a right to receive they may have greater capacity to hold duty bearers to account and even perhaps draw down the services that they require.

The trial was too short to provide many opportunities for building human resource capacity. In addition, the rapid turnover of local staff within HAP and among potential partners meant that HAP suffered from severe constraints on capacity building with regard to its own staff. Competition between agencies over educated, English speaking staff (especially women), and widespread ‘poaching’ has affected the capacity building efforts of most agencies in Afghanistan. Given these constraints, the team was surprisingly effective in attracting and retaining high quality staff. The capacity developed among HAP’s field workers may hopefully contribute to these individuals’ work with other agencies in the future. HAP has also contributed to some agencies’ internal commitments to developing their capacities to assess accountability issues for themselves and the humanitarian community more generally (e.g., MDM-F, MDM-P, IRC). There are indications that HAP may have inspired some agencies to redouble efforts to increase their own human resource capacities related to accountability and protection. This has included the appointment of staff with specific duties related to protection, human rights and the solicitation of beneficiary perspectives. HAP’s research also provided a model and example of how agencies could themselves investigate accountability, and thus contributed to their confidence and their understandings of factors relating to rigour in beneficiary assessments. Some agencies reported that they had been inspired by HAP to reorient their ongoing monitoring efforts to look at beneficiary perspectives on the outcomes of projects and programmes.

Development of a dialogue, and through that potential for contributing to capacity-building among the INGOs encountered a further obstacle in that the trial coincided with the end of the contract period for the ‘first wave’ of international humanitarian staff who had arrived six months earlier. As a result, the majority of staff with whom HAP initially interacted had been replaced by the end of the trial.

One of the greatest challenges to sustainability is the question of whether a truly independent and outspoken advocate for humanitarian space would inevitably run into difficulties where its findings question the government’s commitment to this space and the rights upon which it is based. In Herat (which is said to be a harsher climate for NGOs than elsewhere in Afghanistan) it is doubtful, in the view of the evaluator and the HAP team, that a HAP team would be permitted to continue its work if it was to present reports openly critical of government policy regarding forced resettlement.

3.6. Coherence and complementarity with other actors

On the Herat level, HAP found very good coherence and complementarity vis-à-vis ongoing accountability initiatives related to the IDP camps. Through exchange of information and encouragement HAP helped to provide deeper and more rigorous analysis of issues that had already been identified by agencies on the ground, and also provided an extra ‘push’ for ongoing internal reform efforts.

This was possible due to the quality of the team’s relationships with agencies in Herat and the credibility that this generated. The team made clear its desire for complementarity by emphasising from the start that HAP did not arrive with any predetermined assumptions or agenda regarding what accountability issues it expected to pursue. An important aspect of the team’s efforts to ensure coherence and complementarity was their high degree of transparency. Despite the very short nature of
the trial, all collaborating agencies were clearly informed about the exit strategy. There were no observable ‘loose ends’ at the close of the trial (except for a degree of uncertainty regarding how HAP would engage later in Kabul).

Of significant importance in this regard is that the team built much of its efforts and chose initial priorities drawing on data that agencies themselves had already collected regarding beneficiary concerns. This is an important learning point, as it ensured that HAP picked up where others had left off, and thereby largely avoided criticisms that they were merely bring up old issues that agencies where already aware of. HAP’s efforts became part of the ongoing work of agencies in the field, rather than a duplication of their own accountability initiatives.

Finally, it has been noted that “The relationship of rights to sustainability is ambiguous," since the levels of expenditure required to achieve basic rights is usually far beyond the resources available. Raising attention to a spectrum of rights without anchoring this in an understanding of how agencies are struggling to attain a modicum of sustainability may merely lead to frustration and unconstructive polemics. HAP’s efforts to find a complementary rather than confrontational role vis-à-vis collaborating agencies in the field provided opportunities to jointly consider where and how a rights-based agenda could be moved forward in a viable manner.

3.7. Alternative methods and strategies

Two agencies interviewed felt that HAP should and could have played a complementary role in rural assessments by helping agencies focus on areas of greatest need or by bringing together and raising a discussion of the findings of other agencies’ surveys. Suggestions were also made that HAP could have accompanied the field teams of other agencies in an ad hoc manner, to increase the quality and quantity of these agencies’ own surveys. The team felt that such an approach would have severely compromised HAP’s credibility, and therefore chose not to pursue such a strategy. The team also doubted that agencies were genuinely prepared to make the resource commitment needed to provide a functional counterpart structure at field level. The evaluator concurs with their judgement.

It should be stated that there was no expectation that HAP should or could provide a broader macro perspective on humanitarian needs and gaps in service provision, as other agencies were performing crop surveys and other assessment studies. Most agencies were eagerly awaiting WFP’s VAM report that was to be released in August. HAP’s potential added value was perceived as being primarily oriented towards a more micro-level perspective. In this respect, HAP could potentially find synergy with agencies’ own efforts to look more at the impact of their work in monitoring and evaluation efforts. This was a point raised by UNHCR in their response to HAP’s report on the IDP Mass Information and Monitoring Campaign, and also by Christian Aid regarding their own efforts to transcend mere technical approaches to impact assessment. HAP would presumably be able to limit its role to (a) seeing where accountability, rights and beneficiary voice could be enhanced within existing agency guidelines for these activities, and (b) providing an objective view on internal reform processes.

The evaluator asked interviewees whether HAP would have a role to play in highlighting accountability issues if it had not done any of its own research at all, but had instead used existing surveys by operational agencies to illustrate accountability concerns. This question was admittedly speculative, but almost all respondents were sceptical about whether HAP could establish a credible role for itself if it did not have its own assessments and if the independently verifiable nature of the information it presented could therefore be questioned. One representative stated that that a reliance on other agencies’ surveys was “definitely not a starting point” for HAP’s work.

43 Conway, et al 2002
44 An exception to this was a suggestion by one agency representative that HAP Geneva could provide some practical information back up for agencies that have headquarters that are not actively engaged in the humanitarian accountability discourse.
Although HAP does appear to need to be seen as being able to independently choose methods and design its field investigations as it sees appropriate, it is not equally clear how independent it needs to be institutionally. There is an inevitable trade-off between sustainability and independence with regard to hosting arrangements. HAP’s investigations into the voluntary nature of return created tensions by the end of the trial that would possibly have caused problems for the host agency or led to the government questioning the legality of the hosting arrangement if the trial had continued.\footnote{Concerns have been expressed that UNAMA’s decision to work very closely with the government, in the interest of sustainability and promotion of good governance, has compromised their ability to raise humanitarian accountability and human rights issues with their counterparts (Schenkenberg 2002).} Strong efforts were made to deal with sensitive issues as discretely as possible to protect DACAAR, an approach which limited the team’s ability to develop a closer (but perhaps riskier) engagement with the government. The short time period of the trial allowed HAP to maintain a balance between its independence and its need for a formal administrative host, but this balance would almost certainly have become increasingly difficult to sustain if the trial had continued for a significantly longer period. The team judged that this relatively uneasy combination of hosting and independence was on the verge of encountering major problems at the end of the trial.

The evaluator does not have a proposal for an ideal solution, but suggests that consideration be given to testing a structure with a closer relationship to the host agency. This would perhaps result in less independence, but would provide a clearer platform for addressing these types of issues and for looking for ways to act in a credible but more sustainable manner through a commitment to absorb and utilise HAP capacity. The Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) or the Afghanistan Research & Evaluation Unit (AREU) are examples of the types of organisations that could perhaps have hosted the trial and had a more mutually beneficial relationship with HAP. Arrangement of a hosting relationship that focuses on broader synergy rather than administrative expediency may be time consuming and require relatively detailed knowledge of the key actors before the start of a trial. However, both the Sierra Leone and Afghanistan trials have shown that collaboration with hosts with limited commitment and ownership of the mechanism may also involve considerable unexpected difficulties or delays.

In the opinion of the evaluator, the most important “alternative” is to better tailor approaches to the context before sending a team out. The Afghanistan trial has not revealed any standard, self-evident niche for a field level accountability mechanism. Considerable effort is needed in country to:

- choose an appropriate topical niche
- recruit staff appropriate to the expected focus of the trial, e.g., service provision or protection, key sectors, etc.
- choose an appropriate host agency with an interest in carrying on the work after the trial
- ensure that the interest in hosting the mechanism is anchored at all levels of the host organisation
- select methods appropriate for the objectives and purpose of the trial
- ensure that adequate administrative, logistical and security structures are either in place or can be set-up rapidly

This sequencing is of course very difficult to do in a rapidly changing context, but in the view of the evaluator, this is essential if more efficient and effective structures are to be found. Some initial examples of how such tailoring could be made are:

- The field team/survey focus seems most appropriate for two purposes. The first is to address direct practical problems in a camp or group of camps in a geographically limited area. A HAP team could be effective when those problems are most acute, i.e., when camps are expanding and when agencies have not yet begun to address the emerging problems in a
concerted manner. In later phases (such as the Sierra Leone and Afghanistan cases have encountered), the impact will be limited. A second purpose may be to illustrate a major emerging set of accountability issues to actors on a national level. An example of this in Afghanistan could be to establish a very well resourced team, perhaps at Kabul level, to investigate the coming crisis of reintegration (see conclusions below).

- A different structure, suggested by one respondent, would be for a team to specialise in a predetermined sector, such as water or health. This could enable HAP to extend itself further along the relief–development continuum, while mitigating the dangers of uncontrolled mission creep. This may also serve as a better platform for engaging with national and local NGOs, as they may be more comfortable in applying accountability within their sectoral focus than in dealing with broader and more abstract accountability frameworks.46

- This second trial has again revealed difficulties in fostering ownership within the host organisation. This could be attributed to the de facto separation of the hosting/administrative issues from the objective of developing greater sustainable impact on humanitarian accountability. These issues should be jointly addressed.

3.8. Learning points

- The methods used in the trial provide a useful basis for assessing what worked, what did not work and for drawing some further preliminary conclusions regarding what could work by bringing the international discourse on humanitarian accountability closer to field level realities.

- HAP must establish realistic expectations and perhaps begin by reassessing where different approaches are feasible. HAP field teams may be most effective in acute camp contexts in limited geographical areas.

- Apart from some improvement in the information that IDPs receive regarding their entitlements, the impact of HAP’s work on people affected by disaster and conflict can be assumed to be limited.

- The trial proved to be relatively cost-efficient with regard to research outputs, and would have been even more efficient if it had been longer. Given its limited probable impact, it cannot be judged to be very cost-effective.

- HAP could have a role in highlighting the findings of other agencies’ surveys related to accountability, but great caution is required to ensure that HAP’s credibility does not suffer due to association with non-rigorous surveys.

- Sustainability is ultimately reliant on ownership by local institutions. A more specific strategy for engaging with these agencies would be required if greater sustainability is to be achieved.

- HAP’s research methodology may have had a significant demonstration effect on other agencies considering how to better perform field surveys, thus representing an indirect contribution to capacity building.

- HAP was effective in achieving coherence and complementarity with other actors due to its readiness to pick up where others had left off and its flexibility in adapting to local priorities.

46 In Herat an ideal focus would be agricultural rehabilitation, as these discussions are very much led by Afghan NGOs. Of the five various interagency meetings attended, the biweekly meeting on agricultural rehabilitation had by far the greatest proportion of Afghan participants.
Sustainability and broader impact would be better served if HAP had a host agency with a mandate and commitment to carrying on HAP's work after the trial.

HAP would perhaps have a more efficient start-up period and more effective methodology if a trial was better tailored to the institutional context and topical priorities before a team is sent out. This will be difficult and carry with it additional costs, but would nonetheless be a worthwhile investment.
4. Conclusions

In the introduction to this evaluation it was stated that HAP is assumed to have a rights-based perspective. The trial in Afghanistan has provided a deeper understanding of the potentials, challenges and limitations of introducing such a perspective.

Before presenting detailed conclusions, it is important to point out the uneasy relationship between rights-based approaches and the day-to-day efforts of humanitarian agencies to ensure that target groups can access assets to meet their basic survival needs. It has been pointed out that “Human rights debates... have conventionally concentrated on the ultimate ends (freedom and well-being) and extrapolated back to the social and political relationships that are required to achieve this ideal state”. If HAP assumes that a rights-based perspective is needed, can it engage effectively with humanitarian practitioners at field level on these terms? Can field agencies deal with “freedom and well-being”, or are they just delivering service packages? Operational agencies (and indeed HAP itself) must prioritise among an overwhelming array of pressing failures to live up to the rights of disaster and conflict affected people. It has been noted that in Afghanistan’s transitional phase this prioritisation must be done with a high level of delegation to the field and flexibility, tied to close monitoring. What happens when HAP, in monitoring this process, criticises the chosen priorities, and when other agencies criticise HAP’s choice of priorities? What happens when, as is the case in much of rural Afghanistan, there is no agency prepared to declare itself responsible for more than a narrow set of beneficiaries and a narrow set of rights? What is HAP’s mandate where the division between humanitarian entitlements and the challenges of dealing with high chronic vulnerability begins to blur? Observers have critically noted a fundamental weakness on the part of the NGO community in relating its priorities to relative vulnerabilities. Can HAP be part of the solution for this or, by raising attention to an unprioritisable collection of rights, might it actually aggravate the problems of looking at relative vulnerability? These issues can be sorted out in the field if there is a readiness to accept pluralism since “Rights approaches thus entail understanding the existing patterns of rights, and their embeddedness in social, political and economic institutions”.

In a short period of time, the HAP team performed admirably in this regard. HAP found a role in doing just this by promoting and providing practical advice and data collection related to accountability issues in the IDP camps in the Herat vicinity. This was done in an effective and highly professional manner, and the value of this work was generally recognised and appreciated. The team, and other stakeholders, were acutely aware that the IDP camps were not the most strategic focus within the broader spectrum of accountability issues facing the Western Region. HAP chose its camp focus due to the fact that it was even more constrained than those agencies it was mandated to follow in working with the ‘main issues’ since it was even more constrained in reaching and soliciting the perspectives of war and drought affected people once they had left the camps. These limitations were stressed already in the initial assessment report. Most (but not all) actors accepted the decision to take a limited focus, but as mentioned earlier, with the shift of agencies to the field and the declining population of the IDP camps, HAP would most likely not have retained its credibility if it was to have made the same choice a few months later. The team struggled with their awareness of what they could accomplish within the constraints of their three month trial, and with concerns that a greater humanitarian crisis is looming, for which HAP would have relatively limited influence. They

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47 Conway et al 2002:1
48 DAC 2001
49 Lautze, et al 2002
50 Conway et al 2002:3
51 see HAP Afghanistan, 2002, Strategy Review – the Dilemma of Undertaking Research in Herat (02/06/02)
52 Featherstone 2002
addressed this dilemma by choosing to focus on information, as it is one of the few levers by which
they could—while working in the camps—act to avert uninformed decisions to return to places where
the aid community has limited understanding of what might constitute viable livelihoods and how
these might be supported.

HAP’s focus (and that of most of the humanitarian agencies in Herat) was on questions of supply
rather than rights. This is not a criticism of the team. Within the time frame of the trial, available
resources and the prevailing level of discussions within the humanitarian community in Herat, it is
doubtful that it would have been possible to shift discussions to rights and livelihoods. When agencies
are reliant on very short-term funding structures, they inevitably focus on keeping the pipeline open.
This in turn leads to a concentration on supply rather than critical reflection on rights. Such a shift
will, however, be necessary if there is to be a serious discussion of the ‘next’ humanitarian crisis
facing Afghanistan—that of how people are going to survive after they return home.
BOX Rights, livelihoods and HAP

Prediction of what framework may emerge for accountabilities in the ‘next crisis’ in the Western Region will have to be based on an understanding of Afghan livelihoods. Current resettlement and reintegration assistance is based on assumptions that people wish to return to their own farms and that there is a crucial period before the next harvest when support is needed before the survival situation returns to ‘normal’. It is clear that a significant proportion of returnees have no intention of returning to the rural areas. Many have no effective access to land. Survival strategies in rural areas have been increasingly diversified in recent decades, due to the massive debts that many IDPs have accumulated during the drought, access to their former farmland may be based on claiming rights through highly exploitive patron-client relationships. Decisions regarding aid’s modest role in shoring up entitlements needs to be anchored in an analysis of how people have survived in crises before and how (drawing on this experience) they themselves intend to try to mitigate risks and survive in the future.

Does HAP then have a role in using an understanding of livelihoods to identify appropriate entry points for promoting a rights-driven agenda? Can it provide added value in a context where services are so thinly stretched that agencies hardly perceive themselves to be duty bearers? If not, can HAP effectively situate its interpretation of rights within local norms, survival strategies and aspirations? These issues need to be resolved if HAP is to avoid falling into the trap of accepting the implicit but often false assumptions of the humanitarian community about what entitlements disaster affected people require in order to ensure their survival after they leave the camps and when relief assistance become a shrinking proportion of their asset base. While remaining cognisant of its own limitations, HAP needs to help the agencies with which it interacts to overcome their tunnel vision. If a permanent field accountability mechanism is to be designed that intends to promote a rights-based agenda beyond camp contexts, especially for rehabilitation and natural disaster contexts, then these issues need to be addressed.

In modest and practical terms, a field accountability mechanism could provide a limited platform for bringing together knowledge of what ‘rights’ and ‘livelihoods’ mean in a resettlement process where the humanitarian imperative is in danger of being overshadowed by other agendas. The objective would not be to encourage all actors to address the massive gaps that will inevitably be revealed. Instead, this facilitation role would help agencies understand and acknowledge where their inputs may be most effective, and how to both address acute human suffering and promote viable livelihoods.

In order to do so, it will be essential to overcome the current supply mentality of the humanitarian agencies, where their own inputs are implicitly assumed to be the primary component of how people survive. Even in the past year, when humanitarian assistance has been relatively generous, relief has been estimated to account for only 20% of the assets that villagers in the Western Region have used to survive. Once people are back in their homes, their ‘rights’ to humanitarian assistance will become even more difficult to discern within the context of their other livelihood strategies. It is a challenge for a field accountability mechanism to recognise this and help actors in the humanitarian community to gain a better grasp of their changing role.

The next crisis in Afghanistan will probably come at the intersection between livelihood vulnerability and institutional vulnerability, as the capacities of both villagers and service providers to confront the challenges of the coming winter are weak. At this juncture it is worth considering (at least hypothetically) if HAP would have a niche in seeing how to work within such a framework.
Major issues and challenges arising from the Afghanistan trial

- In a field setting HAP gains its legitimacy and credibility within the humanitarian community primarily from its rigour, its independence and its relevance to the work of others. In Herat, HAP achieved a high degree of credibility from rigour, an effective (though highly tenuous) level of independence and a sufficient degree of legitimacy from relevance. In the stage into which humanitarian programming in Herat is currently shifting this balance would be increasingly difficult to maintain. Whilst the trial could be deemed as genuinely successful, greater challenges would emerge if it were to have continued into the coming months.

- The efforts of UNAMA and the broader donor community to both “put the government in the drivers seat” and to make a very rapid shift from humanitarian assistance to development cooperation will inevitably have major influence on structures of accountability and humanitarian space. The HAP team dealt with these issues effectively during the course of the trial, but emerging tensions suggest that a clearer vision and operational framework for promoting humanitarian accountability in rehabilitation contexts is essential.

- HAP’s focus (and that of most of the humanitarian agencies in Herat) was on questions of supply rather than rights. A shift of focus to livelihoods and right would be necessary if HAP was to further engage in discussion of the ‘next’ humanitarian crisis facing Afghanistan -that of how people are going to survive after they return home.

- Whilst HAP successfully found where it could provide added value to the humanitarian discourse in Herat, the difficulties encountered in the trial showed that there may not always be such a niche. If HAP sends a mission to engage in Kabul, it will be important to consider closely if and how it can present information that is considered to be of sufficient relevance and importance to key actors to convince them that it is worth engaging with the team.

- The ability of HAP to provide an open and independent voice for war and disaster affected people will in many cases be limited where that voice questions the appropriateness of government policy. HAP’s objectives, methods and hosting arrangements need to be adapted accordingly.

- HAP should revisit and clarify the extent of its commitments to promoting voice since, in field level praxis, objectives related to beneficiary voice are inevitably weighed against:
  - the need to filter and prioritise among issues raised,
  - the methodological challenges of using genuine participatory processes,
  - the realities of existing power relations.

Essential factors in improving learning, sustainability, transparency and cost effectiveness

- With regard to rigour:
  - Ambition levels regarding rigour must be chosen based on how the information will eventually be used, and also how HAP expects to provide added value in relation to the survey work that agencies are already engaged in.
In considering priorities, it is important to take into account the fact that HAP itself is subject to many (or more) of the same constraints that prevent the NGOs themselves from doing quality field surveys in isolated locations.

If HAP intends to take up specific cases with specific duty bearers, a very high level of rigour is absolutely essential.

HAP's research methodology may have a significant demonstration effect on other agencies when they are considering how to better perform field surveys, thus representing an indirect contribution to capacity building.

HAP could have a role in highlighting the findings of other agencies' surveys related to accountability, but great caution is required to ensure that HAP's credibility does not suffer due to association with non-rigorous surveys.

With regard to institutional opportunities and constraints to engagement:

HAP's current methods and structure tend to channel efforts toward larger INGOs. Greater engagement with local and national NGOs will require a different approach. If HAP wishes to anchor its work in emerging governance structures and reconstruction contexts this issue will need to be more explicitly addressed.

Sustainability is ultimately reliant on ownership by local institutions. A more specific strategy for engaging with these agencies would be required if greater sustainability is to be achieved. Appropriate hosting arrangements should ideally be part of such a strategy.

In order to be perceived as providing constructive support, HAP may need to pay more attention to analysing the constraints that agencies experience in implementing reforms. This would involve more of an action research methodology than that currently applied. This is a methodological decision requiring greater analysis in the future.

HAP was effective in achieving coherence and complementarity with other actors due to its readiness to 'pick up where others had left off' and its flexibility in adapting to local priorities.

With regard to methods for ensuring stakeholder trust and collaboration:

Depending on the pre-existing level of public discussion and debate on accountability, HAP may need to adopt a modest focus on one-to-one interactions in a short trial. This may be especially true if agencies perceive that public debate is better addressed at headquarters or capital city levels.

The realism and implementability of HAP's recommendations is directly related to the capacities and amount of humanitarian space that agencies have to pursue their mandates. HAP's efforts are inevitably built around a coalition of the willing, which will in turn to a large extent be circumscribed by those agencies which view the scope of HAP's recommendations as realistic and implementable.

Sharing of reports with government authorities is important with regard to transparency, but may carry with it significant risks to the HAP team and even the host agency. Guidance on this topic is important.

With regard to relating reporting to learning:
o to enhance both learning and transparency, HAP should apply a logical framework approach (or similar planning mechanism) to the next trial, with specific reference to the trial’s role within HAP’s concluding phase during the latter part of the year.

o Quality reporting is reliant on a considerable investment in staff time and effort, and requires appropriate skills, but it essential for underpinning the credibility of the trial and to ensure that maximum learning is possible.

Initial ideas for HAP operational models

- In the opinion of the evaluator, the most important alternative approach is to better tailor approaches to the context before sending a team out. The Afghanistan trial has not revealed any standard, self-evident niche for a field level accountability mechanism. Considerable effort is needed in country to:
  
  o choose an appropriate topical niche
  o recruit staff appropriate to the expected focus of the trial, e.g., service provision or protection, key sectors, etc.
  o choose an appropriate host agency with an interest in carrying on the work after the trial
  o select methods appropriate for the objectives and purpose of the trial
  o ensure that adequate administrative, logistical and security structures are either in place or can be set-up rapidly

- The field team/survey focus seems most appropriate for two purposes. The first is to address direct practical problems in a camp or group of camps in a geographically limited area. A HAP team could be effective when those problems are most acute, i.e., when camps are expanding and when agencies have not yet begun to address the emerging problems in a concerted manner. In later phases, the impact will be limited. A second purpose may be to illustrate a major emerging set of accountability issues to actors on a national level.

- A different structure would be for a team to specialise in a predetermined sector. This could enable HAP to extend itself further along the relief – development continuum, while mitigating the dangers of uncontrolled mission creep. This may also serve as a better platform for engaging with national and local NGOs, as they may be more comfortable in applying accountability within their sectoral focus than in dealing with broader and more abstract accountability frameworks.

- This second trial has again revealed difficulties in fostering ownership within the host organisation. This could be attributed to the de facto separation of the hosting/administrative issues from the objective of developing greater sustainable impact on humanitarian accountability. Greater sustainability, efficiency and credibility could emerge if host agencies could be found with a genuine commitment, at all levels of the organisation, to carrying on the work of HAP after the trial period.
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Sayeed Mosem Samimi Ministry of Repatriation
Eng. Mansouri Ministry of Planning
Haji Marjhan Block leader Rwazabagh Camp

Abu Diek UNAMA
Roque Raymundo UNAMA
Daniel Endres UNHCR
Claire Bourguois UNHCR
Paul White UNHCR
Maureen Forsythe WFP
Antonio Leonardo FAO
Tom Morrison FAO (consultant)

Stefano Savi MSF Holland
Danny Gill IOM
Margarita Vasileva IRC
Wouter Doevenspeck IFRC
Gorm Pedersen DACAAR
Mohammed Aqa DACAAR
Roy Brennan DACAAR
Julien Boussac MDM France
Hugo Oosterkamp MDM Portugal
Rita Joana Paiva da Cruz MDM Portugal
Graham Strong World Vision
Marie Herail Handicap International
Ian Purves ACBAR
Rafael Robillard ACBAR
Yehal Lashed Oxfam GB
Sayed Ismael AREA
Cael Coleman Shelter for Life
David Verbree Shelter for Life
Eng. Bahadir CHA
Julia McDade Christian Aid
David Horrocks Christian Aid
Annex 1: Terms of Reference

I - BACKGROUND

The Humanitarian Accountability Project (HAP) is a two-year inter-agency project launched in February 2001 in Geneva in response to concerns among humanitarian organizations about the lack of accountability towards crisis-affected populations.

These humanitarian organisations were moved to act following a number of evaluations of humanitarian assistance, which had identified the need to strengthen accountability. These evaluations had highlighted in particular:

- The inconsistent quality of assistance provided to people affected by disaster,
- An absence of formal consultation with, and response mechanisms for, those affected by humanitarian crisis,
- A lack of co-ordination between humanitarian actors.

The HAP vision is for all humanitarian operations to mobilise mechanisms at field, organizational and sector-wide levels that ensure accountability to communities and individuals affected by wars and disasters. At the core of these mechanisms will be the participation of affected populations and an ethical commitment to listen, monitor and respond to their concerns.

The mandate of the HAP includes:

1. To carry out field trials in three emergency situations in order to test, through various methodological and strategic approaches, how a mechanism for enhanced accountability to beneficiaries or claimants of humanitarian assistance can function.

2. To carry out a programme of research and advocacy on accountability in order to: (i) design and constitute the governance and executive management structures to oversee and administer a permanent accountability mechanism, and (ii) identify other approaches to strengthen accountability.

3. To make recommendations for strengthening accountability within the humanitarian sector, and to develop a proposal for a permanent mechanism, based on the outcome of the above.

A major objective of the HAP is to implement field trials in up to three different countries and contexts. One such trial has been implemented in Sierra Leone, a second is on-going in Afghanistan.

The overall objectives of each trial are to:

1. Identify and test methods to inform, listen and respond to humanitarian claimants;
2. Identify and test methods to engage with humanitarian actors and generate responses to problems, concerns and complaints identified by the HAP team;
3. Facilitate debates and discussions in order to demonstrate the value of accountability and of an accountability mechanism to the humanitarian community;
4. Make recommendations for continued action to strengthen accountability, including possibly through identifying interested local actors who could pursue a continued accountability monitoring work;
5. Analyse and report regularly on findings: monthly reports (including well researched and convincing evidence and case studies identifying and analysing steps taken) and final report (analysing the constraints and success of the work undertaken).

II - REASONS AND USERS OF THE REAL-TIME EVALUATION

1. It is essential for accountability and learning purposes that the HAP be externally assessed. This requires maintaining as much as possible the independence of the RTE.

2. The RTE/resource person will work in each of the three countries where the HAP will undertake action-research. He will closely follow and accompany the ongoing action-research, while maintaining a constructive and critical distance from the HAP teams.

3. The primary audience for the RTE includes: (i) the field team for practical guidance; (ii) HAP Geneva and HAP Board. The work of the RTE will also support HAP's own accountability to outside stakeholders by providing transparency regarding its findings.

4. The two main purposes of the RTE are:
   (i) *During a first and possibly second field mission:* To provide constructive and practical guidance and support during the field research, to help make it as effective as possible, to provide recommendations to HAP Geneva regarding potential course corrections,
   (ii) *During the last mission at the end of the trial:* To provide an external and evidence-based observation of the work done at field level by the HAP, and in particular assessing, from a learning standpoint, the choices of methods and strategic approaches, implementation of activities, their outcome; and in identifying recommendations and findings for the remaining HAP field trials and for a permanent field mechanism of accountability.

By so doing, the RTE is to contribute to the development of a concrete, well-documented, and empirical basis to consider when defining and recommending mechanisms of accountability at field level (one of HAP purposes).

III - SCOPE AND FOCUS OF THE REAL TIME EVALUATION

1. To provide methodological guidance and support to the field team, notably concerning (i) the design and implementation of listening mechanisms, (ii) the design and implementation of a strategy of engagement with the humanitarian community, (iii) the processing and interpretation of data resulting from the listening exercises, in particular with regard to the validity of information gathered and the establishment of lines of responsibilities. The evaluator's role at this stage is not simply a passive or analytical one. On the basis of his involvement in the operation, and drawing upon lessons learned from previous HAP trials and other related experiences, he will be well placed to provide advice to the field team and to alert them to impending problems.

- Advisory and guidance are provided to the field team through the first phase of the real time evaluation work: the RTE is to provide immediate feedback to the field team and later to HAP Geneva on what he observes and hears during his first field mission (and second mission when applicable).
Advisory and guidance are also provided to the team through electronic communications throughout the trial. The RTE will keep records of his advice and recommendations.

2. To evaluate the methods and strategies adopted and pursued by the HAP field team to implement the trial objectives, and in particular:

(i) Has the field trial identified and tested methods to inform, listen and respond to humanitarian claimants? What has been the quality of these methods and of the findings? What are the main findings? What can be learned from the trial? To what extent has the context influenced the choice and success/failure of the methods?

(ii) Is there evidence that the trial identified and tested methods to engage with humanitarian actors? What has been the response from humanitarian actors to these efforts? Is there evidence that the trial generated responses to problems, concerns and complaints identified by the HAP team? To what extent has the context influenced the choice and success/failure of the methods? What are the main findings? What can be learned from the trial?

(iii) Has the field trial facilitated debates and discussions on accountability? To what extent has the field trial created new discussions and to what extent has it contributed to ongoing debate? To what degree has it been successful in demonstrating the value of accountability and accountability mechanism? How can HAP itself learn from the ongoing in-country debates on how to promote accountability? To what extent has the context influenced the choice and success/failure of the methods? What are the main findings? What can be learned from the trial?

(iv) Has the trial made recommendations for continued action to strengthen accountability, i.e., to the field and from the field for central level actors? Are these recommendations realistic, implementable, cost-effective? Are there alternative recommendations, which can be made? What are the main findings? What can be learned from the trial?

(v) What has been the quality of the monitoring in terms of regular reporting and analysis? What are the main findings? What can be learned from the trial?

While the RTE will seek to analyse difficulties and whether the responses provided have been effective, he will also actively seek out initiatives and practices that work well, and identify findings and learning.

3. Evaluate the effectiveness of the trial: the evaluation should assess the achievements of the trial at different levels, immediate objectives (results) and longer term objectives (outcome and impact). Longer term objectives may be impressionistic in the absence of base line data and in the absence of information regarding, for example, learning by central level actors and ex post sustainability. Key questions may include: (i) whether the original objectives – testing and learning - have been achieved? (ii) What have been the constraints to the achievement of these objectives? (iii) What is the impact of the intervention, in particular with regard to the humanitarian beneficiaries the team interacted with, and with regard to the humanitarian actors at different levels.

4. Efficiency. Can the consultant evaluate the degree to which the trial has been cost-efficient in terms of input, time, output? Are there alternatives to the methods and strategies adopted, which would be more efficient?
5. Sustainability To what degree has capacity-building occurred? What constraints were there? To what degree was there coherence and complementarity with other actors implementing similar objectives?

IV – METHODOLOGY AND TIME SCHEDULE

To be further developed before each field visit

Methods will focus on stakeholder analysis and on placing the work of the HAP field teams in the pre-existing and probable ex post context of accountability efforts in each trial context. It will involve the capture and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data encouraging participation where possible.

Data collection methods will involve: (i) desk studies; (ii) direct measurement; (iii) interviews with key informants; (iv) group interviews; (v) observation and (vi) participatory evaluation.

During the first mission, at the beginning of the trial, the RT-E will review with team members the activities and strategies so far and provide guidance and advice on the next steps. (Activity 1 above). Due to work conflict, the RTE will only be present with the team in Afghanistan for 5 days. This time constraint will be reflected in the work plan/protocol to be developed before departure (see below under reporting).

During this visit, the RT-E will also, depending on time constraints establish benchmarks for the final evaluation through the collection of base line data (e.g. interviews with humanitarian actors, interviews with beneficiaries, etc.)

If possible, the RT-E will conduct a second mission to interview key stakeholders and make a general assessment of the HAP progress and process.

The RT-E will return for a final mission near the end of each trial to conduct the evaluation proper.

V – REPORTING AND FEEDBACK

Each field mission will be preceded by the development of a Work Plan, including a review of Stakeholders’ meetings/analysis to assist the field team in preparing for the RTE mission.

Each field visit will be followed by a short evidence-based mission report, documenting key observations, actions and suggestions. The RTE advice and recommendations during the mission will be identified.

At the end of the trial, produce an evidence-based report, of no more than 30 pages (without annexes), with an executive summary of no more than 3 pages, for each of the field trial.

The executive summary should capture:

(i) The evaluation outputs,
(ii) Lessons learned,
(iii) Reasons for the conclusions and
(iv) Reasons for the recommendations.

The trial report should include:

(i) A review of the RTE methodology and identification of the RTE advice and recommendations in the course of the trial;
(ii) An analysis of the context of the trial;
(iii) A review of the main accountability issues raised during the trial;
(iv) Evaluation of the methods and strategies;
(v) Evaluation of the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the trial;
(vi) Conclusion and recommendations for future HAP field trials and for a future field mechanism of accountability.

The RTE will regularly liaise with the HAP directors. Its findings for each field trial will be reported to the HAP Board. Following the HAP Board approval, the report will be posted on HAP website.

1. Background
The Humanitarian Accountability Project (HAP) is a unique, learning oriented pilot project intended to explore how greater accountability can be promoted in humanitarian assistance. The role of the realtime evaluator/methodological resource person (RT-E), and his national counterparts in the three pilot countries, is to ensure that opportunities for learning from the field trials are maximised by providing a critical sounding-board, and by giving direct support in the form of methodological advice and process reporting. The RT-E will also ensure that the field teams themselves are endowed with a degree of accountability by providing stakeholders with an opportunity to express their views and concerns about HAP to an independent observer.

The objectives of this report are to make clear the initial assumptions regarding both the conceptual objectives and the practical expectations of what can and should be achieved by the RT-E in the time allocated. By elaborating what are assumed to be key emergent issues and questions at the outset of the evaluation process, this report is intended to provide a concrete point of departure for HAP staff, steering committee members and others consider how such an unusual initiative as this may provide a learning opportunity about field level accountability.

2. Conceptual Framework and Evaluation Methods
The work of the RT-E takes as its point of departure the HAP vision, which is:

"...for all humanitarian operations to mobilize mechanisms at field, organizational and sector-wide levels that ensure accountability to communities and individuals affected by wars and disasters. At the core of these mechanisms will be the participation of affected populations and an ethical commitment to listen, monitor and respond to their concerns."

Despite considerable agency rhetoric about the need for such downward accountability, little is known about how it may be achieved. A learning approach is therefore mandatory. A major task of the RT-E is to ensure that the learning that is underway in the current experimental phase of HAP can be subsequently critically assessed and codified in such a way as to provide a basis for the eventual establishment of future humanitarian accountability mechanisms and functions. As such, the evaluators will judge HAP based on the criteria of impact, effectiveness, connectedness, coherence, relevance and participation.

Methods will focus on stakeholder analysis and on placing the work of the HAP field teams in the pre-existing and probable ex post context of accountability efforts in each trial context. The programme of work will be as follows:

- During initial recognisance visits (approximately ten days) the RT-E will provide methodological support, review the role of eventual national counterparts (with support from the HAP field team), plan evaluation procedures and define key areas of focus for evaluating each trial.
- The role of national counterparts to the RT-E will be related to availability of human and financial resources. Given apparent limits, it is assumed that the role of the counterpart will emphasise bringing together stakeholders in a workshop context.
The RT-E will return after approximately six weeks for a period of approximately one week when he will interview key stakeholders and make a general assessment of the HAP process.

The RT-E will return for third (ten day) visit near the end of each trial to follow up on previous assessments and to analyse exit strategies and how the HAP trial has impacted on local capacities to promote accountability. This may be in the form of a stakeholder workshop wherein the HAP team presents and discusses their findings.

Short mission reports (approximately seven pages) will be produced after the initial two missions, and a full report (no more than thirty pages) will be prepared after the final visit.

The RT-E will commit approximately 35 to 40 days per case, excluding write up of the final reports.

Many of the issues that the HAP teams will explore will not yield clear-cut answers. Defining duty holders, limits to responsibility, appropriate levels of service provision and judgements of relevant concerns for the teams’ work will all be perceived differently by different actors. The same can be said for setting priorities and sequencing of addressing violations of different types of rights. The universality of codes and standards is often contested. The need for flexibility in adapting regulatory frameworks to local conditions and cultures will therefore be respected. A critical stance will nonetheless be maintained towards any tendency to use calls for flexibility to avoid demands for quality and accountability. Accountability is a matter of bringing people together to discuss what they should do and what they can do. The RT-E will support the HAP teams to mobilise such discussions to look at how legal human rights norms influence on-the-ground institutional mechanisms for providing services and (to a lesser extent) protection. These institutional mechanisms are anchored in cultural and politico-administrative realities. The teams’ work will therefore involve both collecting facts about performance and learning about the local values that frame how actors determine what rights-based approaches mean to them. The task of the RT-E will not be to act as an arbiter within these discussions, but rather to record and analyse the different views that emerge.

That said, the RT-E will not report in a relativistic manner. Downward accountability and the potential of establishing sustainable mechanisms to promote such accountability will be given priority over upward accountability. An objective will be to establish a dialogue with different stakeholders regarding what they see as a credible, relevant and viable set of priorities for a HAP team (or other accountability support mechanism) in different types and phases of emergency. Important in this will be an emphasis on mapping the grey areas in which the limits of HAP need to be defined (see below).

The RT-E shall function internally to HAP, as is perhaps standard in a realtime evaluation or monitoring initiative, but at the same time strive to maintain a critical distance to the project. Transparency, both internally and to external stakeholders, will be essential in order to provide both the accountability and the broader learning that the evaluation is intended to support. All reports should be posted on the HAP website.

3. Areas of Focus
3.1. Methodological Assessment and Support
It is assumed that the HAP field teams will, at the outset, be relatively highly skilled in the methods required for their tasks. "How to" training in interview techniques, etc., is assumed not to be required. Support will be provided in critically assessing the choice and performance
of different methods and in defining what level of methodological rigour is necessary for credibility and viable given existing resources and the broad objectives of the trials.

The basic methodological challenges for HAP are to:

- "represent" the claimants, clients and beneficiaries of the humanitarian system (and also those who should be claimants, clients and beneficiaries, but who lack voice or have otherwise not obtained the support they have a right to);
- while at the same time maintaining a critically reflective awareness of the ways that "re-presentation" inevitably involves reconstructing stories about individual and community livelihood crises within the administrative and socio-political structures of aid delivery and protection. The HAP teams are in many respects part of the same overall system as the operational agencies, and will thus need to critically reflect on the fact that they are not "above" the day-to-day politics of humanitarian action. Their re-presentations of the concerns of claimants, clients and beneficiaries will be coloured by the aid system in which they operate.

Of particular attention in this regard will be the need to create a "participatory process", whereby the clients of the humanitarian agencies are provided opportunities to present their views and concerns; at the same time as a critical understanding is developed of how this "participation" is shaped and created by pre-existing local power relations and the supply-driven pressures of the humanitarian industry itself. Probably the greatest methodological challenge that the teams will face will be to avoid acting as an advocate of the shopping lists and political manifestos that participatory methods tend to generate (especially in an emergency), while at the same time showing a readiness to listen and learn. In effect, methodological approaches will need to reflect the normative aim of making the humanitarian system more demand-driven, while at the same time facilitating frank analyses of the powerful dynamics inherent in the supply pressures and power politics that characterise humanitarian resource flows.

3.2. Learning and Quality
A cornerstone of accountability is learning. A central role of the HAP teams is to facilitate, or perhaps even "jumpstart" the ability of humanitarian agencies to learn from the people who they serve and engage in joint consideration of what should and can be done in a given situation. Codes and standards may provide benchmarks and guides by which this learning should occur. Their application will be evaluated as such and methodological support will focus on bringing out this learning process (i.e., not merely measuring how thoroughly they have been implemented). The RT-E will not make judgements regarding how well the HAP teams have been able to obtain direct compliance with these standards. Judgements will focus on whether learning has been stimulated and whether this has led to enhanced quality of performance.

"Quality" is constructed by sets of actors determining what their values imply regarding field level practice. But which actors? Accountability efforts are increasingly striving to define agency priorities within the broader objectives and normative commitments of the "humanitarian system" (rather than leaving quality to be determined by individual aid workers on an ad hoc basis). HAP strives to take this a step further toward downward accountability by better integrating the perspectives and values of the claimants and beneficiaries as well. In order to do so, HAP will need to look at how current quality initiatives, such as Sphere, are being used in the field, and also enquire into whether these initiatives are relevant within the
values of the clients of the system. There is thus a danger that HAP’s efforts in working with both sides of the drive for quality (outside codes and local values) may confuse many actors, but such a constructivist stance on quality is essential if agencies are to be encouraged to listen to and learn from claimants and beneficiaries.

3.3. “Cost Effectiveness”
Cost effectiveness is often equated with cost benefit analysis. It will not be possible to make coherent cost-benefit analyses of the work of the HAP teams. Instead, it will be important to base judgements on what might constitute realistic levels of ambition for teams, or other mechanisms, in different types of emergencies. This creates a certain paradox. One of the fundamental failures in accountability within the humanitarian system is the vast variation in levels of humanitarian funding in different emergencies (Kosovo and forgotten emergencies such as Angola being the classic examples of different ends of the spectrum). HAP has a role in revealing this injustice at the same time as it must to some extent adapt its own definition of “cost effectiveness” according to the same cruel logic.

In addition to assessing the cost effectiveness of the HAP teams themselves, it will also be important to reflect on what a realistic level of expenditure may be for the internal accountability efforts of different agencies that the HAP teams will presumably promote, either for “self-regulation” (monitoring and internal control) or for downward accountability (participatory methods and learning initiatives). Here again, “realistic” mechanisms will vary tremendously. A typical isolated health post, run by a ministry of health, church or Red Cross Society, may normally receive a supervision visit from a central level once a year. A nurse in that health post may have an opportunity to attend a short refresher training course once every five years. To be sustainable, accountability-enhancing measures for such institutions will need to be modest, probably emphasising local mechanisms to promote the abilities of clients to influence service providers. There will be greater opportunity for promoting control-oriented methods with better-resourced expatriate led agencies. The recommendations of the HAP field teams will need to be cognisant of such realities if they are to have a significant impact on practice. Conclusions regarding the realism and cost-effectiveness of an eventual future HAP-like mechanism will therefore need to be placed in perspective of how realistic its advice is regarding the ongoing accountability trajectories of the agencies with which it interacts.

4. Grey Areas
4.1. Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD)
Afghanistan and Sierra Leone are both countries with great humanitarian needs. They are also countries that seem to be making significant process towards peace and reconciliation. Rehabilitation and reconstruction agendas are rapidly gaining attention and are inevitably competing with humanitarian efforts for access to aid flows. The different operational principles of humanitarian and development action may also conflict, as calls emerge for cost recovery and the discontinuation of free services and distributions. This may create a dilemma for HAP. Experience has shown that in contexts such as these the humanitarian imperative is easily forgotten as the political agendas of rehabilitation and reconstruction take prominence. HAP will have a role in ensuring that the basic rights of those who remain vulnerable are not ignored as donor and agency priorities shift. At the same time, HAP must not fall into a one-sided role (due to its humanitarian focus) of advocating for relief when reconstruction is both possible and essential.
In addition, clients may themselves attempt to engage the HAP teams in advocating certain reconstruction foci related to their own political visions of future development (this may also be a factor in an eventual natural disaster pilot, as can be seen from the polemic debate over alternative development models that was ignited by the aid flows after Hurricane Mitch). If such pressures emerge, it will be important to document how the teams balance the different demands and requests that they receive. The teams will need to avoid being drawn into a taking a political stance, without shirking issues that are inevitably highly political. There is no clear-cut procedure for dealing with such a situation. Pure neutrality is not a coherent option where humanitarian efforts are merging with rehabilitation in the post-emergency agenda.

4.2. Coordination and Service Provision Gaps
HAP strives to stay out of coordination. At the same time, the challenges of defining responsibilities will in many cases lead back to questions of coordination. There is not always a self-evident duty holder for a given task, and gaps in basic services often arise due to failures in coordination, rather than from a dysfunctional relationship between a single service provider and client. As such, it will be important to analyse the implications of HAP’s efforts to avoid the coordination fray, both in terms of its relations with other actors in the humanitarian system and also of possible distortion stemming from HAP looking for gaps in provider-client relationships, when these gaps are actually indications of broader systemic failures. The HAP Teams may also find quite positive roles to play by highlighting coordination issues, even if they avoid being drawn into directly solving coordination problems.

4.3. Technical Assessment
Assessing the quality and appropriateness of the efforts of humanitarian agencies will in many cases require technical expertise beyond that of the HAP team itself. Accurate judgements and understanding of valid norms for service provision will require collaboration with in-country institutions and expertise. That said, the process of uncovering and mobilising local capacities (particularly those based in academic institutions) may be slow and difficult. It will be important to assess what is possible for the teams to accomplish in this regard, and also the consequences if they do not have the time, resources or networks required to access the technical resources that they need. Eventual “failures” in efforts to engage local capacities through HAP’s current approach will be analysed in terms of implications for how future accountability mechanisms could be designed that are more clearly anchored in local and existing institutional structures.

4.4. Promoting Local Institutional Development Versus Direct Service Provision
Many humanitarian agencies are torn between giving priority to providing services directly, often by expatriate teams, and the objective of improving local institutional response capacity. Finding harmony between these two tasks is not simple. HAP, in highlighting poor quality response, may inadvertently experience pressures to promote the use of experienced and well-resourced expatriate teams instead of local institutions that lack capacity to live up the Sphere Standards (which poorly resourced local institutions often see as representing “best practices” rather than “minimum standards”). It is doubtful, for example, that beneficiaries will complain that local water engineers have not been given sufficient training. They will complain that they need water, and will expect HAP to ensure that they receive it fast, even though the training and equipping of local water engineers may yield greater long-term impact. It is not self-evident how the HAP team should react when confronted with such pressures. Process
documentation will be important to highlight the difficulties in dealing with the dilemmas of choosing between promotion of capacity building versus immediate service provision.

4.5. The Role of the State
In a broad perspective, accountability is a political process. The disruptions created by a humanitarian emergency mean that unusual measures need to be taken to re-establish accountability, but it is essential that these measures do not serve to further displace legitimate and emergent political processes. The HAP teams will inevitably have to find an appropriate space for their efforts within the contours of existing gaps in state legitimacy, while at the same time fostering (or at least not hindering) efforts of the state and the political system to re-establish “normal” accountability, often in connection with reassertion of coordination and rule of law. This is another area where process documentation is needed.

4.6. Exit Strategies
It will rarely be obvious when a HAP team should leave. There may not even be an appropriate model for a short-term HAP intervention in a chronic and long-term emergency. There is a need to explore implicit expectations in the current field trials that a significant local capacity to ensure accountability will be in place to replace the HAP team after a few months. It will be important to support the HAP teams in assessing what might be appropriate exit strategies in different types of chronic emergencies, as well as dealing with the special exit challenges in the aforementioned LRRD grey areas. The exit strategy issue will also need to be related to cost effectiveness, as a failure to leave behind an improved, sustained capacity to promote accountability may put into question the cost effectiveness of a HAP intervention in all but the most acute of situations. Here again, process documentation of how the teams deal with the dilemmas that emerge as they plan their exit strategies will need to be fed into efforts to plan future HAP-like mechanisms.

5. Conclusion
The overall task of the RT-E is to provide a basis for HAP to critically reflect on the processes and practices that the pilot is contributing to. The evaluator will help the field teams to critically reflect on their work, HAP Geneva to understand and guide field level efforts, and for other stakeholders to work with HAP to ensure that in 2003 an informed decision can be made about how to proceed with future mechanisms to support humanitarian accountability. International discussions on HAP, and the Humanitarian Ombudsman Project before it, have been repeatedly plagued by misunderstandings and preconceptions about what these efforts have intended to achieve. The basic task of the RT-E is to ensure that at the end of the pilot there is a concrete and well-documented empirical basis for humanitarian actors to consider what models and mechanisms may be effective, viable and realistic in different types of operations. The debate will not end there, but it will hopefully focus more clearly on empirical experience from the field rather than ideological debates in metropolitan agency headquarters. If so, HAP will have provided the foundation for better anchoring the accountability debate and future accountability mechanisms in an understanding of the possibilities and dilemmas of field level practice.