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Accountability to Affected People
Assessing NGO engagement with the Collective AAP Framework

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This report was commissioned by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies and the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee and carried out by a consultancy team comprising of graduate students from the Department of International Development at the London School of Economics and Political Science: D. Leslie, I. Yashruti, S. Yoon & H. C. Whitelaw.

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Disclaimer

The following research will be used to support the IASC and ICVA in their rollout of the AAP Framework tool by providing both broad and contextual good practices to improve the rollout of in-country workshops and Framework development.

Furthermore, the research will be used to highlight ongoing stakeholder concerns with accountability processes in Northwest Syria, emblematic of transnational concerns voiced elsewhere, and assist IASC-ICVA in ensuring the equity of accountability processes.

Any opinions expressed within this report are solely those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of any organisations affiliated with the authors, including the LSE, ICVA, the IASC, or OCHA.

Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected People
AIPG	Accountability, Inclusion, PSEA, and Gender
CBPF	Country Based Pooled Fund
CLAs	Cluster Lead Agencies
COVID-19	COVID-19 Pandemic
DRHC	United Nations Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Teams
HLG	Humanitarian Liaison Group
HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICCG	Inter-Cluster Coordination Group
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organisations
ISG	International Support Group
MSNA	Multi-Sector Needs Analysis
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PCS	Partnerships Coordination Section
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RC	Resident Coordinator
SHRP	Syria Humanitarian Response Plan
SNGOs	Syrian Non-governmental Organisations
SSG	Strategic Steering Group
The Framework	Accountability to Affected People Collective Framework
THF	Turkey Humanitarian Fund
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Contents

Frontmatter i

Acronyms ii

Executive Summary 1

1. Introduction 3

1.1 Accountability to Affected People 3

1.2 The Collective AAP Framework 5

1.3 Application of The Framework to Gaziantep-Northwest Syria 6

2. Methodology 7

2.1 Syria Country Context 7

2.2 AAP Prioritisation through Collective AAP Framework 8

2.3 Limitations 8

3. Existing AAP practices within Gaziantep and Northwest Syria 9

3.1 What worked well: good practices 9

3.2 What could work better: potential areas for improvement 14

4. AAP Prioritisation through Collective AAP Framework 17

4.1 Workshop 17

4.2 Action Plan 20

4.3 Taskforce 21

5. Recommendations 23

5.1 Understanding the country contexts 23

5.2 Collective AAP Framework: Recommendations for the wider rollout 25

Bibliography 31

Appendices 34

Executive Summary

As the humanitarian community has sought to integrate Accountability to Affected People (AAP) within its programming throughout the last decade, there have been continued criticisms over mixed understandings of AAP and the irregularity of its endorsement. In response, the IASC and UN OCHA have begun field testing the Accountability to Affected People Collective Framework (the Framework) as a means to operationalise a renewed commitment from humanitarian leadership, and to harmonise in-country AAP practices.

Rationale: Elevating the voices of affected populations in a protracted crisis

The Syrian Civil War is one of the most visible and protracted humanitarian crises in the world. Following pro-democracy protests against leader Bashar Al-Assad in 2011, 5.5 million people have fled the country and another 6 million people have been internally displaced. Currently, 13.4 million people need humanitarian assistance due to the prevalence of widespread violence, human rights abuses, and a lack of access to basic services.

As the first context to engage in the formal field testing of the Framework, the Northwest Syria-Gaziantep border was selected as the sole case study for this report. The report examines the integration of AAP practices in Northwest Syria-Gaziantep and addresses two pressing concerns. The first of these is to expand sectoral knowledge on good practices and key learnings from AAP policies in the region, with a focus on facilitating greater inclusiveness and participation between affected populations and NGOs at the local, national, and international level. The second is to examine the field testing of the AAP Framework in the Northwest Syria-Gaziantep region and identify key learnings which may be adopted to improve the future rollout of the Framework in other country contexts.

Through a mixed-methods approach combining an extensive literature review and stakeholder interviews, the report highlights the key successes NGOs have had in integrating AAP practices within their regional commitments and programmes. Section 1 introduces the Framework and situates it within broader trends of accountability and localisation. Section 2 outlines the research methodology employed for this report. Sections 3 and 4 separate the research findings into two sections, to better distinguish between the broader context, successes, and room for improvement within the Northwest Syria-Gaziantep region, and specific successes and concerns relating to the field testing of the Framework. Section 5 consists of recommendations drawn from both Sections 3 & 4, to emphasise how the rollout of the Framework relies heavily on existing contextual circumstances, which must be reviewed before rollout begins. Recommendations are therefore organised around five key aspects of the Framework process.

Key recommendations

Assessing country contexts

Prior to developing the AAP Framework, it is key to understand the country's context through assessing the degree to which:

- *Civil society networks are formalised*
- *Existing AAP mechanisms are practiced and understood*
- *Local leadership can support and prioritise AAP*

Pre-workshop preparation and tone setting

- *Leadership commitment should be visible and robust*
- *Process should aim for consistent understanding of AAP*
- *Inclusion of Technical Experts is crucial*

Conduct of the workshops

- *Emphasise bilateral meetings*
- *Provide simultaneous translation services*
- *Ensure diverse representation*
- *Consider integrating trainings*
- *Ensure accessibility for online participants*

Development of the Action Plan

- *Maintain flexibility of the Framework*
- *Ensure Action Plan is accessible at all levels*
- *Consider follow-up sessions*

Establishment and commitments of the Taskforce

- *Maintain flexibility of membership*
- *Assign Action Point leads according to expertise*

1. Introduction

1.1 Accountability to Affected People (AAP)

Following criticism over the agency of affected populations within humanitarian programming, Accountability to Affected People (AAP) arose as the reform agenda for the humanitarian system to better reflect their needs and voices.

> "Accountability to Affected People is an active commitment to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people humanitarian organisations seek to assist"
> (IASC, 2015)

AAP emphasises a collective approach to coordinate the commitments of local, national, and international humanitarian organisations. The following key commitments of the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) are intended to be operationalised within AAP practices:

Leadership and governance

The engagement of senior leadership with AAP at non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and the United Nations (UN) is crucial for the formalisation of AAP practices at both organisational and systematic level, including the integration of AAP agendas within national programme design, performance managements, and hiring practices.

Transparency and information sharing

AAP aims to facilitate two-way information-sharing regarding humanitarian agencies' responsibilities and services, which contributes to affected communities' better understanding of available assistance. Through dialogue and local participation, information-sharing is tailored to the needs, sensitivities, and diversity of affected communities. Information-sharing is also promoted between organisations.

Feedback mechanisms

The collection of feedback to reinforce transparency and guarantee mutual accountability is key to ensuring affected people have a voice in decision-making processes. These communication channels allow communities' needs and communication preferences to be well reflected in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the response.

Participation of affected populations

AAP provides support to better represent the needs of affected populations across platforms. Facilitating the participation of affected communities is a role extended to humanitarian forums, cluster systems, and UN-level decision-making tables (IASC, 2015).

Design, monitoring, and evaluation

Participation of affected people within programme design and monitoring systems promotes organisational learning and course correction to better meet population needs. These ensure learnings are fed back on an ongoing basis, and feedback from affected people is incorporated in the design and implementation of programmes.

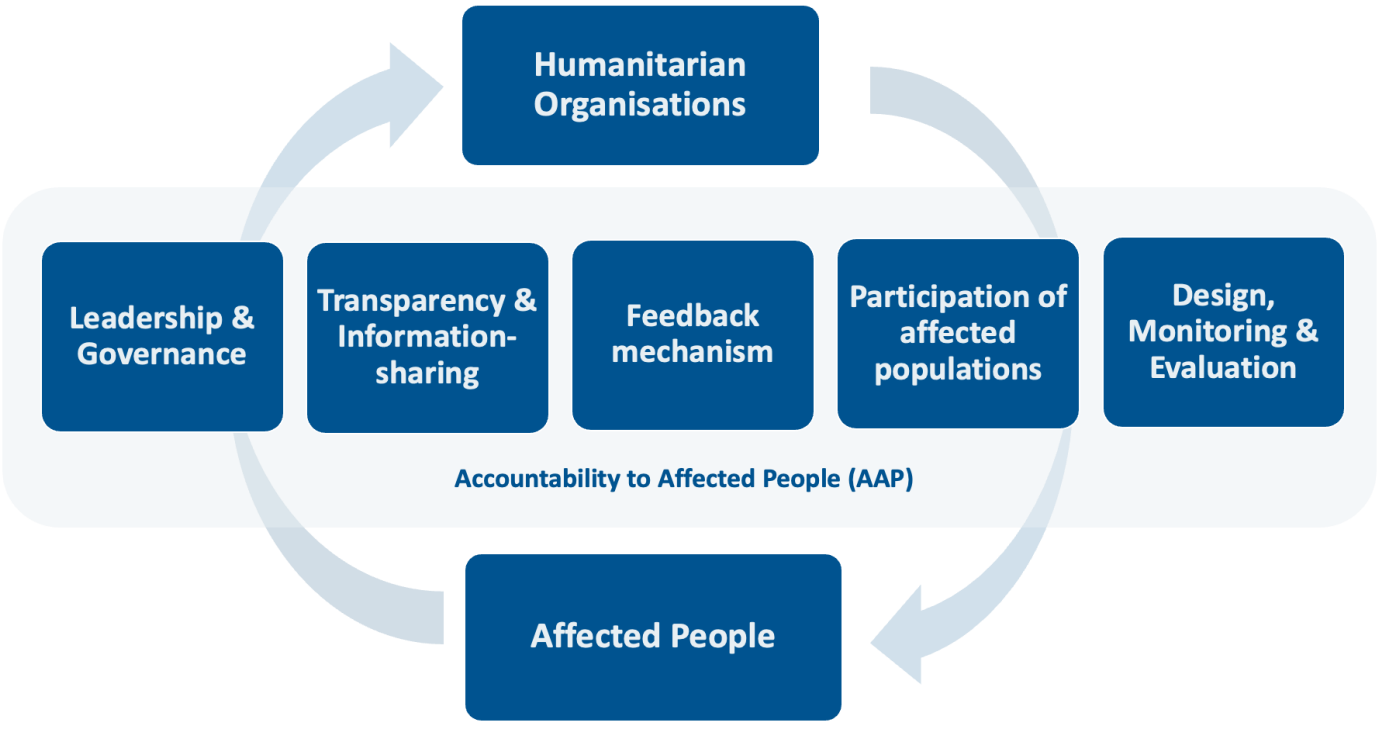

Figure 1. Operationalising AAP Practices

1.2 The Collective AAP Framework

The Accountability to Affected People Collective Framework (hereafter, the Framework) is intended to operationalise the above commitments. Building on previous tools, such as the IASC's Peer 2 Peer Support (2019), the Framework provides flexible guidance which can be deployed in multiple regions and be adapted to contextual needs. In line with the commitment to engage senior leadership, the Framework ensures Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HCs) prioritise AAP within humanitarian programming in a responsive and people-centred manner. This is outlined in the Leadership in Humanitarian Action handbook (2021).

By using the Framework as part of in-country workshops, Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) will be assisted to operationalise AAP by:

1. Committing to the development of a country-level collective AAP Action Plan
2. Fostering a common understanding of the critical role of interagency coordination structures in operationalising AAP and ensuring a collective approach
3. Strengthening country-level leadership on accountability to affected people

This will be done in a spirit of mutual accountability through coordination with stakeholders, including clusters, inter-cluster coordination groups, AAP working groups, and similar structures. The Framework leads to a guiding Action Plan to assist in discussion and facilitate the inclusion of a set of priority actions, with timelines, focal points responsible for them, and proposed cost and resource allocation to strengthen and operationalise AAP. The Action Plans generated in workshops will outline the key actions, timelines, and responsibilities necessary to coordinate collective AAP in their context.

The Framework outlines five key Outcomes and related Actions, which are aligned to the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC):

1. Coordinated needs assessment and analysis reflects all affected community groups' information needs and communication preferences.
2. Humanitarian response planning includes affected peoples' voices.
3. Funding and resources are in place to ensure a coordinated approach to information provision, community feedback systems and participation.
4. Response implementation is coordinated and driven by informed community participation and feedback systems and is monitored and adjusted as needed.
5. Evaluation and review of collective AAP actions and outcomes is coordinated, participatory and transparent to inform learning.

1.3 Application of the Framework to Northwest Syria-Gaziantep

Gaziantep, Turkey is one of the main entry points into Syria and has become the hub for humanitarian operations to Northwest Syria, specifically concerning the provision of aid and assistance from international organisations towards local Syrian organisations and populations. Access has been maintained through UN resolution 2585 (2021), extending access until July 2022. This resolution also emphasised a focus on transparency and early recovery, a goal embodied in the rollout and subsequent evolution of the Framework. To ensure the participation of Syrian NGOs (SNGOs) and their networks, UN OCHA (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) Gaziantep office hired a dedicated Syrian staff in 2015 (Internal Document, 2021). Their role was to assist in the development of a road map encouraging SNGOs and their network to participate and meaningfully contribute within the Humanitarian Coordination System and Mechanisms (primarily the cluster system and Humanitarian Programme Cycle).

This partially contributed to decisions taken by the UN Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator (DRHC) for the Syria Crisis and the Humanitarian Liaison Group (HLG) to develop the first AAP country framework in 2018. The HLG is a unique structure (equivalent to the HCT) employed to facilitate the cross-border response. It was also instrumental in the establishment of the AIPG (Accountability, Inclusion, PSEA, and Gender) Working Group that provided the space for thematic area specialists to coordinate their efforts, as well as to advise the HLG and humanitarian community in designing the Action Plan.

As the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic hindered the Framework from being field tested simultaneously in multiple contexts, the Gaziantep workshop is currently the only one to have occurred, taking place in November 2021. The resultant Action Plan for Change was endorsed by the HLG at the end of 2021 and replaced the AIPG working group with the Taskforce for Change.

2. Methodology

This research is based on a mixed-methods qualitative approach, centred on interviews and desk-based research. Research focused on internal documents provided by IASC, including bilateral meeting notes, AAP workshop development documents, and draft Action Plans. Interviews were conducted with representatives of international, national, and local NGOs that are operating in Northwest Syria-Gaziantep. Two members of the team conducted each interview over Zoom, with each interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. Thirteen interviews were conducted in total, with interviewees anonymised.

2.1 Syria Country Context

For Section 3, eight interviews were conducted with representatives of INGOs, UN agencies, local NGOs, and organisational networks to explore the current context and good practices from their experience integrating AAP. These served to identify key strengths and opportunities within current AAP practices. Interviewee selection was in coordination with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA). The questions were organised thematically to ensure alignment with the key aspects of AAP, while also allowing room for exploration of relevant topics brought up by interviewees. The themes were as follows:

- Inclusive and Adaptive Coordination
- Feedback mechanisms
- Leadership buy-in
- Common Services
- Funding
- Areas for Improvement

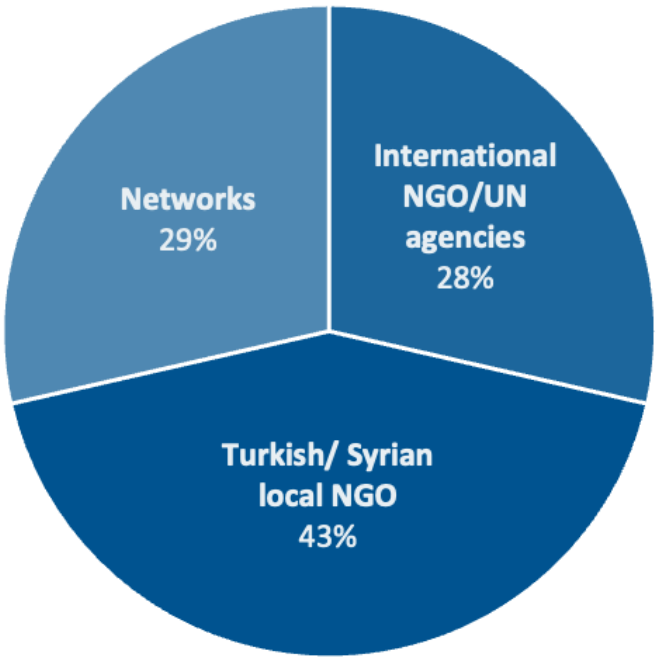

Figure 2.
Section 3 Interviewee Make-up

2.2 AAP Framework Rollout

For Section 4, five interviews were conducted with participants of the IASC's November workshop. Three interviewees also sit on The Change Taskforce. By including both members and non-members of the Taskforce, it was possible to hear a variety of perspectives on the process, particularly how it differs from previous accountability-oriented initiatives.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand:

- The two-day workshop in Gaziantep,
- The development of the 10-Point Action Plan for Change (hereafter, the Action Plan),
- The development of the Taskforce.

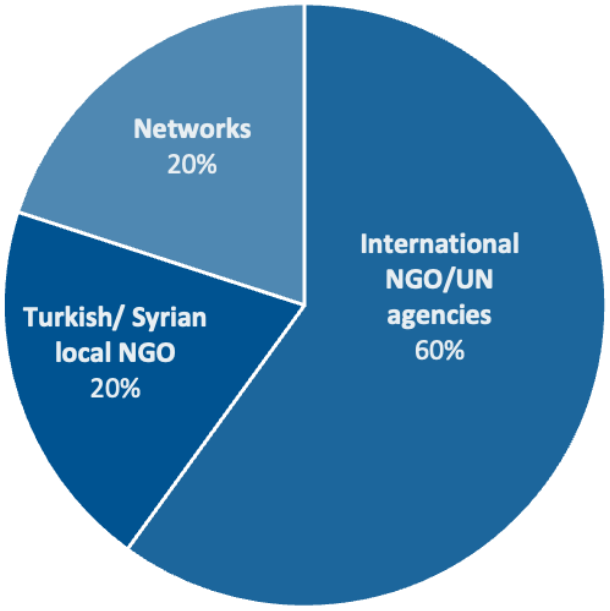

Figure 3.
Section 4 Interviewee Make-Up

2.3 Limitations

Interviewees' roles: Interview questions were initially tailored in expectation of a more unified understanding of AAP among respondents. However, the majority of interviewees had multiple and wide-ranging responsibilities, of which AAP was only one constituent aspect. Hence, when challenges were discussed, respondents were mainly addressing the general challenges of organisations, rather than the specific challenges faced in their own organisation's work.

Small interview base: Considering the large number of NGOs operating in Northwest Syria-Gaziantep, constraints of time and access prohibited a more extensive interview process.

Research Findings

3. Existing AAP practices within Northwest Syria-Gaziantep

This section comprises of an overview of the Northwest Syria-Gaziantep context, a collection of good practices, and areas for improvement regarding the general implementation of AAP within the region.

3.1 What worked well: good practices

3.1.1 Enhanced and accountable leadership

Leadership buy-in: Prior to 2021, OCHA Turkey initiated consultations with the Partnerships Coordination Section (PCS) of OCHA Geneva and The Sphere Project to support the roll-out of customised Sphere trainings. These would be in Arabic, targeting Syrian staff to create dedicated Sphere standards for the Syrian context and set up a pool of Syrian Sphere trainers. In 2021, OCHA received support from the Standby Partner Network to contract a full-time Arabic-speaking Community Engagement Officer and, with IASC support, contracted a full-time international AAP Advisor to assist the Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator (Internal Document, 2021).

Respondents during the interviews praised the increased buy-in from leadership within the UN system, particularly the role of the DRHC. The prioritisation of AAP by leadership has been seen as a key indicator towards its future success, particularly when compared with previous accountability tools. The Action Plan for Change (2021) was seen to reflect leadership buy-in and will be discussed further in Section 4.

Prioritising information sharing and capacity building: In 2015, through its direct engagement with INGOs and SNGOs, OCHA began building organisational capacity by instilling common principles and universal minimum standards for humanitarian response across Northwest Syria-Gaziantep. This was partially in response to the fact that, at the time, the majority (64%) of Syrian humanitarian aid workers had less than five years of humanitarian work experience (UN OCHA Turkey, 2015). To ensure effective responses, OCHA invested in contextualised trainings on humanitarian principles, Sphere standards, international legal frameworks, and the humanitarian programme cycle that supported SNGOs.

Most capacity building mechanisms are based on information-sharing sessions, both between organisations and between organisations and affected populations themselves. Such exercises assist in enhancing organisational understanding and application of policies supporting accountability. One respondent discussed their involvement in a two-day information sharing session, hosted by another organisation close to the Turkish government. With the presence of two members of ICVA, the session focused on the monitoring and evaluation process in the humanitarian system, areas fundamental to the accountability mechanism. Several respondents felt sessions run "similar to university courses", through classroom learning, have proved helpful in establishing early warning systems and facilitating course correction within the application of AAP principles.

3.1.2 Inclusive and adaptive coordination architecture

Ensuring regional NGO participation in cluster coordination: Cluster Lead Agencies (CLAs) have recruited Arabic-speaking cluster coordinators who can conduct meetings and circulate information in a manner inclusive for Arabic-speaking local NGOs. Along with recruiting translators, the CLAs have invested in technical and managerial training for local and national NGOs that help strengthen programme management and build technical capacities within affected populations. The number of SNGOs participating in the cluster system has risen from less than 10 in 2015 to more than 150 in 2021, with 8 out of 11 active clusters being co-led by SNGOs in 2021 compared to none in 2015 (OCHA, 2021). As of June 2018, the Health Cluster included 40 SNGO members and the Education Cluster had 90 SNGO members.

Investing in civil society networks to formalise localisation: Within the cross-border humanitarian response, OCHA convenes the Syrian Civil Society Organisations' (CSO) platform which provides support to 137 SNGOs since June 2018. This platform encourages SNGOs to engage in humanitarian coordination mechanisms, participate in inter-agency activities, build networks with other organisations, and take up capacity strengthening opportunities. It also regularly facilitates the exchange of ideas and project results with its membership. Projects are managed by SNGOs with efforts to ensure the Board of Directors accurately represents the Syrian population. Respondents noted most positions are filled by Syrians, and roughly a third of those are women. Such efforts foster local ownership of the humanitarian response and enhances the commitment of civil society organisations.

UN-led working groups have likewise implemented consultation mechanisms through brainstorming and information-sharing sessions. Such two-way communication mechanisms could provide an opportunity to formalise sector-wide AAP engagements, with INGOs sharing their expertise while local NGOs share their contextual knowledge. As several respondents attested, many CLAs have invited organisations with specialised interests or roles to further the information exchange and facilitate inter-organisation co-operation. Respondents felt such exchanges should be promoted across the humanitarian system.

Filling a language gap: To support local and national participation in coordination and decision-making, clusters and the HLG implemented simultaneous translation and seek to hold meetings solely in Arabic where possible. The provision of simultaneous translation at HLG meetings helped overcome what several respondents considered the biggest obstacle to local NGO participation, thereby allowing participants to speak and understand one another freely. In addition, the clusters facilitated the submission and publication of documents in both Arabic and English, promoting the participation of organisations and communities regardless of language ability. While complaints regarding the lack of translators have been rectified at HLG level and above, respondents noted that this provision is still inconsistent.

Gendered and disability inclusion: The UN Development Programme (UNDP) has made strides to assist organisations to ensure gendered and disability inclusion within all humanitarian projects (UNDP Annual Report, 2019; UNDP Syria, 2021). An educational programme to integrate 25 women into a range of organisations to promote consistent inclusion of both gendered and disability dimensions was set up. One respondent noted how a booklet of best practices was produced at the end of the programme, which was then shared across organisations as guidelines for facilitating inclusion. This booklet was distributed in both English and Arabic to best prepare all levels of leadership to be accountable to those with disabilities within affected populations, and was received favourably by those participants who were made aware of it.

Localisation as a tool to address systemic fragmentation: The NGO system within Syria was heavily fragmented, leading to challenges in coordination. Increased emphasis is being placed on localisation as a tool to address this fragmentation. Localisation is focused on recognising and strengthening the role of local and national NGOs strategically, institutionally, and operationally (ICVA, 2021). This has led to increased inclusion of local and national NGOs at higher decision-making tables, though respondents noted representation is still limited to accommodate for the diversity of interests and objectives of the hundreds of NGOs in the region.

To address fragmentation and improve localisation, the League of Syrian Networks was created in 2015 and is composed of six networks and 300 organisations (IASC, 2019). This is an entirely Syrian initiative and has strengthened coordination among the Syrian networks, enhancing SNGO participation and representation in communication and coordination mechanisms. The League of Syrian Networks is used to select representatives to the cross-border response's Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) and the HLG, as well as to the Strategic Steering Group (SSG) and the International Support Group (ISG) at the Whole of Syria Level, encouraging participation at multiple levels.

3.1.3 Common Services

Feedback mechanisms: Local committees working with community leaders have become common mechanisms for collecting feedback from affected communities. The quality and consistency of feedback is dependent on pre-existing trust and connections between the affected communities and those collecting information. Several respondents noted feedback collected by workers in concert with trusted community leaders is often of a better quality than external authorities. The same respondents additionally highlighted the importance of local NGOs to this process, as they often coordinate with local committees and bridge gaps between affected communities and INGOs. Partnering with local committees and NGOs has been shown to be an integral part of feedback collection as it capitalises on existing community structures and includes affected people, mitigating language barriers that may hinder feedback collection.

Information sharing through remote technology: The use of remote training modalities and technologies (including WhatsApp, Skype, and Zoom) to overcome logistical, administrative, and access issues led to a more consistent humanitarian response, especially in the face of possible supply chain disruptions due to COVID-19. Several respondents also noted the use of social media by NGOs and other actors has assisted in digitising and distributing information concerning legal aid, hospital access, and general information packages on refugee life. Furthermore, these NGOs have been able to use social media to carry out information sessions and trainings to create accessible information flows beyond geographical limits.

3.1.4 Funding and sources of funding

The use of Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF): The Turkey Humanitarian Fund (THF) is a multi-donor CBPF established in 2014 to deliver cross-border humanitarian assistance to Syria. Its main goals are to contribute to the delivery of humanitarian assistance in line with the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan (SHRP), improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian response, and strengthen the DRHC and other humanitarian coordination mechanisms (THF, 2019).

The THF provided direct funding to national and local NGOS, allocating 37% of its funds (more than US$80 million) between 2014-2018 to empower local and national NGOs to operate as integral parts of humanitarian response and not as sub-contractors of international organisations (IASC, 2019). This fund allocation also allows for SNGOs to include a 7% overhead within their project budgets, which assists in the prioritisation of AAP (THF, 2019).

3.2 What could work better: potential areas for improvement

Capacity building of local and national NGOs: While most respondents expressed their satisfaction with the various inter-organisation and inter-agency capacity-building trainings, several considered one- or two-day workshops insufficient to guarantee sustainable commitment from NGOs. These training processes should be ongoing and expanded to promote a coherent understanding of AAP and facilitate its integration within project cycles. Building the institutional and operational capacity of NGOs is of the utmost importance to ensure they are well-governed, adhere to the highest standards of professionalism and transparency, and are empowered to deliver a principled and effective humanitarian response.

Limited representation for closing the feedback loop: Despite the number and variety of NGOs within Syria, this diversity is still not sufficiently represented at higher decision-making processes, including HCTs, as several respondents noted. For those that can participate, they felt time given to deliver feedback from local communities is often insufficient. Larger INGOs are better represented, but they are often reluctant to bring more local NGOs to the table. One respondent reflected that this might be due to a wariness among INGOs about being represented by their competitors. Hence, inclusive decision-making processes should be improved to prevent the provision of pre-packaged solutions and promote contextualised solutions which are sensitive to specific local needs. The lack of inclusiveness could be addressed through INGOs emphasising cooperation with NGOs that empowers them to channel the voices of affected communities. One respondent with experience across multiple organisations noted that when local NGOs are treated as partners instead of service providers, and when their

knowledge and capacities are better respected, such partnerships are likely to lead to better project outcomes. A different respondent reflected that where this respect is lacking, there is confusion among both workers and affected populations over where to provide feedback and how it is acted upon.

Perceived lack of respect for equal partnership: Ensuring respect for local partners is a crucial step to take to prevent marginalising the local community who organisations and AAP mechanisms intend to serve. Several respondents felt that, despite the increasing focus on localisation and accountability, local involvement is occasionally still perceived to be tokenistic and in service of "box-ticking", rather than meaningful inclusion. This perspective is often reinforced by the overreliance on technical language which pervades the humanitarian space, leaving decision-making tables as the realm of a minority of English-speaking, jargon-savvy organisations.

Inability to close the language gap: Beyond the jargon barrier, projects are routinely hindered by a language gap between international humanitarian workers, local organisations, and affected people. Half of respondents considered the language gap a key barrier in the application of greater AAP integration. Many humanitarian organisations use English as their operational language, whereas in Northwest Syria-Gaziantep, the main languages spoken are Arabic, Turkish, and Kurdish. The disjunct is exacerbated by the irregular provision of translation services; as one participant noted, poorly translated background documents can severely impact the extent to which local organisations can participate in inter-agency discussions.

Disconnect between donor demands and population needs: Regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, donor demands to promote COVID-safe environments for project implementation were lacking contextual understanding of the operational areas and what was feasible for local populations. One respondent gave an example of donor requests for images of children engaged in online learning for fundraising purposes, yet many communities did not have access to the necessary video technology or had limited or no internet access. Coupled with the pressure to prioritise donors' demands, a lack of contextualised solutions has disconnected community needs from the provision of services. Such disparity indicates the lack of inclusion of affected people at the project

design phase, an issue of both localisation and accountability, as donors remain distant from affected populations. Communities should not be forced to prioritise between education and necessary policies, such as social distancing.

Reproduction of gender hierarchies in the cluster system: Marginalisation is a particular challenge to women-led organisations and female humanitarian workers who need to be better represented in coordination structures. One male respondent noted the exclusion of women-led, women-oriented organisations which undermines inclusiveness in the cluster system. This effort faces cultural challenges and barriers as well as stigmas that contribute to their marginalisation but, as women are an increasingly vulnerable population in crisis situations, the knowledge and experience provided by these women-led and women-oriented organisations is invaluable to the AAP process.

Inconsistent and inflexible funding: The institutional and operational capacities of newly established NGOs to deliver assistance effectively on limited budgets is an increasing concern, especially considering the high-risk environment in which these organisations are operating, on top of their duties to manage operations in line with donors and other international partners' requirements. The inflexibility of funding was a key concern of several interviewees, as NGOs are concerned with their organisational survival. Commitment to AAP is often dependent on the existence and availability of funding, which prompts a serious barrier to localisation for smaller SNGOs that do not have the networks to entice international donors. Restricted funding hinders possible allocation to AAP-related activities and is influenced by the decisions and opinions of far-removed donors and decision-makers. Donor commitment to flexible funding could support NGOs with possible allocation for more funds to AAP Framework projects and capacity building. Flexible long-term funding would allow the specialisation of humanitarian staffs dedicated to AAP, fostering stronger leadership within SNGOs.

4. AAP Prioritisation through Collective AAP Framework

The following section discusses the main research findings on the field testing of the Framework in the Northwest Syria-Gaziantep context, which began in October 2021. Findings have been grouped according to their relevant stage within the rollout process, these being: the workshop (November 2021), the development of the Action Plan (November-December 2021), and the establishment and commitments of the Taskforce (December 2021). As the Taskforce has been set up too recently for respondents to reflect deeply on its successes or learnings, the section comprises a discussion of key findings.

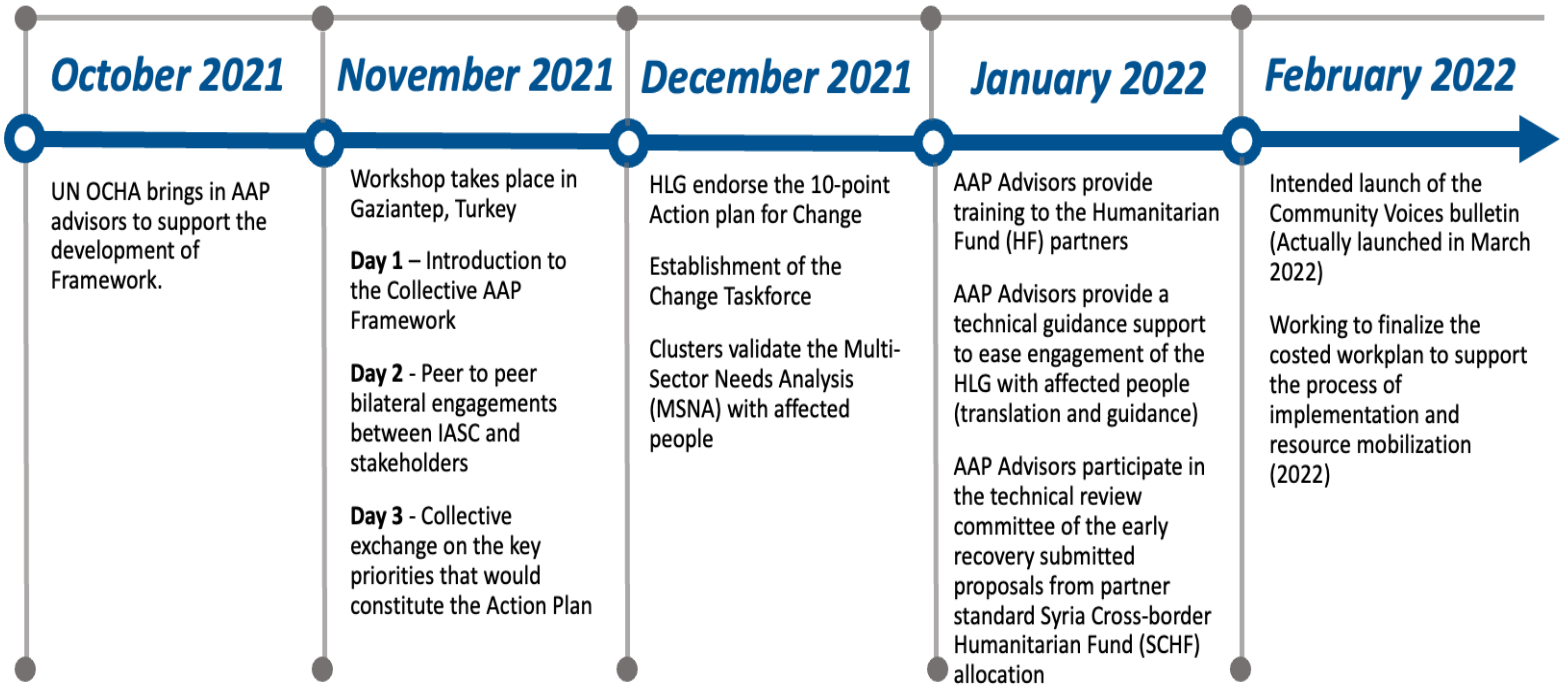

Figure 4.
Timeline of Framework Development

4.1 Workshop

In November 2021, under the leadership of the DRHC for Syria cross-border response, the IASC co-facilitated with OCHA a series of consultations and a workshop in Gaziantep. These took place over three days and included three key components for engagement, briefing, information sharing and preparation for a workshop on the third day with the HLG. These were: the distribution of pre-briefing documents prior to meeting, group discussions with HLG members (including an introductory session and the Framework development), and bilateral and group meetings with key stakeholders.

The workshop concluded with the HLG agreeing on a set of priority actions and timelines, focal points responsible for them, and proposed cost and resource allocation to strengthen and operationalise AAP. This was to be laid out in an AAP Action Plan, which would then prompt the formation of a Taskforce to ensure their delivery.

4.1.1 Examples of good practices

Workshop was a foundational step in steering future discussion: Considering the long-term ambition of the Framework, the workshop was understood by participants to be a key starting point for building future consensus. Respondents saw the importance of the workshop discussions as they unfolded but were under the impression that the primary role of the group workshop sessions were to ignite interest and establish a unified foundation from which the AAP Framework would be developed. Maintaining the workshop as a foundation is key to ensuring the subsequent stages of the Framework are as effective as possible.

Bilateral meetings were key to the workshop's success: Peer-to-peer focus groups were key for the Framework development process. Considering the limited time for discussions within the workshop, the bilateral meetings allowed for participants to provide more nuanced perspectives on the AAP process. Furthermore, these meetings helped communicate the goal of the Framework to participants, ensuring they understood its aims. Bilateral discussions were seen by all as an important step to allowing for a more fruitful group discussion, and ensuring their contributions went beyond the limits of the workshop.

Leadership participation emphasised commitment: Importantly, respondents felt that the engagement of key leadership demonstrated commitment from the IASC Secretariat and the DRHC. The physical presence of UN leadership – including the Head of the IASC Secretariat, the DRHC and numerous OCHA representatives – within the workshop was considered a positive reflection of leadership support of the AAP Framework. Respondents felt this contributed to higher levels of engagement, interest, and optimism throughout the process. Leadership demonstrated their willingness to listen to participants' suggestions and challenges while encouraging innovative ideas to apply the Framework.

Diverse participation allowed for a nuanced and engaged discussion: Respondents noted that the diversity of participants in the workshop allowed for a fruitful discussion that energised their commitment to AAP practices. A broad invitation to participate was sent to interagency coordination structures, including UN entities, INGOs, and SNGOs, with a particular focus on including representatives of both Syrian and international origins and facilitating equal gendered representation. Exposure to different lenses on AAP is assisting both the normalisation of the process and the iterative nature of its incorporation, as several respondents felt that, through the workshops, they were beginning to see the broader applications of AAP beyond their own narrower organisational or individual usage. A limited number of donor organisations were also represented, the inclusion of which SNGO interviewees were particularly favourable toward, as it highlighted how the Framework seeks to cement networks across the humanitarian system. The inclusion of donors also hinted at the Framework being a potential space for donor-NGO discussion, allowing organisations to more accurately represent needs to the donor base. This would serve to enhance localisation and bridge the gap between donor demands, NGO capacities and afected people's needs.

4.1.2 What could work better: potential areas for improvement

Room for greater preparation: It was noted that there should be greater assistance given to participants in pre-workshop preparation. While all participants received briefing materials prior to the workshop, interviews revealed a discrepancy in the level of preparation. Several respondents reported receiving a considerable number of documents in the days immediately preceding the workshop, which led to an inability to review documents in detail. Others outlined the importance of being able to incorporate preparation alongside their many other tasks, particularly as preparation can take longer dependent upon the participant's fluency in whichever language the documents are written. As these briefings documents were key to ensuring participants were aware of the Framework and could contribute meaningfully to the discussions, some respondents felt that these could have been delivered further in advance of the workshop.

Language barriers can impact full communication and understanding during workshop: While respondents praised the emphasis on bilingual integration within the later Action Plan, and the extent to which this reflected the flexibility of the process, there was

considerable feeling that the workshop itself could have had simultaneous provision of Arabic translation, to ensure smooth communication and understanding by all participants. While those present were assisted in translation by their colleagues, such *ad hoc* translation limits the ability of participants to actively participate and engage in meaningful discussion.

Hybrid set-up limits participation for those taking part online: While the hybrid set-up is an increasingly useful way to maximise participation in the workshop, there were some issues in ensuring online participants were able to fully integrate in the workshop discussion. Limited internet accessibility also impacts the quality of participation.

4.2 Action Plan

Following the workshop, a 10-Point Action Plan for Change was produced. This was endorsed by the HLG for Northwest Syria on 8 December. The Action Plan is made up of three main goals, 10 actions, and 20 activities. These will be enacted over the course of a year, before a first review takes place.

The Action Plan was based on the Framework which is organised around five key outcomes linked to the HPC (Section 1.2). The workshop directed discussion around thematic areas – participation, feedback and complaints mechanisms, accountability, resourcing, communications, and the humanitarian programme cycle – and resulted in 31 recommendations. Through consultation with both AAP focal points from the HLG and the Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator, the Action Plan was narrowed to 12 and then to 10 targeted actions. This evolution took place in the five weeks from November 1 to December 10, 2021, when it was then endorsed by the HLG.

4.2.1 Examples of Good practices

The Collective AAP Framework is an evolving process: As shown in the timeline (Section 4), the Action Plan evolved over time following the workshop and extensive discussions and consultations. The iterative nature of the Framework and its discussions were deemed a key strength by respondents, as they allowed for refinement over time and for due consideration to be given to its evolution. The incorporation of concerns over language made during the workshops highlights this, as it ensured that simultaneous translation services were available during the development of the Action Plan.

Replacing jargon with accessible, commonly used language: Considering the Action Plan is intended to assist affected people, respondents felt that technical language should be limited where possible, to ensure comprehension throughout the Northwest Syria-Gaziantep humanitarian operations. Respondents felt that the development of the Action Plan incorporated these concerns, using language which was accessible to a wider network of stakeholders.

Visual design contributes to accessibility and comprehension: Reflecting on the evolutionary nature of the Action Plan, several respondents commented on the visual simplicity and appeal of the final plan in comparison to some of the preparatory documents. This improves its ease of use for multiple stakeholders across the context. Interviewees feel this is a refreshing approach, from a planning delivery perspective, thought to be more accessible and comprehendible for humanitarian workers at all organisational levels and particularly those not aware of international policy-related terminology and formal reports.

4.2.2 Room for improvement

All respondents reflected that, given the relatively recent operationalisation of the Action Plan, it is too early to infer possible improvements. As this was the first in a series of AAP workshops to focus on the implementation of the Framework, there are limited formal iterations from which to draw conclusions.

4.3 Taskforce

The Change Taskforce has been created to carry out the 10-Point Action Plan for Change. The Taskforce is comprised of one donor, four NGOs, four UN agencies, and technical capacity from REACH as well as AAP and AIPG Advisors. It also served to absorb the previous AIPG working group as noted in Section 3.1.1.

4.3.1 Key findings

This expansion included four NGO representatives, an equal number of UN representatives, one donor and two technical groups, and involved the creation of a separate Monitoring and Evaluation Group, to split the interested nominees and to have

a watchdog that would monitor implementation. Respondents reflected on this favourably and viewed it as a clear commitment to effective two-way communication. By allowing for negotiation and acting upon the recommendation of Taskforce participants, many perceived this to enhance the legitimacy and credibility of the Taskforce.

Draws on international technical expertise while listening to realities on the ground: Building on the above point, the Taskforce allows for participants to rely on each other's experiences and strengths. For example, when faced with a specific challenge, a UN Agency technical expert can put forth a suggestion, that is then shifted by the SNGO members with knowledge of the feasibility on the ground. This again enables the Taskforce to be as effective as possible by drawing upon comparative advantages of different stakeholders. The presence of a donor on the Taskforce was also received favourably by interviewees, as it helps local organisations to represent the needs of affected populations directly to the donor base.

A clear shift in language and approach which emphasises the commitment of all participants: Participants in both workshops and the Taskforce reflected that the cumulative effect of the steps taken between the workshop and the start of the Taskforce have reinforced an optimistic vision for AAP. Emphasis on inclusive language and action have clearly fostered a common belief and commitment to the process and to accountability to affected people. Several respondents noted favourably that discussions over the Taskforce were more detailed and in-depth than previous inter-group meetings on accountability, and that their views were both registered and discussed at length. The discussion and its framing reflected a willingness to understand elements which were missing in previous attempts to increase accountability to affected people..

Immediate application of simultaneous translation: Action Plan Point 1 prioritises the use of local languages in meetings and discussion fora. The respect for this within the focus groups, consultations and the further discussions regarding the Taskforce was viewed favourably, as it allows participants and stakeholders to understand and communicate effectively, regardless of their level of English or Arabic. The swift action around this Action Point demonstrated the collective determination for the Action Plan to succeed and allowed participants whose English capabilities are not as strong feel more confident to communicate with the Taskforce.

5. Recommendations

The below section synthesises the findings outlined in Sections 3 and 4, compiling recommendations to ensure future Framework rollouts incorporate AAP good practices, and avoid common or recurring barriers.

The section begins by providing insight on what considerations should be made when tailoring the Framework to differing contexts. Recommendations are then separated into four phases of the Framework development: Pre-workshop preparation and tone setting, conduct of the workshops, development of the Action Plan, and the establishment and commitments of the Taskforce.

5.1 Assessing the country context

It is widely understood that a "one-size-fits-all" approach is not feasible for most development practices, and such is the case with AAP. Therefore, when integrating the Collective AAP Framework, or any other AAP-focused mechanism, stakeholders must carry out a situational analysis to tailor AAP efforts to differing needs, crises, and populations. To understand how best a country context should apply the Framework, stakeholders should consider the three following preparatory exercises:

Assessing the degree to which civil society networks are formalised and invested in. Considering the Framework requires a coordinated commitment from civil society, mapping the pre-existing structures can allow the Taskforce to capitalise on existing organisational infrastructure. Leveraging existing networks to identify where AAP can be integrated will help ensure the Framework is built on a strong foundation, avoiding the replication or removal of local structures. It is key to assess the diversity within these networks, including the inclusion of local NGOs, women, and employment of local populations.

Assessing the degree to which existing AAP mechanisms are practiced and understood within the country context. At the start of Framework development, it is key for all stakeholders to have a unified understanding of AAP and how it can be integrated. By assessing the extent to which AAP is already practiced and understood, organisers can evaluate the need for potential pre-Framework trainings and briefing materials required. This assessment should be carried out even in contexts that are experienced with AAP

practices, as sectors within the humanitarian system prioritise AAP differently.

Assessing the degree to which local leadership can support and prioritise AAP. As identified in Sections 3 and 4, leadership support is a key factor in ensuring the successful application of AAP practices. As the Northwest Syria-Gaziantep field testing relied heavily on the strong commitment of the humanitarian leadership there, it cannot be presumed that such commitment is present in other contexts. While the invitation of the Framework to a country context inherently implies leadership interest and a willingness to support Framework rollout, it is still important for facilitators to understand the extent to which leadership has the capacity to coordinate with their wider network and communicate the importance of prioritising AAP.

5.2 Collective AAP Framework: Recommendations for the wider rollout

The following section provides key insights and recommendations to consider as the Collective AAP Framework is introduced to different contexts. These refer specifically to the preparation and conduct of the workshops, the development of the Action Plan and the establishment and commitments of the Taskforce.

5.2.1 Pre-workshop preparation and tone setting:

Prior to the commencement of the Framework rollout and development, facilitators should consider the tone being set and the distribution of information, including any necessary briefing materials or technical trainings required.

Leadership's commitment should be visible and robust: Maintaining a visible and consistent leadership commitment is a key requirement when enacting the Framework in other regional contexts. This refers to the willingness and active involvement of senior leadership on the ground in local organisations, INGOs, and government actors to integrate AAP across all project cycles and in all humanitarian contexts. In the absence of any substantive government commitment to AAP implementation, it becomes necessary for even stronger commitments and support from the wider humanitarian system, as well as local and national organisations and populations, in order for the Framework implementation to succeed. Even in contexts where civil society organisations have a considerable presence, or where regional government is committed to AAP, the HLG and UN infrastructure must ensure their own commitment remains consistent and does not pass responsibility to these other structures. This may necessitate further internal training and capacity building within UN affiliates before rolling out the Framework.

Preparation process should aim for consistent understanding of AAP: Prior implementations of AAP mechanisms were hindered by inconsistencies in understanding among stakeholders at all levels. Participants having different understandings of AAP in practice or varying priorities due to their technical expertise can lead to more nuanced discussions on AAP but can also detract from the discussion of foundational priorities during the workshop and lead to a "speaking, not listening" mentality, in which participants simply state their own objectives and avoid meaningful discussion of other's needs. The Gaziantep workshop ensured there was an aligned understanding of AAP

through the introduction session.

Resources sent out prior to the workshop must also be shared with all workshop participants and stakeholders with sufficient time given for review before the workshops, to ensure a common understanding at all levels of the process.

The inclusion of technical experts is crucial: The inclusion of AAP technical experts in Northwest Syria-Gaziantep was a significant strength in developing the Action Plan. Their role in the process allowed a transfer of knowledge to on-the-ground stakeholders and ensured global best practices were adhered to. Similarly, the inclusion of NGO technical experts is significant for the rollout of the Framework in ensuring that on-the-ground knowledge is similarly transferred upwards to the UN and other stakeholders. Priority should therefore be placed on seeking out NGO representatives with both technical and field experience in the area they are sought to represent, to ensure that organisations are not represented solely by high-level staff, such as CEOs, who tend to be less involved in the implementation of AAP practices.

5.2.2 Conduct of the workshop

When conducting the workshops, facilitators should ensure the following recommendations are considered to ensure a unified understanding of the Framework and a fruitful discussion. These build upon the previous contextual and tone setting recommendations.

Bilateral meetings are integral to the process: There was a unanimous acknowledgement that the of peer-to-peer meetings were key to the workshop success in Northwest Syria-Gaziantep. Considering the limited time in the workshops and the potential for “speaking, not listening” mentalities, the bilateral meetings ensured both workshop moderators and participants could partake in focussed and solution-oriented discussions. It is therefore key for future Framework rollouts to integrate bilateral meetings to allow for a deeper understanding of AAP, strengthen existing partnerships, and ensure the workshops are not simply seen as a presentation exercise.

More attention is required for translation and language: As noted in Section 4, many were pleased with the introduction of simultaneous translation during the Action Plan development stage. This was a clear example of successful course correction within the rollout process. However, it is important to note that the lack of simultaneous translation during the workshop itself left several participants feeling unable to fully participate. While this was temporarily assuaged by colleagues present who offered to translate ad hoc, participants felt this was a poor alternative to having a simultaneous translator, which would allow them to participate more extensively and speak more freely. Similarly, many preferred having written resources in local languages. It was pointed out that despite many in the Syrian context having fluency in Arabic, this can be dependent on geographical or gendered contexts, and the presumption of Arabic fluency in some contexts led to greater confusion. Providing relevant resources in more local languages would be greatly beneficial to overall workshop engagement.

Participants should continue to reflect the diversity of voices they seek to represent: To have clear and effective discussions on AAP, there needs to be a diverse array of participants present. This includes organisation diversity (including a mixture of larger INGOs and local NGOs), gender inclusion (considering gender balance within the workshop and Taskforce), and expertise and experience (ensuring the participation of those with technical experience within the country context). While respondents commented that the diversity within the Gaziantep workshop sufficiently reflected affected populations' needs, many did note a desire for a stronger donor presence, seeing the workshop as a potential forum to deal directly with donors. This would assist in bridging the gap many respondents noted between donor demands and needs on-the-ground, allowing organisations to share knowledge and communicate directly with the donor base. While participants understood the difficulty of involving affected peoples actively in the workshops, many of the NGO representatives reflected that it would be effective to have them present at later workshops. This was drawn from a feeling that, while many SNGO representatives were themselves Syrian, they did not consider themselves to be affected people, and were therefore limited in their ability to speak with absolute authority on the needs of affected people. When rolling out the Framework elsewhere, it is important to ensure this distinction is taken into account. A lack of organisational representation may indicate unaddressed needs among affected peoples, whilst a heavy presence of organisations in a specific sector is not necessarily an accurate indicator of affected people's current needs.

Consider integrating trainings within workshops: Due to the diversity in understandings of AAP, workshop convenors should consider integrating further trainings on AAP within the workshop process. These could run as part of the introductory session, and would be particularly relevant in contexts where AAP is not already embedded in the humanitarian response.. The participants of the Gaziantep workshop largely saw extending the group discussion as a useful exercise, but not a necessity, as they already had a considerable understanding of the relevant AAP context. However, in cases where AAP is not already prevalent in organisational responses, more time may be needed to ensure alignment.

Online participants should be aware of their role: When including online participants, there should be clear communication of their role, depending on the level of moderator capacity within the workshop.

The following suggestions can assist with identifying to what extent online participants can take part:

High moderator capacity	Medium moderator capacity	Low moderator capacity
Allow online participants to join a breakout group, designating a volunteer to share ideas with team.	Allow participants to type any additional comments within the chat box, with a designated in-house moderator to provide feedback.	Make online participants aware of the lack of capacity to include their ideas, inviting them to send emails with ideas they may have.

Figure 5.
Suggestion for Online Participation

5.2.3 Development of the Action Plan

When developing the Action Plan, facilitators must ensure that the following practices are maintained and encouraged as a means of operationalising the commitment to AAP practices.

Maintain flexibility of the Framework: As demonstrated in the interviews, the key strength of the Framework is its adaptability to diverse settings and flexibility over time. When developing the Action Plan, contextual needs taken from the workshop, bilateral meetings, and local experience should be considered. This includes cultural sensitivities, pre-existing gender dynamics, the structure of the cluster system, and other specificities of the crisis.

Ensure the Action Plan is accessible at all levels: Accessible language, or language that de-prioritises jargon for easier-to-understand terminology, was seen as a key factor to allow a wide range of stakeholders to participate in the Action Plan. Creators should ensure this is maintained, to allow humanitarian actors and affected populations alike to understand how organisations are seeking to prioritise accountability mechanisms. Further, there was a clear agreement that simple visual representations of key information, including the Action Plan itself, are undervalued in their use as a tool to encourage wider stakeholder participation and ensure full comprehension.

Consider follow-up sessions: It was noted by participants that a refresher workshop to reinforce AAP knowledge and skillsets would be a useful future tool. A potential supplementary workshop could take place three-to-six months after the conclusion of the Action Plan, and be used as a means of reviewing it, adding additional Action Points, and combining Action Points where needed. Such a session would require limited provision of extra resources, the key groundwork already having occurred in the initial workshop. A follow-up session would also assist in reinforcing the shifts in language and culture that respondents noted during the workshop process. Re-emphasising the inclusivity and accountability that are cornerstones of the Framework through follow-up sessions encourages continued commitment and dedication to its implementation.

5.2.4 Establishment and commitments of the Taskforce

In establishing the Taskforce, assigning leads based on expertise is integral, as is maintaining the flexibility over their assignment.

Maintain flexibility in Taskforce membership: Aligning with earlier findings, a degree of flexibility is needed when developing the Taskforce. As the Action Plan evolves, there should be an openness to adding new Taskforce members where gaps in knowledge or technical capacity occur. By maintaining a proactive willingness to course correct, local organisations are both more committed and more involved in prioritising the implementation of the Framework.

Ensure Action Point leads are assigned according to expertise and capacity, not hierarchy: As stated in the findings, the Taskforce allowed for non-hierarchical communication of how to approach the Action Plan. Each Action Point is assigned a lead and co-lead. The leads volunteer for each Action Point, and each volunteer is presumed to have expertise in the respective field. Where multiple partners volunteer, they are then assessed according to their capacity. As expertise is necessary for smoother knowledge sharing within the Taskforce, when Action Point leads are chosen in wider contexts, horizontal working structures should be prioritised, and leads should be consciously evaluated on their expertise in the field which they have chosen to volunteer.

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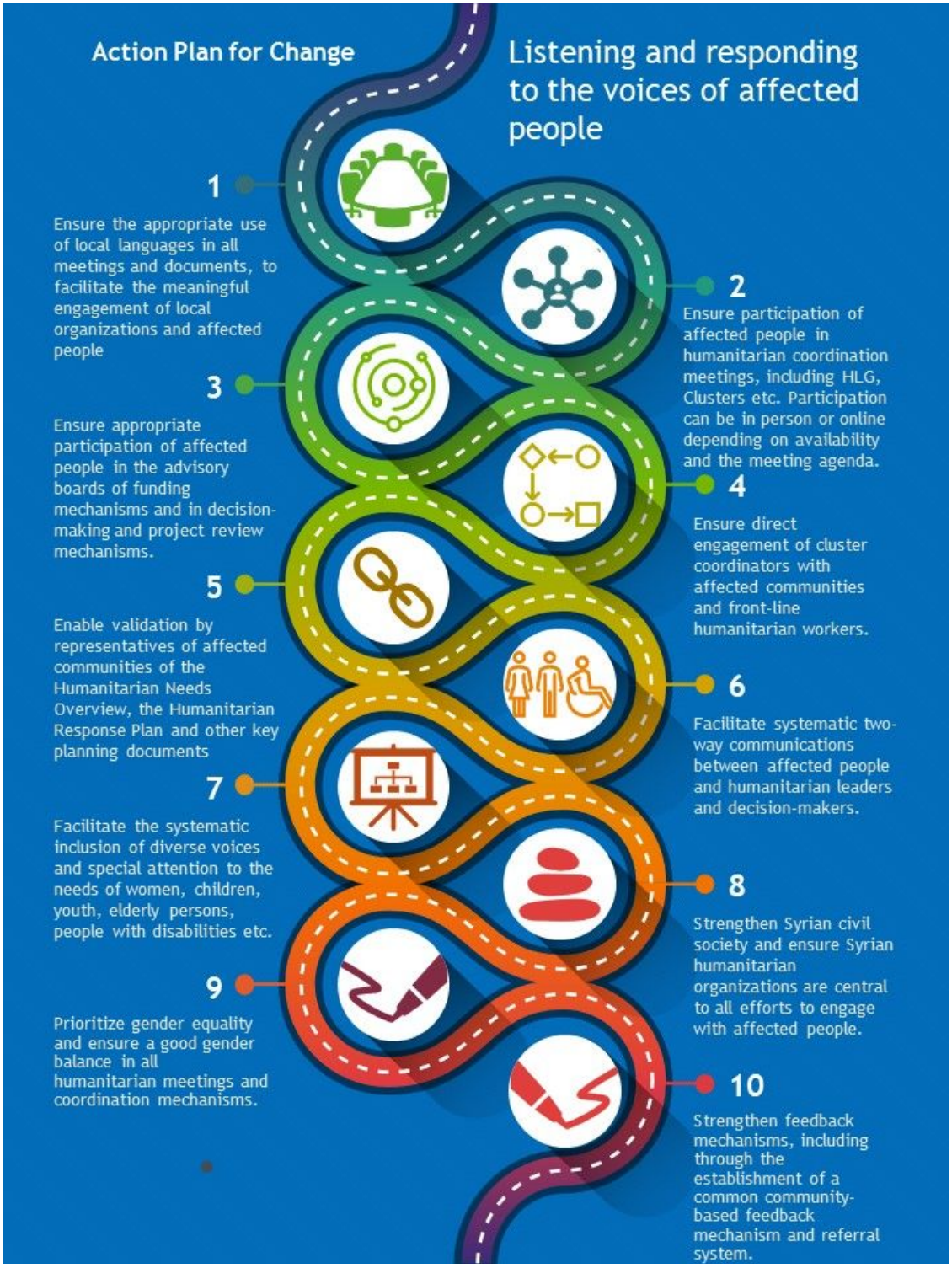
Cover image taken from WHO, 2020. WHO (WHO Gaziantep, Turkish Red Crescent and OCHA) in partnership with Al-Sham Humanitarian Foundation, Hand in Hand for Syria, Independent Doctor’s Association, delivered an 11-truck shipment of essential medicines and health kits for primary health care, trauma, surgery and noncommunicable diseases (valued at US$ 813 880.00) estimated to provide 757 200 treatments for civilians in northwest Syria on 11 June 2020. <http://www.emro.who.int/fr/health-topics/corona-virus/working-with-partners-to-reach-the-most-vulnerable-in-northwest-syria.html>.

Appendices

Appendix C: Copy of the Gaziantep Action Plan

Below are English and Arabic copies of the 10-point Action Plan for Change, as decided by the Gaziantep workshops. Reproduced with permission of UN OCHA.



Appendices

خطة العمل من أجل التغيير
الاصغاء والاستجابة لأصوات المتضررين
1
ضمان الاستخدام المناسب للغات المحلية في جميع الاجتماعات والوثائق ، لتسهيل المشاركة الهادفة للمنظمات المحلية والأشخاص المتضررين
2
ضمان مشاركة الأشخاص المتضررين في اجتماعات التنسيق الإنسانية ، بما في ذلك HLGو القطاعات وما إلى ذلك. يمكن أن تكون المشاركة فيزيائية أو عبر الإنترنت حسب الحالة وجدول أعمال الاجتماع.
3
ضمان المشاركة المناسبة للأشخاص المتضررين في المجالس الاستشارية لآليات التمويل وعمليات صنع القرار وآليات مراجعة المشاريع.
4
ضمان المشاركة المباشرة لمنسقي المجموعات مع المجتمعات المتضررة والعمال الإنسانيين في الميدان.
5
تمكين ممثلي المجتمعات المتضررة من التحقق من صحة النظرة عامة على الاحتياجات الإنسانية HNO وخطة الاستجابة الإنسانية HRP ووثائق التخطيط الرئيسية الأخرى
6
تيسير عمليات الاتصال والتواصل المنتظم مابين السكان المتضررين والقادة وصناع القرار الإنسانيين.
7
تسهيل الإدماج المنهجي للأصوات المتنوعة وإيلاء اهتمام خاص لاحتياجات النساء والأطفال والشباب وكبار السن والأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة وما إلى ذلك.
8
تمكين المجتمع المدني السوري وضمان أن تكون المنظمات الإنسانية السورية مركزية في جميع الجهود المبذولة للتعامل مع المتضررين.
9
إعطاء الأولوية للمساواة الجندرية وضمان توازن فعال ما بين الجنسين في جميع الاجتماعات وآليات التنسيق الإنسانية.
10
تعزيز آليات التغذية الراجعة ، بما في ذلك إنشاء آلية تغذية راجعة ونظام إحالة موحد ومشترك.

Appendices

Appendix D: Tools & Resources

The following consist of key tools and resources for those implementing the Collective AAP Framework.

Collaborative for Development Action Do-No-Harm Framework
https://www.cdacollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Do-No-Harm-A-Brief-Introduction-from-CDA.pdf

Core Humanitarian Standard Guidance Notes and Indicators
https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/resources/chs-guidance-notes-and-indicators

Food security and nutrition cluster guidance on mainstreaming AAP
https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GNC_gFSC-Joint-AAP-Guidance_WEB.pdf

Health cluster resources on AAP
http://www.who.int/health-cluster/resources/publications/AAP-tool.pdf

IASC - TOOLS to assist in implementing the IASC AAP Commitments
https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy_files/TOOLS%20to%20assist%20in%20implementing%20the%20IASC%20AAP%20Commitments.pdf

Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
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Tools to assist in implementing Inter-Agency Standing Committee Accountability to Affected Populations
https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-people/documents-public/accountability-affected-populations-tools-assist

UNHCR- Emergency handbook – AAP
https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/42555/accountability-to-affected-populations-aap

Protection and AAP in the humanitarian cycle
https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/edg_-aap_protection_guidance_note_2016.pdf

Collective Accountability to Affected People: Moving Beyond Listening, Together
https://www.deliveraidbetter.org/webinars/collective-accountability-affected-people/

Appendices

Appendix E: Indicative Interview Questions

These interview questions are indicative of the questions posed to respondents for the interviews in Sections 3 and 4 respectively. Certain questions were disapplied where necessary, to allow for a dynamic interview process where interesting lines of inquiry brought up by the respondent could be followed. The interview sheets must therefore be viewed as guidance only, and do not reflect a complete record of the questions asked in every interview.

Section 3: Existing AAP Practices within Gaziantep and Northwest Syria

Inclusive and Adaptive Coordination practices carried out by your organisation

- How would you/your organisation/team/practice describe the level of consideration of the needs of affected people in your everyday work? Do you feel that you/your organisation/team/practice adequately understands and is able to provide what is most needed by the affected communities?
  - How does that work? Could you provide us with some examples?
- Do you feel there is a difference in practice between your own organisation, and other NGOs in the same space which adversely affects capacity to ensure accountability practices are followed?
- How has COVID impacted your ability to facilitate the needs of the organisation you support?

Feedback mechanisms

- Does your organisation currently have strategies to collect feedback from the communities you support?
- How do you ensure your organization prioritise the needs of the community?
- Are there any examples of good practices that you wish to be shared/noted?
- How prepared do you feel your organisation is to course correct based on local feedback?
- How has your organisation facilitated continued participation and presence of [Disability, Inclusion and Gender or women-led] groups?

Appendices

Appendix E: Indicative Interview Questions Continued

Leadership in seeing real change

- Do you feel your voice, and the voices your organisation represent, are adequately represented at (higher) decision-making tables?
  - Do you think the current representation of diverse organisations is sufficient to represent diverse voices and interests of NGOs operating in the region?
- To what extent is there already buy-in from leadership on AAP processes and more general NGO inclusion?

Common Services

- In order to support the needs of affected people, there are services that cross organisations that require coordination between local, national, and international NGOS. Crossing multiple services and programmes, we're interested to hear if you engage in any wider networks to support the mandate of your organization?
  - How do you think these services could be improved to better understand the needs of affected people and promote their inclusion?
- Have you faced any broader challenges in working to implement AAP across all levels of your organisation?

Funding and Sources of Funding

- Do you feel that AAP implementation is adequately considered when budgeting, both by your organisation and [if required] within the cluster?
- How do you think funding should be improved to better support your organisation's commitment to AAP?

Areas for Improvement

- Do you feel there is room for improvement?
- What are the factors that need to be mitigated in order to support your organisation's commitment to AAP?
- How supported do you feel by ICVA/IASC in achieving AAP?

Appendices

Appendix E: Indicative Interview Questions

Section 4: AAP Prioritisation through Collective AAP Framework

Discussion of organization's own AAP practices

- Specifically looking at your work, does your organisation currently have strategies to collect feedback from the communities you support?
  - Do you believe the communities understand how the feedback process works?
  - How do you strive to ensure that they do?
  - How prepared do you feel your organisation is to course correct based on local feedback?
  - Do you feel there is a difference in practice between your own organisation, and other NGOs in the same space which adversely affects capacity to ensure accountability practices are followed?

Workshop process – Three-day structure and participation

- The workshop went over three days, the first day introductions, the second bilateral meetings and the third day being the framework discussion and development. Overall, do you believe this structure allowed enough time and activities to tease out a framework that aligned with your organisation's needs?
- Do you believe you were sufficiently briefed ahead of the workshop; did you understand what you were being asked to join?
  - What material would have been helpful to receive.
- Did the workshop structure align with your expectations?
  - Did you understand the IACS's conception of AAP beforehand?

Appendices

Appendix E: Indicative Interview Questions Continued

During workshop

- During the second day, the workshop broke up and they started brainstorming barriers to participation, feedback, accountability, resourcing, communications. Teams then provided their feedback on what can be done. How do you believe this went, and do you think this was reflected in the output?
- In your opinion, what part of the workshop was the most important? The most impactful?
- Was there any part of the workshop that was not useful or a waste of time?

Participation

- How do you believe workshop participant comments throughout the discussions were integrated into the framework development?
- Do you believe the comments from leadership reflected a clear understanding of the needs of those on the ground to carry out the framework?
- Do you believe there was anyone missing from the workshop that could have contributed to the discussion?

Workshop process – Leadership buy-in

- Do you feel the framework, and AAP more generally, has been bought into by leadership?
- Do you believe leadership understood the broader challenges in working to implement AAP across all levels of your organisation?
- During the workshop, to what extent did you feel your voice, and the voices your organisation represent, were adequately represented?
- Considering your participation in the workshop and its outcomes, did you see AAP participation steer the creation of the framework?
- How do you believe this shift in leadership will ensure real change?

Appendices

Appendix E: Indicative Interview Questions Continued

Workshop process – Network

- In order to support the needs of affected people, there are services that cross organisations that require coordination between local, national, and international NGOs. Crossing multiple services and programmes, we're interested to hear if you engage in any wider networks to support the mandate of your organization?
- Building on this, what services have you seen in practice more generally that have effectively engaged and included affected people?
  - How does your organisation utilise basic services as a means for increased accountability?
  - How does your organization assure that the services being offered are the ones needed by the affected community?

Workshop outputs

- Do you feel the workshop and its outputs will influence how your organisation moves forward?
  - How do you feel they will influence your decision-making process?
- Looking at the conclusion of the workshop, do you see the clear input from you and other workshop participants?
- Do you believe these changes reflect the comments raised by both yourself and other organisations present at the workshop?
- One of the key outcomes of the Gaziantep Action Plan, produced as a result of the workshops, is the inclusion of simultaneous translation (In keeping with Action Point 1), allowing for speakers in either Arabic or English. Do you feel that this provision is adequate to suit your needs, or are there further needs (particularly with regard to language) that you feel have not been met?

Appendices

Appendix E: Indicative Interview Questions Continued

Workshop outputs continued

- A further Action determined was that "Each quarter front line responders and gender-balanced representatives from local communities will have a virtual exchange with the HLG, where they present key issues and answer questions to support HLG decision-making." <dependent upon who we're talking to maybe?> does this action reflect needs you perceive?
- The Draft Action Plans indicated six thematic areas – participation, feedback mechanisms, accountability, resourcing, communications, and the humanitarian programme cycle – as central to facilitating the rollout of the AAP mechanism. Do you feel these areas were sufficiently addressed and discussed during the workshops you participated in?
- A key change between the draft action plans and the Collective Action Plan occurred in the addition of several new Action Points, to specifically address the meaningful inclusion of diverse voices (particularly from gendered and disability groups, Actions 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 2.3). Was this addition discussed enough during the workshop, and do you feel it reflects required needs enough?
- Multiple new Actions were produced for the Community Action Plan regarding Outcome 3 (financing). New additions included specific commitments to funding community engagement groups (3.2), translation services (3.3), culturally appropriate AAP engagement (3.4), training of Syrian field staff (3.5), and donor interest advocacy (3.5). Do these reflect your own perceptions of funding requests and aims made during the workshops?
- The action plan significantly evolved through time, can you tell us, from your perspective how you think it evolved and how useful it was?
- Do you think the initial framework was useful in getting you to the final version?

Appendices

Appendix E: Indicative Interview Questions Continued

Aligning with your expectations

- Considering this discussion, to what extent do you believe the workshop aligned with your expectations; was your expertise utilised in the areas/discussions you expected/hoped?
- Do you feel that your understanding of IASCs AAP framework was greatly enhanced?
- If there was a key success of the workshop, what would you say?
- Was there anything within the workshop that did not align with your expectations? // was the agenda of the workshops what you anticipated/hoped to discuss?
- Was there anything that was not covered in the workshops, which you feel is important to the rollout of an AAP accountability framework?

Resourcing

- To what extent do you think the framework will help tackle this?
- Does your organisation's budgeting include a committed section for AAP implementation?

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