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Evidence on implementation of Joint Needs Assessments (JNA) and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) by humanitarian organisations

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Question

What evidence is there that Joint Needs Assessments (JNA) and Accountability to affected Populations (AAP) have improved partner behaviour and led to better humanitarian outcomes?

Contents

1. Summary

There is little evidence on the effects of Joint Needs Assessments (JNAs) and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) on humanitarian organisations' behaviour and humanitarian outcomes. JNAs are needs assessments undertaken jointly by humanitarian agencies and organisations to prevent duplication of effort, improve co-ordination and ensure a more independent report of needs. AAP designates a number of methods to either communicate to affected populations, gather feedback, use their feedback in programming or involve them in decision-making on programmes (or a combination of these).

The value of JNAs and AAPs is supported in the humanitarian sector by documents such as the Core Humanitarian Standard and the Grand Bargain Commitments of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. However, the literature notes a number of barriers have limited their uptake. Some authors argue that AAP in particular has only been implemented in a superficial way by humanitarian organisations (Steets, Binder, Derzsi-Horvath, Krüger, & Ruppert, 2016).

Humanitarian organisation have reported undertaking a wide range of measures to include more AAP and JNA in their programmes and systems. There is some evidence of its effects on programming in particular cases (Jean & Bonino, 2013). There is also some evidence of affected populations' views on whether they are listened to or included in decision-making (*Grand Bargain: field perspectives 2018*, 2018). A few case studies of JNA implementation in programmes exist but there is little sustained analysis of these efforts beyond humanitarian organisations' self-reporting on the Grand Bargain Commitments.

The literature argues that AAP is hard to assess because of:

- The range of AAP mechanisms used in different contexts (e.g. emergency v longer-term aid; camps v non-camp settings; cultural differences).
- Divergent understandings of AAP, ranging from improved communication with affected populations, to systems of feedback, to a more thoroughgoing system of participation where affected populations have the power to decide on or veto aspects of programmes, mean it is hard to make comparisons.
- Limited implementation of AAP beyond improved communication to affected populations. Significant changes in humanitarian organisations, programmes and principles might be needed to implement thorough-going accountability (Steets, Binder, et al., 2016).
- The Grand Bargain Commitments are assessed by signatories' self-reports, and not all have targets or deadlines (Metcalfe-Hough, Fenton, & Poole, 2019).

Reports have made a number of conclusions about the best ways of implementing feedback mechanisms in different contexts, including which technologies to use, how to ensure representative feedback, and how to include it in decision-making (Price, 2018). Case studies have pointed to ways in which individual feedback mechanisms have led to programme changes in the field, such as changing rations. They have also suggested ways in which AAP might be implemented in humanitarian organisations.

The review has been unable to find evaluations of the effects of JNAs on humanitarian outcomes and organisational behaviour. Several case studies point to some barriers and enablers to JNA implementation. Synthesis reports suggest that implementation of JNAs has been limited by structural barriers in the humanitarian system (Derzsi-Horvath, Steets, & Ruppert, 2017).

This literature review is largely gender- and disability-blind.

2. Background

Joint Needs Assessments (JNA) are defined as where 'when data collection, processing and analysis form one single processes among agencies within and among clusters/sectors and result in a single report'. Coordinated and harmonised approaches are partial versions of the idea. The latter involves separate data collection which is collated into a shared analysis. The former involves planning to avoid duplication.[1]

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) is defined very differently by different actors. For some it necessitates the involvement of the affected population in decision-making on programmes, while for others it is understood as improved communication with affected populations, or better monitoring and evaluation by humanitarian agencies (Steets, Binder, et al., 2016). Studies also show that the implementation of AAP is quite context-specific and will differ according to the nature of the humanitarian intervention, the society in which it is applied, as well as the organisational structure of the agencies/NGOs implementing it.

JNAs and AAP are two widely supported goals in the humanitarian sector. They were both part of the Grand Bargain Commitments at the 2016 World Humanitarian Conference. Both measures are intended as ways to improve humanitarian action by making it more accountable to standardised measures and affected populations, respectively. Both, therefore, call for humanitarian agencies and organisations to cede some control to other stakeholders.

3. Accountability to affected populations

Background to participation

Accountability to affected populations is understood differently by different actors. This means it is difficult to measure as 'humanitarian organisations may be committed to the idea of accountability to affected populations without substantially changing the way in which they work' (Steets, Binder, et al., 2016, p. 27). Some agencies talk about accountability as CWC (communicating with affected communities), that is the dissemination of relevant information to affected people (Grünewald & Schenkenberg, 2016, p. 42). Others see AAP as leading to a more rights-based approach, and giving affected people significant power over decisions that affect them.

See: Table 1: Typology of participation, IFRC (2019: 7), https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/E_shop_4380_002_Accountability_affected_people_web_FEB.pdf

Accountability can be conceived of as upwards (to donors), horizontal (to other NGOs) and downwards (to recipients). Downwards accountability has two main reference points: the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's 'Five Commitments on Accountability to Affected

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[1] https://www.unocha.org/fr/themes/needs-assessment-and-analysis

People/Populations', and the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS). Both proposals seek to increase the ability of affected populations to give feedback, include accountability in programme design and implementation, and include traditionally marginalised groups. Both also see accountability as a voluntary commitment (Steets, Binder, et al., 2016, p. 30).

Proposals for more AAP raise a number of ethical and practical dilemmas. First, **how to ensure the fair representation of affected populations**, particularly in contexts where existing governance structures are limited or exclude certain groups. Secondly, the authors point to **the need for a consolidation of humanitarian organisations**, since it is unrealistic to ask affected populations to provide their views to a number of different humanitarian organisations. They also raise the difficult issue of, **if affected populations are to be given decision-making power, how to ensure this is used fairly, with respect to the affected community, and in line with humanitarian principles** (Steets, Binder, et al., 2016, p. 32). Thus, studies of AAP in practice point to the potential problem of community leaders dominating feedback structures (Jean & Bonino, 2013, p. 10), or communities asking for aid which does not align with humanitarian principles or best practice.

The most significant barrier to more AAP is that it potentially involves humanitarian actors giving significant power to affected populations. Accountability 'is fundamentally a political process which requires negotiating power at different levels' (Jean, 2017, p. 5). The authors of a recent political economy analysis of structural change in the humanitarian system argue that the biggest weakness of many accountability proposals is that they place voluntary limits on NGO power (Steets, Binder, et al., 2016, p. 41). By contrast, a rights-based approach would need the same accountability mechanisms as in democratic systems: elections and budget controls in the hands of affected people. They therefore note that 'there seems to be implicit agreement among [Western donors and NGOs] to not go the full way by proposing binding mechanisms'. They conclude that most of the actors with power in the current system do not have the incentive to implement a binding form of accountability. Individual donors might push accountability reforms, but this depends on their domestic situations (Steets, Binder, et al., 2016, p. 41).

The report proposes a thought experiment based on how a version of AAP could work if implemented. They start from the premise that AAP would have the following features:

- Inclusive communication, participation and feedback mechanisms are streamlined across all humanitarian agencies and the entire programming cycle.
- AAP is implemented across all crises, but there exists precedence of humanitarian principles over the preferences of affected populations in cases where they are incompatible.
- Fully realised AAP looks different in different contexts: › Camps vs. non-camp settings › Conflicts vs. natural disasters › Well-served vs. under-served crises/communities › Middle-income vs. least-developed countries.
- AAP is based on strong, but not legally binding, voluntary principles.
- Final decision-making remains with humanitarian actors.
- Representative groups act on behalf of the affected populations.
- Area-based consolidation of implementing agencies or outsourced common service .providers for communication, needs assessments and feedback.
- Blending of development and humanitarian activities.

- Donors use satisfaction data as a criterion for funding decisions.
- More flexible funding so that programmes can be changed in line with affected people's feedback.

The report **considers how such a change would affect different stakeholder groups**. It lists the potential 'wins' and 'losses' of affected populations, local authorities, humanitarian field workers, humanitarian organisations and donors (Steets, Binder, et al., 2016, p. 36). For instance, the authors suggest that it could give more power and dignity to affected populations, as well as protections from abuse by aid workers. On the negative side, it could see recipients fail to exercise power for fear of being seen as ungrateful, or end up as a superficial form of participation as the humanitarian organisations retain the final say. It could also lead to tensions among groups regarding who gets to represent them (Steets, Binder, et al., 2016, p. 36). Local governments could gain more legitimacy and support; could engage with consolidated humanitarian actors more easily; and could use aid to help their political campaigns. However, they risk losing power if the representative systems implemented for humanitarian AAP are different from existing systems. If they are not already accountable to their populations, they may be forced to be more so. They may also have to submit to more auditing processes as well as consultation (Steets, Binder, et al., 2016, p. 37).

Humanitarian field workers may benefit from better relations with affected communities and more respect, the need for less bureaucracy and the ability to spend more time with affected communities, the fulfilment of a valued ideal (AAP) for career progression, and more value for their local knowledge. They may lose out if AAP creates conflict in the community, if they lack local knowledge such as language skills. They may have to spend more time undertaking AAP work. They may lose influence, and even their job, as a result of negative feedback. They may also struggle to maintain humanitarian principles (Steets, Binder, et al., 2016, p. 38).

Humanitarian organisations may receive more funding and get more leverage with donors. Multi-mandated organisations are also likely to benefit as they can fulfil more needs. They may lose out from negative feedback, or from competition with local NGOs. Single-sector agencies may lose out if they work in consortiums. Clusters may become less important compared to area-based co-ordination. They will be threatened by the politicisation of aid. They may find it more difficult to plan aid provision because of the influence of affected peoples' views. They may have to devote more resources to AAP (Steets, Binder, et al., 2016, p. 39).

Donors may benefit from more ability to monitor implementing agencies, and get a better sense of how to prioritise needs. They may get more respect from host governments. They may benefit from consolidation in the sector, which reduces costs. They will be able to link relief and development better. On the other hand, they will be less able to align their aid with their governments' needs. If information is channelled to aid organisations rather than them, they will lose power. They may lose legitimacy in the eyes of their taxpayers. They may find that the time needed for AAP does not match their funding cycles. They would have to spend more on AAP. They would risk aid being politicised by host communities/governments (Steets, Binder, et al., 2016, p. 40).

Overall, the **authors argue that there is unlikely to be such a shift of power to affected populations because the stakeholders with the power to change the system have little incentive to do so**.

Implementation of AAP

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) commitments were made by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals in 2011.[2] They are included in the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS).[3] The World Humanitarian Conference in 2016 included AAP under 'workstream 6: A Participation Revolution: include people receiving aid in making the decisions which affect their lives' (Derzsi-Horvath et al., 2017, p. 58).

According to the official independent report from 2019, donors, **agencies and NGOs have taken some steps to integrate AAP into their organisations**. For example (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 45):

- Denmark has made the following of Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) 'obligatory for all civil society activities in fragile situations, including humanitarian interventions' (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 45).
- Canada and Sweden have revised their guidance for NGO partners to require them to identify how beneficiaries are involved in decision-making in projects they support.
- Norway, Sweden and others allow flexible funding to account for community feedback to change programmes.
- ICRC 'worked with Ground Truth Solutions to develop a toolkit for delegations to assess perceptions of their programmes among affected.

With regards to gender and disability, donors, agencies and NGOs have taken the following steps:

- Australia reported that its partners are required to submit a Gender and Disability Action Plan (GDAP) to ensure that appropriate strategies are in place to prevent and respond to sexual abuse and exploitation, and to ensure the participation of affected populations in design and implementation of programmes (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 46).
- ActionAid 'monitoring responses to ensure the meaningful participation of women in all formal and informal decision-making processes on aid, and aims to ensure that women make up at least 50% of people engaged in ActionAid-led community decision-making and consultation processes' (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 46).
- Care has developed a Rapid Gender Analysis (Latimir & Mollett, n.d.)
- The UNHCR has developed Five Refugee Women Commitments. This includes a commitment to equal participation of women in all representative committees (Latimir & Mollett, n.d.).
- Refugee Women Leadership Councils have been established by CARE in Jordan (Latimir & Mollett, n.d.)
- However, humanitarian timeframes are often cited as a barrier to women's participation (Latimir & Mollett, n.d.).

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[2] https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy_files/IASC%20Principals%20commitments%20on%20AAP%20%2528CAAP%2529March%202013.pdf

[3] https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard/history

The IFRC has taken a number of steps to implement Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) standards among Red Cross societies. It is 'working towards defining a set of CEA minimum standards and commitments'.

- 'The Movement CEA guide and toolkit is being widely adopted across the network and is now available in three languages. It has inspired localised guides such as the volunteers' guide developed by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society.'
- 'A Movement brief guide on "How to Use Social Media to Better Engage People Affected by Crises" is guiding innovative approaches particularly in urban resilience programmes.'
- 'IFRC created and hired in 2017 a new Manager position in headquarters to oversee a Community Engagement unit;'
- 'CEA is a core competency of the IFRC's Surge Competency Framework that is now informing the revision of the surge recruitment and training approaches;'
- 'CEA activities have been strengthened and scaled up in the migration response in Europe, Caribbean Hurricane response and plague outbreak operation in Madagascar among others.'
- 'The "Virtual Volunteer" website developed by IFRC to help migrants access reliable and practical information and support wherever they are, was accessed nearly 88,000 times by more than 34,000 people in Italy, Greece, Sweden and the Philippines.'

The IFRC is 'working towards defining common benchmarks to measure the quality and effectiveness of our work and a more predictable, systematic and evidence-based approach'. It is thinking about how to integrate CEA into more of its programmes and staff training. Its CEA is strongest in the assessment and planning phase with levels of information sharing and participation declining during implementation. Between 40% and 50% of National Societies report having a system for collecting feedback and complaints to improve programmes and operations. CEA is included in about 50 – 60% of National Societies organizational strategies, yearly plans, frameworks (*2018 Grand Bargain Annual Self-Reporting-International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) 1*, 2018, pp. 19–21). It has not been possible to find an analysis of the effect of these changes on programmes in more detail.

Most reviews agree that overall humanitarian organisations have made limited progress in implementing AAP in a thorough way. Despite widespread acceptance of the principle, organisations struggle to incorporate feedback into funding and projects (Jean, 2017, p. 4). The annual independent report on the Grand Bargain Commitments concluded that, according to signatories' reports 'there remains a dearth of evidence on how beneficiary feedback was actually used to inform programmes' (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019). It argues that the 'principal challenge holding back realisation of the "participation revolution"' remains the lack of progress on ensuring that feedback from affected populations is integrated into the design, delivery and review of programmes. Tellingly, only half (16) of 31 aid organisations with an operational presence reported evidence of systemic links between feedback and corrective action' (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 45).

This is partly **because of the lack of a clear definition of what constitutes AAP, as well as the fundamental shifts in power relations and organisational structures that some argue would be needed** (see above). Some also point to **the lack of a coordinated approach in developing a common service or framework for AAP** (Derzsi-Horvath et al., 2017, p. 59; Majwa & Stuart, 2017, p. 3). Although organisations such as CAFOD and CARE have developed plans to integrate CHS, while USAID and others have made plans for flexible funding that allows

providers to change programmes in line with feedback, '[l]ess progress has been made to ensure that the views of affected people are systematically considered in the monitoring and reporting of programs that are funded by these donors' (Derzsi-Horvath et al., 2017, p. 62).

While AAP may not always be incorporated into organisations' systems, a recent report notes that 'there are a number of functions – including communication, information-sharing, monitoring, reporting, community engagement and coordination with local actors – that are already carried out by agency staff and their partners on the ground' (Bonino, Jean, & Clarke, n.d., p. 110). Some examples are noted below.

Evidence from affected people

A report based on surveys in insecure environments (Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria) finds that **the majority of affected people have not been asked for opinions, feel aid agencies go through community representatives too much, and that their thoughts are not followed up on** (Ruppert, Sagmeister, & Steets, 2016, pp. 6–7). Of those recipients surveyed, 35% said they were consulted in Afghanistan, 15% in Syria, 7% in South Sudan and 4% in Somalia (Steets, Sagmeister, & Ruppert, 2016, p. 13).

Ground Truth Solutions has conducted surveys of affected populations and aid workers in seven countries, with respect to the implementation of grand bargain commitments. The surveys show **a disparity between how much affected people feel their views have been taken into account, and how much aid workers feel they have taken affected peoples' views into account**. For example, in Bangladesh 52% of affected people felt aid providers had taken their views into account. By contrast 92% of humanitarian staff felt that they regularly use 'data' on the 'views of affected people' to inform their work. The majority of staff (85%) say their organisation systematically collects the views of affected people during the design and implementation of a programme (*Bangladesh: field perspectives on the Grand Bargain*, 2019, p. 3). Similarly, in Iraq, 33% of affected people felt their views were taken into account. By contrast, 75% of aid workers surveyed felt their organisation mostly or completely took opinions of affected people into account during design and implementation of programmes (*Iraq: field perspectives on the Grand Bargain*, 2019, p. 35).

See: Figure 1: what percentage of affected people feel aid providers take their views into account? *Grand Bargain: field perspectives 2018* (2018: 21), https://groundtruthsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Grand-Bargain_briefing_note_June-2019.pdf

Some of the surveys give further information. In Haiti, those who felt their opinion was not taken into account were asked a follow-up question. 46% felt that being asked for an opinion made them feel their opinion was being taken into consideration; 23% felt that seeing a change in response to their opinion made them feel their opinion was being taken into consideration; 12% felt that satisfaction with the aid received made them feel their opinion was being considered; 11% said feeling respected made them feel their opinion mattered (*Field perspective on the Grand Bargain: Haiti*, 2019, p. 17). In Lebanon, those who felt their opinion was not taken into account were asked why: 27% said they were not consulted; 24% said their needs or priorities were not met; 15% said they were uninformed about aid provision; 13% said they did not receive a response; 10% only received an SMS about aid; 9% said aid providers do not care or listen;

3% said aid was suspended or delayed; 2% cited another reason (*Lebanon: field perspectives on the Grand Bargain*, 2018, p. 17).

The study also found '**[n]o consistent links between the type of aid people say they receive and their sense of participation**. Nor does the age and gender of respondents have much influence on whether they feel their views are considered by humanitarian organisations' (*Grand Bargain: field perspectives 2018*, 2018, p. 21).

Some of the surveys provided disaggregated data. In Bangladesh, respondents with disabilities reported feeling less informed about aid provision and more critical of the efforts to include their views in decision-making (*Bangladesh: field perspectives on the Grand Bargain*, 2019, p. 3). In Haiti, 34% of affected people felt their opinion was mostly or completely taken into account when providing support and aid to their community. However, in rural areas, this figure was 19%, in urban areas it was 36% and in coastal areas it was 47% (*Field perspective on the Grand Bargain: Haiti*, 2019, p. 17).

There was also a disparity in views about complaints mechanisms in all countries. Almost all humanitarian staff believe that if affected people make a complaint it will get answered. By contrast, in all countries except Bangladesh and Uganda, a majority of affected people who complained did not get responses. See figure 2 below.

See: Figure 2: Proportions of humanitarian staff and affected people who said they complainants would get a response, *Grand Bargain: field perspectives 2018* (2018: 23), https://groundtruthsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Grand-Bargain_briefing_note_June-2019.pdf

Ways of gathering feedback

Agencies have used different methods of collecting feedback and encouraging participation in different contexts. From a recent report, in Afghanistan, agencies and NGOs use informal feedback mechanisms. They rely on influential men, such as local elders (Ruppert et al., 2016, p. 11). Call centres and SMS were the most prevalent form of feedback in Somalia. They get more feedback from women, but still exclude the minority who do not own a phone (Ruppert et al., 2016, p. 12). International NGOs operating in Syria from Turkey rely on their partners in Syria. Syrian NGOs use local councils, internet platforms and phone networks (Ruppert et al., 2016, p. 12). The survey shows that many prefer face-to-face-channels and would prefer joint agency platforms (Ruppert, Sagmeister, Steets, pp. 6-7).

Existing **inter-agency mechanisms** include the toll-free Inter-Agency Information Call Centre in Iraq for IDPs, Transparency International's Integrated Complaints Referral Mechanism in Kenya, Interactive Community Radio at Protection of Civilian Sites in South Sudan, and the Common Feedback Project in Nepal. The CFP has a team of six who collect feedback from different agencies, as well as independent monitors (Ruppert et al., 2016, p. 16).

The Listen Learn Act (LLA) project was funded by the EU and piloted in Mali, Nepal, Ethiopia (South Sudanese refugees) and Lebanon (Syrian refugees). It used a Constituent Voice (CV) methodology developed by Ground Truth Solutions. It is based on customer relations techniques. It is meant to be used throughout the project planning and implementation to allow aid organisations to make changes based on feedback. It gets feedback on 'four dimensions of performance':

- the relevance and value of services,
- the quality of service delivery,
- the quality of relationships (trust, respect, self-efficacy and empowerment)
- how constituents perceive and experience the results of an intervention (Featherstone, 2017, iv).

The results of the pilot show the community perceptions on being given information, being involved in decision-making and being able to make complaints improved the least (Featherstone, 2017, vi). The report **does not provide specific evidence on the effects of this feedback on programming**, other than to say that organisations can correct their work in response to feedback.

There is little systematic evidence on the effect of this data on programming and NGO behaviour. Anecdotal evidence suggests that beneficiary feedback is important, but there is little sustained evidence of its effect (Price, 2018, p. 1). Regarding the Common Feedback Project (CFP) in Nepal, all that is said about the effect on programming is:

> 'It is difficult to track the impact of CFP feedback data and reports on strategic and operational decisions, but the team reports that its findings are increasingly being used. At district level, the latest CFP findings have become an agenda item at cluster and government-led meetings. A few NGOs have also started using the CFP findings as outcome-level monitoring indicators. Influencing cluster plans and programmes on the national level has proven to be more challenging' (Ruppert et al., 2016, p. 16).

How humanitarian organisation categorise and value feedback relative to other evidence is important. A recent report on the use of beneficiary feedback has 'documented examples where local feedback data was crowded-out by real-time evaluation reports, formal evaluations and commissioned studies because evaluation data are perceived as expert opinion, informed by reliable data and methods as opposed to "noise" coming from feedback channels or anecdotal examples picked up by staff' (Jean, 2017, p. 10).

Organisations need to have a certain amount of flexibility to incorporate feedback into programme changes. A report points to emergency relief in Pakistan and Nepal where feedback could not be acted on because of the pre-defined parameters of the humanitarian organisation's work set with the government and/or donors (Jean, 2017, p. 14). Those managing feedback systems also need to be clear to affected populations about what can be achieved (Jean & Bonino, 2013).

Examples of AAP used

World Vision operated a Community Help Desk (CHD) from 2009-10. The CHD committee was made up of IDP volunteers selected by camp residents on criteria set by World Vision (honesty, calmness and Arabic language ability). It worked with the food distribution committee to collect feedback and volunteers were 'trained and encouraged to resolve simple questions on the spot'. They gave log books of the feedback they collected to a food assistance monitoring and evaluation team. The team then separated the issues raised into those of immediate concern, those that could be resolved in the community, and those that need escalation to management. (Jean & Bonino, 2013, p. 14). The programme also used feedback boxes (with a two-week reply time) as well as informal channels.

The report points to a number of things changed because of feedback, such as better shelter and changes in rations. The report describes how the programme piloted a 'milling voucher' scheme, to pay for milling which affected people had been paying for with their rations up to that point. The change took two years to implement. It was accepted by head office after analysis and a pilot study: 'a compelling package of information that contained analysis of choices and preferences of IDPs, monitoring data and market survey and other assessment data' (Jean & Bonino, 2013, pp. 14–18).

The report draws several lessons from the scheme:

- The Community Help Desk worked well in an IDP camp because the affected population was relatively settled and had an understanding of their entitlements. Such a mechanism might not work as well in other situations (Jean & Bonino, 2013, p. 18).

- The question of who filters the feedback data and why is central to the working of such mechanisms, both in terms of the affected population's representatives, and the humanitarian organisation (Jean & Bonino, 2013, p. 22).

- Integrating AAP requires 'behavioural change' in staff. There are different ways of integrating feedback and accountability mechanisms into organisational structures (Jean & Bonino, 2013, p. 23).

Other examples include **the Humanitarian Call Centre (HCC) put in place by IOM in Pakistan** following floods in 2010-12. Calls were monitored and claims were investigated. This worked alongside IOM's usual systems to monitor the selection of recipients, the distribution of aid and similar issues (Bonino et al., n.d., p. 15). In addition, the Shelter Cluster had 'focal points' to which affected people could give informal feedback. This was disseminated through the cluster system. These forms of feedback led to changes in cash transfers, emergency kits and other aid items (Bonino et al., n.d., p. 16). The IFRC used a free phone line, an SMS-phone with pre-recorded messages; a radio station when working in Haiti on return and relocation, as well as 'well-being visits' and 'exit interviews' with participants relocated by the programme. A number of changes made were made to things such as shelters and programme design as a result (Bonino et al., n.d., p. 17).

According to a rapid evaluation of the response to Hurricane Matthew in Haiti, **few agencies made community participation a priority** (Grünewald & Schenkenberg, 2016, p. 11). Several 'sent advisers on accountability to affected populations in the first weeks of the response', but this was an exception. **It was easier for organisations already present in the country to focus on accountability**. Agencies that had development programmes in the area already had 'well-developed local networks with communities, local leaders… This also suggests that for community engagement to be effective, it should be built on local traditional solidarity-based systems…in which people feel a strong sense of commitment to working together' (Grünewald & Schenkenberg, 2016, p. 42).

4. Joint needs assessment

Joint Needs Assessments are called for by 'Workstream 5' of the Grand Bargain Commitments, 'Improve Joint and Impartial Needs Assessments'. This workstream is co-convened by the UN Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations [formerly the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office] (ECHO).

This literature review has been unable to locate evidence on the effect of JNAs on humanitarian outcomes or behaviour change within humanitarian organisations. However, reports on the JNA commitments in the Grand Bargain Commitments show the steps taken to develop tools and processes for JNAs.

Signatories' progress is self-monitored and evaluated by an independent report each year. Overall, the 2019 report identified 'Workstream 5', which includes JNAs, 'as having improved substantially'. Achievements included 'field testing the Joint Inter-Sectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF)' (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 18). The report points to the following steps taken:

- Co-convenors developed a 'theory of change'
- They 'clarified the actionable steps' needed; 'increased the flow of information between and outreach to participating signatories; and held a number of meetings and events to encourage greater participation' (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 41).
- The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and IOM began to develop a 'coordinated needs assessment ethos' document setting out principles for institutional approaches to working together on needs assessments at country level'
- World Bank, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), ECHO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) developed a paper outlining an approach to identifying test cases, good practice and innovative methods to bridge the analytical divide between humanitarian and development actors (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 42).
- the INSPIRE Consortium contracted by ECHO finalised a series of quality standards and evaluation criteria establishing minimum standards for multi-sectoral needs assessments (MSNAs) and humanitarian needs overviews (HNOs), which can also be used as a reference tool by any organisation (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 42).
- OCHA undertook its first Advanced Training for Analysis in Humanitarian Settings (ATAHS) for its own and other agency staff. (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 42).
- ACAPS, with OCHA and other partners, including the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS), initiated the Humanitarian Analysis Programme, which provides an individualised six-month programme of support and skills development for staff from aid organisations. (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 42).
- IOM dedicated staff to analysis and assessment (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 42).
- Save the Children developed the Basic Needs Assessment (BNA) Guidance and Toolbox and the Facilitator's Guide for Inter-sector Response Options Analysis and Planning (ROAP) (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 42).
- UK collaboration with OCHA, UNICEF and the US to use satellite data mapping of rainfall and population density to inform action to prevent cholera in Yemen (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 42).
- Pilots of the Joint Inter-Sectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF)

Gender

- The ethos document mentioned above and the quality criteria for multi-sectoral needs assessments both explicitly require data disaggregation and adequate analysis (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 43).

- A number of gender analysis and joint needs assessments with gender-disaggregated data taken across the world (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 43).

An independent report suggests that overall progress has been limited, however. It suggests that although efforts have been made to improve technical capacity to undertake JNAs, there are 'widespread concerns that the incentives will remain unchanged, undermining relevant efforts. Inter-agency competition for funding continues to obstruct improved data-sharing and collaboration in assessments' (Derzsi-Horvath et al., 2017, p. 57).

There are several main barriers to the use of JNAs:

- 'there is no agreement yet on how to evaluate the quality of needs assessments and analysis' (Derzsi-Horvath et al., 2017, p. 55).
- the need for progress on 'better data collection (i.e. assessments), better analysis of the data collected at crisis level and better comparability of data across different crises' (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 44)
- '[i]nter-agency competition for funding continues to obstruct improved data-sharing and collaboration in assessments' (Derzsi-Horvath et al., 2017, p. 57; Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 43).
- A collaborative approach has generally not been made an institutional priority (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 43).
- A lack of long-term investment (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 43).
- Aid organisations not setting aside institutional agendas to enable a collective and collaborative approach (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 43).
- a lack of confidence among aid organisations that their investments in enhancing the quality of needs assessment and analysis will result in more informed and principled allocation of resources by donors (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 41).
- A rapid review of DFID's response to Hurricane Matthew in Haiti suggest that it is hard to have a single needs assessment given the different specialisation of aid agencies and their need to raise funds. Therefore, the report suggests that agencies can conduct their own needs assessments with a greater level of specificity alongside a more general inter-agency one (Grünewald & Schenkenberg, 2016, p. 27).
- JNAs undertaken successfully in Bangladesh have involved organisations already working in the country, rather than emergencies involving INGOs entering the country at short notice (Walton-Ellery, email correspondence).
- Government involvement in JNAs can cause delays (Walton-Ellery, email correspondence).

Evidence from humanitarian workers

Ground Truth Solutions has conducted surveys of aid workers in seven countries, with respect to the implementation of grand bargain commitments. The surveys show that most staff feel they have regularly conducted JNAs.

Table 2: Percentage of humanitarian staff surveyed who said 'their organisation regularly conducted joint needs assessments with other organisations'

Country	Percentage of humanitarian staff surveyed who said 'their organisation regularly conducted joint needs assessments with other organisations'
Afghanistan	93% (n=228)
Bangladesh	76% (n=96)
Haiti	85% (n=117)
Iraq	78% (n=167)
Lebanon	74% (n=167)
Somalia	91% (n=204)
Uganda	94% (n=2-4)

Source: (*Afghanistan: Field perspectives on the Grand Bargain*, 2019, p. 49); (*Bangladesh: field perspectives on the Grand Bargain*, 2019, p. 27); (*Field perspective on the Grand Bargain: Haiti*, 2019, p. 38); (*Iraq: field perspectives on the Grand Bargain*, 2019, p. 37); (*Lebanon: field perspectives on the Grand Bargain*, 2018, p. 38); (*Somalia: field perspectives on the Grand Bargain*, 2019, p. 40); (*Uganda: field perspectives on the Grand Bargain*, 2019, p. 46).

Evidence from programmes

In Bangladesh, in 2011 ACAPS and the Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB) led a JNA with 20 NGOs for flooding in southwest Bangladesh. After workshop to discuss lessons, those involved concluded, among other things, that those undertaking JNAs should '[f]ocus less on primary data collection and have a broad assessment approach', can achieve a 'shared situation awareness' but not 'a detailed understanding of the situation' or analysis, and that the JNA should have clear objectives so that the information is useful (Walton-Ellery, 2011, 2013, p. 10). The workshop found that the experience showed that the 'tools and processes that are piloted in the field provide results and evidence that they work' and that a range of humanitarian stakeholders bought into the idea of JNAs (Walton-Ellery, 2013, p. 3).

An expert we consulted said that this joint assessment has become the norm in Bangladesh (Walton-Ellery, email correspondence).

A rapid review of DFID's response to Hurricane Matthew in Haiti in 2016 pointed **to a number of problems with joint needs assessments**. First, NGOs/agencies used different forms and needs assessments. There was a 'lack of reliable and consolidated data'. The report argues that this has since improved with the creation of a Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator (DHC) position at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (Grünewald & Schenkenberg, 2016, p. 11). The report cites as an example of good practice the DHC's sharing of data with the government and important international actors to get acceptance and act fast. A second problem was that there were different, competing data collection platforms. A MIRA (multi-cluster/sector initial rapid assessment) was not done and instead a variety of organisations collected data on different platforms, resulting in confusion (Grünewald & Schenkenberg, 2016, p. 28).

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