



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF'S ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS FRAMEWORK

The core of Lutheran World Relief (LWR) identity is deeply rooted in dignity, justice, inclusiveness and accountability. Resources and responsibilities for decision making are to be used in ways that are mutually transparent and answerable to all stakeholders. This is complemented by the highest standards, flexibility and practicality in program implementation, balancing accountability towards the affected population and the expectations of partners and donors.

In line with this commitment, LWR's Accountability to Affected Populations Framework ensures that those who are the primary group being served are taken in to consideration during all phases of intervention. This accountability stretches beyond projects however, and becomes a fundamental principle of how LWR operates. This Framework uses the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's 5 commitments to affected populations as its outline.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- LWR is guided by the principles of dignity and justice, inclusiveness and participation, accountability and transparency, compassion and commitment.
- LWR has zero tolerance to any form of abuse of power, sexual exploitation, fraud and corruption, physical and psychological abuse and criminal offences.
- LWR takes complaints seriously and positively and shall address all issues of sexual exploitation, abuse of power, corruption and breach of the LWR policies and standards.
- LWR is committed to having an effective procedure for remaining accountable to affected populations.
- Appropriate cultural and local practices should be respected in the development of complaints mechanisms.
- When necessary, it is particularly important to ensure that support is available to complainants in ways deemed appropriate.



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LEADERSHIP/GOVERNANCE

LWR provides appropriate and effective services to the communities being served and is accountable to members of those communities. In the context of emergencies, several international standards act as guide in this process:

- LWR adheres to Sphere standards where feasible and appropriate;
- LWR is an Associate Member of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP);
- LWR is an active participant and contributor to the initiatives taken by the international humanitarian community, and
- LWR is working towards becoming Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) compliant.

To achieve the goal of quality programming and its aims of accompaniment, LWR prioritizes providing capacity building to national agencies and local organizations with an obligation toward poor and marginalized people to support and encourage their efforts to fulfill their responsibilities.

With a dedicated Technical Advisor for Emergency Capacity Building on the Emergencies team, LWR is taking the Quality and Accountability approach to the next level by providing agency-wide emergency capacity building trainings to all relevant LWR staff, which will eventually be given to local partners. In addition to training on most common operational and coordination challenges, these trainings cover international humanitarian standards, such as Sphere, HAP and CHS. These trainings also include creating a de facto in-country group of trainers who can continue to use each other as a community of practice, and ties to related networks as well as training materials.

LWR also has a Framework for Organizational Impact based on a multi-level approach that spans from each individual project and partner, and bridges to strategic inquiry around agency-level impact at our highest strategic planning level. Working with partners and staff, LWR is building strong, rigorous measurement systems into each project, to enable more objective verification on the successes of its programs. By creating minimum standards for measurement, LWR is able to regularly collate impact and outcome data for both internal learning and for public views. The use of impact data, combined with other complementary evaluation techniques, allows LWR to learn, plan, grow and improve our accountability to both program participants and the donors who support our work.

Finally, LWR signs on and strictly adheres to various standards in the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. These include the Statement of Commitment on Eliminating Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN and non-UN Personnel and the ICRC Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief. Both agreements are not only included as attachments to LWR's Cooperation Agreement with partners, but are also referenced within the agreement itself as a requirement for project implementation.

TRANSPARENCY

LWR remains committed to openness and transparency in all aspects of our work. On the LWR website, the latest evaluations can be seen including larger scale ones around various sectors or a specific emergency. Once every 2-3 years, LWR conducts a Meta-Evaluation across all projects falling within an objective area, to collate impact and outcome data and analyze for learning within the sector. The first Agriculture Meta Review was completed in 2013, and was repeated again in 2014 for Emergencies. This review looks back at all of LWR's projects over the last five years, with the purpose of analyzing LWR's collective, global impact in this sector. Both a 5-page summary report, and a full, 30-page detailed report are available. In addition to this, LWR annually produces an organizational-level snapshot report about our work worldwide, including the number of countries we work in, budget breakdowns, and numbers of direct and indirect project participants.

LWR's Cooperation Agreements with implementing partners include a branding and marking clause with various requirements aimed at providing transparency to local communities through public signage that includes key information on project objectives, implementation period, implementing and funding partners, and contact information. These signs list contact people and a phone number so that project participants can have direct access to voice concerns or ask questions.

FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

Project participants are always involved in the project cycle for enhanced ownership and sustainability. To ensure their full participation of communities, staff carry out consultative planning, implementation, monitoring, and regular reviews for all activities. Feedback forums with community leaders and staff are organized regularly and plans of action are developed following such meetings. In LWR's proposal template, partners are specifically asked about how the community will remain engaged and how the organization will remain accountable to them. Questions include how information will be shared (including how participants were selected), how was the community consulted during the design phase, how they will continue to be involved and how feedback will be received, responded to and followed up on.

In India, LWR implemented a Complaints Response Mechanism called the "Letter Box Model" which receives complaints from participants in written form. There is a subcommittee which exists within a disaster management team who opens the box in the presence of project staff. This subcommittee is responsible for managing the complaints. This model follows a process orientated system of data collection, sorting, recording, analyzing, validating for authenticity, processing for relevant answers and taking actions. A high level of engagement from project staff is required at initial stage to build the capacity of community to maintain such systems in a non-partial and neutral way. This model is cost effective, workable and sustains at village setup even if the project sponsorship reduces or stops.

LWR's long standing partner in complex humanitarian responses, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), also has a strong commitment to accountability. LWF has an established complaints mechanism. This system creates a way for refugees to enjoy their rights and to reclaim them in case of any discrepancy. All complaints are taken seriously. In addition, any allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse are in direct conflict with LWF Code of Conduct and will be addressed urgently and confidentially through the channels described in LWF complaints mechanism.

PARTICIPATION

LWR historically has centered its overseas work in a philosophy and framework called "accompaniment." Rooted in the Lutheran tradition that believes empowerment and justice happen only by 'standing with', rather than 'doing for' others in need, accompaniment is a dynamic relationship between diverse partners with complementary resources and skills working together to empower poor communities to improve their lives. It recognizes that these communities already have resources and assets that can be harnessed to improve their own wellbeing. Building on these pre-existing assets, accompaniment is based on shared principles and objectives, and uses jointly-developed strategies with flexibility and openness to achieve sustainable results. Characterized by mutual trust, respect, accountability, and transparency, the relationship contributes to each partner's growth and learning while carrying out its primary goal of improving the well-being of the poor.

LWR has traditionally accompanied local organizations where and whenever possible to foster community empowerment and to ensure resources are used to maximum effect. LWR focuses primarily on civil society organizations which can include farmers' associations, community based organizations, church partners and/or larger, yet locally-based, non-governmental organizations. LWR supports and works alongside these important agents of change as they are locally situated, comprised of local/indigenous leaders and staff, have extensive knowledge and experience in the community, have their community's trust, and have a long term interest in the community's success. In its support for these partners, LWR relies on participatory and appreciative methods, leading-edge development techniques, effective program management, and organizational capacity building. LWR is committed to helping their groups develop their internal systems and processes, as well as technical areas of expertise. In fact, LWR policy allows up to 5% of the total project budget to be set aside for organization capacity building. The plan for these funds must be included in the project proposal and reported on as part of the project.

DESIGN, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

As previously noted, LWR places significant emphasis on working through partners. The reasons for this are various ranging from the value LWR places in the dignity of all people; the value placed on partnerships; the greater sustainability that comes from deep investment by participants; the innovation that comes from working with local partners who understand how to best influence the local context and the efficiency of working through others. Therefore LWR encourages the most inclusive participation possible by all project stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle, from design to evaluation. This position can be found throughout all the tools and resources included in the DMEL (Design, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning) Framework. The tools and resources in the DMEL Framework are oriented toward guiding project staff (both LWR country office staff and partner staff) and helping them organize, document and analyze the information and data that logically flows from an inclusive participatory process. This entire framework is available online and is open to any person or organization.

LWR takes a “people centered approach” throughout the entire project cycle even from initial problem identification. Clearly understanding the problem, with help from all project stakeholders, ensures that the chosen design meets participants’ needs and desires and takes into account the unique context in which the project will be implemented.

Good designs alone do not ensure results; designs must be complemented by quality planning. Planning helps ensure that a comprehensive system for tracking and monitoring project progress towards achieving results is in place. Furthermore, detailed M&E planning ensures accountability to all key project stakeholders (project participants, partners, donors, LWR) by identifying the data and information needed to show project success and impact, setting up a systematic way of collecting it, and ensuring that both positive and negative results are acted upon. Knowing what data will be collected and when it is available during the project cycle helps project managers and other key project staff to determine techniques for analysis which contributes to more informed management decisions.

It is important to note that this process is not linear but rather cyclical in nature. Design leads to monitoring which leads to learning which can lead to changes in design. Continuous and routine monitoring of project ensure LWR is remaining accountable to the affected population who assisted with the initial design in the first place. Another effective monitoring tool is a reflection meeting which will allow project staff and other stakeholders to reflect on project progress and quality in a participatory manner and will help to identify best practices that can be strengthened further and ineffective practices that can be discontinued or improved.



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