

# Humanitarian Accountability

A brief exploration.....

4<sup>th</sup> November 2004

....

“The first thing to know  
is to know that I do not know”

*Sufi Sultan*

# Session Objective

- to initiate participants' thinking on issues around humanitarian accountability.

# Definitions of Accountability

- **“in a position where people have the right to criticise you or ask you why something happened.” (Macmillian Dictionary)**

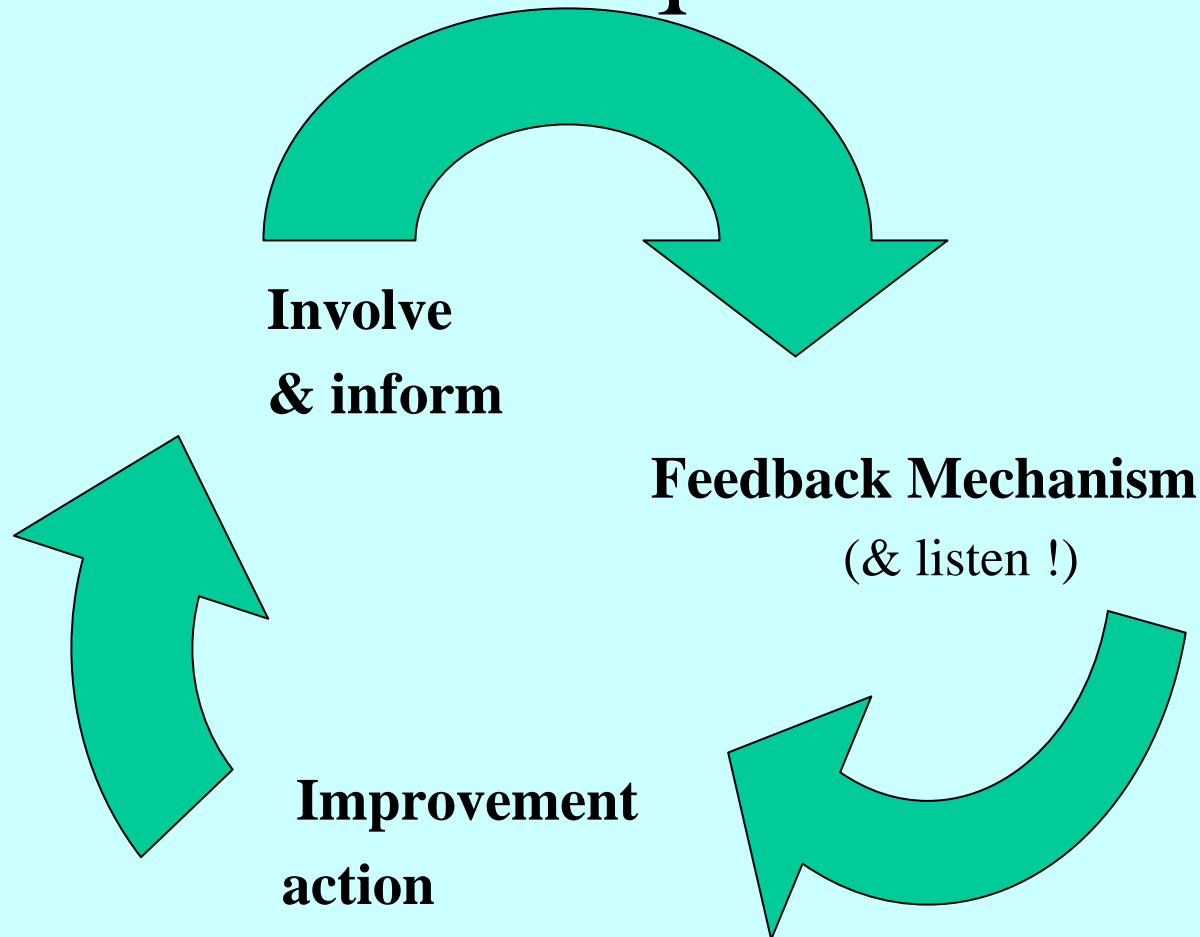
**Two sets of principles and mechanisms.....**

- **Those by which individuals, organisations and states account for their actions and are held responsible for them.**
- **Those by which individuals, organisations and states may safely and legitimately report concerns, complaints, and abuses, and get redress where appropriate.**

# Is anyone accountable?

- Most professions have some mechanism for being accountable, whether to consumers, shareholders, general public, authorities...
- Are you a professional?
- Are you accountable?

# Basic Requirements



# Accountability to disaster affected people

- 1994-Rwandan refugees crisis
- Growth of humanitarian action
- Critical evaluations reports
- 2002- NGO and UN staff abusing beneficiaries in Sierra Leone.

# Why the need for accountability?

- Humanitarian actors exercise real power over crises affected people.
- Quality of humanitarian assistance varies greatly
- Humanitarian coordination is often poor
- Humanitarian workers may even harm people or reduce their dignity, but do so with impunity and without commitment to improve themselves.
- We don't always do what we say.



# Components of Humanitarian Accountability

- ❑ Obligation to involve and consult
- ❑ Obligation to inform
- ❑ Obligation to listen
- ❑ Obligations to respond and report back.

# Experiences of being accountable

In groups, discuss EITHER:

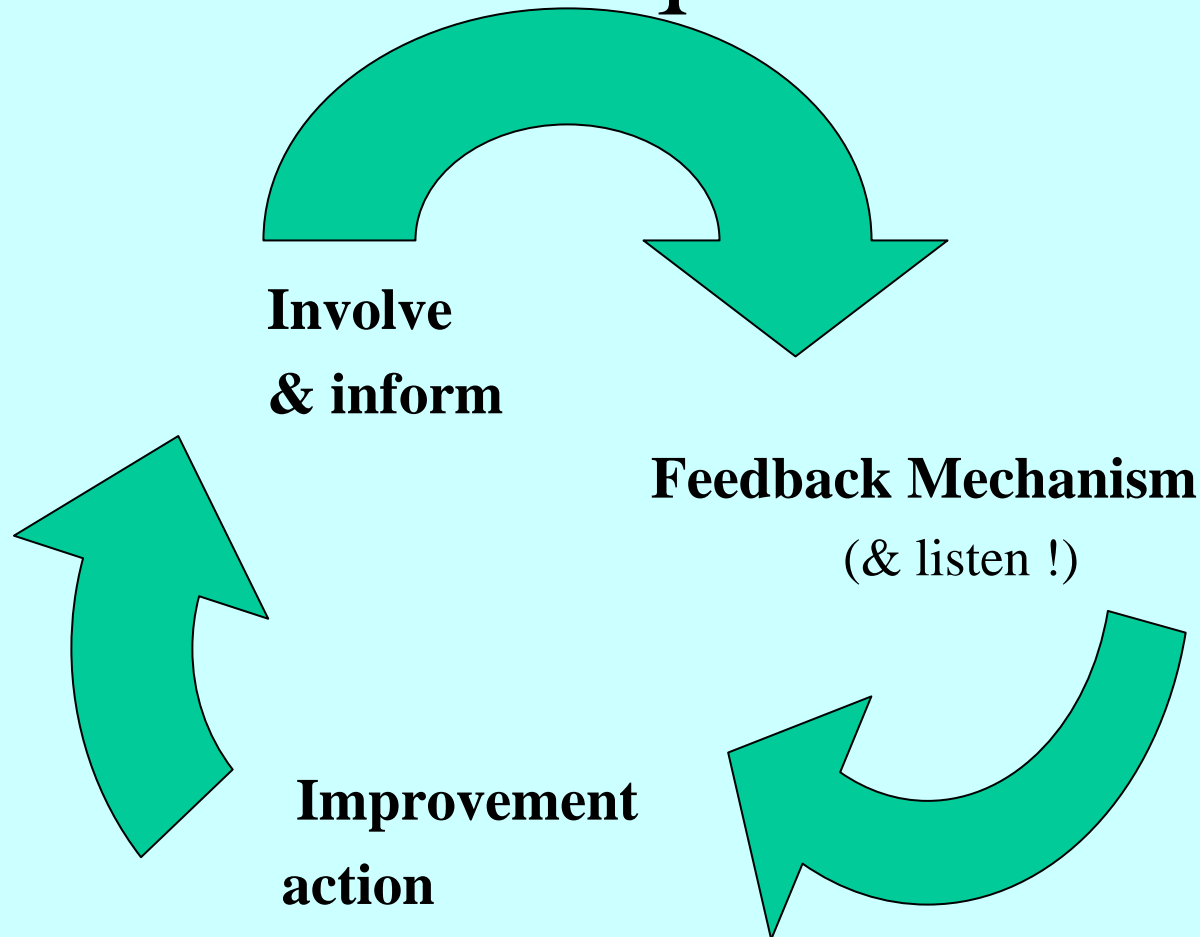
a) “your experiences of the worst shelter project or activity you have seen or read about.

**or**

b) Your experiences of the best”.

Note down what process led to this. *Focus on your own team's actions, not external influences.*

# Basic Requirements



- Do people have information
- Do people have chance to contribute to processes
- Do people have opportunity to feedback
- Do you listen and make changes.
- Do we report back to people.

# What can we do to become more accountable?

- Recognise dynamics of power and influence
- Recognise responsibilities and obligations
- Use established guidelines, codes or principles to help guide your work.
- Build a culture of individual responsibility.
- Ensure crises affected people have a voice that is listened to.
- Develop culture of respect for individuals, their rights and their dignity

# Principles of Accountability

- Respect and promote the rights of beneficiaries
- Members state the standards applied in their humanitarian assistance work
- Inform beneficiaries about the standards and their right to participate
- Involve beneficiaries in project planning, implementation, evaluation and reporting
- Demonstrate compliance with the standards applied in humanitarian assistance work through monitoring and reporting
- Enable all beneficiaries and staff to report any complaints and to seek redress safely
- Implement these principles when working through partner agencies

# Feedback and suggestions please

- to initiate participants' thinking on issues around humanitarian accountability.