IASC Task Force 2 on Accountability to Affected People

08 November 2023 - Meeting Minutes

Agenda:

1. TF2 workplan, IASC OPAG and Collective AAP Framework

    a. Endorsement process for TF2 revised workplan

    b. IASC OPAG and next steps

    c. Collective AAP Framework changes

2. Collective AAP and Localisation: proposed joint work with TF5

    a. TF2 presentation

    b. Members' discussion

    c. TF5 Chairs remarks

3. Donor engagement: proposed way forward

4. ICRC and OCHA key take aways from Learning event

5. Next steps and planning: end of 2023 - Q1 2024

Participation: 30 presences, 35 absences.

Discussion:

1. TF2 workplan, IASC OPAG and Collective AAP Framework

a. Endorsement process for TF2 revised workplan

shared ahead of meeting: *Amended TF2 workplan*

TF Chairs gave members the oopportunity to comment, provide suggestions and ask questions on the amended Taskforce 2 workplan. The draft had been shared with members ahead of this meeting after consultations and changes made with workstream Leads.

Actions points/next steps:

→ Members can provide feedback on the amended workplan until the 10th of Nov. by email to TF coordinator Benjamin.noble@ifrc.org

→ Endorsed version will be shared with members and OPAG.

b. IASC OPAG and next steps

shared ahead of meeting: *TF2 progress report submitted to OPAG.*

Mrs Tanya Wood Co-Chair summarised the TF2 Co-Chairs' contribution to the October OPAG meeting:

TF2 (AAP) and of TF5 (Localisation) Chairs took part in a full day OPAG meeting (17.10). This exploratory meeting focused on identifying stronger links between AAP, localisation, participation, and the nexus, specifically finding opportunities for convergence between the IASC's work in those areas and the updated Grand Bargain. The three new GB ambassadors also highlighted their priorities.

Emphasising the momentum across TF2 workstreams, the TF2 chairs focused on two key deliverables: The Collective AAP Framework and the collective feedback mechanism. They presented those as part of an **the TF2 holistic support package** that also includes the Results Tracker, the HCT members training and the Inter-Agency AAP Surge Capacity. OPAG welcomed the idea of communicating on a holistic package and OPAG asked the TF2 to continue to socialise and make available the various IASC AAP tools and resources, even in draft from, without waiting for the overall package to be endorsed. The TF2 chairs also underlined that this holistic support package is an enforcer of other processes – Humanitarian Program Cycle, Humanitarian Country Teams Compacts, and the Country Based Pool Funds.

b. Collective AAP Framework changes presented to OPAG

Ms Rachel Maher from OCHA who leads the revision and finalisation of the Collective AAP Framework provided background its development, its testing in countries, lessons learned and changes to it.

- The Framework was used in several contexts in last 2 years.
- as a tool for planning and designing AAP action plans and strategies and as a lens through which to review the HPC to ensure greater engagement with, and inclusion of, affected people. Contexts where it was tested: Gaziantep, Bangladesh (Dhaka and Cox's Bazar), Lebanon, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, South Sudan.
- The Framework had been a catalyst for program adaptation and the identification of critical response-wide actions that advance Collective AAP. She noted it had been beneficial beyond the development of AAP action plans; it has been an effective "whole of response" planning tool for effective and accountable programming.
- The main changes to be integrated into the final version responded to the need to be more explicit on Localisation and Preparedness: a new objective on Preparedness was added to the Framework and more guidance on how to operationalise commitments on localisation and the nexus. Data responsibility and information sharing dimension is also added across all HPC phases.

Actions points /next steps

→ OCHA will continue to lead the revision and finalisation with TF2 members consolidate these changes.
→ The final version will be sent in early December to seek IASC OPAG feedback and endorsement.
→ Final version will be sent to all TF2 members for information.

2. Collective AAP and Localisation: proposed joint work with TF5

a. TF2 presentation

Mr Jesse Wood Co-chair introduced an initial framing of the complementarities between the AAP and Localisation. Mr wood also outlined three proposed priority areas of collaboration identified with TF5 Chairs.

1. Explicit the role of N/L Actors in Collective AAP
2. TF5 webinars on challenges and good practice on AAP/Localisation
3. Tracking progress on AAP/Localisation indicators at country level

Focusing on the role of N/L actors in Collective AAP (area 1 above), Mr Wood presented initial ideas for members consideration and feedback. He underlined AAP and Localisation have a shared goal of enabling a power shift within the Humanitarian System at the benefit of N/L Actors and Affected People. He outlined those actors' strength, capacities, and assumptions in relation to AAP outcomes, the expectations of their role and its impact, as well as enablers that can improve their ability to play a stronger role in leading AAP in Collective responses.

They can:

- deliver on AAP (evidenced by CHS),
- have better and trusted access to people,
- improve better alignment of responses and communities' priorities,
- be affected themselves, enabling them to have a better understanding of peoples' priorities,
- have more context knowledge,

- be better equipped to lead AAP activities,
- be more agile to adapt programs in their context.

N/L actors face specific challenges limiting their ability to play a more central role. For instance, they may have:

- difficulties responding to community feedback because they are not sufficiently included in strategic discussion on response level priorities and/or have limited capacity to adapt programs.
- fewer resources to engage in coordination and build medium and longer term capacities : This makes it harder to contribute or lead Collective AAP in responses or invest in targeted advocacy based on Community participation and feedback.

Enablers for N/L actors to play a more central role on AAP

- Inclusive architecture focused on enabling role of N/L Actors on AAP
- Inclusive collective planning implementation M&E
- Investment in Preparedness (see Collective Framework), Capacities, and appropriate funding: such as providing overheads to local and national actors and leveraging efforts in blending humanitarian and development funding for local partners (GB and IASC guidance).

The enablers provide opportunities to N/L actors to participate in the design, implementation, evaluation of:

- collective mechanisms and systems (such as CFM),
- response level processes enabling collective AAP outcomes,
- joint targets on collective AAP and performance metrics.

Expectations: Enabled to influence better strategic decisions, those actors could amplify the voices of people served. Overall N/L actors could better deliver on collective AAP outcomes through their programming (including adaptation based on feedback- therefore contributing to increasing Trust in the response, its appropriateness and effectiveness).

b. Discussion with TF2 Members

Members were asked to comment on the approach and rationale presented that ae intended to frame advocacy and changes in the system (short & medium term).

Ms Christie Bacal-Mayencourt for IOM linked the outlined approach to an IOM consultation with local NGOs organised in October. The TF2 presentation on L/N actors' capacities, challenges, and enablers to lead on Collective AAP resonates strongly with this IOM consultation. Mrs Bacal-Mayencourt underlined specific links and provided recommendations:

- **The strengthening of N/L actors' capacity should not be limited to AAP and should focus on improving their overall capacity to respond**; Concerns were raised on the capacity of local actors to be able to respond operationally, not only because of insufficient funding but their overall ability to respond. We need to work with clusters and programs to enable them to deliver quality programming holistically.
- **International actors have a lot more to learn from N/L actors on strengthening AAP capacity**. The IASC AAP tools can provide support by standardising approaches on AAP.
- **Do more to ensure they effectively influence decisions in coordination structures**. On enablers, the IASC AAP guidance and tools provide more explicit intent to ensure the inclusion of local actors in decision-making processes. However, in several Humanitarian Country Teams or Inter-Cluster (or Inter-Sector) Coordination Groups providing space for N/L NGOs can be tokenistic, even with formal co-lead role.

Ms Bacal-Mayencourt provided support to the enhanced collaboration with the Localisation Taskforce, but asked what form will this take beyond their respective mandates: Will both taskforces merge after June 2024? How will those duplicate or complement the Grand Bargain Participation Revolution and Localization workstreams?

Ms Katie Drew for UNHCR recommended to be more intentional and deliberate about enabling local actors' role in Collective AAP. She outlined UNHCR practice or guidance that focus on formalising enablers for local actors:
The revised guidance on the Refugee Coordination Model defines parameters for local actors in AAP coordination (Q1 2024 Launch). It is expected to:

- formalise the role and inclusion of local actors in AAP coordination mechanisms
- include specific guidelines for those to co-lead of AAP working,
- mandate meetings to be conducted in local languages.

Provide direct financial resources and support to Local actors, including refugee led organisations, so they can lead and implement AAP interventions.
Use a hybrid approach for meetings (digital/physical). Physical access to coordination structures remains challenging - restrictive access to premises. The hybrid practice for meeting during the Covid crisis has demonstrated benefits for improving access to AAP coordination.
Ms Rosie Jackson for CDAC Network also welcomed stronger links across both agendas.

1. *Collective AAP and Localisation connected agendas can rely on existing resources and knowledge*

This linked agenda can build on existing resources and learnings. Those can help investigate how to better integrate into national decision-making systems and adjust, learning from existing practice. This will help going beyond the limited focus on how to incorporate local actors into our current system.
For example, the Capacity Decision Framework for CEE/AAP developed by CDAC outlines how to use local analysis to understand national systems for Accountability and Communication, including on language, culture, and options to support capacity, to address barriers and enable local ownership and participation in CEE/AAP coordination.

2. *Significance of the two-way dimension of capacity sharing /bridging*

We need to invest in changing how 'we' work to fit national decision-making systems and not only in building their capacity to engage in 'our' humanitarian system:
- understand and learn from national actors,
- improve how we engage with N/L actors operational and programmatic capacities that have proven effective,
- define ways and resources to support the development of those in other organisations,
- re-imagine the system to foster more natural entry points.

3. *Co-leadership of AAP - N/L and international actors*

Co-leadership can be effective as long as we ensure that the discussions and the dialogues take consideration of local language and culture, etc. This changes how we envisage our response structure.

    c. Taskforce 5 Chairs remarks

The Co-Chairs of Taskforce 5 on Localisation were invited to react to the presentation and discussions.
Ms. Alix Mason Co-Chair TF5 thanked the TF2 Chairs for engaging with TF5 Chairs in recent months that allowed to explore solutions together and provide different lenses on how to support both agendas and accelerate meaningful mutually reinforcing changes. It helped identify practical ways to build on common focus and to investigate questions that can be used in TF5 webinars. For her, what was outlined echoed with the TF5 conversations especially on critical questions connecting both agendas that would be interesting to take forward:

1. **Ensure the involvement of community representatives and N/L actors in coordination mechanisms**
- The first TF5 webinar 's topic was focused on this. The next ones in 2024 can address more connecting questions and examples with an AAP lens.
- TF5 took stock from work and examples in the Global Protection Cluster and the Area of Responsibilities (AoRs). The focus has been on the participation of N/L actors into international coordination mechanism *in* countries, less on other pre-existing national coordination mechanisms. In addition, lack of participation of N/L actors can be measured through informal feedback: not joining meetings may indicate they are bored or chose not to engage. Those examples highlight

disfunctions of our coordination may be not inclusive, yet they are less documented and are responsive to what communities may share with us.

2. **Capacity sharing with and among N/L actors**

- TF5 work broaden the focus from identifying capacities gaps to leveraging the capacities those actors bring to the table. In addition, this broader focus allows to outline specific roles and functions that they may be better placed to fulfill.
- Based on shared interest in shifting power and push for system change, then roles and functions may be revised and re-distributed based on who is best place to do what.
- Then, solutions to ensures those who can do better some of those have the space and the resources to do the work. The corollary is that they may deliver in a way that is different to how we would do it but still works.

3. **Moving forward Conclusion**

- Linking those two questions we should explore what are the current mechanisms and the current capacities that can support the work and that can reinforce and strengthen AAP and community participation.

Mr Charles Antoine Hoffman Co-Chair TF5 and TF2 Member acknowledged the shared intentions and level of ambition across both agendas: the big picture power shift, changing the way we work, changing the system.

1. **Strategic and structural level**

- Seeking to improve Collective AAP outcomes we tend to prioritise the technical aspects (WGs and CFMs), leaving out bigger structural issues like participation that plays a central role in connecting both agendas.
- TF5 partners and local actors call for more and improve engagement to influence strategic decisions and have a seat at the table. Some of the solutions or progress we are offering do not necessarily address this specific issue.
- The timeframe of the IASC structures (Taskforces mandates until June 2024) requires pragmatism on the changes that can be made within the humanitarian system. The two taskforces can identify and prioritise elements for change, bottlenecks, or areas to make progress against our commitments.

2. **Technical level**

- Joint work for TF2 and TF5: a Ven diagram could outline the connecting points across the two agendas.

3. **Collaboration with TF5 and priority areas**

- Mr Hoffman commanded the meaningful exchange initiated with TF2 Chairs and further developed in this meeting with TF2 membership, as well as the content of the TF2 presentation to frame the discussions.
- The 3 proposed areas make sense. The focus on the first one will benefit the exploration in webinars. The third one is a clear a point of alignment on tracking progress at national level. It will be difficult in a short time frame but worth exploring. TF2 has been working on the results tracker and TF5 is investigating how to better measure progress at country level.

Mr Jesse wood Co-Chair TF2 concluded by underling how this dialogue was useful to help articulate better the focus and opportunities to chart forward. This can help initiate or accelerate system changes.

3. Donor engagement: proposed way forward

Ms Tanya Wood Co-Chair outlined that the stronger connections across agendas (AAP, Localisation, Nexus) strengthen the common goal of a broader power shift. This power shift requires new ways of doing things and donors play a central role in this system change. This workstream seeks opportunities to collaborate with donors and leverage their influence to bolster a Collective AAP approach:

With the reshuffle of the Grand Bargain (GB), the WS Leads engaged with its Secretariat, the GB Ambassadors, and the Participation Revolution Workstream (SCHR, PRM). The OPAG meeting in October focusing on how the IASC and the GB can reinforce and optimise their respective work. Based on this engagement the TF2 Chairs proposed the following to TF2 members for consideration:

1. TF2 to provide inputs to the GB review of its reporting targets so that they align with TF2's advocacy and discussion points with donors on Collective AAP.

2. Building on this work and on the previous donor report and donor events with donors for this workstream, TF2 organises a meeting with donors in Q1 2024 under Chatham House Rules, to develop concrete medium-term solutions to enhance collective AAP. The three suggested themes for this event were outlined:
   o Community driven priorities and adaptation,
   o Conditionality and (un)earmarking,
   o N/L actors leading Collective AAP

Ms Jennifer Doherty for ALNAP mentioned that ALNAP have released a report and plan a related event that focuses on structural issues that preventing progress on AAP and changes in the system (structure, incentives, the mindsets). Ms Doherty highlighted that ALNAP looked at these questions and how AAP takes shape and be consolidated as we tackle a changing crisis context (more protracted Crises, a reduction in funding versus needs). This initiative and report aim to speak beyond the AAP community to some of the required leadership level decisions. Ms Doherty proposed to link some of the recommendations to this workstream.

Ms. Wood Co-chair welcomed this suggestion and concluded by mentioning that TF2 should draw from the GB independent report, on GB participation revolution the ALNAP report, and the TF2 donor report written by Andy Featherstone.

Action points / next steps

→ Leads will organise a meeting in the next two weeks and develop a concept note for the event.
→ Members who are interested in shaping this event can join this meeting. Write to ben if you are.
→ Leads will report back on this in the next plenary in 2024.

4. ICRC and OCHA key take aways from Learning event

Mr David Loquercio for ICRC presented some key take aways from a learning event organised with OCHA. This event aimed at taking stock of the ICRC's deliberate investment in AAP in the last 6 years as well as interrogating some issues in depth. Mr Loquercio outlined the following issues and lessons:

- **Process, people, and principles:** The event questioned to what extent processes have become more important than the service of people and principles? Do we spend more time fulfilling processes rather than working on substance?
- **Alignment of rhetoric and practice:** The sector has invested in AAP aspirational language and commitments but the gap in practice remains. The choice is now to be less ambitious in our targets or improve practice significantly.
- **Address assumptions**: The views, biases and power positions can lead to assumptions that should be avoided: on peoples' level of familiarity on AAP and their needs; on peoples' or organisations' capacities and which ones to support.
- **Assessing peoples' needs:** Not homogeneous in a community, across national and international organisations, as well as staff.
- **Local actors' access to funding:** Echoing the disability inclusion language, could our policies make it easier for local actors to participate in decisions and access funding. Those accommodating policies that enable this access and influence can take different forms: Do we link this access to the expectation that local actors conform to international actors, or do we adapt the system to enable them to do what they do while preserving their identity, model, agility?
- **Valuing the intangible dignity and well being:** Framing our work on outcomes as judged by people affected themselves and not only around saving lives and outputs; this through quality and meaningful community engagement as an important prerequisite to how we design and deliver humanitarian assistance and protection.
- **Quality time:** Taking the time and acknowledge that meaningful engagement requires that investment. The short time frames tend to reduce opportunities to invest in this with communities and for partnerships. Local actors can add value by investing in this quality time, notably because they have less staff rotation and constraints that can hinder others.
- **Digitalisation and ethics:** Digitalisation provides new opportunities, but it also raises some serious ethical issues and personal risks that need to addressed, especially in conflict settings.
- **Climate change** will radically change the humanitarian response settings and requires thinking through the consequences on growing humanitarian needs and the impact on resources.
- **Use humanity and impartiality** as moral compass to make difficult decisions and provide ourselves impetus and momentum to work in difficult contexts. The proximity to people can help us prioritise engagement over processes. It is a prerequisite to accountability making it more tangible and allows us to hold people and ourselves to account.

For more on this event
Event webpage with all recorded sessions :
https://www.icrc.org/en/event/people-centric-humanitarian-response
Two blogs framing the event:
Navigating dilemmas in people-centric humanitarian action (icrc.org)
https://blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/2023/08/29/people-principles-processes-accountability-humanitarian-action/

Mr Jesse Wood Co-Chair commended ICRC and OCHA for drawing lessons from this event. Mr wood acknowledged the enormous appetite to have some of those substantive discussions in the Taskforce. Recognising some valuable considerations relate to the other items discussed in this meeting, Mr wood concluded that the Taskforces could draw from these types of learning into their normative work and for TF2 to inform specific workstreams.

5. Next steps and planning: end of 2023 - Q1 2024

Mr Jesse Wood Co-Chair summarised the status of the Taskforce workplan and progress to date against the commitments made to OPAG: to deliver the overall package of tools and resources. Mr Wood thanks members for their contributions and highlighted the following:

- Workstream Leads and members are encouraged to finalise their work
- TF2 members are welcome to join the donor engagement workstreams as well as others. The coordination team is available to provide briefs and help make linkages to help new members who want to be involved.
- The collective AAP framework will be finalised and shared with OPAG for endorsement at the end of the 2023. Final version will be shared with members.
- Following on the localisation discussion: We will take stock on the framing thinking. Mr wood underlined the importance of prioritising and sequencing in relation to the next phase of the IASC and the Grand Bargain developments.
- Next TF2 meeting will take place the first week of February 2024
- Mr wood thanked Pedro Freire for the development of the newsletter and announced that the next edition would come out soon.