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HUMANITARIAN ACCOUNTABILITY IN POST-HAIYAN RESPONSE IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Abstrak

Studi ini mengidentifikasi alasan di balik pemanfaatan atau pengabaian pemanfaatan atas berbagai mekanisme akuntabilitas dan menyelidiki bagaimana organisasi non-pemerintah memanfaatkan dan menanggapi umpan balik dan hirauan yang diajukan. Studi kasus ini mengumpulkan data melalui penelitian pustaka dan penelitian lapangan yang dianalisis menggunakan analisis konten tematik. Temuan menunjukkan banyak hirauan yang muncul, baik sensitif atau non-sensitif, melalui nomor hotline, konsultasi masyarakat, kunjungan kantor, kotak umpan balik dan poster untuk melaporkan ketidakkonsistenan dalam pelaksanaan proyek dan menyatakan hal positif. Tekanan masyarakat, politisasi lokal, ketakutan akan pembalasan dari manajemen, dan lokasi yang jauh di mana mekanisme ini dipasang menghambat penerima manfaat untuk menyuarakan keprihatinan mereka. Secara umum, mekanisme akuntabilitas ini terbukti bermanfaat dan meningkatkan pelayanan-pengiriman dan implementasi proyek.

Kata Kunci: *akuntabilitas kemanusiaan, partisipasi penerima, pengambilan suara, umpan balik dan keluhan.*

Abstract

This study identified the reasons behind the utilization or non-utilization of various accountability mechanisms and probed how these NGOs utilized and responded to the feedback and concerns raised. This case study gathered data through desk research and field works that were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Findings showed numerous concerns rose, either sensitive or non-sensitive, through hotline numbers, community consultation, office visitation, feedback box and posters to report inconsistencies in project implementation and express positive regard. Community pressure, local politicking, fear of reprisal from management, and the distant location in which these mechanisms were posted hindered the beneficiaries from voicing out their concerns. Generally, these accountability mechanisms proved useful and improved service-delivery and project implementation.

Keywords: beneficiary participation, feedbacks and complaints, humanitarian accountability, voice capturing

Introduction

The prominence of non-government organizations (NGOs), regardless whether local, national or international, has reached to the extent that they are seen as the 'preferred channel' for providing humanitarian and life-saving goods and services in 'deliberate substitution' for the state (Edwards & Hulme, 1995). In post-disaster context, NGOs' humanitarian interventions filled the gap on service-delivery and post-disaster needs of disaster survivors. This was the case after the onslaught of super typhoon (ST) Haiyan in the Philippines in November 2013. Amidst numerous issues and controversies surrounding the early part of the rehabilitation phase, Filipinos expressed extreme disagreement in the government's inability to handle aid and implement humanitarian projects in Haiyan-affected areas and saw NGOs to effectively the gap of the government's failure. Deakins (2001) wrote that "in many areas where NGOs operate, state structures have progressively proved themselves to be inefficient and bureaucratic, fragile in the face of economic challenges, undermined by emerging ethnic conflicts or corrupted by unscrupulous politicians ('kleptocrats')".

However, the perceived reputation of NGOs has brought problems in holding them accountable to their beneficiaries. Their mysterious nature to the general public further complicates issues on accountability (Kearns, 1996). Given these issues and using ST Haiyan as the case under study, this research seeks to identify: a) The various downward accountability mechanisms utilized by NGOs during the rehabilitation phase of their Haiyan Response; b) The concerns raised by the beneficiaries through the different accountability mechanisms; c) The reasons for the utilization and non-utilization of the different accountability mechanisms by the beneficiaries; and d) The ways selected NGOs utilized and responded to the concerns raised.

This study is distinct because it focused on the relationship of the selected NGOs and their beneficiaries in terms of downward accountability by looking into the ways in which people utilized the accountability mechanisms, and the ways these NGOs responded to these, rather than only taking the presence of the feedback mechanisms as a manifestation of the practice of downward accountability. The theoretical application of this study will provide information regarding the application of the concept of 'voice' outside the context of state institutions, especially in studying unequal power relations between NGOs and their beneficiaries. This study is one of the few locally conducted studies in the Philippines to view the dynamics of downward accountability of NGOs in the aftermath of ST Haiyan making it a pioneer in downward accountability studies in the country which may immensely benefit academic and policy-making bodies. Lastly, it contributes to the limited literature of the application of downward accountability practices in NGOs committed in humanitarian interventions and hopes to provide an example in which future researchers, and the academe in general, could base or anchor their studies and researches.

Literature Review

Disasters and Humanitarian Response in Haiyan

Global warming brought about by climate change increases disasters and its effects may have significant impact (Cuaton, 2018) to communities especially in developing countries. Disasters are sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupt the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material, and economic or environmental losses that exceed the community's or society's ability to cope using its own resources (IFRC, 2018). According to a policy paper released by The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR, 2009), the number of disasters has doubled in the last 20 years. Latest data from the *World Disasters Report* released by the UN indicate that over the last ten years, more than one every day or a total of 3,571 natural hazards have been recorded, of which 84.2% had weather-related triggers affecting almost 134 million people (IFRC, 2018). The events in question spanned over 90 countries and affected over 106 million people overall. In 2014, disasters accounted for USD99.00 billion in property and collateral damages, along with immeasurable negative effects on the development of local and global socioeconomic systems (Ager et al., 2015; Monllor & Murphy, 2017).

On November 8, 2013, Super Typhoon (ST) Haiyan, locally known as Yolanda, made landfall in Central Philippines. The Category 5 typhoon was the strongest to hit land, causing unprecedented damage to nine regions, including 591 municipalities and 56 cities spread across 44 provinces, and an estimated 16 million people were affected, many of whom lost their sources of livelihood, while approximately 4.4 million were displaced (USAID, 2014). Haiyan destroyed much of Tacloban City–the capital of

Leyte Province–and surrounding towns (Mangada, 2016) while nearly 8000 people were killed, and up to 90% of physical infrastructure was damaged (Maguire, 2014).

The disaster brought numerous international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the Haiyan-stricken areas. In December 2014, a total of 107 humanitarian organizations were operating in Eastern and Central Visayas that funded and/or implemented projects worth millions of dollars of aid money. Survivors were provided with their basic needs (i.e. food, water, medicines, vitamins, mats, blankets, cooking sets, solar lights, and temporary shelter materials) through the emergency response efforts and donations of 57 countries, 29 foreign military contingents, United Nations agencies, and international non-government organizations (NGOs) (CFE-DMHA, 2014; Mangada, 2016). However, though there was no shortage of aid, relief efforts were not coordinated and humanitarian groups that rushed to affected areas independently chose their beneficiaries as the Philippine government failed to lay down guidelines for the provision of assistance. Duplication and overlapping of aid delivery was common and local government units were unaware of who was doing what, where, and when.

The timely delivery and equal distribution of assistance was exacerbated by difficulties in traveling to inaccessible areas. Amidst these issues and concerns, many have observed that the NGOs' humanitarian interventions filled the gap on service-delivery and post-disaster needs of the survivors. NGOs were the preferred actors in giving humanitarian relief goods and services because Haiyan survivors expressed extreme disagreements and criticisms in the government's inability to handle aid and implement projects in the early part of the rehabilitation phase. Deakins (2001) explained that in many areas where NGOs operate, state structures have progressively proved themselves to be inefficient and bureaucratic, fragile in the face of economic challenges, undermined by emerging ethnic conflicts or corrupted by unscrupulous politicians ('kleptocrats'). The prominence of NGOs, local, national or international, has reached to the extent that they are seen as the 'preferred channel' for providing service, in 'deliberate substitution' for the state (Edwards & Hulme, 1995). However, the perceived reputation of NGOs has brought problems in holding them accountable to their beneficiaries. Their mysterious nature to the general public further complicates issues on accountability (Kearns, 1996).

Humanitarian Accountability and Downward Accountability

Different authors offer various definitions of accountability (Ebrahim, 2003). According to Paul (1991), accountability means "holding individuals and organizations responsible" by measuring its performance as "objectively as possible". For this research the author adopted the definition of Goetz & Jenkins (2007) who best thought accountability as a "relationship between two actors that is characterized by answerability (the requirement that one actor justify his actions) and enforcement (the right granted to the other actor to impose penalties if these actions, or the justification thereof, are deemed unsatisfactory)".

Existing literature of NGO accountability involved in humanitarian interventions focus primarily on their upward accountability, such as governments and private individual or group donors, and less on downward accountability or accountability to their beneficiaries. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are accountable to numerous actors (Ebrahim & Weisband, 2007; Jordan, 2007; Lloyd, 2005; Kearns, 1996) but unlike government officials that are continuously exposed to public scrutiny and criticisms, workers in non-profit sectors like in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are relatively free of government oversight and public inspection (Kearns, 1996). Literature further demonstrates that it was only in the last few decades that the demand for greater and more transparent accountability from NGOs arose (Dhanani & Connolly, 2014; Burger & Seabe, 2014; Williams & Taylor, 2013; Lloyd, 2005; Kearns, 1996) because of the a) rapid increase of NGOs worldwide that is deemed as negative because of the existence of NGOs with "unhealthy growth", b) NGOs attract more funding than before which prompted calls for (NGO) accountability mechanisms, and c) NGOs have been perceived to be a rising power that have set many global policies, hence, "the more vocal NGOs become in the policy arena, the louder the call for [their] accountability" (Jordan, 2007).

Najam (1996) introduced a model of NGO accountability whereby three categories were identified based on the organization's interactions with other stakeholders in every model. These are: (1) NGO accountability to patrons; (2) NGO accountability to clients; and (3) NGO accountability to themselves. Najam defined 'patrons' as the ones "who provide the NGO with goods or services" and 'clients' as the institutions or people "to whom the NGO provides goods or services". Because NGOs are accountable to numerous actors (Ebrahim & Weisband, 2007; Jordan, 2007), the different forms of accountability often overlap and cannot be strictly separated from each other. In most cases, literatures show that NGOs prioritize accountability to its donors at the expense of accountability to beneficiaries and/or to its organizational mission (Ebrahim, 2007; Jordan, 2007; Leen, 2006; Lloyd, 2005). The underlying argument from various literature is in favor of Ebrahim's (2007) claim that "the dominant emphasis currently remains largely on accountability of NGOs to donors or patrons" which then results to the weakness of NGOs in being accountable to their beneficiaries.

Ebrahim (2007) argued that the NGOs' focus on accountability to its donors "privileges one kind of accountability relation over a broader accountability system". Accountability mechanisms of NGOs to their donors can "overshadow or marginalize mechanisms for holding NGOs accountable to communities or to their own missions". In addition, the accountability mechanisms that emphasize rule-following operational behavior run the risk of promoting NGO activities that are so focused on short-term outputs and efficiency criteria that they lose sight of long-range goals concerning social development and change.

Furthermore, the NGOs prioritization of accountability to its donors make the relationships between NGOs and their beneficiaries asymmetric (Ebrahim, 2007). This means that NGOs that provide services–education, healthcare, housing or shelter, and/or rural development–usually "provide a predetermined set of services to their 'clients'". In most cases, these set of services are accepted without conflict because, often, the interests of the beneficiaries are the same with those of the NGOs. However, if the offered services are deemed "inadequate" or "low priority", beneficiaries' options are generally limited to refusing the service (exit) and/or to complaining about them (voice). On the other hand, NGOs have the powerful option of threatening to "withdraw from current or future projects in the vent of noncooperation". A critical aspect of accountability is enabling stakeholders to seek and receive response for grievances and alleged harm that entails deliberate effort to listen and respond to complaints raised by beneficiaries, and others living in the same area, about the quality of services delivered by aid agencies, and staff and volunteer behavior (including allegations of corruption, misconduct and sexual abuse and exploitation). Feedback, Complaint and Response

Mechanisms (CRMs), provide an opportunity for stakeholders to address complaints against an NGO's decisions and actions (Blagescu & Lloyd, 2006).

When NGO accountability is practiced, the trust of different stakeholders (donors, beneficiaries, other groups) increases because it proves the effectiveness and legitimacy of the organization in delivering different services (Lee, 2004). Most importantly, listening to beneficiaries helps an organization to identify early on its programmatic problems, to detect fraud, to have better staff retention, and to save money among others (Blagescu & Lloyd, 2006; Bonino & Warner, 2014). Through a more active, accountable and meaningful engagement with the affected population, quality of aid delivery would be improved (Bonino & Warner, 2014).

Given these dilemmas, the common challenge of NGOs in strengthening their accountability is to establish accountability mechanisms (Ebrahim, 2010) which serve as learning tools for the organization and for its primary stakeholders (Jordan, 2007). This study utilized Goetz and Jenkins' (2007) concept of 'voice' and the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHSQA) framework in studying accountability mechanisms of INGOs in Haiyan-affected communities and its beneficiaries. This study argues that although 'voice capturing' is the main function of establishing accountability mechanisms, this is difficult to accomplish due to the complexities of working on the ground. The concept of 'voice capturing' provides an avenue for involvement and participation of the NGOs' beneficiaries in the project implementation but its application is challenging to implement.

On the concept of 'voice', Anne Goetz and Rob Jenkins (2007) drifted from a static, passive definition of 'voice' to an operational and active definition. They stressed that "voice as a capacity to express views, opinions, experiences and priorities also has a ramification on 'change'–demanding actions from those in power". They added that "voice is not a metaphor for passive expression but a more proactive and demand-based legitimate claim for rights and entitlements". Goetz and Jenkins (2007) see voice as "not only a mechanism for directly holding powerful actors to account, but also contributes to accountability indirectly, by allowing communities to arrive collectively at the standards against which the actions of power-holders are to be judged".

This paper also used Commitments Nos. 1, 4, 5, 6 and 9 of the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHSQA) framework. The

CHSQA framework was developed and published by CHS Alliance, Group URD and the Sphere Project in 2014. The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) is a direct result of the Joint Standards Initiative (JSI) in which the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) International, People in Aid and the Sphere Project joined forces to seek greater coherence for users of humanitarian standards. The JSI consulted more than 2,000 humanitarian workers in head offices, regions and in disaster-prone countries. The CHS replaced the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management, the People in Aid Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel and the Core Standards section of the Sphere Handbook (CHS Alliance et al., 2014). The Nine Commitments and Quality Criteria are:

1. Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.

   Quality Criterion: Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant.
2. Communities and people affected by crisis have access to the humanitarian assistance they need at the right time.

   Quality Criterion: Humanitarian response is effective and timely.
3. Communities and people affected by crisis can are not negatively affected and more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.

   Quality Criterion: Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects.
4. Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.

   Quality Criterion: Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback.
5. Communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints.

   Quality Criterion: Complaints are welcomed and addressed.
6. Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance.

   Quality Criterion: Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary.
7. Communities and people affected by crisis can expect delivery of improved assistance as organizations learn from experience and reflection

Quality Criterion: Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve.

8. Communities and people affected by crisis receive the assistance they require from competent and well-managed staff and volunteers.

   Quality Criterion: Staffs are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably.

9. Communities and people affected by crisis can expect that the organizations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently and ethically.

   Quality Criterion: Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose.

Commitment Nos. 1, 4, 5, 6 and 9 highlight that humanitarian assistance should be (a) appropriate and relevant, and (b) based on communication, participation and feedback; (c) complaints are welcomed and addressed; (d) humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary; and (e) resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose.

Methodology

The field works were conducted in November 2014 and May 2015 in four barangays of Tacloban City, Palo and Dagami, Leyte. The selected barangays/villages were Barangay Aslum, Sagkahan in Tacloban City; Barangay Castilla in Palo, Leyte and Barangay Cansamada West and Tin-ao in Dagami, Leyte. These barangays were purposively selected because of the presence of rehabilitation projects of the selected NGOs which are the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). Both ADRA and CRS operated various housing and livelihood programs in the identified barangays/villages.

Barangay Aslum is a coastal barangay in the Sagkahan District of Tacloban City. It was one of the hardest hit barangays during super typhoon Haiyan, and the chosen pilot community among 17 barangays for the different humanitarian interventions of the Catholic Relief Services in Tacloban City. Palo is strategically located in the northern part of the Province of Leyte and is composed of 33 barangays/ villages. The main source of income for most citizens in Palo is buying and selling farm products, and the local wine "tuba" manufacturing and fermentation. Barangay Castilla is one of the most remote barangays in the municipality.

Barangay Cansamada West and Barangay Tin-ao are in Dagami, Leyte. Dagami, Leyte is composed of 65 barangays wherein 56 of these are rural barangays and 9 are urban counterparts. Rice farming is the largest contributor to its annual agricultural produce with 13,016 metric tons from only 3,713 hectares of planting area. Barangay Cansamada West and Tin-ao were vastly affected by super typhoon Haiyan in 2013 and the floods brought by tropical storm Seniang in 2014. Using a qualitative research design, data were gathered through a combination of desk research and field works. The author used case study method because this research is interested in understanding and explaining the relationship of international NGOs with their beneficiaries through the various downward accountability mechanisms.

A case study may be understood as an intensive study of a single or few cases where the purpose is, or at least in part, to shed light on a larger class of cases (Gerring, 2007). Gerring (2007) defined cases as "a spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over some period of time. It comprises the type of phenomenon that an inference attempts to explain". The strengths of case study research lies on its ability to "generate high conceptual validity; strong procedures for fostering new hypotheses; their value as useful means to closely examine the hypothesized role of causal mechanisms in the context of individual cases; and their capacity for addressing causal complexity" (George & Bennett, 2005).

Semi-structured interviews, key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) were utilized in collecting data and consent form is given and signed by respondents signifying their unforced participation in the study. Respondents were also informed that should they feel uncomfortable with the discussions; they may opt to end the discussion any time. All interviews and FGDs were conducted in *Waray-waray*, local language in Eastern Visayas region. According to Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009), "…techniques such as interviews and focus groups allow research participants to give very detailed and specific answers". The first set of data was obtained from in-depth, key informant interviews with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) selected personnel. These included the selected INGOs concept or definition of accountability and how it was practiced in its different humanitarian interventions; the various downward accountability mechanisms utilized by these INGOs; the reasons behind its utilization or non-utilization; and the ways in which these mechanisms are informed to the people and how the organizations reacted on the feedback and complaints obtained through these mechanisms. The second set of data was obtained from the focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews with selected beneficiaries and community leaders from the aforementioned barangays. These data are crucial in understanding whether the data obtained from the INGOs' personnel are parallel or not. The information was used to verify and to see the similarities and conflicts from the data obtained from the different respondents of this study.

The author utilized the principle of qualitative deductive content analysis which involved three major phases, namely: preparation, organization and reporting of the results (Elo et al., 2014). The preparation phase consisted of collecting suitable data for content analysis, making sense of the data, and selecting the unit of analysis (ibid.). In deductive content analysis, the organization phase involves categorization matrix development, whereby all the data are reviewed for content and coded for correspondence to or exemplification of the identified categories (Polit & Beck, 2012). In the reporting phase, results are described by the content of the categories describing the phenomenon using a selected approach (ibid.) Content analysis is applied in qualitative, quantitative, and sometimes mixed modes of research frameworks and employs a wide range of analytical techniques to generate findings and put them into context. It is a systematic, rigorous approach to analyzing documents obtained or generated in the course of research (White & Marsh, 2006; Downe-Wamboldt, 2009; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Results and Discussions

Theme 1: Types of Downward Accountability Mechanisms

The results identified nine (9) downward accountability mechanisms of both CRS and ADRA that were either institutionalized or assembled in their humanitarian interventions in Haiyan-affected areas. However, between these NGOs, CRS utilized more mechanisms than ADRA. This can be attributed to absence of internal policy mandating ADRA to create and establish accountability mechanisms in its Haiyan Response. In fact, ADRA personnel emphasized that they have just made efforts in establishing such mechanisms because other NGOs have it in their Haiyan Responses.

Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Department

CRS has a Protection and Accountability Department even before its Haiyan Response. During the emergency phase, the Accountability Department was independent from other departments. However, this scheme has 'evolved' during the recovery phase because it was merged with the Monitoring and Evaluation department and now called the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) department. The department is responsible for ensuring that downward accountability is practiced by CRS personnel. The Department personnel visit the target barangays and initiate the conduct of community assemblies/meetings. Their main task is to inform their prospect beneficiaries about the different activities and projects that CRS will implement.

On the other hand, the lack of policy that mandates ADRA to practice downward accountability mechanisms has put the responsibility of promoting and enabling such mechanisms to the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. At the time of writing, it was found that there was no internal mandate that obligates the organization to create an Accountability Department.

Monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) are part of everyday program management and are critical to the success of all projects, including those operating in fragile contexts. Without an effective MEAL system organizations would be unable to track progress, make adjustments, discover unplanned effects of programs, or judge the impact made on the lives of those with whom the organization are working. A MEAL system also helps to be accountable to stakeholders through information sharing and developing a complaints or feedback mechanism which can help to guide program implementation.

Feedback Boxes

CRS and ADRA have an assembled feedback box mechanism to give their beneficiaries an opportunity to make suggestions, give feedback or make a complaint related to the organizations' commitments, programs or staffs' conducts (Jean & Bonino, 2013). More than the traditional locked wooden box, these systems are responsive techniques for encouraging feedback and rewarding great suggestions. Field workers bring it during community meetings so that beneficiaries could write their feedback and complaints. Beneficiaries have the choice to not indicate their names in the feedbacks/complaints.

Although some feedback boxes are available in the communities, these are not easily accessible to beneficiaries especially to those who are living in far flung villages. The intentions of these mechanisms which are to capture 'voice' and to involve the beneficiaries in the decision-making and other processes of the NGOs' project implementation are, therefore, not fully realized.

Community Meetings

Community Meeting as a downward accountability mechanism is used by both NGOs to solicit opinions and questions regarding their humanitarian interventions from their beneficiaries. NGOs entering a new area have a responsibility to understand local agreements and to work within these agreements to the best of their ability. The staffs of both organizations use *Waray-Waray* (official language in Leyte and Samar, Eastern Visayas) and/or *Tagalog* languages in communicating during community meetings. This is helpful because familiarizing international humanitarian practitioners with local culture and contextualizing programs is essential to minimize risk of harm, maximize benefit, and optimize efficient use of resources (Greene et al., 2017). It is important to understand local practices and community organizations before establishing operations. NGOs should respect and where possible work with established local structures, suggesting minor adaptations (e.g. to promote gender equality) rather than creating new (rival) groups (Brooks, 2010).

On both organizations, staffs encouraged their beneficiaries to voice out their concerns and feedback during community meetings. Specifically, their beneficiaries were encouraged to ask questions regarding their projects. It has been observed that conducting community meetings was effective in terms of engaging the beneficiaries and the INGOs in a dialogue, where those with power can be held accountable by the beneficiaries (Paul, 1991). The community meetings can be an avenue where the 'questioning voice' can be exercised, where demands can be expressed. Most of the questions pertaining to the technicalities of the project implementation in shelter and livelihood projects were usually answered in community meetings.

Community Ambassador

Only CRS has this particular mechanism. The beneficiaries were tasked to choose one of the residents of the barangay to act as a community ambassador. The candidate or appointed community ambassador should come from the community and should be elected and voted by the same people of the community. The ambassador is tasked to be a channel of feedback and complaints from the beneficiaries which he/she then reports to the CRS personnel. This mechanism was established in order for local politicking to be, if not eradicated, minimized through the non-involvement of the barangay council in the selection and implementation process of the organization's projects.

Informal Discussions with Humanitarian Personnel

Both organizations have encouraged and exercised the practice of informal discussions with their personnel and their beneficiaries. This is another way for the beneficiaries to give their feedback and/or complaints to the services and personnel of both INGOs. When doing project monitoring, beneficiaries could easily talk with NGO personnel on various matters especially on clarifications regarding program implementation

Slogans and Tarpaulins

Through their own initiative, beneficiaries printed or wrote their 'Thanks' on a manila paper, tarpaulin, wood or plain bond paper, and stamp it outside their houses so that NGO personnel or donors can see it easily. Some households encoded their thanks on bond papers while some with extra money just decided to make one person collect the money while another person was in-charge of the design or layout of the tarpaulin. This effort reinforced the beneficiaries' initiative, because most people's contribution was just monetary and only a few people did the work. The beneficiaries' time and efforts were minimized and instead utilized in other household chores. Interestingly, this mechanism was only used by beneficiaries to express their gratitude to the organization. Furthermore, no complaint written through the slogans, tarpaulins or placards have been observed by the researcher.

Community Help Desk

Only the CRS employed this kind of accountability mechanism. CRS has help desks in their office where the beneficiaries or anyone who has any complaint in the organization is welcomed and accommodated. The Community Help Desk (CHD)/Office is another mechanism for receiving and responding to issues, comments, suggestions and feedback from the community members or beneficiaries which gives them an opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions in a non-threatening way (Jean & Bonino, 2013). It is commonly used by humanitarian organizations in their projects because the beneficiaries feel safe and valued with the presence of NGO workers and the notion that they are there to help them.

Hotlines/ Community Call Centers

Both organizations have hotline numbers in their humanitarian interventions in the Haiyan response. The hotline numbers of CRS were written on the feedback boxes and on the whiteboard posted outside the community ambassador's house in barangay Aslum. The hotline numbers were also made known to the beneficiaries during community meetings. Meanwhile, ADRA also has an assembled hotline number which was also initiated by the monitoring and evaluation officer. He requested for a hotline number from the project manager and used this mechanism during their humanitarian operations. Two numbers in two mobile networks operating in Leyte were used for this mechanism, namely Globe and Smart.

Proper information dissemination coupled with complaints procedures such as "Hotlines" or "Community Call Centers (CCC)", beneficiaries are given the knowledge and avenue to quickly voice their concerns and feedback on unsatisfactory aid services or even the organization's staff performance (Paul, 1991; Jean & Bonino, 2014).

Channels through Barangay Officials

Findings show that some beneficiaries channeled their feedback and complaints through the barangay officials. A two-term councilor of barangay Aslum, shared that some of his constituents went to him and gave suggestions on certain projects and/or asked for clarifications. These suggestions or clarifications were then relayed to CRS and ADRA via the hotline numbers. Community officials, as a publicly elected officer, regard this act as their contribution in giving social services.

Theme 2: Reasons for the Utilization and Non-utilization of the Accountability Mechanisms

There were varying factors that contributed to the utilization and non-utilization of different downward accountability mechanisms established and/or assembled by CRS and ADRA. The utilization of the downward accountability mechanisms by the beneficiaries depended on factors such as (1) sensitivity of a feedback or complaint, (2) level of satisfaction of beneficiaries on the project implementation, (3) intellectual and economic capacity of the beneficiary to utilize the mechanism, (4) fear of reprisal from the management of the INGOs and (5) attitude of the beneficiaries towards the INGOs and the projects they conduct. The beneficiaries for both INGOs mainly utilized the mechanisms in order to express their gratitude and ask clarifications and updates.

Most of the letters and text messages that CRS received from their feedback boxes and hotline numbers were messages of gratitude and appreciation and these are considered as non-sensitive. This can be attributed to the nature of thanksgiving and gratitude which is accepted by the INGO with the least degree of sensitivity involved in channeling such feedback to the organization. The various mechanisms were also used in clarifying the selection process of the projects. There was discontentment amongst the non-beneficiaries in barangay Cansamada and Tin-ao in Dagami, Leyte since they expressed their intention of being included in the list of beneficiaries in the shelter assistance of CRS. They opted to choose the aid given by CRS rather than the aid given to them by the National Housing Authority (NHA) because of the superior quality and larger quantities of materials distributed.

On the other hand, aside from forgetting the hotline numbers, fear of reprisal from the organizations' managements hindered the beneficiaries in voicing their concerns. This fear stemmed from the communities' experience in one NGO that warned that they might pull out or cancel their projects if non-cooperation occurred. This situation fueled the beneficiaries' fear because other community members who were in dire need of the support would surely suffer. This is reflective of the "asymmetric relationship" (Ebrahim, 2007) of beneficiaries and NGOs. Beneficiaries are at the mercy of the INGOs since these entities have the option to stop or pull out theirs resources that support the projects they implement in their target barangays, while the beneficiaries have no option as to where to avail of such services these INGOs offer. This is the reason why beneficiaries of such projects are cautious of doing actions that may disappoint the INGO.

Such a case is not only confined to among the beneficiaries of the NGOs, but also apparent to some personnel of the organizations. In ADRA, some of its personnel did not report the complaints to their superiors for fear that it will decrease the superior's regard on the personnel's performance in the organization and eventually lead to expulsion. In cases where there were foreign nationals who spoke during community meetings or barangay visits, some beneficiaries were simply shy and found it hard to speak because of their fear of getting embarrassed by other community members. This can be considered as one of the intellectual and language barriers in the transmission of communication. In such cases, some beneficiaries asked other beneficiaries who know and can better speak the English language to ask on their behalf. The financial capacity of some beneficiaries and even non-beneficiaries hindered them from using the different accountability mechanisms. In rural and poor communities, instead of buying cellphone load, people use it to buy food and other needs of the family instead. As what an informant said, *"My complaint can wait but my hungry stomach can't."*

Lastly, it was observed that there's a prevailing mindset amongst the beneficiaries that the aid given to them are considered as 'gifts'. Because the projects were given to them freely, the beneficiaries feel a lesser need to complain, to ask for improvement of services provided and/or demand for more projects because it might send misconceptions that these beneficiaries are being ungrateful and discontented from the aid provided.

Theme 3: Responses and Utilization of Feedback and Complaint by CRS and ADRA

The responses revolved on the INGOs' timely response, proper handling of complaints, categorization of complaints and feedback as well as face-to-face response of the feedback. The staffs who receive the complaints categorized them as either sensitive or non-sensitive. Complaints are categorized as sensitive while feedback, like messages of thanks and gratitude are regarded as non-sensitive. Sensitive complaints like local politicking, alleged favoritism in the selection process and discontent of services are branded as sensitive and require actions from the staff.

When a feedback is given, they do not reply on it. However on sensitive complaints, the organization usually requires the staff to answer the complaint within two to five working days. If the staffs during fieldwork know the answer to the questions or complaints of the beneficiaries, they are to respond immediately. If the concern or complaint is beyond the staff's knowledge, capacity, training or job description, they usually advise the complainant/s to wait for the answer because they will ask their supervisors first.

As much as possible, complaints were addressed within 24 hours upon receipt. Complaints raised were verified by personally visiting and inspecting the person or the complaint i.e. infrastructure raised. This, however, depends whether the beneficiary indicated his/her name when he/she complained. They did not force the beneficiaries to give their names upon complaining, like in the case of using the organization's hotline numbers.

Conclusions

The findings demonstrate that Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) have assembled downward accountability mechanisms in their rehabilitation interventions in Haiyan-affected areas. However, between the INGOs, only the Catholic Relief Services has an institutionalized downward accountability mechanisms and utilized more downward accountability mechanisms.

The mechanisms utilized reflected varied feedback and complaints. The feedback from the beneficiaries included the organizations' holistic service-delivery, the staff's approachability and friendliness and the gratitude of the beneficiaries for the interventions provided by the INGO. The mechanisms reflected allegations of local politicking on the project processes and unjust criteria of beneficiary selection. The informants cited that the NGOs' response from their feedback and complaints were timely, were handled properly and were answered on a face-to-face basis.

The utilization of the downward accountability mechanisms by the beneficiaries depended on factors such as (1) the degree of sensitivity of a feedback or complaint, (2) level of satisfaction of beneficiaries on the different project processes, (3) intellectual and economic capacity of the beneficiary to utilize the mechanisms, (4) fear of possible reprisal from the management of the INGOs and (5) attitude of the beneficiaries towards the INGOs and the projects it conducts.

The mechanisms utilized by both NGOs are capable of addressing the concerns of the beneficiaries. However, the author argues that the presence of such mechanisms is not sufficient in judging the extent to which NGOs practice downward accountability mechanisms. Rather, the extent to which these mechanisms permit the conduct of participation of beneficiaries in project is identified by ALNAP (2019) as the gauge in the effectiveness of such mechanisms. ALNAP stresses that an effective mechanism supports the collection, acknowledgement, analysis and response to the feedback received. The mechanisms do support the collection and acknowledgement of the feedback it receives but the action and response to the feedback and complaints still rest on the prerogative of the NGO to act upon such.

The responses of the various informants manifested the different treatments of feedback and complaints of the selected NGOs in the conduct of their humanitarian response. These can be attributed to the proper functioning of the downward accountability mechanisms and the commitment of NGOs to the feedback they received. Given these, the downward accountability mechanisms can be considered effective at the minimum standard indicated by ALNAP (2019) since the mechanisms permit the collection, analysis and response of the feedback and complaints in a manner that has satisfied its beneficiaries.

In conclusion, the manner of questioning the organization by the respondents of both organizations is the manifestation of the ‘questioning voice’, in which in this manner, the non-beneficiaries held the organization to account for the reasons why they were not included in the shelter intervention. However, the NGOs are still in a position where they have the power to not entertain questions and demands by stating different standards and criteria to which the INGO adheres.

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