

Accountable Governance: Assessment of Impact and Learning in Bangladesh



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List of Acronyms

ACT	Action of Churches Together
AF	Accountability Frameworks
CA	Christian Aid
CAB	Christian Aid, Bangladesh
CCDB	Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh
CMO	Context-Mechanism-Outcome (Hypotheses) in Realist Evaluation
CRM	Complaints Response Mechanisms
DfID	Department for International Development
DSK	Dushtha Shasthya Kendra
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GUK	Gana Unnayan Kendra
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
KII	Key Informant Interview
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
OIP	Open Information Policies
PPA	Programme Partnership Arrangement
PVCA	Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment
Sphere	Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response
ToC	Theory of Change
UP	Union Parishads

Executive Summary

1. Accountable governance approaches in Christian Aid Bangladesh

Christian Aid Bangladesh (CAB) has been implementing the **Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) Standards in Accountability and Quality Management**¹ since 2011, as part of its accountable governance mechanisms. Along with its partners, Christian Aid (CA) also uses **Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (PVCA)**, a tool for empowering communities to undertake risk and capacity analyses and action planning. The use of both HAP Standards and PVCA is seen as important for CAB and its partners in taking a more systematic approach to downwards accountability in its programme work.

In Bangladesh, three partner organisations have piloted and been most involved with implementing HAP Standards with CAB support - *Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK)*; *Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK)*; and the *Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB)*. Each of them are CA partners in the Department for International Development (DfID)-funded 'Programme Partnership Arrangement' (PPA) programme. This evaluation focussed on the use, and added value of HAP and PVCA in their recovery and resilience work within the PPA.

HAP and PVCA both provide opportunities for community participation in shaping interventions and in enhancing downwards accountability from Christian Aid to beneficiaries via partner organisations. However, they differ in their practical application, with PVCA regarded by partners as a community-level consultation and planning tool, while HAP is an overarching, systematic approach to improve downwards accountability to communities. Both HAP and PVCA are being used at project inception, but PVCA in CAB so far has been used mainly in resilience work. Little power analysis and targeting of vulnerable groups other than women is being implemented or monitored by CAB and partners under HAP/ PVCA.

2. Country context in a nutshell

Although Bangladesh has recorded significant economic growth over the past 10 years, widespread poverty combined with the threat of climate change and natural disasters remain crucial issues. Increases in local government expenditure have been inconsequential and often not allocated according to true need. Political power remains concentrated in the hands of a few elites allied to two alternating governing political parties, with frequent periods of political unrest. However, likely due to the efforts of Bangladesh's vibrant civil society sector, there have been improvements in democratic processes and accountable governance, such as the passing of the Right to Information Act 2009 and the Disaster Management Act 2012.

In terms of the status of women, there are still many challenges around women's participation in decision-making and their economic opportunities, as well as early marriage and domestic violence.

¹ "The purpose of the HAP Standard is to help organisations design, implement, assess, improve and recognise accountable programmes. It outlines the policies, processes, procedures and practices that an organisation needs in order to be accountable to crisis-affected communities." Retrieved from: <http://www.hapinternational.org/what-we-do/hap-standard.aspx>

3. Purpose and scope of the evaluation

The Bangladesh country study is one of five country studies conducted in 2015 to assess CA's accountable governance work, each using different evaluative designs. The purpose of this particular evaluation is to explain the HAP and PVCA approaches, identify what (if anything) has changed as a result particularly of HAP, and develop an understanding of the extent to which accountable relationships between CA, partners and communities enables partners and communities to call (successfully) for more accountable practices from others.

The study is framed around the following **evaluation questions**:

1. What is the HAP/PVCA approach? What are the similarities or differences?
2. How is HAP understood and experienced by community members, partners and CAB/CA?
3. What evidence is there for accountability within the programme work?
4. Is there any evidence of these accountability relationships extending beyond the delivered programme (whether this is the response or resilience work)? What does this look like?
5. Why and how did this happen, what has been the impact and what can we learn?
6. How have power relations between community, partners and government institutions shifted through our work? What can we say about the quality of engagement?
7. What is the role of women? What can we learn about women's participation? What can we learn about working politically - and how does this look for men and women?
8. Has there been any link between local level/direct accountability relationships and more regional or national accountability practice?
9. Identification of emerging issues which have relevance in terms of a policy or advocacy agenda, either nationally or globally
10. Any comment or understanding about how partners have reconceived/understood their role and relationship with community members, the added value of HAP, and the added value that Christian Aid brings
11. Any comment on the different contexts (recovery or resilience) and approaches to HAP and PVCA

Questions 1-7 were the focus of the field work, while it was anticipated that questions 8-11 would be fully or partially covered via secondary data review, interviews with staff and information emerging during the field work. While this was the case for questions 10 and 11, the evaluation team was not able to access adequate information regarding CA's regional and national level accountability work and advocacy agendas to draw conclusions in relation to questions 8 and 9.

4. Overview of evaluation methodology

While the overall assessment was question- rather than methods-led, CA wished to experiment with innovative theory-based evaluation approaches. These involve testing elements of a programme's implicit or explicit Theory of Change. In response, INTRAC proposed a combination of **Process Tracing** (*what role did HAP/PVCA play in bringing about the expected outcomes vis-à-vis other possible factors?*) with **elements of Realist Evaluation** (*what has worked, for whom, when, and how?*). A detailed guidance note is attached in Annex D.

CAB purposely selected two field sites for the evaluation in Northern and Southern Bangladesh respectively, where focus group discussions were held with community members, complemented by partner workshops and individual interviews as well as document review. Two INTRAC consultants² worked alongside a regional CA staff member³ seconded to the team as a peer reviewer, with the aim of strengthening evaluation capacity within CA as well as supporting analysis and sense-making capacities within the assessment team.

The following **limitations** apply to the study:

- Time constraints curtailed the initial in-country workshop discussing what would be tested specifically and also limited the opportunity to closely involve CAB staff in implementing the evaluation methodology in a participatory way.
- The lack of counterfactual data - for instance, by including communities that had not used HAP or PVCA or that had not received resilience or recovery support from CAB partners - limits the conclusiveness of findings.
- Finally, as there were only few indications of an implicit Theory of Change (ToC) for HAP/PVCA at a country level and as HAP/PVCA had not been a focus of M&E data collection, analysis or documentation, it was not possible to test or draw on previous M&E data on HAP and PVCA.

5. Overall findings

In line with the agreed scope of the evaluation and with the stronger emphasis of communities and partners on HAP as an accountability mechanism, inquiry focussed more explicitly on HAP than PVCA. The evaluation fleshed out different assumptions held by CA and partners in Bangladesh about how HAP is being taken up by communities and whether/ how this has encouraged communities to demand greater accountability from others.

How communities, partners and CAB experience HAP

Community groups are aware of key HAP components and principles (such as what complaints channels are available) but – perhaps unsurprisingly - not HAP *per se*.

Partner organisations have been following HAP-type principles for many years through their implementation of participatory processes and adherence to other accountability mechanisms such as Sphere. Thus, HAP did not exert influence in a vacuum – partners already had a history of trialling accountability and participatory practices and some had established a rapport of trust with communities through years of support provision. What was new about HAP was its systematic approach to information sharing with wider stakeholders and formal complaints mechanisms. Partners have implemented HAP to different degrees, with only one rolling it out organisation-wide. This roll-out has not always been smooth, imposing additional work burden on some staff and at times challenging partner staff's attitudes by handing over more power to the supported communities. This was endorsed by partners' senior management as a good thing.

CAB believe that accountability and HAP's potential to improve aspects of recovery and resilience work are not yet widely understood or fully appreciated but also that HAP has strengthened CAB's already good relationships with partners. Both CAB and partners are able to

² Fiona Talcott and Vera Scholz

³ Jayshree Mangubhai, Senior Programme Officer – Policy & Advocacy, India

demonstrate considerable positive change in behaviour, attitudes and competence of staff on accountability.

Uptake of HAP by communities

Community members, including women, had been observed by CAB and its partners to be making active use of available HAP mechanisms (including access to information and complaints mechanism). This was validated by the evaluation team with numerous instances being evidenced in which particularly women complained and subsequently received a response from CAB partners. Some of these examples do not just demonstrate functioning flows of information but also enhanced performance of project work.

However, the evidence confirms that HAP rarely if ever established new relationships of accountability where the partner NGO had been active for a length of time. Rather, it served to strengthen this relationship by making it more systematic, transparent and less dependent on fluctuating personal relationships between community members and individual partner staff. According to community members, the new mechanisms made people less hesitant to speak up – a sentiment echoed by the majority of those comparing the before and after of HAP. Moreover, group formation ensured that even the more disempowered among the women could indirectly use the provided complaints mechanisms, by speaking through group leaders.

Widening accountability relationships due to HAP

The evaluators recognised shifts in power relations both as changes in self-perception and demeanour based on new group-based ‘power with’ among community members, as well as shifts in how the traditionally most powerful increasingly yield to community demands.

CAB partners initially described that communities - particularly women – had been enabled to articulate rights, and claim entitlements from relevant duty bearers due to HAP. The evaluation team has concluded that HAP was a relatively minor factor in widening accountability relationships that communities have with actors other than CAB partners. This expansion of accountability is likely to have occurred without HAP but may have been smaller in scope or manifested differently.

Community group member in Kamarkhola Union presenting her group's priorities



The most influential factor that led to community groups demanding their entitlements from duty bearers (mainly local and higher level government officials) was non-HAP related programmatic support provided by CAB partners. Most important were the vehicles of group formation as well as rights and gender training. Group formation was described by the overwhelming majority of focus groups to have

increased confidence through collectivisation of individual grievances and demands and to have decreased fears of reprisal. It also linked less influential individuals with more influential ones within the groups, amplifying previously unheard demands at a community level.

Community members mostly attributed their changed attitudes and behaviour to trainings they had attended where they learned about their rights for the first time. Trainings on livelihood generation also played a major role in shifting the power away from traditionally male breadwinners towards women at a household level – though this appears to cause household frictions, too. The developments described were at times aided by external developments such as disasters, with women forced to leave the household for the first time to help with income generation.

While the HAP inductions with communities may have encouraged community members to speak up in general, the additional trainings and workshops conducted by the partners explained to women where to go to demand services and rights. Without the element of additional practical advice, it is doubtful the HAP work alone would have been a sufficient enabler of this.

HAP's role in shifting power in favour of communities

CAB partners provided anecdotes across the spectrum of CAB supported resilience and recovery work where previously disempowered groups had succeeded in making influential actors listen and, at times, yield to their demands. However, on the basis of collected evidence, the evaluation team concluded that HAP was a relatively minor factor in bringing about this tentative shift in power, compared to other factors such as group formation.

The implementation of HAP with communities has narrowed the space for once powerful actors to act unaccountably to some degree, for instance by preventing manipulation of lists of welfare recipients by local officials. However, **there was more evidence in favour of group formation and wider contextual factors as the driving factors for these tentative shifts in power.**

These power shifts are described as 'tentative' because 'money and muscle' are still described by communities as mattering more than people's voices in local decision-making. This is particularly the case where a lot is at stake and precedents could be set that endanger the elite's position in society, such as with access to land. The inference is that while there may be more accountability to communities in relation to service provision, this does not yet extend to communities being able to challenge structural power.

Group formation enabled demands to be gathered and 'bundled together' from the bottom up, in some cases constituting significant voting clout in upcoming elections. As a consequence of this, communities described government officials as paying more attention to their demands.

In terms of contextual factors, there are strong indications that a general top-down push towards transparency and openness in Bangladesh has been equipping communities with the necessary knowledge to articulate their rights vis-à-vis appropriate duty-bearers, independently of any partner intervention. This is valid particularly for communities that had received limited, short-term support. In one village, UP members confirmed that community members had been getting more vocal about their demands in the past four or five years, particularly including women. Time-wise, this coincided with the introduction of a governmental information centre and of helplines, for instance on domestic violence. Women were also perceived to have become more

empowered after other NGOs started working in the area⁴. The second major contextual factor is the spread of technology. As UP members confirmed, mobile phones had become prevalent in their community within the past 12 months, presenting another opportunity to community members to seek / receive further information about available services and eligibility for support.

Changing relationships of power were also evidenced between partners and local decision-makers. Both GUK and DSK described an injection of trust into interactions with the local government, brought about by transparency mandated by HAP. For instance, GUK now breaks down its budgets by UP level and invites UP members to project inception meetings and community consultations. This increased level of accountability from their side has even led government representatives to point to them as a good example to be followed by other NGOs. However, partners did not think government responsiveness to their own improvements in accountability had improved significantly.

The evaluation team concludes that while the data does not exclude the possibility that HAP may have played a bigger role, other factors – group formation, technological advances and a nation-wide push for greater administrative transparency - are likely to have been crucial for shifting the power in favour of communities.

If the goal is to improve accountability between communities and NGOs/donors, the evaluation suggests that HAP can be implemented effectively without accompanying measures. However, for wider empowerment of vulnerable groups, leading to structural shifts in power, additional capacity building interventions are needed, such as group formation and targeted training through CAB partners' project work.

6. Arising challenges for CAB's accountability focus in its programming

- *Women's Participation and Empowerment:* Group mobilisation and rights / gender awareness and livelihoods training work alongside HAP implementation to enable women's participation and influence on project and local decision-making. While there is good evidence to show that women's groups established in CAB-funded resilience projects are becoming political actors, it appears that shifts in intra-community and intra-household levels of power are instrumental in enabling women to demand accountability. However, partners did not have the necessary monitoring in place to be able to uncover whether/ where vulnerable individuals and groups may still be systematically excluded from the community / women's groups and from receiving support.
- *Partner-led Expansion of Accountable Practice:* HAP has increased credibility for CAB and partners with government and other NGOs, but the potential for increasing adoption of more accountable practices by CAB and partners is not yet strongly realised. Although CAB and partners believe that HAP has strengthened their relations with government, there is little evidence that the mutuality of accountability is properly understood and / or that they are actively encouraging government to be more accountable to them.
- *Integration of Accountability Across Programmes:* With the exception of GUK, accountability and HAP's potential to improve many aspects of recovery and resilience work are not yet widely understood or fully appreciated. CAB has integrated HAP

⁴ Who may also have been using HAP approaches

reasonably well across its operations but has not yet managed to encourage broader adoption in partners' work, which is generally piecemeal, with partners implementing HAP to varying degrees.

- *Monitoring and learning on HAP (and PVCA) process and outcomes:* CAB / partners' systems for formal monitoring and analysis of e.g. complaints or PVCA action plan implementation are relatively weak. Partner reports focus mainly on activities and procedures being put in place, and less on what may have changed. Therefore, there is potential for greater support to partners in developing their understanding of how accountability / HAP can create change, helping projects to be more responsive and staff teams more proactive in managing multi-stakeholder accountabilities, and for shared learning around HAP.
- *New CAB and partner staff are not always aware of HAP:* Some CAB staff bring an awareness of HAP from previous work with other organisations but there were no indications that HAP induction is done systematically within the organisations.

7. Recommendations and areas of further investigation

To strengthen their HAP and PVCA monitoring, evaluation and learning

CAB and partners could:

- develop and monitor Theories of Change for HAP and PVCA work to help partners and CAB better realise their full potential, including identifying linkages and opportunities for improving government responsiveness. Arriving at a common agreement on what HAP and PVCA can and should realistically achieve (both separately and in combination) could be a good first step;
- set up electronic systems to capture and analyse complaints data, including demographics of those complaining (and not complaining), usage by location, communication channels, and response actions;
- establish systems to ensure that all new staff are familiarised with accountability principles and mechanisms.

CAB could:

- identify and share good practice annually among HAP-committed partner NGOs, and those interested in strengthening their accountability. This could even be part of other learning events, but HAP focal persons / practitioners need to be there;
- encourage partners to consider change (outcomes and impacts) and how to capture this, rather than just reporting activities and implementation of procedures;

To strengthen project design, implementation and impact

CAB and partners could:

- consider which elements of training and awareness-raising need to be delivered alongside accountability mechanisms in recovery and resilience projects to ensure both achieve the greatest impact - the results of this should be implemented in all future interventions; examples from the partners/ projects visited during this evaluation include rights, gender and livelihoods training.

- conduct power analyses of household, community and local / district / relevant national level government to understand, predict, catalyse and manage power shifts between communities and duty bearers including government actors;
- strengthen targeting of vulnerable groups and identify where programmatic support and HAP may be working differently for different sub-groups (including uncovering where vulnerable individuals and groups may still be systematically excluded).

For general learning on longer term impact of PVCA

- conduct a review of PVCA plans / outputs to assess delivery and responsiveness of different stakeholders. This would require CAB providing technical support and resources for partners to conduct and share the results of a review.

8. Methodological recommendations

The process tracing and realist evaluation methodologies – if done in a participatory way - require considerable input of effort and time from programme staff in understanding the methodology, fleshing out detailed, alternative hypotheses for the achievement of outcomes and in contributing to the analysis. It is important that the purpose of using these approaches is clear and that time is added to a ‘standard’ evaluation timeframe for capacity building of staff, where this is a priority.

For any theory-based evaluation, it is helpful if there is a clear, agreed Theory of Change in place for the programme/ intervention/ strategy being evaluated. Otherwise, additional time is needed to develop this with the team, which again is usually not possible in a ‘standard’ evaluation timeframe.

In addition to the detailed guidance in the methodological note to this evaluation, we would recommend the following:

- Process tracing is more appropriate for evaluations focussed a) on contextualised learning rather than on ‘proving’ an intervention’s worth or an agency’s contribution, so that analysis can go narrow and deep rather than broad and b) where the outcomes being investigated are genuinely subject to different influences i.e. where there are distinguishable alternative explanations for observable change.
- Realist evaluation is more appropriate for community-level work focussed on service delivery, where the justification for and targeting of different individuals/ groups through different measures under the same intervention is usually more fleshed out from the beginning. This is not a hard and fast rule but a starting point for considerations when to use this approach. It is important to have clearly articulated assumptions about how an intervention will affect individuals/ groups’ reasoning (and subsequent behaviour) in different contexts and to plan data collection after these hypotheses have been drafted.

1. Overview of Christian Aid Bangladesh’s focus on accountability within its programming

Christian Aid (CA) has been operating in Bangladesh since 1972, and has expanded to a staff of 15, with all but one based in the Dhaka office. Its portfolio of ‘recovery’ / humanitarian and ‘resilience’ / longer term development projects is delivered through 15 partner organisations.

In line with CA’s corporate strategy ‘Partnership for Change’ and its supporting performance and capability frameworks, Christian Aid Bangladesh (CAB) has developed its focus on accountability within its programming, principally through implementing the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) Standards in Accountability and Quality Management. This was initiated in 2011, and rolled out to partners through an overview orientation and training in 2012. In 2013, field level trainings with GUK and other partners (such as the ACT Alliance members) were conducted, frequently with a focus on the Complaints Response Mechanism.

CAB’s accountable governance work has focused on four of the HAP benchmark areas - Accountability Frameworks (AF), Participation, Open Information Policies (OIP) and Complaint Response Mechanisms (CRM). Additionally, CA and its partners have used Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (PVCA), a tool for risk and capacity analyses and action planning that helps empower communities (and to deliver on HAP Benchmark 3 - enabling community participation in programme decision-making).

The use of both HAP Standards and PVCA is seen as key for CAB and its partners taking a more systematic approach to accountability that will better ensure transparency, greater community participation in decision-making, and strengthened relationships with stakeholders that, in turn, will deliver improved programme effectiveness and overall impact for those that CAB seeks to support. In addition to greater programme responsiveness, CA expects the results chain for its accountable governance work to also include greater government responsiveness to community needs, especially at local level.

Three partner organisations have piloted, and been most involved with implementing, HAP Standards with CAB support: Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK) - working in 9 districts mainly in the north; Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK) - working across 15 districts; and the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB) - working nationally. Each of them are CA partners in the Department for International Development (DfID)-funded ‘Programme Partnership Agreement’ (PPA) programme and are delivering CA-funded recovery and resilience programmes, using both HAP and PVCA. See box below.

	Recovery	Resilience	Cutting across work at an organisational level
GUK	HAP	PVCA & HAP RIVER Project, Gaibandha	HAP
DSK	--	PVCA & HAP CBDRR & CC Adaptation Project, Khulna	--
CCDB	HAP	PVCA & HAP	Elements of HAP

In addition to general orientation and training for all CAB partner organisations, CAB has been giving ongoing technical support to enable and strengthen these three partners’ capacity to integrate HAP processes and standards into their work, including at organisation level and in their other non-CA-funded projects.

2. Context

Bangladesh is relatively poor (ranked 142 out of 187 countries on the UN's Human Development Index) and suffers from many natural disasters and environmental stresses such as cyclones (Sidr in 2007 and Aila in 2009), frequent and significant flooding and ongoing riverbank erosion.

Although Bangladesh has recorded significant economic growth over the past 10 years (averaging over 6% per annum), increases in local government expenditure have been inconsequential and often not allocated according to true need.

There are 7 Divisions, 64 Zila (or Districts), 500 Upazila, and 4451 Union Parishads (UPs) on the Government of Bangladesh's rural administrative structure. The governance system in Bangladesh is one of the most centralized in the world. Sub-national expenditures are only around 4% of the total government budget (comparable figures for more decentralized countries are 35-50 %), and only around 2% of total government revenue is collected at sub-national levels (World Bank).

The political domain in Bangladesh is equally polarised, with power concentrated in the hands of a few elites allied to two alternating governing political parties. There have been frequent periods of political unrest (2006, 2007-8, mid-2013 to 2014, and significantly so in early 2015) – not only at national level, but also in Districts, which hampers advocacy and village level activities. Additionally, there have been different waves of religious fundamentalism and effects at the village level and a long-delayed and quite divisive trial of war criminals (2012 onwards).

However, probably due to the efforts of Bangladesh's large and vibrant civil society sector, there have been improvements in democratic processes and accountable governance. For example, the passing of the Right to Information Act 2009, and the Disaster Management Act (2012), aimed at ensuring accountability of different government and non-government stakeholders, including communities. Since 2015, it has been mandatory for all district websites to include information provided by every NGO and governmental service providers on their activities in the District.

Bangladesh is predominantly Muslim with approximately 10% of the population Hindu, and less than 0.5% Christian. Despite UNDP commenting that "Bangladesh has made significant progress in promoting the objectives of ensuring gender equality and empowerment of women", there are still many challenges around women's participation in decision-making, their economic opportunity, early marriage and domestic violence, accentuated by the fact that Bangladeshi brides go to live with their new husband's family and, as a result, are often very isolated and vulnerable. According to UNICEF, "women's mobility is greatly limited and their decision-making power is often restricted. For instance, about 48 per cent of Bangladeshi women say that their husbands alone make decisions about their health, while 35 per cent say that their husbands alone make decisions regarding visits to family and friends."⁵

⁵ UNICEF Bangladesh - Women and Girls in Bangladesh (2010)

3. Purpose and Scope of Evaluation

This study is part of CA's periodic organisational impact assessments, this time on CA's work on accountable governance, which aims to generate evidence of impact, explain causal complexity, and generate learning across CA. Bangladesh is one of five country studies included in the evaluation, each using different evaluative designs and approaches to understand and document a range of different governance programmes that CA has implemented.

In common with the other country studies, the purpose of the evaluation in Bangladesh is to:

- explain the impact of a specific accountability mechanism- in this case HAP;
- identify links and generate learning between programme implementation and wider organisational theory of change.

The Bangladesh country study particularly focuses on:

- understanding the extent to which accountable relationships between CA, partners and communities (through the HAP work) enables (or not) partners and communities to call for more accountable practices from other actors
- understanding how these accountable relationships are experienced and understood
- identifying the impact that these experiences have had as programme participants identify and forge relationships with other service providers.

The Bangladesh country study is framed around seven key evaluation questions:

Overview and description

1. What is the HAP/PVCA approach – what are the similarities or differences between these two approaches (in theory and practice)?

Effectiveness of HAP

2. How is HAP understood and experienced by community members, partners and Christian Aid? What changes do each set of stakeholders identify through their engagement with HAP?
3. What evidence is there for accountability within the programme work – i.e. are the HAP processes leading to accountability relationships being established within the programme?
4. Is there any evidence of these accountability relationships extending beyond the delivered programme (whether this is the response or resilience work)? What does this look like?
5. How have power relations between community, partners and government institutions shifted through our work, what can we say about the quality of engagement with government institutions, or other relevant bodies?

Understanding the why and how

6. Why and how did this happen, what has been the impact and what can we learn?
7. What is the role of women, what can we learn about women's participation, what can we learn about working politically - and how this looks different for men and women?

Additional questions, not explicitly covered

8. Has there been any link between local level/direct accountability relationships and more regional or national accountability practice?
9. Identification of emerging issues which have relevance in terms of a policy or advocacy agenda, either nationally or globally
10. Any comment or understanding about how partners have reconceived/understood their role and relationship with community members, the added value of HAP, and the added value that Christian Aid brings
11. Any comment on the different contexts (recovery or resilience) and approaches to HAP and PVCA

While questions 1-7 were the focus of the field work, it was anticipated that questions 8-11 would be fully or partially covered via secondary data review, interviews with staff and information emerging during the field work, where relevant to the analyses for questions 1-7. While this was partially the case for questions 10 and 11, the evaluation team was not able to access adequate information regarding CA's regional and national level accountability work and advocacy agendas to draw conclusions in relation to questions 8 and 9. See Annex A for original full ToR, and the *Findings* section below for details of evaluation questions that were agreed as key.

Outputs of this study include this report on CAB's experience of promoting accountability practices and a guide to the evaluation methodology (see Annex D). The former is intended to be shared with a wide range of stakeholders including CA departments, country offices, donors and supporters. The latter will contribute to internal CA capacity building and is intended mostly for use by other CA country offices.

The scope of this research has considered activities and outcomes in the period 2012-15 when CAB and its partners have been most engaged with HAP. However, given the short amount of time available for this study, we have only been able to consider the CA-funded work of two of the partners (GUK and DSK) in any depth - this included field visits in Bangladesh (to Gaibandha in the north and Khulna in the south). Four other partners were consulted at an initial workshop and preliminary findings have also been validated by them at a feedback workshop prior to the evaluation team leaving Bangladesh.

The assessment team consisted of two INTRAC consultants (a governance and an M&E expert) working alongside a regional CA staff member seconded to the team as a Peer Reviewer, as part of a capacity-building exercise and to get her insights into the process. In addition, and to reflect the real relationships of accountability, CAB and partner staff played liaison, technical advisory, translation and observer roles throughout the country visit.

4. Methodology in Theory and in Practice

4.1 Methodology in Theory

For the assessment of its governance portfolio CA has been keen to experiment with new evaluation approaches, widening the toolbox of potential evaluation methods. While the overall assessment remained question- rather than methods-led, CA proposed a theory-based evaluation methodology for this study. The theory-based evaluation methodology that was developed and applied by INTRAC was a combination of Process Tracing with elements of Realist Evaluation.

Process Tracing essentially tries to identify “the causal chain and causal mechanism [...] between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable” (Barnett and Munslow 2014). The independent variable represents the ‘cause’ or one of the ‘causes’ of an ‘effect’ and the dependent variable describes this expected (or unexpected) ‘effect’. The method involves developing a number of different causal ‘stories’ or pathways of change that all have the potential to explain a specific ‘effect’ or outcome, and then weighing the evidence for each of these to arrive at conclusions about which causal pathways (or causal chains) can be confirmed or rejected.

CA’s work on governance and accountability standards at large and its accountability focussed work in Bangladesh specifically lend themselves to a theory-based inquiry. This type of inquiry is ideal for explaining non-linear and complex change and seeks to understand how the often neglected context of an intervention interacts with elements of the intervention in sometimes unpredictable ways to produce certain effects (outcomes).

This evaluation is seeking to contribute to an emerging body of evidence on how process tracing can be used as a practical approach to establish and understand programme effectiveness in international development. A more detailed explanation of the methodology is contained in the Methodology Guidance Note at Annex D.

Adding elements of **Realist Evaluation** - in itself more a school of thought than a formal method - was expected to enhance actionable learning and contextualised understanding of “*How does this work, for whom, and in what circumstances?*”. Thus, while process tracing was intended to give a wider explanation of how observed outcomes have come about, looking at contextual factors as well as CAB’s intervention, introducing elements of realist evaluation would allow for group/ beneficiary/ context-specific findings on what had worked or had not worked for whom.

Since Christian Aid had (unusually) partly defined the methodology before countries had been selected and more detailed evaluation questions had been developed, the combination of process tracing and realist evaluation was hoped to increase flexibility of the overall approach.

	Process Tracing	Realist Evaluation
<i>What type of evidence is generated?</i>	Insights into relative weight of evidence for causal explanations of outcomes, including a verdict of how significant CA’s contribution to desired outcomes has been.	Specific learning on causal mechanisms and the conditions under which they operate most effectively.
<i>Overarching question these approaches are</i>	<i>“What role did the intervention play in bringing about the expected</i>	<i>“What has worked, for whom, when, and how?”</i>

<i>answering?</i>	<i>outcomes vis-à-vis other possible factors?"</i>
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Wherever possible, data was triangulated i) by using multiple data sources at the level of Christian Aid and partner staff, as well as at a community level, to pursue the same question, and ii) by using different ways of collecting data - e.g. individual key informant interviews, workshops and follow-up interviews with CA and partner field / management staff (in separate groups) and community-level focus group discussions. See Annex B for visit schedule/interview list.

4.2 Adjustments made to methodology

A number of adjustments were made to the suggested methodological framework in order to reconcile it with the shorter period of time available for initial discussions and meetings with the CAB team prior and during the country visit, and for analysis and synthesis meetings following data collection. A tight schedule for the overall country visit meant that necessary discussions about the methodology could not all be completed before field work started. These included discussions on how the methodology works but also on HAP and PVCA's Theory of Change, and the construction of causal stories for key outcomes and alternative explanations for these as well as understanding how best to gather evidence for these stories for process tracing. A large portion of this work was done by the consultants with quick sense-checks throughout with CAB staff as described in the next sub-section ('Key steps').

Regarding the Realist Evaluation aspects of this study, this required Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO)-Hypotheses to be developed: these are clearly articulated assumptions about how aspects of the intervention would encourage, discourage or enable different target groups to think and behave differently. This involves identifying what resources, opportunities or constraints were provided by the programme to whom, prompting what 'reasoning' in response, generating what changes in behaviour, generating what outcomes (see methodological guide at Annex D for further explanation). A few selected CMOs were developed by the evaluation team based on emerging indications of relevant contextual factors and outcomes. Ideally, this would have been based on more comprehensive secondary information and existing research as well as participation of the CAB team and partners but limited time prevented this.

4.3 Key steps in implementing methodology

The following steps were used in practice, with corresponding tools and data sources.

- The causal stories and CMOs were used as the basis for iterative theory-building and theory-testing during field work. Most of the components of the causal stories were constructed by the evaluators based on early conversations with CAB and partners as well as document review, and workshops.
- Discussions with the first partner that was visited were then used to flesh out these causal stories in more detail.
- Following the field visits, the feedback meeting with partners and CAB in Dhaka did not employ the process tracing framing, as analysis had not yet progressed to this level of detail and time was limited. Instead, key elements of the preliminary analysis were presented for validation and discussion by meeting participants.

Key steps	How this was done and data sources
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Setting the theoretical framework: reconstructing relevant elements of theory of change, prioritising key outcomes and drafting CMO-Hypotheses	Initial workshop and document review: Combination of document review, workshop with partners and CA in Dhaka, followed by a ranking exercise of key outcomes. This was done iteratively in the first few days of the country visit and with less participation of staff than planned.
Appraisal of implementation to establish relevant details of HAP and PVCA roll-out	Primarily document review, and interviews: Combination of document review, workshop with partners and CAB in Dhaka and three workshops with GUK and DSK staff in different locations, key informant interviews with key partners and CAB staff. This also had to be done largely in country as the bulk of project documents could not be provided in advance.
<i>Iterative step:</i> Setting the theoretical framework by reconstructing relevant elements of theory of change and drafting CMO-Hypotheses	Field work and partner workshops: The outcomes of the initial workshop were then used as the basis for iterative theory-building and theory-testing during field work. Most of the components of the causal stories were constructed by the evaluators based on early conversations with CAB and partners as well as document review, and workshops.
Evidencing causal stories: making explicit what/ where information should be sought to evidence causal stories	Internal discussions by evaluation team in the first few days of the country visit. Further participation of the CAB team was not deemed feasible considering time constraints.
Data collection with communities and partners in line with causal stories, CMO-Hypotheses and other TOR Questions	Field work: 10 FGDs with community groups including one group of non-beneficiaries. Three partner workshops and additional KIIs. Partner workshops involved 26 staff members and included ranking exercises and the use of the impact grid as a basis for further discussions in smaller groups.
Assessment of strength of each causal story based on evidence	Internal discussions by evaluation team: Preliminary analysis for concluding workshop done by evaluation team by mapping of evidence across key questions and detailed follow-up by the evaluators after country visit. Again, more participation of CAB staff and partners would have been desirable but deemed impossible under time constraints and the need to sense-check and discuss findings.
Synthesis of HAP's contribution to each of the key changes	Internal discussions by evaluation team: Review of analysis and weight of evidence by evaluators

4.4 Sampling approach

Field sites to be visited were purposely selected by CAB following feasibility criteria and practical considerations and pre-dated the development of concrete hypotheses to test. The partners DSK and GUK were chosen as case studies because they were two of the three partners who had piloted HAP and PVCA. The third key partner, CCDB, had recently had a lot of evaluation visits and was thus not included in the field visit schedule. However, CCDB representatives were in attendance at the initial and final workshops and separate interviews were conducted. Villages and community groups visited were chosen to reflect a range of more short-term recovery and longer-term focussed resilience projects, geographical and demographic comparison, degree of vulnerability, and in order to avoid an overexposure of any one group to too many visitors. A good spread of projects was considered essential for an investigation of the different environments in which HAP had been applied. See map at Annex C for details of projects' locations.

Overall, 4 workshops, 8 formal one-to-one interviews and 9 informal interviews were held with CAB and partners, and 10 focus group discussions were conducted in 4 different villages communities, in total involving approximately 204 participants - 78% of which were women. Notes from all of these conversations are available on request.

4.5 Priority outcomes selected for Process Tracing

Representatives from partner NGOs and CAB were convened in a workshop on Day 1 of the country visit to jointly arrive at a set of outcomes the evaluators would investigate in more detail.

Outcomes perceived by CAB and partners as most to least Achieved (1 = most, 7 = least)

- 1 Participation of communities in decision-making
- 2 Increased awareness of accountability mechanisms among villagers
- 3 Active use of partners' accountability mechanisms by community members
- 4 Empowerment of communities including women
- 5 Improved accountability practices of partners overall
- 6 Greater effectiveness and efficiency of partners' work
- 7 Improved government responsiveness to local needs

Following discussions with the Bangladesh Country Director and Emergency Programme Officer, the team decided to direct its preliminary focus on the following two outcomes that struck a balance between high levels of achievement, practicalities of measurement and being of strategic learning interest to Christian Aid Bangladesh:

- *3 - Active use of partners' accountability mechanisms by community members*
- *1 - Participation of communities in decision-making and 4 - Empowerment of communities including women were merged into Communities - particularly women - are enabled to articulate rights and claim entitlements from duty bearers. This is directly in line with the Key Evaluation Question 7.*

It was striking that the examples narrated by workshop participants to illustrate abstract statements of change frequently involved aspects of power shifting between different people, primarily the communities and decision-makers (note that some of these are illustrated later in the report). Enhanced government responsiveness can be considered as a way in which these power shifts manifest themselves and so it was decided to include a more general and explorative outcome around power shifting at that level, in close alignment with the Key Evaluation Question 5. This was agreed as:

- *Influential actors are increasingly listening and, at times, yielding to the demands of previously disempowered groups.*

4.6 Selected CMO-Hypotheses for Realist Evaluation

Considering time and resource constraints for the evaluation, a small number of CMO Hypotheses were elaborated in the first few days of field work, based on discussions with partners and Christian Aid in Dhaka. Indications of further promising avenues for enquiry emerged in initial discussions with GUK in Gaibandha. A particular focus was on understanding

women's participation better. The hypotheses singled out for further scrutiny are shown in the table below.

The key contextual factors that were theorised to be of prime importance were about the role of group mobilisation, illiteracy as a disadvantage further reducing the potential power of women, and of democratic mechanisms already in place ('electedness' of local leaders). The second column represents opportunities, resources or constraints that the intervention – in this case, the HAP mechanism – provides to trigger certain reasoning in individuals'/ groups' minds.

The CMO-Hypotheses are considered separately in this report under the appropriate outcomes selected for process tracing.

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	BECAUSE...
Women organised in groups	Are encouraged (opportunity)	To voice complaints to partner NGOs	... their expected chances for success are perceived to be better than for individuals complaining. ...negative ramifications are considered less likely, and ...they recognise the legitimacy of themselves making demands of duty-bearers.
Illiterate women	Are encouraged (opportunities)	To voice complaints in more informal ways rather than formal ways	...informal complaints do not require writing skills.
Women organised in groups	Are encouraged (opportunities)	To complain and make demands of village leadership and other decision-makers	... their expected chances for success are perceived to be better and negative ramifications are considered less likely AND because they recognise the legitimacy of themselves making demands of duty-bearers.
Individuals in elected roles	Are discouraged (constraints)	From weighing in unfairly on decisions affecting communities	...they are under greater scrutiny of the better informed and confident villagers
Individuals in traditional leadership roles	Are comparatively less discouraged than elected leaders (constraints)	To continue relationships of dominance over women and other vulnerable community members	...HAP provides less of a systematic mechanism for holding them to account.

4.7 Limitations of the methodology

Time constraints meant that the initial in-country workshop to identify and develop stories of change, and post-field visit participatory analysis processes, were curtailed. However, inputs from the Peer Reviewer team member were very helpful and preliminary findings were presented to a group of partner representatives and CA on the last day of the country visit for validation and further input.

Due to time constraints and limited backgrounds in M&E, some of the accompanying staff on field visits as well as CA partners had only a partial understanding of the methodology being

employed. The fact that some of the prioritised outcomes aligned with key evaluation questions in the Terms of Reference helped to provide more of a thematic and narrow focus throughout.

The logistics for the field visits to different sites in the country had to be planned before key documents could be reviewed by the evaluators. The selection of partners and communities was subject to very practical considerations and was not strategically aligned with the methodology (for which it may have been useful to take an in-depth look at accountability mechanisms used by those partners not fully adopting HAP or PVCA). Despite this, the evaluators involved the views of a wider range of partners through the workshops and one-to-one discussions. However, the lack of counterfactuals – for instance, including communities that had not used HAP or PVCA or that had not received resilience or recovery support from an NGO – limits the conclusiveness of findings. For this reason, strength testing for process tracing only rarely uncovered ‘necessary and sufficient’ evidence for confirming or rejecting conclusively the assumed causal links.

Although strategic, high level and policy documentation was easily made available by CA and its partners, no explicit theories of change (ToC), logframes or results frameworks were evident, except for the PPA programme. M&E materials tended to be activity-focused monthly monitoring reports or external studies (e.g. the HAP Secretariat Audit in 2013). As there were only few indications of an implicit ToC for HAP/PVCA at a country level, and this has never been a focus of M&E data collection, analysis and documentation, it was not possible to test or draw on the capability or robustness of M&E done on accountability mechanisms.

While many of the discussions were in open village settings where all could at least listen, one or two discussions were constrained, e.g. by staff acting as translators. Care was taken to identify and correct this wherever possible but some bias no doubt crept in.

Due to time constraints, unfortunately, with the exception of male partner staff and some UP representatives, we were not able to speak with many men. This again relates to challenges of choosing field visit sites before finalising hypotheses.

The only ethical issue that emerged from the evaluation related to protection of dignity and welfare of participants. Specifically, many community members experienced difficulty in participating in the evaluation due to flooding that meant women had to cross relatively deep water with strong currents to get to the meeting place. While this is a ‘normal’ part of general life for these vulnerable communities, the need for many evaluation participants to endure such hazards and discomfort was only understood by the evaluators at the end of the first field visit and was not easy to alter.



4.8 Overall reflections on the methodology

Combining process tracing with elements of realist evaluation to understand both process and impact was an experiment for Christian Aid.

Process tracing lends itself most easily to attempts at explaining complex outcomes in a complex environment where there are genuinely different causal routes to an outcome. In Bangladesh, HAP has mainly been applied to resilience and recovery work at a community level. In this evaluation, process tracing proved less suitable for outcomes relating to increased awareness and flows of accountability and information between communities and other actors. This was because the scope for alternative explanations was limited in areas that had only been supported by GUK and DSK – only these had supported these outcomes in the target communities. However, for higher level changes to do with empowerment and power shifts, process tracing was more suitable, by forcing the inquiry to consider explanatory factors and pathways to change other than HAP and the partners' interventions.

In terms of realist evaluation, while the community was the ideal level of analysis, the ToC for HAP and PVCA in terms of how they change individuals'/ groups' reasoning (and behaviour) in different contexts was not well developed. This, and the fact that data collection had to be planned before hypotheses were drafted, meant that some of the more interesting questions about how some of the most disadvantaged groups approach the use of HAP could not be pursued systematically. There was insufficient opportunity to collect relevant data to test all hypotheses.

5. Findings

5.1 What is the HAP/PVCA Approach?

HAP Standards and PVCA have been utilised to support CA's accountability practices and to strengthen participation in programming. This is outlined in the following extract from its Statement of Accountability.

What is accountability, and why is it important?

Accountability is vital to upholding our values and for maintaining our legitimacy and credibility to speak out so that it fully supports our Essential Purpose (to expose the scandal of poverty, to help in practical ways to root it out from the world, and to challenge and change the systems that favour the rich and powerful over the poor and marginalised).

We aim to hold ourselves openly responsible, in ways that involve our key stakeholders, for what we believe, what we do and say we will do - and for showing what we have done compared to what we said we would do. Doing this enables us to get feedback on what works and what doesn't, and what we need to improve. This increases the likelihood of success in our work with poor communities and enhances a sense of ownership among all our stakeholders. It also reduces the potential for inefficient use or misuse of the resources entrusted to us

(Christian Aid: Statement of Accountability 2012)

The HAP definition of, and rationale for, accountability is also presented for reference below.

We define accountability as the means through which power is used responsibly. Accountability is therefore a process of taking into account the views of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, primarily the people affected by authority or power.

When accountability processes are in place and managed effectively, organisations perform better, protect communities from harm, and uphold the rights and dignity of those affected by crises.

HAP Secretariat (2010)

What is HAP?

The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP)⁶, established in 2003, sought to achieve and promote the highest principles of accountability through self-regulation by members, linked by a common respect for the rights and dignity of the people they seek to assist.

The 2010 HAP Standard places crisis-affected people at the heart of all decisions and actions.

The purpose of the HAP Standard is to help organisations design, implement, assess, improve and recognise accountable programmes. It outlines the policies, processes, procedures and practices that an organisation needs in order to be accountable to crisis-affected communities.

The 2010 HAP Standard is comprised of six HAP benchmarks, as set out below.

⁶ HAP has now merged with People In Aid to form the [CHS Alliance](#) and the HAP Standard has now been replaced by the [Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability](#) (CHS).



BENCHMARK 1: Establishing and delivering on commitments
The organisation sets out the commitments that it will be held accountable for, and how they will be delivered



BENCHMARK 2: Staff competency
The organisation ensures that staff have competencies that enable them to meet the organisation's commitments



BENCHMARK 3: Sharing information
The organisation ensures that the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders have access to timely, relevant and clear information about the organisation and its activities



BENCHMARK 4: Participation
The organisation listens to the people it aims to assist, incorporating their views and analysis in programme decisions



BENCHMARK 5: Handling complaints
The organisation enables the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders to raise complaints and receive a response through an effective, accessible and safe process



BENCHMARK 6: Learning and continual improvement
The organisation learns from experience to continually improve its performance

Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments

Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (PVCA) is another of the approaches used by CA to support its accountable governance work. Developed around 2001, it is a series of actions that enables a community to understand the risks affecting them, the problems they bring, the sources of their vulnerability to these problems and the resources and skills they can use to overcome them.

This analysis eventually leads to an Action Plan detailing the actions the community considers most urgent or important and the resources needed to implement them. The action plan is an importance source for partner organisations to design high quality projects and can be used to prepare advocacy plans targeting relevant local or national authorities. If done well and used continuously rather than in a one-off exercise, PVCA can have an empowering effect by reinforcing people's capacity for collective action, enabling a community to understand the risks it faces and identifying opportunities available to it in order to make informed decisions about its future.

As PVCA assessments take 2-3 days to conduct, and ideally require at least a minimum degree of stability in a community's situation, PVCA is perceived to be especially useful in non-

emergency situations where its integrated and inclusive approach to disaster risk management and development can best be delivered⁷.

In theory, both HAP and PCVA look at accountability in very similar ways and break down accountability into similar aspects e.g. sharing information, participation in decision making, taking time to analyse power and identify vulnerable groups, listening to feedback and complaints, and continuous learning and improvements.

PVCA is linked to HAP through the latter's requirement under Benchmark 4 that CA "shall:

- enable beneficiaries and their representatives to participate in programme decisions and seek their informed consent
- specify the processes it uses to identify intended beneficiaries and their representatives with specific reference to gender, age, disability and other identifiable vulnerabilities
- enable intended beneficiaries and their representatives to participate in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation."

PVCA helps CA fulfil those requirements and, additionally HAP Benchmarks 3 (transparency and information sharing) and 5 (feedback / complaint handling systems).

The key differences between HAP and PVCA are that the latter is a tool and the former is a set of benchmarks and principles and a systematic approach to delivering accountability. While they can be used in conjunction, the only part of PVCA that lives on is the Action Plan (that should become an integral part of a project and continue to be monitored and adapted), while HAP is more a continuous process applied to one or more projects or even at organisational level, to be implemented and monitored on an ongoing basis. HAP can be scaled up, whereas PVCA is a bounded and focused series of actions.

CAB sees PVCA as being instrumental for all the resilient livelihood interventions, and the best available method to engage with communities. To CAB, the PVCA Action Plan becomes a foundation document for future work in the community and, as it is a community-built document, it gets local government buy-in. Whatever comes out of PVCA is translated into project design and implementation, and decision-making processes involve communities very strongly.

In relation to the government's community risk assessment (CRA) approach, it appears that this is a relatively shorter process of risk assessment and risk reduction (than PVCA) that can be less 'empowering' in practice in terms of government officials building community ownership of the process. It also has less emphasis on the resources and skills of communities, and importantly, less emphasis on accountability than PVCA.

Similarities or differences between HAP and PVCA

From workshops with CA and partner staff, it is apparent that PVCA is seen as a community-level consultation and planning tool and that HAP is seen as a systematic approach to improve accountability and accountable relationships from an organisational perspective.

In all the data gathered, the two approaches were never seen by CAB or partners as integrated with each other and were rarely talked about as being linked in any way. Complaints aspects of

⁷ N.B. For recovery / disaster projects in Bangladesh, it is mandatory to use the government-approved Community Risk Assessment approach.

PVCA generally went unrecognised by communities, partners and Christian Aid, with everyone seeing the former as a part of HAP.

Both HAP and PVCA are being used at project inception but HAP is also rolled out across projects and cascaded down and across a whole organisation. They are also used differently in resilience and recovery work - with HAP across everything but PVCA only in resilience.

Additionally, HAP appears to be treated as a continuous process, remaining active with at least some aspects of follow-up built in. PVCA, on the other hand, seems in practice to be a relatively static exercise that results in a collaborative Action Plan that is then taken over by normal project delivery mechanisms. For example, although community groups seem to be aware of some Action Plan implementation, it is often anecdotal, budgets are not tracked and project activities are only actively monitored and updated annually at sub-District level by Standing Committees. From the limited time available to investigate, it wasn't clear whether partners actively monitor or systematically follow-up on anything other than their own elements of the Action Plans (i.e. not the government-required action) but there certainly was no analysis of Action Plans collectively being done by partners or CAB.

Neither HAP nor PCVA are completely new to accountable governance, being added onto previous experiences and existing partner processes, especially participatory processes already being practiced by partners.

Although in theory, both HAP and PCVA look at accountability in similar ways and should involve taking time to analyse power and identify vulnerable groups, this did not seem to be a strong element of CAB or partner practice with either approach. No power analysis work appeared to have been done under HAP and targeting of vulnerable individuals and groups (other than 'women') was left mostly to communities themselves through their involvement in the compilation or review of beneficiary lists (under both PVCA and HAP). Inclusion of the vulnerable was not being systematically monitored.

A final aspect of difference between HAP and PVCA in practice (and theory but not overtly recognised) is that there are more disincentives for staff to implementing HAP: it shifts power and has a bigger impact on changes between partner/staff and communities/wider stakeholders (i.e. the former are relinquishing power of project control and decision-making to the latter). With PVCA, partners are implementing with and for communities i.e. communities gain power but not at the expense of the partner organisation. Instead, the PVCA process assists with making partner support more strategic and responsive to real grassroots needs.

5.2 How is HAP understood and experienced?

Originally developed after the 2005 Southeast Asia tsunami relief effort, HAP was first used by organisations in Bangladesh after a major cyclone in 2007. Following on from CA Global becoming HAP Certified in 2009, HAP was rolled out across different country offices - in CAB's case, in November 2011. This involved a self-assessment of itself and GUK.

As part of CA's re-certification for HAP in 2013, the HAP Secretariat conducted an audit that included a visit to CAB, CCDB and DSK. This highlighted a few weaknesses, mostly related to monitoring and follow-up, some of which remain valid. Of seven recommendations provided that applied to Bangladesh, it appears that most – related to benchmarks 2, 5 and 6 - are still 'work in progress'.

Partner organisations believe they have been following HAP principles for many years through their implementation of participatory processes, and adherence to other accountability mechanisms such as Sphere. HAP is therefore not completely new to partners as they have existing accountability processes and associated support policies (such as rights and disaster management) already in place.

What is newer though is HAP's emphasis on information sharing with wider stakeholders and shared formal complaints mechanisms. Framework documentation and the systematic approach for formalised transparency are also relatively new, taking the place of more relationship-dependent approaches.

Of the two partners focused on in this study, their Accountability Frameworks (AF), Open Information Policies (OIP) and Complaints Response Mechanisms (CRM) were very much the same. However, each has implemented HAP to different degrees. GUK has rolled out HAP organisation wide, with all staff knowing about it and using it in their work. Additionally, GUK's framework includes orientation for communities on OIP and involving them in developing the CRM. At DSK, all senior managers had orientation training but HAP has mainly just been rolled out for individual projects (for others, it is 'not mandatory'). DSK's framework includes formal community level components (e.g. complaints investigation committees and community audits). In addition to the three CAB partners that have piloted HAP with CAB technical support, three others (Nijera Khorī, Web Foundation and Church of Bangladesh) have rolled out HAP internally without CA support. Only GUK has rolled out HAP organisation-wide.

CAB has its own AF, OIP, and CRM and its Country Strategy includes clear sections on accountable institutions and accountability to partners. HAP and accountable governance also appear prominently in CAB's Annual Report 2014-15.

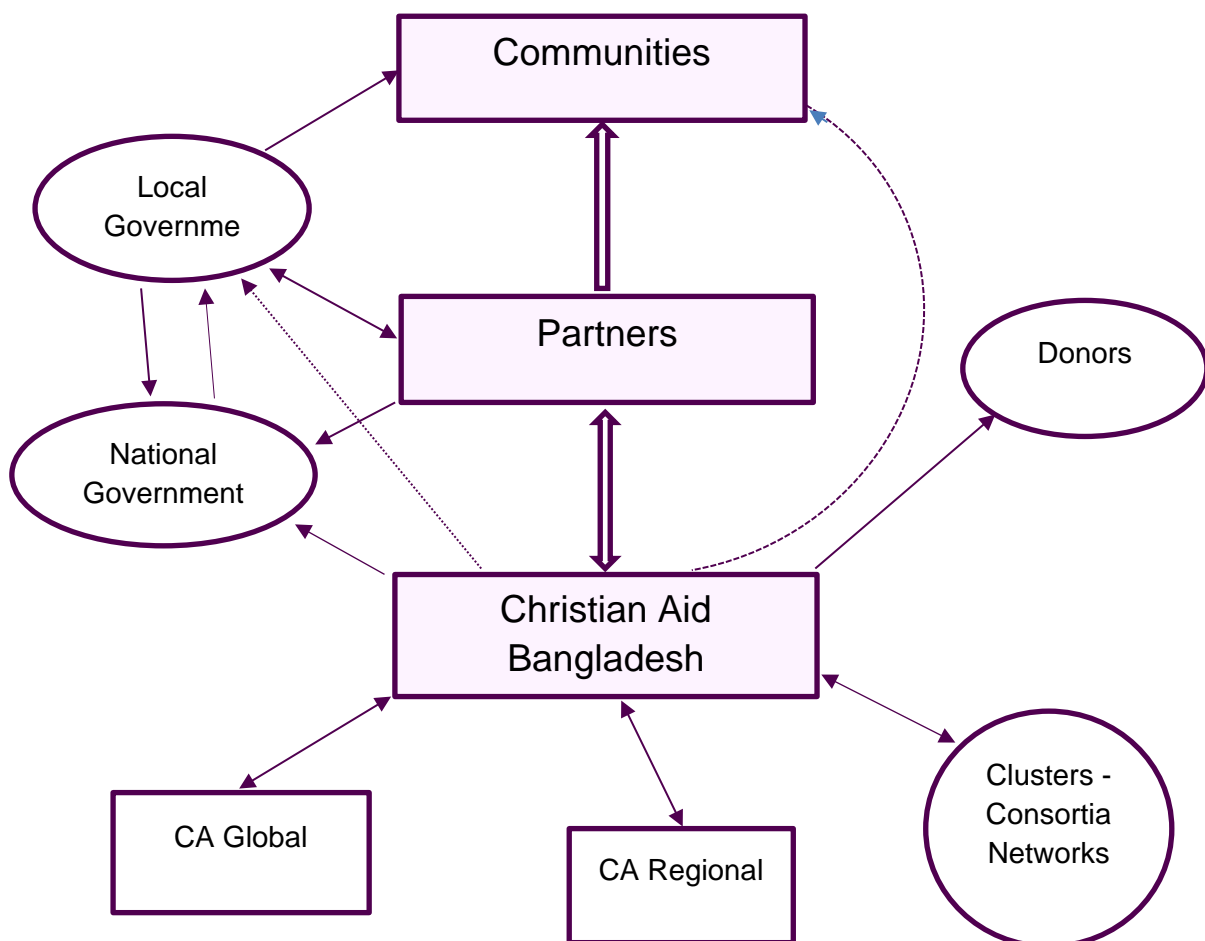
In terms of understanding HAP and accountable governance, CAB believes there are "huge gaps between thinkers and practitioners - the latter will implement but not think it through". Moreover, "In Bangladesh, accountability is often seen as just a project information board and a complaint box, and detailed complaints mechanisms have not percolated down to the community." Both of these comments were based on the view that accountability and its potential to improve many aspects of recovery and resilience work are not fully understood or appreciated i.e. partner staff, government officials and communities tend to perceive accountability as a series of practical activities but generally fail to grasp the power of changes in mind-set, more holistic implementation and follow-up, and potential knock-on effects that accountable governance can deliver. CAB staff themselves admitted that their interest in HAP was at least minimally driven by the need to address accountability to adhere to donors' expectations.

As an indication of understanding, prioritisation and capacity for accountable governance, the three key HAP pilot partners' websites provide a mix of evidence:

- DSK's makes no mention of accountability or HAP, nor is there much information on emergency work, and all the pages are out of date (nothing much since 2011).
- GUK's is also good, with up to date project information, copies of annual reports and audited accounts; accountability and transparency are main objectives / values. Contact information also includes the Chief Executive's cell phone number.
- CCDB's is good, including up to date annual reports and copies of audited accounts; accountability and transparency are main organisational objectives / values. It only has the main office as a contact point though.

As they do not receive specific training (just a small amount of discussion at the beginning of an intervention), none of the community groups is aware of HAP *per se* but they are aware of key HAP components – primarily open information and complaints / feedback mechanisms. They mainly experience these as a complaints box, phone numbers being made available and more open access to information holders, including meetings with partner staff, local government representatives, etc. Although they mostly did associate these HAP mechanisms with partner-supported projects and said the processes were a lot more systematic than that used by other INGOs/donors, community group members seem to know more about the concept of accountability from earlier rights and gender awareness training (that may have included HAP principles but not explicitly). Additionally, there seems to be some confusion between HAP and the national Right to Information Act (which are however complementary) and around whose responsibility it is to respond to existing issues. For example, sometimes people either through lack of knowledge or as a false / malicious complaint, complain to higher levels rather than directly to partners for them to respond.

The diagram below shows the various stakeholders in this study and the relationships of accountability between them. Uni- and bi-directional arrows indicate one-way and mutual accountability respectively. Dotted lines indicate CAB's indirect relationships with communities and local government, which it sees as only through partners. Note that in reality, the mutuality of accountability between national and local government is predominantly one-way (from local to national) with little in return.



The following tables highlight some of the ways that communities, partners and CAB experience components of HAP and accountability with their respective stakeholders. Examples provided in the right hand column are not meant to indicate new things occurring due to HAP: instead, the tables are an attempt to scope the range of experiences from communities' and organisations' perspectives. Many of the engagements and activities existed before HAP, though perhaps to a lesser extent and/or much less formally or systematically.

How Communities Experience HAP and accountability	Examples given of accountability in practice
Amongst each other - traditional expectation that, informally, people look after each other, especially those who are most in need, and newer roles in delivering communal work/action plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taking in other families who have lost their homes in the floods - As group leaders supervising Cash for Work participants - Collectively delivering on public elements of PVCA action plan such as fixing the road.
With NGOs / donors - through engagement with participatory approaches to project / organisational governance and project implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation in project design and project inception meetings, developing project beneficiary criteria - As joint members of project implementation committees and joint monitoring of projects - Through the provision of information boards, complaints box, weekly meetings, face-to-face and mobile phone interactions with field & HQ staff - As recipients of direct/tangible project support - Information and support for individual cases.
With Local Government - at Ward, Union and, occasionally, sub-District and District levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Voting as part of national election process - Sources of information - face to face with UP Chairman and representatives, open village meetings, official Information Centre, interaction with extension workers - (jointly) approving beneficiary lists for government safety-net / support mechanisms - complaints processes - Brokering / channelling requests and claims to higher level officials.
With Christian Aid Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CAB as a funder: Visible signs are CAB's logo on project documentation & information sources as well as staff monitoring visits

How Partners Experience HAP and accountability	Examples given of accountability in practice
Internally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - senior management leadership - staff orientation and training - relevant policy & procedures development and implementation - systems for monitoring, analysis & learning
With Community - project participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreeing project design, location, participants - (Joint) project management committees - Reporting progress on implementation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivery of tangible support - Responding to complaints / feedback (face to face, mobile phone, and written)
With Community - all (including non-beneficiaries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consideration and inclusion - Information dissemination - Volunteer management - Do no harm - Responding to complaints / feedback (face to face, mobile phone, and written)
With Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - formal approval of project - provision of its organisational information for District webpages - joint monitoring of projects - advocacy for resource allocation for the communities (and sub-groups) it serves - collaborative action in emergency situations
With National Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - formal NGO registration - advocacy for improved public policy and more equitable resource allocations based on evidence collated through participatory processes (- varied and limited evidence collected)
With Christian Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivery of project objectives - Proper use of funds - Adherence to reporting requirements - Sharing and learning - Mutual support
With Other NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increased credibility / role model
With Other Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivery of project objectives - Proper use of funds - Adherence to a variety of accountability and reporting requirements - Sharing and learning

How CAB Experiences HAP	Examples given of accountability in practice
Internally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - senior management leadership - staff orientation and training - relevant policy & procedures development and implementation - systems for monitoring, analysis & learning
With Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reviewing community satisfaction with partner accountability as part of monitoring visits
With Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promotion of increased accountability - facilitating sharing and learning - provision of technical support - responding to any complaints / feedback
With Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sharing strategic information relevant to local projects
With National Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - formal NGO registration - adherence to national public policies - advocacy drawing on evidence from accountable relationships with partners (- varied / limited evidence)
With Other NGOs / Clusters / Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - with recognition and credibility from HAP Certification

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - as leaders and facilitators of accountable governance - joint advocacy drawing on evidence from accountable relationship with partners
With Christian Aid Regional / Global	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mutual support - programme collaboration and joint project development and decision-making - learning and sharing - joint advocacy
A Range of Complaints Behaviours Reported by CAB & Partners	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People don't normally do so (complain) due to social hierarchies & fear of being denied benefits if they do • Many community members prefer informal ways (of complaining) • Sometimes complaints are by one group member against another, sometimes informal or anonymous • Complaints to partners come mostly from men, even though there are less male than female beneficiaries • Women speak out within woman's groups, but often not in front of mixed groups • Women may complain through women's CBOs • Some complaints come via third parties like teachers, local leaders, or men • There are more complaints to partners for emergency projects and less for other longer term resilience / livelihood programmes (where there is more access to information and community group structures often address complaints directly themselves without going via the partner) • Single women's voices are not heard much, even in groups of women. 	

Changes identified through engagement with HAP

Although not aware of HAP per se, community group members and project beneficiaries recognise and value their new found roles and participation in PVCA, project design, implementation and decision-making - for example, as members of project implementation committees or (for non-members) being better informed via information shared by the latter or project staff.

A key part of the initial workshop, involving staff who were the 'HAP Focal Points' for partner organisations, was to identify individually and collectively 'what has happened as a result of HAP?'. A range of responses were put forward including:

- Systematic process in place for governance and accountability
- Attitudes and behaviour of organisation staff members changed (willingness to engage)
- [HAP] included in organisation Human Resources policy
- Women's empowerment / Empowered communities
- People's confidence has increased
- Target groups became one of main decision-makers in committee of project
- Advocacy increased
- Some responsiveness on public services

A fuller discussion of these issues, and HAP's contribution, is contained in the sections on ToR questions 3, 4 and 6 below where process tracing has been used to interrogate these claims. ToR question 7 provides a fuller consideration of HAP in relation to gender issues.

In analysing these claims, it has proven very difficult to separate out HAPs contribution to changes, which, for example, are often mentioned in conjunction with rights / gender training. However, there is no doubt that HAP, through its physical facilitation of both formal and informal complaints mechanisms, has been instrumental in enabling illiterate women to complain (e.g. by giving out mobile phone numbers – but see box below). HAP has also been responsible for driving organisational change processes focused on attitudes to transparency and accountability which in GUK's case at least, seem evident and to be progressing well (despite initial resistance and tensions from additional demands for open information). GUK has also reported better relations with local government, greater trust, and local government now demanding greater accountability / information from other NGOs – all coming from HAP and corroborated through FGDs with the lowest level of local government representatives.

DSK has also seen improved information flows, project recognition and relations with local government and sharing of more information with other NGOs resulting in greater collaboration and collective advocacy (e.g. in support of landless families). While the extent of the latter could not be corroborated, all partners and community groups believe that local elites have been constrained by the generation of accountable beneficiary lists through HAP processes.

Mobile Phones

One of the main enabling factors for driving greater accountability in rural Bangladesh highlighted in a wide range of conversations has been the huge increase in use of mobile phones over the last year or two. This, along with HAP's emphasis on open access to information including staff phone numbers, has had very positive effects for community members, especially women and those who are non-literate.

Correspondingly, open access to staff, often outside normal working hours and in their private time, has had a significant adverse effect on staff, especially those in key public-facing roles. None of the CAB partners is using wider mobile technology yet, e.g. for more interactive or project monitoring purposes but, given communities enthusiastic adoption, and the cheapness of, mobile phone use, this could surely come.

For CAB, HAP has given greater credibility to their lead on the promotion of accountability and calls for greater accountability from others, although the evaluators were not able to generate any independent evidence of this self-perceived leadership, e.g. as compared to other INGOs. Most importantly, CAB believe their work with HAP has strengthened their already good relationships with partners; they are now openly inviting complaints (though none have come via the complaints box) and offering opportunities to approach the Country Manager if other staff are unresponsive. Although all CAB staff were fully oriented with HAP at the beginning of its comprehensive adoption, there has been quite a few new staff since then who don't yet seem to have been similarly trained.

5.3 What evidence is there for accountability within the programme work?

The outcome below, prioritised by partner representatives in the initial workshop, corresponds directly to this key evaluation question. This relates to community members, particularly women and other more vulnerable groups within communities, making active use of information channels with the partner and complaints mechanisms established under HAP.

Prioritised outcome for process tracing:

Community members, including vulnerable groups and women, make active use of available HAP mechanisms (including access to information and complaints mechanism).

Available evidence

- Partner records of complaints
- Partner reporting to Christian Aid
- FGDs with community groups
- Several workshops held with GUK and DSK staff, and various partner representatives
- Interviews with non-resilience and non-recovery project staff in GUK

The following represent different hypotheses and causal stories emerging from initial conversations and document review that might explain the above outcome, which were tested during the field visit.

Hypothesis 1: *A wider set of community actors is effectively complaining to, and requesting and sharing information with the partner because HAP makes communication channels more accessible and safe to use.*

- After Christian Aid supported the three partners (DSK, GUK, CCDB) in rolling out HAP at a project and organisational level, these partner NGOs have integrated HAP practices into parts of their work (primarily resilience and recovery projects).
- Christian Aid partners then conducted awareness sessions on aspects of HAP with the communities to encourage the use of HAP for strengthened downward accountability.
- Thus, community members, including vulnerable groups, are aware of HAP mechanisms and their purpose (even if not calling it that).
- Awareness leads to increased confidence to use these mechanisms because the suggested process is more systematic and provides fewer disincentives for voicing complaints (such as fear of negative consequences).

Hypothesis 2: *The partner-provided support to community groups, based around livelihoods, income generating activities and early recovery is the key factor encouraging community members to hold the partner NGO actively accountable.*

- According to this potential alternative explanation, the confidence of (vulnerable and disadvantaged) community members was not enhanced through their awareness of how HAP worked *per se* but rather through the other support provided as part of the respective projects - most notably the formation of community groups, economic empowerment, and training on rights and gender.

Validated causal story: The functionality of the accountability mechanisms under HAP was validated in numerous instances showing community members participating and using HAP and the partner NGO being responsive to their demands. Some of these examples do not just demonstrate functioning flows of information but also enhanced performance of project work.

Examples provided by GUK-supported communities

- When [a second village in Gaibandha] was hit by severe flooding, groups were formed under a GUK recovery intervention to deliver on cash for work construction. Group leaders struggled to control and monitor their group members and asked the partner for additional support on this. In response to community feedback enabled through HAP, partner staff advised on smaller group sizes and expanded group

leaders' mandates to conduct roll-calls before and after construction work in order to systematically monitor who was showing up for work on time and delivering on the required hours.

- A village group in Uria mentioned that for a road construction component supported by GUK, the daily rate offered to communities was very low. They complained to GUK staff, who came and explained existing budget constraints to them. Through discussions they arrived at agreement that in the future the community would contribute to the salaries being paid as well and that deliberations would take place before implementation.

Based on evidence that was sought out, it appears most likely that:

- Greater awareness and encouragement to use the new accountability mechanisms provided was indeed prompted by field staff awareness sessions where the purpose and associated process of the complaints box and the possibility of complaining via mobile phone were explained.
- Partner staff also reported that communities supported in the past without HAP in place had few hesitations to complain about insufficient quantity of emergency food items received.
- **However, there were factors going beyond HAP roll-out that influenced *who* could eventually use the complaints mechanisms.**
- One factor was group formation – those that could not read and write to submit formal written complaints, or those that did not have or know how to use a mobile phone, would turn to their group leaders for them to submit the complaint on their behalf.
- At the same time, we lack comprehensive and reliable information on the counterfactual, i.e. would they have not complained without being member of a group?
- A second non-HAP related factor mentioned often in communities that had received longstanding support from the partner NGO was the good relationships between community members and field staff, even reaching into the years before HAP was set up in the community, which had ensured an informal flow of information.

Contribution score of HAP to changes observed:

Significant contribution	HAP was the primary factor in bringing about a change in attitudes, knowledge and actions of the target stakeholder group. Without HAP, the change would not have been observed.
Some contribution	HAP was among the most important factors for bringing about a change in attitudes, knowledge and actions of the target stakeholder group. Without HAP, the change is likely not to have occurred in the same way.
Small contribution	HAP was a relatively minor factor in bringing about changes in attitudes, knowledge and actions of the target stakeholder group. Without HAP, the change is likely to have occurred but to have looked differently.
No contribution	HAP was no factor in bringing about changes in attitudes, knowledge and actions of the target stakeholder group. Without HAP, the change is likely to have occurred in the same way.

While the evidence suggests that some community members have always had good relationships with partner field staff and/or had few hesitations to share their thoughts, there is also strong indication that the change would have looked different without HAP. In particular, the most vulnerable - illiterate groups, single women -, even where organised in groups, may have found it more difficult to feel they could talk directly to the partner NGO where no formal channels for complaints were established.

The evidence reconfirms the point made before - HAP rarely if ever established new relationships of accountability where the partner NGO had been active for a length of time. Rather, it served to strengthen this relationship by making it more systematic, transparent and less dependent in their effectiveness on fluctuating personal relationships between community members and individual partner staff. This is illustrated by what the recipients of recovery support in Gaibandha said – before the complaints mechanism was in place, they already had field staff’s phone numbers, but they could not always provoke a response and at times could not reach anyone. They described the new systematic system for complaints as “fantastic”, saying it provoked less hesitations in people to speak up – a sentiment echoed by the majority of those comparing the before and after of HAP.

CMO-Hypotheses

CMO-Hypothesis 1: *Women organised in groups are encouraged to voice complaints to partner NGO because their expected chances for success are perceived to be better and negative ramifications are considered less likely AND because they recognise the legitimacy of them making demands of duty-bearers.*

This hypothesis was largely confirmed through data collection. Group formation was one of two crucial factors in giving particularly women the opportunity to voice complaints more effectively than in the past, taking away fears of partner support being withdrawn from them based on their complaint. However, it also appears that the groups function as a communication channel for those not organised in groups – in several communities, group members attested to being contacted regularly by those not receiving support asking them to communicate with the partner NGO.

CMO-Hypothesis 2: *Illiterate women are encouraged to use more informal types of complaint with the partner NGO because they do not require writing skills.*

This hypothesis could not be confirmed in its entirety through the evidence collected. While illiterate women did indicate the use of accountability mechanisms, those that do not have access to a mobile phone appear to use these only indirectly – by asking more literate and/or leading group members to complain on their behalf.

5.4 What evidence is there of accountability relationships extending beyond the programme?

The second outcome prioritised for process tracing relates to changes beyond the scope of programme delivery, specifically changes in community members’ perception and understanding of other actors’ duties and their own rights as well as pro-active behaviour in challenging institutions and established leaders outside of the thematic area of programme work.

Prioritised outcome for process tracing:

Communities - particularly women - are enabled to articulate rights and claim entitlements from relevant duty bearers.

Evidence:

- FGDs with community groups
- FGDs with local government representatives
- Several workshops held with GUK and DSK staff, and various partner representatives
- Interviews with non-resilience and non-recovery project staff in GUK

The following represent different hypotheses and causal stories emerging from initial conversations and document review that might explain the above outcome, which were tested during the field visit.

Hypothesis 1: *Experiencing accountable relationships with the partner NGO using HAP encourages community members to also seek out accountability with other duty-bearers at local and higher levels.*

- Through holding community consultations and practicing the transparent sharing of information with communities and local decision-makers, the partner NGOs have facilitated greater exposure of the majority of villagers to local government interactions than before.
- Greater exposure to interacting with local government then leads to greater confidence among community members to approach them directly about concerns and grievances.
- Another effect of the transparent convening of stakeholders early on under HAP was that community members gained new knowledge about their entitlements and whom to turn to, both for help, and to demand these services.
- Finally, engaging in functioning two-way flows of information via HAP encourages community members to replicate these relationships with other formally powerful actors. In other words, community members start expecting a similar degree of openness and responsiveness experienced through interaction with the partner NGO in their interactions with local decision-makers and higher levels of authorities – for instance, by proactively putting together their own beneficiary lists to ensure proper allocation.

Hypothesis 2: *Other programmatic interventions – notably community group formation and rights and livelihood skills trainings – were crucial for creating the necessary confidence and pooling knowledge of community members to claim their rights.*

- According to this competing narrative, it is primarily group formation that gives particularly women the feeling of security and confidence necessary to challenge men in power, making them less afraid of failing or even worse, negative consequences as in the past.
- Rights and gender awareness training provided by partners complements this by increasing knowledge of entitlements and the universality of rights.
- These components are necessary to trigger women's action.

Hypothesis 3: *Other NGOs' work and external trends towards greater democracy and accountability unrelated to the partners' work prompted community members to be more vocal about their rights and services and to pursue these. (i.e. government 'safety-net' entitlements)*

- Right to Information Act and general move of governmental actors towards providing better information and responsiveness has started to shift mindsets of citizens (to be claiming certain rights).
- Wider reach of mobile phone technology and internet coverage enables greater number of people to access accurate information faster.
- Other NGOs and donors working in the target areas have been working on rights awareness and empowerment with target communities.

Validated causal story: There are numerous examples that illustrate the demand-side changes set out above.

Examples provide by DSK and GUK-supported communities:

- Both in resilience and recovery-oriented contexts community group members were active and involved in selecting and cross-checking the selection of beneficiaries for support, going beyond services provided by Christian Aid’s partner NGOs.
- The Apex Group in Kamarkhola – a gathering of different women’s groups representatives, all constituted as a consequence of CAB partner support - pro-actively initiated inclusion of its own representatives in the UP’s non-elected Standing Committee in order to influence decision-making at a local level. The group is intending to nominate two group members who will stand for the next UP elections in 2016. The Apex and associated groups have also been active in lobbying for the rights of landless community members at the Upazila level, where they report the issue is being considered though without success so far.
- A woman in Gaibandha successfully claimed old age benefits on behalf of her father-in-law. (See ToR question 7 below for more detail)
- Women in Gaibandha have learned about and taken on positions in formal governance bodies, such as school management committees.
- The agricultural department has field staff assigned at a community level. When these are not visiting the community regularly, the community members are now calling and asking them why they have not been to visit them. They are also reported to now call on higher officials to check on why they are not coming to the village to deal with issues.

Available evidence suggests that Hypothesis 2 (non-HAP programmatic support as the major factor) carries the most weight in the GUK and DSK supported communities visited for the evaluation. Since many of the causal linkages for this hypothesis are of a subjective nature – on what made individuals speak out for their rights – a lot of the rich evidence from community focus groups was either sufficient or necessary to confirm the hypothesis. Confirmatory evidence emerges most strongly for Hypothesis 2 based on the following:

Training on rights, and gender conveyed legal knowledge and greater collective confidence:

- In almost all cases where community members described a change in their attitudes and confidence to approach decision-makers, they attributed this directly to the fact that partner-supported training had taught them about what entitlements were available to them and whom they had to turn to in order to demand these effectively.
- Most of the community groups had weekly meetings with partner field staff and there was some indication that these were used as a channel for field staff to encourage and advise community members on whom to turn to with their grievances, which is not related to either HAP or PVCA.

Another key aspect of programmatic support that enhanced community members’ confidence and means to raise their voice with duty bearers was group formation:

- In one instance, a women’s group used its relationship with the widely visible and recognised Apex Group constituted as a consequence of CAB partners’ support– a committee of representatives of all community organisations in the

“We were too shy to speak but now we shout.”

– Members of Volunteer Group in Uria

area – to make their demands heard, by having the Apex members communicate their concerns with higher level officials that may have been beyond the former group’s reach.

Illustrations of why group formation had such a big influence on whether even formerly disadvantaged individuals would speak out were:

- Increased recognition particularly of women and their concerns within their community and with the UP members, who formerly would ridicule their requests. Many spoke of a widespread feeling that as a group, or member of a group, they could not be ignored any longer.
- Where individuals did not feel able to appropriately articulate their concerns outside their group, other group members – often the group leaders – would echo their concern more widely.
- The perception that being in a group would protect individuals from negative consequences of raising a problem with officials.
- Members of groups functioned as amplifiers. In one instance, they managed to mobilise greater demand for one person’s cause within the entire community, bolstering the person’s confidence and personal clout to pursue her claim with the Upazila level further.

Trainings on livelihood and rights combined with the group approach and aided by external factors:

- There is strong indication that shifting power at a household level, often due to enhanced capacities and knowledge of women gained in partner trainings, was key for enabling women to enter the realm of communal decision-making in the first place (see ToR question 7 below).
- The one component in the intervention considered crucial by the women was livelihoods training (e.g. teaching women how to fish, alternative agriculture training and accessing markets and market actors), which increased women’s potential and actual contribution to the household income.
- Only through this were women able to start convincing their husbands of the value of their participation in groups and of their interaction with men outside the family (e.g. decision-makers, governmental extension workers, market intermediaries) – to the point where husbands are now described to be in charge of some of the family / household chores.
- Other external events in some instances – such as when cyclone Aila hit the Southern coastal areas in 2009 – further reinforced public conception that women and men should both contribute to income generation. These components together – some of which are predating HAP - enable and encourage women to leave the household realm and become more involved with public affairs and local decision-making.
- Moreover, while HAP might encourage community members to speak up more in general, it was additional trainings and workshops conducted by the partners that explained to women where they would have to go to demand services and rights. Without this support, it is doubtful that even the participation element of HAP would have been a sufficient sole enabler of this.

The evidence in relation to Hypothesis 3 was neither sufficient nor necessary to confirm the crucial links sketched out above. This does not mean it is not true under any circumstance but rather that all available evidence suggests that this was not a strong factor.

Contribution score of HAP to changes observed:

Major contribution	HAP was the primary factor in bringing about a change in attitudes, knowledge and actions of the target stakeholder group. Without HAP, the
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	change would not have been observed.
Some contribution	HAP was among the important factors for bringing about a change in attitudes, knowledge and actions of the target stakeholder group. Without HAP, the change may not have occurred in the same way.
Small contribution	HAP was a relatively minor factor in bringing about changes in attitudes, knowledge and actions of the target stakeholder group. Without HAP, the change is likely to have occurred but to have looked differently.
No contribution	HAP was no factor in bringing about changes in attitudes, knowledge and actions of the target stakeholder group. Without HAP, the change is likely to have occurred in the same way.

HAP's small contribution to female community members now pro-actively voicing their demands and rights with duty bearers is likely to have been the transparent sharing of information with different stakeholders. For instance, through community consultations, which built collective awareness of plans and funds available and of local leaders' commitment, strengthening community members' demands and follow-up regarding local decision-making and service delivery authorities.

CMO-Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: *Women organised in groups are encouraged to complain and demand rights/services from local leadership and other decision-makers because their expected chances for success are perceived to be better and negative ramifications are considered less likely AND because they recognise the legitimacy of them making demands of duty-bearers.*

While this hypothesis could be more or less confirmed, this is where the data that was collected meets its limits as some examples shared by community members strongly suggest that it is important to consider sub-groups among women separately.

One example in Uria village that demonstrates differences among women relates to the head mistress of the local school, which opened in 2009 and is now hosting 160 students from the area. The school was selected for government support in 2013, but this has not been provided to date. She then decided to apply for government support from the local education department, which provided funding for raising the plinth of the flood-affected playground, which is also now used as shelter in times of flooding. For more than a year and a half, she had been lobbying the Upazila Education Officer to provide better equipment and provide support for relocating the school away from the endangered embankment where erosion and floods regularly threaten the accessibility of the building. The Upazila representatives had been promising to match national government support once the latter is being provided. The teacher – whose father had sponsored the land on which the school was built and who therefore counts among the more privileged in her community – has been meeting with officials every month to discuss the issue. She subsequently became a member of the Volunteers' Group, which mobilises the community in times of disaster to take the most vulnerable to the shelter and provide first aid to the wounded. By sharing her story with that group, she had managed to increase demand for an improved school building and better education among the community at large, through her fellow group members sharing the story with their own personal networks⁸.

In addition to this example of an already-powerful woman harnessing 'power with', there were also examples of less privileged women who had only begun to approach decision-makers after the group was formed. Both GUK staff and several of the community members reiterated that in

⁸ At the time of the evaluation, a decision on funding for the school was still pending

the past, it was only special people in the community who would interact with duty-bearers on a par. Through the partner work, less privileged people realised that they also had the right and the ability to speak to those in power themselves.

While it would have been important to inquire more deeply about what changed for different sub-groups of women – single women, educated women, those discriminated on the basis of their caste, religion, disability or other personal characteristics – this level of systematic disaggregation was not feasible during the field visit. It would be useful to consider this in future research and monitoring and evaluation activities of partners.

5.5 How have power relations shifted through our work?⁹

This TOR question echoed early reports shared with the evaluators in the planning workshop conducted with partners and Christian Aid staff, as well as the PPA Outcome Assessment conducted in 2015. Although no power analysis work had been done by CAB and its partners and there was no formal baseline to measure power shifts, these reports included a range of examples where communities had not just articulated their rights and engaged pro-actively with duty bearers but where this was done successfully. In other words, the evaluators were able to recognise shifts in power relations both as shifts in self-perception and demeanour based on new group-based ‘power with’ among community members, as well as shifts in how the traditionally most powerful in interactions increasingly yield to community demands (e.g. disempowerment of elites).

Prioritised outcome for process tracing:

Influential actors are increasingly listening and, at times, yielding to the demands of previously disempowered groups.

Examples provided by community members

- UP members in Uria describe higher numbers of people, particularly women, now stopping them to ask for help and support. They do not describe it as a burden but as a “headache” when they cannot satisfy their request, indicating that women’s demands are now seen as an issue to take seriously by elected officials. [N.B. In terms of wider accountability, UP members also raised frustration at the inadequacy of resources available to them and their limitations in reaching higher levels of governance to change situations.]
- The visited Apex Group in Khulna District has been pro-actively drawing up lists of beneficiaries based on their perception and knowledge of who are the most needy in their proximity. They submit this list to the UP authorities whenever government support is being planned. According to group members, the UP has been ‘more or less’ accommodating their lists in their decision. What is more, the Apex Group emphasised their changed standing with elected officials as it was representing 2000 potential voters in the upcoming UP elections. According to them, their demands used to fall on deaf ears with UP members – “now, they come to us to ask us what we think and want”.

⁹ NB: Evaluation Question 5 is cross-cutting and included in responses to the other questions

Hypothesis 1: *The implementation of HAP with communities narrows the space for once powerful actors to act unaccountably.*

- Partners rolling out HAP at a project and especially as an organisational quality standard increases pressure on decision-makers to act in similarly transparent and accountable ways.
- Space for unfair exertion of power by any one group has been reduced as HAP mandates the transparent provision of information to both communities and local decision-makers.

Hypothesis 2: *Group formation – a key element of how partners channelled their support to segments of communities in need for their resilience and recovery projects – increased the effectiveness of people’s voice and demands and led to greater responsiveness of decision-makers.*

- In other words, the sheer strength in numbers of claimants as well as their abating fear of speaking up is leading to greater effectiveness of their interactions with previously unresponsive decision-makers.

Hypothesis 3: *Other contextual factors unrelated to either HAP or the partners’ resilience/recovery interventions have shifted perception, attitudes and resources of decision-makers vis-à-vis the population they are serving.*

- Right to Information Act and general move of governmental actors towards providing better information and responsiveness has started to shift mindsets of government (to be providing certain rights and services).
- Wider reach of mobile phone technology and internet coverage enables greater number of people to access accurate information faster, increasing and making visible critical mass/demand for change.
- Other NGOs and donors working in the target areas have equally pushed the government to be more open towards its citizens at a local level.

Validated causal story: There is strong evidence to suggest that Hypothesis 2 and 3 both carry more weight than Hypothesis 1 (positing HAP as a crucial factor in bringing about power shifts).

- There is some necessary evidence to support Hypothesis 1 – both GUK and several of the groups visited recounted instances where they felt that through HAP, the selection of beneficiaries for government and NGO support had become a lot less prone to one-sided manipulation, either because partner staff were now bound to a transparent and clear set of criteria or because the community groups were actively involved and keen to monitor the selection.
- At the same time, however, two groups in different communities confirmed that ‘money and muscle’ still mattered in local decision-making, especially for highly sensitive topics with high stakes for influential individuals such as access to land
- There was a moderate amount of sufficient evidence to confirm that group formation itself had curbed some of the power that influential decision-makers used to have.
- This relates to enhanced responsiveness of low-level government both to individual demands for entitlements as well as to better inclusion of vulnerable and ‘deserving’ households in selection of service recipients (as defined by the communities themselves).
- Particularly decision-makers in those communities that have received very limited and short-term support (primarily the early recovery project where cash for work projects were rolled out in 2015) were more heavily influenced by external factors that had little to do

with HAP or the partner intervention. In that context, UP members confirmed that community members had been getting more vocal about their demands in the past four or five years, particularly including the women. Time-wise, this coincides with a governmental Information Centre that was set up to provide information to the community and the setting up of helplines, for instance on domestic violence.

- Therefore, there is strong indication that a general top-down push towards transparency and openness has been equipping communities with the necessary knowledge to articulate their rights vis-à-vis the appropriate duty-bearers.
- UP members also drew the link with other NGOs by describing how women have been becoming more empowered a couple of years after NGOs started working in the area. (Of course, some of these NGOs may also have been using HAP).
- As UP members confirmed, mobile phones had become prevalent in their community within the past 12 months, presenting another opportunity to community members to receive further information about available services and eligibility for support.

Example

A woman in the village of Kamarkhola in Khulna was visiting her parents' house at a time when the local government did the rounds in her village to establish who was deserving of benefits under a new benefit support scheme. When she returned, she found she had been excluded from the list because of her absence. She approached the UP members and requested to be included in the list of beneficiaries but was swiftly turned down. Subsequently, she took several female members of the Apex Group, accompanied by her husband, to the Upazila vice-chairman to demand inclusion in the list. The vice-chairman reportedly convinced the chairman to ensure she was included in the list and her household is now in receipt of the services.

Beyond the hypotheses set in advance, changing relationships of power were also evidenced between partners and local decision-makers. Both GUK and DSK described an injection of trust into interactions with the local government, brought about by transparency mandated by HAP. For instance, GUK now breaks down its budgets by UP level and invites UP members to project inception meetings and community consultations. This increased level of accountability from their side has even led government representatives to point to them as a good example to be followed when interacting with other NGOs. However, at the initial partner workshop, government responsiveness was perceived as the lowest level of change achieved through HAP so far (i.e. the improvements in accountability weren't reciprocated much).

Contribution score of HAP to changes observed:

Significant contribution	HAP was the primary factor in bringing about a change in attitudes, knowledge and actions of the target stakeholder group. Without HAP, the change would not have been observed.
Some contribution	HAP was among the important factors for bringing about a change in attitudes, knowledge and actions of the target stakeholder group. Without HAP, the change may not have occurred in the same way.
Small contribution	HAP was a relatively minor factor in bringing about changes in attitudes, knowledge and actions of the target stakeholder group. Without HAP, the change is likely to have occurred but to have looked different.
No contribution	HAP was no factor in bringing about changes in attitudes, knowledge and actions of the target stakeholder group. Without HAP, the change is likely to have occurred in the same way.

HAP's contribution appears to have been effective in reducing the extent of unfair influence that powerful individuals used to play in drawing up lists of selected beneficiaries for NGO and governmental support. It reportedly also enhanced credibility of partner NGOs with governmental stakeholders and possibly other NGOs – to what effect, though, is not substantiated by evidence. One of the stories of change captured also paints a picture of women's voices gaining power over a period that predates HAP – but they only started seeing enhanced responsiveness from decision-makers a year after HAP has been in place. This is not sufficient for assuming a significant role for HAP in bringing about the tentative power shifts involved.

CMO-Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: *Individuals in elected roles are discouraged from weighing in unfairly on decisions affecting the community because they are now under greater scrutiny of better informed and more confident community members.*

Partners and some of the community groups felt strongly that the selection of beneficiaries had indeed become a lot more balanced and fair. Where political party members still supply lists of beneficiaries they want to see on the final lists to partners, partner staff in several villages are empowered by now employing transparent criteria to the selection, eliminating most of politically motivated candidates for support from the final lists. There are also several instances where community members either successfully complained about deserving households missing from government lists of support or pro-actively drew up lists based on their knowledge of who is vulnerable in their communities and saw this largely considered by local decision-makers when government schemes were rolling out benefits and services.

Hypothesis 2: *HAP provides less of a formal constraint to discourage traditional leaders and other unelected leaders from relationships of dominance over women and other vulnerable members of the community.*

There was strong evidence from different communities that decision-makers at a local level could still be influenced easily by those with a lot of money. Power shifts with holders of traditional or informal power were evidenced at the household and intra-community level. Husbands are increasingly letting their wives play roles outside the household, even helping them with chores at times, and the community elders are slowly accepting new practices relating to the role of women in the communities. However, indications here are mixed – for instance, upon probing in Focus Groups, it became clear that there had been tensions between married couples with ensuing domestic violence over women's attempts to break out of traditionally assigned roles as carers in the household. These emerging power shifts, however, were not linked to HAP or PVCA but rather to group formation and the provision of income generating and other trainings.

5.6 What can we learn about women's participation?

Before April / May 2014 (start of project), how was life for you as an individual woman?

- “We were confined at family level, with no network. Now we know each other and can speak.
- We didn't know about local government, surveys, and government services (e.g. livestock officers or agricultural extension officers), and now we communicate with them directly.
- We didn't know about the market, and now we can sell our produce.
- We also now know about disaster preparedness.
- We didn't know about school management committees, and now two of us are on those committees

- We found out about some unused government land, so have now received some training and we're cultivating small vegetable plots.
- We also now know about medical services.
- We are now treating our sons and daughters the same".

Women's Group in Uria Union

The above quotes were taken from an enthusiastic group of approximately fifteen women from four different villages all shouting out their experiences of recent change. The cacophony represents a very real and positive result of CAB-funded partner project activities but it shows that HAP alone is not responsible for the changes. Instead, as detailed in ToR questions 4 and 6 above, it shows that a combination of group mobilisation, information dissemination, training (and HAP) brought together to enable and increase participation can have a significant effect on empowering women and transforming their lives.

Similar responses were heard across all communities visited, and recent examples of women's empowerment, such as those below, were relatively easy to identify.

Case 1: After Anju learned about potential support for her elderly father-in-law from an Upazila workshop, she requested it for him but was turned down. She appealed to the local elected representative but again he turned her down. Anju then shared her problem with the women's group she belonged to, and five group members went with her to see that UP member. They threatened him that they would go to higher levels to complain, and then they were successful. Their explanation of how Anju was successful in the end - *"The key was group pressure (individuals are not effective) - and the next election is coming up soon!"*



Case 2: Through women's mobilisation and discussions at weekly meetings, one women's group stopped the UP Chairman increasing a girl's age on her birth certificate (that would have allowed an early marriage), and proactively took on individual cases of girl child abuse, by letting the village know and resolving the issue, and violence against wife / daughter-in-law, where all the group members went to the female members of the family concerned and resolved the issue.

Case 3: As an example of women's voices and views now being heard, one group proudly reported that *"We got the road construction included as a priority in the [PVCA Action] plan"*.

There is good evidence to show that women's groups established within CAB-funded resilience projects are becoming political actors, being recognised by local government and taking roles in formal governance bodies (e.g. school management committees, UP Standing Committees, etc). However, it appears that intra-community and -household levels of power are very important to the reality of women, communities and partners. Although this is not directly to do with accountable relations, shifts in power at these levels seem to be instrumental in enabling women to demand accountability. For example, it is difficult to believe that previously quite isolated women would reach out to government levels without preliminary or concomitant shifts in enabling power within their families and communities. The latter cannot be attributed to HAP: although HAP Principles of Accountability contains a commitment to respect and foster humanitarian standards and the rights of beneficiaries, the Standard Requirements (i.e. Accountability Framework) does not talk about rights. It only states "the organisation shall do this / that ..." and is about the procedures required to put this in place, not the processes that will make it happen, such as rights and gender awareness training.

Additionally, although HAP's accommodation of informal mechanisms now enables illiterate women to complain, one potential concern arising from conversations is the necessity to closely monitor how the power balance within communities and even within groups is evolving. Most of the women that were either very vocal, or those chosen as representatives or those that had been closely involved in drafting the PVCA plans tended to be literate. Even if all women can gain from group pressure and political activity aimed at, say, construction of a new road or better public services, there is always the danger of creating new exclusionary practices within communities despite the best intentions.

Partners did not have the necessary monitoring and evaluation processes in place to be able to uncover where vulnerable individuals and groups may still be systematically excluded from the general community / women's groups and, where these groups have now established

themselves as communal gatekeepers to government-provided support, from the receiving of such support. In one instance, members of a community group said that women not included in formal project groups have less knowledge to even raise their voice. There are hints that very poor women - those that are disabled, or have mental health problems, or “those not interested in improving themselves” - might still be at a disadvantage in terms of participation and exerting influence.

Due to time constraints, unfortunately, with the exception of male partner staff and some UP representatives, we were not able to speak with many men. It goes without saying, though, that there will be allies and obstacles to women’s empowerment among them. For example, the UP Chairman in case 2 above may not be a great supporter but the following quote from a women’s group in Uria Union shows how partner organisations’ work can change men’s attitudes and turn obstacles into allies. *“Before, our husbands would say ‘why are you going to these meetings? What use are they?’ Now they are helping with family chores so that we women can come to meetings and get useful information. The same group highlighted that they now participate in village arbitration / conflict resolution meetings and processes and, more generally, “women can now participate as representatives of the women’s group”.*



6. Conclusions

Overall, we can say that HAP and PVCA (separately and together) are being used, and are helping to empower communities, improve the sharing of information, and make project planning and activities more participatory.

6.1 Strengths of CAB's accountability focus in programming

Partner organisations have been following HAP principles for many years through their implementation of participatory processes and adherence to other accountability mechanisms such as Sphere. Some have also already established a rapport of trust with communities through years of support provision. Nevertheless, the key strength of CAB's accountability focus in programming is that CAB and partners are now implementing much more systematic approaches to accountability, driven by HAP.

Through the development and use of key policy documents such as accountability frameworks, open information policies and complaints response mechanisms, as well as supporting policies (e.g. covering gender, disability and child rights), CAB and partners are performing relatively well against HAP Benchmarks for establishing and delivering on commitments (#1); sharing timely, relevant and clear information (#3); and handling complaints (#5). Additionally, all of CAB's HAP documentation is available in the local language, Bangla, as well as English.

There is also good evidence on participatory aspects of CAB / partner's HAP benchmarking (#4). For example, partners are using HAP (and PCVA) to build onto and strengthen their existing participatory practices, and they are integrating community participation into project implementation and decision-making such as strong involvement in compiling beneficiary lists and managing cash for work groups.

In general, much larger amounts of more detailed and targeted information is being made available and shared with many different types of people, and some partners are assimilating HAP principles into non-CAB-funded projects. Both HAP and PCVA are being used at project inception, and in one partner case (GUK) in quite a formal way with broad and inclusive project inception meetings for all stakeholders. These positive changes support the evidence of considerable senior staff buy-in to strengthen accountability that was apparent during this study: all of which has led to improved organisational and project recognition; sharing of more information with other NGOs resulting in greater collaboration, and better relations with local government.

CAB's implementing of HAP (e.g. greater sharing of information and being more open to feedback) has also strengthened its, already prioritised and valued, relationships with partners.

Even though evidence suggests there are disincentives for staff to implementing HAP i.e. through the need to equalise / relinquish power to communities and wider stakeholders, CAB and partners are able to demonstrate considerable positive change in behaviour, attitudes and competence of staff on accountability due to implementation of HAP (benchmark 2).

CAB and partner staff making themselves open to feedback and creating an awareness that complaining is acceptable has contributed to the development of accountable relationships more broadly. As has the provision of information to communities on who they should go to to pursue claims, for what, and that it is their right to make demands on duty-bearers (e.g. project staff, village leaders and government officials). However, although these empowering aspects of the

accountability programme and the fact that they have often been delivered in conjunction with rights / gender awareness training, are a strength, there are issues associated with these linkages, which are discussed below.

6.2 Priority Issues / Important Weaker Elements of the Programme

Women's Participation and Empowerment

If the articulated goal of HAP implementation is to improve accountability between communities and partner NGOs/donors, findings suggest that HAP itself can be implemented effectively without accompanying measures. However, for wider empowerment of vulnerable groups, connecting up HAP with training on community members' rights appears to root accountability mechanisms more effectively in collective awareness.

In terms of women's empowerment specifically, evidence shows that it has and is being achieved as a real and positive result of CAB-funded partner project activities but that this cannot be attributed to HAP other than to a fairly limited extent. Group mobilisation and rights/ gender awareness and livelihoods training, all work alongside HAP implementation to enable and increase women's participation and influence on project and local governance and decision-making.

Although not directly to do with accountable relationships, changes in intra-household and intra-community levels of power also seem to be fundamental to this empowerment and are instrumental in allowing / enabling women to demand accountability more broadly. For example, there is good evidence to show women's groups established within CAB-funded resilience projects are becoming political actors, being recognised by local government and taking roles in formal governance bodies. However, these processes of empowerment have been external to, or a precursor of, HAP processes.

Additionally, factors external to projects such as technological advances (mobile phone availability, websites, etc) and a nation-wide push for greater administrative transparency appear to have been crucial for shifting the power in favour of communities.

In short, increased accountability between partner NGOs and community members is unlikely on its own to lead to community members being better able to articulate their rights and access their entitlements from government. For women, especially, to demand accountability and reach out to government levels, HAP alone is not enough. There needs to be explicit links between accountability mechanisms, rights and gender awareness training and concomitant shifts in visible and hidden power at community level to enable women to interact more on a par with duty bearers.

Additionally, although implementation of HAP's information and complaints processes (especially informal approaches such as through mobile phones and face to face exchanges) have probably established accountable relations for non-privileged illiterate women, power balances within communities and groups are evolving. For example, women most involved in demanding accountability tend to be literate. In other words, while there are positive shifts in power relations, there is also a danger of reinforcing existing relations or creating new exclusionary practices (e.g. between literate women and illiterate women) within communities despite the best intentions.

Broader Power Shifts / Expansion of Accountable Practice

Although HAP has provided increased credibility and, possibly, role model status for CAB and

partners with government and other NGOs, the potential for increasing adoption of more accountable practices is not yet being strongly realised at a partner level.

Prior to HAP, relationships between CAB, partners and government obviously existed, with the concept of accountability perhaps being added more recently. Although CAB and partners believe that, e.g. through more openly sharing information with communities and government, their relations with government are stronger, there is little evidence that the mutuality of accountability is properly understood and /or that they are encouraging government to be more accountable to them.

In terms of HAP work enabling partners and communities to call for more accountable practices from other actors, there is some evidence that this is happening but only to a limited extent - for example, local elites being constrained by accountable beneficiary lists at UP level. These tentative power shifts are “tentative” because “money and muscle” still matter for highly sensitive political decisions at a local level and national government control is very entrenched.

Additionally, PVCA has offered some opportunities for expanding accountable relationships and improving government responsiveness through its very participatory nature and the creation of action plans that require government action, but monitoring and follow-up by communities and partners is quite limited.

Evidence to support CAB's claim of leadership in accountability within the NGO sector more broadly in Bangladesh was not made available at the time of this study.

Integration of Accountability across Programmes

With the probable exception of GUK's case where there is a systematic organisation-wide approach, CAB believes that accountability and HAP's potential to improve many aspects of recovery and resilience work are not yet widely understood or fully appreciated. This study concurs with that.

In particular, CAB has integrated HAP reasonably well across its operations but it has not yet managed to encourage broader adoption in partners' work, which is generally piecemeal with partners implementing HAP to varying degrees. There would definitely be value in connecting up the three HAP pilot partners with other partners that CAB is starting to support on this journey. However, CAB does need to be cognizant of partners' co-implementation of other accountability approaches (often tied to other donors' expectations of their own funded programmes with the same NGOs / partner organisations).

Additionally, new CAB and partner staff are not always aware of HAP, indicating that a systematic approach to staff training and induction is currently lacking.

With its systematic and ongoing approach, HAP has the potential to drive sustainable change but CAB / partners' accountability practices are weak on systems for formal (electronic?) monitoring and analysis of e.g. complaints or PVCA action plan implementation.

Additionally, partner reports focus mainly on activity level and procedures being put in place, with little on change / impact. This means that developing and demonstrating an understanding of how accountability / HAP can create change, help projects to be more responsive and staff teams more proactive in managing multi-stakeholder accountabilities, and the potential for general shared learning around HAP, are not being strongly realised. On the positive side, partners did indicate an interest in more CAB-facilitated learning across HAP implementing partners.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions above, the following are suggested recommendations for strengthening CAB's Accountability Programme:

(a) To strengthen their HAP and PVCA monitoring, evaluation and learning ...

CAB and partners could:

- develop and analyse Theories of Change for HAP and PVCA work to help partners and CAB better realise their full potential, including identifying linkages and opportunities for improving government responsiveness;
- set up electronic systems to capture and analyse complaints data such as demographics of those complaining (and not complaining), usage by location, choice of communication, and response actions;
- establish systems to ensure all new staff are familiarised with accountability principles and mechanisms (including the transition of HAP to the new Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability - CHS).

CAB could:

- identify and share good practice annually among HAP-committed partner NGOs, and those interested in strengthening their accountability (this could even be part of other learning events, but HAP focal persons / practitioners need to be there);
- encourage and build the capacity of partners to report on impacts, rather than just reporting activities and implementation of procedures;

(b) To strengthen project design, implementation, and impact ...

CAB and partners could:

- consider which elements of training and awareness-raising need to be delivered alongside accountability mechanisms in recovery and resilience projects to ensure both achieve the greatest impact - the results of this consideration should be implemented in all future interventions;
- conduct power analyses of household, community, and local / district / relevant national level government to understand, predict and manage power shifts between communities and duty bearers including government actors;
- strengthen targeting of vulnerable groups and identify where programmatic support and HAP may be working differently for different sub-groups (including uncovering where vulnerable individuals and groups may still be systematically excluded from participation and support).

(c) For general learning on longer term impact of PVCA ...

- conduct a review of PVCA plans / outputs to assess delivery and responsiveness of different stakeholders. (This would require CAB providing technical support and resources for partners to conduct and share the results of a review.)

Methodological recommendations

The process tracing methodology requires considerable input of effort and time from programme staff in understanding the methodology, in fleshing out detailed, alternative hypotheses for the achievement of outcomes and in contributing to the analysis. We would recommend the use of process tracing for evaluations focussed on contextualised learning rather than on 'proving' an

intervention's worth or an agency's contribution, and for analysis that goes narrow and deep rather than broad.

We would recommend realist evaluation for community-level work focussed on service delivery, where the justification for and targeting of different groups through different measures under the same intervention is usually more fleshed out from the beginning. This is not to be understood as a hard-and-fast rule but rather as a consideration to inform selection of methodologies.

A separate methodological guidance note is included in Annex D.



8. Bibliography

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- DSK-HAP-Accountability Framework
- DSK-HAP-Complaints Response Procedure
- DSK-HAP-Open Information Policy
- Guide to the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management
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- GUK RIVER Annual Project Review 2014-15
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- PPA Outcome Assessment Report April 2015 - Bangladesh
- PVCA Good Practice Guide
- Review CA BD Complaints & Response Policy - May 2015
- Review CA BD Open Information Policy - May 2015
- Revised CA BD AF contextualised - May 2015
- The Climate Challenge - Community Adaptation and Women's Empowerment in Bangladesh
- Understanding CA Impact Through a Community Lens
- UNICEF Bangladesh - Women and Girls in Bangladesh
- http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/Women_and_girls_in_Bangladesh.pdf

Annex A: Evaluation Terms of Reference

To be inserted

Annex B: Visit Plan

Accountability Assessment, CA Bangladesh

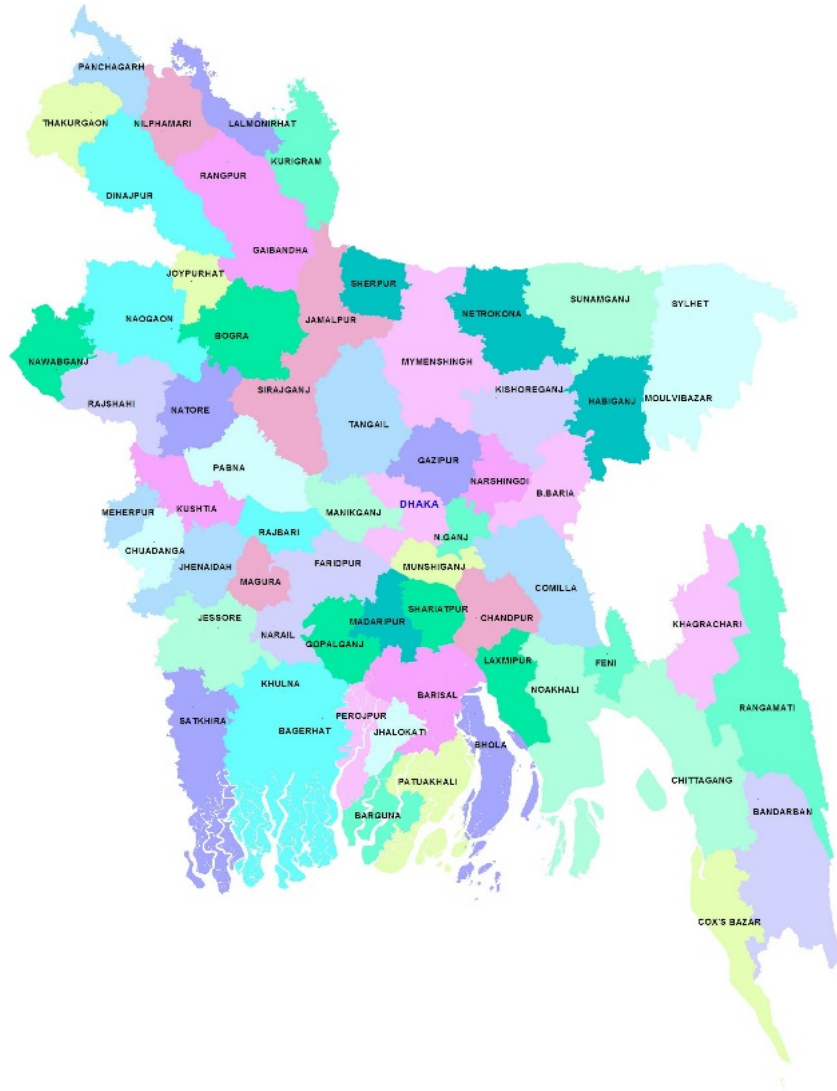
Visit Schedule

22 August 2015	Arrive in Bangladesh	Dhaka
23 August	CAB & Partner staff workshop	Dhaka
	Meeting with CAB Country Manager and Emergency Programme Manager	
24 August	Travel to Gaibandha from Saidpur Airport Meetings and workshop with Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK) team and senior staff	GUK head office, Gaibandha
25 August	Field Visit to GUK RIVER project	Uria Union
26 August	Field Visit to GUK Early Recovery Project	Fulchari Union
27 August	Flight back to Dhaka Debriefing at CA Dhaka Office Flight to Jesore	Jesore
28 August	Field Visit to DSK CBDRR & CC Project	Kamarkhola, Khulna District
29 August	Workshop with DSK staff Travel back to Dhaka	Khulna Dhaka
30 August	Analysis of Evidence	Dhaka
31 August	Closing workshop - feedback to CAB and Partners	Dhaka

Annex C: Map

Visit Locations

Map of Bangladesh showing Districts of Gaibandha (coloured pink in the north) and Khulna (coloured blue in the south).



Maps showing Uria and Fulchari Unions in Gaidandha District, and Kamarkhola in Khulna District are attached.

Annex D: Methodological Guide

Background

Process Tracing was first trialled as a new approach within a series of theory-based evaluations of Christian Aid's governance portfolio in 2015. The aim was specifically to understand and evidence how Christian Aid's and its partners' accountability practices were contributing to building more (downwardly) accountable relationships more broadly in the context of Bangladesh. The evaluation team added elements of Realist Evaluation to their evaluation design, in order to allow for greater flexibility of the methodology and 'user-friendliness' of the findings. 'Flexibility' because selection of methodology in this case preceded the final agreement on evaluation questions, and combining the two different methodologies would provide more room for the evaluators to adapt and tailor the approach based on the eventually defined questions; Greater 'user-friendliness' due to Realist Evaluation's focus on potentially more actionable 'what works where for whom?' questions that would complement the more theoretical 'tracing' of competing explanations through Process Tracing.

This guide focusses primarily on the steps necessary to conduct Process Tracing but includes a brief section on how and where to combine this with Realist Evaluation. There is a list of selected references at the end of the document for those interested in further reading.

Description of the methodology

Process Tracing at a glance

- Process Tracing establishes causal linkages (e.g. intervention A leads to outcome B) based on detailed description of the causal mechanism at work. It builds a case-based understanding of what most likely brought about an observed change in a specific context.
- A causal mechanism is the "interaction between what the programme provides and the reasoning of its intended target population that causes the outcomes." (Westhorp 2014, 5)
- It is a question-led as opposed to a 'tool'-led approach as it easily accommodates any kind of data collection and analysis methods.
- Its primary purpose is to learn about the causal mechanisms that bring about an outcome - even if these do not evidence the contribution of the intervention - rather than 'proving' that an intervention has worked.

1. *Definition.* Process Tracing "attempts to identify the intervening causal processes – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable" (Barnett and Munslow 2014). The independent variable is a factor that causes a dependent variable. In other words, Process Tracing includes a consideration of different causal 'stories' or 'pathways' that all

have the potential to explain a specific outcome. It weighs the evidence for these different pathways to arrive at conclusions about which causal chains can be confirmed – or where several factors played a role, how much weight each of these carry.

2. *Current debates.* While currently there is significant interest in adapting Process Tracing – traditionally used in the social sciences to explain historical events - for impact evaluation (see Barnett and Munslow 2014), there are still few practical examples of how this has been attempted.
3. *The central role of description.* The practice of Process Tracing has occasionally been likened to the work of a detective rather than the work of an experimental scientist (using control groups) or econometrist (using frequencies of association of factors to establish cause and effect). Essentially, Process Tracing, by focussing on one case only, builds up different causal stories that might explain a given outcome, collects evidence on these different pathways and applies strengths testing to the evidence to decide which stories are best supported by evidence and which can be disconfirmed. Careful description has been identified as the key feature of Process Tracing (Collier 2011).
4. *Theory-testing Process Tracing.* The potential of Process Tracing for impact evaluation is considered to be most linked to theory-testing. Ideally, applying it for impact-focussed inquiry should both build up a descriptive sequence of small changes leading to an outcome, as well as help to test assumptions (articulated beforehand) of *how* the intervention contributed to producing the outcome (i.e. what was the ‘causal mechanism’ at work).

When to use it – when not to use it

When to use it	When to think twice about using it
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where sufficient time and human and financial resources are available for an evaluation that uses participatory iterations of analysis and discussion with stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there are significant time and resource constraints for an evaluation that involves stakeholders in participatory and iterative ways.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the evaluation outputs are intended for internal learning and understanding rather than primarily for donor accountability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the evaluation is primarily expected to demonstrate the success of an intervention, i.e. where there is overriding pressure to report on results to donors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the level of complexity involved is relatively high – for instance, for advocacy and campaigning interventions aiming for high-level policy and practice changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the level of complexity involved is relatively low – for instance, for WASH programming, where there are already many examples of interventions that have been shown to work across different contexts with some variation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there is strong motivation and space internally to deepen an understanding of how and why changes played out the way they did, for instance where a more quantitative effectiveness review has already taken place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there is little motivation or capacity among internal staff to reflect deeply on alternative explanations and to articulate assumptions about how an intervention was supposed to work in detail.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the intervention is at a relatively mature stage and at least some level of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the intervention to be evaluated is at early stages of producing tangible

meaningful change has materialised.

changes – i.e. where only low-level outcomes have been observed to date.

Complexity in a nutshell

Complex interventions have been likened to the task of raising a child: there is no ‘recipe’ or easy formula to maximise the likelihood of success; experience gained from one case is not easily applicable to other situations; every child is different and needs to be understood as a unique case; outcomes of raising a child are difficult to predict and there is disagreement between those involved about what desired and expected outcomes should even be.

No intervention is likely to be complex throughout and in all of its aspects – as such, it is more useful to think about complex *aspects* of any given intervention.

Potential Challenges with Process Tracing

Risks or potential challenges	Implication for evaluation if not managed	Risk management
Unreliable measures and bias to favour one hypothesis over others	Incorrect conclusions drawn about what best explains a given outcome	Triangulation (using multiple sources of information), complemented by good understanding and documentation of respective biases involved Involvement of external key informants at validation stage who have less of a personal stake in the effectiveness of a given intervention.
Time and practical constraints resulting in insufficient quantity and quality of data collected	Missing information would mean some causal stories might remain incomplete	Careful planning with internal team, including prioritising of stakeholders, questions and evidence. Going narrow and deep instead of shallow and broad.
Lack of evidence on prioritised outcomes or prioritised outcomes turn out not to have materialised to the extent initially presumed.	Weak or irrelevant causal stories emerging that offer little useful learning	More modest milestones could be agreed as a priority to investigate further, instead of longer-term outcomes It might be opportune to conduct Process Tracing as a follow up to a more traditional effectiveness evaluation.

Realist evaluation

1. *Features shared with Process Tracing.* Some elements of Process Tracing (iterative 'detective' logic, case-based and context-specific inquiry, focus on causal mechanisms) align closely with Realist Evaluation thinking. As mentioned before, while Process Tracing can also be used to *develop* theory, most evaluations are designed primarily to *test* existing theory (some of it context-specific, some of it taken from wider research), about the relationship between an intervention and its impact. The focus on theory testing aligns well with Realist Evaluation as ideally in Realist Evaluation a hypotheses on what drives change is identified prior to data collection, which can then be tested. For example, in a health programme, there could be a hypotheses about how the intervention interacts with *contextual factors* (e.g. awareness training with pregnant women on the dangers of smoking) to trigger a *mechanism* (e.g. discouragement from doing something they know harms the unborn baby) that then translates into an *effect* or *outcome* (pregnant women stop smoking). This is phrased as *Context-Mechanism-Outcome-Hypotheses* (see below).
2. *Realist Evaluation:* Realist Evaluation is a school of philosophy rather than a concrete approach. Realism posits that both the material world and social world, including social constructs (such as gender), exert very real effects, which makes them both real. For evaluation, this implies that there can never be final proof of what has led to a change, but that we can work towards a better understanding of the world (Westhorpe 2014).
3. *Added features of Realist Evaluation: the central role of context.* The fundamental assumption of Realist approaches is that nothing works everywhere for everyone. In other words, context determines programme outcomes. Famously, and in juxtaposition to the existing emphasis by some donors and development agencies on finding out "what works", realist approaches phrase the question as: "*How does this work for whom in what circumstances?*".
4. *Focus of Realist Evaluation: causal mechanisms.* In Realist Evaluation, this is perhaps one of the most central concepts. According to Realist Evaluation, these mechanisms will only be triggered ("fired") when the circumstances are right. Using the example of local elites who get discouraged from unfairly influencing decisions affecting the community if they find themselves under greater scrutiny of better informed community members, this mechanism (the discouragement) only works if there is a sufficiently large mass of people holding them accountable, presumably.
5. *Focus of Realist Evaluation: focus on individuals' reasoning.* Accordingly, a programme possesses causal powers ("firing power") by providing a resource, an opportunity or a restraint to change the reasoning of programme participants. In other words, Realist Evaluation tends to be more concerned with psychological and motivational responses leading to behaviour change. The implication for evaluators is that they need to identify *what* resources, opportunities or constraints were provided by the programme *to whom* and *what reasoning* was prompted in response, generating *what changes in behaviour*, generating *what outcomes*. The interaction between what the programme provides and what decision-making it triggers in target groups causes an outcome (this is the 'causal mechanism').
6. Based on our experience with Christian Aid in Bangladesh, we would recommend Realist Evaluation primarily for community-level work, where the theory - the justification for and targeting of different groups through different measures under the same intervention - is well developed and understood from the beginning. Where there is no strong 'Theory of

Change' that connects programme measures with different target groups in different contexts, then this cannot be tested by Realist Evaluation.

Why combine the two approaches

1. *Utility and user focus.* Process Tracing can be carried out without an explicit Realist element, however, adding a Realist focus can strengthen the overall utility of the evaluation. The reason for this is that Process Tracing uses a wider lens to look at why something happened, which could include explanations that might dwarf the importance of the intervention that is being reviewed, and therefore may provide a smaller number of actionable lessons for the implementing agency. Realist Evaluation on the other hand asks very specific questions about specific target groups and what works for them and why. While both approaches have an overlapping concept of what constitutes 'causal mechanisms' and both draw on programme and implementation theory as a foundation for their inquiry, Process Tracing tends to focus on careful description and testing of causal stories, while Realist Evaluation hones in on specific learning-focussed questions phrased as Context-Mechanism-Outcome-Hypotheses.
2. *Increasing flexibility of evaluation approach:* Programming focussed on individual level changes lends itself more strongly to Realist inquiry. Where an evaluation will require considerations on the complexity of the overall intervention packages as well as learning about specific mechanisms, combining the two approaches seems to be most fruitful – offering an overall assessment of Christian Aid's contribution and effectiveness as well as some targeted key learning. Each best copes with different levels of complexity – Process Tracing allows for an elaboration of assumptions, feedback loops, influencing variables and the understanding of different configurations of factors while Realist Evaluation, through its focus on mechanisms, can appear more suited to less complex settings.
3. *Shared preparatory steps make for little duplication in planning.* Since many aspects are shared by both approaches – Theory of Change as a starting point, flexibility in terms of methods and data sources, focus on careful documentation and transparency, single case focus – combining both approaches could easily bring added value.

	Process Tracing	Realist Evaluation
<i>What type of evidence will be generated?</i>	Insights into the relative weight of evidence for causal explanations of outcomes, including an overall verdict of how significant Christian Aid's contribution to desired outcomes has been.	Specific learning on causal mechanisms and the conditions under which they operate most effectively.
<i>Overarching question these approaches are answering</i>	"What role did the portfolio play in bringing about the expected outcomes vis-à-vis other possible factors?"	"What has worked for whom when and how?"

Detailed steps for Process Tracing (with realist evaluation)

Steps	Activities	Participation of Christian Aid staff
1	<p>Setting the theoretical framework <i>This step will unpack the 'black box' of what happens between the project and programme activities and expected (or unexpected) changes. It is recommended to start steps 1 -5 before field visits and data collection are planned in detail.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconstruct relevant elements of Theory of Change involving programme team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ What was intervention trying to achieve (outcomes)? ➔ How (strategy and activities)? ➔ How will it contribute to these changes (key assumptions)? ➔ Who are relevant actors and drivers of change? <p>Realist Evaluation: <i>This will demand an inquiry into how the programme intended to change the internal reasoning- the thinking or attitudes - of its stakeholders to encourage, discourage or enable them to change their behaviour. In other words, what were the resources, opportunities, and/or constraints provided to stakeholders through the intervention).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elaborate the framework for testable realist hypotheses on how the (intervention) context interacts with the mechanism to produce an outcome (Context-Mechanism-Outcome-Hypothesis or CMO-Hypothesis). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Discuss: For whom will the basic programme theory work and not work and why? In what contexts will the programme theory work and not work and why? What are the expected mechanisms and in what contexts are they expected to work, and how? ➔ The starting point for thinking about this could be to look at where interventions were successful and compare them to where they were not successful (i.e. in different localities or with different groups). 	<p>Close involvement of Christian Aid staff who will co-construct the theoretical framework, with the evaluator facilitating and steering the process</p>
2	<p>Appraisal of implementation process <i>In order to establish a plausible causal story, there needs to be evidence that the intervention was carried out to a sufficient degree of quality and scope.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess and document what was actually done under the intervention to achieve the selected target outcomes • Including review of the quality of partnership agreements <p>Realist Evaluation: <i>This will require evidence of what was done to encourage, discourage and/or enable participants to change their reasoning and their subsequent behaviours or actions.</i></p>	<p>Christian Aid staff to validate existing information, prioritise source documents where time constraints, providing insights on what actually happened, going beyond what has been reported and documented</p>

3	<p>Prioritising the key dependent variables (“priority outcomes”) <i>This step will further delimit the scope of the inquiry and allow for a targeted approach. Outcomes to be focussed on might be set at different levels (e.g. medium-term to longer-term).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key intermediate or final outcomes considered to be the most significant ones, i.e. realistic and useful for learning 	Christian Aid staff to participate in facilitated discussion on this
4	<p>Identify and evidence the extent to which these outcomes and any unintended outcomes have materialised <i>This will include a look at whether/ how behaviour changed as a result of the intervention and what followed from this.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This step will require a mix of document and internal M&E data review and consultations with internal – and where appropriate external – stakeholders 	Little participation needed in most cases.
5	<p>Process induction and operationalisation <i>This step will guide decisions about data sources and concrete questions to be asked during field work. It will also establish a framework to be applied later on during testing of the strength of evidence.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a causal story for each possible explanation – the intervention being one of them – by means of a detailed sequence of potential processes and mechanisms. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ This might draw on tools such as the ‘Impact Grid’¹⁰ to help get thinking started. • Operationalisation: develop some specific indicators (what would changes look like?). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ What evidence should we expect to see if part of the causal mechanism exists? ➔ What counts as evidence for an alternative hypothesis? ➔ What can we conclude when the predicted evidence is not found?¹¹ 	Staff to provide a sounding board for and insights into suggested causal stories and how to operationalise them.

¹⁰ The impact grid is a qualitative data collection and analysis method that enables partners and beneficiary groups to identify and articulate what difference the interventions of the project/programme have made to them. The participants identify *stories of change* - brief examples of the knowledge, skills, confidence etc they have gained, and what they have done as a result. These stories can be positive or negative- it is the respondent who makes this judgement. The participants then place the stories on a grid, depending on the extent to which they believe the project/ programme/ intervention contributed to this change. The stories are then analysed to help give an indication of the project/ programme's outcomes and impact and how strongly these can be attributed to the interventions. The position of the examples on the grid can also be analysed to see what patterns emerge (e.g. differences in men's and women's stories, differences in contribution of different aspects of an intervention). An additional benefit is that the grid can help to identify stories that can be further developed into case studies.

¹¹ See reference Punton, M & Welle, K. ‘Straws-in-the-wind, Hoops and Smoking Guns: What can Process Tracing Offer to Impact Evaluation?’ IDS CDI Practice Paper, No. 10, 2015 for further information on different types of evidence tests in Process Tracing.

	<p>Realist evaluation: <i>This step will involve elaborating hypotheses about what mechanisms operated in which context to produce what outcomes (Context-Mechanism-Outcome / CMO-Hypotheses). This line of inquiry will not be pursued for the entire causal chain; the focus will be on main mechanisms defined through discussions with the team.</i></p>	
6	<p>Refine data collection tools <i>This is based on the specific direction of enquiry and mapping of evidence needed. Data can be of quantitative or qualitative nature and be collected and analysed in any way appropriate.</i></p>	Little participation needed in most cases.
7	<p>Field work and primary data collection with key informants and stakeholders <i>This step will generate the bulk of the data and will involve some triangulation of data gathered through document review and internal discussions.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use for example and impact grid exercise and/ or semi-structured interviews, timelines exercises • Gather required data to assess the extent to which explanations are supported or not supported. 	Little participation needed in most cases, except where staff are key informants.
8	<p>Building causal stories: first assessment of strength of each causal story based on evidence <i>This can be a quick assessment conducted by the evaluators to pursue further data collection in areas where evidence is weak and/or to adjust the focus of enquiry (e.g. where initial data shows that some hypothesised causal factors have indeed not played a big role in bringing about the outcome).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive at short-list of explanations and draw conclusions on relative contributions. • Identify weaker areas of evidence and prioritise these when gathering more evidence. • The question applied for each causal link in the causal story could be: <i>“Is the evidence available necessary and/or sufficient for confirming or rejecting the hypothesis?”</i> 	Little participation needed in most cases
9	<p>Synthesis of evidence on causal story for each outcome and drawing out learning o mechanisms <i>This step will piece together the different causal stories to arrive at an understanding of what the contribution to impact of the intervention has been to date. Different tools could be used for this, for instance, a matrix to demonstrate the extent of achievement of an outcome and contribution.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate contribution scores or similar measure of synthesis <p>Presentation of causal stories and initial analysis to team/validation workshop. <i>Discussions with the team will contextualise the evidence gathered in the field by adding insights on how conclusive the evidence is in some cases.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss findings and make sense of them 	Active participation of staff required at this validation stage

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw out learning from Realist enquiry and to what extent lessons are context-specific or generalizable • Ensure process has been well understood by team and discuss how both the findings of the approach and the approach itself could feed into future planning or M&E 	
10	<p>Narrative analytical report and documentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short narrative report on evaluation findings and results, including outputs of the methodologies and tools used in the evaluation, including Stories of Change where appropriate • Suggested structure for Process Tracing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Select priority outcomes → Lay out causal stories for Outcome 1 → Describe evidence/data sources → Reconstruct to what extent each causal story can be confirmed and rejected → Conclusion on what causal chain most likely led to the outcome and add contribution score → <i>Repeat process with other outcomes</i> → Conclusions 	Little participation needed in most cases

A Practical Example

How the analysis was applied and documented: Evaluation of Christian Aid Bangladesh’s use of HAP (Humanitarian Accountability Partnership)

Weighing the evidence

For each of three identified priority outcomes (mostly relating to improved governance and empowerment of communities), the evaluators elaborated different possible explanations, of which Christian Aid’s accountability mechanisms were one.

Example outcome: **Communities - particularly women - are enabled to articulate rights and claim entitlements from duty bearers.**

Example hypothesis: **Experiencing accountable relationships with the partner NGO using HAP encourages community members to also seek out accountability with other duty-bearers at local and higher levels.**

Priority outcome	Causal Links for Causal Story	Evidence	Is the evidence necessary and/or sufficient to confirm the link?
<i>Communities - particularly women - are enabled to articulate rights and claim entitlements from duty bearers.</i>	Through holding community consultations and practicing the transparent sharing of information with communities and local decision-makers, the partner NGOs have facilitated greater exposure of the majority of villagers to local government interactions than before	Value of everybody attending community consultations as departure from common practice mentioned in more than half of all Focus Group Discussions	Neither necessary nor sufficient to confirm link
	Greater exposure to interacting with local government leads to greater confidence of community members to approach decision-makers on other issues.	Focus Group Discussions delivered examples of emerging interactions with government but attributes all of these changes to group momentum and not to greater exposure	Sufficient to disconfirm link

The reason for the way the evidence on the first link was weighted (“neither necessary nor sufficient to confirm link”): It is not *sufficient* to confidently confirm the link because the available evidence does not rule out alternative factors. This is also known as ‘low uniqueness’. The evidence is not *necessary* to confirm the link as this link could have been confirmed through other types or sources of evidence than the Focus Group Discussions, for instance, by local government confirming increased exposure to villagers.

The reason for the second link’s weighting of evidence (“sufficient to disconfirm link”) was that open-ended questions were asked in the Focus Group Discussions to establish why particularly women felt more confident about approaching decision-makers after the intervention. What all of the Focus Groups confirmed was that it was enhanced knowledge or rights, livelihoods skills obtained and group mobilisation that made them speak up – not prior exposure to their interlocutors through accountability mechanisms.

It needs to be stressed that the process of weighing evidence should ideally be thought through before data collection – to think about appropriate and strong sources of data. Working out what the evidence means is best done in a group of people who bring appropriate contextual knowledge to judge how strong a piece of evidence really is.

Example for a documentation and analysis grid for an added Realist Evaluation element (optional)

The evaluation combined an element of Realist Evaluation with Process Tracing, attempting to explicitly draw out and test causal mechanisms – interactions of the context with opportunities, constraints or resources provided by the intervention - emerging alongside the prioritised outcomes. The following is an example of a table that structures these Context-Mechanism-Outcome-Hypotheses. A few of these hypotheses were prioritised for testing as part of Process Tracing.

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Reason
<i>e.g. Elected leaders</i>	<i>Are discouraged (constraints imposed by intervention)</i>	<i>From weighing in unfairly on decisions affecting communities</i>	<i>Because they are under greater scrutiny of the better informed and confident villagers</i>

On the use of contribution scores

A contribution score can be used to visualise and rate an intervention’s contribution to the prioritised outcome. The wording and ‘intervals’ for this can be decided by the evaluator in discussions with Christian Aid staff to arrive at a scale that is meaningful and useful in a given context. The following is an example from the Bangladesh evaluation.

Significant contribution	HAP was the primary factor in bringing about a change in attitudes, knowledge and actions of the target stakeholder group. Without HAP, the change would not have been observed.
Some contribution	HAP was among the important factors for bringing about a change in attitudes, knowledge and actions of the target stakeholder group. Without HAP, the change may not have occurred in the same way.
Small contribution	HAP was a relatively minor factor in bringing about changes in attitudes, knowledge and actions of the target stakeholder group. Without HAP, the change is likely to have occurred but to have looked differently.
No contribution	HAP was no factor in bringing about changes in attitudes, knowledge and actions of the target stakeholder group. Without HAP, the change is likely to have occurred in the same way.

What findings from the Bangladesh evaluation were unique to Process Tracing?

Similar to other theory-based methods to evaluation, Process Tracing delivers a very detail-oriented investigation of alternative explanations as well as the intervention as an explanatory factor. Instead of delivering an implementation-focussed verdict on effectiveness, it contextualises an intervention's influence in this way. Subjecting each causal link and each piece of evidence to testing and increased scrutiny enhances the credibility of the overall explanation. Particularly the formal evidence testing element and accompanying documentation introduce an element of transparency and greater inter-subjectivity that sceptics of qualitative evaluation may often find lacking in the real-life application of methods otherwise. While similar findings would have been reached using other approaches, the extent of detail dedicated to a limited number of selected key outcomes and competing explanations of this, as well as careful evidencing of each link, is unique to Process Tracing.

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