

2008 Peer Support Group Meeting

Notes captured on flipcharts from Block III: Working groups

Session 6: The HAP Standard

- How have you used the Standard?
- What did you find most useful about it?
- What aspects of the Standard would you change/ what would you add?

Facilitator: Monica Blagescu, HAP

Session 7: Certification: where to?

- What is the experience of agencies engaging with the certification process?
- What factors are affecting decisions regarding certification?

Facilitator: David Bainbridge, Tearfund

Notes captured on flipcharts

Session 6: The HAP Standard

Different ways in which the Standard has been used

- in reiterating existing good practice, as a “positive reinforcement” tool
- as an internal advocate for change
- to develop questionnaires and for other monitoring and evaluation purposes, with a view of identifying areas of improvement in programme quality
- to review internal policies and corporate strategies
- to operationalise programme quality monitoring
- in staff inductions
- to inform Terms of Reference for programme evaluations
- in Disaster Risk Reduction work

What has been most useful from engaging with the Standard

- Guided self-assessments and baseline analyses demystify the Standard
- The Standard and the Certification process add the much-needed peer pressure and recognition of good practice

Key Considerations

- There is value in developing a certification system by NGOs for NGOs; members’ level of influence over the process is critical as is a meaningful consultation process with communities and staff at programme sites
- The language in which the Standard has been written is not useful in the field; the Guide should be better disseminated by agencies and the Secretariat to managers and field practitioners;
- Continue emphasising the importance of processes, values and attitudes – one of the key value-added characteristics of the Standard; members to recognise the difference between “systems” and “mechanisms”
- The review process could result in a more simple not necessarily a more complicated Standard. This should be approached as process to consolidate the Standard.
- Inter-operability with other standards is key; latest developments with Sphere and People In Aid are encouraging in this direction.
- Be more explicit on how the Standard applies to agencies working through partners
- Review the Standard by seeking input from different countries and different types of organisations, both that have used the Standard before and that are new to it

Session 7: Certification – where to?

Tearfund – HAP member since 2003; baseline in 2007, certified in 2008-12-18

- Slow and hard to begin changing the organisation: the internal organisational review helped
- Beneficiary accountability as corporate priority, endorsed by leadership

Key learning: Accountability needs to be corporately owned: part of the values and corporate plan

- Built into strategic plans, values, cross-cutting issues, reports, briefing, inductions – permeates across the entire organisation
- The HAP baseline demystified the HAP Standard and the benchmarks, and helped staff see the connection between policies/procedures and the HAP process
- It was encouraging for staff to realise that much of what required already existed
- Weakest areas were complaint handling processes and Humanitarian Accountability Framework
- Action plan was developed with a view of moving towards certification

Key learning: encourage/influence line managers responsible for actions to prioritise making progress as per plan

- HAP is currently organising intro sessions with all staff at the start of the baseline analysis
- Levels of transparency: can be set up by the agency itself (based on a clear non-disclosure policy)

Key learning: allow for more time to prepare for certification than you may estimate you need. Tearfund took around 12 months from the baseline analysis at the Head office until the certification audit

- Partners do not have to be HAP compliant for agencies to be certified
- It is agencies themselves that set agreements with their partners, and not HAP
- Certification does not mean that everything needs to be fully compliant from the very start, but agencies need to have in place a clear plan of improvement against which they will be monitored at the time of the mid-term
- There is no given timeline between the baseline analysis and the certification audit

Key learning: need clear internal communication to staff in relation to the HAP certification process and what is expected of them

- Even without HAP, Tearfund would want to do this
- Post-certification action to solve non-compliance and audit recommendations

Key learning: use agency-appropriate language to write the Humanitarian Accountability Framework

- External process helped deliver on internal priorities (nothing like a deadline to sharpen focus)
- Workload and priorities a massive factor: reliant on staff to deliver
- Competes against other priorities: Gender, HIV, disaster risk reduction
- For Tearfund this was not about donor recognition

Key learning: the scope of the certification can be set by the agency along decision-making lines