Policy & Guidelines

Accountability to communities

for

ADRA Austria and Partners

	Date:	Signature President
Board approval	28 April 2020	*Reinhard Ehrif*
Revision 1		
Revision 2		
Revision 3		
Revision 4		

Enactment: 28 April 2020

The present Policy on Accountability to Communities is a binding board decision. It applies to all programming activities with ADRA Austria.

All previous handed out guidelines concerning accountability to communities are no more relevant.

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1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Description

Accountability is about being answerable to those who have invested their trust, faith, and money in ADRA. As a Nonprofit Organization, we must be accountable to our donor community. In order to ensure accountability to our donors, accountability must be ensured towards the target groups and communities we serve. Accountability to our donors is directly related to accountability to the communities we work with.

Everyone who works with ADRA, including our partners, whether as a paid staff member or a volunteer board director, has a role to play in ensuring the organization is answerable and accountable first to beneficiaries in all our interventions as well as to our donors.

ADRA Austria and its partners nurture a culture of accountability to ensure that the organization does create value for its stakeholders. Accountability is more than a retrospective assurance mechanism. It defines what we are to be held accountable for, influences what we want to achieve and how we work. It is important that accountability is being given throughout the project.

Accountability to community is the process through which ADRA and its partners enable communities to play an active role in the decision-making processes and activities, which affect them. ADRA has a genuine desire to understand the needs and interests of communities. Therefore, ADRA and its partners ensure engagement and a participatory approach to decision-making. ADRA establishes mechanisms that enable communities to give input into decisions that affect them.

Being accountable to communities is not limited to the duration of the project. As the major lessons come up after project completion, we should remain active in the project area or reserve some funds within the project budget that enable follow up visits for a certain period of time.

1.2   Purpose of this Guideline

This guide seeks to formalize a set of practices and affirmations for how ADRA will proactively promote a culture of accountability among its stakeholders. By implementing these policies and guidelines, ADRA aims
to demonstrate that staff members, volunteers or partners are not set above the communities they serve, nor are they immune to scrutiny from other organizations within the same network. Additionally, ADRA believes that **developing a more systematized accountability process will enhance its network's ability to ensure that members and partners embody their principles, and do not act in a manner that undermines their collective work or the integrity of the ADRA network.**

1.3   Definitions

Responsibility; something that it is your job or duty to deal with

Stewardship; the conducting, supervising, or managing of something, in particular the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care

Transparency; the quality of being done in an open way without secrets

Accountability; the fact of being responsible for what you do and able to give a satisfactory reason for it, or the degree to which this happens.

Accountability is the sum of taking responsibility as a good steward in a transparent manner. It is all about using power responsibly. It involves taking account of the needs, capacities, concerns and disposition of affected parties, and explaining the meaning of, and reasons for, actions and decisions. Accountability is therefore also about the right to be heard and the duty to respond.

1.4   Stakeholders

Beneficiary stands for the people we serve, those who benefit from the project. Those, whose lives we are working to change profoundly. They can be affected directly (or primary) and indirectly (or secondary) by the project.

Direct beneficiary simply means the number of people directly involved and benefitting from the project. Depending on the project, this could be beneficiaries who receive trainings, students of a school or women who received livestock. They are connected with the project.

Indirect beneficiaries are all the people who are not directly connected with the project, but will still be touched by the project and benefit from it. This could be people from the area or other members of the community or family members of the participants.

Donors are grant givers, such as foundations, state or federal agencies and every single individual that provides funding. Our mission wouldn't be possible without the support of those who partner with us to fund our work.

Partners are very important to ADRA. We pursue strong, equitable partnerships with community-based and grassroots organizations, to ensure that our work directly impacts those who need it most. Partners are also other development agencies, educational and research institutions and we partner with the government, local, regional, and national, to address common development objectives.

1.5 Objective

Complaints, misunderstandings and mistrust transform into suggestions, understanding and trust

2 VALUES

Our western culture promotes development as an endless process. For the sake of healthy livelihoods, development should slow down, where basic needs are met. The increasing number of diseases of civilization testifies that development is not all positive. It is about the human common sense and a sharp mind to recognize the development threshold. Accountability to communities ultimately leads towards moral/ethical values that empower people to take pro-active and far sighted decisions, accompanied by constant learning.

2.1 Enabling Environment

Building trust; to do ourselves what we expect from others, naturally builds trust. Trust is the foundation to build relationships, on which all our work is built.

Open dialog; trusting relationships ensure an open dialog among stakeholders and holistic consulting. The sharing of information is essential for good decision-making. Absence of information and essential insight, may lead to wasting resources, loosing time and energy and missing project objectives.

Using resources effectively; efficient and effective use of our available resources is essential to creating change and improvement among the target population in the time given. Donors are motivated to support interventions that create positive impact and added value.

Enabling learning; Transparency towards partners and target communities facilitates productive dialog and with it, essential feedback that provides valuable insights into the implementation process as well as progress and change.

Enable change & improvement; is based on learning.

2.2 Core Values

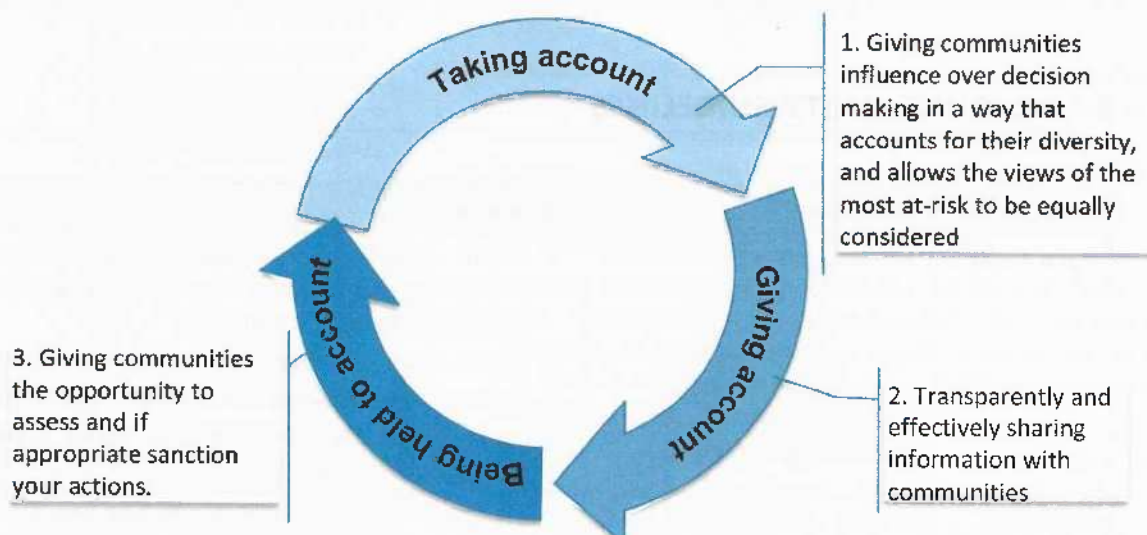Following are the values and added values to ensure accountability:

Core Value	Motivation	Attitude
Engage	Quality time to listen and contemplate needs to be assigned into all the phases of project implementation.	Understanding the needs and circumstances of our target groups takes time to listen, observe as well as communicate and exchange information
Transparency	We role-model what we teach and train for easier adaptation of new behaviour, patterns, methods or techniques	Being transparent towards individuals and communities we work with, is a positive challenge and an eye opener for us, as we learn to see our work and action through our beneficiaries' eyes as we learn to "walk the talk".
Open ears & eyes	Openness is key to learning and change. Different perspectives are important, to understand the cause of the problem rather than just its effects.	Listening, being enthusiastic, open-minded and responsive, respective and acknowledging ethnicity, taking a professional attitude of learning and the willingness to understand.
Honesty	Partners and beneficiaries can rely on our word and action.	My thinking is dominated by truth and my speech at all times without contradictions

Inclusion	Create a foundation that enables to outline a vision that leads to meaningful life perspective	Sense of identity and self-esteem
Trust	Create a foundation that enables to outline a vision that leads to meaningful life perspective	Sense of identity and self-esteem
Respect	Desire to see and understand people from a neutral perspective	Every person is precious, has skills and potential
Collaboration	We recognize that collaboration is central to our ability to multiply impact. Strengthening our engagement with the wide range of actors and communities with whom we partner to achieve shared goals, with those who fund our work, with those who mobilize with us to influence change, and with the governments that host u,s is a key priority for us.	Consultation and participation with affected communities results in better and more appropriate aid and saves more lives. For aid agencies, therefore, the pressure to deliver accountability to beneficiaries is increasing, not least because donors are starting to apply accountability as a condition of their funding.
Sensitizing	An important element of development is the awareness of western influences and the risk to addiction to it	Environmental Protection Informed access to media and electronics
Justice	Empower the oppressed, ensure access to the omitted, create voice for the voiceless, speak for the mute, integrate the outcast	ADRA and its partners have clear selection criteria for its target groups, consistently working with the poorest
Principles	Principles give stability and security at all aspects of our work	Nurturing and sharing values eventually forms principles
Mutual learning	We are eager to learn from each other	We understand ourselves as part of the learning process
Stewardship	The money we receive from donors belongs to the poor and therefore closely consults with target groups on how to best utilize it.	ADRA plans and invests its entrusted funds effectively and evaluates its created and added value

3 ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

3.1 Accountability Process

1. Giving communities influence over decision making in a way that accounts for their diversity, and allows the views of the most at-risk to be equally considered

2. Transparently and effectively sharing information with communities

3. Giving communities the opportunity to assess and if appropriate sanction your actions.

Taking account; to give communities meaningful influence over decision making in a way that is inclusive, non-discriminatory and accounts for the diversity of communities. Listening is not enough: individual organisations and humanitarian actors need to incorporate the feedback into their strategies as well as in the collective response to the crisis. While many organisations are now putting in place individual feedback mechanisms, innovative approaches to joint feedback mechanisms can reinforce transparency, mutual accountability and have a positive impact.

	harassment or threats in any form—verbal, physical, psychological, sexual or visual.	Strong policies on sexual harassment lay out the steps for reporting sexual harassment, describe what the organization should do about the complaint, and state the disciplinary consequences of harassing any employee.
Child protection	ADRA is committed to safeguarding the rights and welfare of children.	This policy ensures that the rights and welfare of children are respected, that adequate safeguards are in place to protect children from harm, and that effective mechanisms for the reporting of actions that compromise a child's safety are established.
Workplace Non-discrimination	According to the UN Declaration of Human Rights, all people are entitled to equal protection from discrimination. ADRA actively advocates against any form of discrimination.	This policy of non-discrimination, covers conditions of employment including hiring, promotion, salary, termination, and compensation of individuals, not on the basis of gender, ethnicity, religion, age, mental or physical handicap, or for any other reason.
Alcohol and Drug Use	Employees of ADRA are representatives of ADRA at all times, and must behave in a manner appropriate to this status. Substance abuse, including the abuse of prescription drugs, is incompatible with the health and safety of individual members and with ADRA's Core Principles.	This policy limits the possession, use, distribution, or manufacture of alcohol or controlled substances in the workplace and all premises used to further programmatic objectives.

5   APPLICATION

5.1   *General*

Accountability to communities is an active commitment to use power responsibly, by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people ADRA seeks to assist

Leadership/Governance: Demonstrate commitment by ensuring accountability is integrated into country strategies, programme design, monitoring and evaluations, recruitment, staff inductions, trainings and performance management, partnership agreements, and highlighted in reporting.

Transparency: Provide accessible and timely information on organizational procedures, structures and processes that may impact communities in order to support informed decisions, and engage communities in a dialogue as part of information provision.

Feedback and complaints: Actively seek the views of communities to improve policy and practice in programming, ensuring that feedback and complaints mechanisms are streamlined, appropriate and robust enough to handle (communicate, receive, process, respond to and learn from) complaints about breaches in policy and stakeholder dissatisfaction.

Participation: Enable communities to play an active role in the decisions that will impact their lives through the

5.2 Project specific

Accountability is outlined specifically at each step of the project implementation process. The project cycle includes 6 major steps:

a) **Design**; Data and information collection, mapping of problems, potentials, stakeholder and concept
b) **Planning**; project structure and resource planning, securing funds
c) **Implementation**; partnership building, mobilizing, empowering, enabling through close collaboration
d) **Monitoring**; initiate structured dialog to get real-time feedback as well as observation
e) **Evaluation**; installation of tools and methods to track change and measure success
f) **Follow up**; accompany communities by quarterly or semi-annual visits to learn about progress or set-backs
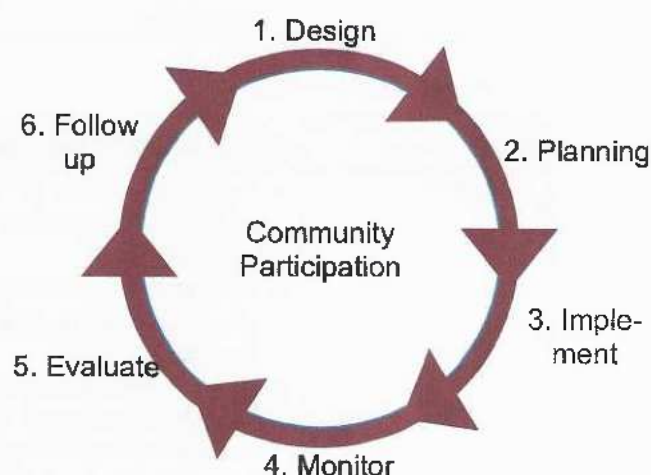
Accountability is ensured with a clear commitment from the implementer's side as well as the side of the communities. Both sides have their duties to productive collaboration and positive change. Knowing about the expected contribution enhances dialog and creates value for all parties involved. Therefore, application is divided into **Accountability by the implementers** and **Participation by target group**.

a) Project design

Step	Accountability by the implementers	Participation by target group(s)
Information sharing	• Detailed understanding about the use of information • Background and intentions about collecting information	• Ensure balanced selection of sources of information • Ensure random participation
Needs, problem, potential mapping	• Select appropriate methods • Ensure culturally sound approach • Understand the needs and interests of communities	• Ensure realistic information (no overenthusiastic promises to manipulate donor decision)
Context Analysis	• Have staffs involved that understand the local context • Staffs are aware of limitations	• Ensure the analysis is not limited to the project context (broad few) • Allow voices/viewpoints from the voiceless

b) Project Planning

Step	Accountability by the implementers	Participation by target group(s)
Strategic Management	• Consider trends, constraints, risks, problems • Consider climate change and environmental aspects • Includes clear sensitizing, mobilizing, motivating, visioning steps	• Invite elderly people and people in senior functions • Learn from technical people and policy makers • Learn about the bigger picture and build ownership
Structured Approach	• Outline the project as system that shows its components and how they are linked	• Contribute information and feedback to the outlined system
Identifying resources	• Ensure contribution from all sides as good as possible • Outline all contribution (not only financial)	• Commitments from target groups and LGs if possible • Contribute time, material
Setting priorities	• List priorities and consult with target	• Understands and agrees on set priorities

	groups and LGs	
Decision-making	• Establish mechanisms that enable communities to input into decisions that affect them.	• Ensure participation of each beneficiary group to have their own speaker

c) Project Implementation

Step	Accountability by the implementers	Participation by target group(s)
Build trust	• Transparent hiring process with direct participation/consulting or indirect information • Transparent procurement process to give insight during selection and inform the decision • Transparent beneficiary selection with mutually formulated selection criteria and identification of beneficiaries • Transparent project asset use process to allocate it for its best continuation of use • Transparency on the use of overhead (if applicable)	• If possible invite trusted senior people to attend the hiring process or consult when CV screening • Invite respected leaders from target community to attend the tender selection process • Invite senior leaders or Government officials to participate in the formulation of criteria and the selection process • Have local representatives and LG officials included to consult and ensure fair decision making • Partner participation to develop a fair key to share
Build ownership	• Don't provide resources or assets which can be provided by the target group	• Willing to contribute within the limits of the beneficiaries' capacity
Build capacity	• Share knowledge appropriate to the learning abilities of the target group • Include a practical part after theory	• Be honest if teaching or knowhow transfer is not understood • Active participation
Raise awareness/ sensitize	• Provide enough information to minimize risk of set-backs	• Actively participate and ask questions
Empower	• Create independence as fast as possible, starting with short-term gains	• Willingness to organize and mobilize the community themselves
Enable	• No direct intervening in the practical part of the intervention	• Motivated and willing to mobilize their own resources and practice themselves

d) Project Monitoring

Step	Accountability by the implementers	Participation by target group(s)
Critical thinking	• Open but critical approach while communicating with beneficiaries	• Openness and willingness to reflect its own work and project activities critically
Structured feedback	• Provide framework that outlines when and what kind of feedback is needed • Ensure participants can articulate themselves appropriately	• Commitment to give honest feedback • Commitment to participate in feedback event • Willingness to provide feedback without reminder or incentives
Stories to track progress	• Ensure the situation is well balanced outlined	• Committed to tell the full story
Correction	• Constant learning and adjustment/ correctio/realignment as needed	• Committed to learn and adjust as discussed

e) Project Evaluation

Step	Accountability by the implementers	Participation by target group(s)

Track Changes	• Being present in the field to observe and communicate with direct beneficiaries • Ask specific questions directly or by text messages	• Show and explain the changes made
Analyse impact	• Understand the activities well enough to know how and why impact will occur • Commit to write stories together with the individuals and the community	• Understand the process of change • Understand and play the role to contribute towards change
Learn lessons	• Open to analyse challenges and problems with the individual or community involved	• Be honest and provide as much as possible details that contribute towards the problem
Identify good practice	• Analyse success to understand its factors and document it • Seek ways to improve good practice	• Spend time and support the process • Being involved in finding ways to improve

f) Project Follow up

Step	Accountability by the implementers	Participation by target group(s)
Availability	• Provide beneficiaries with contact details • Being available and find the needed time in case of need	• Take responsibility and provide a semi-annual report or feedback • Take time and show up at the ADRA office
Assistance and Coaching	• Have a telephone conversation from time to time and learn about success and challenges	• Being reachable by phone
Observe continuation	• Scheduled and planned follow up meetings and/or visits after the end of the project. • Reserve extra time if passing or going to the project area	• Ensure access to ex-beneficiaries and the project area • Being available
Ensure sustainability	• The implementing partner conducts visits to ensure that the community utilizes, maintains, repairs, replicates, multiplies, etc.	• Ownership on the recipient side must grow
Build resilience	• Share new information or arrange yearly information meeting	• Show interest in additional information • Motivated to learn new things
Mutual learning	• Show interest in continuous learning to improve and change for future interventions	• Show interest in continuous learning and willingness to try new methods

6   Responses to accountability violations

6.1   Objectives

Sometimes it is not possible to prevent violations of accountability. It should also be noted that this is a living document, and more guidelines will be added to this section as necessary. The following are general recommendations since the specific content and nature of the problem may require a different course of action.

ADRA employees and partner promise to hold themselves accountable to the core principles. ADRA also realizes that accountability requires the establishment of a mechanism for receiving questions or complaints about the actions of its employees or partners vis à vis the operationalization of the core principles.

6.2   Limits

This protocol is not intended to replace any domestic statutory/official procedures that may be in place in the countries concerned, or to supplant governance mechanisms.

6.3   Procedures for complaints

ADRA Austria's workplace, projects and activities must be a safe environment that is free of any form of discrimination, harassment, violence or abuse. We work with our partners to prevent and detect corruption and mismanagement of funds.

For details of the response mechanism, see ADRA Austria Complaint and Response Mechanism Policy and Guidelines.