Balancing accountabilities and ethics in humanitarian evaluation

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In this presentation
1) Introducing different accountabilities and ethics dimensions in humanitarian evaluation
2) Reflect on whether there is dichotomy between accountability and ethics in HE
3) What can evaluators do
accountabilities – necessarily plural!

, including evaluation to donors. What about accountability to so called beneficiaries? Can HE genuinely reconcile these 2. If yes How? Considering issues of humanitarian principles, access issues;

On accountabilities
Public funding allocated to respond to crises brings multiple accountability requirements including to:

• Funders (and taxpayers)
• Crisis affected populations / beneficiaries

“Upward” accountability often dominates

Can EHA genuinely reconcile the two accountabilities?
Reconciling “upward” and “forward” accountabilities in Humanitarian Action considering:

a) Humanitarian principles
b) Access issues
Evaluation at any cost? Conducting evaluations in humanitarian contexts can often expose people (eval staff, aid workers and beneficiaries) to risk.

massive power differential: limited info about situation, inputs or results (and that info often controlled by the implementing agency themselves); danger to life and livelihoods

Decisions can impact on lives and livelihood
Dichotomy between accountability and ethics is a false one.

Doing evaluation badly can be unethical

A poor quality evaluation that generate poor quality evidence that doesn’t contribute to inform those decisions on whether and how best achieve humanitarian outcomes using scarce resource available—is an evaluation that is compromised not only from a quality perspective, but also from an ethical one.

Not commissioning and using evaluation, or doing badly, is unethical (to donor public; to future populations who might receive unfit goods / approaches; according to the humanitarian imperative of ‘presence’ – being there with and not letting people be forgotten)

So –

Need to design right, for methodological accuracy and to ensure that the evaluation does not further hide information

Need to:
A) Commission, design, facilitate, carry out EHA that use credible and high quality processes to generate credible and high quality evidence (e.g. WFP EQAS; UNICEF GEROS quality of evidence work by ALNAP)
B) Supporting uptake and use of evaluation results

Even if we strive to ensure high quality and credible evidence, there are remaining issues –

There will still be ethical balance to be struck around for example:

Confidentiality
Sensitivity of (primary) data gathering on issues of MPHSS / SGBV
e.g. upward accountability eval question differ from AAP-oriented eval questions

don’t try to be everything to everybody with a single evaluation exercise ..
Thank you

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