

EVALUATION OF IOM ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS

This evaluation brief presents a summary of the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations, as identified by the evaluator(s) for use by key stakeholders, including internally by IOM staff and externally by project partners. More details can be found in the full evaluation report.

Evaluation type:	Central Evaluation
Evaluator(s):	Melissa Andrade Costa (Lead eval.) Mehret Habte (Ethiopia case study)
Field visit dates:	February-March 2024 (Ethiopia) March 2024 (Türkiye)
Final report date:	December 2024
Commissioned and managed by:	IOM Central Evaluation Division

Evaluation objective: To evaluate IOM strategic, institutional and operational approach to AAP, and to provide recommendations and lessons learned on how to further streamline, raise awareness and advocate for AAP principles and commitments for the populations and communities IOM serves.

Evaluation criteria: Relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability (with the impact criterion covered only to inform possible future impact assessments).

Evaluation methodology: An analysis of qualitative data gathered through key informant Interviews, focus group discussions and an online survey, in addition to a document review. The findings reflect the perceptions of informed individuals (mainly IOM staff) rather than a technical assessment of AAP activities.

BACKGROUND

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) is defined by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee as “an active commitment to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people humanitarian organizations seek to assist”. Since the 1990s, the AAP agenda has significantly expanded within the humanitarian response field.

In 2020, IOM introduced the AAP Framework, which became a mandatory instruction (IN/285) in September 2021, with the purpose of helping the Organization “ensure quality and responsive programming in line with the evolving needs of beneficiaries, affected populations and communities, and enforce the Organization’s zero tolerance against sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and other misconduct.” The commitments in the AAP Framework were developed in line with the IASC commitments to AAP and adapted to meet the operational realities faced by IOM.

A central AAP Unit located in IOM Headquarters is responsible for the overall coordination of AAP in IOM and for monitoring AAP activities globally. Their activities include developing normative guidance, creating toolkits, conducting training sessions, providing technical support, disseminating information, managing knowledge, and establishing an internal AAP community of practice.

Project information:

Geographical coverage:	Global (with case studies on Ethiopia and Türkiye)
Project type:	IOM policy on AAP
Project period:	From 2020 onwards (introduction of IOM AAP Framework)

Over the years, AAP has become a more common feature of IOM interventions, especially in the context of emergencies. Institutional indicators monitoring AAP activities have recorded substantial growth since their inception, with perceived growing understanding and acceptance of AAP principles and concepts among staff.

However, [an assessment conducted in 2023 by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network \(MOPAN\)](#) concluded that IOM had not yet been able to consistently incorporate AAP across all its programmes, and had not invested adequately in AAP, considering the scale of its operations.

IOM, through its Central Evaluation Division, decided to carry out the evaluation of its efforts and accomplishments in the area of AAP to follow-up on the MOPAN 2023 assessment and produce specific recommendations for ensuring that AAP commitments are fulfilled.

KEY FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation found that the IOM AAP Framework is highly relevant, generally coherent, and solidly centered around Instruction 285. However, its focus on emergency operations leaves many unclear on the mandatory nature of AAP in non-emergency contexts.

Resources allocated to central AAP functions were found to be inadequate. The AAP Coordination Unit was largely funded with earmarked funds and staffed by ungraded staff or consultants. Informants indicated that more practical resources and hands-on support are needed for effective and efficient AAP implementation at the field level.

The evaluation also found that no formal strategy, plan, or monitoring and evaluation framework to guide the implementation of AAP from a central level were in place. AAP has been monitored through a collection of indicators included in the IOM Strategic Result Framework and its related plan. These indicators have recorded significant growth in recent years, but they are not assessed against clear targets. They focus on outputs and very broadly defined outcomes, and they do not collectively constitute a robust policy monitoring framework. There is clear progress in the implementation of AAP within IOM, but any claim of “AAP mainstreaming” within the Organization cannot be reasonably demonstrated.

At a decentralized level, the evaluators found examples of IOM being able to set up articulated systems and initiatives that promote AAP, with tangible effects on operations. However, sustaining and scaling up these initiatives is challenging. AAP implementation at the level of IOM country offices is predominantly undertaken in the context of specific projects or thematic areas. This may often lead to a “fragmented approach” where solutions and activities implemented in one area are not necessarily replicated or extended to other relevant ones.

Different gaps that reduce the effectiveness and efficiency of activities promoting AAP at a decentralized level were identified. These include a lack of full integration of AAP into the IOM project cycle, a lack of standard solutions and technical resources for the development and management of complaint and feedback mechanism (CFM) systems, a lack of technical resources and support to make full use of data gathered from affected people, and a lack of capacity to engage with

other actors to promote “collective accountability”.

In conclusion, the evaluation largely confirms the findings from the 2023 MOPAN assessment, by which IOM has not yet been able to consistently incorporate AAP across all its programs and did not invest adequately in AAP, considering the scale of its operations.

GOOD PRACTICES

The case of IOM Ethiopia stood out as an important attempt at “institutionalizing” AAP in the country office structure, creating a central coordination center for all AAP activities, with the aim of reducing “fragmentation”, and a network of focal persons with AAP responsibilities. Notably, this country office also established a mechanism to fund AAP activities from all ongoing projects.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation put forward nine recommendations with suggested activities. These have been consolidated into the following five key recommendations:

1. Clarify that the scope and applicability of AAP extends beyond emergency response operations, covering the full spectrum of IOM interventions where affected people are directly or indirectly assisted.
2. Develop an operational strategy for AAP, to be negotiated at the highest leadership level, as well as a dedicated framework to monitor and evaluate implementation, ensuring also that AAP activities enjoy adequate visibility, both internal and external communications.
3. Strengthen central AAP functions and proactively support country offices in developing office-wide approaches to AAP implementation and funding, reducing fragmentation.
4. Increase training opportunities and update capacity-building material with increased focus on the development and dissemination of practical AAP implementation tools.
5. Establish minimum standards for complaint and feedback mechanisms and work towards standard solutions.