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| **Appendix 1. List of Definitions of Accountability.** |
| **Author/Organization** | **Definition** |
| ActionAid International | [Accountability] is about empowering people and transforming power relations.1 |
| Birnbaum ML | Accountability means the ability to account for one’s actions whether favorable or unfavorable.2 |
| Blagescu M | Accountability has been defined not only as a means through which individuals and organizations are held responsible for their decisions and actions, but also as a means by which they take internal responsibility for shaping their organizational mission and values, for opening themselves to external scrutiny and for assessing performance in relation to goals. |
| Darcy J | For the purposes of this chapter, I assume a definition [of accountability] based on an ‘accountability relationship’ model that combines two elements (i) the responsibility of an individual or organization to account for their actions and decisions, against defined criteria, to another party; (ii) the ability of that other party to call the individual or organization to account, with the expectation that this will influence future actions or that sanctions for non-compliance will follow.3 |
| Davis A | Accountability means simply being able to be held to account for one’s actions, and implies a degree of responsibility for those actions… To be accountable, one has to be clear about the specific limits of responsibility of the actor in question. Second, the objectives of the actor have to be clear and legitimate. It seems to be extremely difficult to define humanitarianism... Without the capacity to be explicit and precise about objectives, it is unlikely that accountability can be enhanced as a one-size-fits-all initiative.4In general, the better definitions of accountability incorporate two fundamental concepts: answerability and enforcement. Answerability involves the provision of information (account-giving) to those with power, to enable them to judge the agent on the appropriateness of the information provided, as well as the motives for, implementation of and outcomes (intended and unintended) from a particular action… [A]ccountability is the obligation to answer for an action. Enforcement implies that the information given is used. Those with power must determine what information is required, ensure that the information is of reasonable quality, use it to judge the action in question and ensure that that judgment is enforced (through the justice system, compensation, punishment, reward, change or learning).5 |
| de Renzio P and Mulley S | We can think of accountability as having two key components: answerability (the obligation of power-holders to justify their decisions and actions) and enforceability (the existence of mechanisms for punishing poor performance or abuse of power). Answerability requires information to be available for external actors to monitor the performance of power-holders, and their capacity to carry out such analysis. Enforceability requires mechanisms for sanctioning abuse of power or poor performance in power-holders’ agreed commitments. Therefore, the three key determinants of the functioning of accountability mechanisms are availability and use of information, mechanisms for monitoring performance, and the existence of adequate incentives for compliance.6 |
| Edwards M and Hulme D | Accountability is the means by which individuals and organizations report to a recognized authority, or authorities, and are held responsible for their actions.7 |
| Egeland J | [A]ccountability is about strengthening our capacity to save lives and alleviate suffering in a manner that affirms individual dignity… Accountability is about more than getting programs funded and the trucks rolling. It is about means as well as ends. It is about transparency of intentions and operations, principles and practices… Accountability is about these intangible but essential qualities of humanitarianism... that we will treat them as human beings, with dignity and respect… This element of recognition, of remembering those whom the world has forgotten, is an essential component of accountability.8 |
| Emergency Capacity Building Project\* | The ECB project has defined accountability thus: the process through which an organization makes a commitment to respond to and balance the needs of stakeholders in its decision-making processes and activities, and delivers against this commitment. In the ECB context this means making sure that women, men and children affected by an emergency are involved in planning, implementing and judging the response to their emergency.9‘Accountability’ is all about how an organization balances the needs of different groups in its decision-making and activities. Most NGOs have processes in place that will meet the accountability requirements of more powerful groups such as project donors or host governments. In The Good Enough Guide, however, accountability means making sure that the women, men, and children affected by an emergency are involved in planning, implementing, and judging our response to their emergency too.10Accountability describes the ways in which organizations and projects involve different groups in making decisions, managing activities, and judging and challenging results.11 |
| Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International\* | Accountability is the means through which power is used responsibly. It is a process of taking into account the views of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, and primarily the people affected by authority or power.12Accountability is the means for using power responsibly.7 |
| International Non-Governmental Organizations Charter of Accountability Ltd.\* | Accountability is the process through which an organization actively creates, and formally structures, balanced relationships with its diverse stakeholders, empowering these to hold it to account over its decisions, activities and impacts, with a view to continuously improve the organization’s delivery against its mission (One World Trust, 2011).13 |
| Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies | Accountability [is] an explanation of the meaning and reasons for actions and decisions that consider the needs, concerns and capacities and circumstances of affected parties. Accountability is about the transparency of management processes including the use of financial resources. It is about the right to be heard and the duty to respond.14 |
| Joint Standards Initiative\* | The principle of accountability requires that organizations and their staff fulfill and respect their legal and ethical responsibilities and use their power responsibly in humanitarian action. It is the process of taking account of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, primarily those who are affected by the exercise of power. Accountability from a legal, human rights perspective 'refers to the relationship of government policymakers and other duty bearers to the rights holders affected by their decisions and actions.15 |
| Larose L and Adams J | According to Professor Rob Gray, accountability is ‘the duty to provide an account ... or reckoning of those actions for which one is held responsible. Thus accountability involves ... the responsibility to undertake certain actions (or forbear from taking actions) and the responsibility to provide an account of those actions’.16 |
| Management Accounting for Non-Governmental Organizations\* | Accountability means explaining what you have done and taking responsibility for the results of your actions. This includes explaining how you have used funds.7 |
| Médecins Sans Frontières | Accountability for MSF could be defined as a proactive process of deeper "engagement" with those who we define as our stakeholders, reporting the reasons for our choices, the results of our actions and the limits, challenges and dilemmas inherent in our work, based on our responsibilities as a medical and humanitarian organization in order to change and improve our response.17 |
| One World Trust\* | Accountability [is] [t]he processes through which an organization makes a commitment to respond to and balance the needs of stakeholders in its decision-making processes and activities, and delivers against this commitment.18Accountability is the process through which an organization actively creates, and formally structures, balanced relationships with its diverse stakeholders, empowering these to hold it to account over its decisions, activities and impacts, with a view to continuously improve the organization’s delivery against its mission.19 |
| ReliefWeb | Accountability is the means by which individuals and organizations report to a recognized authority, or authorities, and are held responsible for their actions (Edwards and Hulme, 1995).20 |
| Slim H | [Accountability is] [t]he process by which an NGO holds itself openly responsible for what it believes, what it does and what it does not do in a way which shows it involving all concerned parties and actively responding to what it learns.21 |
| The Sphere Project\* | The Sphere Project understands accountability as the responsible use by humanitarian agencies of the resources at their disposal.22 |
| Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response\* | … [S]everal aspects of accountability emerged as common for the 9 organizations: Acknowledging, making visible and diminishing the power imbalance between organizations and disaster-affected persons; Involving affected persons meaningfully in key decisions and processes that influence their lives; Building relationships with affected persons that are characterized by dignity and respect; Sharing relevant information and communicating transparently (providing feedback to disaster-affected persons as well as consulting them); Behaving with integrity, keeping to commitments made and engendering trust… Accountability is understood as a means to challenge and correct the fundamental power disparity between aid provider and aid recipient.23 |
| Stockton N | [A]ccountability… [is more than just] a synonym for transparency. But accountability is also concerned with taking account of the views, interests and capacities of stakeholders in a manner that leads to substantive changes in program design and delivery.24 |
| Tsunami Evaluation Coalition\* | Accountability refers to organizations (or individuals) being held responsible to a particular group for the effects of their actions. Accountability can be to the affected population, to affected governments, to donors, to the tax-paying or donating public in donor countries, or to the broader group of humanitarian organisations.25 |
| Venkateswaran S | Accountability should not just be about the final outcome, but also the degree of responsiveness of donors, the state and implementing agencies to the local context and the needs of the community, including ensuring that communities have control over the rebuilding process.26 |
| Wisheart M andCavender A | Being accountable means that we have a shared commitment to learning as the path to excellence and to integrity in fulfilling commitments to stakeholders; we measure and report on our performance against agreed principles, policies and practices; regardless of our position in the organization, we acknowledge we have responsibility to others and accept the responsibility for our actions and their implications (World Vision International).27 |
| World Health Organization | Accountable: the person/people ultimately answerable for the correct and thorough completion of the task.281. Explicable, understandable (Oxford Pocket Dictionary, 1992). Being responsible, answerable, liable, amenable, chargeable (Roget’s International Thesaurus, 1963). 2. Obligation to demonstrate that work has been conducted in compliance with agreed rules and standards or to report fairly and accurately on performance result vis-a-vis mandated roles and/or plans (OECD). Accountability is the means used to hold persons/entities responsible for their actions.29 |
| \* initiatives or bodies that focus on improving accountability as part of their work |

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