



The Sphere Project



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE
Pakistan / Afghanistan



HAP
Humanitarian
Accountability
Partnership

Outputs of Lessons Learned
Event Organized by CWS-P/A
in January 2011

BEST PRACTICES: Q&A IN HARSH CONDITIONS

Challenges and Issues

Providing emergency response in very harsh conditions often adds to the challenge of ensuring high quality and accountability. Kohistan, a district in KPK province of Pakistan is very conservative and a difficult terrain to access by road. At times it takes two days just to reach to the desired destination. It is also a challenge to access women who are barely visible in the community. Low level of literacy and mobility of women and girls add to the challenges when organizations try to ensure gender balance when targeting their response. Language barriers and cultural differences are hindering factors for effective and timely response. Hiring of female staff is still a challenge faced by INGOs in the area.

What worked well?

Meeting with influential people within the communities such as the religious leaders, elected representatives at the initial stage of emergency response led to community acceptance and recognition of good will of Saibaan. Continued engagement with district administration despite the challenges and biases from both sides was beneficial in getting them to be part of the emergency response. Without support of district administration it is impossible to work in these areas.

Selection criteria was developed by communities themselves, reducing element of distrust towards implementing organization. Village Development Organizations (VDOs) comprising of village committees were also formed to be part of the project cycle process including initial assessment, monitoring and evaluation. Surprise visits were conducted by senior management of Saibaan to monitor Q&A compliance and handle complaints. Complaints mechanism was set up for this purpose. Information was regularly shared in a transparent manner to avoid risk of mistrust. All staff members were oriented on the local context especially on the cultural context to honour the value of the indigenous knowledge of locals which assisted in effective implementation of programme.

Lessons Learned

- Rapid community participation and involvement is key to gaining trust & successful implementation of emergency response.
- Avoid engaging in discussions of values & life styles of people in the area to minimize clash of opinions.
- Provide detail information of project and progress reports both in written and soft copies to the government authorities to avoid duplication of work and synergize the efforts and synthesize the core competencies of all stakeholders.
- MoUs with village committees help to formalize the relationship & expectations of roles & responsibilities.
- Safety & security of staff is guarded when thorough analysis of working in harsh conditions is carried out.
- Bias & pre-conceived notions of poor experience working with government authorities may hinder collaborative efforts.

For more information, contact Sahibzada Jawad Alfaizi, Saibaan, Email: jawad.sahibzada@saibaan.org.pk