

Working together to improve implementation and advocacy on accountability to children

ACCOUNTABILITY TO CHILDREN INITIATIVE

2024 Annual Meeting for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action

This session was designed to spur discussion and reflection on:

- Why accountability to children is important, within the broader framework of accountability to affected persons) and;
- What we can contribute and advocate for as a sector that works closely with children and communities.

The outcomes will help to shape the Alliance's Accountability to Children Initiative's priorities moving forward.

Session Introduction and Overview:

The session began with the IRC's Child Accountability Specialist, Sanjana Kuruppu, giving an overview of "Accountability to Affected Persons, accountability to children and why it matters" a recording of which is [here](#).

30 participants joined the session and identified themselves as specialists in the following areas: Child protection - 27; Child participation - 6; Child safeguarding (including PSEA) - 8; Accountability to Affected Populations - 5.

They participated in group work to either identify challenges to address, or good practices to share.



Workshop:

Participants were invited to reflect on their agency's work in this area and identify what works / enablers and barriers, positive examples and entry points for influence and amplification. They arranged themselves into language-specific groups to discuss the following topics.

"We have not specifically consulted children, but programme evidence has shown the need to do it."



Good Practices: Suggestion boxes, child-friendly spaces, storytelling through photos

Challenges:

- Lack of resources
- Little time to involve children and youth
- Different approaches required depending on age and gender
- Ethical component of working with children (uphold 'do no harm')
- Inclusive approaches with vulnerable populations (discrepancy, native language)

"We have recognised the need to specifically consult children, but barriers include lack of specialised expertise and resource gaps"



Challenges:

- Feeling we do not know how to start - perfect is the enemy of good
- In case management we do not always collect feedback
- How do we 'do participation' well? What is representative?
- Budget constraints to implement feedback collected
- Asking for feedback but not being able to follow-up

"There are some consultations with children, or some feedback channels used, but children are not involved in designing of programmes"



Good Practices:

- Engagement with children throughout the project integrated as project activity
- Consideration of safeguarding and risk analysis during the design process
- Institutionalised requirements to listen (and respond) to children's voices
- Several child participation champions
- Standardised indicators
- Better context understanding for humanitarian actors (mapping)
- Sense of engagement and belonging
- Increased trust in frontliners
- Effective in developing advocacy calls and direct advocacy with national stakeholders
- Tools and feedback mechanisms have been adapted / created for children
- Peer trainings for children and engagement of parents to explain objectives and potential benefits

Challenges:

- Concepts are not child-friendly enough
- Lack of buy-in from senior leadership in humanitarian contexts
- In sudden-onset emergency, lack of time (or perception of lack of time)
- Lack of specific tools to engage children in co-design / co-creation
- Feedback mechanisms for children not systematically used / adapted in each context
- Guidance is more relevant for development contexts not humanitarian

“Children are involved in co-creation / co-design of programmes”



Good Practices:

- Child-friendly accountability mechanism developed
- Children involved in development of child-friendly safeguarding tools
- Global requirement for children’s engagement with national leadership and programmes
- Child consultations in humanitarian settings
- Children’s participation in cluster assessments and validation
- Local-level social accountability projects for local government child accountability
- Annual reports by countries and responses in children’s participation in decision-making

Challenges:

- Dedicated funding for co-creation with children
- Resource intensive process

- Engaging diverse groups of children is difficult to manage
- Feedback loops, inclusive participation

Session Wrap-Up:

What are we doing and what needs to be advanced?

The session ended with a summary of the next steps for the Initiative, which are as follows.

Research, piloting and promotion through the Inclusive and Accountable project:

- Research to understand barriers to accountability and inclusion for children.
- Adaptation and piloting of tools on accountability to children
- Regional and global dialogues for change

General:

- Promotion of positive case studies and sharing of resources
- Webinar on accountability mechanisms targeting child protection colleagues
- Webinar on child participation targeting accountability colleagues as advocates across sectors

Session Results and Next Steps:

Participants were invited to sign up to mailings from the Accountability to Children Initiative, which will include a report from the session, notice of upcoming webinars, and updates on and products from the Initiative's flagship project Inclusive and Accountable. If you would like to sign-up to mailings, please contact: accountability@alliancecpha.org

We would love to hear your ideas about the most important things the Initiative should call attention to, and the tools, resources and actions you think the Initiative should prioritise.