



# CAPISALITATION REPORT

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION  
AGAINST HUNGER'S OPERATIONAL  
HUMANITARIAN ACCESS METHODOLOGY

MARCH 2022- FEBRUARY 2023

A PROJECT FUNDED BY



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) supported the one-year Action Against Hunger Operational Humanitarian Access Project focused on the capacity building of its field teams. The project started on 1st March 2022 and was implemented by its three operational headquarters: Acción contra el Hambre Spain, Action Against Hunger USA & Action contre la Faim France. The project was conducted by the Access experts of each headquarter, Maria Romero Pardo (Spain), Patrick Guga (USA) and Regis Billaudel (France) with the support of Camille Raga-Clemenceau (Internship) & Laure Pele (Finance follow-up).

The contents of this report are derived from the project implementation and include a comprehensive overview of the processes involved, along with a detailed account of the successes and challenges encountered. It

is intended for other humanitarian agencies to share learning in this area.

By 2021, Action Against Hunger Access & Security experts had developed the Operational Humanitarian Access Methodology (OHAM), including presentations, exercises, templates and trainings.

This methodology aims to help teams to classify access obstacles according to six groups and to follow a six-step approach rooted upon two central pillars of (1) acceptance and dialogue & (2) interaction with stakeholders.

The project aimed to train, sensitise and implement the Operational Humanitarian Access Methodology within the majority of the Action Against Hunger network country offices worldwide.

The project produced three results:

### Result #1

Frontline staff from the field coordination level and the Access and Security department were trained in three 4-day workshops (Nairobi, Amman and Dakar), focusing on the application of the methodology to become “Access Champions”. The workshop participants implemented the methodology in their country offices following the training.

### Result # 2

Access experts were deployed for short missions in 10 countries to sensitise and train staff and implement the methodology.

### Result #3

The compilation of this comprehensive Capitalisation report, outlining lessons learned, success stories, recommendations and achievements.

The country teams understand that access is not an objective in itself; rather, it is a prerequisite condition upon which assistance can be delivered to populations in need. The Field Coordinator remains the conductor of the access capacity of the team in the field. Through this role, they can identify obstacles and their root causes. Our experiences highlighted improvements in their ability

to prepare and conduct fruitful dialogues and negotiations. However, the challenge remains in defining clear objectives and actions to be implemented. Action Against Hunger should maintain ongoing support to the field whilst also building the capacity of our leaders at the country coordination level to effectively manage the access challenges their teams face.

**“This report is dedicated to all humanitarian workers who are victims of violence in the course of their work”**

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Humanitarian crises are becoming progressively more protracted and more complex. This affects programme access and makes aid delivery increasingly dangerous. ACAPS has reported that in the first half of 2022, access indicators including 'environmental constraints', 'restriction and obstruction to services and assistance' and 'restriction of movements within the country' were the most commonly cited challenges. As a result of access constraints, crisis-affected populations in more than 60 countries are not receiving the humanitarian assistance they need. In addition, ACAPS' Humanitarian Access Overview report from December 2022 suggests that free access has deteriorated in 24 countries and access to populations in need remained an increasing concern in most countries where Action Against Hunger is intervening.

Action Against Hunger has recently identified specific countries affected by new types of conflicts, notably in the Sahel and Lake Chad regions. In these countries, the organisation has had to shift from structural support to emergency response and thus has had to reassess its level of acceptance to operate within these environments. Indeed, some emerging actors in the conflict are openly hostile to so-called 'humanitarian influence' and directly target NGO workers (e.g., IS and Al Qaeda). In light of this context change, Action Against Hunger teams have reviewed their usual *modus operandi* and taken steps to update it.

Since the World Humanitarian Summit (2016 in Istanbul), the humanitarian landscape has evolved and as such, many policy frameworks and strategies exist to respond

to contemporary challenges. One example of this is the implementation of the Triple Nexus, drawing together humanitarian, development and peace actors to operate more holistically. Practically this presents a challenge, specifically in very hard-to-reach field areas and can make the delivery of emergency lifesaving activities slower. Further to this, some Non-State Armed Groups (Non-State Armed Groups) are targeting NGOs, which seriously encroaches on humanitarian space and jeopardises free access to populations in need, especially in areas where these groups are operating. This deterioration is occurring in the Sahel and other regions, such as the coastal countries of West Africa. According to Access & Security experts, this phenomenon will likely affect other countries in the coming years.

Recently, the close monitoring of contexts where Action Against Hunger implements programmes has highlighted an increase in barriers to access affected populations. As a result, two and a half years ago, the organisation decided to recruit access experts and create Access and Security units to address these. These units aimed to better understand the contexts in which the organisation operates, the various obstacles that field teams might encounter, and the possible actions to gain, improve or maintain access. Access & Security experts observed that field teams frequently complained about access issues or constraints without identifying the true roots of these obstacles. Therefore, it was recognised that it was important to refine internal communications and develop a common organisational vocabulary.

## 2. A NEED FOR A STRUCTURED, OPERATIONAL APPROACH

### 2.1 THE GENESIS

The first observation from Access & Security experts at the headquarter level was that access is part of the organisation's DNA. From the early days of Action Against Hunger, the founding members stated in their charter that "Action Against Hunger demands free and direct access to the victims". Since 1979, Action Against Hunger teams have constantly developed their capacity to fulfil the mission of the organisation. However, changes in humanitarian contexts and the arrival of new technologies have brought new challenges to the teams. Increasing volumes of activity and the growing, time-consuming and administrative demands of the work can often put Action Against Hunger frontliner teams in challenging positions and distract them from their primary roles.

Addressing this, the Access & Security experts set about developing a simple methodology enabling teams to differentiate between real access obstacles and regular work burdens. Firstly, it aimed to raise awareness of what humanitarian access means within the organisation itself. It created a culture of access and helped teams better analyse what prevents aid from being delivered. It then enabled them to identify the actions to implement to achieve their assistance objectives. Finally, it consisted of a series of exercises that the teams could carry out to identify solutions independently. In doing so, it keeps the field coordinator as a leader in this matter.

### 2.2 A STRUCTURED METHODOLOGY

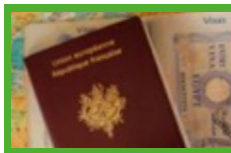
Thus, in 2021, the Network Access and Security Unit developed an Operational Humanitarian Access Methodology (OHAM)

alongside a range of tools to be used at base level, collectively contributing to improved country-level access capacity.

#### THE OPERATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ACCESS METHODOLOGY PROCESS



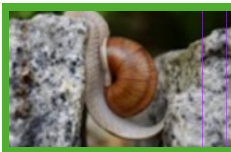
## A structured methodology through a six-step approach enables the identification of corrective actions to improve access.



**BUREAUCRATIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE OBSTACLES**



**ONGOING BATTLES AND MILITARY OPERATIONS**



**CLIMATE, TOPOGRAPHY OR LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE**



**ATTACKS ON HUMANITARIAN PERSONNEL, ASSETS AND FACILITIES**



**DIVERSION OF AID OR INTERFERENCE**



**DENIAL OF NEEDS**

## A methodology based on the identification and classification of six groups of access obstacles that the teams are facing.

### 2.3 A FRONTLINER EMPOWERMENT APPROACH

It is important to recognise Action Against Hunger teams' successes in delivering aid in recent years. However, Access & Security experts identified the need for the teams to work in a more structured approach in relation to humanitarian access issues.

It was, therefore, decided to move away from an approach based on writing policies and guidelines. Instead, the experts focused on proposing a structured methodology that was quickly implemented by the frontliner team themselves.

The project aimed to disseminate the methodology and train staff to apply each of the six steps with the Security, Safety and Access department responsible for supporting this process.

The methodology enables teams to link each access obstacle to one of the pre-identified categories of obstacles. Thus, the notion of "access problems" will no longer be presented generically by the teams, and it will be easier to identify concrete actions to be implemented. With these classifications, teams have to identify the obstacle and the

person or department that can help remove this obstacle within the organisation. The idea is therefore, to plant a seed so that as soon as an access problem is encountered, a category of obstacle comes to mind. All the steps that follow help to refine the analysis and develop the skills of each participant. If the classification of the obstacle is understood, the methodology then consists of several key themes and exercises, which lead to the creation of an action plan for

the teams to overcome it. When working on access, notions of acceptance, dialogue and negotiation need to be taken into account, alongside the ability to develop maps to present geo-localisation obstacle illustrations, which can become very useful in some contexts for presentations and ongoing decisionmaking. Applying the six steps within the methodology allows teams to find their own solutions to access problems.

## 2.4 A CROSSCUTTING APPROACH

The methodology and the project have enabled the integration of access as a crosscutting approach by creating synergies and bridging fundamental dynamics by sharing experiences and views across different departments.

The awareness-raising session includes all staff, which is the initial step in the crosscutting approach. Programme managers and heads of support departments are invited to contribute throughout the six steps. Depending on the type of obstacle identified, when designing action plans, for example, specific actions will involve several departments. For instance:

- When confronted with Obstacle #1 (administrative obstacles), it can primarily concern and require coordination and administrative staff action.
- When confronted with Obstacle #2, it will most likely lead to interventions, anticipation and coordination between the logistics teams and technical/programs departments.

- Obstacle #3 also concerns the coordination level and can sometimes implicate the country-level teams.
- On the other hand, Obstacles #4 and #5 can require coordinated actions between the Security teams and the Field Coordinator, as the respect for the security framework is essential, considering the teams' lives might be at risk.
- Obstacle #6 will generally implicate the coordination-level teams and, when needed, be supported by the advocacy teams. This inter-department cooperation allows for better collective anticipation and reduces the risk of avoidable delays in aid delivery.

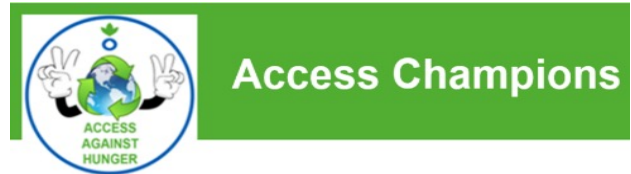
Identifying simple objectives and using a common vocabulary ensures a better transfer of learning by all team members and contributes to the development of a culture of access. Ultimately, the Field Coordinator will remain the cornerstone of this approach and must support the implementation of the actions identified and validated by the teams.



### 3.1 THE IDENTIFICATION AND TRAINING OF “ACCESS CHAMPIONS”

Having developed a methodology for the teams working at the field level, it was necessary to be able to disseminate it within Action Against Hunger teams at scale.

Access & Security experts chose to develop a community of Access Champions from national staff, and Country Directors (CD) were asked to select the most suitable persons from their teams for this role to attend the training. Priority was given to Field Coordinators or staff members from the Access and Security department. This community was invited to the four-day



Access Champions

training sessions to learn how to apply the methodology. Each training was open to a maximum of 12 participants. An intensive but interactive face-to-face approach was adopted. Within the training, dialogue and negotiation roleplays required actors within realistic settings, which cannot be achieved successfully online.





The training had two main objectives:

- Access Champions should take ownership of the Operational Humanitarian Access Methodology.
- Access champions should cascade the methodology knowledge by facilitating its implementation in various bases within their assigned country offices according to the terms of reference given to them to support them.



## 3.2 THE EXPERTS' DEPLOYMENT TO THE FIELD

Following the training, the three Access & Security experts were deployed in ten countries. Two criteria were used to select the country offices: Firstly, to be part of the red or black contexts registered according to the Action Against Hunger security context classification, and secondly, the availability of the missions to carry out the methodology within their bases. Experts went to the accessible bases to support Field

Coordinators in a three-day access workshop to implement the full methodology. To ensure full availability from the teams, Access & Security experts planned, with the CD, a detail OHAM implementation schedule before their deployment. In most cases, the field team produced an action plan with clear objectives and actions linked to improving access.

### EXAMPLE OF DEPLOYMENT PLANNING IN AFGHANISTAN

Deployment of the operational methodology for humanitarian access (for each base).

#### 1. Sensitisation of the Base Field Coordinator

2. **STEP # 1** - Access and Humanitarian Principles Awareness Session.  
(Day 1 Plenary = 2 hours)

3. **STEP # 2** - Analysis of Access Barriers according to Action Against Hunger classification, using the Access Matrix tool  
(Day 1 Programme Managers = 2h-3 hours)

4. **STEP # 3** - Acceptance Awareness session and Carrying out the Acceptance Self-Assessment.  
(Day 2 Programme Managers and key Support Staff = 3-4 hours)

5. **STEP # 4** - Mapping Session  
(Day 2 Dedicated to Security Staff and/or Base Coordination = 1h30 hours)

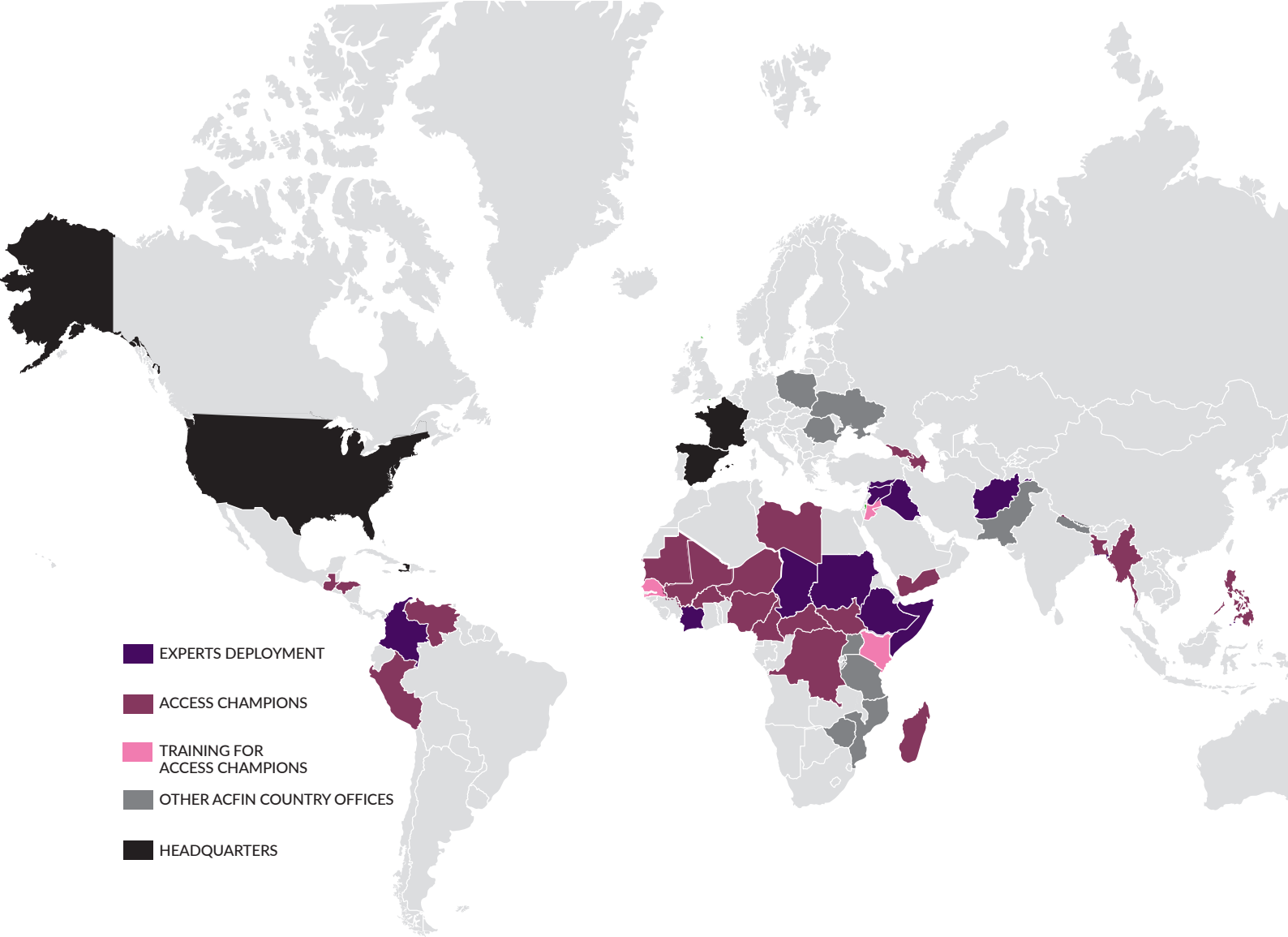
6. **STEP # 5** - Global Action Plan on Access and Acceptance-strategy per base.  
(Day 2 Key staff 2-3 hours)

7. **STEP # 6** - Drafting the Access X-Ray document  
(Day 3 Field Coordinator+ Key Staff + Access Expert = 3.5 hours)

8. **TRAINING** - Exercises in Humanitarian Dialogue and Negotiation  
(Day 3 Key Staff = 7 hours)  
(Total 24 hours over 3 days)

9. Debriefing with the Base Field Coordinator

### 3.3 THE CAPITALISATION REPORT



### DEPLOYMENT OF ACTION AGAINST HUNGER METHODOLOGY IN THE WORLD

Access & Security experts believe this is an innovative, operational approach to tackling access issues. Experts are also aware of and grateful to Sida for the trust

and the opportunity they gave to Action Against Hunger. This Capitalisation report aims to share AHH's experience with other humanitarian actors and agencies.

## 4. THE BENEFITS OF USING THE METHODOLOGY

Note that the following information was gathered between September 2022 to February 2023. However, the methodology's

positive effects and implementation continue past the project's end.

### 4.1 IMPACT ON CAPACITY BUILDING

# **38 Access Champions trained** to deploy the Operational Humanitarian Access Methodology and on Dialogue and Negotiation

# **32 Country offices** benefited from this methodology

# **66 Field offices** benefited from this methodology

# **1536 Staff sensitised** on this methodology

# **189 Managers trained** (field coordination, programme, and support department managers)

# **53 Action plans** elaborated\*

The figures above offer a snapshot illustrating the relevance and usability of the methodology to deploy amongst all levels of staff to develop a culture of access promptly. On average, the Access Champions and experts implemented the six steps and the Dialogue and Negotiation training within the three training days.

Feedback from the Access Champions regarding how they found each step of the methodology training and implementation with their teams has been gathered below to outline their perspectives.

The **methodology's first step** is to bring together as many staff as possible to raise awareness of the importance of access in humanitarian contexts.

\* Out of sixty-six bases, only fifty-three felt the need to develop the action plan for their context further.

As *Moussa*, Access Champion from Cameroon (Francophone), said: “The awareness session on access was a good opportunity to reinforce basic knowledge on access and acceptance, and the teams interacted well”.

In Ethiopia, *Abay*, the Access Champion, also praised the value of this awareness session, “especially for the programme managers, who lack time, but can be confronted to access issues everyday”.

The **second step** of the methodology involves filling out an Access Matrix, which allows for the identification of the access obstacles to be grouped according to their classifications. In this Matrix, the teams must detail how often these obstacles arise. For

instance, the base teams of **Baga Sola (Chad)** identified that Obstacle 1 (Bureaucratic obstacles) occasionally arose in two sub-zones and that Obstacle 4 (Conflict and military operations) occasionally arose in six sub-zones and permanently in one sub-zone.

### ABSTRACT ACCESS MATRIX- BAGA SOLA - CHAD - 07/10/2022

LOCATIONby districts	Please document if you NEVER, OCCASIONALLY or PERMANETLY meet one of the obstacles					
	O.1. Bureaucratic	O.2. climate, the topography, lack of infrastructure	O.3. misuse of aid and interference	O.4. Ongoing battles and military operations	O.5. attacks against humanitarian personnel property	O.1. Denial of needs
Zone 1	OCCASIONALLY	NEVER	NEVER	OCCASIONALLY	NEVER	NEVER
Zone 2	OCCASIONALLY	NEVER	NEVER	OCCASIONALLY	NEVER	NEVER
Zone 3	NEVER	NEVER	NEVER	OCCASIONALLY	NEVER	NEVER
Zone 4	NEVER	NEVER	NEVER	NEVER	NEVER	NEVER
Zone5	NEVER	NEVER	NEVER	OCCASIONALLY	NEVER	NEVER
Zone 6	NEVER	NEVER	NEVER	OCCASIONALLY	NEVER	NEVER
Zone 7	NEVER	NEVER	NEVER	PERMANENTLY	NEVER	NEVER
Zone8	NEVER	NEVER	NEVER	OCCASIONALLY	NEVER	NEVER
Zone 9	NEVER	NEVER	NEVER	NEVER	NEVER	NEVER

The second step is complemented by the **third step**, which goes further into the source of an access issue: Acceptance. This exercise proposed an Acceptance Self-Evaluation to the teams to assess Action Against Hunger staff’s acceptance level in different regions and by different actors. Thanks to this exercise, the teams in Baga Sola identified fifteen stakeholder groups in the area, and they agreed that thirteen

of the fifteen groups accepted the teams and their activities. For one group, the team concluded that Action Against Hunger activities were accepted, however, the humanitarian agencies, including Action Against Hunger and its teams, were just tolerated. For another group, they concluded that humanitarian agencies, including Action Against Hunger, its teams, and its activities were only tolerated.

## ABSTRACT OF THE ACCEPTANCE SELF EVALUATION GRID -CHAD- BAGA SOLA

According to your team, what is the overall perception by each group?	1 ="ACCEPTANCE", 2="TOLERANCE", 3="HOSTILITY"				
	NGO & HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES	AAH	AAH ACTIVITIES	AAH TEAM	SCORING
1. POPULATION	1	1	1	1	4 12
2. RELIGIOUS LEADERS	1	1	1	1	4 12
3. TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES	1	1	1	1	4 12
4. ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES	1	1	1	1	4 12
5. YOUTH ASSOCIATION	2	2	1	2	7 12
6. LOCAL PROVIDERS	1	1	1	1	4 12
7. WATER SERVICES	1	1	1	1	4 12
8. HEALTH SERVICE	1	1	1	1	4 12
9. AGRICULTURAL SERVICE	1	1	1	1	4 12
10. LIVESTOCK SERVICE	1	1	1	1	4 12
11. SOCIAL ACTION SERVICE	1	1	1	1	4 12
12. EDUCATION DEPARTMENT	1	1	1	1	4 12
13. POLICE	1	1	1	1	4 12
14. MILITARY	1	1	1	1	4 12
15. NSAG_R	2	2	2	2	8 12

NOTE - THE HIGHER THE SCORE, THE WORSE YOUR PERCEPTION BY THIS GROUP IS

The quotes below demonstrate that access evidence compiled through the Acceptance

Self-Evaluation was a valuable experience for country offices like Cameroon.

*In Cameroon (Anglophone), Robert, the Access Champion, was particularly and positively surprised by the teams' reaction during the acceptance self-evaluation. He said, "a big success during this deployment was filling out the Acceptance Self-Evaluation: staff were able to understand how important acceptance is and put themselves in the shoes of the beneficiaries. On a daily basis, the staff come back to me to talk about their realisations following this training."*

*In Cameroon (Francophone), Moussa explains: "I had to insist on the value and interest of having them fill out the acceptance self-evaluation. But, once the exercise was completed, the staff understood how important it was, and now we want to have the staff do this exercise regularly."*

The **fourth step** is a mapping session, during which the staff learn tips on creating maps of regions efficiently and accurately, according to where Action Against Hunger activities and programs are implemented, alongside details of access obstacles in the area. This

allows for a quick inventory of access issues and activities in these areas, which can be easily updated. Based on feedback received from Access Champions, this exercise could be challenging for some. However, managers enjoyed it and found it useful in most cases.

*In Nigeria, Zahradeen, the Access Champion, found that the map-making exercise was the most difficult step during the deployment, as “staff lacked training and practice”.*

*This was also the case in Mauritania, where Abdoul, the Access Champion, said that “the teams could use reinforced training on map-making.*

The **fifth step** is the elaboration of a Global Action Plan, synthesising the activities that could be implemented to gain better access and address the identified issues.

area, including the map, the details from the Access Matrix, and the Global Action Plan.

The **sixth step** is the elaboration of an Access X-ray. This document compiles all the information relating to access in the

In addition to the six steps of the methodology, the Action Against Hunger staff were invited to participate in **training on Dialogue and Negotiation** with role-playing in front of actors.

*In Aleppo, Syria, our Access Champion Karam said that “the negotiation training helped improve the accepted behaviour of staff at checkpoints. The whole team was able to work together and identify constraints and solutions.”*

*In Cameroon (Anglophone), Robert pointed out that it was important that the teams realised how negotiation is part of their everyday work and that it is a skill that they have to master.*

*In Burkina Faso, our Access Champion Abdoukader, told us that “the training on negotiation and dialogue was particularly appreciated amongst the teams, and they have expressed a wish for further, regular training. The key messages are clear and well understood. Through practise, the teams were able to evaluate their capacity and the need for improvement”.*

*Also, in Cameroon (Francophone), Moussa shared that “the staff greatly enjoyed the dialogue and negotiation training, and now want to take part in this kind of training more regularly. This training was the perfect opportunity for concrete experience-sharing and senior-to-junior advice sharing.”*

Ultimately, the deployment of the methodology was well accepted and understood by the staff, which signals positively for the training of the Access

Champions themselves. It allowed entire field teams to work together, reflect on issues they face and jointly find solutions.

*Abay, the Access Champion in Ethiopia, insisted on the fact that “the staff realised that having a good relationship with local actors, as well as good communication and negotiation skills, ultimately helps the teams face less challenges in reaching the populations.*

*Also, the Operational Humanitarian Access Methodology training has a direct and positive impact on the team capacity to gain and maintain a good relationship with local authorities including armed forces and stakeholders and increase ACTION AGAINST HUNGER acceptance*

## 4.2 IMPACT ON DELIVERY OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

It was apparent that the impact on Action Against Hunger team building and capacity building was instantaneous during the training. However, it is expected that it will take longer to assess the tangible effects in terms of increased quality and capacity to deliver assistance to populations in hard-to-reach areas. Access is not an objective; it has to be understood as a prerequisite to accomplishing our mission. In the meantime, the structured approach can help teams to better understand and measure the importance of having a good acceptance whilst practically proposing actions to improve access.

The methodology also helps to demonstrate that in some bases, the team did not identify any access obstacles. In some areas, implementing activities requires managing a high workload, but this does not mean

access is obstructed. For instance, filling in a travel authorisation is not an access problem. The problem occurs if the authority in charge regularly or systematically refuses to give travel authorisations. This is where it is important to differentiate between access constraints and denial. Further to this, in some cases, Action Against Hunger itself refuses to access certain places, considering that the residual risk of exposure is too high for the teams, compared to the humanitarian impact of the activity on the population. As such, some teams identified real access challenges regarding being unable to assist specific groups or areas. The examples presented below are some of the actions that the teams decided to implement, which have had a direct impact on increasing their capacity to deliver humanitarian services in areas where access is potentially too dangerous or denied.

## 4.2.1 CHAD

In Chad, in Lake Chad Region (around Baga Sola town), particularly vulnerable populations (living on islands where Radical Non-State Armed Groups potentially present) meet Action Against Hunger criteria to benefit from humanitarian assistance with the RRM (Rapid Response Mechanism). During the deployment of the methodology, the team identified two obstacles.

- Possible exposure to attack from Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) or Boko Haram.
- The assistance kit is too bulky to transport by small boats.

Baga-sola teams produced this action plan to address these issues.

### ABSTRACT OF THE ACTION PLAN -CHAD- BAGA SOLA

**OBJECTIVE 1: RRM - Reach more villages in the Kangalam, Bol, Ngouboua, Kaiga-Kindijira area with Obstacles #4 and 5**

ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES
Develop a precise monitoring of security events to create a “zoning” map (Bol).	TC+ Resp secu	1 week	Team+network
Clarify the “Black” zone of “no go” declared by the military as best as possible	(Cmcord - ocha coordination) A&S Resp + TC	1 month	OCHA
Create a zoning reporting by colour (Example: black, red, orange, green and grey)	Ref secu base=Log Base+Log RRM	2 weeks	PPT map program

**OBJECTIVE 2: RRM - To have a kit adapted to transport by pirogue for assistance in island areas about Obstacle #2.**

ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES
Put together a kit with a suitable weight/size/ relevance ratio (+cash?) Log RRM+ RP RRM 2 weeks n/a	Log RRM+ RP RRM 2 weeks n/a	2 weeks	n/a

## 4.2.2 IVORY COAST

The methodology was deployed in the Tehini base at the initial response stages. Being sensitised to the risks and the potential presence of Radical Non-State Armed Groups in the area, the team recognised the importance of being accepted by the population from the beginning of the three-year project. It was decided that a hardware WASH-type activity would directly

and positively impact the community and establish acceptance within newly accessed areas. Fulfilling this, the team worked on a retro-planning of water-point rehabilitation to be completed before the beginning of the rainy season.

The Dialogue training revealed the need at base level to define “talking points” to

guide the team communication at army or Non-State Armed Groups checkpoints. This situation served as an opportunity to sensitise the team on the risk of having phone numbers and SMS in their mobile phones as well as of carrying official

documents from government offices in their car (e.g., mission orders, etc.). The Field Coordinator and the Access and Security Manager took responsibility for addressing these actions.

### 4.2.3 SUDAN

Action Against Hunger teams identified a major access obstacle within bureaucratic and administrative requests. These demands arrive from different authorities at different levels (Humanitarian Aid Commission-HAC, Labour Office, technical line ministries...) and take many forms, such as visa denial, internal travel permits denial to operational areas or approval delays. Additionally, obstacles can also take the form of involvement by authorities in procurement, recruitment and other processes related to field programmes.

To address these issues, Action Against Hunger teams decided to regularly collect such information from the ground to strengthen evidence and communicate evidence to advocate for improving working practices with authorities by showing the impact on their population not accessing the aid and services provided by the humanitarian actors. In addition, systematic evidence-gathering sustains humanitarian diplomacy initiatives at national and international levels.

### 4.2.4 NIGER

During the elaboration of the Access Matrix and the Acceptance Self-Evaluation exercise, Action Against Hunger teams pointed out that the main access obstacle was the imposition of armed escorts to humanitarian actors when reaching specific country locations with Non-State Armed Groups presence and security risks. The Government of Niger, in its fight against the lack of security and the Non-State Armed Groups, established the imposition of armed escorts in these areas as a security strategy. To continue operating while maintaining neutrality, humanitarian NGOs have reinforced their acceptance towards

the communities and stakeholders as a mechanism to avoid using armed escorts since under humanitarian law, using them should be a last resort.

However, in Niger, humanitarian NGOs undertook several humanitarian diplomacy actions at the regional and national level. This led to a high level of mistrust between humanitarian actors and the military as their acceptance strategies enabled humanitarian actors to reach areas where the military could not. Therefore, it was relevant for Action Against Hunger teams to improve mutual trust and dialogue

by promoting a better functioning of the regional Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord) mechanisms to stimulate a better understanding between political-military and humanitarian actors. Additionally, the

objective was to achieve more effective communication and comprehension of humanitarian principles and NGO challenges regarding using armed escorts during their operations.

## 4.2.5 ETHIOPIA

Action Against Hunger opened a base in the town of Sekota to assist the victims of the Tigray War. Sekota Action Against Hunger team planned to implement malnutrition treatment activities in the Tsemere health centre, three kilometres from the front line. However, the military was already using the health centre as their own hospital and refused access to humanitarian organisations.

Ethiopian Access Champions were trained in Nairobi in May 2022. The Access Champion implemented the methodology, including dialogue and negotiation practice with the Sekota team by July 15th. As a result of the training, the Field Coordinator felt comfortable engaging with senior Ethiopian representatives to obtain authorisation to open activities in the health centre facility. He prepared for this meeting using the approach he learned in the Dialogue and Negotiation exercises (preparation grid, active listening, body language...).

On 26 July 2022, the Field Coordinator and the Access Champion participated in the first meeting with the zone commander of the regional special force. The meeting was tense, however, they managed to arrange a second meeting with the commander, but this time in the presence of civilian representatives of the local administration on 28th July.



After several more dialogue sessions and interaction with the military commander and the area administrator, the Field Coordinator obtained permission and launched the therapeutic outpatient and supplementary feeding programme. Between 1st August and the end of October, more than 50 severely malnourished children were treated in the outpatient therapeutic programmes. Five children with complications were referred to the hospital for medical treatment. 334 children and 134 pregnant and lactating women were registered in the moderate malnutrition treatment programme. This programme remains open and active.

## 4.3 THE EXPERTS' PERSPECTIVE & ANALYSIS

### 4.3.1 SUCCESSES AND BEST PRACTICES

#### 4.3.1.1 REGARDING THE PROJECT LOGFRAME

- ✔ The training and deployment objectives were achieved.
- ✔ The number of people sensitised promptly demonstrates that the project's design through Access Champions training was efficient.
- ✔ Humanitarian access has always attracted much interest from Action Against Hunger teams, but it was often unclear. Step #1, the sensitisation, largely received positive reactions from the teams and the most common remark was: "now we can better understand what this terminology means and what it implies".
- ✔ On the whole, feedback was positive in terms of understanding and adherence, particularly by the Field Coordinators and the managers at the field offices level.

#### 4.3.1.2 REGARDING THE STRUCTURED METHODOLOGY AND TEMPLATES

- ✔ The process of identifying obstacles and classifying them through the six groups enabled the team to understand better their root causes.
- ✔ Developing an operational methodology rather than written policies or guidelines seemed more efficient and appreciated by the teams.
- ✔ Breaking down the methodology into a step-by-step approach enabled the team to build upon their work and establish crosscutting and inter-department dynamics around access issues.
- ✔ The step-by-step process enabled the identification of the obstacle's root cause rather than simply a recognition of its burden on humanitarian operations.
- ✔ In several cases, the teams acknowledged that they are not blocked from implementing their activities and have clear steps to address access issues.
- ✔ As the teams identified an access obstacle, they could position it within their action plan.
- ✔ The Access Matrix (denial of need) and the Acceptance Self-Evaluation are tools that can highlight gender & inclusion challenges caused by access issues which are the first steps in addressing them.
- ✔ The training on mapping (step #4) was highly appreciated as it proved very effective in presenting and discussing access issues.
- ✔ The teams requested additional and regular training and practical exercises focusing specifically on dialogue and negotiations, citing the effectiveness of such activity in their work.

#### 4.3.1.3 REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION

- ✔ The three trainings for Access Champions were well structured. They enabled a knowledge cascade regarding deploying the methodology to the field base level.
- ✔ Mobilising small manager teams for the four short sessions was not challenging. The methodology was deployed within 3 days.
- ✔ Some Access Champions drew up summary reports regarding the exercises they had carried out for reference and for sharing with others.
- ✔ The initial methodology was designed as a step-by-step approach; however, after being deployed once, the materials and steps can be carried out independently according to specific needs.

## 4.3.2 LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES

### 4.3.2.1 REGARDING THE PROJECT LOGFRAME

- ✦ There is a need to highlight the Field Coordinator versus the Access Champion role. Access Champions usually reside at the mission level. The Country Director can ask the Field Coordinator to implement the methodology and the Access Champion can facilitate this.
- ✦ It was ambitious to train the Access Champions as trainers for the Dialogue and Negotiation sessions. However, some of them were able to organise their sessions successfully.
- ✦ The role of the Head of Department - Access & Security and his/her connection with the Access Champion should be clarified in the coming months for each mission.
- ✦ It was very challenging to deploy the training in some country offices due to delays in visa processes (more than two months for Iraq).

### 4.3.2.2 REGARDING THE STRUCTURED METHODOLOGY AND TEMPLATES

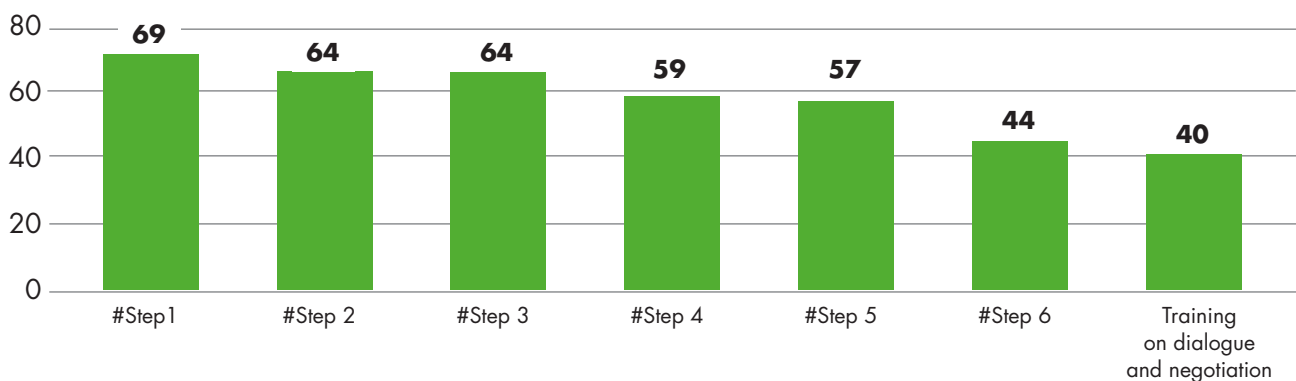
- ✦ There is room for improvement within the action plans developed under Step #5. Teams were confused between objectives and actions. An access action plan is a means to promote and trigger specific actions to address access obstacles in a structured and crosscutting approach, thus involving different departments and teams. Unlike security plans, access plans are not mandatory within the organisation.
- ✦ The experts found ways to upgrade the capacity of the teams in this part of the methodology by reinforcing the efficiency of access action plans to include indicators, allowing concrete monitoring and progress of the activities as well as the improvement of access. This could also involve and empower coordination-level staff, as they would have access to these materials.
- ✦ The current Step #6, "Access X-ray", should be reviewed, as it is not wholly relevant. It was developed to be used as a summary document of the access situation presented by the Field Coordinator to the national-level coordination staff; however, it creates some confusion. Experts will review this template to make it more user-friendly and easier to complete.

### 4.3.2.3 REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION

- ✦ In some cases, the Field Coordinators were aware of the critical role they should play in the access capacity of their teams. However, some Field Coordinators could not participate in the whole process. Experts reflected a need to gain greater buy-in from the senior manager level, supporting Field Coordinators to take the lead in their positions to implement the methodology alongside the technical support of Access Champions and Head of Department - Access & Security.
- ✦ Experts should focus on supporting teams in contexts where they encounter obstacles at steps #4 (ongoing conflict) and #5 (humanitarian workers being targeted). This should be done in close collaboration with security management staff in coordination with national-level staff, including Field Coordinators.

- ▼ In the same spirit, Action Against Hunger teams should be supported in their capacity to make informed decisions when facing the management of major dilemmas, such as whether or not to use the visibility of the organisation, whether or not to use armed escorts as a last resort, etc.
- ▼ It is less relevant to talk about access at the country level; instead, further analysis at the field office level should be supported. In specific complicated contexts, particularly in conflict zones, field offices should conduct further in-depth analysis of the zoning areas and their specificities for managing present and emerging security risks. This facilitates the identification of influential actors and assesses the extent to which dialogue is possible. In many cases, this cannot be achieved by an out-of-country expert.
- ▼ Organising the Dialogue and Negotiation training requires a great deal of energy, preparation, and self-confidence. We found that some of the Access Champions were not able to deliver that training. However, when the trainings were able to be organised, they were successful, and the teams found it very relevant and useful for their work. In addition, these trainings highlighted the lack of clear red lines for the staff when confronted with situations where armed groups or military actors have specific requests which go against humanitarian principles and Action Against Hunger Charter. For instance, staff are often at a loss concerning the appropriate reaction and messages to transmit to such actors in these situations.
- ▼ Feedback data compiled from the Access Champions, as outlined in the graph below, illustrates the overall successful deployment of most of the steps. The decreased deployment of steps #5 and #6 and the Negotiation and Dialogue training is explained above.

### Number of bases having completed the steps



## 5. CONCLUSION AND WAYS FORWARD

This project has laid the foundation for a more practical approach to operational access and implementation of Action Against Hunger activities in hard-to-reach areas.

The methodology is a success in terms of capacity building and its deployment. Access Champions could take ownership of it and then facilitate its deployment among the teams. This methodology has also enabled the inclusion of crosscutting dynamics and intra-departmental working practices at the base level. Indeed, it helps the teams to deal with operational access constraints in a structured way and upgrade their performance.

The methodology should gradually be used at the project elaboration stage. It is recommended that those teams that have not yet received the training should have the opportunity to benefit from it in the near future.

The team can identify obstacles; they will require support to improve the quality of their action plans from the managers at the country offices coordination level.

The Access Champions still require support from the experts, specifically for implementing the Dialogue and Negotiation training. Their capacity and expertise to propose solutions to teams when faced with access-related dilemmas should be strengthened.

The national coordination level should be trained and sensitised in the role that they should play to embed a systematic use of the methodology. In addition, they should learn how to use it to define their intervention logic, adapted to each geographical area in their country. The experts should use the table below to sensitise the management at the capital level and help the team to focus on the situation within steps #3 and #4. Further efforts in developing access capacity should be focused on when the population in need fails to receive humanitarian assistance.



## HUMANITARIAN ACCESS: THE FOUR MOST COMMON SITUATIONS

ACF: A CHARTER & An OPERATIONAL



MISSION  
“ACF demands FREE ACCESS to victims and direct control of its programs”

#1 Our teams carry out the activities the population is served without difficulty

**ACTIONS** to implement

Encouraging the teams

#2 Our teams carry out the activities the population is served but the teams are experiencing difficulties

Identify the origin of these difficulties which are often endogenous

**OBSTACLES**

#3 Population in need of emergency humanitarian aid & included in proposals is not served

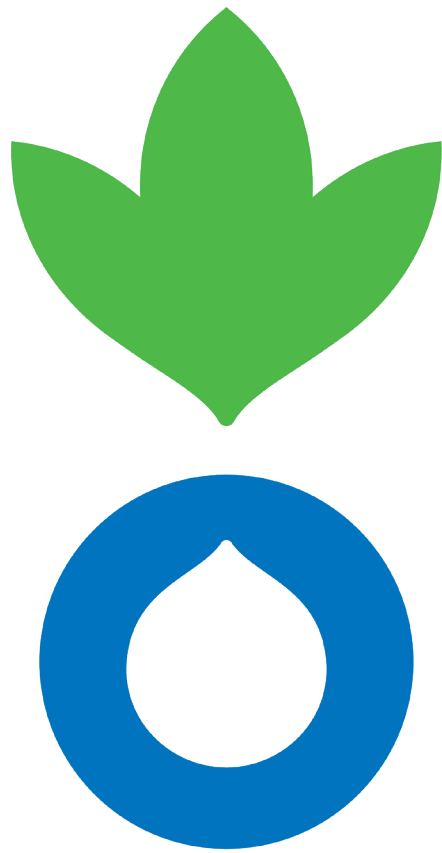
Complete and implement the **Global Action Plan** included in the Access methodology

#4 Population in need of emergency humanitarian assistance but not included in proposals and not served

Strategic review to define whether we want to reach these populations. If the answer is “yes”; Roll out the methodology proactively

Experts should continue to highlight the benefit of using the methodology. They will maintain the Access Champions community spirit through webinars. They should upgrade skills and capacities at the national

coordination level. They should remain available to dedicate technical support, for highly complex contexts, on request from Country Directors and Desk Officers.



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