THE LISTEN AND LEARN PROJECT
Improving aid accountability in Haiti

2014

A joint DARA/Keystone project funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
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<td>Accountability to affected populations</td>
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<td>AUSAID</td>
<td>Australian Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>CAP</td>
<td>Consolidated Appeals Process</td>
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<td>CDAC-N</td>
<td>Communications with Disaster Affected Communities Network</td>
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<td>European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department</td>
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<td>EDC</td>
<td>Education Development Center</td>
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<td>GHD</td>
<td>Good Humanitarian Donorship</td>
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<td>HAP</td>
<td>Humanitarian Accountability Partnership</td>
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<td>Humanitarian Response Index</td>
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<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</td>
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<td>International Federation of the Red Cross</td>
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<tr>
<td>INA</td>
<td>Integrated Neighborhood Approach</td>
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<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>OCHA</td>
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<td>RFP</td>
<td>Requests for Proposals</td>
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INTRODUCTION

On January 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake with an epicenter 25km from Port-au-Prince devastated the poorest country in the Americas, killing hundreds of thousands and displacing 2.1 million Haitians according to United Nations (UN). The disaster hit the most densely populated areas and the same people who were still trying to recover from a series of hurricanes in 2008. Contrary to previous disasters, the images showing collapsed buildings, corpses and desperate survivors immediately triggered an outpour of solidarity. Only the international response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami bears comparison with the huge amounts of public and private funding and resources committed to provide emergency relief and recovery to Haiti.

From traditional humanitarian donors, such as the US or the European countries, to emerging donors, such as Brazil, or thousands of charities and individuals, official and private donors committed over US$2 billion to Haiti. United Nations agencies, major international NGOs (INGO’s) and an unknown number of medium and small organizations, with little or no previous experience in humanitarian work, landed in Port-au-Prince to implement a wide range of programs all over the country. Haiti became the republic of NGOs.

Despite the unprecedented support from such a diverse range of donors and implementing organizations, the effectiveness of the response was criticized almost from the beginning, not to mention the outcomes of the decade-long international aid to Haiti. In fact, the deaths and devastation that followed the earthquake evidenced the country’s failure to enforce even minimal building standards or urban planning, itself a reflection of government neglect and corruption, and the failure of international aid.

Like in so many humanitarian contexts, the voices of the Haitians were not prioritized before or after the earthquake. Actually, the needs of vulnerable people are often interpreted when carrying out humanitarian response, not directly asked and discussed with them, leading to needs going unfulfilled.

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1 The final death toll remains unknown.
THE LISTEN AND LEARN PROJECT

The purpose of the Listen and Learn project, a joint DARA/Keystone initiative funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, is to improve the accountability of aid efforts in Haiti and to provide a model for greater beneficiary accountability in relief and recovery programming for this context and others. Our vision of success is that aid efforts in Haiti and elsewhere place the needs, concerns, and priorities of disaster-affected people at the center of program design and implementation and that their impact is measured based in meaningful part on real time feedback from the people receiving aid.

The project took place in a first phase from January 2013 to July 2014 and consisted of two components:

The first component, which was implemented by DARA, was analytical and based on face-to-face interviews with aid organizations in Haiti and phone and face-to-face interviews with representatives of governments, international organizations, NGO networks, foundations and private contractors in Washington DC, New York, London and Rome. It presented the situation in Haiti four years after the earthquake and analyzed the beneficiary accountability practices of aid actors. The analysis included bilateral and multilateral donors, UN agencies, international NGOs as well as private companies, and philanthropic organizations. The combined methodology for the donor accountability research was based on field and policy analysis tools already developed and tested to evaluate good practice and donor accountability under the auspices of DARA’s Humanitarian Response Index (HRI) over the last five years.

The second component, implemented by Keystone Accountability, was practical and deployed Keystone Accountability’s Ground Truth model with DARA’s technical support. It tested a new way to gauge the perceptions of disaster-affected people and to assist organizations to incorporate that perspective into program design and implementation. This approach, which is an adaptation of Keystone’s Constituent Voice™ methodology, provides agencies in the field with a continuous stream of accurate, comparable data on beneficiary perceptions as the basis for adjusting their priorities and programs in real time. The model uses elements of both action research from the development field and the consumer service approach. The goal is to make affected people the unit of account in aid-related decision-making by asking a representative sample of beneficiaries a few questions continuously, and then using the answers to guide improved performance.

We were fortunate to have received the support and participation of several agencies operating in Haiti (see full list in “Acknowledgements”).
STARTING POINT: HAITI, FOUR YEARS AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

Four years after the earthquake that pummeled Haiti, one of the main achievements of the humanitarian response is that 89% of the population displaced by the 2010 Earthquake have left the camps. Nevertheless, the United Nations (UN) acknowledges that significant humanitarian needs still remain, while humanitarian funding, capacities, and presence of international aid organizations were drastically reduced in recent years. The United Nations has repeatedly warned about the consequences of an early withdrawal when humanitarian assistance is still required to consolidate progress made and act as a buffer against new crises whilst strengthening local capacity.

Throughout the response there have been reports of shortcomings in the humanitarian response – mainly the lack of durable solutions, livelihoods, accommodation, communication, and that at the time of the evaluation major gaps existed in the water and sanitation and health sectors, with organizations reducing their water and sanitation and cholera operations.

The 2012 inter-agency real-time evaluation mentioned the lack of attention to cross-cutting issues, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, and disaster risk reduction, and weak inter-sectoral coordination. Furthermore, the evaluation noted that organizations see the limited level of funding as a major issue for humanitarian and recovery efforts, with emergency funding no longer available for many agencies. In addition, agencies viewed the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) as ineffective for obtaining funding and failing to give a comprehensive needs overview and a strategy to link recovery and development.

Unfortunately, the earthquake has not been the last shock Haitians suffered these past years. Rising food prices, hurricanes, and two cholera epidemics diminished the coping capacity of the population.

Who is doing what and where?

Despite the visible reduction in the number of international aid organizations working in Haiti, it is still hard to determine who is doing what and where. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Office of the Special Envoy for Haiti and the Inter-American Development Bank, and Interaction merely provide rough estimates of the number of NGOs and other aid actors working in Haiti. Interestingly, only 343 NGOs are registered with the Ministry of Planning, while OCHA’s list includes more than 800 and the Office of the Special Envoy 1,000. Only a fifth of those organizations are headquartered in Haiti. Due to their proximity, a large number of US and Canadian charities and small faith-based organizations, among others, continue to have a regular, although inconsistent, presence in Haiti.

Funding

The exact total amount of money donated to the Haiti response will never be known, so the figures from the UN’s Financial Tracking Service – US$2.5 billion in humanitarian spending in 2010 – must be seen as an underrepresentation considering only private donations reached US$ 3.1 billion.

As with so many high-visibility disasters, donor governments pledged millions to support immediate relief and recovery efforts, but pledges were slow to be fulfilled, and in many cases were not reported transparently, making them difficult to monitor. Tracking aid flows was made more complicated by the huge number of private donors, estimated at over 40% of reported aid, though the actual figures were likely quite higher.

A factor further complicating quantification is the significant role played by countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Mexico and the Dominican Republic who were among the first to send medical and rescue teams and have subsequently provided substantial bilateral aid. These emerging donors have largely worked outside established coordination mechanisms.
Cuba’s substantial humanitarian presence has gone largely un-reported. [In Annex 2, “Emerging Donors in Haitian Earthquake Response” we analyze the role of these new donors in the context of Haiti.] Finally, FTS data suggesting that private donations total US$1.24 billion, 36.8 percent of the total humanitarian assistance, is generally considered to be an under-estimate. Many INGOs reported an unprecedented response from their supporters.

UN agencies, INGOs and foreign private contractors were the primary recipients (99%) of relief and reconstruction funding, whilst the Haitian government received just 1% of the $2.29 billion disbursed in 2010 and 2011. Haitian NGOs continue to be virtually excluded from relief and recovery funding, not to mention from decision-making processes.12

Several authors dispute the so-called ‘trickle down’ effect, common in other contexts like Somalia, suggesting namely that “for donor’s civil entities, international NGOs, and UN agencies there are often multiple layers of sub-contracts and sub-grants before reaching the groups that are implementing programs on the ground in Haiti”13 and making it extremely difficult to trace how the money was spent and its real impact.

Transparency and accountability

Four years after the earthquake, considering the level of funding and the number of aid organizations and programs, evaluations and activity reports are scarce, covering only a small proportion of what was done in Haiti and its actual impact. This deficit applies both to implementing agencies and donors, including the largest one, the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

In addition, emerging donors do not report much, if any, of their funding to the UN’s Financial Tracking Service, while also opting to allocate aid through bilateral channels or partnerships instead of multi-lateral institutions. Many emerging donor countries have yet to sign on to international accountability mechanisms, such as the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative. Out of the three non-traditional donors analyzed in this accompanying report, Brazil is the only signatory to the GHD14.

The key findings from the main evaluations and reviews of the international humanitarian response in Haiti stress that in spite of the quick international response and delivery of medical care, food, water, shelter and protection, the quality of the response was hindered by a constant flow of often-inexperienced small NGOs and in-kind donations; a limited understanding of the context, particularly the urban setting; the by-passing of local authorities and civil society groups; insufficient communication with affected populations; lack of attention to how assistance could better support coping strategies; weak humanitarian leadership structures, including a weak relationship with the military; and inadequate systems for data collection and analysis. As a result, the speed and sustainability of the recovery efforts was negatively affected.15

(Not) Working with local actors

Several reports denounce the down-side of not using local experts and services (e.g. health, education), and instead bringing in non-Creole-speaking international staff with limited emergency experience or knowledge of the local context, and creating an unsustainable situation.16 17 18

The lack of a “genuine two-way communication and effective support”19 from the international response led Haitians to “feel sidelined and increasingly critical of NGOs and the overall aid effort.”20 The reputation of international aid actors in Haiti has progressively deteriorated over the last three years. Many Haitians do not distinguish between aid actors or their activities in the country, 21 possibly because they feel treated the same way by different actors. As some reports conclude, even months after the earthquake there was a fear that these feelings would quicken and “turn to deep anger and violence if ignored”.22

Recommendations from evaluations and reports
Several of the recommendations in the Disasters Emergency Committee report on *Urban disasters: Lessons from Haiti*\textsuperscript{23} stress the importance of working with local partners and warrant repetition in the context of accountability to affected people:

- “Always seek to work with and through municipalities and pre-existing service providers whenever possible to strengthen local structures. Include the building of neighborhood social and human capital and local civil society as a vital component in all program approaches and at all stages of relief and recovery.
- NGOs should take care not to compete unfairly with the local private sector, and should work where possible with local commercial providers.
- Support the ‘safe return’ of people to neighborhoods of origin, considering especially the most vulnerable, as a strategy based on urban planning principles.
- In urban response and recovery assume that professional skills and resources might be found locally. In recovery, prioritize the facilitation of long term homes over the building of short term transitional shelters.”

Other reports highlight the challenge of integrating beneficiary feedback with operational teams to ensure their opinions are taken on board and used to shape and refine programs.\textsuperscript{24}

This is exactly the starting point of our project and the aim of our work in Haiti during 2013 - 2014.
Our field research in Haiti (throughout 2013) and face-to-face and phone interviews with aid organizations in Washington D.C., New York, London and Rome confirmed the preliminary findings of the previous desk analysis of dozens of evaluations and reports: very few of the UN agencies, NGOs, charities or private contractors operating aid programs in Haiti have a functional beneficiary accountability framework or guidelines in place beyond informal accountability tools (e.g. surveys, quality control procedures to track satisfaction among beneficiaries, etc.). According to one NGO representative at the headquarters level, the lack of formal procedures in implementing accountability mechanisms makes the organization dependant on the initiative of those leading the projects on the ground, at times jeopardizing the long term sustainability as staff rotation is often high. Others pointed out that accountability to beneficiaries simply is not a priority in programming for many organizations.

This gap stands in sharp contrast with developments at the international level. Since the adoption of the Transformative Agenda in 2012 by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the main international body for humanitarian coordination among UN agencies, the Red Cross / Red Crescent Movement, and NGOs, accountability to affected populations (AAP) has become a major policy priority for the humanitarian community. The IASC Heads of Agencies adopted five commitments and an IASC working group has done further work on implementing the concept in practice. Some effort was made to follow through on the commitment to make accountability to affected populations a reality in the response to Typhoon Haiyan that struck the Philippines in November 2013. Furthermore, since 2012, a number of quality and accountability initiatives have also worked on a core humanitarian standard on quality and accountability, consolidating their various standards and guidelines. The eight commitments of the latest draft also put the concept of accountability to affected populations at the center of the standard.

In the months after the earthquake in Haiti the situation was different when, for instance, a Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) team was deployed in the country, several of the biggest international NGOs (e.g. Save the Children and Oxfam GB) had accountability teams on the ground. The Communications with Disaster Affected Communities Network (CDAC-N) was also active. But today, with donor funding leaving the country and organizations closing operations or downsizing programs, the accountability picture is bleak. We found some positive exceptions in Haiti: the Red Cross Movement, Catholic Relief Services, Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide, Oxfam GB, and the International Organization for Migration.

On the communications front, the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and a number of its national societies devoted considerable resources to communicating with affected populations. From community radios, to short message services, and internet-based tools, we were impressed to see how the IFRC is able to reach millions of Haitians. The American Red Cross has a unit solely responsible for beneficiary accountability within the organization. In the context of Haiti, the organization has a permanent beneficiary accountability team in Port-au-Prince, including an Accountability to Beneficiaries Officer and Manager, following the development of the Accountability to Beneficiaries Strategy in 2012, in what constitutes their “most advanced field operation”. Similarly, the British Red Cross set up a complaint and response mechanism and, more importantly, an Integrated Neighborhood Approach (INA) to rebuild Delmas 19, a quartier in Port-au-Prince severely affected by the earthquake, with the direct participation of local communities.
DONOR SUPPORT FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

A common complaint, mainly from international NGOs in Haiti and headquarters, is the lack of donor support for accountability initiatives. Of course, major donor governments (ECHO, DFID, SDC, AUSAID, USAID, CIDA, etc.) require some degree of beneficiary participation in the projects they fund, although in the context of Haiti “those with offices in Port-au-Prince show more interest”.

The value for money trend is also strengthening donor rhetoric around accountability. The discussion surrounding value for money derives from the greater public scrutiny to demonstrate results from foreign development aid. However, according to certain senior representatives of inter-governmental aid agencies interviewed, this trend also allows for donors to pass on this pressure to humanitarian organizations on the ground. Value for money tends to include looking at the cost-effectiveness of results, but the cost-effectiveness of humanitarian aid is not just a matter of technical efficiency. The effectiveness of humanitarian response also depends on the context. It is intended for those who need it most without discrimination. One expert on aid to Haiti stated, “On the ground, NGOs feel vilified. They’ve been criticized and donors haven’t shared the burden of this criticism with them.”

Although the main concern is to ensure taxpayer’s money is properly spent, some interviewees perceive an increase in donor interest in downward accountability in recent years. Several representatives of both non-profit and for-profit organizations that received funding early on from USAID pointed out the complete lack of beneficiary accountability in programming and contracts during the immediate response. One aid worker in the health sector stated, “There was little accountability in the early days. Many limbs were removed that did not need to be.” However, other representatives interviewed said that they have witnessed the shift in donor government attitudes in insisting for downward accountability in programming in recent years. One organization with a longstanding presence in the country that has also recently initiated a new program with USAID funding noted, “accountability towards beneficiaries was present (in the contract)... more and more donors are starting to move towards accountability towards beneficiaries and not just accountability towards taxpayers.”

Reportedly, non-governmental donors perform better, such was the case with the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), a network of 14 British NGOs that was able to raise almost US$200 million after the earthquake. On the one hand, all DEC members participate in the HAP and have a common understanding of accountability: “The means by which power is used responsibly to involve beneficiaries and stakeholders; ensure transparency; and take responsibility for our programs”. On the other hand, DEC’s Accountability Framework sets the priorities all members need to comply with and is embedded in reporting, evaluations, annual assessments and learning processes.

According to our research and interviews in Port-au-Prince and capitals, most private donors (e.g. foundations, corporations, etc.) funding aid programs in Haiti do not include specific requirements on beneficiary accountability and seem uninterested in this issue. This point is especially relevant considering the huge flows of money from private sources that were sent to Haiti after the earthquake. However, one private organization, the Boston Foundation, a US-based philanthropic foundation that established the Haiti Fund in the immediate aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, is a positive example of a private donor implementing beneficiary accountability mechanisms and involving beneficiaries in programming. For each project, the Foundation conducts two site visits during the project cycle to get feedback from community members and determine if the project needs adjustments or extra funds. They also run a Grantee Roundtable each year in Haiti, where organizations share best practices and “tell the Foundation (or the Haiti Fund) how they would like it to change in their approach to them”. This requires a certain amount of flexibility by the Foundation to meet changing needs.

Maybe donor government reluctance to invest in beneficiary accountability lies in the fact that even the most ambitious initiatives fall short in showing results. As the HAP 2010 annual report highlighted, most of the initiatives were, and continue to be, one-way only (the
Relatively soon after the earthquake, there was a deep sense of alienation and disillusion that set in among my Haitian colleagues, much of which they would not discuss with me. There was the perception that the aid agencies were just talking with themselves and they had set up a superstructure through which they were happily organized but that was deeply alienating towards Haitians. - NGO representative

There was little accountability in the early days. Many limbs were removed that did not need to be. There were 350 agencies in the health cluster in Haiti – no enforcement, no screening. – Health worker

INTEGRATING BENEFICIARY FEEDBACK

The fact that little happens after Haitians are asked about their needs is having damaging consequences for the relationship between operational agencies and donors, and affected populations, even leading to widespread “hostility against international organizations”. A recent evaluation of IFRC’s beneficiary communication program in Haiti acknowledged this problem: “Focus group interviews found that communities had been consulted prior to implementation of operational programs but they often felt processes did not fully consider their needs and suggestions. Very often they felt that, in general, aid organizations came with their minds already made up, and room to change programs goals or activities was limited, particularly once programs were in motion”. Several operational agencies interviewed did highlight that input from beneficiaries was used to improve programming either during the implementation phase or to improve future programs. Methods mentioned to gather feedback include satisfaction surveys, consultative groups, NGO participation in national strategic design (when working with government agencies in Haiti) and focus groups in evaluations. However, the variety of responses indicates that the NGO community has yet to establish a systematic way to ensure that beneficiary feedback is integrated effectively to improve current programming, and that knowledge gained through learning mechanisms and evaluations is used when planning for future interventions.

MEETING NEEDS AND OBJECTIVES: FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE

Finding the right balance in terms of “flexibility” is an issue that was highlighted several times during the study. Implementing agencies often work in volatile and difficult environments where needs and priorities change. While beneficiaries may express that their needs have shifted, field teams are often faced with challenge of completing contractual program objectives agreed with by the donors. Furthermore, strict security protocols that agencies may have in place in disaster settings are often rigid and may not allow for beneficiary feedback.

Field and headquarter interviews suggest that the flexibility of donors can vary widely. Several organizations mentioned that there is a very strong focus on completing project objectives, sometimes regardless of changes in the context. According to one interviewee working in...
I don’t think there was much consultation with local leaders in the decision making process in those early months. The vast majority of the agencies that came in after the earthquake did not speak Creole and were not aware of local culture. I think it was also difficult for agencies to find these people (local leaders).

Another challenge in integrating feedback is ensuring that the needs expressed by beneficiaries match (to the greatest extent possible) those found in need assessments. As one representative from the Center for Disease Control noted, “Individuals are never going to ask for larger infrastructure projects that are key to sustainable positive outcomes. They may not ask for vaccination posts, medical buildings, waterspouts, WASH or education.

Another explanation to the minimum attention paid to beneficiary accountability in Haiti, and elsewhere, is a lack of common understanding of what accountability to beneficiaries is and that organizations lack concrete solutions and instruments on how to implement the concept. Since nobody seems to expect anything, there is a free for all accountability situation, where “we can define accountability the way we want.” Unfortunately, this freedom is not used positively by aid organizations and, according to one interviewee, this could be because “you can’t say there is a genuine interest in beneficiary accountability” among most of the aid organizations still working in Haiti, so the issue is rarely on the agenda of coordination meetings or internal discussions.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

It was repeatedly mentioned in interviews for this project and in several other reports and evaluations that a barrier to a proper interaction with the affected population was that most of the international organizations that came to Haiti after the earthquake, whether UN agencies, NGOs or charities, had little or no knowledge of the context and the language or any previously established relationships with Haitian networks or organizations. This barrier still exists today, making beneficiary accountability a bigger challenge still.

Several interviewees said that aid agencies did not adequately consult with local leaders and communities when implementing programs, which resulted in a disconnect between aid agencies and the local populations. Local organizations and civil society continue to be marginalized and even the work with local community leaders is questioned, “no one is a community leader in everything and forever,” and extremely difficult, “criminal gangs are the ones in control of the most vulnerable neighborhoods.”

This marginalization is also seen at the government level. The vast majority of USAID funds awarded for post-quake Haiti relief and development have gone to NGOs and contractors not in Haiti, but from the United States and specifically from greater Washington D.C. area. Just 0.7 percent of USAID awards have gone directly to Haitian businesses or organizations. As one respondent stated, “Most of the work is done today by a group of big private contractors with opaque practices, no accountability and exclusive economic interests.” Another senior official of an inter-governmental financial institution was especially critical of the US Government in this respect. “The US Government model offers no support to the (Haitian) government budget and very little of the money ever leaves Washington D.C., making it so that there is almost no money going through Haitian firms.”

Previous reports and evaluations have pointed out the low capacity levels of many of the aid organizations that arrived to Haiti immediately after the earthquake. This was due both to the magnitude of the disaster and the country’s proximity to the United States which allowed for quick access. The interviews carried out for this study confirmed this, noting that many aid agencies that arrived after the earthquake were not adequately prepared to work in emergency situations. As one development worker who had been living in Haiti before the
earthquake expressed, “I was appalled at the very low level of competence”. Several interviewees pointed out that the sheer magnitude of the disaster, as well as Haiti’s proximity to the US, caused a massive influx of aid agencies and workers, especially in the initial months. “The fact that Haiti was so close to the US meant that many people came down who perhaps should not have. The development and aid community in Haiti just mushroomed up after the earthquake.”

While there are a numerous cases in which NGOs and governments failed to work directly with their Haitian counterparts, causing marginalization and mistrust towards the aid communities, we were able to identify certain cases of best practice throughout headquarters and field interviews. For example, the Education Development Center (EDC), a US-based NGO, had been working in Haiti long before 2010, focusing on out of school youths training through community-based training centers. While they were not an aid agency, when the earthquake hit, they were able to mobilize and deliver goods and supplies. “We worked on a very local level in some of the places that were hardest hit after the earthquake. Because we had that local network, after the earthquake we knew right away which neighborhoods were not getting relief such as water and food,” said one EDC worker at the time.

Another positive example was that of the aforementioned Boston Foundation, which aims to incorporate Haitian leadership and perspectives in every phase of the project. To avoid marginalization, the Foundation ensures that all Requests for Proposals (RFP) are in Haitian, Creole, French, and English in order to solicit proposals from Haitian-led organizations and grass-roots groups outside of Port-au-Prince. Hardcopies of the RFPs are also distributed throughout communities so that local NGOs in communities without Internet connection can still participate in making proposals. Finally, during the selection process, the Grant Making Committee visits the communities where the proposals come from and asks the communities how the organization has engaged with them in the design of the project.
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aid community has still not made much progress towards systematically including the perspective of Haitian people in the design and implementation of their programs.

There is a narrow but growing body of evidence that interacting with affected populations makes a difference in the quality and relevance of aid.46 It requires a step change in approach beyond listening to what beneficiaries relate through complaints mechanisms or say in focus groups. Above all, it implies using the feedback. This is the focus of the Ground Truth project piloted in Haiti and covered in Part 2 of this report.

Aid organizations in Haiti must understand beneficiary accountability as a responsibility and also as an opportunity. For that to happen, donor support is critical, but also a change in the way aid organizations work. Our research shows that in many cases organizations are not capable of using beneficiary feedback because program managers are hard out to make changes to their programs that take account of feedback or simply because they lack the expertise to do it. Others fear that dealing with beneficiary ‘complaints’ might open a Pandora’s box that could overwhelm and jeopardize their work.

Experience shows the opposite. In fact, organizations that prioritize a productive and constant dialogue with affected populations consider it crucial. The greater risk to aid programs is too little beneficiary involvement— not too much.

Beyond calling for the prioritization of beneficiary accountability in Haiti, the Listen and Learn project tried to show how to deal with this challenge in practical terms. The experience piloting the Ground Truth model with Concern Worldwide, J/P Haitian Relief Organization and Oxfam GB and beneficiaries in current relocation and integration programs is very positive, but it is just a step. We hope others will follow.

Recommendations:

This report represents a wide range of views and experiences related to incorporating beneficiary feedback to adapt to changing needs and increase the effectiveness of aid. While the research focused on the context of Haiti during the years immediately after the 2010 earthquake, these recommendations can be applied to the broader humanitarian system.

General – Aid community

- The progress that has been made in identifying accountability to affected populations as a policy priority for the broader humanitarian community must now be translated into practice. The case of Haiti demonstrates that while some priority was given to setting up accountability frameworks in the first months of the response, the added value of this work has been lost. Through their funding guidelines and policies, donors must ensure that beneficiary accountability remains a priority in operational responses on the ground and that sufficient resources are devoted to it.

- A key issue for the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit will be “Transformation through innovation”. Mobile devices and SMSs are widely used to communicate unilaterally with beneficiaries in disaster settings. Integrated Voice Response mechanisms (used by the IFRC in Haiti) now allow these agencies to collect feedback from large portions of beneficiary populations as well, establishing two-way communication. The aid community should examine the successes and shortcomings of the use of new technologies to gather real-time beneficiary feedback and identify how best to apply these technologies to the humanitarian context.

UN Agencies and INGOs

- The progress made in advancing accountability to affected populations by prioritizing this concept in the IASC Transformative Agenda is very welcome. This progress must
now be translated into establishing effective beneficiary feedback mechanisms in every humanitarian response for its full duration. The Ground Truth model is an attempt to accomplish this goal (see Part 2). Organizations working directly with beneficiary populations should have a unit, or person, responsible for collecting feedback from beneficiaries, analyzing the feedback, and incorporating it into ongoing programming. This unit, or individual, should also be responsible for maintaining the two-way communication between the agency and the beneficiaries.

- Working with local partners is paramount. The influx of foreign aid organizations with little knowledge of local culture and language has caused a deep rift between the aid community and local populations in Haiti. Implementing agencies must ensure the hiring of local staff during emergencies and collaborate with already existing local organizations. This can be crucial in gaining access to communities in need of assistance and gaining the trust of local leaders and communities.

- Aid agencies must make beneficiary accountability an integral part of programming and establish guidelines to ensure that feedback is effectively incorporated throughout the project cycle.

- Learn from others. The IFRC has made significant headway in establishing beneficiary accountability mechanisms in Haiti and other disaster settings. Aid partners should engage with the IFRC and learn how to go about incorporating accountability frameworks and tools into their respective programs.

**Donors and Philanthropic Organizations**

- Demand accountability. Donors should support and require beneficiary accountability in grant and contract decision-making processes in order to increase the level of priority organizations place on beneficiary accountability. While government donors need to be accountable to taxpayers, they should also recognize the importance of beneficiary accountability in ensuring that projects are effective and taxpayer money has been well spent.

- Find the balance. Flexibility on the part of both donors and implementing organizations is critical in the ability of organizations to take beneficiary feedback into account. Organizations must be able and willing to make changes to projects to better address beneficiaries’. Donor funding should allow for flexibility in project and program implementation to enable organizations to make adjustments to programs should beneficiary feedback so require.

- Work Local. Donors and grant making institutions should aim to work with local organizations in humanitarian and development settings. Direct engagement helps build and strengthen in-country capacity and long-term sustainability. This may include a greater initial investment in terms of time and capacity building, however, the outcome will also be greater.

- Strengthen the donor – host connection. The Haitian Government and its respective ministries were largely bypassed by the aid community after the earthquake. Much of this had to do with the sheer devastation of many of these ministries. However, in disaster settings, the international aid community must engage with national and local governments when channeling funds and taking strategic decisions. Donor and recipient governments, along with aid organizations, must continue to find ways to work harmoniously in disaster response. These actors should participate in and support initiatives such as the Disaster Response Dialogue, a platform created to improve trust and mutual cooperation in disaster settings.
Part 2: FROM GOOD INTENTIONS TO OPERATIONAL PRACTICE

Using the perspective of affected people to improve humanitarian performance in Haiti

INTRODUCTION

Accountability to affected populations has become a watchword for improved performance in humanitarian programs and is now a central feature of initiatives intended to transform humanitarian action. There is still a long way to go, however, in translating good intentions into standard operational practice. For the moment, listening to beneficiaries takes place sporadically and using their feedback to enhance performance is still rare.

One reason for the slow pace of pick-up, as DARA’s research underlines, is a lack of practical tools to facilitate the kind of two-way process that accountability implies. Especially challenging is finding a methodology that meets the twin requirements of collecting feedback in a way that is not burdensome to aid agencies or affected people, on the one hand, and translating the data into insight for program design and improvement, on the other.

The grant from the Conrad Hilton Foundation helped underwrite a yearlong pilot to test Ground Truth’s open source Constituent Voice™ methodology\(^1\) in Haiti’s protracted recovery program.\(^2\) It is the first time the CV system, which bridges the gap between listening to aid recipients and using their feedback data to affect change in the development context, has been tested systematically in the humanitarian context. Experience with the pilot provides insight about the potential of the approach as well as the obstacles that can sideline the perspective of affected populations.

Finding willing partners to test a methodology with the potential to confront them with potentially unpalatable feedback was not easy. Our partners in this pilot, Concern Worldwide, J/P HRO and Oxfam GB, deserve due recognition for agreeing to devote time and effort to testing this new approach in their programs.

The pilot provided a stream of data from stakeholders over a period long enough for aid providers to listen, consider and respond to the data, and for beneficiaries to see whether their feedback was being taken into account and determine whether it was worth their while to engage in the feedback process.

The structure of this second part of the report covers the Ground Truth approach and looks at experience in Haiti during each phase of what is a 5-step Constituent Voice cycle that proceeds from design and data collection to analysis, dialogue with affected people, and, categorically, course correction.
The report also presents conclusions drawn from the experience in Haiti and lays out some practical guidelines on how to use the CV methodology in humanitarian settings (see annex).

**APPROACH**

Ground Truth’s successive rounds of feedback collection honed in on affected people’s perceptions around three dimensions of program performance:

- Relevance and quality of services from the perspective of the end-user;
- The tone of the relationship between benefactors and beneficiaries, based on the latter’s sense of the former’s responsiveness and competence, and the level of trust between the two.
- Longer-term impact based on ‘predictive’ questions that relate directly to outcomes.

A central feature of the Constituent Voice methodology is seeing the feedback data not as a metric only (a sort of end itself) but as the basis for an ongoing dialogue that enables the aid agencies to explain to affected people what they have learned from each round of data collection and to address – with members of the affected communities – the concerns and problems raised. Following this dialogue, the agencies may make program adjustments before seeking further feedback and initiating the CV cycle over again. In this sense, CV is a kind of mutual expectation management system for implementers and affected persons.

The Ground Truth pilot in Haiti set out to test the usability and effectiveness of the CV methodology in the context of 3 separate but similar relocation and community integration programs in Port au Prince that are part of the camp transitions pillar of the Humanitarian Action Plan.
In Haiti there were four rounds of data collection over the course of a little over a year. We asked the same questions in each round, with the data set building into a narrative from which implementing agencies got regularly updated insight into how their programs were perceived by the end-users. The feedback did not provide the whole story, however, and supplemental inquiry through focus groups and interviews was encouraged to help agencies make sense of the survey data.

The Ground Truth team advised and consulted with partner agencies on designing the survey instrument, analyzing and making sense of the data, dialoguing with feedback providers, and contemplating corrective actions.

**DESIGN**

The Ground Truth micro-surveys were designed with the active collaboration of staff from the 3 partner organizations and tested with the affected communities. The questions derive from the ‘theories of change’ driving the camp transitions programs. As noted, to avoid burdening affected people with long questionnaires, the methodology calls for very few questions. In Haiti we asked just 5 questions in 4 rounds over 13 months (June 2013, November 2013, March 2014, July/August 2014). The goal was to provide a regular stream of data from stakeholders over a period long enough for aid providers to absorb the feedback and respond, and for beneficiaries to grow comfortable with the approach and become more candid in their responses.

The survey instrument is a questionnaire with short statements designed to elicit ‘actionable’ feedback without encouraging venting or provoking expectations. Each respondent is asked to say whether she or he strongly ‘agrees’, ‘partially agrees’, ‘disagrees’ or ‘strongly disagrees’ with the statements. ‘No opinion’ is a fifth option.

The statements respondents were asked to score are as follows:

1. ‘The assistance I receive from NGOs has taken my needs into account.’
2. ‘I feel safe and accepted in the place I live.’
3. ‘I will be able to pay my rent in a year’s time.’
4. ‘I am prepared to play my part in making the relocation program a success.’
5. ‘I believe that my feedback will be taken into account.’

For each question, the respondent was also asked to explain briefly why she or he scored the statement as s/he did. Additionally, gender, age and location were recorded so that data could be disaggregated by these variables along with the NGO responsible for the program.

The 5 questions, which were posed in Creole, were intended to surface perceptions on the following issues:

- Relevance and adequacy of the aid provided in meeting the needs of the affected population (Q1);
- Levels of protection in the context of peoples’ sense of safety and acceptance in places where they live – in camps initially and later outside (Q2);
- Sustainability of the program – based on peoples’ sense of their ability to pay their rent when the rental subsidy program, which is a central pillar of the relocation program, ends a year after they leave the camps (Q3);
- Willingness of the affected people to play their part in integrating their families into their new communities (Q4); and
- Their sense of whether their feedback would be taken into account – with implications for the trust and relationship quality (Q5).
Responses were then converted into a Ground Truth score based on an average weighted as follows: 1. Fully agree = 100; 2. Partially agree = 50; 3. Don’t agree = -50; 4. Don’t agree at all = -100; 5. No opinion = 0. Ground Truth scores therefore range from -100 to 100 with zero as the mid-point value. Negative scores indicate a tendency to disagree with the statement in question.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data was directly captured in face-to-face interviews by enumerators from le Fonds de Parrainage Nationale using smart phones and Devicemagic software. The responses were relayed from the data collection devices to a central data bank for processing using SPSS statistical analysis software and then exported to Excel. Enumerators worked from registration sheets provided by the 3 partner agencies providing names, addresses and GPS coordinates of beneficiaries.

The responses to the open questions (‘Why did you respond as you did?’) offer additional contextual detail and clarification. In Round 4 these responses were coded and provide an additional metric. Also in Round 4, enumerators noted respondents’ GPS coordinates to enable geo-spatial visualization of the data.

Sampling in all 4 rounds was random with the goal of interviewing a representative group in each agency’s program balanced between men and women, and older (31-65 years) and younger (18-30 years) people. At the outset, Ground Truth sought to reach 300 respondents per NGO partner. Due to the difficulties of tracking beneficiaries once they left the camps, the sample size got slightly smaller over the course of the 4 surveys. Nonetheless, it remained respectable throughout, ranging from a high of 745 respondents in the 1st round, split equally between the 3 partner programs, to some 611 in the 4th round. The frequency of data collection (x 4 per year) means that the sample size for each round is less important than for data collected at longer intervals.

Round 1

The first round of data collection, which took place in June 2013, provided a baseline with some significant differences in GT scores from location to location - and, thus, from NGO program to program. Issues that stood out as requiring further attention were:
Q1. Needs alignment: In Petionville camp, where J/PHRO was working, some 81% of respondents did not agree that the assistance they had received took their priority needs into account, yielding a GT score of -56. This compares to GT scores of 17 in the Boliman camp, where Concern Worldwide was operating, and 36 in Duval, a neighborhood where Oxfam GB was working with people who had already left camps some months earlier.

The data pointed to significant variations between perceptions on the relevance of support between the J/P HRO cohort and people in the Oxfam GB and Concern programs. It was recognized that while perceptions of needs coverage in Petionville might improve as relocation moved ahead, the difference with people in the other 2 cohorts warranted attention in the context of a retrospective program evaluation.

Q2. Safety and protection: Respondents' sense of safety and ‘acceptance’ were disturbingly low in both Boliman and Petionville camps, with GT scores of -50 and -80 respectively, compared to 88 in Duval.

Follow up deliberation with the agencies determined that although the scores were likely to improve as the relocation process moved ahead – as evidenced by better scores from people living in the Duval neighborhood – the situation was extremely grave for people who remained in the camps, and warranted urgent attention.

Another take-away was that once people were out of the camp environment, their sense of safety and acceptance increased notably – NB the results in Duval. This provided an indication to program managers that community integration projects were perhaps less urgent than activities linked, for example, to income generation.

Q3. Economic security and program sustainability: Capacity to pay rent in a year's time received low scores in all locations – notably in J/P HRO’s Petionville camp and the Duval neighborhood where Oxfam GB was working (-7 and -14 respectively). Sentiment in Concern’s Boliman camp was more positive but, with a GT score of 1, was low. Women’s perceptions, at around -15 on the GT scale, were – more than men – quite negative across all locations.

At what was still an early stage in the relocation programs, the survey results surfaced a major structural challenge in the assistance package: addressing the future capacity of beneficiaries to pay their rent and, by extension, to provide for themselves and their families. Ground Truth’s report on Round 1 flagged this as an important issue and underlined the need to establish linkages to livelihood programs and income generating opportunities. The report also recommended pushing for a review of the prevailing policy on the provision of rental subsidies with the lion’s share going to the landlord and only a small cash allocation going to the relocated families.

Q4. Engagement: In all locations, which encompass a range of living and security conditions, people said they were willing to play their part in making the relocation program a success. GT scores for ‘fully agree’ on this question are 66 in Duval, 47 in Petionville and 38 in Duval – with ‘partially agree’ at 28, 34 and 22 respectively.

When conditions were bad - as they were in the camps - people seemed prepared to engage as individuals in the hope of speeding their exit. When things got better (as was already the case in Duval), the emphasis shifted to engaging around community efforts. The preliminary analysis suggested a range of motivations the agencies needed to understand and factor into their programs.

Open questions: Focus groups and responses to the open questions (the question ‘why’) suggested that beneficiaries in all locations – men and women, older and younger – had yet-to-be-solicited ideas about their predicament and how to improve it; ideas they were keen to share.
Responses to the open questions underlined the importance of tapping the ideas of the affected population about how best to provide cash subsidies for their relocation and to pay their rent. In the focus groups that preceded Round 1, we heard many creative suggestions from the affected people about taking best advantage of these cash infusions from the international community. Suggestions included providing the rental subsidy direct to beneficiary families (rather than to landlords), paying the lump sum in smaller increments, and splitting the grant into 6 months of rental subsidy (to the landlord) and an equivalent amount in cash to the affected people so they could, for example, start a road side stall or invest the money in some other productive way.

Round 2

By the time the second round of data collection took place in November 2013, everyone surveyed was out of the camps. There were 2 particularly striking findings:

First, on Question 2, which focuses on safety and acceptance, respondents in the Concern and J/P HRO programs, who had recently left the Boliman and Petionville camps, registered significantly higher scores, suggesting they felt far less physically vulnerable than they had in the camps. Meanwhile people in OXFAM’s program area, who were re-located 6 months earlier, felt marginally less safe and accepted than they had in Round 1.

The second standout finding was that people in all 3 programs were considerably more pessimistic about their ability to pay their rent in a year’s time than they had been in Round 1. This question (Q3) aimed at surfacing peoples’ sense of economic security – or lack thereof – and thus the general sustainability of the program.

On the other questions in the survey, the headline findings from Round 2 are as follows:

On Question 1, which looks at needs coverage, respondents’ perceptions in the Concern and OXFAM cohorts showed little change while J/P HRO’s score increased significantly.

On Question 4, which focuses on peoples’ willingness to engage in the process of relocation, the score for people in Concern’s cohort, who had recently left Boliman camp, dropped significantly while those for OXFAM and J/P HRO were both up.

On Question 5, which asked people if they believed their feedback would be taken into account, Concern’s score is slightly down, OXFAM’s is unchanged, and J/P HRO’s slightly up.
Round 3

Long-term security issues in the Concern area of St. Martin precluded data collection there in Round 3 (November 2013). Results for the J/P HRO and OXFAM cohorts, however, were notably positive on needs coverage (Q1), safety and acceptance (Q2), willingness of respondents to play their part (Q4), and trust in the implementing agencies to act on feedback (Q5). Higher GT scores and convergence between demographic groups on these questions suggested a determination on the part of the affected populations to make the relocation programs work. Qualitative data, which is generated by asking each respondent the reason they responded as they did, validated this analysis.

Respondents’ concerns about their ability to pay their rent once the rental subsidies came to an end, however, reached a new low. The fact that rental subsidies were about to be phased out in the Oxfam GB neighborhoods and had longer to run in J/P HRO’s area of operation is reflected in the relative scores of the two NGOs.

Overall, the results in Round 3 suggested the need to review urgently the broader policy on rental subsidies and redouble efforts to establish linkages to development and income generating initiatives that would enable people to pay their rents – and feed, educate and provide health care for their families.

Round 4

Scores for all 3 agencies are closely bunched in Round 3 despite the different contexts in which they are operating. Results are strongly positive on priority needs coverage (Q1), safety and acceptance (Q2), willingness of respondents to play their part (Q4), and trust in the implementing agencies to act on the feedback (Q5).

Higher scores and continued convergence between demographic groups on these questions suggests a determination on the part of the affected people to make the relocation programs work.
That said, after a year tracking perceptions, respondents’ remain deeply concerned about their ability to pay their rent without a subsidy. By the time of Round 4, the subsidy program had already ended for people in the Oxfam GB program and scores had bottomed out at low levels. In the J/P HRO area, scores plunged from -50 to -70. Scores in Round 4 for the Concern cohort, which was not surveyed in Round 3 because of security concerns, aligned closely with those for people in the Oxfam GB and J/P HRO programs.

This map shows ratings for Question 3 in different parts of Port-au-Prince using GPS coordinates collected during enumeration. Delmas, where J/P HRO is active, is in the center of the map while Duval, Oxfam GB’s focus, is to the north east of the city. Each dot represents an individual’s score, ranging from red for very negative through yellow to green for positive perceptions. This visualization shows that concerns about people’s ability to pay their rent are acute in both locations. We do not have GPS coordinates for the Concern cohort in St. Martin, where most respondents were surveyed by phone, but alarm about the impending end of the subsidy program was high there too.

In terms of follow up action, the results for Round 4 reinforce the need to expedite review of the policy on rental subsidies and to intensify efforts to establish linkages to development and income generating initiatives so people are better able to pay their rents – and feed, educate and provide health care for their families.

TESTING OTHER DATA COLLECTION TECHNOLOGIES

In Round 2 we tested Interactive Voice Response (IVR) as a way of reaching large numbers of people in a cost effective way in Haiti’s low-literacy environment. Our partner was DIXIVOX, a Haitian firm specializing in interactive communication. The results, however, were disappointing. Many telephone numbers provided by the agencies did not work and often people who were not registered picked up. The explanation is that people in Port au Prince change SIM cards and numbers often, and many share phones with family and friends. This makes it hard to solicit people with any degree of accuracy. Even with advance notice (an explanatory SMS sent 5 minutes ahead of the call), people were suspicious and the quality of responses unreliable – mostly excessively positive. Even a five-question survey is too long, it seems, for this form of interrogation.

In Round 4, we had better luck with cell phones when enumerators resorted to calling people registered with Concern Worldwide in the St. Martin neighborhood after face-to-face data collection there was abandoned because of security concerns. These person-to-person calls generated good data from a representative sample.
DIALOGUE AND CLOSING THE LOOP

Dialogue based on the findings is a demanding process as agencies seek to understand the data and prioritize follow-up in face of competing demands and challenging security conditions. It builds on consultation efforts undertaken during the design phase of the programs and other forms of interaction with beneficiaries during implementation. We are still working with the agencies in Haiti on optimizing this phase of the cycle and more detail will emerge in the coming months on how they have landed it.

By way of preliminary analysis, we see different levels of effort in closing the loop.

**OXFAM GB** was a consistent and diligent loop-closer, organizing focus group discussions after each round of data collection. The agency was especially focused on people’s perceptions of their ability to pay rent without a subsidy and used the evidence to advocate for further analysis of the underlying policy. They also took note of people’s sense of relative well-being once they had left the camps and used this information to fine tune their program activities, both in terms of the focus of community events and in placing more weight on livelihood activities.

**Concern’s** efforts to close the loop were stymied by the extremely precarious security environment in the St. Martin area where they are working. After a prompt start in Round 1, they were unable to organize a dialogue session following Round 2 and had to opt out of data collection altogether in Round 3. This said, the agency did pay close attention to the findings and worked hard to hasten the relocation process in response to the very negative views on safety in the camps revealed in Round 1. They also pursued this protection focus, based on inputs from the affected population, in installing solar lamps – along with other agencies – in many parts of St. Martin.

The most significant action, which was reinforced by the survey results, was to push for an evaluation to check where people were a year or more after they left the camps – “where” in this instance means not only their geographic location but their socio-economic state more generally.

**J/P HRO** organized focus group discussions after the 1st round using a close the loop guide provided by Ground Truth (also provided to the other partners) designed to surface issues that underlay the raw data. The team did not organize dialogue sessions following rounds 2 and 3 because of the pressures of other business. Dialogue around the findings for Round 4 has yet to take place in any of the programs.

**All 3 agencies** drew some benefit from the iterative survey process. Answers to the open questions suggest that people interpreted the frequent rounds of data collection as reflecting a desire on the part of the agencies to serve them better and take their needs into account. What comes through strongly in the Round 4 data is that the people are hopeful that their feedback will be taken into account despite lack of concrete evidence that this has been the case so far.

COURSE CORRECTION

Two areas stand out in terms of course corrections.

1. **Safety and welcome**: The most positive change in perceptions during the pilot relates to perceptions of people’s personal safety and sense of being welcome in the community in which they live (Q2). The levels of vulnerability and fear revealed among people still living in camps in Round 1 (June 2013) helped galvanize two actions. The first was to encourage agencies to share these concerns with the UN and Haitian police authorities. They concurred with the affected people’s assessment of the security environment in the camps and indicated there was little they could do to improve things. This then led to the second action: a decision
to redouble efforts to speed the process of relocation from the camps. The significant positive variation in scores on this question between Rounds 1 and 2 indicates this decision was welcomed. Scores continued to climb in subsequent rounds indicating a growing sense of safety and acceptance.

2. Economic security and sustainability: Feedback over successive survey rounds points to an escalating sense of concern among affected people about their ability to pay their rent in approved housing once they are no longer eligible for the subsidy program that covers accommodation costs for a year.

The data stream on this question conveyed a consistent message. Corrective action seems to have been slow for two main reasons. The first is a concern – in the context of what are very poor communities with few opportunities to earn their way out of their predicament – that respondents may have answered as they did in the hope of having the subsidy program extended. The second, more important reason is that the rental subsidy program is part of broader government policy and individual agencies are simply not able to deviate from it unilaterally.

That being said, the Ground Truth results corroborate concerns from other sources about the limitations of the relocation program. A major study on durable solutions by IOM and the Brookings Institution published in mid-2014 raised related issues and underlined, inter alia, the need to ensure better linkages between camp closures and livelihood programs. To provide an objective analysis, the Shelter Cluster has commissioned a longitudinal evaluation to analyze the sustainability of all relocation programs. The findings of this joint study are expected in January 2015. Oxfam GB, meanwhile, is triangulating the Ground Truth findings with its own study on the relative welfare of two groups of people in the Duval neighborhood. One of the groups received the rental subsidy and participated in Oxfam GB’s livelihoods program; the control group got only the rental subsidy.

LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These lessons and recommendations flow from experience to date in testing the Ground Truth approach in Haiti. They are informed by lessons from our work in other humanitarian programs. The following points stand out:

Feedback as a key component of monitoring and evaluation

• High frequency, light touch feedback collection from affected people can provide valuable indicators of performance at modest cost that place little burden on either humanitarian agencies or affected people.

• Systematic, regular feedback from affected people can be a powerful complement to traditional forms of monitoring.

• Perceptions provide a single although important data point. Their power is best amplified by triangulation with objective data verified through other means.

Building and implementing a feedback system

• Ground Truth’s methodology brings in a broad range of beneficiary views and reduces the risk of “capture” – the ‘power of information’ concentrated in the hands of a few people as is the case with focus groups and interactions with group representatives.

• Regular data collection provides benchmarks against which to manage and continuously improve performance whereas periodic inputs are too easier to ignore.
• Feedback on program activities undertaken on a regular basis is more actionable – in terms of contributing to program course correction – than in the context of programs based on a single initiative or activity.

• Collecting feedback is one thing; acting on it is another. Using the data implies analysis, contextualization, getting back to the respondents on their views and, categorically, making course corrections.

• Socio-economic conditions are a crucial variable and, in a chronically poor place like Haiti, feedback collection and dialogue needs to explicitly factor in these contextual considerations as they relate to the target community.

• It is important not to burden beneficiaries with too many questions and to make sure they recognize it is worth their while to engage. They will do so if they see their perspective is respected and, where feasible, acted upon.

• The formulation of survey questions is extremely important. Special care is necessary to determine whether, for example, the respondent perceives the question as referring to past, current or future provision of services – or provision of services by others. Some nuances can be clarified in subsequent dialogue, but getting the questions right gets you ahead.

• Public communication is crucial in maintaining a dialogue with the broader affected community and motivating them to provide candid responses in future rounds. They need to know about the survey findings after each round as well as any programmatic changes they prompt.

• Poorly facilitated dialogue after data collection drains the enthusiasm of participants. Dialogue with affected populations must be conducted in a creative and engaging way if the process is to deliver on its promise and not become a turn-off.

Promoting a culture of adaptation

• Data collection puts issues on the agenda but follow-up action by the agencies depends a lot on the level of interest from managers. Where the latter actively follow the process, engagement is greater.

• Comparing perceptions across agencies encourages healthy competition as they crosscheck their own performance with others working on similar programs.

• The power of the data as a tool for advocacy with the government and the broader humanitarian community is attenuated in the Haiti pilot by the fact that the three partner agencies represent a sub-set of those working on the relocation and reintegration program. This may have made our 3 partner agencies less willing to raise it with their peers.

• There is a danger that agencies may explain away inconvenient findings. People will, of course, respond in a way they believe is most likely to serve their interests. This makes it all the more important to ask the right questions followed by the kind of genuine dialogue that helps clarify issues in context.

• Human resource issues can undermine the CV cycle. High staff turnover means that key perception indicators may be ignored and corrective actions not taken as new staff scramble to keep the existing program on track – and have no time to consider course corrections.
The Ground Truth approach is light touch and intuitive but it is also continuous and requires flexibility and commitment on the part of both humanitarian agencies and donors.

Responsive programming implies a change in mindset that will take root as agency managers and other aid workers become more confident in the application of the methodology and, as they do so, affected people become more candid with their feedback.

Technology as an enabler of feedback

Smart phones are efficient, effective and versatile tools for face-to-face data collection. They, speed up data collection and processing, and offer valuable additional functions such as capturing GPS coordinates for geo-spatial mapping of responses.

High cell phone penetration in Haiti was crucial in interviewing people by phone in Round 4 when security conditions ruled out face-to-face collection. But, to reach a representative sample, you need accurate phone numbers through the registration process. This is complicated in the Haitian context because people change SIM cards often and share their phones with friends and family.

Low literacy in Haiti limits the effectiveness of SMS as a vehicle for questionnaires.

The Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system we tested as an alternative to SMS is cumbersome, even with short questionnaires, and the quality of responses poor – mostly excessively positive compared to data collected face to face.

All forms of telephone inquiry (enumerators calling in person, SMS and IVR) require advance communication to overcome suspicions and drive candid participation.
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PART II

1 The copyright for CV is the same as that for Wikipedia, the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/.

2 Other supporters of the program are the IKEA Foundation and the Swiss Development Co-operation Agency (SDC)

ANNEX 1: Constituent Voice: principles and practice in humanitarian settings

A. Principles

1. Continuous, light-touch feedback data collection. Constituent Voice (CV) requires continuous, light-touch feedback data collection. To keep the response burden on affected people as light as possible, no data collection instance should take more than a few minutes to complete.

2. Content. Ground Truth has refined its light-touch methodology for data collection after consulting many humanitarian organizations, accountability groups, and beneficiaries. We also drew lessons from a review of evaluations of humanitarian operations. Our surveys focus specifically on:

   • Relationship analysis - taking the pulse of the relationship between benefactors and beneficiaries by honing in on responsiveness, competence, respect, empowerment, credibility and trust;
   • Relevance and service quality analysis - allowing beneficiaries to rank the relevance and quality of services against their actual preferences and experiences;
   • Outcomes analysis - tracking whether program activities align with long-term goals of both beneficiaries and aid agencies by triangulating standard M&E metrics with beneficiary perceptions.

3. Measurement as intervention. CV yields metrics that can be relied on for decision-making. But by demonstrating accountability it wins greater and better engagement. It always implies reporting feedback data findings back to constituents and ensuring a dialogue to interpret findings and devise corrective actions. There is a continuous cyclical movement from data to dialogue to agreed action and back to data collection.

4. CV’s categorical imperative is USE: Above all, CV is about using the feedback to take corrective actions and then to assess the effectiveness of those actions through ongoing feedback data collection. The top-level metric of CV’s own effectiveness comes from the question, “To what extent do you think [the organization] will use your feedback to improve?”.

5. Analytics. Following the categorical imperative of use, CV analyses and visualizes data in ways that enable better decisions by diverse constituents. Three defining techniques of analysis are segmentation, benchmarking and triangulation.

   • Segmentation – CV identifies three segments of constituents: those that are pleased with the organization and are committed to it; those that are neutral; and those that are less than satisfied with the relationship or performance. This allows organizations to develop appropriate strategies for each segment.
   • Benchmarking allows organizations to compare their feedback with that of other like organizations. Benchmarking is a powerful motivator of performance improvement as one can see what the highest achievers are actually doing. And no one likes being at the bottom of the cohort.
   • Triangulation correlates feedback data with independently collected outcome data, allowing for the identification of predictive or leading indicators. When managers and funders understand that the answers to CV scores today are accurate predictions of outcomes months hence, they have a strong motivation to use those scores to drive performance improvements.

6. Empowerment. CV develops capacity to generate, understand and use quantified data. Feedback data takes us beyond individual anecdote to express the range of views among
affected people while also being able to disaggregate the views of particular groups within the
community. When affected people master this language it is an immensely empowering thing.
When they can engage those responsible for humanitarian programs with quantified data that
they have created themselves they are better able to hold service providers accountable to
agreed standards and behaviours.

B. Ground Truth in practice

The methodology combines traditional social science models of participation with an
approach to data collection and analysis adapted from the customer satisfaction industry. It
has five stages:

- **The first stage** is to design the survey instrument based on what the agency or
agencies are trying to achieve, and then cross checking these goals with the affected
population through focus groups and interviews.

- **Second** comes data collection. Ground Truth's distinctive approach is to ask very few
questions (five maximum), and to ask them very frequently. 'Frequently' means at
least quarterly but preferably on a monthly basis. This makes it possible to see how
beneficiaries’ perceptions change (or don’t change) as their views are (or are not)
factored into the design of humanitarian programs. Selection of beneficiaries is
random and based either on cell phone numbers provided by beneficiaries or, for
face-to-face collection, using standard sampling techniques.

- **The third stage** is analysis of the data and building it into a dashboard that managers
in the field can understand and track.

- **The Fourth stage** is to enter into dialogue with affected communities within a couple
of weeks of data collection. This is when beneficiaries hear from the agencies about
what they have learned from the feedback and what the agencies propose to do
about it. They also get a chance to say whether they agree with the analysis of their
feedback and the proposed follow-up.

- **The fifth stage** in the cycle is course correction as operational agencies adjust their
programs to take account of the feedback and respond to it.

- Once the course corrections have had time to get underway, the cycle begins over
again, providing a continuous stream of people-based intelligence against which
humanitarian agencies can manage their programs.

Continual improvement

The approach is systematic, asking representative samples of the beneficiary population
about how they see the relevance and importance of aid. This provides an opportunity for
continual improvement as agencies make course corrections based on frequent rounds of
feedback. The average cycle for data collection is three months, with 'loop closing' sessions
following a week or so after data collection. We find that as beneficiaries recognize that
providing feedback leads to action, participation rates go up -- as does the quality of the
feedback.

Formulating Ground Truth survey questions

The process of formulating questions starts with a careful analysis of the context and the
'theory of change' of the program or intervention. This is done in close cooperation with the
managers of the humanitarian program and tested with groups of the affected population. The
latter are engaged through focus group discussions and other dialogic processes. From these
two streams of intelligence, we strive for:

- Questions likely to yield information that can be acted on – i.e. questions that are simple
and to the point.
• Questions understood in the same way across the respondent group.
• Questions that can be tracked over time and across programs or organizations to enable comparison and sense-making dialogues.
• Questions that yield enough data to enlighten and spur further investigation but not enough to drown humanitarian managers in excessive detail.

The focus is on getting reliable evidence of performance across interrelated dimensions of humanitarian performance: relevance and quality of service, relationship quality, and outcomes.

We try to create a blend of questions across these categories to get the best picture of the respondent experience of and attitudes toward the program and organizations running it. The relative utility of each category varies for each case depending on the nature of the program (notably whether it is an emergency or more protracted situation), the context, and the theory of change.

**Relevance**
The importance dimension seeks to establish the importance or relevance of the program or service to the respondent. Is it central to the respondent’s existence? Or is it relatively trivial? Is it somewhere in between? Typical questions include:
• The assistance we receive from […] takes our needs into account.
• I feel safe and protected in the place where I live. *(Asked in the context of protection concerns)*

**Quality of Service**
Questions on service quality are ideally asked as close as possible to a unique ‘touch point’, such as a food distribution centre, medical facility, or a registration point. Questions can be both general and specific.

Examples of specific questions from actual Ground Truth surveys include:
• I get the attention and support I need from […] staff.
• The time it takes to get registered and relocated is reasonable

**Relationship quality**
Relationships matter. Precisely how they matter varies according to the nature of the program, particularly whether it is an emergency or a protracted situation. The core elements of
relationship quality for most organizations in humanitarian settings relate to trust, fairness, and voice. These relationship building blocks are interrelated and overlapping. By asking related questions, some focussed on specific interactions and some general ones about the overall relationship, it is possible to compare answers and build up a nuanced picture of the organization’s relationships with beneficiaries. Overtime, relationship quality is a determinant of effectiveness and outcomes. Because there is more than one side to every relationship, we also routinely ask respondents to rate their own readiness to engage.

Common relationship questions used in our surveys include:

Trust (incorporates confidence, integrity, manner, credibility, professional ethics)
- I have confidence in [name of organization] to support our efforts to improve the lives of people in my community.
- The aid workers from [name of organization] care about us and want to help us as best they can.

Fairness (incorporates pride and respect)
- [Organization X] treats me fairly.
- People at [name of organization] treat me with courtesy, dignity, and respect.

Voice (incorporates responsiveness)
- I feel free to ask questions and say what I think.
- I believe my feedback will be taken into account.

Readiness (promoting self-reflection by the respondent)
- I am prepared to play my part in making the relocation program a success.
- Our community is coming together for the benefit of all.

Outcomes
Beneficiary perceptions of outcomes provide evidence that we can later triangulate with other measures of outcomes (evaluations and so on) to arrive at a composite outcome narrative.

- I will be able to pay my rent in a year’s time. (In the context of camp relocation cash grant program in Haiti)
- I believe my community is better prepared to cope with another natural disaster
- I am satisfied by the way the lives of people in my community are improving.
ANNEX 2: Emerging Donors in Haitian Earthquake Response

Increased attention has been given to the role of donors that have not traditionally played a formal role in humanitarian assistance. Often referred to as “new”, “emerging” or “non-traditional” donors, these terms generally refer to those countries that are not members of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and its Development Assistance Committee (DAC), but play a significant role in humanitarian and development assistance thanks to their emerging economies and increased interest in bolstering their influence within the international community.

For this study, we focused on the role of three Non-DAC donors who supported aid efforts in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake and who are continuing to increase their presence as a donor in current crises such as Syria and the Philippines. Brazil, Turkey and Saudi Arabia each made significant contributions to post-earthquake Haitian relief efforts and examining how they engaged in Haiti with the government, the aid community and local populations can provide further insight on their respective strategies, interests and growing role in the sector.

Brazil

Unlike Saudi Arabia and Turkey who have engaged minimally in Latin America, Haiti is considered one of Brazil’s traditional partners, as the emerging South American power gives most of its development aid to Lusophone countries in Africa and countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Between 2005 and 2010, Haiti was the fourth top recipient of aid from Brazil. It was one of the first countries to respond and the first to donate to the Haiti Reconstruction Fund (donating $55 million). According to the UN’s Financial Tracking Service, Brazil donated $15.2 million in 2010, $3.5 million in 2011 and $4.6 million in 2012 through both bilateral and multilateral channels. Brazil was one of the two largest non-DAC donors in the Haitian response (along with Saudi Arabia).

However, humanitarian and development assistance is not new to Brazil. As a developing country with a growing economy, Brazil has helped spearhead South-South cooperation for the last 40 years. Its partners and technical projects have increased significantly in recent years. From 2003 to 2009, the number of technical cooperation projects Brazil initiated annually increased from 23 to 413. The Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), a government body, the Ministries of Health and Social Development and public research and private institutions have all taken part in these initiatives, primarily focusing on agriculture, health and education sectors.

With Haitian health services in shambles in the wake of the 2010 earthquake, Brazil teamed up in a South-South cooperation with the Haitian Ministry of Health, and Cuba to form the Tripartite Cooperation Brazil - Cuba - Haiti, which is aimed at improving the health of Haitians and strengthening health management in Haiti, focusing on primary health, epidemiological surveillance and immunization. Brazil’s role includes the reconstruction of two specialized laboratories, training of community health workers, purchasing equipment and ambulances, and expanding vaccinations for Haitians.

Turkey

Once a major recipient of humanitarian aid, today Turkey has evolved as a major international player providing development and humanitarian assistance to people affected by crises across the globe. Most analysts attribute this expanding role to Turkey’s growing economy, its increasing international outlook and ambitions, and the rise of humanitarian crises (both natural and man-made) in its vicinity. In 2012, the last year for which there are complete
statistics, Turkey became the world’s fourth largest government donor of humanitarian aid and the largest non-Western provider of development assistance outside the OECD DAC.\(^5\)

While dubbed a “new donor”, Turkey in fact has been actively involved in responding to crises and disasters for several decades. Its first efforts were in 1985 when Turkey provided a comprehensive aid package worth $10 million to the Sahel countries. However, it was in the 2000’s that Turkey grew its humanitarian activities in line with the country’s ambitions to establish itself as an important international player. In 2011 Somalia received the largest share of Turkey’s humanitarian aid amounting to US$77.7 million, while the number of Turkish embassies in Africa grew from 12 in 2002 to 34 in 2013.\(^6\)

When administering humanitarian aid, Turkey prefers to work through the government (of the affected country) or through Turkish organisations, in particular the Turkish Red Crescent or Turkish NGOs. According to one senior diplomat interviewed, only in instances where Turkey does not have experience or a presence, will it provide assistance through UN channels (e.g. D.R. Congo or some of the Sahel countries where it supported WFP and OCHA with funding). While regional neighbors such as Pakistan, Somalia and Iraq were the largest beneficiaries of Turkish humanitarian assistance in recent years, Turkey made substantial contributions to aid efforts in Haiti in 2010. In fact, Turkey’s experience in responding to domestic earthquakes has resulted in the establishment of disaster management agencies such as the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD). Immediately after the earthquake Turkey sent four military aircraft to Haiti with search and rescue teams. Shelter was identified as one of the most crucial needs after the earthquake and the Turkish Red Crescent’s humanitarian aid team in Haiti set up 200 tents near Port-Au-Prince, providing shelter to nearly 1,200 earthquake victims.\(^7\) While most of Turkey’s aid to Haiti came through in-kind contributions, bilateral aid, and the presence of Turkish NGOs, the government also participated in the multi-lateral effort with a modest $50,000 donation to the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

**Saudi Arabia**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has emerged to become what some have referred to as the “undisputed leader” of an increasingly influential regional bloc of Arab countries engaged in humanitarian aid (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait). Saudi Arabia does not differentiate between humanitarian and development aid and sees itself as a development partner both in the region and abroad. From 2005-2009, Saudi Arabia tripled its Official Development Assistance (ODA) and accounted for 82% of total reported contributions from these Arab countries.\(^8\)

Like Turkey, Saudi Arabia prefers to channel aid through bilateral channels or in-kind contributions. One recent report cites three reasons for this modality. First, the Kingdom traditionally emphasizes foreign policy notions of sovereignty and territorial integrity of nation states. Second, dealing directly with governments strengthens bilateral ties between the Kingdom and the recipient country. Finally, again like Turkey, Saudi Arabia has gained inroads in certain regions where it enjoys considerable access and geographic and cultural familiarity with local and regional authorities, allowing for direct involvement and greater oversight over how funds are spent.\(^9\)

This was, however, not the case in Haiti, as the small Caribbean nation fell far outside Saudi Arabia’s traditional sphere of influence. Unlike some of the other “new” donors from the Middle East, Saudi Arabia did not initially act on the funding appeals after the Haitian earthquake, resulting in scrutiny from the international press.\(^10\) The Kingdom soon responded to the pressure by providing $50 million to the United Nations Emergency Relief Fund for Haiti, the largest of any non DAC donor. As Saudi Arabia lacked strong bilateral ties and an immediate presence in Haiti, the UN pooled funding mechanism proved the easiest way to allocate funding.
Perspectives of New Donors

Throughout the research period, the team met with senior government representatives of Brazil, Turkey and Saudi Arabia to discuss how they implement and prioritize humanitarian and development aid. Meetings were carried out at the field level in respective embassies for those countries with a continued presence in Port au Prince and in Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York for those without. The discussions provide insight into how these countries view their role in the humanitarian sector, and several responses confirmed (or at times challenged) previous notions on the strengths and shortcomings of each.

Brazil

Brazil's South-South cooperation and trilateral projects have gained significant attention in recent years and have offered a new approach to simultaneously engaging with recipient governments, development partners and multilateral organizations. The rise in Brazil's technical projects in recent years has been significant. According to the Brazilian Cooperation Agency, from 2003 – 2009 Brazil increased the number of technical projects it supports from 23 to 413 globally. However, this rapid growth has come at a cost. A 2010 study on Brazilian development cooperation by the Overseas Development Institute showed that monitoring and evaluation is, in general, not incorporated into Brazil's technical cooperation initiatives, mostly due to a lack of institutional capacity, and final evaluations are generally not carried out. Furthermore, the SAP (Sistema de Informações Gerenciais de Acompanhamento de Projetos) does not gather information for assessing the effectiveness of its cooperation, gathering mostly information pertaining to administrative aspects of project management.

A meeting with the Coordinator of the Tripartite Cooperation Project Brazil - Cuba – Haiti, at the Brazilian Embassy in Port-au-Prince, allowed for a better understanding of Brazil's humanitarian role and objectives in Haiti. The program is centered on providing public health services and building capacity within the Haitian Ministry of Public Health and Population (MSPP). The representative also noted that Brazil often works through multilateral agencies such UNDP or directly through recipient governments (such is the case in Haiti), given capacity limitations. As this can result in minimal direct interaction with beneficiaries, the Brazilian Development Agency depends on the MSPP to prioritize the needs of beneficiaries, and a certain level of flexibility is allowed in order to at times reprioritize needs. Finally, in an attempt to improve coordination in the health sector and avoid duplication of efforts, Brazil supports the Minister of Health in coordinating a monthly meeting with partners and other NGOs. This also serves as a forum to discuss ongoing and changing priorities in health throughout the country.

The Coordinator recognizes the need for greater accountability mechanisms within programming. "We are looking into carrying out an external evaluation of the program in 2014, however, this is too late. Programs should include a continual monitoring and evaluation focus throughout the development and must have an evaluation view from the onset of activities.” This conclusion is in line with other analysis of Brazil's humanitarian and development interventions.

Turkey

Turkey has catapulted in recent years to become the fourth largest humanitarian donor, and is now attracting growing attention and recognition. In September, 2013, Turkey was chosen to host the first ever World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, convened by UN Secretary-General. Five months later, the New York Times Magazine ran a feature article "How to Build a Perfect Refugee Camp", highlighting Turkey's efforts in providing refuge to Syrian refugees, going
beyond norms and international standards. However, Ankara’s “do-it-yourself” humanitarian approach has also drawn criticism from within the humanitarian community. By providing the majority of its aid directly through host governments and directly on the ground through Turkish NGOs (and not multilateral coordination agencies) some counterparts believe it may end up jeopardizing coordination and efficiency.

Interviews with two senior Turkish diplomats to the United Nations overseeing humanitarian affairs point to Turkey's ambitions in solidifying its role as a donor and its desire to establish a viable alternative to traditional donor counterparts. In relation to Turkey's preference for bilateral aid packages, one representative stated, “We have very good relations with OCHA, however, with all due respect, with multilateral organizations there are too many fees and management costs and not all the money reaches the beneficiaries. It is a lot easier to directly engage with a country through our embassies and provide aid directly according to the needs we see in that country. This way it is easier to see the impact our aid is having.” According to the representative, Turkey shares information on the assistance it provides with relevant UN agencies, however, only in instances where Turkey does not have experience or a presence in the host country, will it provide assistance throughout UN channels, e.g. DR Congo or some of the Sahel countries where it supported the UN WFP and OCHA with funding.

Onlookers have raised the issue of Turkey's use of aid as a tool to achieve the country's foreign policy objectives. However, according to one diplomat, Ankara's swift bilateral approach also creates trust with local actors and communities. “Combining humanitarian with development aid, diplomatic efforts (such as opening embassies) and even with economic interests (e.g. landing rights for Turkish airlines) demonstrates that Turkey is committed to a long-term engagement.”

**Saudi Arabia**

As indicated by previous research on Saudi Arabia's aid policy, our interviews with Saudi officials confirmed that the Gulf state does not differentiate between humanitarian and development aid, in which one representative gave the example of how the Saudi Development Bank at times provides funding for humanitarian issues. “Saudi Arabia has been active as a donor for decades but prefers to be seen as a “partner in development cooperation”. The official also confirmed the country’s experience and interest in providing bilateral support to host countries, although less open than their Turkish counterparts, to discuss the reasons why, simply stating, “Currently the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prioritizes bilateral aid over multilateral.”

Previous studies on Saudi Arabian aid have highlighted the lack of accountability and reporting mechanisms. Despite the country's considerable humanitarian and development assistance in recent decades, little is done to track, publish and evaluate the impact of the aid (Al-Yahya, Fustier). However, insight provided during interviews indicates a shift. “Aid transparency is becoming an absolute need for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We would like to increase our multilateral engagement in the future, but bilateral aid will continue to account for the majority. We would like to better display these contributions (bilateral) as they do not show up on public platforms such as the OCHA Financial Tracking Service,” said one official. The interviewees also highlighted the Mission’s participation in the UN’s Partnership Initiative, which is responsible for budgetary oversight. In this context, they are interested in efforts that enhance the transparency of the working of the UN, trust funds, and the aid system in general.
References Annex 2


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