

2025 | 2026

Certificate of Advanced
Studies in Humanitarian Action

Accountability to Affected People



Credits

10 ECTS



Dates

12 January – 3 April 2026



Format

Online (combination of self-study and live sessions). Live sessions are scheduled take place 1–2 times per week. All live sessions are in group and mandatory – Usually in early afternoon CEST.

Online course requires 20–25 hours of dedicated work per week. We recommend that participants allow at least 50% of their time for the course and adapt their professional activity accordingly and with flexibility on working hours.



Language

English



Fees

- **Full price:** CHF 5'000
- **Partner rate (MSF, ICRC, UNICEF, IOM):** CHF 4'000 (20% discount)
- **Special Rate for Government and NGO/CBO Staff:** CHF 2'500. Available exclusively to staff from local and national NGOs, CBOs, and government employees in low/middle-income countries. Proof of local employment and salary required.



Lecturer

Dr Erna Burai – erna.burai@unige.ch



Short description

This certificate addresses the ambition of improving Accountability to Affected People (AAP) and people-centred programming within the humanitarian sector. It explores the components, conceptual underpinnings, and practice of AAP in various contexts. It prepares participants to better realise the principle of accountability in their field of expertise by familiarising them with existing modalities and organisational practices and by critically assessing the promises and limitations of these approaches.

This intensive online course, which culminates in a residential week in Nairobi, is organised in partnership with UNICEF.



Objectives of the course

At the end of the CAS, participants will have developed the relevant skills to design and adapt humanitarian strategies and projects in a people-centred manner in line with the specificities of each context.

More specifically, participants will be able to:

- Define AAP and relate it to other humanitarian values;
- Understand its philosophical and conceptual underpinnings in humanitarianism;
- Explain the origins of the concept of AAP and discuss its boundaries ;
- Identify and juxtapose types of accountability (upward vs. downward; formal vs. informal, normative vs. operational etc.)
- Argue on the primary and secondary expected outcomes of AAP;
- Differentiate the institutional ingredients of AAP;
- Understand how organisational cultures impact accountability mechanisms from the local to the global level;
- Plan and evaluate the AAP strategy in a humanitarian project;
- Appraise their project/organisation and team through the AAP lens;
- Formulate evaluation strategies and tools adapted to their project organisation;
- Design recommendations useful for their project/organisation enhancing AAP in practice;
- Strengthen collective accountability between agencies.



Workload

Around 250 hours of work including:

- Synchronous live sessions (1-2 times per week)
- Asynchronous self-study activities (individual or group work activities such as readings, interviews, podcasts, videos, in-class presentations, self-tests, case studies and simulation exercises, reflexive analysis, forum discussions etc.)



Structure of the CAS

Module I: Accountability relations in the humanitarian sector

- Week 1: What is Accountability to Affected People (AAP)?
- Week 2: Accountability as a relationship
- Week 3: Donor perspectives and advocacy
- Week 4: The internal culture of accountability: leadership, organisational culture, certifications and standards

Module II: People-centred programming

- Week 5: Elementary community structures
- Week 6: People-centred approaches and localisation
- Week 7: Collective accountability and area-based programming

Module III: Modalities and practices of AAP

- Week 8: Communicating with communities
- Week 9: Inclusion and diversity
- Week 10: Reversing power relations in the humanitarian sector

CAS Assessment

- Week 11: Preparing a final written assignment on an AAP-related dilemma or an AAP strategy
- Week 12: Residential session in Nairobi, Kenya (30 March – 3 April 2026)



Audience

- Professionals in the humanitarian, development or social sector looking to improve the provision of humanitarian assistance through accountability lenses
- Professionals from any other sectors (private, academic, etc.) who wish to increase their understanding of the humanitarian field and develop their competence in accountability to affected people



Distance Learning

- Broadband/high speed connection - 2.5 Mbps minimum.
- Please note that most weekly content and activities are accessible via phone, but a PC/laptop/tablet is preferred
- Microphone and webcam



Admission requirements

1. A university qualification (Bachelor's degree or equivalent)
2. At least three years of relevant professional experience in the humanitarian, development or social sector
3. Excellent command of English

Feedback from past participants



Shalini Prasad,
UNICEF India



THIS COURSE PRESENTED AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO DEEPEN MY UNDERSTANDING OF AAP'S CORE CONCEPTS, PROGRAMMING, COORDINATION, AND CONTEXTUALIZATION WHILE ALSO ENABLING ME TO TRANSFER THIS LEARNING TO SBC AND OTHER PROGRAM NETWORKS WITHIN UNICEF INDIA. A KEY MOMENT WAS THE INTRODUCTION OF THE PEOPLE CENTRED APPROACHES! OVER THE PAST MONTHS, I HAVE APPLIED ITS KEY COMPONENTS, ESPECIALLY IN DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT (DRM), ADVANCING EFFORTS TO INTEGRATE AAP INTO SYSTEM STRENGTHENING AND CAPACITY-BUILDING INITIATIVES AT NATIONAL AND STATE LEVELS. IT IS A COMPREHENSIVE COURSE WITH A GOOD MIX OF THEORY AND APPLICATION. THE COURSE COORDINATORS AND SPEAKERS/RESOURCE PERSONS ARE EXCELLENT, AND THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT HELPS LEARNING FROM THE DIVERSE EXPERIENCES AND BACKGROUNDS OF PARTICIPANTS.



Zinnia Martinez,
IOM



FOR ME, A HIGHLIGHT WAS SHARING THIS COURSE WITH PEOPLE FROM AROUND THE WORLD – LISTENING TO THEIR PRACTICES AND REALIZING THAT WE FACE THE SAME CHALLENGES. I ESPECIALLY CHERISHED THE MODULE ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, WHICH GAVE ME TOOLS, METHODOLOGIES, AND A MINDSET TO TRULY WORK WITH COMMUNITIES FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END OF PROJECTS. I ALSO LEARNED FROM MY COLLEAGUES HOW TO DO THE BEST WITH FEW RESOURCES, WHICH IS OUR REALITY NOW MORE THAN EVER. THE BEST MOMENT WAS _NALLY MEETING EVERYONE IN AFRICA – IT WAS WONDERFUL TO HAVE THAT SPACE TO CONNECT AND LEARN FROM EACH OTHER.



Application deadline and registration